



# VIRGINIA GUN COLLECTORS ASSOC., INC.

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Est. 1983 (A Not-for-Profit Organization)

NRA Affiliate Number G8162

CMP Affiliate Number 026160



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## March 2024 VGCA Newsletter



### President's Comments

Fellow members—

I just found out that our first Gun Show at the new location in Dale City is sold out! Many thanks to our acting Show Manager Andrew Woodard for his hard work and diligence in achieving this goal. As our show will be on the first weekend in April, our next membership meeting will be at NRA on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

At that meeting, Andrew will provide more details and discuss the show floor plan, table assignments, and set-up arrangements. Since it is our first show at the VFW, I ask for your patience as we work through the new procedures. I do believe the new location will provide us with the financial stability that has been challenged in recent years by the pandemic and significant price increases at our previous venue. I look forward to greeting you at the show - and please bring a friend!

A last-minute change in presentations means that Director Matthew Gminski will review the Marlin Model 60. For many members, this handy little .22 rimfire was our introduction to plinking and/or hunting, so be prepared for a trip down memory lane! I hope to see you there!

And don't worry – member Troy Blackwood will give his originally scheduled presentation on the Beretta Model 1951 later in the year.

*Ed Costello*, VGCA President

# ★ February Presentation



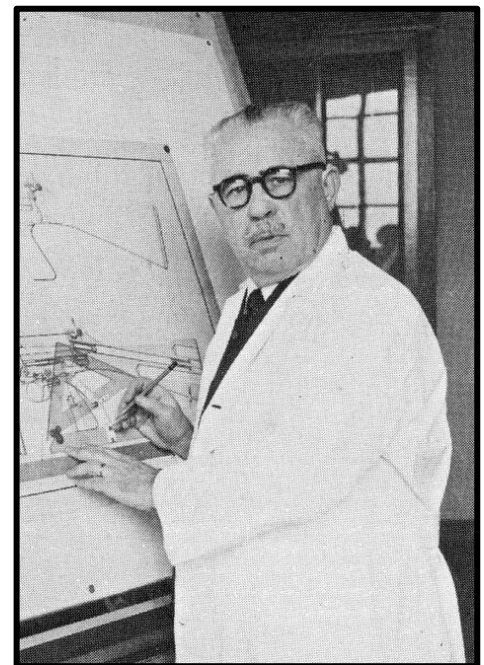
VGCA member Carlos Davila (*left*), who you may remember did a presentation last year on the Fabrique Nationale Hi-Power pistol, returned this year with a presentation on another FN product – this time the Fusil Semi Automatique (SAFN), aka the FN-49.

Development of the FN-49 began before WWII under the guidance of Dieuidonne Saive, who patented a new gas-operated, tilting bolt self-loading rifle design in 1936. Though broadly similar to a contemporary design by the Soviet engineer Tokarev (which resulted in the SVT-38), both designs appear to have developed independently. Prototypes were produced in 1937 and development continued slowly.

Escaping to England after the Germans captured Belgium, Saive (*right*) started working in the Ministry of Defence Armament Design Establishment and located near the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield. Prototypes were ordered from Enfield in 1943 and delivered in 1944. Designated EXP-1 and sometimes referred to as the Self-Loading Experimental Model, these prototypes were chambered in 7.92 Mauser (already in production in England for the Besa tank machine gun) as the rimmed .303 British round was less than suitable.

Saive returned to Liege, Belgium in September 1944 as soon as the FN factory was liberated by the allies. An order for 2,000 EXP-1s was canceled after the initial rifles produced by FN experienced problems using Belgian made ammunition and the war in Europe ended.

Development continued post-war. The functioning problems were resolved, the design was finalized, and by 1948 had the first pre-production rifles of the what would become the FN-49 were in hand. These semi-automatic rifles had a fixed 10-round magazine, bayonet lug, rear receiver peep sight, and could be made in variety of calibers. By March 1948, FN had its first order from Venezuela. Orders continued from several other countries through 1960 with the details shown below:



<u>Country</u>	<u>Caliber</u>	<u>Production Number</u>
Argentina	7.65x54	5,537
Belgium	7.62x63 (.30/06)	87,677
Belgian Congo	7.62x63 (.30/06)	2,795
Brazil	7.62x63 (.30/06)	11,002
Columbia	7.62x63 (.30/06)	1,001
Egypt	7.92x57	37,602
Indonesia	7.62x63 (.30/06)	16,100
Luxembourg	7.62x63 (.30/06)	6,306
Venezuela	7x57	8,012
Misc Trials Rifles	Various (including 7.5x54 & 6.5x55)	<u>81</u>

**TOTAL PRODUCTION**

**176,113**

Data from *The FN-49, The Last Elegant Old-World Military Rifle* by Wayne Johnson, 2019

Carlos went through the differences in the FN-49s produced for various countries, with an emphasis on the markings and unique features (which interestingly enough, in almost every case includes the buttplates).

The FN-49s purchased by Luxembourg were distinguished by “AL” on top of the receiver, representing “Armee Luxembourgeoise” (Luxembourg Army). Chambered in .30/06, they have a stamped sheet metal buttplate with a trap door for a cleaning kit.

The Egyptian contract FN-49s, the second largest number produced, featured a crown over an Arabic inscription for “Egyptian Army” on the receiver top. Chambered in 7.92x57 (8mm Mauser), these rifles had a brass disc on the right side of the buttstock and a brass buttplate with a trap door.

Venezuela was the first country to purchase the FN-49 and their rifles featured the Venezuelan coat of arms on the receiver. Chambered in 7x57 (7mm Mauser), the barrel had a muzzle brake and the stamped buttstock had horizontal six ribs to reduce slippage on the shoulder but no trap door.

All the FN-49s sold to Argentina went to the Argentine Navy. The receiver top features the Argentine coat of arms and the letters “ARA” for “Armada de la Republica Argentina” are stamped on both the left side of the receiver and on the stock. The stamped buttplate with a trap door is of a slightly different design than the Luxembourg contract. Originally chambered in 7.65x53 (7.65 Mauser), in 1967 Argentina placed an order with FN for a single example converted to 7.62x51 NATO. Between 1972 and 1974, Argentina locally converted their remaining FN-49s to 7.62 NATO and replaced the fixed magazine with a proprietary 20-round detachable mag.

In addition to covering these major FN-49s variants, Carlos also provided a detailed look at several different sniper models.

This was another superb presentation by our resident FN expert. The next time you see him, please be sure thank Carlos for sharing his knowledge with the rest of us!



# MARCH LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

*By Al Reid, VGCA Legislative Affairs*

At this time the Governor has vetoed two anti-gun Bills and sent a third back to the General Assembly with modifications.

The Bills vetoed were HB 46 and SB 47, both almost identical and relating to someone who has become a prohibited person having to transfer their firearms to someone who is over 21 and doesn't live at the same address.

HB498 relating to schools having to notify parents on laws pertaining to firearm access etc. was sent back with modifications.

Seven gun control bills were defeated in the General Assembly. Defeated may be too strong a word. In most cases the relevant committees never met to discuss or vote on these bills or were moved to next year. These bills will probably appear at a later time.

These bills were:

SB57, relating to the banning of CHP holders carrying a firearm on premises that serve alcohol (restaurant or club). This also included the car parking areas of said premises.

HB113, makes it illegal for anyone to possess, purchase, or transport a firearm if convicted of a second or subsequent drunk driving offense.

HB158, required a locking device and printed warning messages with all firearm sales.

HB270, creates a state sponsored "assault firearm" buy-up scheme and required a five day waiting period for all firearm sales.

HB319, removes courses conducted by the NRA and USCCA from the list of qualifying courses to get a CHP. This included instructors qualified/certified by these organizations.

SB522, essentially the same as HB319 with the additional requirement to fire 10rds of ammunition.

HB791, relates to misdemeanor offences for the carrying of a pneumatic gun on K-12 school property.

Currently, there are 34 further anti-gun Bills remaining on the Governor's desk which he has until 8 Apr to decide what he is going to do with them.

Currently the Democrat majority don't have the numbers to override the Governor's veto however, we should remember that several Republicans voted in favor of at least one if not numerous of these bills. Not enough to ensure an override but dangerous within itself. The General Assembly will meet on 17 April in an attempt to override the Governor's veto.

Many of you may be aware of a judge in Illinois finding that an illegal alien has a 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment right to possess a firearm. In making this decision the Judge researched the person's background and criminal history both in the US and their country of origin, and finding no criminal history in either country determined that they were of no criminal threat and therefore could possess a firearm. This was reportedly a one-off decision not a carte blanche for every illegal alien to use as a defense. You can bet though that this will be the case. As an aside to this, it is reported that the wording in the law/statute that relates to who can legally possess/purchase a firearm in the US is being amended. Where it currently refers to "citizen or resident" the wording is being changed to "person or individual". Effectively, if this is correct just about anyone can legally possess or purchase a firearm.

Many individuals and I daresay some Club members use Social Media to send images of their collection or recent purchases to members of their social network. It is no secret that some Government agencies are trolling these social media sites looking for all kinds of information. It has recently been reported that the FBI, using AI Facial Recognition Software developed by Amazon and Google, is looking at social media sites in order to develop a pseudo data base of gun owners. This is perfectly legal at this time as the poster voluntarily displays the images. If you are interested, follow the link below for more information.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sphs5Ku8jqg>



## ★ **Discontinuing the Paper Newsletter**

In early 2020, as a cost savings measure, the VGCA Executive Committee announced that we would be discontinuing the hard copy newsletter mailed to less than 40 of our members without an email account. Shortly after that decision we found ourselves in world-wide pandemic. In order to keep our lines of communication open to as many members as possible during those stressful times, especially when we were unable to meet in person, the Executive Committee voted to postpone that decision until after "things returned to normal."

While some may question if we will ever truly return to a pre-COVID "normal" - we have reached a point where we need to discontinue this costly service. The June 2024 Newsletter will be the last printed issue, after that, the electronic version of the newsletter transmitted via Constant Contact will be our only newsletter.

The differences between the two versions (printed and electronic) are striking. The printed version is typically 8-12 pages long in black-and-white. The electronic version is 30+ pages in color and includes many features that we simply don't have room to publish in the hard copy version, including book, show, and museum reviews, CMP Updates, and our monthly Show-n-Tell write ups.

If you currently receive our printed newsletter and would like start getting our electronic version, please provide George Dungan or Rob Becker with an email address and we ensure it is added to our Constant Contact database. Again please note – the last printed version of our newsletter will be the June 2024 edition.



# THERE IS STILL TIME! CONTACT GOVERNOR YOUNGKIN TO PROTECT YOUR CONSTITUTIONAL 2<sup>ND</sup> AMENDMENT RIGHTS

You can help protect your Constitutional rights and property by contacting Governor Glenn Youngkin to express your concerns and urging him to veto anti-gun laws when they come to his desk for signature.

