

## MY SKEET HISTORY

John McKinney

I grew up around guns. As a boy, I always enjoyed going target practicing with my mother and father. Mother was an accomplished pistol shot and my father grew up when you could legally shoot ducks with a rifle. I was amazed at his ability to shoot birds on the wing. At age 10, I was given my father's Winchester .22WRF rifle. However, I could not take it out unless with my parents. Later on, I got my first shotgun, a Stevens .410 bolt action. As I got a little older, I was allowed to go hunting all over the adjacent Osage county, which was just behind our family residence. I liked to hunt doves, rabbits and squirrels.

When I was age 17 and a senior in high school in 1953, my aunt took me out to the Tulsa Gun Club to try shooting skeet. Off we went with my 20-gauge Stevens double barrel and a box of 6's. I had never seen skeet shooting, however I did manage to break a 17. My aunt was so thrilled at my success that she convinced my father to enter me in a forth coming skeet tournament. That was a big deal as we had very little money. Had I known what was coming, I would have told my father to keep the money. I was a junior shooter and would be competing against the great future hall of fame junior shooter, Jimmy Clark, from Bartlesville. You don't have to guess what happened there.

That temporarily ended my skeet career until I returned from Air National Guard boot camp in San Antonio, Texas in December 1959. At boot camp I met Lynn Geyer and found that we both liked to shoot. In 1960 we joined the Tulsa Gun Club and began practicing skeet. We shot as much as possible considering our limited income. That was when I met Bob Omstead and we also became inseparable friends.

In October 1961 our guard unit was activated for a crisis with Russia in Berlin. My friend, Lynn Geyer, began investigating how the base might assemble a skeet team to compete where there was a military 5-man team event. Surprisingly, we got the okay and assembled a team. Our first shoot was the Military Air Transport Service championships, at Scott Field, Illinois. We got the use of a staff car and a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant chaperone. When we arrived for the shoot, we only had 12-gauge guns, however several people loaned us guns for the other gauges. The Surgeon General for the Air Force, General Ken Pletcher, was hosting the pre-shoot dinner. Pletcher was an avid skeet shooter. He was also a NSSA President in later years. If I am not mistaken, he shot for 57 years. He was happy to see an ANG team was there and he gave us tickets for dinner on the Mississippi riverboat, the Admiral, for the next night. That shoot began my consecutive years run at skeet shooting.

During that time, we also shot at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, where I broke a 95 to win E-Class, shooting my Model 12 Winchester. They were still using soldiers to individually place a single target on the throwing arm at that time. Later in the year we got to go to Ent Air Force base, in Colorado, to shoot. In those days, you first shot singles, then went around to shoot doubles. Shortly thereafter the game was changed to speed up, where you shot the singles, followed by the double while at the station.

After our year of active duty, Lynn and I continued to shoot skeet in registered shoots. I remember a shoot at the Tulsa Gun Club, where I thought, I was going to get my first 100. In those days, you shot down the line. You started on one field and progressed to shoot the next consecutive fields. I was down to field 4, preparing to shoot my last 25, when someone came down from the club house and said to me, "hurry up and finish this last 25 because we are up at the club house, waiting for you to start the shoot off". Naturally, that rattled me and I broke a 21, and finished with a 96.

In the State Championships in 1965 I had just finished shooting the first 2 fields and was down 2 targets when my IBM boss, Rex Coffman, arrived. Rex was an accomplished motivational speaker. He gave me a pep talk and I finished with a 98 and won C Class. Lynn Geyer and I had entered the two-man team event, and Lynn shot a 99 in either A or B class. In the ensuing shoot-off, I missed a target and we lost.

The 12- and 20-gauge championships were won by Gene Sears. I found that interesting as Gene Sears was also the Oklahoma State trap champion. Gene also won the .410 state skeet championship in 1966. In all my years, I never saw Gene Sears ever shoot skeet again. Gene passed away in 2022. He was an ATA hall of famer as well as a perennial trap shooting champion. Gene founded the Sears Shooting Supply, in El Reno Oklahoma, and was a well-known supplier of guns and shooting supplies. Sears Shooting Supply is still a major supplier today.

In those years silverware and trophies were the prizes. At this particular shoot, the prizes were silverware. Money was never a prize, since if you won money in any sport, you were disqualified from competing in any Olympic sport. Even when money became acceptable for adults, junior prizes were never money.

Over the years my dear friend, Walt Matteson, and his daughter Jodie, had a house full of skeet trophies. In later years, Walt resorted to using many of these old trophies as duck decoy weights. They were rather cumbersome however they were less expensive than decoy weights.

For the next few years, I shot locally at the Tulsa Gun Club, Red Castle Gun Club, Skiatook Sportsman's Club and Tinker Air Force Base. Lynn and I shot together just about all the time. Lynn found a shoot at the old Pajaro Gun Club in Ft. Smith, Arkansas, so we decided to go there. I remember that they also shot live pigeons there, so I took my Charles Daly trap gun along. I enjoyed the live bird shooting so much that I spent every dollar that I had shooting pigeons, and did not shoot in the skeet shoot. There was a lot of money in the gun club and they drew a lot of wealthy shooters.

During those years, a lady by the name of Daphne Muchnic, from Atchison Kansas, would always be there. The family owned the Locomotive Finished Products company. Her husband was into sailboat racing and did his thing while Daphne was on the skeet tour. She was gorgeous, a fantastic shot. One of the best women shooters in America.

The money shoots in the bird ring were expensive. You had 2 shots to kill the bird in the ring, however Daphne always blistered the bird on her first shot and never needed the second shot. If

you had the bird crippled and down in the ring after 2 shots, you had the option of sending the bird boys after the cripple. If the bird got outside the ring, he was a lost bird.

Daphne shot a gold F Grade Remington 1100, and I remembered watching her cripple the bird on the first shot, however the gun jammed with the empty shell caught in the ejection port. Since there was no such thing as a gun malfunction, that bird cost Daphne a lot of money.

