



LSA Quarterly

Africa!

In this issue, LSA Director Jay Hunt travels to the *bosveld* of the Limpopo Province on the South African border with Botswana and hunts plains game with rifle and pistol.



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Revolutionary War Veterans Association

Project Appleseed

By Dan Plunkett

According to FBI statistics, there were a record 21 million NICS checks performed in 2013. That number exceeded 2012's then-record total by more than 1.5 million. Louisiana accounted for more than 350,000 of the checks in 2013, a number that has steadily risen for several years.

Not all firearms sales involve a NICS check however and not all NICS checks result in the sale of a firearm. But enough firearms sales have occurred in the United States to put an estimated 260 million firearms in private hands. Various polls indicate that there is a firearm in somewhere between 40% and 50% of all US homes.

Once upon a time that number was close to 100%. In the 1770s, the American colonists depended on their firearms for security and to put food on the table. Without a musket, there would likely be no meat for the family to eat - and little means of protection. So in April 1775, when British General Thomas Gage sent 800 of his finest soldiers to confiscate the stores of powder and ball in Concord, Massachusetts, the colonists did not cooperate. In fact, thousands of men answered the urgent call of William Dawes and turned out to face the Redcoats.

Wait. William Dawes?!? Wasn't it Paul Revere that rode through the night, shouting "The British are coming?" Well, yes and no. Revere did saddle up that night and ride through the countryside outside of Boston. But he didn't warn of the advancing "British." After all, Revere - and everyone he was warning - was British! They all were citizens subject to the Crown. So Revere warned that the "Regulars were out" to distinguish them from the local militia companies. And, in any event, Revere was captured by the Regulars before he reached Concord.

If you didn't learn that story in school, you are not alone. In fact, much of the story of April 19th, 1775 has been swept into the corner over time. Much of that story, and indeed the story of the Revolutionary War, depends on marksmanship. The colonist's well-aimed shots carried the day, and eventually won the war. Americans in 2014 who own a firearm can thank those colonists for knowing how to use theirs!

The Revolutionary War Veterans Association was formed eight years ago to honor the men who relied on marksmanship to secure our liberty and freedom. The RWVA's principal effort is "Project Appleseed." That program, which is in all 50 states (and even in New York City), provides rifle marksmanship training to thousands of Americans every year. It also tells the real stories of April 1775, keeping alive the tradition and legacy of the colonial marksman.

All of the marksmanship training is based on fundamentals developed over generations and honed by the US Armed Forces. This is field shooting, with nothing but your body and a canvas sling to support the rifle. The targets are scaled so that shooting can be done at 25 meters. But the basic skills are the same ones used by High Power Rifle competitors at Camp Perry.

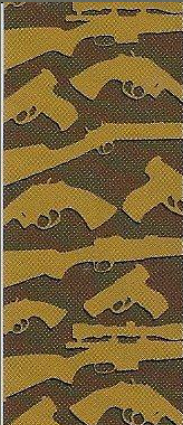
As an Appleseed instructor, I have seen children as young as 8 and adults as old as 78 on our firing lines. Because Appleseed events are not competitions, having a state champion – or a neophyte teenager – next to you will not slow your progress. You shoot your target, for better or worse. So don't let your age – or anyone else's keep you from coming out. Samuel Whittemore was 78 in April 1775, and he did not let his age hold him back.

Although exempted from militia service, Sam knew "what must be done" when he got the alarm. He gathered his musket, two pistols, and a cavalry saber and hobbled to a low stone wall adjacent the main road. When the Redcoats appeared, Sam fired five shots so quickly and effectively that the British soldiers thought they were under ambush from several men. Their commander sent a large detachment to respond. As they approached Sam's position, he took out three more with one shot from each of his firearms. Sam was reaching for his saber when a Regular shot him in the face. Others bayoneted him 13 times. The Regulars left Sam for dead.

When the colonists brought Old Sam to the local doctor that afternoon, he shook his head and said, "Your friend will not survive." He told them to take Sam home to die in his own bed, surrounded by his family.

And so he did – 18 years later! It is said that Sam fathered more children after April 1775. It is at least probable that he never bought himself another pint of ale.

I wonder how many of those 21 million NICS checks last year involved Sam's descendants. In spirit at least, I suppose all of them did. If you want to keep Sam Whittemore's legacy alive, you might start by attending a Project Appleseed clinic. Check www.appleseedinfo.org for the schedule or email me (dplunkett@cox.net) for more information.



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11616 Industriplex Blvd.
Suite 13
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

225-751-1400
225-933-3488
bbiossat@yahoo.com

Africa!

By

Jay D. Hunt, Ph.D.

Anyone who has read my articles over the years will realize that although I'm a dedicated competitive rifle shooter, I love to hunt with handguns. Specifically, I like high powered hunting handguns with scopes on top. I've previously written articles on my Ruger Redhawk in .44 Remington Magnum (*LSA Quarterly* Vol. VI No. 2 Apr-Jun 2012, "Heavyweight Hunting Loads for the Ruger Redhawk) and my Thompson/Center Contender with the custom SSK barrel chambered in 6.5 JDJ (*LSA Quarterly* Vol. V No. 3 Jun-Sep 2011, "Long Range Handgun Hunting with the 6.5 JDJ").

