Jack O'Connor

2012 Newsletter - 1st Quarter

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"The .270 Can Do Great Things" – Jack O'Connor, December 1943, with permission from Outdoor Life ***- 15***

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT CARD

By Mark Yochum, Co-Chairman

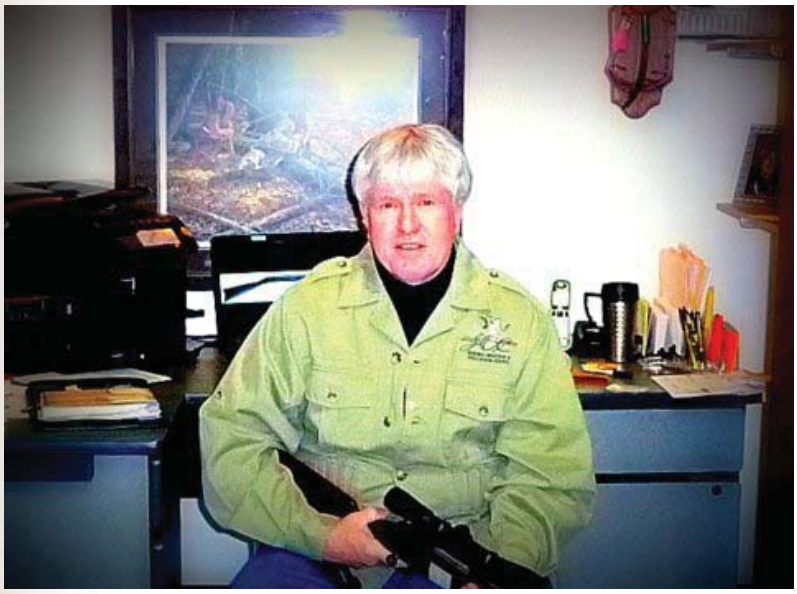
Countries that no longer exist, animals that are no longer hunted and prices you couldn't even dream about. Imagine thirty day African safaris for under $3500 or better yet 14 day safaris in South America for less than $1000 including round trip airfare with an offering of "Jaguar Guaranteed". Those were the days and we will never see their like again. Amazing!

Here at the Jack O'Connor Center we know we can't bring back 1964. But as hunters and conservationists we also know we have to do our part. That is the legacy of our namesake Jack O'Connor and the goal of the Hunting Heritage and Education Center. Through youth education, public outreach and community awareness we will keep alive the spirit of the hunting tradition.

Thank you for the support you have shown as a Charter Member of "The Friends of Jack O'Connor". The Center is open and shares with all comers the life and times of Jack and Eleanor O'Connor. It is now possible for us to work together to promote the hunting experiences and the conservation lifestyle that Jack O'Connor lived.

About the Co-Chair: Mark Yochum is currently the co-chairman of the JOCHHEC. He is a Life member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Safari Club International, an NRA member and a supporter of Ducks Unlimited and The National Wild Turkey Federation. He is a United States Army veteran, lives in Lewiston, Idaho and works as a Real Estate Broker.

From the Director's Chair



By Mike Butler, Director

The Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center has come a long way since our doors opened in 2006. Many ideas have been kicked around, but two of the best ones have come to fruition in the last couple of months. Our membership drive has been a great success and the debut of the Jack O'Connor Tribute Rifle was an overwhelmingly dream come true. Needless to say, none of this would be possible without the constant vigil of our great volunteers and other members of our local community. Those dedicated folks are putting their best foot forward to preserve the legacy of Jack O'Connor's indelible impact on outdoor journalism and its effect on promoting and preserving our hunting legacy for future generations. I hope your membership will provide you with opportunities to tell your friends about us and that your membership will encourage you to visit our website and engage in the forums which should be informative and educational. Always remember that our hunting heritage is not to be taken lightly and it should be shared with friends and family whenever you have the opportunity. Good Hunting….! MB

About the Director: Mike Butler started his wildlife career in 1975 with the Missouri Department of Conservation. He is an Endowment member of the NRA, a Life member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and a supporter of Ducks Unlimited and The National Wild Turkey Federation. He is an avid turkey and elk hunter, and enjoys Alaska salmon fishing at least once a year.

Tech Corner

"I Want to Duplicate Jack's Handloads"

By Allan Jones

Volunteer Host, Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center

I was reading Jack O'Connor's articles long before I started reloading at age 19. At some point, college, marriage, family, and career meant some things of my youth were set aside. However, that doesn't mean you can't pick up where you left off when you're older.

I did not get around to rediscovering Mr. O'Connor's books and articles until after I had the experience of generating three reloading manuals. With that background in internal ballistics under my belt, today I see his published load data in a different light.

We get many calls and e-mails at the Jack O'Connor Center from people who want to duplicate Jack's loads. I'm going to state up front that any attempts to do so make me very nervous.

The most basic issue is that any attempt to recreate 35 to 60 year-old loads requires using components that are no longer the same as they were when Jack was reloading. Reloading components are not constant; their manufacturers make continual improvements. They strive to keep older data valid, but this may not always be possible. Raw material sourcing, new environmental and workspace safety regulations issues affecting manufacturing, and the discovery of better methods of fabrication can create changes. Let's consider how components have changed.

The Cartridge Case

This is an area that we know affected Jack directly. Several places in his writings, he mentions that the propellant charge for his favorite 270 Winchester load with a 130-grain bullet fit in a Western case but would not fit in a Remington case. Why? It's obvious that case capacity differences among brands existed a long time ago.

