

FIREARMS NEWS[®]

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GUN
SALES,
REVIEWS,
& INFORMATION

FN'S SCAR-20S

THE DESIGNATED MARKSMAN'S SCAR:

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IN

6.5

CREEDMOOR!

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NX8 1-8x24mm F1

**SHOTGUN
DUCK BILL/
SPREADER CHOKES
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PISTOL

H MATCH
6.5 Creedmoor
#81500 140 gr ELD® MATCH



No, these are not film clips from *Apocalypse Now*; the Do Long Bridge. Instead, it's Big Sandy 2011 (L) and 2022 (R).

SHOOTING ARIZONA: MACHINE GUN SHOOTING LIKE NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD

Part 3 — Progression to Current Shoots and The Epilog

By Richard Maclean

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The views and opinions are the author's and not necessarily those of the staff or management of Outdoor Sportsman Group or *Firearms News*. They are presented for educational, informational, and entertainment purposes only.]

Part 1, *Evolution*, described the history of machine gun shooting in Arizona leading up to the present day. Part 2 *War Stories: Memorable Events and Characters* included several of the more notorious incidents along the way and the conflicts among individuals that influenced the shoots. This final part explores some wisdom gained from early shoots that culminated in forming the Big Sandy Range in Wikieup, Arizona. Lastly, we include an epilog describing what happened to some of the individuals who created machine gun shooting in Arizona like nowhere else.

The movie *Raising Arizona* also had an epilog-type ending in the form of a dream. As remarkable as the movie, we'll describe some events that you might only envision in a dream (or nightmare). Imagine parachuting into a hot warzone and taking out the enemy with your machine gun? No problem. Strap on your "Para-Shoot" harness; we're going in.

■ Unforgettable Shoots and Training

Paper bullseyes and tin cans can become humdrum

after a while. [See Mike Dillon's comments later] However, machine gunners can get creative with target design and shooting environment. One of the more creative was Frank, a volunteer Special Forces trainer at Fort Bragg's "Pineland" that mimics a hostile foreign country. He produced some remarkable ones.

The Para-Shoot

Frank spotted a long incline in the White Tanks that would be perfect for a zipline (see the table *Where were the shoots?* in Part 1). On top of a flatbed truck, he mounted a frame with a parachute harness attached to a zipline anchored to a tree 300 feet down the gradual incline. The object was to strap on the harness and zip down through "enemy territory" while taking out the defenders in the form of cardboard silhouettes. Never more than fifteen feet off the ground, it was relatively safe.

Two incidents stood out. With an American-180 submachine gun at 1,200 RPM, and nearly 200 rounds in the pan magazine, one faux paratrooper stitched straight lines of evenly spaced holes in the targets like



cartoon caricatures of machine gun impacts. Another “para-shooter,” firing a belt-fed, M60 general purpose machine gun (GPMG), was less successful. The machinegun’s recoil stopped the zipline descent, much to everyone’s amusement.

Live Fire Shoot House

Using 2" X 2" wooden poles, black plastic sheeting, a door in its frame, and a staple gun and nails, Frank created a “shoot house” that approximated the commercial ones built at places like Gunsight in Paulden, Arizona. Here the object was to breach the door, enter the house, take out just the bad guys and rescue the prisoner in the form of a weighted dummy.

Frank was in good shape and miscalculated the weight carrying ability of the participants who did not know the proper way to carry a person, let alone manage 150 pounds of dead weight. It gave everyone a better appreciation of what firefighters can do. Breaching the door was the most interesting. Let’s just say it was in the 90s and before the days of strict control over the things that go bang.

Jungle Runs

Frank and others would set up paper silhouette targets obscured by vegetation and rocks in the ravines and washes in the White Tanks. Here the object was to identify the targets and “take them out.” No one knew what to expect. Overlooking a target meant you were the one taken out. Shooters soon learned



Big Sandy Range Night Shoot 2011. R to L Maxim; RP 46 Russian.



Para-Shooter Kenny is about to descend into "enemy territory" on the zip line. A cord supports the M60, similar to the technique used by Vietnam-era helicopter door gunners. (circa 1966)



Kenny's descent on the zip line is stopped by the M60's recoil, much to everyone's amusement.



Zipline launch pad setup. The shooter has an extended magazine Glock.



Once more with feeling. Words cannot describe what it is like to experience the shock wave from the discharge of heavy weapons feet away. At the right is a D20 152mm Russian howitzer. At the left is the Australian Leopard AS1 tank firing. 2017 (Rob Lippert)

that scanning the sides and rear was essential. Frank would tell shooters, "The first run is for the final score because life doesn't give you a practice run."