Although a big fan of the T/C Contender, I have always wanted an XP-100. In fact, when I bought my first Contender in the mid-1980s as a graduate student, I wanted an XP-100 but could only afford a Contender. Last summer, I finally added a Remington XP-100 to my collection. The XP-100 (so named by Remington for eXperimental Pistol number 100) was manufactured by Remington from 1963-1998 and introduced the fastest production handgun round, the .221 Remington Fireball. The single shot pistol was based on Remington's short action bolt action rifle Model 40X. The beauty of the XP-100 is that it balances so well. The pistol grip is located in front of the action, eliminating that nose heavy feeling present with the Contender. A repeater version, XP-100R, was manufactured for a short time between 1991-1997, which had a small integral magazine that held four rounds. Unfortunately, because the repeater version had a magazine, the pistol grip was moved to a location behind the action, yielding a poorly balanced (and ugly) handgun. The repeater version did not sell well.

As with most bolt actions, there is nothing special about re-barreling the XP-100, and my friend, Bob Jenkins, re-barreled my pistol by cutting down a match grade stainless steel rifle barrel with a 7 mm bore diameter to a length of 16 inches, turning a beautiful medium-heavy profile, and finally cutting the chamber to .284 Winchester. If you don't know the story of the .284 Winchester, you're not alone. The cartridge is all but extinct, and probably would be if it were not for wildcat cartridge developers. The .284 Winchester has been necked up and down to every imaginable diameter to yield new cartridges. Perhaps the most useful and popular of these is the 6.5-284 Norma, which is used in long range competitions. The .284 Winchester was introduced in 1963 by Winchester to duplicate the ballistics of their wildly popular .270 Winchester. Because the .270 Winchester is based on the .30-06 Springfield, the cartridge overall length (COAL) is 3.340", which prohibited its use in Winchester's short action Model 88 lever gun and Model 100 autoloader. The COAL for the .284 Winchester is 2.800". Although the ballistics of the two cartridges are virtually identical, the .284 Winchester was never popular and was essentially dead on arrival.

Winchester lists a single factory load for the .284 Winchester in their 2014 on-line catalog. Using a 150 Gr. Power-Point bullet, their SuperX (Catalog No. X2842) advertises a muzzle velocity of 2,860 FPS. Although Winchester has multiple factory loads with various bullets for the .270 Winchester, their SuperX load (Catalog No. X2704) lists a muzzle velocity of 2,850 FPS using their Power-Point 150 Gr. bullet. The two loads have very similar velocity and trajectory curves. The intrigue of having the performance of .270 Winchester in a handgun was just too much for me to ignore!

Load development for my pistol was straightforward: I searched for a load that worked well in rifles, and duplicated the load in my pistol. Because I recognized that the bullet would be somewhat slower out of the 16" barrel, as compared to the 24" rifle barrels typical for the .270 or .284, I decided that I needed a relatively heavy bullet that would perform well on game at velocities between 2,570 and 2,150 FPS. For me, the 150 Gr. Nosler Partition seemed to be the perfect choice for deer-sized game. The soft exposed lead-alloy combined with the thin frontal jacket ensures bullet mushrooming on impact. The thickening of the jacket toward the center of the bullet along with the namesake integral partition arrests bullet expansion and maintains approximately 66% of the bullet's mass, ensuring penetration. Since I had done so much research on my recipe before I loaded a single round, I was not surprised that the 150 Gr. Nosler Partition seated over 54.5 Gr. of Alliant Reloader 19 with CCI-200 primers in W-W brass yielded outstanding accuracy. Muzzle velocity from the XP-100 is 2,564 FPS, which is approximately 220 FPS slower than one might expect from a 24" rifle barrel. Although the .284 Winchester was designed for short actions, the action on the XP-100 is a tad too short for the round. I load the 150 Gr. Partition to a COAL of 2.820". The only problem that I have encountered is that I must remove the bolt to eject an unfired cartridge. Typically, this would not be an issue, but the bolt release on the XP-100 is located under the action, which would require me to remove the action from the stock to push the bolt release. Instead, I use a knife or some other thin, stiff rod to push down the bolt stop to release the bolt from the rails. This is neither convenient nor fun.

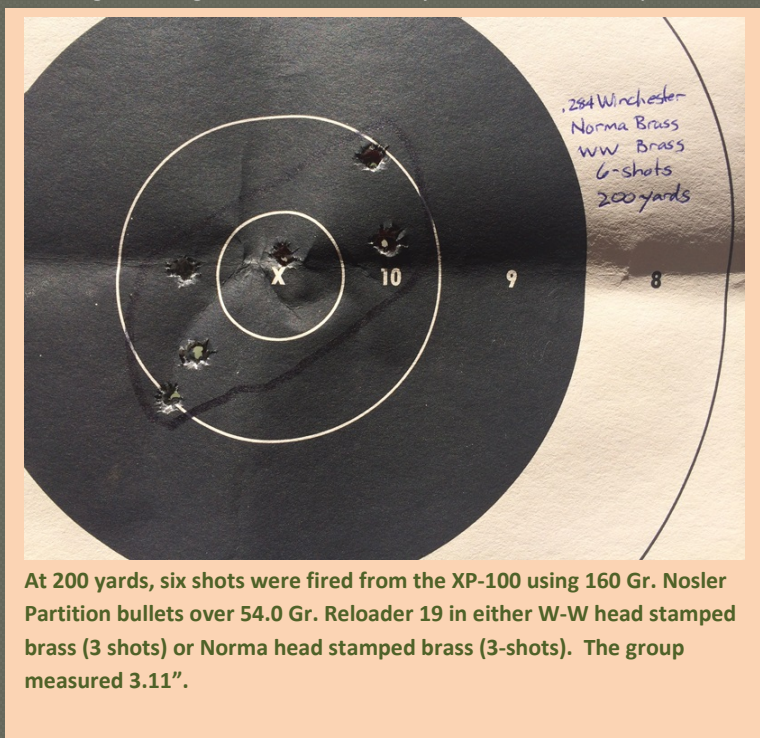
This autumn, I used the XP-100 to take two small deer and a coyote. As expected, the bullet performed flawlessly on each of the animals. Right before Christmas 2013 while deer hunting in Catahoula Parish near Harrisonburg, LA, two coyotes appeared on the trail just after noon. I was able to put a bullet through one of them, and could have taken the second one had I been better prepared. The bullet entered the left front shoulder, passed through the chest, and exited from the right flank. There was copious blood and the coyote went all of 5 feet before dying. The first deer shot with the XP-100 was facing me at about 50 yards. The bullet impacted the point of its right shoulder, went through the ribs, and exited the left rear abdomen. The heart was shredded, but interestingly there was very little damage to the lungs. The bullet passed through the heart and right between the lungs. The deer dropped in its tracks. The second deer taken with the