You can contact the Governor's office by telephone, send an e-mail or write a hard copy letter. Hard copy letters have been said to have the most impact, but any way you express your concerns will help.

The telephone number of the Governor's office is (804) 786-2211.

To send an e-mail go to the following website and complete the pre-formatted form:  
<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/communicating-with-the-governors-office/>

Hard copy letters to the Governor should be addressed to:

*Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 1475  
Richmond, VA 23218*

Part of the VGCA's mission is to educate others about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, gun collecting and gun ownership. As such you, as individual citizens and constituents, can contact government officials to educate them and express your concerns.

Please identify yourself as a constituent and voter, and urge him to veto the bills in a polite, short, clear manner. Give your reasons in an as objective a manner as possible without using inflammatory language.



## ★ **Reminder – VGCA Spring Show**

Our next gun show will be held at the **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) General Lewis B (Chesty) Puller Post 1503 at 14631 Minnieville Road, Dale City, Virginia 22193**. The dates are April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Table rental is only \$55 for a 6 ft. table. If you would like to reserve a table, please contact Show Manager Andrew Woodard at [ajw055570@aol.com](mailto:ajw055570@aol.com) for an application.



# ★ Next Membership Meeting: Mar 28<sup>th</sup>

## Presentation: “The Marlin Model 60” by Matthew G.

### Location: NRA HQ Basement Auditorium

Our March VGCA Membership Meeting will be in the basement auditorium of the NRA Headquarters. The room will open at 6 p.m. with pizza arriving shortly thereafter and the meeting starting at 7 p.m. We hope you can make it!

## ★ Reminder – No Meeting in April

Due to our spring gun show, there will be no VGCA Membership Meeting in April. The next membership meeting after March 28<sup>th</sup> will be May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## ★ VGCA Tee Shirts

New VGCA Tee Shirts are now available for purchase. Tan colored and featuring the VGCA patch on the left breast, the VGCA logo on the right sleeve, and the Virginia state flag on the left, they are available in sizes from medium up to XXL. The cost is \$20 and they can be purchased at our membership meetings – but don’t wait – more than half have already been sold!

*Member Bryan Pelton (on left) was selling VGCA Tee Shirts at our November Gun Show while Bruce Buchner (on right) proudly wore his new shirt while manning the membership table.*



## ★ Upcoming Officer Elections in 2024



With our officer elections scheduled for May, it is not too early to consider running for president, vice president, secretary, or treasurer. If you would like to contribute more to the running of our organization, think about running for office. Contact Ed Costello, our nomination committee chairman, or one of current officers or directors if interested.

# WE WANT YOU!



# ★ February Meeting Notes

VGCA Vice President George Dungan called the February meeting to order at 7 p.m. Guests and prospective new members were introduced following the Pledge of Allegiance. There were approximately 50 members and guests in attendance and another 6 participated via webinar. George provided a quick review of the VGCA membership process, to include publishing the names of prospective members in the newsletter ad allowing the current members to review/vote to approve.

Acting Show Director Andrew Woodard announced that there were only 22 tables available for our spring Gun Show on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. UPDATE: As of 18 Mar 2024, all tables for the April show have been reserved. If you are still interested in having a sales or display table, please contact Andrew (details on page 6) and ask to be placed on the waiting list in case there is a last minute cancellation.

Vice President George Dungan covered some of the current gun control legislation advancing through Richmond. VGCA members were reminded to contact their representative and the governor to express their opposition to these measures.

George (*far right*) then honored long-time member Rick Nahas (*near right*), who recently stepped down as our Show Director. Rick has been organizing and executing VGCA gun shows over the last 21 years – literally dozens of shows! Over the years, he has dealt with cancellations due to weather and an expanded layout to enhance social distancing for both vendors and customers during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. When asked what is most proud of during his tenure as Show Director, Rick replied that it was our safety record - there was never an accidental/negligent discharge. George presented Rick with a commemorative plaque and the heartfelt thanks of the entire VGCA membership.



Lastly, the members were reminded everyone that we will have officer elections in May. Up for election are the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Current president Ed Costello is not running for re-election but instead is in charge of the nominating committee. Please contact him if you are interested in running for office.

## THANK YOU!



Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to give a presentation at a membership meeting this year – our calendar is now full! If you have a topic you would like to present at a future meeting (we will begin filling out our 2025 calendar in a couple of months), please contact any of the VGCA officers or directors.



# JOHN RIGBY & COMPANY;

## *Serious Guns for Serious Hunters*

*By Marc Gorelick*



*Rigby Rising Bite Double Rifle in .470 Nitro Express. Photo – John Rigby & Co.*

When one talks about big game and dangerous game rifles the name Rigby comes immediately to mind. Rigby rifles have been associated with the top echelon of sportsmen and professional hunters. Rigby owners include European and foreign royalty and nobility, statesmen, including at least one U.S. President, and numerous wealthy sportsmen. John Rigby & Co. has held Royal Warrants from King George IV, King Edward VII, King George V, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II. A list of owners of Rigby rifles reads like a “who’s who” of the top big game and professional hunters, such as Harry Selby, Jim Corbett (author of *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*), WDM “Karamojo” Bell, John A. Hunter, Philip Percival, Pete Pearson, and John “Pondoro” Taylor. Rigby has also been in the forefront of firearms and ammunition development with numerous patents to its credit.



John Rigby (*photo left*), the company founder, was born in 1758. He established his gunmaking business in Dublin, Ireland in 1775, making the company the oldest gunmaking firm in continuous existence in the English-speaking world. By 1781 John Rigby was making, under his own name, shotguns, rifles, muskets, spring guns, carbines, blunderbusses and pistols to clients' specifications and in a wide range of prices. Although he was an upstanding member of Dublin's merchant class, during the short-lived Irish Rebellion of 1798 British police and soldiers raided his establishment and seized all his, and his clients', weapons, supposedly to keep them out of the hands of rebels. Although nearly bankrupt, he rebuilt his business and by 1810 was once again one of the leading gunsmiths

in Dublin. In 1816 John Rigby took his elder son, William, into partnership with him and the company name was changed to 'John Rigby & Son.' After he died in 1818, his sons William and John took over the business and, in 1823, changed to company name to W&J Rigby. The period of 1820 to 1865 spanned flintlock, percussion, pinfire and needlefire ignition systems and marked the start of the modern metallic cartridge era. Rigby was a leader in barrel-making and rifling technology and was also known for its high quality dueling pistols. The firm also sold to the military. Rigby won awards and gained international recognition at the Great London Exhibition in 1851 and at the 1855 Paris Exhibition.



The third John Rigby, born in 1829 in Dublin, took over the firm in 1858 when William, his father, died. He opened a store in London in 1865 and closed his Dublin operations in 1897, joining the small circle of elite gunmakers who catered for London and Imperial society. John Rigby was a top target shooter and developed the Rigby Target Rifle. Using Rigby rifles he won numerous competitions including the individual prize at Wimbledon in 1864. The Irish Team, using Rigby rifles and with him as its captain, won the Elcho Shield match in 1873. He was Irish Champion three times. Shooting with the Irish team at Creedmore, the

team won the Bennett Cup with Rigby having the highest individual score. The Leech Cup match is held annually at Camp Perry, Ohio and is the oldest competition in US shooting sports.



*Photos above and below. W&J Rigby, Dublin percussion double barreled rifle, 12-bore, muzzleloader, made 1863. Barrels with sharp rifling made of horseshoe Damascus, inlaid silver thread at barrel root, rib with fixed sights and additional rear sight flaps that can be set up, marked 100, 150, 200 and 500 with silver thread as aiming aid, engraved with maker's address "W.J. Rigby - Dublin", double trigger, hammer-fired action with dolphin-shaped hammers, fire shields, hammer safety and patchbox. Photos courtesy of Johan Springers Erben, Vienna, Austria.*



Between the Crimean War and World War 1 every facet of firearms and ammunition underwent radical change and Rigby was deeply involved in introducing new firearms designs and cartridges for both the military and civilian markets. Rigby holds numerous patents that resulted in advances in firearms

development. For instance, between 1879 and 1910 Rigby built approximately 1,000 guns and rifles using the Rigby-Bissell patent action (Number 1141 of 1879). Rigby described the action as their 'vertical bolt' but it's better known as the Rising Bite and is renowned for its massive strength. Used only on Rigby's best-grade double rifles and shotguns, it is coveted by both shooters and collectors.

John Rigby's firearms expertise was well known and, in 1887, he was appointed Superintendent of the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield Lock where he oversaw the transition from single shot black powder rifles to smokeless powder bolt-action repeaters. Rigby and his staff resolved design and production problems for a new rifle and its cartridge: the .303-caliber Lee Enfield, which served as the principal battle rifle for the United Kingdom until 1957.

After leaving the Royal Small Arms Factory, John Rigby began negotiations with Mauser in Oberndorf, Germany and was awarded a 12-year exclusive distributorship to import and distribute all Mauser made rifles, actions, barreled actions and components into the United Kingdom and British Colonies. This started a collaboration with Mauser so that even today Rigby bolt action rifles are based on the Mauser 98 action. At this time Rigby also sold Mauser pistols, including the C96.

*Left – Sir Winston Churchill in September 1898 at the Battle of Omdurman in the Sudan was armed with a Rigby-Mauser C96 Broomhandle pistol. He was also armed with a Rigby-Mauser pistol when he was captured during the Boer War in South Africa.*



*Photos above and below. John Rigby & Co. London Safari Deluxe bolt action rifle, .375 H&H Magnum, made in 1999. Overall length 47", with a 26" long barrel. It has floral engraving, gold inlaid serial number and partially cloud-grained walnut stock. Photos courtesy of Joh. Springers Erben, Vienna, Austria.*



Rifle and cartridge development often go hand in hand and Rigby was a leader in both fields. In 1899, Rigby asked Mauser engineers to make a special action that would handle Rigby's popular rimmed .400/350 cartridge, which was used in its double barrel break action rifles. This is considered the birth of the magnum action which, in turn, provided the ideal platform for dangerous game cartridges like the .375 H&H, .416 Rigby and the .505 Gibbs. Rigby introduced numerous cartridges to complement its guns and meet the challenges posed by taking big and dangerous game. In 1908 Rigby developed the .350 No.2 as the successor of its well proven .400/.350 NE. The only difference was that the new cartridge featured a 225gr bullet at a higher velocity. The rimless .350 magnum had much the same ballistics but was chambered in Mauser bolt action magazine rifles. Following the success of Rigby's .350 caliber rifles on the magnum Mauser action, there was demand for a bigger and more powerful cartridge to be built on the same platform. In 1911 Rigby and Mauser collaborated to produce what is perhaps the Rigby's most famous cartridge and caliber, the .416 Rigby that could be used in the Rigby-Mauser bolt action rifles. This was the first magazine rifle that could perform on a par with the powerful Nitro-Express double rifles, for one-third to one-fifth of their prices. The first bolt action rifle in the new caliber was sold in 1912 and is listed in the Rigby ledgers as a Mauser sporting "Big Game" rifle. Between 1912 and the World War 2 an estimated 189 rifles were built to the original design. Today they are both rare and highly collectible.