The organizers would debrief the group and examine what they carried. It would be apparent to all that they overlooked necessary gear yet brought multiples of non-essential items. It was not an integrated, efficient group. This training was eye-opening for Arizona big game hunters such as myself, who hunt with their buddies in remote areas. Survival depends on what the group collectively has available.

The Real Deal

These experiences gave participants an appreciation of the skill and fitness required of a member

of Special Forces teams. The shoots were always a lot of fun since no one was shooting back at us. Entertaining for us, but dead serious for military and police who shot in Arizona's ranges. For example, the SEAL team that took out Osama bin Laden spent some time training at the Big Sandy Range before the main event. The famous SEAL Team 3 sniper, Chris Kyle, would practice taking his "longest kill shot" in the Iraq War.

This brings us to at least a partial answer to the often-asked question, "Why do you own and shoot guns?" Watching an action movie does not impart anywhere near the experience of witnessing the firing of real guns, artillery, explosives, or even an M60A1 main battle tank (MBT) at the Big Sandy Range.

The experience makes one realize what others do to protect us as we sit comfortably in front of our TV, munching on snacks.

For example, the MG-42 firing scenes in *Saving Private Ryan* are memorable. Firing a real one is beyond imagination. It forces us to think about what it was like being on the receiving end of "Hitler's Zipper" in WWII. How did they have the courage and devotion to do it? We owe them so much.

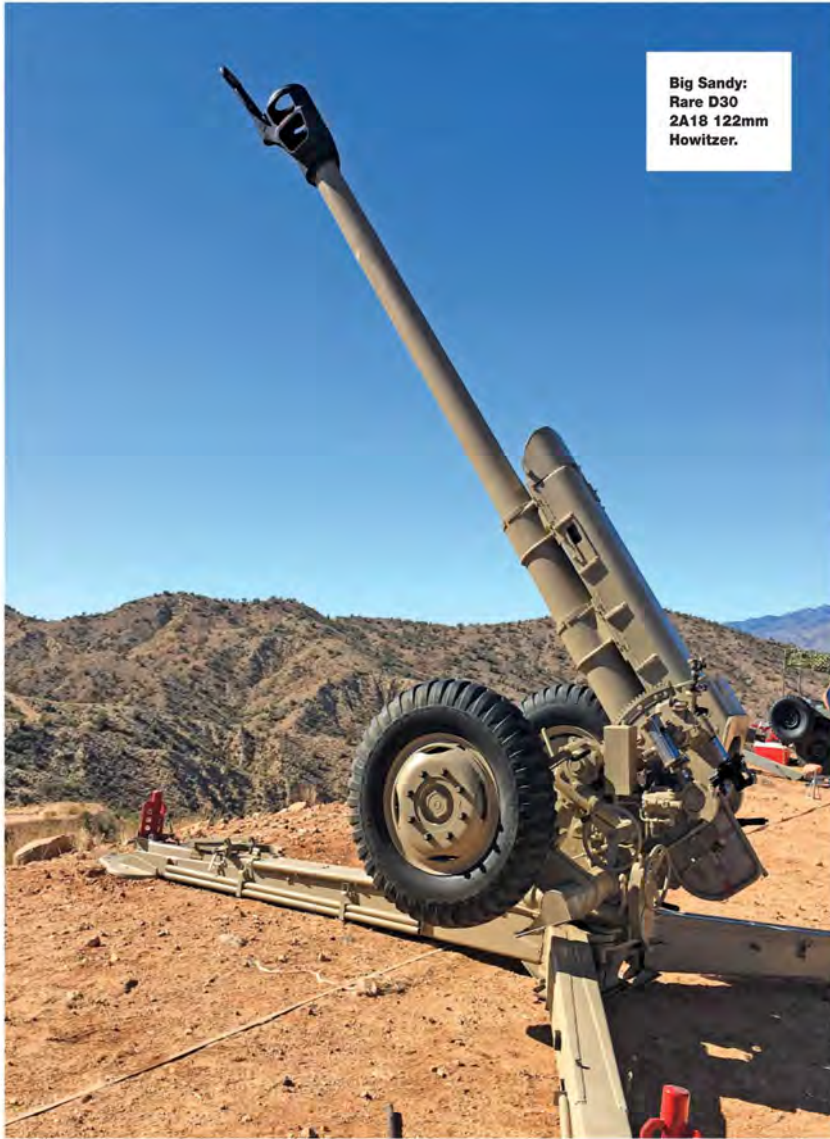
■ Misperceptions over Militia, Racism, Sexism

Who might participate in Arizona machinegun shoots? If one listens to the mainstream media and politically correct elites, assuredly, they must be testosterone-charged white supremacists, racists, and

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The D30 is massive and has a barrel that is long enough and strong enough to be locked against the legs to become the towing point. 2019 Big Sandy (Rob Lippert)



It is not just a few of the guys who have a macabre sense of humor—Ann at the 2010 Big Sandy. Ann's father was a regular at early machine gun shoots.