XP-100 was standing broadside at 121 yards very near dark. The magnification on the scope was turned down to a lower power because of the darkness, so precise shot placement was not possible. The shot was a little further back than I had hoped for, but the shot through the liver caused massive destruction and the deer went about 100 yards before dropping. As Dan Zelenka later said, "[It was] crude but effective."

Typically, one would not choose a 150 Gr. bullet for elk or large African plains game if a heavier bullet is available. In an earlier article on the 7 mm Remington Magnum (*LSA Quarterly* Vol. VIII No. 1 Sep-Dec 2013, "My Favorite Rifle: the 7mm Remington Magnum"), I discussed the Swift A-Frame 175 Gr. bullet. Although this bullet is an excellent choice for larger game when fired at rifle velocities, my concern is that the bonded core and the heavier jacket would not result in acceptable expansion when fired from a handgun. Luckily, there are several larger 7 mm bullets that may be perfect for shots on larger game out to around 200 yards from the XP-100. Nolsen makes two heavier versions of the Partition in 7 mm that have the same characteristics as its smaller 150 Gr. cousin: a 160 Gr. and a 175 Gr. Clearly the 175 Gr. is the preferred choice, but I was concerned that my lack of experience with this bullet on game when fired at handgun speeds might cost me a quality animal in Africa. Luckily, there is an acceptable method for comparing bullet performance: ballistic gel. Unfortunately, ballistic gel is expensive. The cost to make a single 6" X 6" X 24" block is in excess of \$50, and I would need several to do adequate comparison testing. So, I fell back on an old standard that has absolutely nothing to do with shooting bullets through live animals, but would allow me to compare penetration between bullets that I know work well on animals and those for which I have no data: wet newspaper.

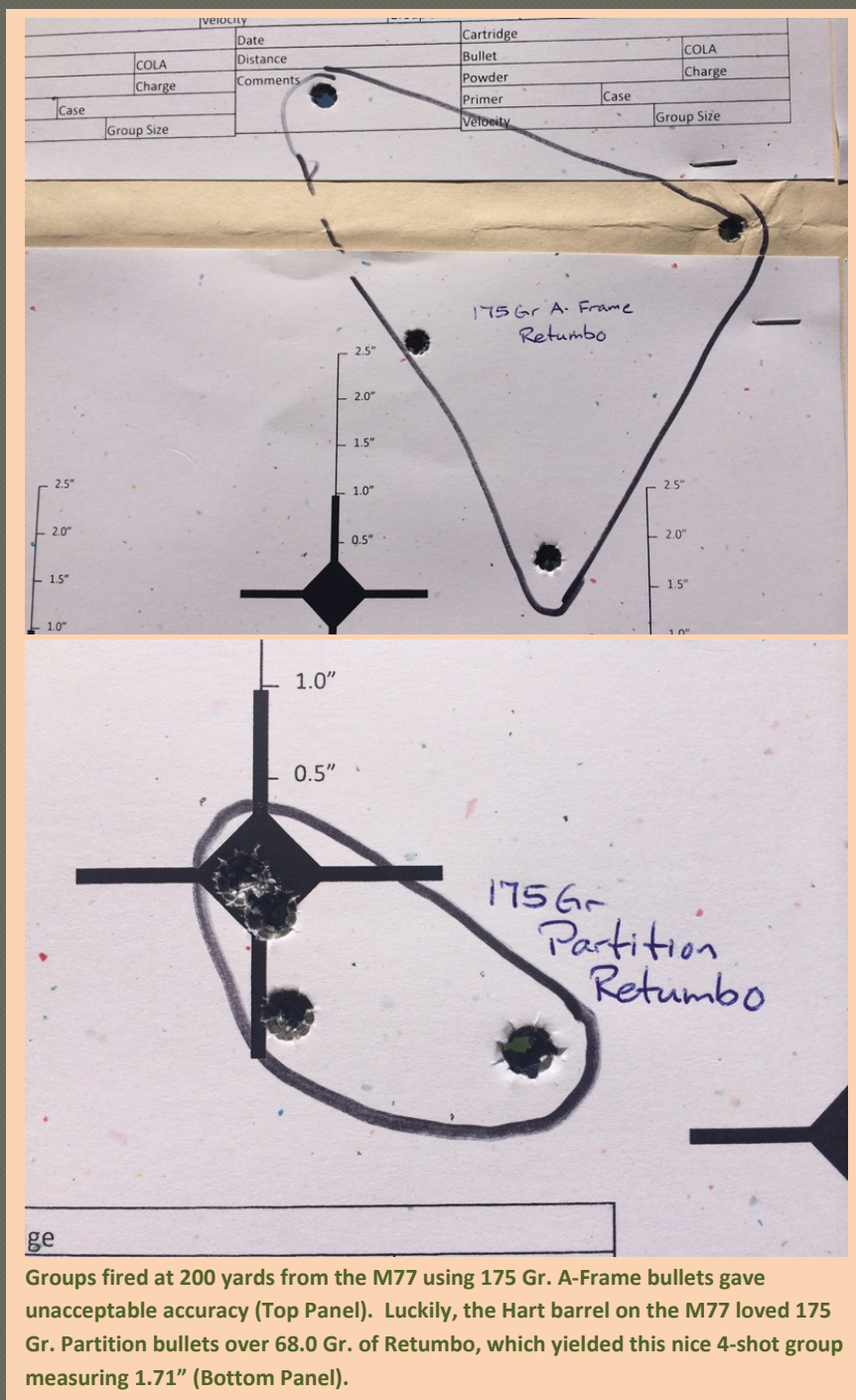
I decided to compare the 160 Gr. Partition fired from the XP-100 at pistol velocities to the heavier 175 Gr. Partition fired from my Ruger M77 in 7mm Remington Magnum at rifle velocities. Ultimately, this is the combination of firearms and loads I ended up taking to Africa. In the .284 Winchester, 54.0 Gr. Of Reloader 19 yielded $2,478 \pm 8$ FPS when loaded in Norma head stamped brass, and $2,556 \pm 18$ FPS when loaded in W-W head stamped brass. As can be seen in the figure, when fired at 200 yards from the XP-100 using a solid rest, the rounds impacted the target in a reasonably tight group that is more than adequate for hunting large African plains game. Firing 3 rounds out of W-W brass and 3 rounds from Norma brass, the combined 6-shot group measured 3.11" (1.6 MOA).