The gun club also would have a party somewhere, along with a big Calcutta. That was in the 60's when a dollar was a dollar. The Calcutta's would always be in excess of \$10,000. That would be a staggering amount of money in today's dollars.

Bo Echols's family owned the Merchants National Bank in Ft. Smith and both Bo's father and uncle were great shooters. They helped put on the great shoots in Ft. Smith. Most of today's shooters know Bo Echols. Bo is probably a better shot than either his father or uncle. Ft. Smith had a number of great shooters, including Billy Echols, Mont Echols, John Smith, Fred Valance and Larry Randall. Larry Randall owned the Ford agency and traveled to Spain to shoot live birds.

Among the Tulsa shooters of that era was Ralph Couch, who owned Couch Pharmacies. Ralph was a rather eccentric fellow who also went to Spain to shoot live birds. On one trip, Ralph was second in the Spanish Live Bird Championships. He brought the Madrid Spain newspaper back and posted it on the wall at the Southern Hills Gun Club. The big headline was "Senior So and So was numero uno and Senior Ralph Couch de Los Estados Unidos esta numero dos". That said that Ralph Couch of the United States was second.

As I said, Ralph was a bit eccentric, and he took his Jaguar automobile to Europe when he traveled there. He didn't like the Germans practically running him off the road on the autobahn. Finally, he decided to take the Jaguar to the Chapparral racing team and have them put a Chevy 327 in the Jaguar. He returned to Europe to Germany and loved outrunning the BMW's and Mercedes.

In his later years, Ralph wore the same attire most every time. It was tennis shoes, purple socks, black Bermuda shorts and a Flamenco dancer's black hat which had little white balls dangling from the brim. He was easily quite identifiable.

In the mid sixties there was a well to do Southern Hills shooter who was the owner of a construction company. Unfortunately, his name escapes me today. He thought that indoor skeet shooting would attract a number of shooters. He opened an indoor skeet shooting range on south Yale at about 48<sup>th</sup> street. Leagues were organized, much like bowling. Shooters used .22 smoothbore rifles firing shotshells at reduced sized clay targets. Unfortunately, it was a short-lived fad, and did not last.

During those years George Beavers and his wife Betty were good friends with Jim Bevers and his wife Clara. George and Jim would shoot and Betty and Clara would run the shoot. Betty and Clara were women who were unsung heroes as they donated countless hours helping run the

shoots in both Oklahoma and Arkansas. Both George and Jim were inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Another great shooter was Fred Peters. Fred often shot with Jim and Kevin Prall, however they normally only concentrated on major shoots around the country. Fred shot Remington guns and always had the parts to fix almost any problem. More than once, Fred fixed a problem on one of my Remington's and never took a dime for his parts or time. He never allowed me to so much as even buy his lunch. Fred was an absolute gentleman. In 1990 Fred was inducted into the Oklahoma Skeet Hall of Fame. A well-deserved honor.

The favorite gun of the era was the Model 12 Winchester pump gun, although some shooters preferred a side-by-side double. I always wanted a Model 12; however, the skeet guns were highly desirable and expensive. My alternative was to buy a used field grade Model 12 with a 30" barrel and send it to Simmons Specialties in Kansas City to have the barrel cut down to 26" and a ventilated rib installed. Simmons did all that and re-blued the gun for only \$25. When I got the gun back, I contacted a gentleman named Ernest Pohl, who lived in Tulsa and was a co-owner in Bishop stocks. He got me a nice stock and a big fore end and I was ready to go.

When today's shooters look at the scores from back then, they probably thought the shooters of that era were not as good as today's shooters. Not so! The guns, ammunition and accessories were substandard compared to today's products. Remember, it was 1966 before anyone ever shot a 100 with a .410. Kenny Barnes did that with a whippy little six-pound Model 42 Winchester pump gun and ammunition that lacked pellet protector wads. I can only wonder what Kenny Barnes could have done with one of today's balanced, tube sets and modern ammunition.

As time passed, Lynn and I continued to shoot as much as we could afford. During the 60's we competed against with any number of the great, old time, Tulsa shooters. People like Bob Omstead, Jim Durham, Don Hill, Jesse Vint, Walt Matteson, Lloyd Johnson, Lee McBride, Tex Ritterbusch, and the newcomer kid, Harry Proffitt. All these people made major contributions to Oklahoma skeet and were well known names. Most are in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Jesse Vint and Don Hill were well to do Tulsa businessmen. Jesse was the President of Unit Rig and Don Hill was the founder of Grant Manufacturing. I always found it unusual that they had married sisters. Both men lived into their 90's. Don Hill attended 13 World Skeet shoots before his passing in 2010. He was also a WWII veteran. His home adjoined the Southern Hills property. Both men were early inductees into the Hall of Fame.

I was fortunate enough to get to shoot on 5-man teams with Jesse Vint several times. Jesse was one of those people who was everybody's friend. I really liked Jesse. He was also a bit eccentric. I can remember more than once, when I saw Jesse stop shooting long enough to take his Model 42 Winchester .410 over to the nearest car. He would put the barrel of the gun between the bumper and the frame of the car, and give the gun a couple of big tugs. He would look down the barrel and say, "now it looks right", and he would return to shooting. I remember the last time that I saw Jesse. I was at a shoot at Oil Cap. I was walking from the club house to the parking lot and I saw an elderly gentleman hobbling toward me. As he approached me, he said "Hi, I'm Jesse Vint". I was embarrassed that I had not immediately recognized him, although he had not

shot for years. He told me that he wanted to come to the gun club to see if any of his old-time friends were here. I found it amazing, that well into his 90's, he would want to return to the gun club. Jesse passed away shortly thereafter. Jesse Vint's son, Jesse Vint Jr, is a Hollywood movie actor and director.

Our five-man team included Walt Matteson, Jodie Matteson, Jesse Vint, Tommy Leach and myself. Tommy Leach was a good junior shooter from Ada, who was good friends with Jodie Matteson. Jodie and Tommy were outstanding junior shooters.