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sexists. After all, machine guns are the tools of criminals, terrorists, militias, and other nefarious actors. Well, they certainly can be.

But so too can computers be the tools for hackers engaging in spying, cyberwarfare, harassing, phishing, theft, and blackmail. Correcting misperceptions can be challenging if the parties involved are unaware or misinformed. The earlier stories of the police raids by authorities described in *Part 2* illustrate this point. In a June 1984 *Arizona Republic* article, Outdoor Editor Bob Thomas summed it up, "The public, however, has become imbued with the idea that machine guns are inherently evil, strictly tools of Prohibition-era gangsters and terrorists."

Ed Hope, one of the organizers for the Big Sandy Range, provides another example, "Before one of the early Big Sandy shoots in Wikieup, I stopped into the local mini-mart and made some small-talk with the clerk. I mentioned that I was surprised that no local people ever visited as spectators at the shoots. To my surprise, he said no local would go, fearing that it was a training camp for a militia.

After that, we got the word out that locals were welcome and free admission. We struck an agreement with the Kingman 4H Club for them to cater lunches and dinners. They were charged nothing and received all the profits. We also set up a 50/50 raffle for the local school district, where they would receive half the proceeds. Some winners would also donate their winnings. We would contribute as much as \$20,000 to the local school district. For a school district like Scottsdale's, this is not a lot. But for this small community, it has had a significant impact."

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Early SP Crater shoot: M60 on a pedestal mount. To her left is a Dillon Minigun. (Ed Hope)



Drone overview of Big Sandy Range early morning, March 2022 shoot viewing east. Cannons and tanks are kept together at the far western end of the firing line because an unanticipated blast can rattle even an experienced shooter. (Rob Lippert)

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In my thirty-plus years of *Shooting Arizona*, I have never observed talk of action against the government. Timothy McVey lived in Kingman, Arizona, but his likes would not be tolerated at the shoots described in this article.

The attendees are predominately white males, but that is more a factor of Arizona demographics rather than any concerted effort to keep minorities and women out. Indeed, many of the shooters were former military; their lives depended on others, and race did not matter. I have asked 1st and 2nd-generation shooters about their experiences, and they report the same: discrimination would not be tolerated.

As for woman participants, some were well known in the gun community, such as Sandra Froman, past president of the NRA and Arizona resident. However,

they are more often the spouses or partners of male shooters.

■ Building the Big Sandy Range

The population surge and urban growth were primary drivers for finding a safe and secure shooting place. Organizers had no legal right to control access to public land. More uninvited people meant more un-vetted strangers at major shoots with millions of dollars in firearms, ammunition, and equipment on the firing line.

Even worse, visitors might not know basic gun safety and, thus, put everyone at risk. Alan Korwin sums it up, “The trigger is the world’s strongest human magnet: Hand someone a gun, and their finger instantly attaches to the trigger.” Experienced

shooters never do this, even while posing for a photo op. [See accompanying photo of Gerald at the Big Sandy with his scoped, Bushmaster 50 cal.]

These safety and security considerations created the need for insurance to protect the personal assets of organizers. And range insurance through the NRA or others requires an established business, typically an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation). *Part I* describes the “marriage” of four individuals at a wedding that created the needed business model for Dry Creek LLC.

Dry Creek shoot at SP Crater north of Flagstaff, Arizona, was the first insured machinegun shoot without the confines of commercial or public shooting ranges. It had the required remoteness and backstop to shoot, for example, RC model airplanes, artillery, and reactive targets. The drawback was that it was Arizona’s trust land leased to the Babbitt Ranches. The partnership only lasted three years, from 2001 to 2003. At its height, 230 shooters participated.

Although machinegun shoots had been going on at SP Crater for nearly two decades, organizers such as

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Shooter Gerald shows off his scoped Bushmaster 50 cal. for the camera. Unlike movie actors and improperly trained shooters, his finger is not on the trigger even when posing. He knows what he is doing.



The big sandy has space available for RVs and nearly unlimited camping sites. The 2022 quarter-mile firing line viewing west. (Rob Lippert)



Opening talk and safety instructions for the first Big Sandy Range shoot in 2004. Ed Hope is in the foreground and Kenton Tucker in the back. (Rob Lippert)



Explosions galore, or more specifically, over a ton of ANFO and 14 cases of dynamite get used up at a Big Sandy shoot.