Rigby's .416 cartridge was the basis for further ammunition development. At the time of his death in 1916, John Rigby was working with Kynoch to develop the Rigby .322 Nitro cartridge. Based on the .416 cartridge case, they intended to use a .330 diameter bullet weighing 250 grains. The velocity would probably have been about 3,000 feet per second, which would have produced more than 5,000 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle. In the 1950s, Roy Weatherby added a belt to the .416 Rigby cartridge case for a number of his proprietary rounds. And in the early 1980s, the American company Research Armament, worked with the Finnish ammunition maker Lapua, to develop the .338 Lapua Magnum. Using the .416 Rigby case and a 250 grain .338 diameter bullet it was almost identical to what John Rigby had conceived seven decades earlier. Today, the .338 Lapua is generally considered the ultimate cartridge for long range sniping. And in 2019 Rigby introduced the .416 Number 2, which is chambered in Rigby's Rising Bite double rifles. Using the .416 Rigby's original design, a rim was added to the cartridge to improve its extraction in double rifles, while maintaining the same cartridge ballistics.

*Rigby .416 No. 2. Photo – John Rigby & Co.*

John Rigby also developed Nitro Express cartridges. In 1898, working with the Curtis & Harvey Gunpowder Company, he introduced the first Rigby Nitro Express, the Rigby .450 NE. In order to get around the Indian colonial government's restrictions on the .450 NE, Rigby adopted the .470 Nitro Express as a "standard" heavy double-rifle load.



*Custom Rigby Double Rifle in .470 Nitro Express completed in 1913 for Lord Dunsany. Overall length is 45¾ inches with 28 inch long barrels. Photo courtesy of Joh. Springers Erben, Vienna, Austria.*

John Rigby's son, Theo was the last member of the Rigby family to own the business. After he died in 1951 the firm was sold to a succession of owners, including gun maker and big game hunter Paul Roberts who bought the company in 1984. Following an elephant hunting trip with a .416, Roberts developed and released the first new Rigby cartridge for over 80 years. Using the same case as the .416 Rigby but with a larger 480gr .458 caliber bullet, the .450 Rigby was born. The company was purchased by an American (who moved production to the U.S.) With another sale rifle production was moved back to London, with Paul Roberts of J. Roberts and Son contracted to produce rifles for Rigby.

In January 2013, John Rigby & Co was bought by the L&O Group (Lüke & Ortmeier Gruppe), a German holding company which also owns Blaser, JP Sauer & Sohn, SIG Sauer, and Mauser. Rigby resumed its close collaboration with Mauser. In 2014 Rigby moved into new purpose built premises in Pensbury Place, London SW8. A fully operational workshop and showroom are on site, all ledgers and memorabilia are housed within the same building, along with Rigby's museum of historic guns. In 2015 the firm's gunmakers completed the first Rigby Rising Bite double rifle (in .470 Nitro Express) to be made since the early 1930s. And in 2021 Rigby restored the Falling Block rifle to its core range of guns. The rifle is built around a true Farquharson action, mirroring the original patented John Farquharson design of 1875 is and a strong match to the original historic Rigby-made Farquharson rifles.

Rigby has a full-time in-house team of skilled craftsmen. Each of Rigby's gunsmiths has worked his way through the ranks from apprentice to master gunmaker and some members can boast more than 30 years' experience. Rigby also has a dedicated gunmaker apprenticeship program, the Rigby Academy, designed to preserve the traditional skills and methods used in making high-end firearms. Upon completing the



five-year program, successful graduates earn a Rigby gunmakers certificate and an opportunity to apply for a permanent position within the company. The course of study is designed to keep the traditional skills and methods of gun making alive to ensure the continuity of knowledge for future generations. Rigby in-house engravers include some of the best in the business, such as French artist Geoffrey Lignon, and Finnish artist Saija Koskialho, who both studied at the prestigious Liege School of Gunmaking in Belgium.

*Photo – John Rigby & Co.*

The manner of ordering a bespoke gun from John Rigby & Co. has not changed much over the years and is similar to the personalized service of other makers of custom best guns. The first contact with the company will set-up a meeting with Rigby's managing director. Part of the ordering process includes a

trip to West London Shooting School where the buyer goes for a fitting. After measuring the customer, checking eye dominance and watching the customer shoot a number of different targets, Rigby will provide a 'recipe' for the person's ideal stock dimensions in order to design the gun entirely around the shooter. Rigby is building this gun just for the patron and they want as much input as they can get. The more specific a customer can be in explaining his or her preferences and requirements, the closer to the perfect gun for him the company can get when building it.

The next step is barrel making. Once the barrels are made, they will be actioned, jointed and submitted for proof testing; producing a "barreled action"; the basis for every new gun. The stock will be carved to the customer's exact requirements, including grip-shape, a gold or silver oval for initials, checkering size and pattern, and so on. The choice of wood for the stock is something that would be decided in earlier discussions. Next, the engraver gets to work on the plain metal of the action and lock-plates. The buyer may want the traditional scroll, game scene or deep-relief carving as part of the order. The engraving choice normally falls into one of two categories: scroll or game scene. Whatever the customer decides the Rigby team will find the most appropriate engraver to carry out this specialist work. There are many different types and styles of scroll but the style that adorns the standard gun is based on the company's house pattern, which dates back to the last quarter of the 19th century. The finisher will then work his magic to create the finished product. His job is to ensure perfect fit, finish and function of every part of the gun. Then the factory manager and Rigby's managing director will assess the gun. After about 30 months, the gun is ready to be picked, but before it is released the customer takes another trip to the West London Shooting School, where an instructor coaches the customer through his targets, observe his shooting, and checks to make sure that the gun's fit and function is exactly as intended.

Rigby currently produces six main models of long guns, built on classic and time-tested designs. And Rigby guns are not cheap.

The **Falling Block Rifle** is built around a true Farquharson action, identical to the original patented John Farquharson design of 1875. Available in .303 British, .350 No.2, .416 No.2, .450 NE and .600 NE, each Falling Block rifle includes Rigby pattern iron sights, a choice of grade seven Turkish walnut, a custom stock fitting and silver oval inlaid into the stock engraved with initials, London Best standard engraving, London Best barrel black and oil finish, with numerous options available. Rigby Falling Block Rifles start at about \$79,580US (£62,700).



*Rigby Falling Block rifle with Farquharson action. Photo – John Rigby & Co.*

Built on a Mauser 98 action, the **Highland Stalker** is a traditional bolt action deerstalking rifle that is modeled on the look of the original .275 Rigby, which was the ubiquitous rifle of its time. It features grade 5 wood as standard, traditional Rigby pattern iron sights, an ambidextrous stock, rounded grip shape, hand-finished checkering and original-style engraving, and comes in men's and lady's versions. Prices start from \$12,000.



*Rigby Highland Stalker bolt action rifle. Photo – John Rigby & Co.*

The **Big Game Rifle** is built on Mauser barreled actions which are then assembled into superb hand-finished rifles by master craftsmen at the Rigby workshop in London. Many aspects of the original rifle, including the much admired and copied extractor and the three-position flag safety, have been retained. They feature plasma nitriding on all exposed metal surfaces for a tough anti-glare and rust-resistant finish. The Rigby express sights have a single fixed V and two folding leaves (sighted for 65, 150 and 250 yards) dovetailed into the quarter-rib, original pattern engraving, case-hardened recoil bars and a heat-blued extractor. The Big Game is available on a single or double square bridge action (depending on the model), and offers professional and sporting hunters a more moderately priced alternative to Rigby's London Best custom rifles. The Single Square Bridge style is the professional hunter's rifle of choice. Available in .416 and .450 Rigby calibers, it is designed for use with express sights only. The Double Square Bridge model is available in .375 H&H, .416 Rigby and .450 Rigby calibers and can take scopes. There are two distinct editions – the PH (Professional Hunter) and the Big Game. The PH starts at about \$13,995US and the Big Game starts at \$16,995US.



*Above – Big Game bolt action rifle. Below – Big Game PH bolt action rifle. Photos – John Rigby & Co.*



The **London Best** are Rigby's top of the line bespoke bolt action rifles. Built in much the same way as they were 100 years ago, the London Best rifles incorporate engraving of choice from some of the world's best engravers and feature deluxe stocks of supreme quality Grade 7 Turkish walnut. The rifles are fabricated by hand at Rigby's London premises using Mauser actions of various lengths, and premium quality barrels from our select suppliers. All London Bests are built with a range of premium features as standard, including engraved pins and recoil bar and gold inlaid details, with numerous custom options. There are two variations. The London Best Vintage Edition starts at \$47,138US (£37,140) and is built from a traditional Rigby historic pattern. The London Best starts at about \$51,707US (£40,740).



*Above – Rigby London Best bolt action rifle. Below – London Best Vintage rifle. Photos – John Rigby & Co.*



The **Rising Bite Double Rifle** is the pinnacle of Rigby's line of custom guns. Called Rising Bite because of its unique vertical-bolt locking system, the Rigby Rising Bite is one of the most famous double rifles ever to have been made. A Rising Bite Double Rifle represents a unique test of a gunmaker's skills and each one can take up to three years to produce. They come in a range of calibers, from .416 Rigby up to .600 Nitro Express. All models are best sidelock ejectors with dipped edge lock plates and incorporate a number of premium features as standard, including: grade 7 Turkish walnut, mirror-bored chopper lump barrels regulated to 100 yards, traditional Rigby pattern full scroll engraving, gold inlaid details, color case hardening and London Best oil finish and barrel black. Prices start at about \$166,697 (£131,340).



*Rigby Rising Bite Double Rifle. Photo – John Rigby & Co.*

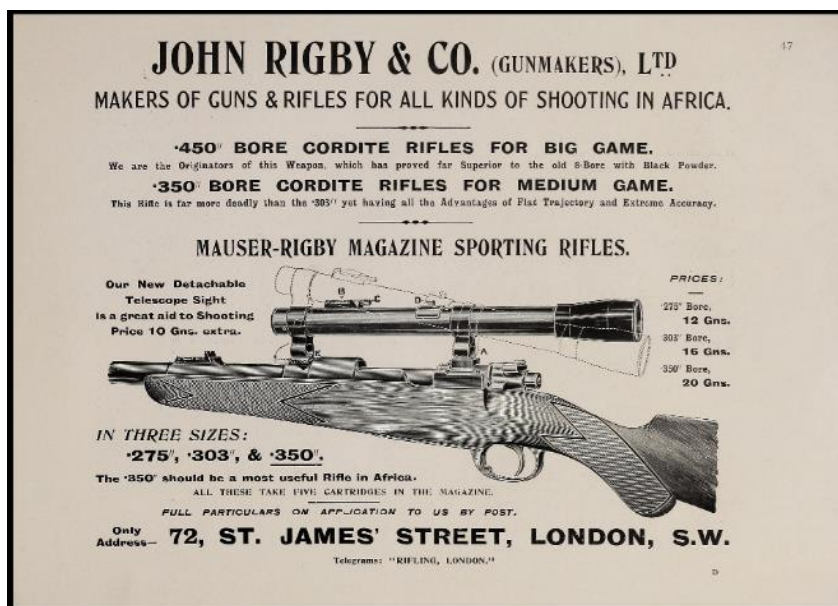
Rigby's only current shotgun is the **Rising Bite Shotgun**. Like its rifle counterpart, the custom best shotgun is characterized by the unique Rigby patent Rising Bite action, well known for its immense strength and distinctive style. It is available in 12, 20, 28, and 32 gauge (bore) and .410. Standard features include Rigby's dipped edge lock plates, chopper lump barrels in different lengths, a traditional English straight-hand grip with hand-checked butt, inlaid with a silver oval, and traditional "Rigby Scroll" pattern engraving with carved folding leaves on fences. Different engravings and wood options are available. The shotgun's prices start at about \$151,542US (£119,400).