OSSA officers in the late 1970s, Don Hill and Jim Durham established an investment account for the OSSA, to guarantee the organization's financial stability for future years. Jim Durham and Don Hill were the creators of the Oklahoma Skeet Hall of Fame.

Bob Omstead was the owner of the Omstead Service company and a major contributor to Oklahoma Skeet. I recall shooting with Bob in a tournament when a trap broke down on an adjacent field. Bob immediately stopped shooting and left to go repair the malfunctioning machine. Bob frequently donated appliances to local gun clubs, as well as his time.

When Winchester discontinued the Model 42 .410, Bob bought one of the last 3 guns that Simmons built. Most people today do not know that Winchester never put a vent rib on a Model 42. Simmons Specialties put their ribs on the guns for Winchester.

Bob bought the gun from Dong's Sporting Goods, here in Tulsa, and paid \$150 for the gun. I wanted one of the guns, as they were highly desirable and the most often used in skeet. I immediately went to Dong's and began to dicker with Fong Dong. I thought we were in agreement on a \$150 price. As I was reaching in my pocket for the money, Fong said "you go see Mae Dong". I told Mae of the deal Fong and I had made and she immediately said "Fong, Fong, no can do". She would not agree on \$150, she wanted \$160. I thought that she would give me the same deal that Bob got, but I was wrong, I passed on the deal. One of the worst decisions I ever made in my life.

Fong Dong was a skeet shooter as well as a trap shooter. I remember once when Fong came to Southern Hills for a skeet shoot. We had just had a big rainstorm. The parking lot was full, so Fong parked on the adjacent grass. After shooting, he came out to get his van. He started the van; however it would not move as it was stuck in the mud. Fong got help to push the van, but to no avail. Mae Dong came out and she called out called to Fong, "Fong, Fong, have good idea". Fong quickly told her to go back in the club house. The van was still unmoved when Mae came out and again called out "Fong, Fong, have good idea". Once again Fong told her to go back inside. Finally, Mae came out for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. This time she could not contain herself and she said "Fong, Fong, have good idea, call twiple AAA". I just about fell over laughing.

Lloyd Johnson was an executive at Amoco who was a perennial contender at all the major shoots in the Tulsa area.

Lee McBride was a great shot who was always a contender.

Tex Ritterbusch was a Vice President at the Dover Corp, who was a good shot and a frequent contender.

Today, the kid, Harry Proffitt, still occasionally shoots. "The kid" is now in his 70's and is a power to be reckoned with even today. He grew up working as a trap boy for Walter Dinger at Southern Hills Gun Club. Harry earned the nickname that all the old timers call him. The Iron Man. Harry got that nickname at the World Shoot in Savannah. He made the shoot off with 100 in the 20 gauge and then shot for 10 hours, with a 15-minute break each hour, until he finally finished second. What a performance.

Glasses became mandatory after Henry Joy shot out his own right eye. He learned to shoot lefthanded and became one of the best shots in the country. No one used ear protection and that's why all us old timers have hearing problems. Finally, in the late 60's you started to see ear protection. Early protection was the ear muffs, and non-believers would ridicule the wearers telling them that they looked like Mickey Mouse. It wasn't long until ear protection became mandatory.

Most of today's shooters have little or no knowledge of the contribution Oklahoma shooters made to the game of skeet in years gone by. Most of those people are in the Oklahoma Skeet Hall of Fame, however many do not recognize their names. Robert Parker, Jack Lindsey, Jimmy Clark, Ethel Balch, Jim Prall, Billy Clayton, Bo Staten, C. E. Heath, and Walter Dinger. Most were nationally recognized players in the 1930's, 40's and 50's. Walter Dinger ran the Southern Hills Gun Club for decades. He also was the World 12 Gauge Champion in San Francisco in 1939.

Oklahoma also has had its share of other world champions. Billy Clayton won the 28 Gauge World Championship in 1935, as well as the 1936 HOA and 1936 .410 World Championship. Robert Parker (Parker Drilling), won the HOA in 1939 and the 20 Gauge World Championship in 1940. Jack Lindsey won the 1938 28 Gauge World Championship as well as the 1938 HOA.

Jim Prall won the World 12 Gauge Championship in 1965 and then he won the World .410 Championship in 1967. In the 1960's, it was my opinion that Jim Prall was the best shotgun shot in the world. Jim began his shooting career at the Remington Gun Club at Lordship Point as a junior shooter. He fulfilled his military obligation shooting on the USAF Skeet Team. After a lengthy shooting career as an amateur, Jim went to work for Remington as a professional shooter, known then as an Industry class shooter. I was so impressed by Jim's shooting that I once decided to see just how many times that Jim's name was in the NSSA records. After finding his name 52 times in the records, I quit counting. Today, Jim owns and operates Tulsa's premier gun store, Sports World. His son, Kevin, was an accomplished young shooter who, unfortunately sustained a career ending back injury in an automobile accident.

In 1979, Tommy Oliver, a school Principal from Ada, won the World 20 Gauge Championship. Tommy Oliver, along with Harry Proffitt, had joined Jim Prall to originally create Sports World, however Jim Prall soon became the sole proprietor of Sports World.

Oklahoma women have played a major role in women's skeet. Walter Dinger's great granddaughter, Jodie Matteson went on to become one of the 4 women to ever win a world class open title shooting against men. Kathy Drennan did likewise. Both Jodie and Kathy won in 1985 when Kathy won the Champion of Champions event and Jodie won the World's Doubles Championship. Previously, the only time a woman ever won a world championship title was when Carola Mandel won the 20 gauge in 1954. Lori Desatoff later became the fourth woman to win.

Jim and Pauline McReynolds were inducted into the OSSA Hall of Fame, however they spent most of their time shooting elsewhere. Pauline was a great ladies shot.

In addition to Jimmy Clark, Oklahoma has produced other exceptional junior shooters. Ronnie Ford from Muskogee was an All-American Junior shooter as was David White from Tulsa. Jimmy Blackard, from Claremore, was an exceptional junior who was also an All-American Junior shooter. Occasionally, I would see Jimmy Blackard when I was practicing at Southern Hills Gun Club. Jimmy was always trying to hustle unsuspecting shooters. If they would spot him one target, he would bet them that he could beat them while shooting his Model 12 Winchester upside down. He usually won.