The previous work I had done using 175 Gr. A-Frame bullets had shown potential when fired at 100 yards, but when I began testing at 200 yards, the groups opened up dramatically to unacceptable levels. The 5.68" 4-shot group is typical. Although I could have certainly worked at getting group sizes to close up, the Nosler 175 Gr. Partition shot well out of my barrel from the start. The 175 Gr. Partition fired from the Ruger M77 yielded a muzzle velocity of $2,886 \pm 10$ FPS when loaded over 68.0 Gr. Hogdon Retumbo, and 4-shot groups measured well within 1 MOA. The group shown was 1.71". When fired into soaking wet newspaper tied into a very tight bundle, both the 160 Gr. Partition fired from the XP-100 and the 175 Gr. Partition fired from the M77 easily passed through 13 inches and exited out of the back when the target was 200 yards downrange (to view a short YouTube video of the experiment, visit <http://youtu.be/fKBP35rwVJs>). At 200 yards, the 160 Gr. bullet fired from the XP-100 had

slowed to 2,124 FPS and hit the target with 1,602 ft-lbs of energy. In comparison, the 175 Gr. bullet fired from the M77 had slowed to 2,529 FPS and hit the target with 2,486 ft-lbs of energy.

After a 15 ½ hour flight from Atlanta to Johannesburg, R.S.A., I was dismayed to see that my large duffel bag containing my clothes, binoculars, daypack, and most importantly, my ammunition in a locked case



Groups fired at 200 yards from the M77 using 175 Gr. A-Frame bullets gave unacceptable accuracy (Top Panel). Luckily, the Hart barrel on the M77 loved 175 Gr. Partition bullets over 68.0 Gr. of Retumbo, which yielded this nice 4-shot group measuring 1.71" (Bottom Panel).

was not on the baggage carousel. However, there was a bag that looked strikingly like my bag going around and around without a taker. Oh, my. Had someone taken my bag? To make a long and painful story shorter, another careless hunter from Flint, MI who was on my flight had indeed grabbed my bag instead of his bag, and did not realize his mistake until he reached his camp, a full 4 hours' drive from my camp. Although I had my firearms, I had no ammunition, and one cannot simply pick up .284 Winchester ammunition on a whim. The outstanding Outfitter, Stef Swanepoel and his staff at Numzaan Safaris (<http://numzaan.com/>) sprang into action, and had my bag retrieved and returned to me in only two short days! The bottom line is that I ended up using the rifle to take several animals that I would have taken with my pistol had I been able to do so.

The first day of the hunt had me stalking Red Hartebeest through the *bosveld* (bush land). Although it is winter in South Africa and quite cold in the mornings (between 35-40°F), the lack of cloud cover allows the temperature to quickly rise to the high-80s. When I started my stalk I was cold, but I was shedding clothes as we walked through the tangle of thorny scrubs and small trees, and was in shirt sleeves when I finally got a shot on a nice bull at about 200 yards. The bullet entered his shoulder at an extreme angle and exited far back on the off side (which can be seen in the accompanying photograph). This was one of only two animals that required a *coup de grâce* shot, as all of the other animals were taken with a single, well-placed shot.

The small bodied impala was one of the animals I had planned to take with my pistol; however, I happened upon a nice herd of about 200 impala as I was

looking for Cape Eland. Because the Cape Eland weighs just under a ton, I was armed with my rifle when the nice impala ram presented me with a 100 yard broadside shot. Needless to say, he dropped in his tracks. To me it was just a routine and very easy shot, but my Tswana tracker was thoroughly impressed and thankful that he did not have to track the impala after the shot.



