

MY SKEET HISTORY
Believe It Or Not
By
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As an old man, over the last 63 years, I have had many interesting experiences. You may find some of these things rather hard to believe. They did happen.

One afternoon I went down to Southern Hills to practice. I was standing outside the clubhouse, watching people shoot on the north skeet field. I saw Don Hill, one of Oklahoma's greatest shooters ever, miss a target. Don immediately took the gun by the barrel, took about three running steps and hurl the gun with all his force. I heard a whoosh whoosh whoosh as the gun sailed through the air. When it hit the ground, pieces of wood went everywhere. Don turned around and walked into the club house. About 15 minutes later, Don emerged from the clubhouse, walked out and retrieved the gun and left.

My shooting partner, Don Freely returned from shooting in Colorado Springs. He told me that he was shooting with Mike Annan, one of Colorado's greats. Mike missed a target and walked over to a telephone pole. He began to threaten the pole as he swung the Krieghoff by the barrel. Don asked one of the shooters if Mike might hit that pole with his Krieghoff. The man said, I don't know if he will or not, but I will tell you what he did do.

The man said that after a shoot the previous year, Mike walked out into the gravel parking lot, threw his Krieghoff down, got into his pick-up and ran it back and forth over the gun.

I wasn't sure if I believed the story was true or not. A few years later, I was reading the latest Skeet Review. I looked at the guns for sale section. I saw an ad which read "Two Krieghoff four-barrel sets for sale, one like new, one slightly used with scratches" The address was a P.O. Box in Aspen Colorado. Mike Annan lived in Aspen.

Mike Annan's wife, Marjorie, was one of the great women shooters of that era. At a major shoot, while about 8 months pregnant, Marjorie ran a 100. A doctor who had also just shot 100 wasn't looking forward to having to shoot off with Marjorie. He went to shoot management and tried to get her disqualified. He claimed that as a doctor, he considered her too pregnant to be shooting. He lost his plea.

While in Kansas City, John Christopher and I went out to shoot practice. John brought his son Mike with him. Mike stepped up on station 3 and called for the high house. When he fired, there was a loud blast. The muzzle of the gun looked like a peeled banana. John was furious. He declared; you stuck the muzzle in the ground. Mike was saying, I did not, I did not. John said yes you did and I will find where. Believe it or not, John found a spot on the ground, with a perfect little hole in the ground!

Later, here in Tulsa, my good friend Shane Cornell's son Steve did exactly the same thing. However, they were able to salvage the barrel by cutting it off and installing a Cutts compensator.

At a big shoot at Tinker AFB we were shooting the twelve-gauge event, when an individual with a model airplane began to buzz the skeet fields. It would fly down the line of skeet fields, turn and come back the other way. As you might imagine, that was providing a major distraction for the shooters. I wondered if someone might shoot it down. This continued a while until Harry Proffitt got into his car and drove down to where the operator of the airplane was. He politely explained to the operator, that if the airplane made one more pass over the skeet fields, it would not return. Not surprisingly, the airplane did not return to the skeet fields.

Over the years, I have seen two examples of fore ends of twelve-gauge guns which were fired with a twenty-gauge shell lodged in the barrel ahead of a twelve-gauge shell. The results are disastrous. The blowout is always just where the shooters hand would be. One of the examples was on the wall at the Ft. Leavenworth Gun Club.

Years later, after returning to Tulsa, I was asked if I would like to go quail hunting. I said yes, and was ready to go the next morning. When I was preparing, I took twelve-gauge shells off my reloading bench. When we were in the field, I loaded the gun and off we went. Shortly thereafter we got into quail. I swung on a bird and pulled the trigger. All I heard was a click. I opened the gun and found no shell in the chamber. I didn't understand how that had happened, however I put a fresh shell in the chamber and proceeded on until noon.

We returned to have our lunch and I pulled the bolt back and took the fresh shell from the chamber. With the bolt back, I laid the gun on the dog trailer and had lunch.

After lunch, I picked the gun up, with the muzzle pointed upward. I was stunned when a shell dropped out. The shell was a twenty-gauge shell! Had I dropped in another twelve-gauge shell, I would have been primed for disaster! I had been hunting with a loaded twenty-gauge shell ahead of a twelve-gauge shell. Since I had seen examples of that happening, I was stunned and scared by what I had done.

The twenty-gauge shell was a red Winchester as were all my twelve-gauge shells. I always loaded both red 20's and red 12's. When arriving home, I got rid of all my red twenty-gauge hulls. By this time all the manufacturers were making twenty-gauge in yellow hulls. I got the message!

At the World Shoot one-year, Iowan Boyd Wickman shot his first 100 with the .410. He was elated. Shortly thereafter before the shoot-offs could start, Boyd collapsed of a heart attack, and died. That was unfortunate for his family, however were those who said, what a great way to go.

The 1968 world twelve-gauge championship in Bucyrus Kansas resulted in a tie, for the only time in skeet history. Al Buntrock and Tom Heffron were in a lengthy shoot-off and they decided to finally stop and declare themselves co-winners. The NSSA declared that from here forward, there will always be a winner.

There was a big shoot at Tinker AFB one year where the wind was unbelievable. I was astounded at what a pair of shooters did to overcome the wind. When Joe Orr stepped onto the station, he would have his two-man team partner, Tom Bunger, step up behind him. Once Orr was ready to call for the target, he would have Tom Bunger hold onto his shooting vest to stabilize him. I would have thought that would be illegal, however no one ever protested.

My good friend Earnest Dorsey was shooting a twelve-gauge event with his 1100, when the gun blew apart as the gun went off. When Earnie shot, the barrel ring broke loose from the barrel. Infuriated Dorsey flung the gun, breaking the stock. As the gun flew onto the next field past where Tommy Housh was shooting, Tommy called out, "I think I just saw an 1100 fly by".