In 1987, Doug Thompson became the next Oklahoman to win a World Championship when he won the 28-gauge championship.

I doubt that anyone shooting today knows that the 1938 World Championships were held at the Southern Hills Gun Club, here in Tulsa. The gun club was run for years, first by Walter Dinger and then by his grandson, Walt Matteson. Something that always amazed me was that the City of Tulsa allowed the Southern Hills Gun Club to exist all those years, since it is against the law to discharge a firearm within the city limits.

In late 1968, I was promoted to Kansas City and decided that I wanted to get more serious about my shooting. Until this point, I had only shot in 12-gauge events since I did not have any of the other gauge guns. I met Don Freely, John Christopher and Jim and Joy Pope. We began shooting together and I shot with them for the next 7 years. During that time, we shot in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Colorado and Missouri.

Don and John always went down to Olathe on Saturday mornings to Simmons Specialties to see what was new down there. They knew the Simmons family and were able to get me a good price on a new 20-gauge 1100 skeet gun. As I was the sole breadwinner for a family of 4, shooting competitive skeet was a rather expensive sport.

While I was in Kansas City, I always got a call from Don Hill when there was going to be a big shoot at the Tulsa Gun Club. Don would ask me to bring a squad down to shoot and I was always quick to oblige. I remember 1969 quite well as that year Don Freely posted the highest 28-gauge average in the world. Don had a 99.6 average. Don Hill also had a record-breaking average in the 12 gauge that year.

There was a big gun club, the Winchester Gun Club, at Bucyrus, Kansas, where they held the 1968 World Skeet Championships. We went there to shoot, and after entering the shoot, I was talking with some of my newfound Kansas friends. They began to tell me of how difficult it would be to win anything here, as there were some of Kansas greatest shooters ever, here, making the competition very difficult. People like Tom Bunger, Jeff Glenn, Joe Orr, Les Kelly and Don Freely. I looked down the drive coming up to the club and saw a blue Pontiac GTO coming up to the clubhouse. I immediately recognized that as belonging to Walt Matteson, my dear friend, and one of Oklahoma's greatest shooters. When I told my Kansas friends about Walt, they continued to tell me all the virtues of the Kansas shooters. The Kansas people thought that a Kansas shooter would prevail. When it was all over, an Oklahoma great, Tommy Oliver, won the top prize, a new Chevy Vega, and drove it home. My friend, Walt Matteson was second in the 12-gauge event.

My neighbor, in Kansas City, was a fellow IBM'er Jack Harrell, just promoted to Kansas City from Tulsa. His son Mark, was at a loss for something to do, so his father asked us to take Mark to the gun club to try skeet shooting. Don Freely and I worked with Mark. Mark was doing well, so his father brought him a new Remington 870 skeet gun. Mark had exceptional reflexes. I remember Don Freely commenting, "Mark shoots high 2 before my eyes can focus on it". We asked Mark's father to enter him in a Junior event at the Winchester Gun Club at Bucyrus, Kansas, and he did so. It was a big shoot. Dr. John Shima flew in in his personal aircraft, along with his son, John Shima Jr. Mark shot a 95 and John Shima Jr. shot a 96. Marc was devastated that he had lost. I don't think that Mark ever competed in another skeet shoot after that. However, he had the distinction of saying that the last time he shot competitively, John Shima only beat him by one target.

While I lived in Kansas City, we all practiced at the 7&10 Gun Club. The club was named that as it was at the intersection of highways 7&10, just west of Kansas City. The club was primarily a trap gun club however they also had skeet fields. We were practicing one day, when we met a new shooter. All I remember is that his last name was West. He had just purchased a new sewing machine for his wife. As a reward for purchasing a new sewing machine, he was given a brand-new Winchester Model 1200 12-gauge pump shotgun. Probably the least expensive shot gun that Winchester ever produced. He had no use for the gun, so he gave it to his son, Tony. He and Tony were often practicing at the club, and as time passed, Tony became a very good shot. The family doted on Tony and he was soon given a high grade shot gun. Tony continued to improve and became an exceptional shot.

Tony came to Tulsa to shoot and he was taken in by the Prall family. I remember Jim Prall telling me that Tony West was about to eat him out of house and home. Tony had the misguided idea that he could make a living shooting skeet. Tony became friends with Jodie Matteson, and I recall their going to a turkey shoot at a Broken Arrow FFA club. When it was over Tony and Jodie had a carload of turkeys. I also remember that several of us once entered a trap shoot at Tulsa Gun Club. Tony West was there. He was shooting trap doubles. Some old-time trap shooters were sitting on the porch, watching Tony shoot.

Tony had never shot trap doubles and he did not know that he was shooting the wrong bird first, making it more difficult. He was shooting the straightaway as the second shot. The old timers



opted that he would not do very well shooting the wrong bird first. Tony won the trap doubles event with a 98, all the while shooting the wrong bird first.

Shortly thereafter, Tony was returning home to Kansas City, when he was involved in a head-on collision between his Corvette and a truck. Tony was killed instantaneously. What a waste of talent.

My good friend, Lynn Geyer was now in Phoenix and was the state manager for Brown and Foreman Distillers. Lynn was still an active shooter and he convinced Brown and Foreman to sponsor the Early Times Open at the Phoenix Gun Club. That became a big-time annual event. He called me and asked if I would come to Phoenix to shoot and I said yes. Don Freely and John Christopher also agreed to come. We joined with Lynn and his friend, Don McGaffe, to create a five-man team. There was also a big Calcutta and I got in, however when my name came up, no one bid, as no one in Phoenix knew me. My wife, Kathleen, bid a minimum of \$25 and bought me. Don Freely and I broke 100's and the rest of the squad broke 99's. We thought our 497 would be a sure winner, however the U.S. Navy Skeet Team beat us with a 498. After a big shoot off was over, Don Freely was the winner. The last man Freely put out was Harry Willsie, a Canadian, who had just won the English Commonwealth Games in Australia, and was on his way back to Canada. I remember all this well because it was the biggest skeet payday I ever had. My Calcutta winnings paid for our air travel, hotel, meals and all the turquoise jewelry that Kathleen bought.