This became even more of a factor about 1986-89, when some manufacturers "beefed up" their case wall thickness to minimize the chance of case head separations. That reduces case capacity. In the Speer lab, we found that old loads developed in pre-1987 cases commonly showed a 4,000 to 8,000 psi increase when tested in post-1987 cases.

Bullets

When Jack was reloading, bullets were pretty much alike. With the exception of the Nolser Partition he used, all bullets had relatively thin copper jackets of simple design and one-piece lead cores. That's a configuration that produces the shortest bullet length, meaning more room for propellant.

Today we have bullets with thicker jackets, and some that have no lead at all. These bullets can be much longer. It's possible to have a modern 0.277-inch bullet weighing 130 grains that is as long as the old-style 150-grain bullets of Jack's heyday. You cannot put Jack's compressed charges under these new, longer bullets.

Primers

There is more differentiation of primers today that when Jack was active. A good example is the CCI 250 Magnum rifle primer. Before 1989 or so, that primer had the same primer compound, or "mix," as the standard CCI 200, but held more of it. This gave the Magnum a higher gas volume and longer burn time but the flame temperature was the same as the 200.

Newer ball-type propellants proved to perform better with a higher primer flame temperature, so the mix was reformulated to produce a flame 23 percent hotter than that of the mix in the standard

primer. That necessitated a retest of older data and was why we shot so many rounds in the development of Speer Manual #12.

Propellants

Jack used a lot of 4831 propellant in rifles. In his active years there was only one 4831, Hodgdon's. It was derived though reprocessing and blending military surplus lots. Then DuPont brought out their version of 4831—IMR 4831—in 1973. It was NOT the same as Hodgdon 4831. Its burning rate fell somewhere between IMR 4350 and the original Hodgon 4831 (H4831). Substituting IMR 4831 for loads developed in the lab with H4831 would increase pressures. This situation was widely discussed (and cussed) in reloading publications, and data developers had to add warnings to their publications not to interchange these propellants.

Hodgdon's 4831 have further evolved into H4831SC—"SC" stands for short cut. The cylindrical granules burn at the same rate but fit more closely together. You can get more of the SC version in a given case than Jack could with the original. If his compressed load was at max pressure and you can fit another grain or two of the short cut stuff in the case, you are over the pressure line.

"Then How Can I Duplicate His Load?"

I never met Jack O'Connor. However, it's clear to me from his writings that he was very practical. He wanted a load to produce a certain velocity, and found it in the combination of old components detailed in his writings. When he got the velocity and had decent accuracy, he had his load. I'm convinced that had he the wide choice of components we have today, his "pet loads" might have been very different from what are preserved in his legacy of work.

My answer to duplicating an O'Connor load is to find a combination of modern components that, if possible, duplicate his velocities. You don't need the same propellant, bullet, case and primer—they are no longer available in a form Jack knew.

In the 270 Winchester, we all know the praises Jack had for the 130-grain version. In his writings he says they launched at about 3100 ft/sec. As he had access to the Speer test tunnel (it is within walking distance of the house where he lived for 30 years), I am willing to accept his velocities as test results and not estimates.

In Speer Reloading Manual #14, I find that H1000 and IMR 7828 will move a 130-grain bullet, including the Grand Slam, close to 3100ft/sec from a 22-inch sporting rifle. In Hodgdon's excellent on-line load database, several propellants will do 3100 or better with the Barnes 130-grain TSX. It's not stated what barrel was used for the Hodgdon velocities; I suspect it's a 24-incher.

So set a reasonable velocity goal, look to lab-tested load data, and choose accordingly. I feel pretty sure that Mr. O'Connor would not want your risking a fine rifle and your own safety trying to recreate something that is no longer practically possible.

About the Author: Allan Jones had a 16-year career as a forensic firearms examiner before moving to Lewiston ID and taking over the roles of data developer and technical editor for Speer Bullets. He produced Speer Reloading Manuals 12, 13, and 14. He retired in 2007 and now volunteers at the Jack O'Connor Center and writes a monthly ballistics column for Shooting Times magazine.

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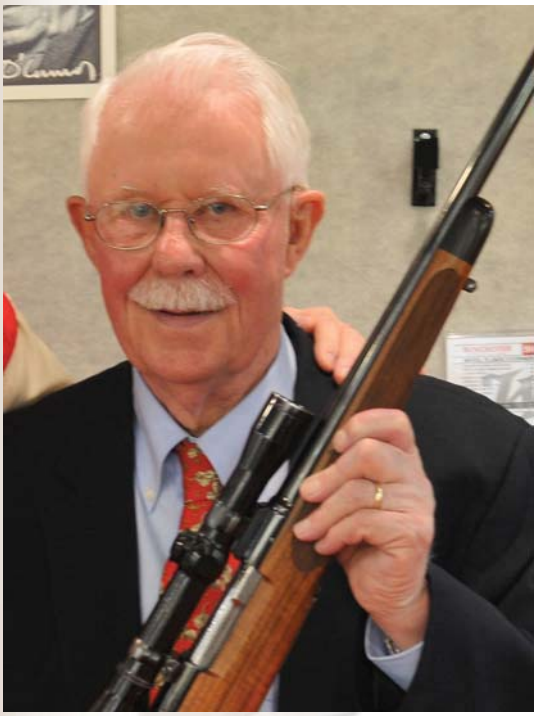
Growing Up O'Connor



By Bradford O'Connor

It was 2 the afternoon of January 20, 1978, when the agent with the steamship company called my Seattle house to tell me that Jack O'Connor had just died of an apparent heart attack on the S.S. Mariposa en route from Hawaii to San Francisco.