*Rigby Rising Bite Side by Side Double Barrel Shotgun. Photo – John Rigby & Co.*



According to Rigby’s literature, the idea of a “Best” gun is peculiarly British. It does not refer to the most garishly decorated, nor the most expensive gun that can be made. Rather, the term “Best” in British gunmaking simply denotes that the gunmaker’s instructions are to build the gun from the finest available materials, to the highest possible standards, without compromise in terms of time taken or money spent. And Rigby Best guns certainly fit the bill.



John Rigby & Co. Advertisement from 1905.

## ★ 2024 Presentation List ★

MEETING DATE	TOPIC	PRESENTER
28 Mar 2024	The Marlin Model 60	Matthew G.
	<i>No meeting in April 2024 due to our Spring Gun Show</i>	
23 May 2024	The History of the Finnish Mosin-Nagant	Matt DiRisio
27 Jun 2024	The FAL	Carlos Davila
	<i>No meeting in July 2024 due to our Summer Break</i>	
22 Aug 2024	Guns of the Old West	Expanded Show-n-Tell
26 Sep 2024	The Beretta Moel 1951	Troy Blackwood
24 Oct 2024	The Marvelous Mauser	Bryan Pelton
	<i>No meeting in November 2024 due to our Fall Gun Show / Thanksgiving</i>	
TBD Dec 2024	Annual Holiday Pot Luck & Swap Meet – no presentation	

If you have any presentation suggestions – or would like to make a presentation yourself – please contact Matthew G. at [matthewofmclean@gmail.com](mailto:matthewofmclean@gmail.com) or one of the VGCA officers or directors.

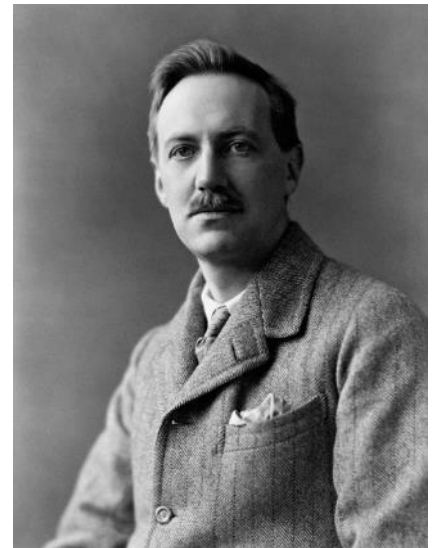
# VGCA GUNS OF DISTINCTION: LORD DUNSANY'S RIGBY SPECIAL .470 NITRO EXPRESS BIG GAME RIFLE

**By Marc Gorelick**

*Photographs courtesy of Joh. Springer's Erben, Vienna, Austria (unless otherwise attributed)*



Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett (b. July 24, 1878 – d. Oct. 25, 1957) is better known as Lord Dunsany. The 18th Baron of one of Ireland's oldest noble houses, he was an Anglo-Irish writer and dramatist who published more than 90 books and hundreds of short stories, plays, novels, and essays during his lifetime. He gained a name in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a great writer in the English-speaking world. Best known today are the 1924 fantasy novel, *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, and his first book, *The Gods of Pegāna*, which depicts a fictional world and pantheon. Other fantasy works include his second book, *Time and the Gods*, and the wonderful story, *The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save for Sacnoth*. Many critics feel his fantasy work his early work laid the foundations for the fantasy genre, and he was a major influence on J.R.R. Tolkien, H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Ursula K. Le Guin, Clark Ashton Smith, Talbot Mundy, Arthur C. Clarke, Evangeline Walton and other giants of fantasy and science fiction.



But Lord Dunsany was more than a prolific writer. He served in the British Army as a lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards during the Boer War and was a captain with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers during World War 1 and was wounded during the Easter Rising of 1916. During World War 2 he volunteered for and served in the Irish Army Reserve and the British Home Guard.

Lord Dunsany was also a noted sportsman and big game hunter. He was a gifted marksman, national pistol champion and versatile hunter. Besides his home hunting grounds, his travels also took him to Africa where he hunted big and dangerous game.



This double barreled side by side rifle, chambered in .470 Nitro Express, was ordered from John Rigby & Co of London and completed for Lord Dunsany on Sept. 18, 1913. According the Rigby's records, Lord Dunsany also ordered two other rifles at the same time, a .350 Magnum Rigby and a .275 Rigby. Then as now, John Rigby & Co is considered a top gunmaker for hunting weapons, especially when it comes to dangerous game.



The Rigby "Best" rifle is 45  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, with 28 inch long barrels, weighs 11.9 pounds and is British nitro proofed. It has a frosted wide rib that is engraved with the maker's name, is regulated for 500 grain bullets, and has express sights with 2 additional hinged rear sights inscribed 200 and 500 (yards). Instead of a "Rising Bite" lock up it has a strong doll head fastening system with an extra latch that Rigby turned to with the advent of nitro powders for

increased safety and reliability, and introduced as a new standard after 1920. The gun has bar-action sidelocks and sear, disc-set strikers, a double trigger, an automatic sliding tang safety with a gold inlaid "Safe", a straight grained walnut stock with drop points, pistol grip, rubber recoil pad, Monte-Carlo butt plate, oval cheek piece and a blank gold stock monogram plate on the underside of the stock. There is fine hand checkering on the grip and fore-end which has a turning lever lock.



This Rigby "Special .470 Bore Big Game Rifle" (as is inscribed on the left hand barrel) has a color case hardened base with typical exquisite Rigby arabesque engraving, acanthus leaf carved fences, and the ham shaped "dipped edge" lock plates are also covered with arabesque engraving. Screw heads and the opening lever and furniture have engraved decoration.



The Rigby Big Game double rifle in .470 Nitro Express became legendary as the weapon of choice for many African professional hunters. In 1898 Rigby had introduced the .450 Nitro Express, which was very popular for taking big game. However in 1899 the Indian colonial government began to restrict .450-caliber rifles and ammunition. This forced British

gunmakers to develop a number of variations to avoid the India ban. The most popular of these proved to be the .470 Nitro Express, and John Rigby & Co. adopted this as its “standard” heavy double-rifle load.



This gun came with its original Rigby case with the Rigby trade labels and all its accessories. It was offered for sale at Joh. Springers Erben 38<sup>th</sup> Classic Auction in Vienna, Austria on November 17, 2022 for about \$52,256US (47,000 Euros).

93  
September 1913

18. Dunsany, Lord			
1. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	68	5	
2. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	1	
3. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	17	6
4. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	1	
5. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	5	6
6. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	18	
7. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	6	
8. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	8	6
9. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	3	6
10. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	12	6
11. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	21		
12. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	17	6
13. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	11	
14. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	4	6
15. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	6	
16. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	6	6
17. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	3	
18. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	15	
19. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	17	6
20. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	2	6
21. 470 Lever-Action Rifle	1	1	6

433

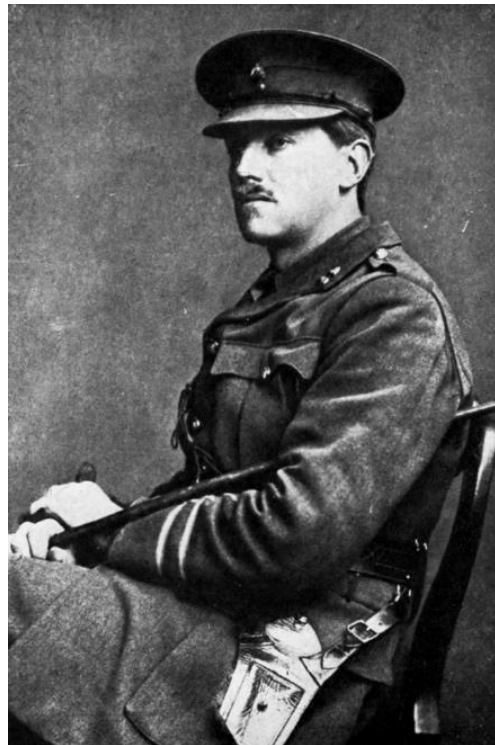


Photo left – Copy of John Rigby & Co. records showing sale of this rifle to Lord Dunsany.  
 Photo right – Lord Dunsany as an officer in the British Army in 1919. Public Domain.

# HAMPTON ROADS MILITARY SOCIETY

The Hampton Roads Militaria Society (HRMS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to assist collectors and historians in the collection & preservation of militaria of all sorts and periods, preserve and honor our military past, and honor the veterans of all our conflicts. They generally meet on the 1st Tuesday of each month, but this can vary. VGCA members are welcome. Upcoming meetings (at 1243 Bayne Drive in VA Beach) are:

**12 Mar 2024** – Topic; Ghost Army by Mark Hesse. This was the United States Army tactical deception unit which had the mission to mislead the Nazis as to the size and location of Allied forces preparing for D-Day and to perform deception operations after the invasion. According to Wikipedia, information about this unit was classified until 1996

Topic for the April meeting will be the second of Chris Betcher's presentations on the Evolution of the Rifle. He will start with Mauser, concentrate on Civil War era developments and move on toward the end of the 19th century.

For more details, HRMS website is: [Hampton Roads Militaria Society \(classicfirearmsandechoesofglory.com\)](http://classicfirearmsandechoesofglory.com)

# ★ Membership Chairman's Report

## Membership Chairman's Report March 2024

**New Applications for Membership:** Since the last Newsletter, there have been two new applications for membership.

- **Michael Jambrosic of Aldie sponsored by George Dungan**
- **Michael Chowanec of Spotsylvania sponsored by Dan Helm**

**Please welcome the following new member to our group:**

- **Todd Harrington of Winchester sponsored by Jim Burgess**
- **Jon Myrah of Vienna sponsored by Bruce Buchner**
- **Antonio Davila of Bethesda sponsored by Carlos Davila**

If you know of anyone who would be interested in joining our organization, please invite them to a meeting or to our upcoming VGCA Gun Show.