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Kenton Tucker and Ed Hope recognized that access to this location was by no means guaranteed. Indeed, in April 2022, Arizona Game and Fish Department declared SP Crater closed to protect nesting golden eagles.

Others were concerned. For example, Claire Bymoan, a Phoenix-based Class 2 and 3 SOT (Special Occupational Taxes) manufacturer and dealer in machine guns, wanted a shooting spot for his family and was willing to support one financially. A total of nine others were ready to support such a range, and the search was on.

It was not an easy mission. The basic requirements were one square of land (i.e., one square mile), remote



The author is trying his luck with a Bren.

location, unrestricted access (i.e., not landlocked or encroached), high backstops, compatible zoning, a responsive county government, north or south line direction, and desert climate. The line orientation is needed to keep the sun out of shooters' eyes at key shoot times. The last is essential for wildfire control, lead migration alleviation, and unobstructed line-of-sight. It took nearly five years and the help of a real estate agent to find a suitable property.

Two LLCs were formed: Big Sandy Land & Cattle to manage the property and MG Shooters to manage the shoots. The first shoot was in 2004, and currently, the twice-a-year shoot attracts over 230 participants and 900 spectators on a quarter-mile firing line with access to nearly unlimited RV and tent camping areas. In addition to target shooting, the Big Sandy Range runs competitions for specific types of firearms (e.g., submachine gun, rifle, sniper, etc.). In addition, companies such as suppressor manufacturers are allotted a designated area to demonstrate their latest products.

■ **Big Business**

Operating the Big Sandy Range has become a professional business and a big one at that. There are 40 paid staff members, including a medic, two licensed explosive managers, an accountant, and a fire crew. Range safety officers (RSO) are certified, and the Big Sandy is an NRA Affiliated Range. Reactive targets (a.k.a. dynamite and commercial fireworks) are transported, magazine stored, and controlled under rigorous state and federal requirements. It must be consumed entirely during a shoot; none can remain unattended on site.

In 2013, it was zoned for a use permit for a test center and landing strip. Construction commenced, and the site today includes a strip capable of landing a C-130, a 1,000-foot range for precision shooting, and tactical training facilities such as a shoot house and electronically controlled moving targets. As mentioned previously, it was used by SEAL Team 6 before the Osama bin Laden raid.

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M2 HB 50 Cal with a tombstone drum on an anti-aircraft mount on the Big Sandy line. Note the white 55-gallon drum targets in the background. (Rob Lippert)



A typical lineup of small arms on the line at Big Sandy. Firing line to left: Vickers, 1919A4 Browning, PKM, MG 42, PKM. Back Table: Mix of AK - 47 and 74's, VZ58, Thompsons.



Various manufacturers of weapons and weapons systems demonstrate their products to shooters at the Big Sandy Range. Unfortunately, sometimes it does not work out well. For example, a suppressor blew off the barrel in this 2010 demo at Big Sandy.



R. Lee Ermy (a.k.a. Gunny) with two Thompsons filming a segment for Mail Call 2009.



Shot up 5th generation RC model airplanes. The wreckage is sorted, and usable parts re-assembled on site. (Rob Lippert)



Venders may show up at the Big Sandy shoot with most anything gun-related. If you are interested in a weapon, you pay for the ammo and test-fire it. If a deal is cut, you can buy it. All NFA rules apply to Title II weapons, so they will not be coming home with you. Pictured L-R 1917 water-cooled Browning; Russian Maxim; Brass Maxim; Vickers. (Ed Hope)



Partial assortment of machine guns for rental at the Big Sandy shoots. Belt feeds are pictured at the bottom of the display and set up on the firing line. These, as for most gun rentals, are dealer samples made after 1986.



Big Sandy shoot (2013). Components and ammunition sold by Montana venter Robert Olmstead, Big Sky.



Big Sandy shoot (2019). Sherman Tank modified as a "Ronson" or "Zippo" flamethrower on Iwo Jima. The sides were protected from magnetic mines by wooden planks attached to the sides. Restored by Battleground Las Vegas.

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For seven years, R. Lee Erney (a.k.a. Gunny) produced shows such as *Lock n' Load*. Canadian and European companies have also produced documentaries. For example, a film company recreated the scene where Sir Hiram Maxim cut down a tree with his machine gun. Trees were Maxim's favorite demonstration targets. In addition, sound production companies such as Sony Corporation's Audio Library record live fire and explosions for action movies and video games.