Red Hartebeest



Southern Impala

The second day of the hunt found me on the banks of the Crocodile River (*Krokodilrivier*) hunting Southern Greater Kudu with my rifle. We spotted a small herd and were paralleling it when a magnificent bull, which had been lying down and unseen, stood up. Most kudu bull have wide placed horns, but this guy stood out for having a very narrow set of horns. Beauty, as it goes, is in the eye of the beholder. I have always preferred the look of a whitetail deer with narrow tall antlers over one with wide-set antlers, so this bull immediately called to me. I could see he was the dominate bull in the herd, as several of the other smaller bulls had similar narrow-set horns; clearly, he was their father. Time did not permit the PH or tracker to get the shooting sticks set up in front of me, so I quickly fell to the kneeling position, and squeezed off a shot that was perfectly placed through his heart. He ran about 20 yards and fell over dead. I was later to find out that the trackers were beginning to talk about me in *Setswana*. Apparently one-shot kills are not the norm, and especially one-shot kills without the use of sticks.

Next on the agenda was Common Waterbuck, but as we were looking for a solitary bull, I happened upon a magnificent Burchell's zebra stallion. The zebra have overpopulated this area, and the locals were culling zebra and they had asked me to take one if the opportunity presented itself.



Southern Greater Kudu



Common Waterbuck



Burchell's Zebra

Again, this is an animal I would have taken with my pistol had I had the ammunition, but instead he fell to a 50 yard heart shot and walked about 10 feet before dying.

Because the short winter day was quickly coming to an end, we left the zebra for the skinners to retrieve and quickly made our way to an area where a very nice waterbuck had been seen by another hunting party the day before. The area was heavily “infested” with a large herd of very dangerous Cape Buffalo, so hunting the elusive waterbuck close to sunset was exhilarating. For almost 2 hours I pursued the bull without the opportunity to get a shot. Finally, just before last light, the bull presented me with an extreme quartering away shot. In the fading light, I placed the crosshairs on the bull’s shoulder (I thought) at just over 250 yards, and squeezed off a shot. The bull turned and ran. I knew I had a good hit, but the thought of tracking a wounded animal through heavy brush at night with buffalo in the area was a little more fun than I wanted at that moment. Luckily, I had made a good shot and the bull ran about 30 yards and died. The shot had entered the rear leg, passed through the vitals, and exited on the offside front shoulder. The resulting photographs are some of the best taken on my adventure.

The following day I again hunted for Cape Eland. We had discovered a small herd of bachelor bulls, and I concentrated on the one bull with huge tracks. Lawrence, my Zimbabwean Tswana tracker, Conrad, my PH, and I spent the entire morning pursuing them. Shortly after noon, it became too hot to continue, so we switched to sitting over a water hole. I was hunting on the edge of the very large Atherstone Nature Preserve. The Atherstone Nature Reserve is a 23,500 hectare (58,000 acre) reserve consisting of vast savannah plains with *bosveld* and Kalahari grasslands eco-systems. The preserve is home to elephants and black rhinoceros, which are targeted by poachers. To limit poaching opportunities, the wildlife officers of Atherstone have strategically moved all watering holes away from the edges of the preserve, to places deep within the preserve. Therefore, animals such as



Warthog



Blesbok

warthog, which are not confined by the electric fences designed to keep the elephants and rhinoceros inside the preserve and poachers out of the preserve, come off of the preserve to drink. The African warthog is not like our domestic swine, which prefer to be active at night. Instead, the warthog is at its most active between 10 AM and 2 PM. However, my PH told me that the biggest warthogs will drink later in the day, just before dark. As we were watching the water hole, an extremely big boar arrived with two sows. I placed a shot with my pistol right through his lungs at about 100 yards. He picked up his head and tail, and trotted back toward me trying to figure out what had just happened. He did not appear to be particularly concerned, but just continued to walk toward me. He died less than 5 yards from me. That, my friends, is one tough critter. The skimmers told me it was the best warthog they had seen in 5 years.

After spending the entire day before hunting Cape Eland, we decided that a change of scenery was in order, and started the morning on the trail of Nyala. As we were searching for nyala, we came across a large herd of blesbok containing several nice rams. The rams always seemed to be surrounded by ewes, and shot placement was difficult without risking a pass-through bullet striking a ewe behind the intended target. After trailing the herd for several hours on foot, I finally got a clear shot on one of the nicer rams, dropping him in his tracks with a bullet through both front shoulders.

As with the day before when the sun reached its apex, my PH and I sat over a different water hole with my pistol in tow. Several very large sable bulls came to the hole to drink, and I had two magnificent bulls walk less than 5 yards from me before they winded me. They are truly one of the most beautiful antelopes in Africa, but the trophy fees associated with harvesting one of these beast falls well out of this hunter's budget. This watering hole proved to be one of the most entertaining spots on this hunt. On

this day, while trying hard not to fall asleep following lunch, I was thrilled for the distraction of a Slender Mongoose (*Galerella sanguinea*) who had come to drink. After it drank, it sat on the edge of the water hole looking around. In my mind I thought, "Now, all we need is a cobra." Imagine my elation and delight when a Mozambique spitting cobra (*Naja mossambica*) suddenly appeared at the water's edge. The mongoose spotted the cobra and ran toward it with the expected rise and flaring of the cobra's throat. I was trying desperately to film the interaction with my iPhone through the binoculars, but gave up in short order to watch the show. My PH and I were enthralled! The mongoose eventually worked its way to within a couple of feet of the cobra, and dug up its nest devouring what appeared to be baby cobra. Wow. Go mongoose! At this same watering hole the very next day, a professional film crew was filming a sable hunt when a female



Kalahari Gemsbok

leopard came into drink. The crew caught this cat in stunning digital HD at just a few yards, and played it for us back at camp later that evening. She was seen several times by several people in camp in that area, and clearly is raising cubs nearby.