As many readers here might have guessed, Jack O'Connor was my father. He also was my mentor, hunting partner and a best friend.

News of Dad's death was a stunning loss to many of his longtime readers and fans, but a deeper personal loss to me. My world had been turned topsy-turvy. I knew immediately that I would face profound changes in my life.

With the death of my mother the following July, I became an orphan at 45.

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Yet, I was left with a treasure trove of pleasant memories of many hunts with them in Africa, the United States, Canada and Mexico.

One of my most vivid early memories was of the first deer I shot, a handsome little Arizona whitetail on Maj. John Healey's ranch in Huachuca Mountains about 70 miles southeast of Tucson. It was in 1946, a few months after I had turned 13.

We were on a ridge glassing for any sign of deer when Dad spotted a buck partly concealed by brush below in the canyon about 100 yards away.

Dad motioned me to sit in a comfortable shooting position, then whispered: ``hold the crosshairs about three inches below the shoulder and s-q-u-e-e-z-e the trigger.''

I shot, the boom from the .257 Roberts echoed from across the canyon. Before I had time to reload for a second shot, the buck staggered, stood for a moment, and then collapsed.

``Well Brad, you got your first buck,'' Dad said.

And my first buck fever. I was so excited that my legs failed me and Dad had to carry my rifle and help me walk down to the deer.

That same .257, a Mauser 93 fitted with a 3x Weaver scope, was put to good use a later when my brother Jerry and I used it to shoot a couple of desert mule deer in Sonora, Mexico.

I recently came across a photo of me at about age 5, holding a couple quail in one hand and what appears to be a kid-size side-by-side shotgun, no doubt a toy. I don't know when or exactly where that picture was taken, but I know for certain that it was somewhere in the Sonoran Desert not far from our home in Tucson.

I was 5 or possibly a bit older when I tagged along with Dad and sometimes with Dad and his friend Carroll Lemon on desert hunts for quail or antelope jackrabbits, often in the searing heat of summer.

Those treks (sashays, Dad always called them) into the desert were long and tiring for a tender kid, but I always looked forward to returning to our Ford station wagon where Dad or Carroll would reward me with a cold bottle of Coke from the ice chest.

On one of these outings, I witnessed Dad killing a running coyote with one shot offhand at more than his 200 long paces. The shot was no fluke. In the many years I hunted with Dad, I can't think of any game shot he missed.

Dad also was a legendary wingshot. I first realized this when our family would head to fields near the San Xavier del Bac Mission south of Tucson on hot September afternoons, armed with shotguns and campstools to intercept waves of white-winged doves flying to feed in nearby fields. Dad would limit quickly, scoring on almost every shot while we – Mother and my brother Jerry and I – would struggle to fill ours.

He still was a deadly wingshooter decades later even when his eyes developed cataracts. The fall before he died, three of us in our party missed a pheasant that had flushed about 20 yards from us. Dad slowly raised his 28 gauge Arizaga side-by-side, said ``Oh hell,'' fired and the rooster folded and fell to the ground with one pellet in the head 60 paces from where Dad had stood. Pure luck? I think not.

Over the next few decades, I hunted with Dad and often with both parents in Sonora, Idaho, Wyoming, Northern British Columbia, The Yukon and Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia in Africa.

All of the hunts were memorable but the one I think most often about was in Northern British Columbia in 1951.

Though our party consisted of four hunters – Dad and me and Vernon Speer and Dr. Elmer Braddock – Dad and I hunted together most of the time during the month-long hunt while Vernon and Elmer hunted separately with their guide.

As northern hunts go, this one was quite successful. I took my first wild sheep, a mountain goat and a caribou and I also learned a valuable lesson in ethics and about the virtue of patience.

We were a couple of weeks into our hunt and on the move with our pack string to a new camp when two caribou with magnificently huge antlers approached, attracted by the scent of one of our mares in heat.

I begged Dad to let me shoot the larger of the two, but he said I could not because the caribou season would not open for another day or two, and, besides, to shoot such dim-witted sex-addled creature would not be sporting. Though I was heartbroken, this was just another reminder that my father was a man of impeccable hunting ethics.

The lesson in patience came at the end of the hunt. Until then, we had not seen another caribou for nearly two weeks with very little hope of seeing any on this day. A truck from Atlin had arrived at the end of the road for us to load all our gear and supplies for the long drive back to Whitehorse from where we would fly home.

While Dad, Vernon and Doc Braddock packed, Dad suggested that a guide and I head to a basin a few miles away where the guide previously had seen bull caribou at the start of the rut. Hours later, we returned to camp exhausted but elated. I had shot the granddaddy of all caribou, a bull with massive antlers that later took first place in the Boone & Crockett competition and, at the time, was the No 4 mountain caribou on record.

Patience had been rewarded.

At 18, I was neither fish nor fowl – no longer a kid and certainly not yet an adult. I also was a bit rebellious, so that month of father-and-son bonding in the northern wilderness was a combination of good fellowship, outdoor classroom and boot camp.

During long, tedious hours on the trail, we talked of many things and I began to better understand Dad's deep love for sheep and sheep country, his love for wilderness and his disdain for those who spoil it. I better appreciated his passion for the written and spoken word.

Although I did not realize it at the time, the hours we spent discussing writing shaped my decision later to study journalism and to become an outdoor writer at The Seattle Times.

Almost every day of our 28-day safari in Zambia in 1969 was memorable. Most days, I went with Mike Cameron, my professional hunter, while Dad and Mother hunted with Ron Kidson, their PH. Though we rarely crossed paths during the day, we all met late in the afternoon for a sundowner and a tipple or two to rehash our chases of the day.