The range is well known for its public shoots, but new weapon systems and military vehicle testing are equally important from a business standpoint. Ed Hope explains, "The process to obtain permission to evaluate weapons systems on government ranges is long and involved, even though the object may be to test systems designed according to government contracts. What takes as much as six months to get approval at a government range is done in two weeks here."

Ed continues, "Sometimes developers such as Northrop Grumman want to demonstrate their systems to foreign customers. We had one occasion where they brought in six buses of observers and had to separate them by country for fear of conflicts among them."

A Show Like No Other: Tanks, Artillery, Explosions, Target Airplanes, Ground Fireworks, Oh My!

To be precise, a minimum of fourteen cases of dynamite, over 15 cases of commercial fireworks, and nearly two million rounds are fired over the three-day event. How is that even possible? A single minigun can chew up tens of thousands of rounds, according to the owners such as George Dillon. Typically, three show up.



Reenactor photo opportunities like no other. Ed Fallon poses in front of an M18 Hellcat tank with a Thompson. Big Sandy 2022. (Rob Lippert)

Visitors come from all over the world to watch the spectacle. Machine gun rentals are available, but restrictions apply to those under 14. It costs \$325 for a line shooting position and \$35 for spectators. As mentioned earlier, locals are free to watch. The 4H Club of Kingman provides catering. Over two dozen vendors sell everything from gun parts and accessories to memorabilia to tracers.

One never knows what "hardware" might show up at a shoot. Battlefield Vegas typically brings one of its tanks to demonstrate its firepower to the delight of everyone. Extra-large lowboy trailers trucks are used to ship one of their tanks from Las Vegas the


AUTHOR'S REFLECTIONS ON SHOOTING ARIZONA

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have met, shot with, got to know, and interviewed many principals of the firearms community in Arizona and elsewhere. In my former "day job" as a business consultant, I met and interviewed scores of top executives: CEO, VPs, board members, and the like. All very bright, but unless your thing is golf, most were very lackluster compared to this lively crew.

Many of the famous and infamous in this story are now elderly or dead. The "golden age" was the 1960s through the 1990s when these individuals were active, guns and ammo cheap, shooting spots numerous, and regulations not as burdensome. I only experienced the 1990s and forward, but it gave me an appreciation of the freedoms enjoyed in the politically incorrect but exciting past.

Some rightfully could claim that the present is much better – the platinum age, as it were – because a place like Big Sandy now exists where one can shoot machine guns in a safer environment and witness displays of firepower only seen on a battlefield. Yes, but I miss the small gathering of friends, especially after a shoot sitting around a campfire, having an adult beverage, and swapping stories.

Big game hunting has similar fellowship, but not necessarily the exceptional assembly of forensic experts, FFL dealers & manufacturers, Title II collectors, gunsmiths, and former members of the police and military. Idan Greenberg, a Class 3 dealer, ran the best small shoots. Well-organized, interesting firearms experts and topped with a New Orleans-trained master chef to cook unforgettable meals. Such shoots are possible to a much more limited extent today. They were much easier in the past to set up for the reasons outlined in this story.

For those readers living in highly restrictive states, this story may seem like a fictional tale of the Land of Oz: Machine guns, explosives, artillery, tanks, Oh My! I repeat, "This story does not in any way claim to be the truth. Nonetheless, it is inspired by actual events." 

160 miles to Wikieup. After several precarious experiences on the narrow, winding dirt road into the shoot, they now offload and drive the tanks in. Main battle tank on the road? No big deal to the locals nowadays. It is a significant investment in effort and cost, and the attendees love this unique demonstration.

Some weapons are incredibly rare with intriguing histories, such as the Italian Breda heavy machine gun mentioned earlier. There are single-digit serial numbered Maxims, Colt Monitor BARs, shortened versions of German MG-34s, German FG42 Paratrooper lightweight machine guns (LWMG), and a



There has been a wide span of “rapid-fire” guns at the Arizona Shoots, from an original brass Gatling gun (flanked by an MG42 and 1919 Browning R and 20mm cannon on L) to a Minigun at a night shoot (Tully Morrison), both at Big Sandy.

B20 152mm Russian howitzer. Millions of dollars of weapons are always on the line.

While all hardware adds to the experience, it is nonetheless a shooter’s shoot. “Spraying and praying” does not work well. The reactive targets are typically hundreds of yards out and the size of a stick of dynamite (1/4” D by 8” L). After being mounted to the stick, they are painted orange. Glowsticks are attached for the night shoots. RC model airplanes moving at 100 MPH are phenomenally difficult to hit and bring down.

