

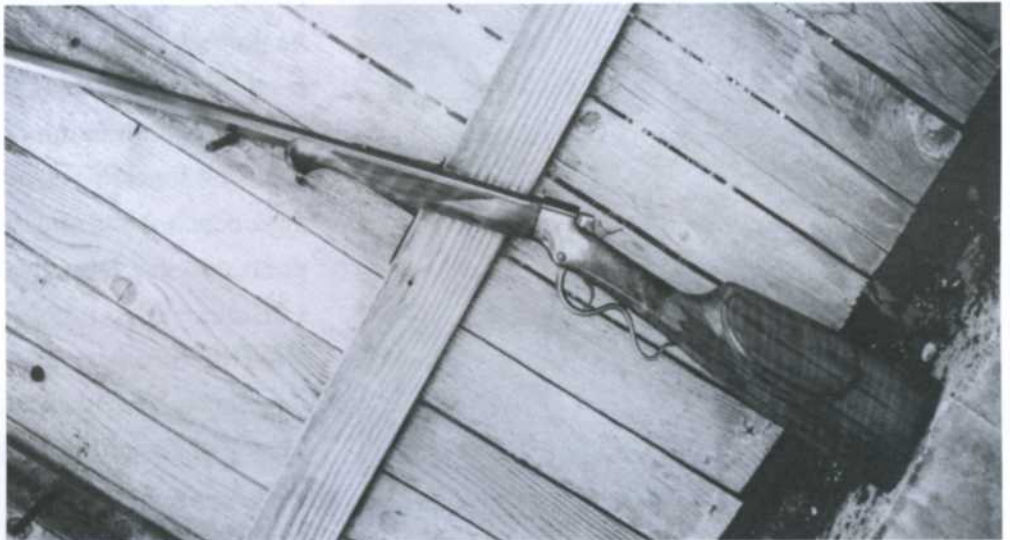
Teach the Children

Get them started right.

FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM Joe Sciascia's letter from the March-April 2003 issue of the Single Shot Rifle Journal. "...It is my observation that there are too few new people getting involved in shooting sports of any kind, and single shot appears to be the most serious affected. I am 49 years old and one of the youngest shooters that I know of who is involved in single-shots..."

PROLOGUE

Mostly old timers, that's who I see at the local range on Sunday mornings after church. By old timers, I mean retirees in their 60's and 70's. That includes me. The good news is that we are all shooting old timey rifles, e.g. Ballards, Sharps, Rolling Blocks, Stevens, etc. There are virtually no Gen-Xers nor children, those I would put in the 12 - 16 age category. Sooo, the question is; who will carry on the single shot tradition, which has made such a wonderful come back, after we depart for the "great shooting range in the sky?" This is an alarming trend and it begs the next question. What are we doing about it?



My suggestion is that we start at home concentrating on children and grandchildren, both boys and girls. And start them young. The latter is essential what with the plethora of activities available to youngsters these days. Believe me once they get hooked on video games it's a wonder they ever get out of doors. In my case, I have three grand children and what follows is my story.

Several years ago I decided I would build the eldest of my grandchildren a rifle with the provision that he would not shoot it without proper adult supervision. Since that time I have built rifles for the younger two grandchildren as well.

MICHAEL

Michael is now twelve and we have begun to go to the range together. Yes, he plays video games, but fortunately he is a sports nut and is not house bound



This stock is not too shabby. Great color and figure made this stock pop for Michael and grandpa too.

(nor obese). He also plays soccer, baseball, la crosse, and basketball and is a straight "A" student so I consider him well balanced. But I digress.

The rifle I built for him is a 22 long rifle bolt action originally made in China. It is a Winchester M-52 knock off and is extremely well made and economical to boot. Best of all it is one helluva shooter consistently getting 1/2 inch to 5/8 inch five shot groups at 50 yards. It seems indifferent to ammo type, shooting all equally well and to the same point of aim. It seemed like a good choice for a first rifle.