One evening, I told about a cow elephant that charged our Toyota Land Cruiser as we were headed off the Zambezi Escarpment on a road leading to camp and that the cow came within a foot of so of hitting the vehicle.

Dad listened patiently to my account, but said nothing. I knew he was skeptical.

A day or two later, when Mike and I returned to camp from the day's hunt, Dad greeted me as we drove up.

``Brad, we met your damned cow,'' he said. Then he told me about his encounter.

About an hour earlier, he, Mother and Kidson were on the same road when the cow burst out from a mopani thicket and attacked Kidson's Land Rover, getting so close that Dad had a .416 Rigby cartridge chambered and ready to fire.

Kidson stomped on the accelerator and barely managed to gain ground on the elephant before she abruptly stopped and ambled back to her calf.

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The saga of the testy cow ended three days later when the cow attacked four of us when we were on foot scouting for bull elephants on the Zambezi flood plain. It was either the cow or us, so we had little choice but to shoot her.

By the time I was in my teens, Dad had taught me much of everything I know now about shooting, starting at about 6 or 7 with a .22, then a little later with a .410, followed by the .257 and still later by handguns and fine shotguns.

However, it was not until 1951 that he introduced me to handloading. He thought it would be a good experience for me to load all my own .270 ammunition for our hunt that fall in Northern British Columbia.

Though I had a youthful fascination for all things that went boom, handloading somehow scared the hell out of me. I regarded it as some sort of devil's alchemy and that one misstep would blow up a rifle, or worse. But under Dad's closest supervision, I loaded enough cartridges in an afternoon for not only the Northern B.C. hunt, but for several other hunts in the years to follow.

What I learned from Dad that afternoon stuck in a strange way. I committed most of what I learned to rote and today, more than half a century later, I can recite details on powder loads, bullet weights and muzzle velocities as easily as I can my date of birth, telephone number or as readily as a true baseball fanatic can reel off batting averages for Ted Williams, Stan Musial or Ichiro Suzuki..

I recently wheedled a shooting buddy into loading some .270 cartridges with Dad's favorite load of 62 grains of 4831. Big mistake. Neither of us realized that the modern 4831 burns faster than what Dad and I used back in 1951. We did not blow up my .270, but the load was so hot that we had to tap the expanded cartridge case out of the rifle's chamber. Why neither of us consulted a modern reloading manual is beyond me.

With Dad, I met Frank Pachmayr, Bill Ruger, Roy Weatherby, Bill Sukalle and Al Biesen but I was just a dumb kid who did not know that all of these men were the giants of the gun and hunting world.

From the time I was old enough to hunt my first deer, I had at least some access to fine rifles and shotguns, but it took years for Dad's love for them to rub off on me. Well into my 20s and 30s, I was perfectly content to do most of my upland and waterfowl hunting with a homely but functional 12-gauge Remington 870.

I now am a born-again gun nut, but the transition from the days of the 870 to the present did not materialize overnight. The more I handled a fine gun, the less I hankered to hunt with the old 870. I am known now to swoon shamelessly over the sight of a fine custom rifle or an elegant side-by-side shotgun.

In the period between disinterest and outright love for guns, I took up bicycling shortly after Dad died, starting with a shockingly expensive road-racing bicycle I had built to my measurements at a custom shop near Milan. I was so smitten with this bike that within a decade I ordered three more Italian road bikes.

The first bike has more than 100,000 miles on its frame. I replaced a front fork damaged in an accident, two sets of wheels, a dozen or so tires and chains, but the frame and the vital components of the drive train are almost as good as new.

What I learned from the bikes applies to fine firearms. A beautiful bike is meant for riding and a fine rifle or shotgun is made for shooting or hunting. Fine guns and fine bicycles are built to last and to provide years of flawless service. Dad would not have argued over that.

So, when I head to the skeet range or to the same brushy draws and stubble fields of Northern Idaho or Eastern Washington where Dad and I used to hunt pheasants, I leave the old 870 at home. I pack the sweet little 16-gauge Winchester Model 21 Dad gave me when I was a teenager and if I don't see a rooster or fire a shot, at least I have spent a day holding something beautiful and savoring the memories of hunting with Dad.

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About the Author: Bradford O'Connor was born in June 1933, in Flagstaff, Arizona. He moved with his family to Lewiston in 1948 and graduated from Lewiston High School in1952. He served in the military as a policeman in Korea 1953-1955. Bradford graduated with a BA in English and Journalism from the University of Idaho in 1959. He worked as a cub reporter for the Los Angeles Mirror-News 1959, copy and city editor for the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin 1960-1976, and last but not least, was the outdoor reporter/columnist/editor for the Seattle Times 1967-1991. Bradford has written several articles and provided numerous photographs for several publications, including Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, Petersen's Hunting, Road & Track and dozens of Associated Press membership newspapers. His hobbies and interests include photography, travel, food and wine, shooting, hunting, fishing and bicycling. Bradford married his high-school sweetheart (Anne) in 1953. They will celebrate their 59th wedding anniversary this year. The O'Connor's have two children (John in Denver; Pamela in Seattle) and six grandchildren.

"What Jack O'Connor Means To Me"

By Mandy Miles

Jack O'Connor came into my life at about age seven on the pages of Outdoor Life Magazine. His articles were my transport to the outdoor world I longed to know. Jack made you feel like you were right there, and he taught you how things should be done, no nonsense. Jack O'Connor influenced thousands of young and old alike, and set a standard for outdoor writing that is unmatched to this day.

