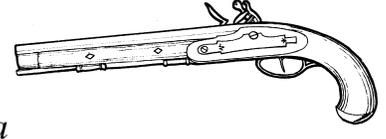


# Pistol Shots II



by Michael Luma

Lots of news from the efforts of the work party on the Pistol Range, where sixteen good fellows and ladies came to work, and what a great job they did. Several participants arrived Thursday and worked through Saturday.

Vern McKinley and Dick Bauer always check the range a few weeks ahead of the work weekend and Vern emails a detailed list of work and materials needed. Chuck Sedgwick and Dennis Mitchell spent two long days raking leaves into the road for a burn-off. Others busily replaced target frames that were soon followed by the red white and blue painters. It was good to see Shirley Murphy with us and busy on the line also.

During the weekend the walkway behind the firing line was cleared in preparation for new concrete the full length of the line. New numbers on the firing positions and a variety of other tasks finally brought the work list to completion.

The grill was hot with plenty of food, and an enjoyable time had by all in spite of all that work.

I'll recognize these good folks with a list as I couldn't keep up with who was doing what. Larry and Linda Hough, Marty and Shirley Murphy, Chuck Sedgwick, Dennis Mitchell, Jerry Middendorf, Dick Bauer, John Uithol, Lou and Lynn Hesel, Howard Young, Russ Combs, Vern McKinley, and Mike and Birdy Luma. Thank you all!

May 17 was the Wiener World Championship and if you haven't attended one of these yet you are missing out. Thirty-two competitors, and although places were recognized, everybody went home with an equal and generous amount of meat. I'll run through the first seven places, the 7th being a young man who is holding his own on the pistol line, Lou Hesel, Russ Combs, Jim Jaskoviak, Mingo, Doug Galbraith, and Nick Galbraith. Hot dogs were grilled for lunch, naturally, and Linda Hough provided pies.

Another project that has moved the wheels is target frames that will last longer than wood. We are in the early



stages of this, and are considering plastic or steel.

## Some Pistol Thoughts

Let's squeeze in a few thoughts about shooting the flintlock pistol. They really are fun to shoot, but can intimidate some competitors. There's no reason to fear the flinter, but you need to understand its nuances and be prepared ahead of time. Flintlock shooting needs an attentive mind before beginning the day, but first, pick the right day. Avoid the hottest muggy days if possible. Light winds, moderate temperatures, and consistent light are all pluses. With distracting variables minimized we could say that you need to dedicate your full attention to the flintlock, however; that should be our purpose anytime we step to the line with a pistol. So let's get right into the meat of the issue; the ability to shoot a flintlock well is in the knowledge of that lock. After all, if we compare a flintlock and a percussion pistol they should be identical in all ways except the lock. Are your two single shots equal to one another? Mine are, and this is an area that should not be overlooked.

Some, seeing the flinter as a difficult pistol to shoot, may give up on making the trigger, or sights as perfect as they can while shooting. If you

find yourself quitting as you shoot the flinter it's time you have a little talk – with yourself.

With those comments though, consider this. There is a factor with the flintlock that can cause problems and has nothing to do with your ability to shoot. It is in the *follow through*. It is considerably different than what you see with a percussion pistol. This is because the flinter is slightly slower than the percussion pistol, and because of the additional weight of the hammer and frizzen, and all the motion that occurs during ignition.

Spend more time shooting your flinter, concentrating on the minds recognition of that different follow through, and get comfortable with it. Although the follow through looks erratic with the flinter, you will discover that it is consistent from shot to shot, just different from what you see with your percussion gun. Don't let it spook you! Details, details!

Make your flinter as good as it can be. With that pistol in top notch shape evaluate your lock carefully. Is it a quality lock that you frequently see on the line and that others applaud, or is it a less popular model that is out of favor?

Of course I'm indicating use of a lock that may be on the more expensive side. There are exceptions, but for the most

# Flintlocks

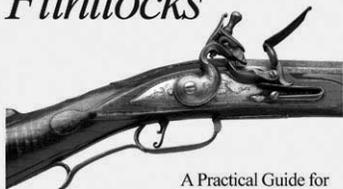
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part a good, reliable, match quality lock will get into your pocket a bit, but it is money well spent and will provide many years of enjoyment, making your flinter as special as any gun you own.

You need to understand your locks' mechanics and what it takes to give the most consistent ignition. With the lock out of the gun learn to hold it by both ends between the thumb and forefinger so that the sear is released with one thumb while keeping enough clearance with the other when the frizzen flies open. Now you can operate the lock using different flints and see how much and where those sparks are going.

Determine whether the flint should be bevel up or down in order to get the best "stroke" from the upper portion of the frizzen all the way to the bottom. Experiment with the leather, or lead, that you use to hold the flint. My leather has a hole punched in its center so that, when wrapped around the flint and installed in the jaws of the lock the flint can be very close to the jaw screw. That is a variable however, as sometimes the flint needs to be pulled forward to provide adequate length for that full stroke on the frizzen. You should also experiment with both English and French flint, while making small adjustments, until a nice shower of sparks goes directly into the pan. You will find one particular size flint that is best. It is surprising how many shooters don't do this and just assume that because it is a bought product that it will work correctly. A few evenings of careful work should give you the information you need to get the most out of your lock.

Spark color is important also, and sparks can range from dull reddish to a bright or whitish yellow which I think is best. However, if the color is a darker

red, but you are getting a good pan full of sparks, that too, will provide consistent ignition. Beware of one or two sparks; it will just not do the job consistently regardless of its color.

The color, and amount, of frizzen sparks are determined by the steel used and how it was hardened then tempered. My best results have come from heating the frizzen to just a bright red and quenching in oil. Next the part should be polished clean which I do on the face of the frizzen. Now, heat the part slowly, pulling the torch away frequently until it draws to a dull yellow. Others use a bright orange for hardening and brown/purple for the tempering. You will need to experiment.

Facing of the frizzen is another option but it takes careful work. Take care to fit the half sole to the curve of the frizzen and beware that you will change the curve somewhat during the heating process.

When competing in your most important matches you might consider setting out a half dozen handpicked square edged, sharp flints before you begin. This will allow you, during the match, to just pick up a flint for replacement if one would break or dull quickly. I used to change my flints every five shots during competition, but now only if I get mediocre ignition. If, however I get one noticeable lag I will change that flint immediately, saving it for practice at a later time.

So get to know that gun well, shoot it with the same confidence you have with your other guns and enjoy a new friend!

I would suggest a copy of *Flintlocks-A Practical Guide for their Use and Appreciation*, written by Eric A. Bye, for anyone who appreciates flintlocks and would like to further their study. It is well written, informative, and well detailed. **MB**

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