



JULY AUGUST 2020



PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

The 2020 Michigan Rifle and Pistol State shoot is in the books. We were anxious to shoot and anxious to see how many people would come to shoot. Covid has canceled most shoots and events this year as you well know. Happily we had almost the same number of competitors this year as last. It was a good week of shooting.

We welcomed a new offhand overall championship this year. We honored our dearly departed friend and founding member Robert A. Elka with this new trophy. The combined scores of the open offhand aggregate and the flintlock offhand aggregate form the Elka championship. Our inaugural winner, Serge Bourdeaux,

received the new trophy from Mary and Bobby Elka. All three of them were overcome with emotion remembering Robert.

The lack of shoots, cancellation of the Kalamazoo Living history show and overall reduced travel led to serious concerns about this year's raffle. Steve Byers built us a beautiful 45 caliber Armstrong rifle. With the help of many people we pushed ticket sales thru emails, text messages, Facebook, MSMLA state website, and magazine articles. We received lots of mailed orders for tickets and phone calls for order info. The combination of all these efforts resulted in nearly normal sales figures.

This year's happy winner was Alan Jenkins. Alan purchased his winning ticket at the Lapeer Firelocks show this year. Alan, son of gun builder Neil Jenkins, was truly excited with his new rifle and immediately asked for Steve's phone number. He wanted to personally thank him for his work and get load information.

I want to thank the Grand Valley Cap n Ballers club for hosting us for the past 3years. They took great care of us as always. We had a great time. Next year we

will be at Laingsburg as guests of the Lansing Muzzle Loading Club. Hopefully things will return to something close to the normal we all knew. Next years state raffle rifle is being built by Joe Valentin. I am not sure what he is building, I only know it will be wonderful.

We are still looking for a knife builder for next year. If you would like to make a knife please contact me. We give a custom knife every year as the trophy for the Michigan State Championship aggregate. This is a special honor to have something you build become a treasured trophy. Please consider this project. It is a rewarding project.

Hopefully we will see you down the road. Stay safe and healthy, and continue to make smoke. Lyle

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STATE TRAILER

the shelving needs to be transferred from the old state trailer to our new state trailer. Give Jim Brotherton a call at 989-640-6433 or 517-882-4275 to set up a time to do this after the middle of August. The old state trailer will be moved to Laingsburg after the middle of August to make the transfer. Thank you in advance for the help.

TIME TO PRODUCE SOME FRUIT

Black powder club meetings are known for offhand comments. Some elicit laughter, some bring tears, some start turf wars, some are ignored, and sometimes a heartfelt statement blossoms and produces fruit. How the members handle an impromptu statement often reflects on the future success or failure of the club.



“Ladies Fun Tyme at the Range” began with such a comment. At a Sunday club shoot in 2009, Janet Tessman said, “I want to have a ladies shoot here in Michigan.”

In the casual loading-bench chatter that followed, Janet said “a ladies-only” shoot could be a new adventure for the club. She wanted to share her love for the black powder shooting sports with other women and introduce ladies to the joy and personal satisfaction that comes from mastering a muzzleloading rifle, pistol or shotgun. She felt, and others around her agreed, that if women became interested in the black powder shooting sports their families would join in, too. And then she added, “I hope other clubs in Michigan will host their own ladies-only events.”

The Grand Valley Cap ‘n Ballers™ Ladies Fun Tyme at the Range is beginning its second decade of laughter—“I’ve never seen ladies laugh so much at a shoot,” is the most often heard comment at the event. The same holds true for the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association’s National Women’s Weekend. The only disappointment is the idea hasn’t caught on with other Michigan clubs.

It is not too early to start looking ahead to next year’s black powder shooting season. Perhaps your club can hold a ladies-only black powder shoot, either for one day or a weekend? For most clubs, the physical structure exists, a match format is in place and a network of regular attendees is known.