My friend Lynn later created a gun company with his friends, Bruce Kinkner, (later a NSSA president), and Dennis Thomas. That was the well-known Southwest Shooters Supply. That was a part of Lynn's legacy for Arizona skeet.

While in Kansas City, we shot the 1971 World Championships, in San Antonio. It was August and hot, so we did not expect rain. It was also the first year for the new National Gun Club. Unbelievable to us, we were rained on all the way to San Antonio. During the week of the World Championships, it rained 14". The grass on the new fields quickly became a quagmire. It was never ending rain. They began to bring bales of hay to help soak up the mud. That brought up a new crisis. On occasion, they would open a hay bale and out would come a live rattlesnake. They killed a big one and posted it at the entrance of the Remington tent. I had not brought any rain gear as I thought surely it would end before my time to shoot. I finally realized that was not going to happen, so I began scouring San Antonio for rain gear. Finally, I was lucky enough to find a rain poncho and a pair of car wash rubber boots, in a liquor store. Our club five-man team, Don Freely, John Christopher, Jim Pope, Joy Pope and I, won medals in the Club Five Man Team events. Joy Pope won the D Class 20-gauge championship with a 96. She broke the last 66 targets straight, in a driving rainstorm.

In 1973, while still in Kansas City, we decided to go to the Colorado State Skeet championships, held at ENT AFB in Colorado Springs. That was a long drive. Surprising, my lone 100 won the 20 gauge. The event also included the Colorado State International Skeet championship. John Christopher and I opted in. I had never seen an international target. For the uninitiated, international skeet is a totally different game. We all know that in American skeet, the target must travel 60 yards in still air. In International skeet, the target must travel 70 meters in still air.

That requires a harder target. Also, the gun must be held in the low gun position until the target appears. There is a 0 to 3 second random delay before the target appears. As you might imagine, station 8 was the most difficult target. John Christopher wanted to shoot my Krieghoff, so we passed the gun back and forth. I don't recall what John's score was, however I shot a 91. Naturally, I won nothing, however I was pleased with my score.

The military bases often offered international events, so when we returned home, I decided that I would like to try shooting another international shoot. I went to Richards-Gebaur AFB, Missouri, where there was an international event. That time I shot an 89, again for naught

In 1974, the Kansas State Championship was held at the Topeka Gun Club. I really didn't enjoy shooting there as the club was built in a bowl, surrounded by large trees. Shooting targets there was like shooting targets traveling behind a picket fence. In those years, Kansas had it's share of great skeet shooters there. They included Don Freely, Les Kelly, Jeff Glenn, Tom Bunger and Joe Orr. Unbelievably, when it ended, my 100 was the 20-gauge winner.

Also, in 1974, the world championships returned to San Antonio. For several months before the shoot, I had a premonition that I would shoot 100 with the 20 gauge. The night before the 20 gauge, I couldn't sleep. At breakfast I met the other squad members at a restaurant. I was extremely nervous and could not eat. After we had shot 75 targets, I was still straight. Someone asked our squad leader, Don Freely, when we would start the last round. Don said, "we will start when this man is ready". He was referring to me as he didn't want us to start until I was ready. We soon started the last round and I was able to finish the last round straight for 100. I went out of the shoot-off fairly early. All I got was a 100X100 pin. It was eerie as I never had that premonition ever again in my life.

In 1975 we moved back to Tulsa and picked up where I left off. Walt Matteson was now running the Southern Hills Gun Club, when up came a big Cadillac. Surprisingly, out stepped my old friend, Bob Omstead. Bob had gotten out of the game when I moved away, however he heard the gunfire and decided to come down and see who was there. It was as though we had never separated. We now not only shot skeet everywhere, we also did a lot of bird hunting together.

Shortly thereafter, I purchased a matched pair of Remington 1100 28 gauge and .410 shotguns. Now, at last, I could become a 4-gun shooter.

One day, Harry Proffitt and I were discussing international skeet, and I told him of my experience with international skeet. I found that Harry was one of the people who could get you a tryout for the 1976 US Olympic International Skeet team. Harry volunteered to get me a tryout. The tryouts were being held in St. Louis. I knew that there were not a lot of international style shooters in the US. However, I also knew there were several outstanding shooters. The top candidates all came from the military. I knew that I would not have a chance competing against them, so I declined Harry's offer.

About then I met Larry (L.T.) Drennan, an icon in Oklahoma skeet. Larry was a USMC Major who did three combat tours in Vietnam. Larry competed for more than 60 years, winning numerous titles and events. Larry lived in Ada, Oklahoma and donated countless hours to the

advancement of the Ada Gun Club and Oklahoma skeet. Larry competed up into his 90's, before passing in 2021. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Skeet Hall of Fame in 1988 along with his daughter Kathryn.

At this point in time, Ken Reid came to town in the IBM office. Ken wouldn't take no for an answer when it came to learning how to shoot skeet. He quickly became a part of our group. Gary Schuetz moved from Kansas City to Tulsa with IBM. He also wanted to learn to shoot so as to improve his bird hunting skill. As a result of his skeet education, Gary Schuetz ended up in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Also, Steve Merrifield, an IBM rookie, wanted to learn to shoot and he was taken under the wing. Walt Matteson was also one of our group, and we all spent a lot of time shooting with Walt at Southern Hills. The group also bird hunted a lot together.

Walt would have skeet shoots at Southern Hills and have a big Calcutta, usually at a local restaurant. Calcutta's normally would auction the shooters off as a single entity, however they were beginning to lose interest with the shooters, so we designed 3-man team Calcutta's. Each 3-man team would have a very good shooter, a good shooter and a lesser class shooter. This introduced a randomness so as to make team selection more complicated. They were well accepted and the concept found its way to the big gun clubs in Texas. The Texas people liked to say that they conceived the idea of the 3-man team Calcutta, however in reality, it had its inception here in Tulsa.