Since I am a professional stock maker I could not forego the opportunity to replace the original mystery wood stock which was offensive to my eye in a rifle which otherwise bespoke quality. So I planned a

stock befitting one's first grandchild. A very nice claro stock blank was selected for the project. It was fitted, finished and checkered. The resulting rifle is a thing of beauty and the rifle continues to shoot with superb accuracy. Michael was thrilled with it on his twelfth birthday and he and I are having a ball.

Will he maintain his interest in shooting as he grows into maturity and acquires interest in other activities? I honestly can't say I know the answer to that question. As they say, "only time will tell." I do know this, I feel good about it and think that Michael and I have grown closer as a result of this experience. I can't give him the hands on touch in his other activities that I can sharing a bench at the range. Michael thinks Grandpa is a pretty neat guy. For now that's enough for me.

MATTHEW

Shortly after delivering Michael's rifle, my wife suggested I ought to build one for each of the other boys. I didn't need much coaxing. While I do not regret the decision to build Michael a bolt-action rifle, this time I thought I would go the single shot route. I had recently scored a very nice Remington #2 Rolling Block and decided that this would be just the ticket for Matthew. The rifle's exterior was in very good condition and the action was very tight. The bore was useless however, and chambered for 32 rimfire, a very common round for the #2 Rolling Block. The action is perfect for youngsters as it is not nearly as large as the more ubiquitous large frame Rolling Blocks.



Left side view of Matthew's #2 Roller.

I began by having the exterior of the barreled action cleaned up removing the few pits that were evident. Then I selected a claro/English walnut graft blank and had it machined by flip-flopping the blank so that the majority of the butt stock featured the English walnut portion of the stock. The claro portion remained in the wrist and checkering did a good job of disguising the plainness of the wood in that area. When the wood work was completed, save and except the checkering, I disassembled the rifle and sent the barreled action off to have the barrel relined and chambered for the 22 long rifle cartridge. The stock set was checkered while the work of bluing the octagon barrel was accomplished. The frame, breech block and hammer were color cased. The end result is a thing of beauty and "too nice to use," a comment I often get from clients who are pleased with my work. The rifle was subsequently delivered to Matthew who was thrilled with the anticipation of its use.

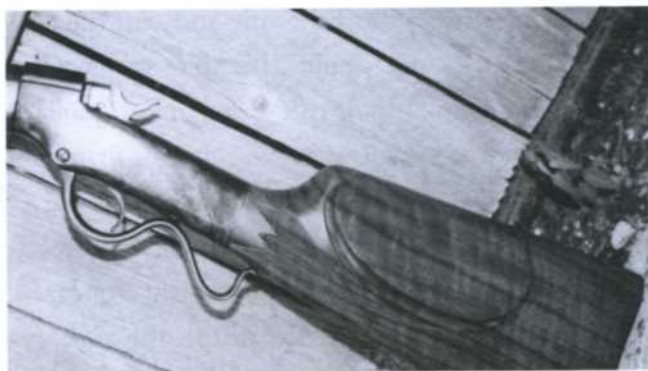
JUSTIN

When grandson number three was born, I said to my wife, "goll darn it, now I'll have to build another rifle for Justin." Of course she knew I was thrilled to build yet another rifle for one of "the boys."

For this rifle I chose a Ballard junker that I had recently traded for. This rifle would be a serious departure from the first two grand son projects because "junker" was the operative word. As such the



A left side view of Justin's Ballard showing butt forend and butt stock with its European style pancake cheekpiece.



A closer look at the color cased Ballard frame and the beautiful butt stock.

cost of the project far exceeded the cost of the first two projects put together. I rationalized that reality because I had lots of time to do the project, thus the costs of the various steps would be spread out over a period of time and would seem less onerous. Still the total cost of this project was such that I would not attempt to take on a restoration project of this magnitude again.