Now, almost 60 years later, I am a Board Member of the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage Center. The Center's mission is to keep his legacy of conservation and sportsmanship alive and pass it on.

Two subjects Jack penned many times were sheep hunting and the Winchester Model 70, usually in 270 caliber. His writing elevated sheep hunting and sheep conservation efforts world-wide, and his praise of the 270 and Winchester Model 70 - "The rifleman's rifle" - made an American classic.

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Jack O'Connor gave me a dream to follow and, in this, our first newsletter, I am writing this article on following the dream.

In June, 2011, a tag for Bighorn Sheep in Idaho Unit 11 showed up with the mail. Unit 11 is the rugged Snake River Canyon south of Lewiston, Idaho. The Idaho State record ram was a "found" skull and horns from Unit 11 that is on display at the Jack O'Connor Center in Lewiston, Idaho. I have gone to see that mount many times to help me know what a "great ram" looks like.

The native Big Horn Sheep in Hells Canyon were meat for Indians, miners, and settlers, but with meat hunting and disease from domestic sheep, they disappeared.

Bighorn sheep were reintroduced in Unit 11 with transplants from Alberta, Oregon, and Washington that held great genes for big rams. Idaho Fish & Game allows up to two Bighorn rams from Unit 11 to be harvested each year, and nine out of the top ten Idaho sheep came from Unit 11.

Snake River Canyon is hot and arid in July and August, when I started early scouting. I hoped to find a nice, old ram, and got some help from friends and my son, Spencer. We would be in the mountains and canyons at first light to watch and listen. Deer, elk, coyotes, bear, even ewes and lambs we could find, but no old Bighorn rams.

I tried all the places I had heard rams were seen in past years, but found none. Finally, an early fall cooling trend brought the 100 degree days down a little and some smaller rams showed up. Sheep hunting is a lot of sweaty hiking and looking with binoculars and spotting scopes to find a good ram. Although the hikes were fun, it was discouraging.

Trophy hunting means looking for the largest animal in your area, and means passing up good rams until you find the biggest one. This hunt was to be more about sharing the adventure and fulfilling a life-long quest. I wanted to do my hunting with my son, Spencer without an outfitter. I decided what was a good ram for me. If I could get up the mountain, my son and some younger friends could help me get the meat and horns down to the river.

On August 30, we watched the sun come up and listened to sounds of the canyon. I glassed deer, coyotes, river otters, and chukars, but no rams. Spencer finally spotted a good ram going toward his bedding area. Then it disappeared.

I started up the long, dry wash to cut the distance. A shot across the canyon was almost 500 yards, so I waited until the ram bedded down. A sneak down into the draw got me out of sight and I crossed up the ridge to get to a vantage point about 300 yards from the ram's bedding area.

It was a cool, dry morning with the sun making the grass look golden. The steep climbs seem to get harder, but I take my time and get to a good vantage spot and wait. The ram finally stands up; he is an old, battered ram with broomed off horns that have real character. I am thankful for this chance and decide I am going to take this old ram. My old model 70 Winchester Super Grade barks and the ram is mine.

My son has camped and hunted with me since he was a little guy. When he shot his first antelope, I carried it out on my back about a mile at 8,000 feet. I told him then that someday he would have to be the pack horse, and this will be that day.

After pictures and tags, we measured the old ram at 15 3/4 bases and 37 inch broomed horns. He is 12 years old and he probably would not have lasted the winter. It is a quiet satisfaction watching my younger friends and son carry the meat and horns down to the boat. I hope that lessons of outdoor legacy are being passed and that the conservation leaders of our past generations would look down with pride.

About the Author: Mandy Miles lives in Lewiston Idaho where he practices law to support his bird hunting and German shorthairs. He reports the dogs are easier to train than his children were and the dogs are always glad to see him.

“The .270 Can Do Great Things”

By Jack O’Connor- December 1943

Just the other day, a long-time friend mentioned that he was still shooting a Remington .270 he bought decades ago as a result of reading Jack O'Connor's countless pieces on the rifle. "It has never let me down," my hunting buddy wrote. Jack would have heartily approved of those words, and for my friend, like many of our generation, O'Connor's name and the .270 were virtually synonymous. Given that consideration, it seems only fitting to complete this anthology with one of his "Arms & Ammunition" columns on the rifle. December, 1943

Assuming that a cartridge can make its way on merit alone, that cartridge is the .270 W.C.F. In its early years it sat in the corner, dressed in sackcloth and covered with ashes, while few riflemen suspected that underneath it had a figger like Miss America, a disposition like an angel, and that it could bake pies like Mother used to make. The .30/06, its papa, had all the prestige of government adoption behind it, as well as the boosts of the gun writers. Further, in those early days, the rifleman could buy all the government ammunition he wanted at prices ranging from around one cent for 1918 wartime stuff to about three cents for later M-1 cartridges with no fouling gilding-metal jackets. No wonder the .270 had a tough time getting started!

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Gun writers of the 1920s and early '30s did the cartridge no good by saying that it would do nothing the .30/06 would not do, that its velocities were not so high as claimed, that it was not so accurate as the .30/06, and that it was a great little hand to change its center of impact.