Oh, and by the way, on the day I saw the mongoose-cobra interaction, I took a very nice Kalahari gemsbok as it drank. The shot was little further back than I had hoped, and we had to employ the services of two Tswana trackers, Lawrence and Never (yes, Never is his actual birth certificate name).

Conrad told me that they typically do not allow hunters to make long shots on wildebeest, as they are very tough animals that can absorb a lot of lead. We had been concentrating our hunting to the *bosveld*, but we had failed to spot any really nice Blue Wildebeest bulls, as they prefer the Kalahari grassland environment. Conrad decided that he had seen enough really good shots by me to allow me to hunt wildebeest on the open grasslands. As we drove through the area, we saw several enormous herds of wildebeest, many with large bulls. These animals never



Blue Wildebeest

seem to stop moving, and a long shot at a moving target is never a good idea. After several hours of searching, we finally spotted a good bull on the edge of neighboring *bosveld*. The shot was not difficult, but it was a low percentage shot with him facing me. Conrad urged me to take the shot, and against my better judgment, I did just that, aiming for his left front shoulder. I missed the shoulder by just an inch or so, but this caused Lawrence to go to work. We tracked him through the bush for several kilometers until he returned to the open grassland. Great. Luckily, the apprentice PH, 17 year old Michael Walker from Texas had stayed with the truck and had seen the wildebeest burst from the bush and run about 1,000 yards into the center of the grassland before stopping. He radioed us that it did not look wounded, but that it was the only animal that had come from the bush. We had tracked the wounded wildebeest to that very spot, so it seemed highly likely that the wounded wildebeest and the one standing in the middle of the grassland alone were one in the same. Very, very carefully, I stalked to within 325 yards of him, with Michael using a rangefinder to give me exact readings. The wildebeest watched our movement, and I was afraid that he was going to bolt at any moment. Conrad asked me if I was comfortable with the shot. I looked through my scope, set on 14X, and watched the mirage run left to right with about a 10 MPH wind. "Piece of cake," I said, as I slid the tang safety on the Ruger M77 to "Fire." I held about 6 inches into the wind, calculating that a 10 MPH wind would cause about 2 minutes of angle (MOA) drift. With the Leupold CDS (custom dial system) elevation knob set to 320 yards, I squeezed the trigger and as the rifle recoiled, I listened for the telltale "smack" of the bullet. The wildebeest responded about two seconds after the shot by running in

a tight circle for 10 seconds, and then bolting away from me running on three legs. We watched him run about 500 yards and then lie down. The shot was a perfect center shoulder hit, and the bullet passed through to the opposite shoulder and remained just inside the skin. It took TWO more *coup de grâce* shots to finally kill this magnificent animal. It is hard to imagine taking four 175 grain Partition bullets to kill a single animal, but, one has to be tough to live on the open plains of Africa.

Now, it was time to get really serious if I was going to take a Cape Eland in the three days left to me on this safari. Based on my experience the day before on the wildebeest, I had decided that I was going to use my PH's CZ 602 in .375 H&H Magnum to take the 1,200-pound eland. Besides, how could I go all the way to Africa and not use the ultimate African hunting round? Before sunrise the next day, Conrad, Lawrence and I were walking the dirt roads looking for a place where a herd of eland had crossed the night before. We quickly found the bachelor herd we had been stalking several days before, and entered the veld after them. Quite literally, Lawrence tracked the herd all day, and although I saw the bulls on three different occasions that day, no shots were fired. We walked at about 10 KM through nasty thorny bush through the hottest part of the day. The next morning, we took up where we had left off the day before, and got back on the herd. After about an hour,

I finally got a broadside shot on a bull. Conrad could not see the bull from his position, but Lawrence was excitedly whispering in my ear, "Take him! Take him! TAKE HIM!" The shot was made from my knee once again, as there was simply no time to set up the shooting sticks. On the shot, he whirled and ran away through the bush and I was not able to put a second round into him. There was good blood, and it appeared to be bright red and from the lungs. Lawrence tracked him all day, and we walked 13 KM looking for him until the trail went cold and dry. Lawrence has mad skills, but not even this experienced Tswana tribesman could find him. That evening at the basecamp as we were discussing our next day's search strategy, one of the apprentice PHs, Daniel (also from Texas) suggested we hire a helicopter. A quick radio call to Thabazimbi had a chopper reserved for the next



Cape Eland

morning. As the sun rose on another beautiful, cold winter morning, the chopper was landing a few yards from camp in an open field. The pilot jumped out, took the doors off the front left and rear right, told me to sit behind him in the right rear seat, placed the lap belt across me and the shoulder belt behind me, and he handed me the .375 H&H Magnum barrel down and between my knees. There was no briefing. I guess he figured if I shot the chopper out of the sky it was my butt auguring into the ground with his. Conrad sat in the front left seat next to the pilot.