Notice to New Member Sponsors: VGCA will be discontinuing hard copy versions of the VGCA Newsletters in July. Please make sure your prospective applicants include a legible email address and telephone contact number if at all possible and make sure that your name is on the sponsorship form. Without an email address new members will NOT receive the newsletter or VGCA announcements.

Membership Numbers: There are currently 429 Life members and 107 Annual Members for a total of 536 members in the Virginia Gun Collectors Association, Inc.

Recruiting: Membership in the VGCA is a great way for people with an interest in the history, development, and use of firearms to broaden their knowledge and pass what they know on to others. It also offers the opportunity to network with individuals who have similar interests. To help facilitate new membership we have a Membership Table at every Chantilly and Fredericksburg gun show and also at our VGCA gun shows. If you would like to volunteer to work a shift at an upcoming show please contact George Dungan at [george@ecominv.com](mailto:george@ecominv.com) or Bruce Buchner at [buchnerb@cox.net](mailto:buchnerb@cox.net).

The next Chantilly show is April 19th, 20th, and 21st and we need volunteers to work our membership table. Please contact Bruce Buchner at [buchnerb@cox.net](mailto:buchnerb@cox.net) to get on the schedule.

Membership Renewal: All annual dues were due by the end of December and you need to be current to get in our VGCA shows for free. You can renew annually for \$30 or \$150 for life. Please use the form below to renew and either mail it in or bring it to a meeting and give it to either George Dungan or Bruce Buchner. If you are unsure of your membership status email [george@ecominv.com](mailto:george@ecominv.com) and I will let you know.

*George Dungan*, Vice President and Membership Chair

Dues may be paid by mail by sending a Check for \$30 (please, NO USPS or other Money Orders) and the completed membership renewal form above to the address on the form. VGCA will also accept payments in person (CHECK or EXACT CHANGE preferred – I have NO CASH for change) with a completed renewal form. If members have questions, please email **George Dungan, Interim Membership Chair** at [george@eccominv.com](mailto:george@eccominv.com) or call me at **571-243-6387**.

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Please detach and return with your payment  
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## Membership Renewal Request (AMR-2023\_Oct)

VGCA, Inc., P.O. Box 2318, Merrifield, VA 22116-2318

Please complete and return this renewal form with your payment. Indicate Annual, Life or that you do not wish to renew your membership by checking the appropriate box below.

*Please Print Clearly*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- Enclosed is a check for \$30.00 for CY 2024 VGCA Annual Membership dues.
- I wish to upgrade to Life Membership in VGCA. Enclosed is a check for \$150.00.
- Remove my name from the VGCA membership roster.

Make all checks payable to VGCA (Please - NO CASH or Money Orders). If members have questions, please email **George Dungan, Interim Membership Chair** at [george@eccominv.com](mailto:george@eccominv.com) or call me at **571-243-6387**.

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# CMP UPDATE

*By Marc Gorelick, CMP Liaison*

*The VGCA is a CMP Affiliated club. The VGCA club number is 026160.*

## REGISTRATION OPEN FOR THE 2024 NATIONAL MATCHES AT CAMP PERRY



The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) announced that registration for the CMP’s 2024 National Trophy Pistol and Rifle Matches is officially open. The annual event, held at the Camp Perry National Guard Training Base in Port Clinton, Ohio, since 1907, is conducted by a partnership between the CMP and the Ohio National Guard. The month-long series showcases a variety of indoor and outdoor events for both adults and juniors. Spectators are welcome to witness the matches, free of charge.

The National Matches, July 11 – August 10, is comprised of the CMP National Trophy Pistol and Rifle Matches, National Games Matches, National Smallbore Matches, National Air Gun Championships and the National Mid-Range and Long Range Matches. Along with several competitive opportunities, the National Matches includes a variety of educational clinics.

The National Matches are open to first timers and seasoned competitors. They are also open to spectators and sales. Some of the events include: **Rimfire Sporter Rifle, Smallbore Rifle**, National Rifle and Pistol Air Gun Matches, various Pistol Matches (including Service Revolver), and Highpower, Service and Vintage Rifle Matches, and Mid-Range and Long-Range Rifle. The Service and Vintage Rifle matches should be of interest to gun collectors as they include vintage and modern military rifle events like the John C. Garand, Springfield and Vintage Sniper matches for individuals at every stage of their marksmanship abilities. The Vintage Sniper Match will include a new category – Vietnam Era – and the Springfield Armory M1A event of the past is now the McKee Memorial Match (M14 Heritage Match).

Small Arms Firing Schools (SAFS) will be held for rifle, pistol and smallbore rifle. Participants in SAFS are instructed by some of the top military shooters in the country on firearm safety and competition basics. All firearms and ammo are provided for the live-fire portion of the clinic. Other clinics during the National Matches include a Rimfire Sporter Rifle Clinic, the CMP/USMC Junior Rifle Clinic, taught by current members of the Marine Corps Shooting Team, and the CMP Advanced Highpower Clinic, for more experienced competitors. Most clinics include both classroom and live-fire training on the range. And the CMP North Store, located on the grounds of Camp Perry, provides buying opportunities at the Matches with a lineup of military surplus rifles, memorabilia and equipment needs.

For more information, including links to registration and schedules, go to the CMP website at: <https://thecmp.org/register-now-for-the-2024-national-matches-at-camp-perry/>. Additional information is at: <https://thecmp.org/cmp-national-matches/>.



## ★ In Review ★

*The “In Review” section of the newsletter includes VGCA member reviews of gun shows, books, and museums. If you would like to submit a review, please send it to the newsletter editor at [rpebecker@verizon.net](mailto:rpebecker@verizon.net).*

### **A “Gun Show” Review: SHOT Show 2023**

**By Matthew G.**

*Photographs by the author (unless otherwise credited)*

This year, I attended SHOT show (Shooting Hunting Outdoor Trade Show) in Las Vegas, NV with fellow board member Ian Wulf. The show is open to those in the firearms business, not open to the public. Most in attendance were those who worked at gun shops, importers, distributors, military, law enforcement or those with press passes. This was my first time at SHOT show, although having worked in the gun business for the last 14 years.

Getting into SHOT meant registering with NSSF (National Shooting Sports Foundation) and uploading a pay stub to prove employment by a relevant business. My account was still in “Pending” when we went to check in and get our badges, which necessitated a clerk to pull up my account and verify my pay stub before giving me the green light and sending me over to another table where my badge was printed. The entry fee for the event was \$35 per person, which covered all days.

SHOT is a convention/trade show to show off the new offerings from gun companies and related businesses. Many new designs are released during SHOT show, such as Smith & Wesson’s new lever action rifle, Blitzkrieg’s milled AK rifle imported from Turkey, and Huxwrx’s Flow Ti 22 rimfire suppressor, made of 3D printed metal. Many more new products were introduced at SHOT, those are just a few that we saw during the trip. Distributor exclusives were also abound, including Glock’s new 19X with MOSoptic cutout and factory threaded barrel, exclusively from Davidson’s.

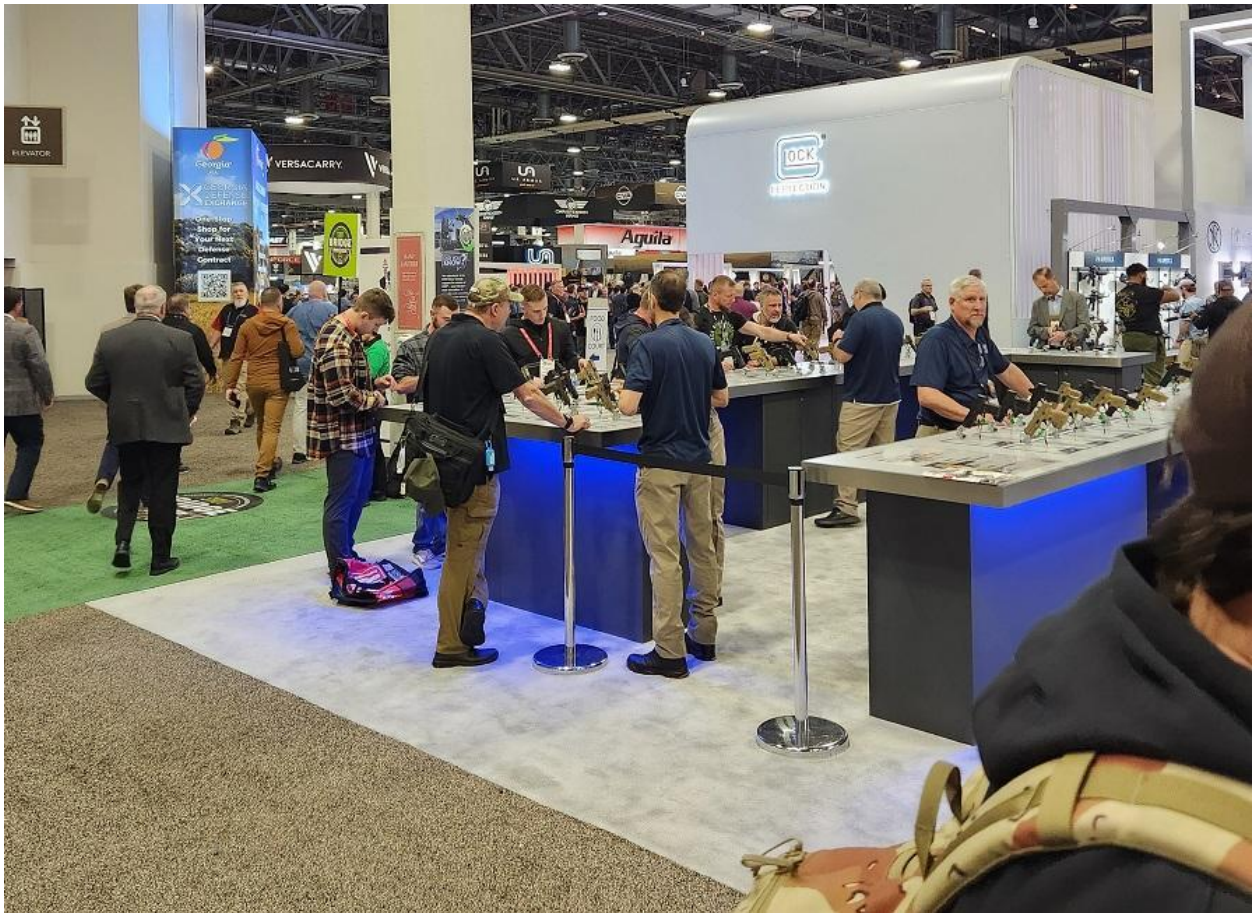
As a first-timer to SHOT, I have to say that the size of the event was massive and initially overwhelming. Although headquartered in the Venetian Expo which has 1.8 million square feet of space, the event also occupied space across the street at Cesar’s Forum. The two spaces were linked by a temporary aluminum foot bridge, erected above Krueger Street. The event consisted of multiple rooms in multiple stories of two buildings, with many of the big-name brands with large multi-level displays located in the larger rooms of the Venetian.