Time has proved all those statements baloney of the purest ray serene. The typewriter pounder who even now is so often quoted as saying the .270 would do nothing the .30/06 would not do, never in all his life shot a head of game with a .270. Unless he kept a yogi or a swami chained in the backyard so he could consult him when in doubt, I'll be darned if I know how he got that information. As for the statement that .270 velocities are not so high as claimed, Winchester .270 rifles loaded with 130-grain Winchester ammunition were tested some years ago. The results of average instrumental velocities for ten-shot strings taken at 150 feet came out as follows: 3,126, 3,125, 3,115, 3,038, 3,028, 3,109, 3029, 3,038, 3,017, 3,034. The average for these 100 shots, checked by several different chronographs and fired from several different rifles, comes out 3,075 incremental – that is, actual velocity over the given range. Add the arbitrary figure of 70 feet to it, and you get a muzzle velocity of 3,145 foot seconds.

As far as accuracy goes, it has long since been discovered by those who have actually fired good scope-equipped .270 rifles from benchrests that the average factory .270 will outshoot the average factory .30/06 with factory ammunition. In comparative tests of the best handloaded ammunition in the two calibers, the .270 will also turn the trick. The average .270 will, in my experience, outshoot the average .220 Swift and shoot right along with a .257.

What about changing center of impact? Well, in 1938 I sighted in a tailor-made .270 on a Mauser action with the 130-grain Winchester factory ammunition. In the spring of 1943, when I took the rifle to Bill Sukalle for a new barrel, I still hadn't touched either windage or elevation. It was checked repeatedly at the target, and I shot hundreds of rounds at small marks like hawks, crows, jackrabbits, and coyotes.

I might add here that as far as big game went, up to about 250 yards it made no difference what sort of fodder I put into that rifle. It would keep any 130-, 150-, or 100-grain factory load well within a 6-inch bull at 200 yards, and with the best factory or handloads, it would shoot minute-of-angle groups all day long if I did my part.

Is that an exceptional .270? For a time I thought so. I began to suspect it wasn't when a friend of mine was targeting in a stock Model 70 Winchester with a Weaver 330 scope. His first five-shots group measured slightly more than an inch across. So did his second.

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When my .270 Mauser began to develop a case of throat erosion, I walked into a sporting-goods store and wrote a check for the first Model 70 .270 the clerk pulled out. I had Al Linden stock it and M.L. Stith fit it with a 330 Weaver. It shoots just like the first one.

Jake Schoeller, former member of the Dewar Cup team, fine shot and an accuracy nut, has a standard .270 with a Zeiss scope. With his handloads, it is good for minute-of-angle groups. Al Ronstadt, now of Washington, D.C., wanted a .270 with a medium-heavy barrel and had one put on a Model 70 standard stock and action. I saw him shoot a 10-shot group well under one inch with the powerful combination of 53 grains of No. 4350 and the 160-grain Barnes Bullet.

This is not to say that there is no such thing as an inaccurate .270, or one which changes point of impact. Any rifle with a crooked or poorly bedded barrel, or with a fore-end so cut that it can warp hard against the barrel, will give poor accuracy and change its center of impact. However, the relation between case capacity and bullet diameter in the .270 evidently makes for clean burning of powder and for good accuracy, just as it does in the .257 and the .22 Varminter. The .270 has that somewhat mysterious quality known as "balance."

The .270's reputation was made, however, not on the target range, but out in the hunting fields, particularly in the West and in Canada and Alaska, where ranges are long. Hunters using the.270 discovered that with it, they could hit game at longer ranges than with anything else, and that when they hit, they got a higher percentage of one-shot kills.

The explanation is simple. The trajectory of the .270 with the 130-grain bullet at a muzzle velocity of 3,140 foot seconds, or the 100-bullet at 3,540, is very flat; for all practical purposes it corresponds to that of the Swift over 300 yards and is flatter beyond. Consequently, the hunter is less likely to undershoot at long range. Sighted to hit the point of aim at 200 yards with a scope, the 130-grain bullet drops only 5 inches at 300 yards, not enough to miss even a deer with a hold in the center of the chest. (That drop from line of scope sight works out only 4.5 inches for me, by the way, and it also did for the late Capt. E.C. Crossman.)

If the hunter wants to turn his scope-sighted .270 into a real long-range rifle, let him sight in for 300 yards. In that case the bullet rises 1 1/2 inches at 50 yards, 3 inches at 100, 4 inches at 150, 4 inches at 200 and 3 inches at 250. It's at point of aim at 300, 4 inches low at 350, 10 inches low at 400, and 18 inches low at 500. All of which means that, so sighted, a .270 has a point-blank range of over 350 yards on even a small deer, a bighorn, or an antelope, and that by holding high on the backbone, the hunter would not have to bother his pretty head unduly about trajectory even at 500 yards, which under most conditions is too far to shoot.

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With a higher-mounted scope, the trajectory is apparently even flatter, and under most conditions of plains and mountain hunting, the rifleman needs only to put the top of the post or the intersection of the crosshairs on what he wants to hit.

The other part of the ease of hitting with the .270 lies in the fact that the bullet gets there fast and cuts down on necessary lead. The 130-grain Peters and Winchester sharp-pointed bullets arrive at 300 yards still zipping along at 2,440 foot seconds, and the 100-grain gets there with a retained velocity of 2,600, or faster than the fastest factory load for the .220 Swift. The Swift gets the 46-grain open-point bullet to 300 yards with a velocity of 2,130, and it gets the 48-grain soft-point Spitzer there with 2,570.

For the sake of comparison, the 150-grain Western open-point .30/06 bullet, which leaves the muzzle at 2,980, gets to 300 yards with a retained velocity of 2,070 and the best-shaped 150-grain .30/06 bullet, the Remington 150-grain bronze point, retains 2,260. For the sake of another comparison, the 180-grain Western open-point bullet for the .300 H&H Magnum is traveling at only 2,080 at the 300-yard mark, or only 50 foot seconds faster than the 180-grain Remington bronze point .30/06 bullet with its initial velocity much lower than that of the Magnum.