The chopper flew over Atherstone Nature Preserve and I spent the short flight to the hunting area trying to eye elephants and not freeze to death in the rushing cold morning air. To say the least, the search was exhilarating. Each time we saw an eland, the pilot would bank over sharply in a high G-force maneuver and we would fly just feet above the shrubs and trees looking for a wound on the left side of the animal. After about 20 minutes of flying search patterns and eyeing running eland, I heard Conrad say over the radio, "There is a bull and he is down." I must say I've never been so happy to see a dead animal in my life. I was simultaneously relieved and disappointed that I was not going to have to shoot from the helicopter, but I was overwhelmingly happy that the bull was not walking around wounded. As the saying goes, one has never hunted if one has not wounded an animal. It may be a sad reality of hunting, but I don't have to like it! The pilot guided the trackers and a volunteer crew from the camp to the spot, and I was elated to see that the animal was in great shape. He had apparently died the day before, and the meat and hide were in fine shape (I had him for breakfast on the day I departed for the States). We had found him before the hyenas and jackals found him! My shot had been a high lung shot, and the 300 Gr. .375 caliber Barnes TSX failed to open as promised by the manufacturer.

Of the ten animals that I harvested on this safari, nine are eligible for the Safari Club International (SCI) record book (there is no category for zebra). All nine of my animals qualified for the SCI record book! My experiences on this trip add additional support to my absolute faith in the Nosler Partition bullet. This fine bullet remains my number one go-to projectile when hunting anything other than predators or dangerous game where a solid bullet is prescribed.



The Tale of Three Bullets: (from left to right) the 160 Gr. Nosler Partition fired from the XP-100 and recovered from the off-side of the Kalahari Gemsbok and the 175 Gr. Nosler Partition fired from the M77 and recovered from the off-shoulder of the Blue Wildebeest both performed exactly as advertised. However, the 300 Gr. Barnes TSX fired from the PH's .375 H&H Magnum has barely been deformed and did not expand, essentially acting as a solid bullet.

Traveling on Safari with Firearms

The South Africa government has quite a different view of handguns as compared to the US. Before I was allowed to bring the XP-100 into the country for use on my safari, I first had to write a motivation letter. Given that I had never written, much less read such a thing, I was a bit perplexed on how to go about doing this. However, a few short minutes on the internet brought me to the website of the Professional Hunters' Association of South African (PHASA). This website provided excellent insight into what the South African government wanted to see before they would allow me to bring my pistol into the country. After all was said and done, the motivation letter was a full nine pages long, and included information about the pistol, the cartridge, my specific load and bullet choice, photocopies of my membership cards to clubs and organizations (Safari Club International, Handgun Hunters International, the NRA, the LSA, Palo Alto Rifle & Pistol Club, South Louisiana High Power Club, my Master Classification card for NRA High Power Rifle to name a few). Also, I had to enclose photocopies of me with game taken with handguns, proving my prowess with same. I found a great picture of a very thin, dark haired, and highly bearded me from around 1985 or so holding a Contender and a quite dead groundhog I shot in the mountains of East Tennessee.

After passing through customs where a pair of smiling officials waved me right through, I found my way into the unsecured portion of the airport where a Professional Hunter (PH) from Numzaan Safaris and the greeting agent I had hired happily greeted me and escorted me to the airport police station to claim my gun case. The greeting agent had secured a gun permit from the RSA government in advance. Although this is not required, and the RSA police will issue you one when you arrive, it will save you a lot of time to have one in advance. The greeting agent handed me my permit, I unlocked the case for the police to compare the serial numbers on the firearms to those provided by me, and I was done. The policeman even commented on how nice my pistol was. The entire process took less than 5 minutes to complete, and I was out the door and headed to the Limpopo Province 3 hours north of Jo-burg.

Essentials: make sure your rifle is unloaded and in a locked, airline approved case. The TSA does not want you to use TSA-approved locks for gun cases, and they will have you standby when they x-ray your case prior to accepting it. If they want to open it, you are there with the keys to unlock the case. Do not buy a cheap case; it will be man handled and you want the most case you can afford protecting your treasure within. Although the TSA allows one to pack ammunition in the same case as your firearm, most foreign countries do not allow this practice. Purchase a good quality deep pistol case, remove the foam, and place your ammunition inside the case. Put a strong lock on the case and place this case inside your checked luggage with your clothes, knives, and other essentials.

CMP Vintage Sniper

By Danny Hudson



Original USMC M1903A1 Sniper Photo courtesy Tom Jackson

Vintage Sniper is Born

The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) has continued their excellent record of developing match applications for vintage rifles with the inauguration of the CMP Vintage Sniper Match in 2010. The course of fire was developed to allow the use of historic sniper platforms in a competitive scenario, utilizing rifles from all nations. The match allows a two man team consisting of a spotter and a shooter, firing ten shots for record from a sandbag rest at 300 and 600 yards. Firing is completed on the standard SR high power targets for those distances, with the same scoring methods. CMP rules allow for reasonable non-military modifications to rifles, to include modern reproduction optics and barrels. As with most CMP matches, vintage sniper has developed a strong following with ever increasing levels of competition. For more information, visit the CMP website at: www.odcmp.com.