We went for guns, but there were many other items being offered there. In one section there were different types of motorcycle helmets for police, radios, boots, armored vehicles, bulletproof vests, thermal imaging, range finders, metal detectors, portable hunting blinds, archery, camouflage paint, clothing, and every accessory you can think of for the shooting sports from scopes to specialty tools and magazine loaders.

To put it into perspective, NSSF was expecting around 60,000 attendees for this year's SHOT show. There had to have been at least that many. Traffic around the event was slow, with many people arriving via rideshare services like Uber and Lyft, completely filling the front entryway of The Venetian. Although people were everywhere, the crowd was very cordial, calm and orderly. Rented tour buses were provided by European American Armory from many of the larger nearby hotels and dropped people off underneath the Venetian.

The show covered several days, opening to police and certain other select attendees on Monday, January 22nd, along with a range day held off site. The show opened to everyone else the following day and was open through Friday, January 26th. It took days to see the show. Even though we spent days on the floor (and walked many miles in the process), we still didn't get to see everything. If you want to go and just walk, without stopping to talk to people, you'd probably get through it all. If you're there to make deals and see/touch products and speak with salespeople, owners, designers and engineers, then you'll have a hard time covering the whole show.



I was shocked by the lack of security. There were a few uniformed officers here and there, but far more private security guards of varying flavors were in attendance. There were no metal detectors or security measures of any kind to get into the event space lobby, through check-in, or onto the display floor of the two buildings. Security guards made sure everyone had a badge on, but that's about it.

Flying to Las Vegas, I was wondering how they were going to handle keeping all the guns in a safe condition during display. Zip ties weren't going to fly, as many people want to work the action of a gun, cock it open to take a look etc. All guns on display at SHOT each had a small bright plastic zip tie style tag with a number on it, presumably having been checked by someone to be in a safe condition. Most guns were missing a firing pin, while some were missing an entire bolt.

A pedometer would've been a good accessory for this trip. We stayed at Circus Circus casino/hotel not far away and walked there one evening, but we decided to save our feet for the rest of the trip and tried to keep our miles low by taking a shuttle bus from our hotel each day. Just walking the show was probably 7 to 10 miles a day, which is what we heard from some others at the show.

I'm used to traveling on work trips to visit gun shows, where I can run around and buy items to bring back to the gun shop and resell for a profit as soon as I get back. That's not the case at SHOT. Nothing is available right then and there to take with you, but many brands (like North American Arms and Bushmaster) sell directly to dealers and were happy to talk about pricing and estimated delivery times. People go to SHOT to see items and order them, not to buy and bring home.

There were plenty of freebies though! A big part of SHOT for many attendees is to get the free merch, often times called “swag”. I wound up getting a T shirt from Mile High (in conjunction with Thunderbeast), a baseball cap out of a free vending machine, stacks of stickers, some keychains, badge holders to use at future gun shows and a few patches. Free bags were given out by many companies including SAR USA, Colt and Condor so attendees could have a place to put all their free stuff.

The really neat part about SHOT for me was who I got to meet. Shortly after getting my badge and walking into the show, I rounded a corner at the Mossberg display and recognized a guy standing there at the counter with a Sharpie marker in his hand. Who was it? Renowned speed-shooter Jerry Miculek. I got to talk to him a bit and shake his hand, only to realize his daughter and wife were lined up right next to him. I even got a picture with him, should've gotten one with the whole gang.

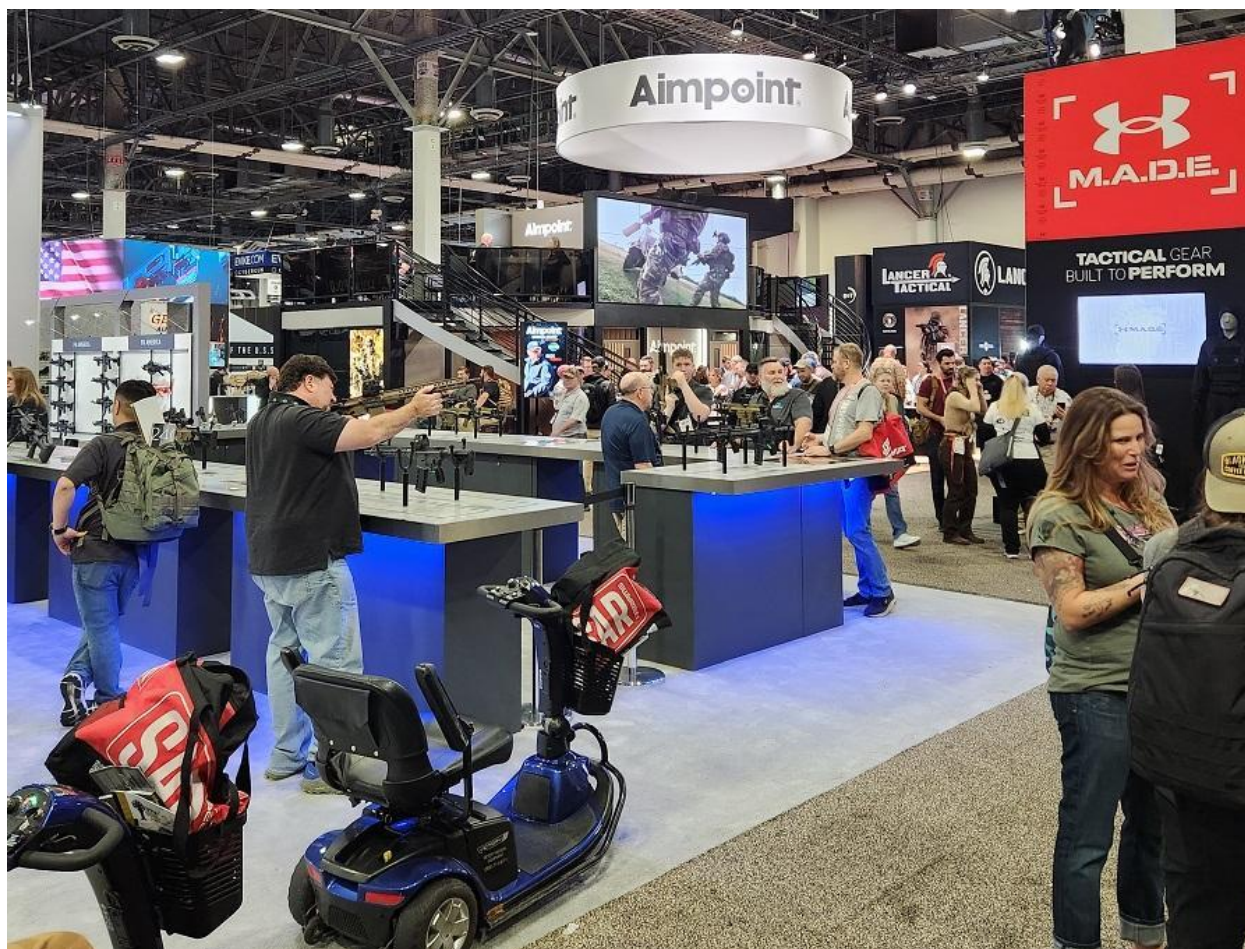


Other people I met at the show were Sandy Chisholm, who started North American Arms and later sold the company to an employee stock ownership trust. He was a very interesting man to talk to in person and extremely humble. I also met a man named Les Baer, who you may be familiar with if you're into 1911s. We talked about Virginia, as he saw Chantilly, Virginia on my badge, and said he loved the race track in Manassas. I told him that VGCA used to hold a show right near there, but that the track had gone to housing years ago. As a man passionate in both car racing and custom guns, he seemed upset that one of his favorite tracks had turned into a housing development, as he loved racing there in the 1990s. Small world.

I could usually spot who the boss was at a table, as it was usually an older person and usually better-dressed than others. Charlie Brown of MKS Supply, distributor of Hi Point Firearms, was another one that was easy to spot and a joy to speak with. The icing on the cake was being able to meet George Kelgren of Kel Tec. I told Mr. Kelgren that I greatly appreciated his P11 design and its derivatives and that I'm

personally an avid collector of his early designs. That seemed to catch him off guard, but he appeared receptive to the admiration.

While some displays were basic at best, others were over the top. For example, the display for Henry rifles was quite small, no flashy in the last, and displayed the long guns vertically on a gun rack along the wall/floor of one side of their booth. On the other end of the spectrum was Aimpoint, who had a huge display with a second story containing a glass-enclosed conference room.



Why go to SHOT? If you're in the gun business and can get in, you should do it once to see the new stuff that's out there and to put some names and faces to the businesses you've been buying from for years. We were all there for work, but it was also a coming together of the industry in an energetic, upbeat, positive environment.

Being on my feet, walking miles, and talking for days-straight was very tiring. It was completely worth it just to see how big the industry is and how big the event is. This trip was a bucket list type of trip for me, and I'm glad I was able to finally make it.



# ★ Show-n-Tell ★

**NOTE: For anyone bringing in items for Show-n-Tell - please hold the item up so the members in attendance can see it. This will also help your photographer get a sharp picture and allow people who could not attend the meeting to see it clearly in the newsletter. We also ask that you provide a Fact Sheet (copies of the one below will be provided at the meeting) to assist the newsletter editor in accurately describing your item. Thank you!**

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## VGCA Show-n-Tell Fact Sheet

Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_

Model: \_\_\_\_\_ Action Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Caliber: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Production: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Produced: \_\_\_\_\_

Year this example was manufactured (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Significance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Question(s) for members: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Where acquired (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ When acquired (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

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A message from your VGCA Photographer--

I ask those who bring items in for Show-and-Tell to PLEASE hold the item UP and in view of the audience so that they can be seen clearly, and so that I might be able to get a decent picture for the newsletter. PLEASE stand behind the tables and simply hold the item at chest or waist level, face forward, stand still, and give me a five or six seconds to grab a decent photograph of the Show-and-Tell item.

If you do not want your Show-and-Tell item to be shared with other VGCA members, just tell me in advance and I will not attempt to take a photo of it.