All these little figgers preach a couple of powerful lessons—that for long ranges, bullet shape and sectional density are very important and that the hunter ought to keep his eye glued to velocity figures out where the game is and not at the muzzle.

This high retained velocity also explains the spectacular killing power which everyone who has used the .270 has noticed at from 250 to 400 yards. Long ago I made up my mind that in order to be reasonably happy, I had to live where I could do a lot of hunting. I have used three .270 rifles since 1925. In that period I have also done some hunting with three .30/06 rifles, a 7mm, a .358, a .257, a .30/30, a .35 Remington, and a .30/40. The only cartridge with as good a record as the .270 is the 7mm., but it happens that the longest shot I ever made with it was 200 yards.

As nearly as I can remember, I have shot at and hit 39 head of big game with .270s. The longest shot (an antelope) was around 500 yards; the shortest (a whitetail), about 50 feet. The average was about 300 yards. One deer was hit and lost, but it was no more than scratched. Three took more than one shot; and 35 were killed with one shot. Most of those 35 didn't move out of their tracks. In 18 years I believe I have also shot about 100 coyotes with a .270, several of them being killed at 400 yards or more. Of all of them, only one wasn't killed instantly, and he, strangely enough, was less than 75 yards away.

Once upon a time, the owner could get any bullet he wanted for the .270 just so long as it weighed 130 grains. In late years, however, the picture has been greatly complicated. All major concerns

load a 150-grain soft point with muzzle velocity of 2,770 foot seconds. Peters loads a 130-grain bullet similar in shape and construction to the original Winchester pointed expanding, and Remington loads the round-nosed, but very strong 130-grain Core-Lokt.

Both Winchester and Westem load a l00-grain bullet at the very high muzzle velocity of 3,540; Winchester in a protected point similar to their 130-grain, and Western in a Spitzer soft point. Both Western and Winchester load the .270 with the 130-grain Silvertip. Western also loads a l30-grain hollow-point boattail, and of course, Winchester still loads the 130-grain "pointed soft point" or "pointed expanding" bullet originally designed for the cartridge.

Further to complicate the picture, bullets weighing 100, 120, 140, and 160 grains were available from Fred Barnes before the war, and bullets weighing 95, 100, 130, and 150 grains were manufactured by the Western Tool & Copper Works. In normal times, the only fly in the ointment is that there isn't any such critter as a cheap .270 bullet, as there have always been cheap .25 and .30 caliber bullets. The cheapest sold for about two cents, the most expensive for about three, whereas good .25 and .30 caliber jacketed bullets could be bought for around one cent. Handloads for the .270 have always cost somewhat more than for many other calibers.

The best all-around .270 game bullet has always seemed to me to be the 130-grain pointed expanding bullet designed for the cartridge and made by Winchester. Along with the 180-grain Remington bronze-point .30/06 bullet, it is almost a perfect ballistic job, combining a sharp, wind-bucking point with good sectional density. The base is very thick and heavy, the jacket becomes slightly thinner toward the point (which in reality is a sharp soft point of lead covered with a thick jacket of copper to keep it from battering in the magazine).

I have never seen one of those bullets fail to expand well, even at long range, and I have never seen one that failed to penetrate deeply. I have found it practically perfect for medium-size big game, weighing from 100 to 350 pounds on the hoof; and hunters in Alaska and Canada say its penetration is adequate for moose and grizzlies.

Why so little has been said about the virtues of that bullet is a question I cannot answer. Some years after it had been on the market, a German firm brought out a line of bullets which was practically identical, and the gun writers almost broke blood vessels shouting its praises. The only explanation I could give was that some Nazi designer had taken the trouble to section a 130-grain Winchester .270 bullet, whereas some of the gun writers hadn't.

For anything from a big mule deer on down, the 130-grain Winchester Spitzer or the similar Peters job looks like the best medicine. In spite of the fact that men like Russell Annabel of Alaska and Jim Osman of Canada have used it on elk and moose and have found it satisfactory, I'll make a guess

that the controlled expansion bullets like the Winchester-Western Silvertip and the Remington Core-Lokt would be a good deal better.

I base that on some hunting of broomtail horses, which are about the size of elk. Two .270 rifles were used by government hunters who had to exterminate the beasts on forest lands. The boys started out with the 130-grain Winchester bullet, and got pretty sloppy kills. They then shifted to the Remington Core-Lokt, and got deeper penetration and far more one-shot kills.

The same thing can be said of the Winchester-Western Silvertip-a bit too much penetration and not enough expansion for light game. For me, the Silvertip worked excellently on the one antelope and the few deer I have shot with it. Most deer and antelope hunters, however, have wanted less penetration, more expansion. In wooded country where shots have to be taken through brush, I'd prefer either to the pointed expanding.

A correspondent in Michigan made extensive tests, shooting the Remington Core-Lokt through all sorts of cover, and wrote that because of the round nose and thick jacket, it drives on through twigs and even small limbs with a minimum of deflection. The Silvertip, the Core-Lokt, and the Western boattail all retain less velocity than the original pointed expanding bullet does, for they get to 300 yards with a retained velocity of 2,260, as against the pointed expanding's 2,440,

I have always felt that the 150-grain soft point was a fine hunk of cheese for which there was little excuse. It has neither the flat trajectory and the shock power of the sharp-point l30-grain bullets, nor the penetration of Silvertip and Core-Lokt. It reduces the .270 to the power of a 7mm., which is a fine cartridge, but definitely not a .270.