On a more somber note, to date, six members of the Arizona shooting community are “entombed” at the Big Sandy Range. Burial is via a solemn ceremony as an ounce of ashes in the head of a 37mm Bofors shell

is fired into a target of explosives in front of the firing line. Eric Lutfy of Thunderbird Cartridge Company prepares the “entombment vessels.” For 1st through 4th generation shooters, this is free.

Bob Faris, the 1st generation shooter instrumental in inspiring *Shooting Arizona*, ended this way. What a way to go!

**Epilogue
Big Sandy Range**

The Big Sandy Shoots had years of just break-even times where the money went back into the range for improvements. However, it has grown to the point where it is now profitable. Profitable because it is used for shoots, training, filming, sound recording, defense

industry testing, and more. The owners always envisioned that the range would be successful, and now it is, even beyond their original expectations.

Since the Ukraine war began, military training and the defense industry have used the range heavily. The owners plan to expand the variety and sophistication of the targets and improve the facilities. Their goal, as always, is “be a magnet for Machine-Gun-Minded-Shooters like us, the owners.”

Mike Brick

Mike owns Yuma Coin & Gun Shop. It is a Title I store that does not deal in machine guns. However, he did the permit paperwork to organize the large Yuma area machine gun shoots beginning in 1986.

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Pat Earl Anderson was given a peace offering—a flower in a 37mm Bofors shell—from her father Earl’s longtime adversary, Eric Lutfy, owner of Thunderbird Cartridge, at the 2010 Big Sandy Shoot.



Eric Lutfy and Ralph Wong (R), two of the most senior 1st generation shooters in Arizona, pay their respects at the Bob Faris repast. From front to back: MG42; FN-FAL Heavy Barrel; Bren; two M2HB 50 cal. Brownings; Lewis; M50 Madsen LMG; MG08-15 Maxim.

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Mike says, "ATF came in to do a compliance inspection, and they said, 'We want to see your full autos first', I explained I had none. They said, 'We were told you had one of the biggest full-auto shoots in the Southwest.' So I told them I just file the paperwork; I'm like the company clerk."

Claire Bymoen

Claire operates TCB Guns, Inc. with his son Todd. It is a Class 2 manufacturer and Class 3 dealer established in 2002 in Phoenix.

Mike Dillon

Mike passed away in November 2016. His son Steve took over Dillon Precision, and his other son Chris runs Dillon Aero, Inc.

Pat Earl Anderson

Pat, like her father, is a skilled flyer (e.g., aerobatics) and aircraft owner. But, unlike her father, she is a delight to be around, more like her mother. Now retired as an airfield manager for the Salt Lake City International Airport, she lives in Hurricane, Utah, with her husband Norm, also a pilot. The 37mm Bofors shell filled with roses Eric Lutfy gave her at the Big Sandy in 2010 as a "peace offering" to her deceased father, whom he often fought with, sits on her bookshelf today.

J. Curtis Earl

Curtis died in July 2000. He was a cheat, liar, thief, snitch, braggart, and philanderer. He was petty, grandiose, egotistical, and suspicious of everyone. The day I finished this article I was told by his stepdaughter, Kate, from his second marriage, "He beat the crap out of my mother a couple of times." There is more, but not printable. You get the idea.

An FFL dealer told me he would never stay in a room alone at Curtis' house since he knew he would be accused of stealing something. Projection is the psychological term. Another told me that Curtis would swap out parts on a firearm that was waiting for transfer approval, substituting an inferior quality part. Another said he could get along by never engaging in even minor business deals—yet another by "biting his tongue" when Curtis went off on some uninformed rant.

He made millions and would have made millions more if not for his destructive attributes. In the end, he gave tens of thousands of dollars to strangers while giving a pittance to his closest blood relatives, daughters Pat and Tina, and decades-long lady partners. Kay helped him in his business and got a box of trinkets. Clare tried to stop him from injuring himself when cancer distorted his mental capacity in the end. She got not a dime.

As one acquaintance said, "He could squeeze a penny until it cried." How ironic that he picked Christopher Gruys to be the estate executor. Gruys was an attorney who "resigned in order to avoid being disbarred" in 1972 and later became an accountant. He was married to an alluring wife who also flew airplanes, one of Curtis' lifetime passions. Curtis was Curtis until the end, blinded by a pretty face. For

those who have read the previously mentioned Louise Thoresen's book; *It Gave Everbody Something to Do*, this combination was déjà vu all over again: A crook and an attractive wife.

For those who think they were colossally cheated on a Curtis gun deal, take solace in the fact that whatever you experienced, it was minor league compared to what Curtis got at the end. The proverb, "What goes around comes around," comes to mind.