The big question is, if someone suggested adding another open-to-the-public woods walk, or silhouette, or sporting clay match, how hard would it be? And if your club is small, why not join up with a neighboring club, alternating locations year to year?

Selecting a date is tricky, because Michigan, unlike many other states, has a pretty full roster of established muzzle loading shoots. Usually, upstate matches don’t conflict with down state events, and vice versa. Please keep in mind, the idea is to bring families into the black powder shooting sports, not split them up with dad going to a shoot that conflicts with a local ladies-only event.

The majority of ladies come alone; daughters and grandmothers are encouraged to attend. Some husbands tag along to help their wives and this nurturing attitude works, too. The men have to be conscious not to impose any pressure on the ladies. Organizers and range officers are responsible for maintaining a pleasant, learning environment.

The original intent of the lady's events was to emphasize "women helping women," but there simply aren't enough women instructors. For women starting out, the intimidation of shooting with the men is real issue. Newcomers tend to feel foolish when they make a mistake or something goes wrong. Every effort must be made to eliminate such an atmosphere.

Twenty-five yard targets work best, with one or two fifty-yarders. The women like a mix from novelty to standard bulls-eye, both big and small. Last year, one of the ladies said the standard chicken target "looks like a duck." Well, duck jokes became standard fare for that relay, and the scores reflected the abundant laughter, but everyone had fun. This is an introductory shoot; demonstrate the wide range of targets the sport offers, or a specific target which is unique to your club.

Keep in mind that experienced shooters will frequent your ladies-only matches, so two or three more difficult targets keep the veteran's on their toes. And with that, the novice shooter learns that with a little practice and patience, ladies are very good shots and tough competitors.

A luncheon allows the women to share a first morning at the black powder

range. Party subs, bagged chips, pop and water go easy on the club budget. Include the luncheon in the entry fee, put out a donation jar, or seek out a local sub or sandwich shop for a donation. If your club has a kitchen, go for it—but why aren't the ladies who usually fix the dogs and burgers not on the line shooting? Fellows, you have to step up.



Make provision for loaner guns. Some clubs have production muzzleloaders available with all the necessities, and many regular shooters keep one or more rifles in the car or truck for newcomers—just adjust the measure and cut down the charges.

Please plan ahead for women who just show up. This is the nature of "starting out from scratch." And above all, begin the event with a mandatory safety meeting, presented by a certified range officer or black powder instructor. Include the basics of loading, as well as the basics of sighting

at a target. Assume the lady has never fired a gun and go from there.

List the shoot on the MSMLA Shoot Schedule (contact Ron Fernwalt in November, please), then create a flyer for the event that includes the dates, times, location and planned schedule for the day or days. Send an invite and flyer to clubs in your area. You can find them in the MSMLA Club Directory. Include contact numbers and email addresses, costs and camping provisions.



Set a projected number of attendees that your club can easily handle. Knowing the number of committed volunteer instructors helps establish the shoot capacity. Consider asking other clubs for assistance with mentors. Ten to fifteen might be doable, but if forty women show up, is your club prepared for that many newcomers? Preregistration helps alleviate this potential problem. And if your ladies-only shoot is blessed with an abundance of women showing interest, consider splitting the roster and holding a second shoot at a later date.

Depending on club size, the wives, girlfriends, mothers or daughters of existing members are one source of attendees. Friends of women who shoot at your club are another. With the growth of women in the shooting sports, invite female shooters from the local sportsman's club, women's pistol league, or CPL classes. These are women who already enjoy shooting modern arms—it's a hop, skip and jump to black powder.

A well-kept secret is local churches that hold pistol classes—don't overlook this source as these ladies like to shoot, they share their experiences with other ladies in the congregation and they tell their outside friends how much fun they have. A last resort is posting flyers in sporting goods stores, local gun shops and exercise facilities, because you have no control over who or how many folks will show up, and when they do, will they be pro- or anti- gun people?