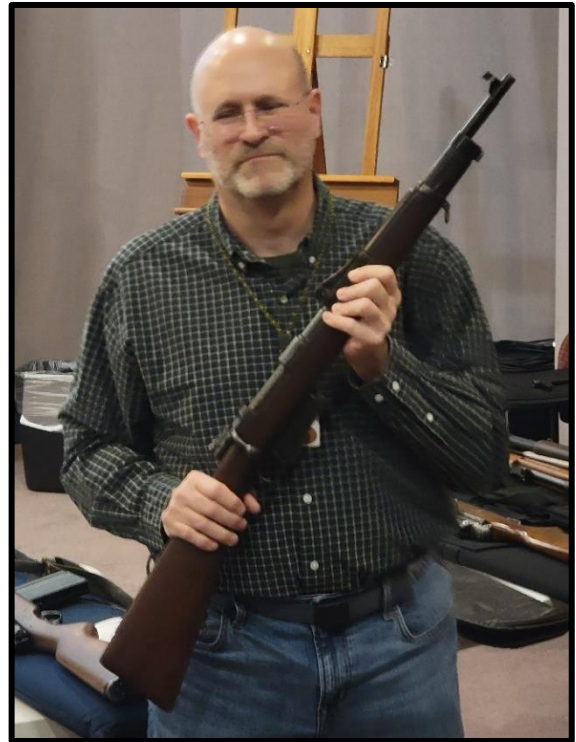
I do the photography for the VGCA and its' members, not for myself, and not for any personal gain. Your assistance in documenting your items will be a great help. I spend an average of five hours editing the pictures for the newsletter and not having a clear view of the subject has been a great and constant frustration for me.

Your help will assist in making a better newsletter for all VGCA members. Thank you!

*Jack Looney*

# FEBRUARY SHOW-N-TELL

Member 1 (*right*) brought in a Peruvian Mauser Model 1891/12 Navy Carbine. This is one of the rarest military Mauser you'll ever see! This gun started as an Argentine long rifle, which sold second half of their contract to Peru in 1901. 99% of those sold to Peru had the Argentina crest ground off of the top of the receiver and Peruvian crest stamped on. It is chambered in 7.65x53 Argentine, also known as 7.65x53mm Mauser or 7.65 Belgian. Originally loaded with a 210 grain round-nose bullet, this rimless cartridge was updated in 1905 to utilize a 154 grain spitzer design, with velocity increasing from approximately 2130 fps to over 2700 fps. Model 1891 rifles were converted to this cartridge *as* part of the 1912 upgrade program. Most, but not all, had the “roller coaster” rear sight more commonly associated with the German Gew 98 added at this time. In the mid-1930s (sometime after 1934), a small number were cut down and converted to carbines for the Peruvian Navy.



This example has “1963” stamped on the butt stock, which is thought to be the year it was taken out of naval service in Peru. It is a pre-1898 antique.



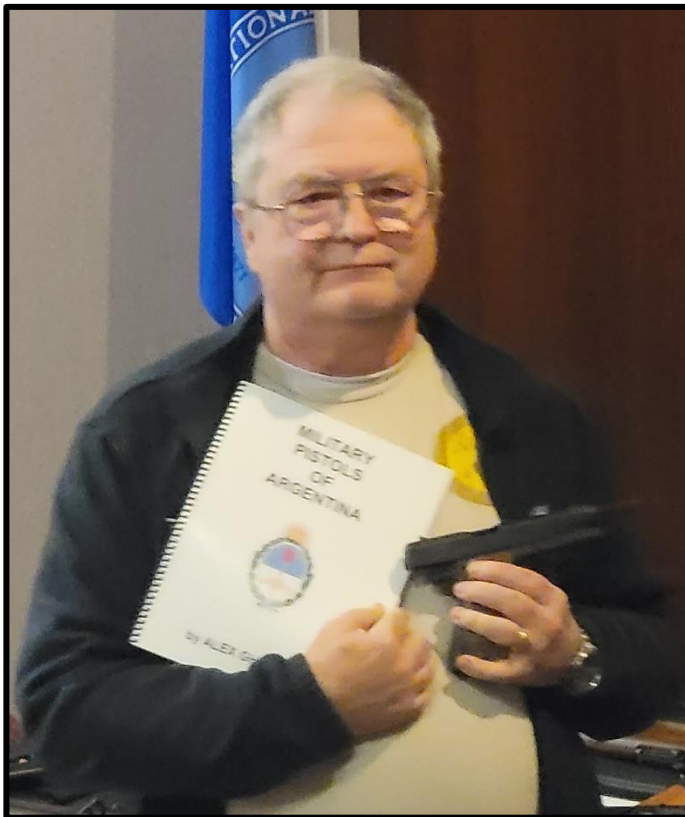
Member 2 (*left*) shared a SIG P220 pistol in its original blue box. The SIG P220 was developed in 1975 as a replacement for the SIG P210 in Swiss military service. Designated the “Pistole 75” by the Swiss, this semi-automatic pistol with a single stack magazine was initially chambered in 9mm Parabellum. SIG entered into an agreement with J.P.Sauer & Sohn of Germany for P220’s commercial production and distribution and at one point or another made the pistol in six different calibers, plus a .22LR conversion kit. The P220 remains in production to this day.

This particular example has sentimental value for Member 2. He worked at a gun shop in California in the 1980s when the P220 became available commercially, but it was well out of his price range. This one, chambered in 7.65x21 Parabellum, showed up used in the gun shop. Brought back from Europe by a graduate of the Defense Language Institute and is not import stamped. Saving his \$100 ROTC monthly stipend checks, he eventually was able to buy the

pistol and one box of Winchester ammo. Rare in the U.S. (as are the associated magazines), the 7.65mm was primarily made for the Swiss and Italian markets. This one appears to have an Italian “CAT” marking and was made in West Germany.



Member 3 brought in a Simson and Company W625 .22LR rifle (right). Designed in the hopes of getting a large German military contract for a .22 trainer, the W625 failed to do so, primarily due its unpopular split rear receiver design. Approximately 15,000 were produced from 1932 until 1934. This example was made in 1932 or early 1933 and has a 13 over 166 unit, so it did ultimately serve as a trainer (probably with the Hitler Youth or SA). This is the first German trainer in Member 3's collection.



Member 4 shared an Argentine Ballester Molina (left). Argentina was one of the few countries to adopt and license built the Colt Model 1911 pistol. As such, Argentina had to pay royalty fees to Colt. In an effort to save money, they developed the Ballester Molina in about 1937. Broadly similar in appearance to the Colt model, most parts are not interchangeable. Indeed, the only parts required to be interchangeable were the barrel and magazine. Functionally, the Ballester Molina lacks a grip safety and the thumb safety can engaged with the hammer is down or cocked. The Ballester Molina was produced until about 1953 – though the Colt 1911 continued to built under license until the 1960s.

This example was made for the Argentine Air Force and was recently at purchased at a Dulles Gun Show. It has already been to the range and it works!



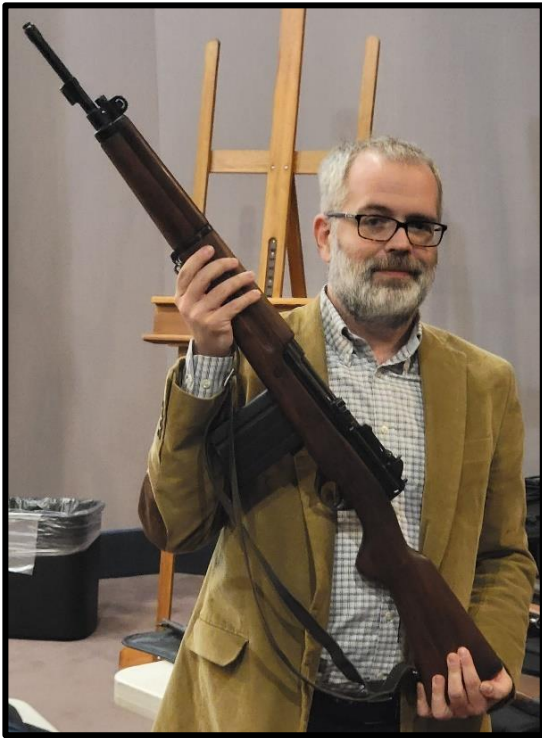
Member 5 brought in an Argentine FN-49 (*left*). As noted in the evening's presentation, the original Argentine FN-49s delivered to the Argentina Navy were chambered in 7.65x53 and came with a fixed 10-round magazine. In the early 1970s they were converted to 7.62 NATO and adopted to use 20-round detachable magazines. Member 5 also had the detachable grenade launcher used with rifle-launched grenades.

These rifles have seen use in various coups as well as limited use from Argentine Navy patrol boats during the Falklands War against the British in 1982.

Member 6 shared a Ruger AC556, the select fire Version of the Mini-14 (*right*). Chambered in 5.56x45, the Model designation of this specific gun is K AC556 F (K is stainless, F means it came with a folding stock). It takes detachable box magazines. Ruger makes 5-, 20- and 30-round mags while 40 rounders are available from after-market manufacturers. The AC556 is identical to a Ruger Mini-14, with selector switch on the right rear top of the receiver. The selector can be set to semi-automatic, 3-round burst, and fully automatic. The Mini-14 came out in 1973 in semi-auto and in 1979 Ruger started making them in select fire. The USMC bought a number of them to be used by the guards at foreign embassies. The AC556 came in about 9 different versions, including 18 inch barrel, 13 inch barrel, stainless steel, blued, fixed stock, and folding stock. This example came with a folder but Member 6 replaced it with a Ruger wood stock as it is more controllable when fired on automatic!



Member 6 bought this gun in Houston, Texas about 40 years ago. It has been "a good friend" and shot many times. However, it time to thin the collection and this gun was recently sold - just waiting for the transfer paperwork to go through.



The Argentine FN-49 proved to be a popular rifle as Member 7 brought his in to share (*left*). Member 7 noted that the large detachable magazine seems enormous and can spoil the look of this old school wood-and-steel battle rifle. This particular rifle is fairly accurate though not 100% reliable. Still, it came with a “truck load” of extra magazines and Member 7 considers it a fun gun!

Member 8 shared what he referred to as “the bastard gun” (*right*). He bought this rifle from a store in West Virginia. Initially thought to be chambered in 7.92x57 Mauser, after some cleaning Member 8 noticed that 8mm ammunition would not fit. Then he tried .30/06 ammo – that didn’t fit either. Member 8 started asking for help identifying the caliber. Disassembly revealed “7.62” stamped under the wood – so it is chambered in 7.62 NATO. It is truly a

“frankenrifle” as it has a Czech VZ24 receiver, Spanish 1943 handguard, Turkish 98/22 floorplate, and Turkish and Arabic stamps. If only this gun could talk!



Member 8 also shared a trophy from a deployment to Iraq. It is an FN holster stamped on the back that it is intended for a Hi Power pistol (*left*). One the front of the holster it says that it is a gift from Saddam Hussein. The holster came from one of Saddam’s doctors, who Member 8 interrogated. This is a neat souvenir with an interesting story!





Member 9 brought in a Venezuelan FN-49 (*left*). As noted in the presentation, about 8,000 of these rifles were procured by Venezuela as the first military contract for the FN-49. Chambered in 7x57 Mauser, these rifles have the Venezuelan coat of arms on the top of the receiver and have a reputation for being very pleasant to shoot.

Member 9 took it to the range on Monday and noted that “it works and is reasonably accurate.”