For the handloader who likes to experiment and who is never satisfied with things as they are, the custom-made bullets offer definite possibilities. The l20-grain Barnes spitzer bullet is lightly constructed and, when driven at about 3,200, the most deadly small deer, coyote, and antelope bullet I have ever seen. Whitetail deer, hit anywhere solidly with that bullet, are almost always stone dead before they topple over. I have seen about 15 deer and antelope killed with that bullet, and I have never seen one move three feet after being hit. However, it would go to pieces too quickly to be absolutely dead sure at all angles on large mule deer.

The 140-grain bullet seems a shade too light to burn No. 4350, that great heavyweight powder, and No. 4064 will give it only 3,000 foot seconds. I'd stick to the 130. The heavy custom-made bullets in combination with No. 4350 are something else again, and anyone wanting to use the .270 on the heaviest game should look them over. Fred Barnes made a fine 160-grain semi-Spitzer of great sectional density, a small soft point, and a thick, heavy jacket of pure copper. It can be given about 2,800 with 52 grains of No. 4350, and 2,850 with 54 grains. With my Model 70 sighted in for

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300 yards with the Winchester 130-grain factory load, the l60-grain bullet in front of 52 grains of No. 4350 is exactly on at 200; a fact which comes in very handy for the sheep hunter who wants to take along a few cartridges loaded with the heavier bullets in case he runs into a grizzly. The 150-grain Western Tool & Copper Works bullet is a formidable baby, which 54 grains of No. 4350 will drive along at 2,950 foot seconds. Wow!

It was the 100-grain bullets, with their very flat trajectory, their astounding accuracy, their freedom from ricochet, and their ability to buck wind, that made the varmint and coyote hunters sit up and get interested. As we have seen, these bullets retain more velocity at 300 yards than any factory load for the .220 Swift. Because of the small time lag, they are much less wind-sensitive than the standard hot-shot .22 bullets, and they can be depended on to make longer sure hits on chucks, crows, hawks, and what not. Many a varmint shooter who has spent plenty of moola dallying after those painted hussies, the super-duper .22s, has discovered that the little old .270, who has been sitting in the corner all the time masquerading as a big-game rifle and nothing else, has exactly what he has been looking for. If he can manage it, he gets a ten-pound .270 with a medium-heavy barrel, slaps a 10X scope on it, use those 100-grain bullets at 3,540 foot seconds -and discovers he has the doggonedest long-range varmint rifle in the country.

It is my notion that it will be some time before a better cartridge than the .270 makes its bow. The cartridge even now has only slightly less recoil than the .30/06 and a heavier bullet at higher velocity means more recoil, perhaps so much that the average hunter will not do his best work in the field with it. Actually, the .270 was a 1940 cartridge, which happened to be introduced in 1925, a long way ahead of its time. It took the riflemen of this country many years to catch up with it.

On the other hand, the .270 is by no means always the rifle for the one-gun man. Lots of other calibers will serve just as well or better for the once-a-year deer hunter in the wooded East. The .270 has always been and probably always will be an expensive proposition to handload because of the odd-size bullets. Furthermore, just about one chuck hunter in 100 has enough skill to take advantage of the extra range the .270 gives him.

Working pressures are a good deal higher in the .270 than in the .30/06, and barrel life is shorter. If a man does much rapid fire, or shoots many ten-shot groups, both of which heat the barrel up, he will see a good deal of erosion in 1,000 shots, and he may find his accuracy falling off in less than 2,000 shots. Barrel life is, I believe, about 30 percent longer than that of the Swift and 30 percent shorter than that of the .30/06. My figures may be on the gloomy side, because I do a lot of experimenting, which is tough on barrels.

Because of the cheaper bullets, longer barrel life, and lighter recoil, I'd rather do most of my varmint shooting with a .250/3000 or a .257. For hunting the largest game, I'd get a lot more comfort

out of the fact that the .30/06 tosses a 220-grain bullet, but until something better comes along, I'll stick to the .270 as a Sunday gun on anything from coyotes on up to mule deer, if the shooting has to be done at long range.

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About the Author: Jack O'Connor's first love, besides his family, was the outdoors and writing about hunting, firearms, and the natural history of big game animals. As the longtime firearms editor for Outdoor Life magazine, O'Connor hunted and collected trophies throughout the world, and introduced millions of readers to hunting and firearms. He is still considered the undisputed dean of outdoor writing and journalism. Please visit our website at www.jack-oconnor.org to learn more about Jack, his family life, career, and conservation legacy.

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Coming soon out at the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center:

- ***June 2nd - Come out and enjoy the excitement of a gun raffle drawing. A of the copy of the Jack O'Connor number 2 rifle will be raffled off to some lucky individual. In .270 Winchester, this rifle, made by Roger and Paula Biesen, is the 5th and last in this particular series. A .375 H&H will be the 2013 raffle drawing rifle.***
- ***June 2nd – Come out and enjoy the Winchester "Show and Shine" in coordination with the raffle drawing. Anyone that has a Winchester rifle or shotgun collection is encouraged to purchase a table and show off their favorites. If you have an interest, be sure to give us a call (208-743-5043), stop in, or visit the website for more information.***

In our next newsletter:

- ***Eldon "Buck" Buckner begins discussions on the O'Connor firearms, their origins, use, and significance as part of the O'Connor lore.***
- ***Allan Jones will take a modern look at Jack's sight-in strategy for rifles and see how it works today in "Three Inches High" from The Tech Corner.***
- ***Plus, another great article from the Jack O'Connor collection.***

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