Later, in 1980, the management at the Tulsa Gun Club decided not to hold registered skeet shoots. Since we were wanting to have some larger shoots, we wanted the use of the Tulsa Gun Club facilities. Several of us got together and made the Tulsa Gun Club an offer they couldn't refuse. Give us the facilities in good working order, and we will pay you a fixed price for every target that we throw. The management agreed and we started holding registered shoots there. We held some of the largest skeet shoots in Oklahoma history. We had one large shoot I remember. We shot a total of just over 300 guns in a time where there was no doubles event. The shoot drew a number of the outstanding Texas shooters, including Phil Murray, Tal Sprinkles and I think that Tito Killian was also here. When all the bills were paid, we divided the proceeds equally among the group. The group included Ken Reid, Walt Matteson, Harry Proffitt, Gary Schuetz, Jim Durham, Steve Merrifield and myself. Jim Durham was a huge contributor to national skeet, and he would always endorse his check over to the NSSA. During his career, Jim was both the OSSA and the NSSA president as well as the owner of Radio Inc, a local electronics business.

Later, I recall that when I was on the OSSA Hall of Fame Selection Committee, that I learned a lot about Jim Durham. Jim was a small, quiet, unassuming man who was a generous philanthropist. He was also an OSSA hall of famer. I needed access to some old records that Jim had. Jim invited my wife Jan to come along and visit with his wife, Eleanor, while I reviewed the records. When I finished, Eleanor wanted us to see their new home. She took us to see the study, which was Jim's office. Jim had several plaques and awards throughout the room as he was active in many civic organizations and had received numerous awards. Jan looked down on his desk and saw several small medals. She asked him what they were. Jim replied that they were reduced copies of medals he had received. He explained that he had lost the originals and had been sent these as replacements. Jan selected one and asked what it was. Jim said that that one was for the Italian Campaign. One by one Jan asked about the medals. When Jan picked up the

last medal, I already knew what it was. It was a Bronze Star. Jim had won the Bronze Star, for bravery and gotten a battlefield promotion to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. I had known Jim for almost 30 years, yet I never knew that. It reminded me of a saying that I had coined years ago. You don't know, what you don't know!

Cal McKee was another old timer who was a WWII army veteran. Cal was a paratrooper, and in his later years, the Tulsa World printed articles of his wartime experiences two times. He is also in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. After WWII, Cal used the GI bill to attend college, where he graduated to become the President of Warren Petroleum. Cal shot skeet for almost 40 years.

In 1983, several of us elected to go to the World Shoot. The group included Walt and Jodie Matteson, Ken Reid, Gary Schuetz, Steve Merrifield, Kyle Omstead and myself. A lot of other Oklahomans were also in attendance that year. Ken Reid and I had 100's in the 20 gauge, however we went out fairly early in the shoot off. All we won were 100X100 pins. The 12 gauge was a 250-target event, divided into the Eastern and Western Open, each was 125 targets. At the end of the Eastern Open, Walt Matteson had a 125. The shoot off started on several fields and was finally reduced to one field. They were shooting doubles at 3, 4, and 5. Walt was easy to keep track of as he was wearing his usual yellow vest, with the state of Oklahoma, an oil derrick, and a quail emblazoned on the vest. When it got down to Walt and one other shooter, the OSSA Skeet President, Carl Dewberry, reached into his pocket and held up a wad of bills. Knowing Walt was a good doubles shooter, he yelled "I am betting on the boy with the yellow vest". He was quickly surrounded by takers.

Both shooters were shooting Cutts compensator guns, which was unusual. Some of the old timers referred to the compensators as "flutes". Walt had his 1100 and the other shooter had a Winchester 1400 with a blond stock. They began, and shot a box of shells straight. At the end of the round, they retired to get another box of shells. The other shooter was stacking his doubles over the center stake. As I poured a fresh box of shells into Walt's vest pocket, he remarked, "I don't know who this silly SOB is, but he has a .755 tube in that Cutts and I shoot ducks at 40 yards with a .755 tube". The shoot off wore on, and finally Walt lost. That was when we all learned who Wayne Mayes was.

Wayne Mayes was the greatest skeet shooter of that era. Unfortunately, in 2013, his career was cut short when he ignited gun powder and suffered fatal injuries from the burns he sustained.

Every year at the end of the skeet season, Walt Matteson would host a game dinner at the Southern Hills Gun Club. Everyone brought their own game dish specialty. Old time skeet shooters were always invited to attend. I remember, as an old gentleman walked past our table, his friend called out, "When you go inside, get some of that roast beef, it's excellent". Little did he know that he would be eating Ken Reid's smoked mallard. Ken was a great cook and always did the cooking on our hunting trips.

No game dinner was complete without the front porch shoot. It was a measured 42 yards from the front of the clubhouse porch to the center stake on the north skeet field. You paid your money and you took your chances. If you broke the target you stayed in the race. From the front

porch, shooting the high house target on the north field was akin to shooting a 42-yard high five. More than once, Jim Prall won, shooting a .410.

After the shoot, everyone would convene into the clubhouse for the roast. It was a noisy party where almost everyone was roasted over some minor sin or stupid thing that they done over the previous year. It was all in fun and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the show.

The history of the Southern Hill Gun Club and Walter Dinger, was carried on by his grandson, Walt Matteson, until Walt's passing in the late 90's. Over the course of the years, which I was shooting there, the Southern Hills Gun Club produced a total of eight Oklahoma Hall of Fame shooters.

Today, the Southern Hills Gun Club is no more, as Southern Hills demolished the club to make way for a par three golf course. Almost 50 years of skeet history, gone.

Throughout the 1990's I shot almost every shoot that Oil Capital Gun Club had, as that was my home club. In the mid-nineties I shot my best 12-gauge average ever. I shot 1200 targets and missed 16 targets for a 98.67 average.