Rifle Build

Earlier this year, I decided to build a modern reproduction of the USMC M1903A1/1941 sniper rifle utilizing a 924K M1903 receiver and a new Criterion barrel topped with the new Malcom Hi Lux reproduction of the Unertl 8X Marine Sniper scope. While I have the tools and ability to build up a standard 1903 rifle, I was a bit hesitant to tackle mounting the required scope blocks. This mounting is critical, and requires a spacing of 7.20 inches between mount centers to obtain ¼ minute clicks from the external micrometer adjustments on the Unertl reproduction scope. I decided to give the CMP Custom

Shop a call and see what they could do for me, and after a few minutes on the phone with Deshay and John, my rifle was headed their way for a complete build. I opted for an extra accuracy treatment of truing the receiver and bolt face, and having the shop stock the rifle for me, keeping all accuracy adjustments within the match rules. I utilized scope mounts for the Unertl from Steve Earle (<http://www.steveearleproducts.com/scopeblocks.html>). Steve's work is second to none, and I opted for the standard 1903 mounts. That was a slight mistake on my part in hindsight, as I should have gotten the .100" higher version due to scope clearance issues. The CMP had my rifle back in 30 days. For those of you who have ever dealt with gunsmithing, this is an incredible turnaround time. I have to say, the overall work appearance was outstanding. But as Colonel Whelen said, "Only accurate rifles are interesting". The proof would be on the range.

Break in and Load Development

I started out with a pretty standard barrel break in, shoot 1 clean, shoot 2 clean, etc. until I had reached 70 rounds. (NOTE: There are those who would argue that Criterion barrels are hand lapped and require no real break in procedures, but I have always religiously broken in barrels slowly and have had nothing but positive results.) I did not concentrate on accuracy during break in, just getting rounds through the bore. After break in, I started out with a pretty standard military 30/06 load of 48gr. of IMR 4895, 150gr Hornady FMJ, CCI 34 primer, with standard OAL. This load stayed in the 10 ring on a 200 yard SR target, but really didn't show promise, although the round count was still low on the rifle at the time. My second load was 47gr of IMR 4895, 155 Siera HPBT Palma, CCI 34 primer, 3.285 OAL (.01 off the lands). This load came in at about 1.5 minute of angle (MOA), staying consistently in the X ring at 200 yards, but I knew that a heavier bullet would be better at the 600 yard portion of the vintage sniper course, so I tinkered with 175 grain Sierra Matchkings, finally settling in with 46.5gr of IMR 4895, CCI 34 primer, and 3.200 OAL. This came in at around 1 MOA at 300yd and about 1.25 average at 600 yards. I have stuck with this load, but after Camp Perry I plan to try out some IMR 4064 and maybe some Reloder 17 just to experiment. (As a side note, this load happens to mirror the old M72 National Match load from 1965.)

The overall synopsis of this is that I was able to quickly achieve 1 MOA accuracy from a 100 year old, non-bedded, steel and wood, shoulder thumping beast and have yet to totally ring it out. Kudos to the CMP Custom Shop, and to the Springfield Arsenal!!



Scope Notes

For those of you unfamiliar with the Malcom Hi Lux USMC scope, it is manufactured in China, and has a sketchy reputation for overall mechanical quality. So much so, that Creedmoor Sports offers an “accurized” version that has had the threads cleaned up and other improvements. My scope was without benefit of these little tweaks, so I had to do that myself. Note that the screws on this scope are not case hardened, and will deform easily. Be careful!

The CMP does not allow the return to battery spring to be mounted on the scope since the USMC did not utilize the spring. To remove the spring, you must remove the eyepiece, adjusting mount, and crosshair insert. When you are removing this spring, be VERY careful when removing the crosshair band insert. You can very easily bend or break the wires. Again, the small screws are very soft and damage easily. Use great care, and a proper fitting screw driver.

Despite the small piccadillos on the scope, the glass is good, and the adjustments on mine were accurate and repeatable, even though the “clicks” are a bit mushy. Overall, it is an adequate scope that can get the job done after some TLC.

Vintage Tactical Anyone?

While the CMP Vintage Sniper match is a challenging venue, it is still a known distance, paper punching application. Not really harkening back to the realities of sniping in the trenches at Ypres during WW1, or the hedgerows of Normandy and rubble of Stalingrad during WWII. I recently had the pleasure of participating in a “modified” vintage sniper course of fire at the Henry County Gun Club in Puryear, Tennessee. The club has a 600 yard range, with tactical steel targets/berms at 100-630yards. During the matches, the match director places several swinging steel 8 inch targets at various unknown distances, and the match is fired with scenarios similar to a tactical match, but utilizing 1903A4s, USMC 1903A1s, M1Ds, M1Cs, Mauser M41 snipers, and Moisin Nagant M91/30 PU snipers. I witnessed one shot hits on a 8” plate at 630 yards from almost all these old rifles. The scenarios were all fired prone from a bag rest similar to the CMP rules, but with the added realism of the unknown distance and timed fire. I found it to be pretty dang enjoyable and challenging.

Get out there and shoot!

Bottom line; shooting vintage rifles is enjoyable. Shooting vintage sniper rifles is EXTREMELY enjoyable. As with most of the CMP Games type matches, it doesn’t take an extreme amount of money to get involved and be competitive. Many companies are selling reproduction vintage sniper rifles for reasonable amounts, and most are immediately available. True historic vintage snipers like an original 1903A4, USMC M1903A1 Sniper, or some of the German snipers can be a bit pricey. However, the Moisin Nagant M91/30 PU sniper rifles are very reasonable, and can be very accurate. One of the top scoring shooters at the “Vintage Tactical” match described above shot an original M91/30 with hand loads. So, just get out there and shoot!! It is a great time!

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