



# The Welcome Mat

The **Welcome Mat** is intended for relative newcomers to the muzzleloading hobbies, but even graybeards may find some useful information. This column will appear on an irregular basis, as appropriate questions and topics come up. See the Association pages in the magazine for all the ways to contact us with your questions and needs.

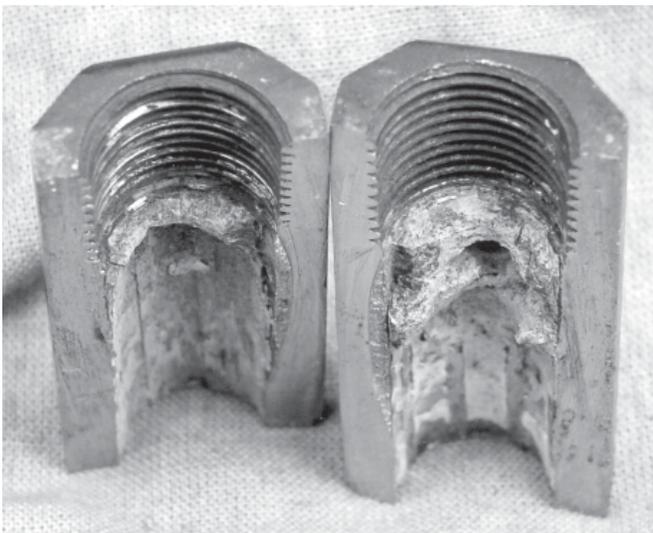
## Ravages of Neglect

by Roger Fisher

Have you ever wondered what is going on down there in the breech of your pet muzzleloader? Hopefully it is not similar to the following example of neglect!

This barrel was pulled and an attempt was made to install one of the newfangled fiber optic rear sights. This involved a screw set into the top barrel flat. Long story short, the drilled hole ended up too deep, so a new barrel was next in line.

The gunsmith involved decided to pull the breech plug and was surprised to see the barrel and plug threads were quite corroded. On closer examination, he could see that the plug had not been fully cranked against the bore shoulder. This allowed the moisture to migrate into the threads and cause some serious corrosion. The two threads next to the bore shoulder were badly corroded. The age of this barrel is not known; but the rusting was already well established.



The gunsmith noted that the breech was blocked solid with rock hard fouling that resulted when the rifleman failed to clean the breech area. Many folks assume that the cleaning, drying, and oiling of the bore completes the job; but that is only part of the required process. The fouling gets packed against the breech plug face and if not cleaned builds up into a rock hard block like you see here.



The extra ten minutes of soaking the breech area with water or other solvent, then scraping/wiping the breech plug face would prevent the problem altogether.



The gunsmith then used a punch to knock out the center part of the fouling rock. This writer was given the barrel to open up and examine the blocked bore. We can only imagine the frustration the rifleman had with repeated misfires and his getting only a temporary fix by the frequent use of his vent pick. We wonder if he did not notice that his ramrod was bottoming out higher and higher in the bore. He apparently did not mark the rod at the loaded level. So, another lesson learned, keep that bore clean folks, all the way to the bottom.

**MB**