In the late 1990's, Jan and I were playing golf at Indian Springs Country Club, when we met Ray and Helen Vaslavsky. Ray wanted to get into skeet shooting. I suggested the Oil Capital gun club and Ray promptly joined. Ray and I, along with Earnest Dorsey, practiced together. Ray wanted to get into shooting registered shoots. Soon thereafter he wanted to conduct a registered shoot. Earnie and I weren't so sure we wanted to get involved, however Ray convinced us to help run a shoot. I was responsible for the squadding, Ernie handled trap maintenance while Ray handled the inside work. Ray even convinced the wives into taking care of the food service. We did this a few times until Ray and Ernie choose to leave Oil Cap for the North American gun club. Shortly thereafter Oil Cap discontinued registered skeet shooting, as no one would step forward and take responsibility. That was really unfortunate.

Oil Cap was originally organized by McDonnell Douglas employees and was located in Catoosa at Spunky Creek. Harry Proffitt convinced them to put 2 skeet fields on the side of a hill. However, shortly thereafter, in the late 1970's, the club was forced to move due to housing encroachment. We moved to the newly selected property in Broken Arrow and started to develop the facilities. Jim Durham convinced the officers that we should create 8 skeet fields in order to potentially conduct an NSSA Zone skeet shoot.

Harry Proffitt, Harry Proffitt senior, Leroy Archer and I were selected to develop the clay target facilities. We did all the work in Leroy Archer's kitchen. We got the Remington Arms recommendations for skeet field layout and construction, and went to work. Oil Cap currently has 6 skeet fields since pistol shooters encroached on 2 of the potential skeet field locations.

Harlan and Beth Dobbs took responsibility for skeet tournament operations, along with Bill Brown. Over the years they conducted countless big skeet shoots and resulted in Oil Cap being recognized one year as the number one NSSA affiliated club in America. That plaque remains on the wall at Oil Cap to this day.

It is unfortunate that the club no longer conducts registered shoots as they have the premier location in the state since they have 6 skeet fields, each with a totally unobstructed background.

By 2000 I was shooting most of my targets locally. As the years passed, I shot fewer and fewer targets.

In January 2017 my old friend, Ray McCoy, called me and asked if I would like to join him on a winter skeet tour to Florida in his RV. I quickly agreed and we went St. Augustine to shoot, followed up with a seniors shoot in Jacksonville. Between shoots we played golf on a number of Florida courses. Florida was the last new state in which I shot. It was my 11<sup>th</sup> state. Since Ray wanted to shoot some of the bigger shoots, I took the opportunity to travel with him in his RV over the next few years, shooting in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas.

When Ray and I would travel to Arkansas and Texas, Ken Reid would come to join us and we would enjoy shooting together. Once, when we were in Dallas for the Pan Am, the winds were unbelievable. After the .410 event was over, many well known AA shooters had posted scores in the 80's. The winds were gusting to 40 mph and the targets were probably the worst I had ever seen. However, when the 28-gauge event was over, Ray McCoy was in a concurrent shoot-off along with Robert Paxton. The shoot-off quickly was reduced to Ray and Robert Paxton. The targets were so bad that the crowd was oohing and aahing with every pair of targets. McCoy finally won. After witnessing that, I am now able to say that I have seen Ray McCoy beat Robert Paxton in a shot-off.

My shooting skeet tournaments became less and less as the years passed; however I still love to shoot. The last few years have been spent practicing and shooting with my old friend, Earnest Dorsey. Since Earnie is almost as old as I am, we often discuss the past. Earnie is an unsung hero in Oklahoma skeet as he has been a competitive shooter and contributor for some 40 years. For years, Earnie was the guy to go to, to keep your machines running. Not only that, Earnie has been my gunsmith of choice for years. Recently, Earnie and I learned that we had tutored yet another OSSA Hall of Famer, when Ray Vaslavsky was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Over the past 63 years, I have shot competitively at some 37-gun clubs, located in 11 states. I have shot more than 160,000 targets, 10<sup>th</sup> most in Oklahoma history, and won 2 state championships outside Oklahoma. I've competed in 6 World Championships, twice shooting 100's in the 20 gauge. During the 1970's and 1980's, I shot a documented score of 95 or better more than 425 times, including 58 99's and 28 100's. I shot in A Class 327 times as well as 115 times in AA Class during those years. At this point, I am the longest LIVING competing NSSA member, as well as the third longest competing member in NSSA history. I doubt that any Oklahoman will ever surpass my longevity record.

Included are four of my old average cards from back then.

STATE	PLACE	12 GAUGE					20 GAUGE					28 GAUGE					410 GAUGE					SHOT BROK
		SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	
AN	SOUTHERN	100	96	.960	A																	
LD	SOUTHERN	100	92	.940	A																	
AR	SOUTHERN	100	93	.937	A																	
PK	SOUTHERN	100	97	.945	A																	
AV	TGC	100	96	.948	A	100	94	.940	AA	100	91	.910	AA	50	40	.800	A	100	86	.840	A	
AY	SOUTHERN	100	97	.951	A																	
JNE	FT. SMITH	100	90	.957	A																	
JNE	TINKER	100	90	.957	A																	
ULY	SAN ANTONIO	250	240	.759	A	100	93	.935	AA													
UG	TINKER	100	92	.961	A									100	93	.920	AA					
EPT	TGC	100	97	.962	A	100	95	.940	AA	100	96	.933	AA	100	90	.877	A					
CT	FT. SMITH	100	90	.964	A																	

NOTE: Use one line for entering 2 or 4 shot strings, 1st regular string, frequent combinations of multiple strings. Enter under CLASS, your 10th shot. Enter under P, your mid or 10th shot. Shooter is responsible for correct recording of data.

ENTER YOUR SCORE WHEN YOU FINISH SHOOTING. RECORD ALL SCORES FOR ONE SHOOT ON ONE LINE IF POSSIBLE.