Don't limit the shoot to just rifles. Consider the possibility of introducing pistols and shotguns if your club has these venues—or separate women's weekends at the different ranges. At one NMLRA National Shoot, four ladies from the trap and skeet range organized a ladies-only shotgun introduction. They passed the invite from range to range and gathered about twenty interested gals, ranging from twenty to...well, it's not polite to ask.

The women shot trap, skeet, sporting clays and quail walk over the course of a day. These were not full sixteen bird matches, but four or five shots intended to capture the flavor of the shotgun games.

The day ended with an herbal tea, wine and hors d'oeuvre party with a door prize drawing.

Three of the ladies bought shotguns that week, and several of the men passed a hat, collecting enough money to cover most of the fees. A wine shop offered buy one-get-one free to the organizers, along with a discount card for each lady who shot.

The pistol range held a similar event. To save loading time, they used .22-caliber pistols for about twenty shots. Three shots with a muzzleloading pistol followed, more if the lady wanted.

Two shots into learning with a production, percussion pistol, one gal asked her husband if he had any black powder pistols in his gun safe. He said, "Yes." She said, "You never told me. When you go to the range, I want to shoot one of the pistols!" He was ecstatic, because he had tried for several years to get her to shoot a rifle at his local black powder club.

Keeping score is not critical, but one or two matches that count for score at the end of the shoot get the competitive juices flowing—and women are competitive! For the experienced shooters, an aggregate or two make the shooting fun. Now and again, one or more of the newcomers will enter an aggregate, just to see what's involved.

Prizes require some legwork and input from the wives in the club. Powder, a package of jerky or a pound of lead don't cut it with the ladies. Gift cards of all sorts are popular, and some merchants will donate them or sell them at discounted rates.

A local club asks members to donate two like-new items of interest to women from their garage sales—no junk, of course. One club member made a leather shot pouch, another man added a powder horn and a third came up with shooting accoutrements, all to be given away in the door prize drawing. Prizes for designated match scores are fine, but don't forget a drawing for all participants.

Passing the hat, designating a monthly shoot's 50-50 drawing proceeds, establishing a dollar-a-dryball jug, holding a novelty target match or putting out a donation jar earmarked for the new ladies-only shoot help get the project on a solid financial footing.

So, are you ready to start a new women's event in your neighborhood? Now is the time to plan for next year!

Submitted by Dennis Nealy

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***MONTE HEISER KIDS SHOOT
LANSING MUZZLE LOADING GUN
CLUB***

(Shot after the Fall Shoot Program)

I would like to start out by saying how proud I am to be part of such a great and prestigious sport and the association that defines our heritage in shooting and our overall lives. Without all the fellowship, comradery and friendship this sport would not be possible.

As some of you know I run the Monte Heiser youth match. Monte started this match back in the early nineteen-eighties, which I participated in. He made all the trophies in his garage from old and new trophy parts donated to him from fellow shooters, family and friends. They were great looking trophies. To try and win a trophy all a youth had to do was have fun and display sportsmanship. No matter how you shot, it was how much fun you got to have with all the other kids outside not in doors with TV and video games (which now we are losing to greatly) When Monte passed away John Streeter took over and ran the match for year. Then Jim Gallager stepped in for a few years, until he could not do it anymore. That's when I stepped in, to run the match and make the trophies. It's been the best time I have had. When I get bored I go out to the garage and make a trophy or two. Then when September rolls around the fun starts. I get to see the kids running and smiling as they get to see all the trophies before they get ready to shoot. This special youth match brings tears and joy to me when I get to give

out the awards to them. I have been doing this youth match for ten or eleven years and I hope to keep doing it for many years to come. So bring your kids, grand kids, nieces, nephews, friends or neighbors. All youths win no matter how they shoot. The best part is it costs nothing to shoot.

*We have had as many as 30 kids to 20 or fewer. The decline keeps coming. Hopefully with all of us getting the youth involved we can reverse this decline. Sincerely,
James Brotherton
Lansing Muzzle Loading Gun Club*

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