To begin I had the octagon barrel and frame polished to remove all pits and rust. Thus I would be assured that the wood to metal fit would not be affected by dimensional changes later on due to the removal of pitting. Once that was done I fitted and finished the stock making up my own pattern complete with a pancake (European) shadow line cheek piece. When the finish work on the stock was completed, the rifle was disassembled and the action was sent off for additional gun smithing (spell that resurrecting). There were missing parts, and screws, stripped screw holes, a cracked hammer, and a lever smashed so out of shape that it was barely recognizable. The trigger also received considerable tender loving care. When the action was returned it was unrecognizable. It was smooth, and tight with all slop removed. The lever looked like new. I was very pleased although the bill caused serious "sticker shock."

By now the stock was completed including checkering, so I reassembled the rifle to double check that everything was as it should be. Satisfied that it

was, I again disassembled the rifle and sent the barreled action off once again. This time to have the barrel relined to 22 long rifle from the original 32 rimfire. A new extractor was made and the firing pin adjusted for the smaller 22 LR cartridge. The barrel was polished and blued and the frame, split breech block, lever, steel butt plate, and hammer color cased. When completed and returned to me, the rifle was again reassembled. I was absolutely pleased with the outcome, especially since this Ballard represented extremely damaged goods when the project was begun. The effort and cost seemed worthwhile. I suspect that was because there is some innate feeling of satisfaction from salvaging a single shot rifle that was headed for the junk heap.

EPILOGUE

As this is written Michael is fourteen years old

and he and I are enjoying each other's company at the range. I have since fitted a scope to his rifle, as I did not want him to become discouraged with trying to use open sights.

Matthew is 5 ½ years old Justin is 4 years old so it will be some time before they are ready to begin shooting. If the Lord is willing and the creek don't rise I may be able to introduce them to the shooting sports as I am doing with Michael.

Since this article was written a fourth grandchild has joined us. Giovanna, a beautiful little girl is now 2 and I have complicated a custom Remington #4 for her.

Whether or not I have been able to ensure another generation of shooters with a love for the single shot rifle is uncertain. But I have received untold pleasure in building these rifles. A labor of love is truly an understatement. It was well worth the time and effort, and I have a good feeling about what I have wrought. ●

Subscribe to...

Man at Arms *for the* **Sword and GUN COLLECTOR**

Get all the news and information you need from the world's leading source on antique gun collecting.

Six times a year, Man at Arms magazine for the Sword and Gun Collector brings the whole world of gun collecting right into your home with entertaining and authoritative articles and lots of large color pictures of your favorite antique firearms. And, as the NRA's official "Journal for the American Arms Collector," we can give you special, exclusive features like NRA Collector News and the NRA's most up-to-date Gun Show Calendar. Don't get left behind...get Man at Arms today!

\$32 FOR ONE YEAR; \$62 FOR TWO YEARS



VISA,
M/C and AMEX
Accepted

Man at Arms Magazine

54 E. School St., Woonsocket, RI 02895
800-999-4697 · 401-597-5055 · Fax: 401-597-5056
Visit our website at: orders@manatarmsbooks.com

Largest selection of Blocks **Anywhere!**



Over 800 Pieces In Stock!

Standard Blocks: .860 rear/.560 front hole spacing for 6-48 screws, cut for Lyman, Unertl, or Winchester detents, contoured for round bbbs. and octagon with .250 or wider flats. Also Posa blocks, Malcolm blocks, original type Stevens blocks, blank undrilled blocks, flat base blocks, stainless steel blocks, non-standard dovetail blocks, long blocks, multi-height blocks, blocks that mount in sight dovetails, blocks for Winchester 8X scopes bases, and special order blocks with nearly any features...many at no additional charge. We also offer scope rails for new 1885 Brownings. Most items with black oxide finish and in stock for immediate shipment. Most in-stock blocks and typical specials: \$24.00 per pair. Screws: \$1.50 each. All items plus S&H.

Steve Earle Products, Inc.

24 Palmer Rd., Plympton MA 02367
781-585-3929 e-mail: steven.m.earle@comcast.net
www.steveearleproducts.com