His daughter, Pat Earl Anderson, provides an example, "My father willed a quarter of a million dollars to

the NRA Foundation. We contacted the NRA years after the estate was supposedly settled, and they had no record of such a gift. They hired a Phoenix-based law firm to investigate and could not locate Gruys. I was told that he may have skipped the country." If he did, he returned and was reported to have died in California in 2020.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Despite the reputation J. Curtis Earl had, I must stress that Earl was one of the best promoters of machinegun ownership ever, probably the best, and I have known many of them as far

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Big Sandy shoot (2010). Dan is wiping down an M1 57mm anti-tank round. Oil on the surface can attract dust. These were effective on German armor until 1942 but inadequate for Panther or Tiger tanks.



Ed Hope shows off a rare 25 mm Hotchkiss anti-tank Portée at the SP Crater shoot circa 1992. (Ed Hope).



At the end of his life, Curtis Earl wanted to build a legacy by donating weapons to the Idaho State Historical Society in the Old Idaho Penitentiary, but only if a wing was named the "J Curtis Earl Memorial Exhibit." The Thompson display is one of the best. (Idaho State Historical Society)



Lock and really loaded. Mandall's cellar was converted to a bar with one of the two original signs hung on the wall. Who would have thunk? Currently, it is closed for renovation by Goldmine Brewing Company. (Dillon McClelland)

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back as the late 1970s. I never met him in person, but I spoke to him a few times. He invited me to visit his establishment in the 1990s when I was in Arizona, but unfortunately, I was never able to make over. I regret that very much. His five-dollar catalog had a huge influence on me and on my career in the firearms and defense industries.]

Bob Faris

I wrote of his passing in the February 2012 issue of *Small Arms Review*. The executor of his will and close friend, Kenton Tucker, arranged a "missing man" military flyover by Mike Dillon and a celebration of life in North Scottsdale at his sister's residence. A Who's Who gathering of the Arizona machine gun community paid their respects to "Uncle Bob."

Bob had a world-class collection of memorabilia and firearms. On display at the celebration of life was a small sampling, including crew-served weapons and the 1911 pistol he converted to full auto in Korea and is now owned by Ed Hope. The semi-auto rifles, collectible cartridges, and memorabilia were sold at auction or given to friends. However, Bob was precise regarding the recipients of his extremely valuable machinegun collection: guns were dispersed among nearly twenty designated friends.

Dolf Goldsmith

Dolf has written ten books about various crew-served machine guns, including Brownings (5 volumes) and Maxims. His latest, *The Vickers Machine Gun: Pride of the Emma Gees*, was published in 2020. He has also been involved with other writers, such as Robert Segel in 2018, writing the forward for *Handbook of Machine Gun Support Equipment and Accessories 1895-1945*.

As of this writing (June 2022), approaching the age of 94, his memory of people and events is incredible. He has been very supportive in the preparation of this article. Unfortunately, he has not been well physically.

His friends and I in the Arizona shooting community wish him well. He has contributed so much to us all.

Idan Greenberg

In 2010, Idan was accused of being part of a conspiracy to make illegal machine guns. A Class 2 manufacturer was discovered using the serial numbers of transferable MAC 10 submachine guns and applying these registered numbers to non-transferable 1919 Brownings and 1910 Maxims side plate guns. This "switch" increased the value of the original papered gun twenty-fold for the manufacturer.

Since Idan did not know about the serial number scam, he completed three ATF-approved transfers of these Title II weapons from the Class 2 manufacturer to customers. The same Justice Department officials responsible for the Fast and Furious scandal confiscated the guns and aggressively prosecuted Idan.

He reimbursed his customers, police and forensic experts from around the world wrote supporting letters, there were no prior issues with ATF or the police, no "new" transferable machine gun serial numbers were created, ATF approved the transfers, no one was injured, and no guns fell into criminal hands, unlike the Fast and Furious gun-walking fiasco. These facts cut Idan no slack with Eric Holder's Department of Justice, which was by then facing accountability probes.

Understandably, he refused all plea deals offered and took the unusual step of presenting his case directly to the jury. This was a grave tactical mistake. In December 2012, and only five days past the tragic Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, the jury found him guilty. Why?

According to several sources, including an ATF lawyer involved in the case, the jury initially thought Idan innocent, believing he did not know about the scheme to defraud. But after witnessing his astute firearms competency on the stand and with the Sandy Hook massacre fresh on their minds, they reasoned

that he must have known. As a result, he was sentenced to three and a half years in federal prison. The sentence was reduced to two years after his lawyer documented several factual errors on which the original sentencing was based.

The financial and emotional impact on him and his family has been devastating. Currently, he runs a chauffeur business using classic antique cars. His case is being reviewed by the University of Arizona Innocence Project at the Rogers School of Law. The Arizona gun community still wonders, "What constructive purpose was served by his prosecution and incarceration?"