DATE	PLACE	12 GAUGE					20 GAUGE					28 GAUGE					410 GAUGE					SHOT BROK	
		SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.		
B27	SOUTHERN H.	100	99	.990	A	1																	
AR20	SOUTHERN H.	100	98	.982	A	1	50	48	.960	A													
AR23	ADA						100	94	.946	A													
AY1	SOUTHERN H.	100	97	.980	A									50	48	.960	A	1	100	90	.895	A	
AY8	TGC	100	99	.982	A	2	100	97	.956	A	100	93	.940	A									
AY30	TINKER	100	100	.986	AA	2	100	97	.960	A	100	97	.952	A									
MY25	TINKER	100	96	.983	AA		100	93	.953	AA	100	90	.937	A									
LY3	SOUTHERN H.	100	95	.977	AA		50	47	.952	AA	50	46	.935	A									
G20	TGC	100	96	.975	AA		100	94	.950	AA	100	92	.933	A									
PT3	TINKER	100	96	.973	AA		100	92	.946	AA	100	90	.936	A									
IT2	TGC	100	97	.973	AA																		
IT8	FT. SMITH	100	98	.974	AA		100	96	.948	AA	100	96	.940	A									
IT6	TINKER	100	143	.971	AA																		

NOTE: Use one line for entering 2 or 4 shot strings, 1st regular string, frequent combinations of multiple strings. Enter under CLASS, your 10th shot. Enter under P, your mid or 10th shot. Shooter is responsible for correct recording of data.

ENTER YOUR SCORE WHEN YOU FINISH SHOOTING. RECORD ALL SCORES FOR ONE SHOOT ON ONE LINE IF POSSIBLE

DATE	PLACE	12 GAUGE					20 GAUGE					28 GAUGE					410 GAUGE					INTERNATIONAL										
		SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	
MAY 6	Tulsa	100	94	.940	AA		100	94	.940	A		100	97	.970	A		100	92	.920	A												
MAY 29	Oklahoma City	100	98	.960	AA		100	95	.945	A		100	94	.955	A		100	91	.915	A												
JUN 25	Oklahoma City	100	98	.967	AA																											
JUL 1	Ft. Smith	100	97	.968	AA		100	98	.957	A																						
JUL 14	Southern Hills	100	98	.970	AA		100	95	.955	A																						
JUL 31	San Antonio	250	241	.968	AA		100	96	.956	A		100	97	.960	A		100	92	.916	A												
AUG 19	Oklahoma City	100	99	.970	AA		100	94	.953	A		100	95	.958	AA		100	79	.885	A												
SEPT 4	Tulsa	100	97	.970	AA		100	95	.953	A		100	94	.954	AA		100	89	.886	A												
SEPT 24	Ada											100	94	.952	AA		100	91	.890	A												
OCT 1	Southern Hills	100	99	.973	AA																											
OCT 17	Ft. Smith	100	94	.969	AA		100	96	.958	A		100	95	.951	AA		100	82	.880	A												
OCT 15	Oklahoma City	150	144	.968	AA																											
		.9684					.9537					.9514					.8800					HOA										
		.9384																														

ENTER YOUR SCORE WHEN YOU FINISH SHOOTING. CHECK AGAINST SHOOT REPORT WHEN RECEIVED FROM CLUB

DATE	PLACE	12 GAUGE					20 GAUGE					28 GAUGE					410 GAUGE					DOUBLES											
		SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.	P.	SHOT	BROKE	AVG.	CL.								
3/29	Sand Springs	100	93	.930	A																												
4/13	TGC	100	96	.945	A		100	94	.940	A																							
5/17	TGC	100	98	.957	A																												
5/22	Tinker	100	96	.958	A		100	98	.960	A		100	96	.960	AA		100	90	.900	B													
6/7	TGC	100	97	.960	A							100	99	.975	AA																		
7/3	TGC	100	95	.958	A							100	98	.977	AA		100	88	.890	B													
7/25	San Antonio	250	236	.954	A		100	95	.957	A		100	95	.970	AA		100	95	.910	B													
8/9	TGC	100	95	.953	A							100	89	.954	AA																		
8/16	Ada						100	97	.960	A							100	93	.915	A													
8/30	Tinker	100	95	.953	A		100	97	.962	A																							
9/5	OIA	100	92	.950	A		100	97	.957	A		100	89	.943	AA		100	90	.912	A													
9/27	TGC						100	90	.948	A							100	90	.910	A													
10/2	SHGB						100	94	.948	A							100	91	.910	A													
		AA					AA					AA					AA																
		C					C					C					C																

From 1977 until 1992, I was in constant competition with Jesse Vint, Don Hill, Jim Durham, Walt Matteson, Jodie Matteson, L.T. Drennan, Kathy Drennan, Tex Ritterbusch, Harry Proffitt, Fred Peters, George Beavers, Jim Bevers, Cal McKee, Gary Schuetz, Dr. Jim Little, Alan Barnes, T.J. Johnstone, Gary Matthews, and upon occasion, Doug Thompson, as well as Jim and Pauline McReynolds. The notable thing regarding these aforementioned names is that all are in the Oklahoma Skeet Hall of Fame. I competed with the best shooters that Oklahoma had to offer. Most are deceased today.



Also, over the years, I represented Southern Hills, Tulsa Gun Club or Oil Capital at the OSSA for several times from 1987-2000. I served as Chief Referee under the Durham administration, as well as serving on the OSSA Hall of Fame Selection committee for 4 years from 1998-2001. Also, I was a Durham Award recipient in 2009. In 2015 I was a D Class All American Honorable Mention at the age of 80.

I have enjoyed the shooting and over the years I have met a lot of great people. Now I find myself an old man, approaching 90, who goes to skeet shoots knowing almost no one, since the players have changed so much over the last 60 plus years. Conversely, the new players see an old man, wondering why he would even be here, no better than he shoots.

I have taken this time to document the past for those who are here now, not knowing what came before them. They don't know, what they don't know.

I have written this, intending to expand the knowledge of local area skeet history, as well as document the past. The names included herein are people I was acquainted with.

Throughout the years there have been countless other wonderful people who were great shooters and/or donated countless hours to the advancement of local area skeet. If I failed to acknowledge you, I apologize.

John B. McKinney  
NSSA 34414  
March 22, 2024