Member 10 brought in a Röhm Gesellschaft RG23 revolver (*right*). Röhm Gesellschaft (RG) manufactured guns and shooting equipment in Germany starting in the 1950s. Their low cost exports to the United States were impacted by the Gun Control Act of 1968 and shortly thereafter, RG opened a factory in Miami, Florida (the same guns that no longer met certain criteria for importation were still legal to manufacture in the U.S.). The RG23 is a 6-shot single action/double action revolver chambered in .22 LR. It was assembled in Florida using an American cast zinc alloy frame with most other parts made in Germany. In 2010, the RG brand was acquired by Umarex GmbH & Company.



Member 11 shared an Italian Beretta BM59e, sometimes called a BM59SL (*right*). Developed in 1959 when the Italian military decided to upgrade their American M1 “Garand” rifles. Beretta made the modifications, which included cutting back the barrel and rechambering them for 7.62 NATO, cutting the op rod, adopting them to feed from a 20-round detachable magazine, adding a muzzle brake, and converting them to feed from a 20-round detachable magazine, adding a muzzle brake, and converting them to select fire. In addition to modifying American-supplied rifles, Beretta also manufactured new BM59s, which competed against the FN-49 for foreign contracts. Famously, the Argentines had 2100 M1s converted and would later weld their selector switches to permit semi-automatic fire only.

This example is marked Beretta, so it’s a Beretta conversion gun.



Member 12 brought in a Beretta 92 pistol (*left*). This is not a typical commercial Model 92 however. It has a “dash 65490” on the side, a chrome-lined bore, a “PM” on the slide and barrel, and no safety markings. This pistol looks like a U.S. military M9. Member 12 has been looking for one of these for 11 years – ever since carrying one for almost a year in Iraq.

Member 12 also brought a unique suppressor (*right*). Acquired from former VGCA President Bernie Breighner, it is a military “wipe” suppressor for use by downed USAF airmen.

It also comes with a barrel and fits right on the Beretta pistol. This is a rare and highly desirable collector piece – Member 12 has chosen not to use it.





New Member 13 brought in his Swiss-made post-ban SIG 550 (*left*). Chambered in 5.56x45 NATO, this SIG 550 is the civilian semi-automatic-only version of the Swiss primary battle/assault rifle. It has been imported only in small numbers. Member 13 acquired this very expensive bipod-equipped rifle at Chantilly Gun Show, along with Swiss magazines, and has not had an opportunity to fire it yet.

Member 14 was inspired by Troy Blackwood's article in the February newsletter on the Armi Jaeger .22LR "look-alike" guns. At a recent Fredericksburg Gun Show, Member 14 purchased this German Sport Guns (GSG) "AK47" chambered in .22LR (*right*). The magazine rocks into place just like an actual AK. He has only put one magazine through it so far at 25 yards and it was hitting a 4-5 inch target. It is a fun gun!



## ★ Upcoming Events and Shows ★

PLEASE NOTE: VGCA members are strongly encouraged to verify shows before driving to an event. These dates were confirmed when this newsletter was written, but are not guaranteed.

### VIRGINIA – 2024

- Mar 23-24, 2024 – Hampton, VA – Hampton Roads Convention Center – *SGK*
- Apr 6-7, 2024 – Dale City, VA – VFW Post 1503 – *VGCA (our show!)*
- Apr 6-7, 2024 – Fishersville, VA – Augusta Expo – *Showmasters*
- Apr 19-21, 2024 – Chantilly, VA – Dulles Expo Center – *Showmasters*
- May 4-5, 2024 – Fredericksburg, VA – Fredericksburg Expo and Convention Center – *SGK*
- May 4-5, 2024 – Harrisonburg, PA – Rockingham County Fairgrounds – *Showmasters*
- May 18-19, 2024 – Richmond, VA – Richmond Raceway Complex – *Showmasters*
- Jun 14-16, 2024 – Chantilly, VA – Dulles Expo Center – *Showmasters*

### MARYLAND – 2024

- Apr 6-7, 2024 – Frederick, MD – Frederick Fairgrounds – *Appalachian Promotions*
- Apr 13-14, 2024 – Timonium, MD – Timonium Fairgrounds – *Appalachian Promotions*
- Apr 20-21, 2024 – West Friendship, MD – Howard County Fairgrounds – *Appalachian Promotions*
- Jun 22-23, 2024 – Crownsville, MD – Anne Arundel Fairgrounds – *Appalachian Promotions*

### PENNSYLVANIA – 2024

- Mar 23-24, 2024 – Allentown, PA – ParkView Inn & Conference Center – *Eagle Shows*
- Mar 23-24, 2024 – Gettysburg, PA – Redding Auction – *Central PA Antique Arms Association*
- Mar 23-24, 2024 – Harrisburg, PA – Farm Show Complex – *C&E Gun Shows*
- Mar 23-24, 2024 – West Middlesex, PA – Hidden Valley Sportsmen’s Club – *Same*
- Mar 29-30, 2024 – East Greenville, PA – East Greenville Fire Hall – *Pennsylvania Antique Gun Collectors*
- Mar 30, 2024 – Harborcreek, PA – Gem City Gun Club – *Same*
- Mar 30, 2024 – Wampum, PA – Possum Hollow Sportsman’s Club – *Same*
- Apr 5-7, 2024 – Oaks, PA – Greater Philadelphia Expo Center – *Eagle Shows*
- Apr 6-7, 2024 – Monroeville, PA – Monroeville Convention Center – *Showmasters*
- Apr 13-14, 2024 – Matamoras, PA – Best Western Inn at Hunt’s Landing – *Westchester Collectors Inc.*
- Apr 13-14, 2024 – Quarryville, PA – Solanco Fairgrounds – *Eagle Shows*
- Apr 13-14, 2024 – Union City, PA – UCVFD Social Hall – *Randy Peterson*
- Apr 13-14, 2024 – Washington, PA – Washington PA County Fairgrounds – *ARH Sport Shop*
- Apr 13-14, 2024 – Wind Gap, PA – Plainfield Township Fire Company – *M2 Promotions*
- Apr 20-21, 2024 – Bloomsburg, PA – Bloomsburg Fairgrounds – *Eagle Shows*
- Apr 20-21, 2024 – Cresco, PA – Barrett Township Municipal Bldg – *Tall Timber Tactical*
- Apr 27-28, 2024 – Kempton, PA – Kempton Community Center – *Jaeger Arms*
- ~~Apr 27-28, 2024 – Lykes, PA – Liberty Hose Co. #2 – Same – CANCELLED~~
- May 11-12, 2024 – Allentown, PA – Allentown Fairgrounds – *Forks of the Delaware Historical Arms Society*
- May 18-19, 2024 – Carlisle, PA – Carlisle Expo Center – *M2 Promotions*
- May 18-19, 2024 – Millville, PA – Millville Farm Market & Creamery – *Jaeger Arms*
- May 19, 2024 – Portland, PA – William Pensyl Social Hall – *Portland Hook & Ladder Co. #1*

## PENNSYLVANIA – 2024 (continued)

- Jun 1-2, 2024 – Wind Gap, PA – Plainfield Township Fire Company – *M2 Promotions*
- Jun 8-9, 2024 – Tobyhanna, PA – VFW Post 3448 – *Jaeger Arms*
- Jun 22-23, 2024 – Monroeville, PA – Monroeville Convention Center – *Showmasters*
- Jun 22-23, 2024 – Sellersville, PA – Forrest Lodge VTW245 – *Jaeger Arms*
- Jun 22-23, 2024 – Washington, PA – Washington PA County Fairgrounds – *ARH Sport Shop*
- Jun 29-30, 2024 – York, PA – York Fairgrounds – *Appalachian Promotions*

## SPECIAL EVENTS / SHOWS – 2024

- May 4-5, 2024 - Wilmington, OH – Roberts Convention Centre – *Ohio Gun Collectors Association* – Annual Display Show
- May 16-19, 2024 – Dallas, TX – NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits
- Jul 20-21, 2024 – Doswell, VA – Meadow Event Park – *North South Trader's Civil War Magazine* – National Civil War and Antique Arms Show

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## FOR SALE:

The "For Sale" section of the Virginia Gun Collectors Association (VGCA) Newsletter is provided as a service exclusively to the members of the VGCA and is intended for listing firearms and firearm related items. The VGCA, its officers, and directors are not responsible for any listings made in any VGCA Newsletter. We are not responsible for the accuracy (condition, value, etc.) of any listings. All buyers, traders, and sellers agree to comply with all local, state, federal, and international laws in regards to items sold via the VGCA Newsletter. It is their duty and responsibility to ensure the quality and value of the transaction and that all such laws are followed at all times. Buy, sell, or trade at your own risk.

If you would like to list an item (or items) in the VGCA Newsletter, please send your description, price, and contact information to [rpebecker@verizon.net](mailto:rpebecker@verizon.net). I must receive your material no later than the second Sunday of the month for it to be included in that month's newsletter. Items will be listed for one issue of the Newsletter.

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### FOR SALE:

✳️ **FINNISH MOSIN-NAGANT** is authored by VGCA member Matt DiRisio and published by Wet Dog Publications. The list price is \$99.95. It is 584 pages long with over 1,500 color and black and white photographs.

For ordering information go to the Wet Dog Publications website at:

<https://www.fnbrowning.com/book-finnish-mosin-nagant>.



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### FOR SALE:

✳️ After more than two and a half years of research, VGCA member Bill Vanderpool has published his book **Guns of the FBI**. This book is available at GunDigest.com or can be purchased directly from Bill by calling 703-626-2975. He is more than happy to sign a copy for you. Cost is \$50.00.

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### FOR SALE:

✳️ VGCA member Charlie Pate has four books that he has authored for sale, at discounted prices to VGCA members. These include:

- "U.S. Handguns of World War II" - \$45.00
- "The Smith & Wesson American Model" - \$55.00
- "U.S. Military Arms Inspector Marks" - \$45.00



- "The Colt Model 1860 Army Revolver" - \$60.00

If interested, please contact Charlie at [usarmsresearch@gmail.com](mailto:usarmsresearch@gmail.com)

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**FOR SALE:**

★ VGCA member Larry Babcock has published a companion piece to his earlier book **M1 Garand Photo Essay**. This second book, titled **M1 Garand Photo Essay Volume II** covers all new material, to include the M1C and M1D sniper rifles as well as a myriad of M1 accessories. Best of all, both books are offered at a discount to VGCA members. Volume I is normally priced at \$69 and volume II lists for \$49, VGCA members can buy them directly from Larry for \$60 and \$40 each respectively - or \$90 total if you buy both. Look for Larry Babcock set up near the VGCA recruiting table at the next Chantilly Gun Show or order from him directly at [larrybab@comcast.net](mailto:larrybab@comcast.net) / or text to 703-856-2561.

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**WANT TO BUY:**

★ Browning lever action Gold Medallion, short action, blue or silver.

Also: Browning lever action with pistol grip and take down. Prefer .308 but any considered.

Call King at 703 576-7016, if no answer leave name and number with brief description.

Thank you, King von Schilling

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