John Hanigsberg, M.D.

John passed away in 2005. "Doc" was at nearly every major shoot since the 1980s. Aside from his sense of humor, he was the person that everyone was delighted to see because he had the medical knowledge to intervene if things got serious. For example, when Robert (see previous articles) was injured by his exploding 20mm recoilless rifle, he had the credentials to deal with his injuries and immediately summon a medivac helicopter.

Ed Hope

Ed continues to manage MG Shooters (i.e., the shoot) and the Big Sandy Land and Cattle Company (i.e., the land), both Arizona LLCs. Longer-term, he states, "At the last two shoots, I had my usual spot on the line, but I was so busy that I never got to shoot. I will be gradually phasing out from managing Big Sandy to doing more shooting. I also need time to finish my book on Madsen light machine guns. To do this, I will need to travel to Europe and visit key museums such as the Danish War Museum in Copenhagen to research their archives."

Peter Kokalis

Peter passed away in January 2017. Graduating from Northwestern University and Arizona State



A variation of "Swords to Plowshares." The famous Mandall logo is now holding a propane torch used to make leaded stain glass works of art. (Creative Center of Scottsdale)

University, he brought technical precision to his 35-year career of writing for magazines such as *Firearms News*. His personality grated on many, but all recognized his expertise.

As for me, I never had a problem with Peter. I had few direct encounters with him. On one occasion, I ran into him at a gun show and gave him a blank firing adapter. He thanked me profusely. The lack of conflict with a fellow writer may have been because I do not write about his subject areas (I write primarily on historical events and people in the gun and classic car worlds.) He was a world-renowned subject matter expert on firearms.

Eric Lutfy

Eric continues to manage Thunderbird Cartridge Company.

Mandall's Shooting Supplies

Marty Mandall shut down his store in 2004 and died in March 2009. The gun range was converted to a bar below Goldmine Brewing Company, and one of the original signs is on the wall. Shut down during Covid; it was used for brewery production purposes. However, according to Dillon McClelland, Co-Owner, it is undergoing renovations and may be open in late 2022.

The other original sign is on the wall of the Creative Center of Scottsdale, located adjacent to the brewery and bar. The Center has working spaces and private studios for artists of all specialties, including leaded stained-glass windows. The new sign out front mimics the original Teddy bear, only now holding a propane torch. They will be soldering lead instead of shooting it.

"Robert"

Tragically, Robert died in 2020 in California after a home gun smithed .50 BMG rifle exploded when he attempted to ram the bolt shut with a stuck, protruding firing pin. Ironically, the accident might never have occurred if he had been at the Big Sandy surrounded by expert advice.

Mike Simmons

Mike maintains his FEL (Firearms Explosive License) and his business Simmons Services. As a permitted user of explosives, he is active in all aspects of high-energy targets, industry testing, and demonstrations at the Big Sandy Range. Mike states, "The easy part is getting the FEL license. The bigger issue is getting

an explosive supplier to sell it to you. Again, it's about trust; I'm known and trusted with 35 years of experience."

Tom Spengel

Tom passed away in 2015, maintaining his Class 3 FFL to the end.

Kenton Tucker

Tucker has been participating in and organizing machine gun shoots in Arizona from the 1970s through today. He plans to continue in primary leadership for the Big Sandy Range for at least the next five years. His early experience with firearms and munitions established him as a leading professional in the firearm appraisal and technical advisor business today. In addition, he is currently involved with the film industry to document the historical and mechanical aspects of firearms and machine guns.

His unusual retirement objective is to own one of his grandfather's cars. This goal may seem like not much of a challenge. It's a big one, however, beyond the reach of most. Fifty-one Tuckers were built, of which forty-seven survive. None are for sale; if one were, it would cost over a million dollars.

Ralph Wong


Ralph no longer organizes his famous shoots in Marana, Arizona. He continues to reload using Dillon products (his favorite) and his interest in developing "wildcat" performance cartridge loads.

Woodin Laboratory

Bill Woodin died in March 2018. He worked up until the very end. He envisioned establishing a permanent home for his cartridge collection and a non-profit organization to continue his reference work. For nearly four years, attempts were made to do just that, but to no avail. Finally, the family decided to sell off the collection of over 200,000 specimens, including his single cartridge display boards featured in the *International Ammunition Association Journal*. It is so large that it must be sold gradually, one grouping at a time. This process is now ongoing. Many, including myself, who knew Bill well, are heartbroken over the dismantling of the collection.

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The other original Mandall sign is in the Creative Center of Scottsdale