

Jack O'Connor

2013 Newsletter - 1st Quarter

Table of Contents:

<i>Chairmen's Report Card</i>	-	<i>Mark Yochum</i>	-	2
<i>From The Director's Chair</i>	-	<i>Mike Butler</i>	-	4
<i>Tech Corner - "The Guy Who DIDN'T Pick</i>				
<i>the 270 Winchester"</i>	-	<i>Allan Jones</i>	-	5
<i>Growing Up O'Connor</i>	-	<i>Bradford O'Connor</i>	-	9
<i>"Eleanor O'Connor's Arizona Favorite – The .257</i>				
<i>Roberts"</i>	-	<i>Eldon "Buck" Buckner</i>	-	14
<i>"Can Jack Go Home"</i>	-	<i>Stephen Redgwell</i>	-	18
<i>"The Incredible Antelope" – Jack O'Connor, September</i>				
<i>1943, with permission from Outdoor Life</i>			—	22
<i>Member Pictures</i>			-	23
<i>Miscellany</i>			-	25

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT CARD



By Mark Yochum, Co-Chairman

America....."Land of the free and home of the brave". Francis Scott Key nailed it when he wrote those memorable lines so long ago. These are the reasons we live in such a wonderful country. Freedom has many connotations and among these are freedom of choice, freedom of speech, religion, political affiliation and so forth including for example the freedom to pick the kind of cars we drive, what channel TV we watch and if we elect to send text messages from our cell phones or not. We are free to assemble, attend schools, shop at the mall or shop on-line. We are free to own pets or not to own pets, free to fish and hunt or free to not fish and hunt. As you can see the list could go on and on, and it does.

To some degree these rights or the basic premise of these rights goes back to our colonial forefathers. When they drafted the "Constitution of the United States" they had no concept of the advancements in technology that would come forth in the birth of the industrial revolution but they did have a firm grasp on how they perceived life in this country should be and this is crystal clear in the historic document that begins "We hold these truths to be self-evident.....".

In the coming months each of us will be faced with many choices on many issues. The task will be exercising our right of choice and voicing our opinions. My challenge to each and every one of you is to be informed and to educate yourselves as much as possible before making important decisions. It is unfortunate in our electronic age that Truth, Falsehood and Bias walk hand in hand. Consider sources and motivation before you accept a Truth and be clever enough to recognize Falsehood and Bias....it will be difficult but you deserve to make the right decisions.

A great challenge that is brewing now in the media and in the highest political offices as well in our homes and work places is the interpretation of our great "Constitution" and especially the Second Amendment dealing with the right to bear arms.

At this juncture I am not going to ask you to align yourselves with either side of the debate but only ask that you get as much information as possible. This is what I am personally trying to do. After reading the "Constitution" I find that the Second Amendment does not grant the right to bear arms.....it was already a right. It is simply codified and re-affirmed for the purposes of:

Deterring tyrannical government.....Repelling invasion.....Suppressing insurrection.....Facilitating a natural right to self-defense.....Participating in law enforcement.....Enabling the people to organize a militia. Target shooting and hunting were so essential to daily life that common sense precluded adding them to this list.

Be informed, weigh your decisions, don't believe everything you see or hear and exercise your right to "Freedom of choice".

In 2013, please consider a renewal of your membership and share the opportunity with someone you know that cares about our hunting heritage. You can find all the information you need on our website: www.jack-o'connor.org Thank you for help...we couldn't make a difference without you!

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

From my vantage point, 2012 was an exciting year. First, we were able to see the successful production run of the Winchester Model 70 Jack O'Connor Tribute Rifle. Secondly, we got our website forum area squared away so it is now user friendly. And...last but not least, we had our first open house-gun show and shine. 2013 looks to be another banner year, with a large push to recruit new members, advertisers, and the hopes of forming a youth hunter education challenge shooting team. As we are all aware, gun ownership is at the point of a lot of political discussion as 2012 ends. As hunters and shooters it is imperative that we all stay engaged in those discussions and make our voice known. As members and supporters of the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center, we know that hunting, conservation, and the shooting sports are intricately interwoven into a fine tapestry of tradition and heritage, whose values are timeless in our American society, past and present. I have heard it said numerous times during the last couple of years that American kids are losing their sense of nature and outdoorsmanship. Some have even gone as far as to call it nature deficit syndrome. My generation did not have nature deficit syndrome as we were too busy riding bikes, catching lightening bugs, and playing baseball/football in the back 40 field. Now that most of us are grandparents it is high time to get our grandkids back outdoors and being the kind of American kids we once were. My challenge to you for 2013 is to take a kid (any kid) hunting and properly introduce them to the sport of hunting and shooting. I have yet to see a kid without a smile after a great day afield with family members and friends. So let's quit talking about it and make it happen.....!!! Good Hunting in 2013!!!! 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

“The Guy Who DIDN’T Pick the 270 Winchester”



By Allan Jones

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

“I shoot a 270 Winchester because of Jack O'Connor.”

Had I a dollar for every time I’ve heard that, I could buy a lot of really nice rifles from Roger Biesen. Like many others, I read Jack O’Connor as a kid and decided I needed a Model 70 Winchester in 270 Winchester. At the ripe old age of 12 or 13, I’d saved up the then-retail price of \$129, and the hardware store two doors down from my dad’s supermarket had a new, standard-grade M70 in the appointed caliber on the rack, taunting me every time I walked by.

Dad, being a wing shot and small-game hunter, always pointed out we had no place to shoot a high-power rifle (largely true back then). He never got the point of shooting a firearm to learn about a cartridge until I wrote *Speer Reloading Manual #12*, but I can’t

complain—he was a great man who never winced at the cost of keeping me rolling in 22LR ammo and 12-gauge shotshells.

So I went back to my research. I'd read about reloading and knew I would be doing it when the time was right. I studied the 270 Winchester and was hard-pressed to find anything wrong with the performance.

However, further research about the 270 triggered something in the embryonic reloader in me: at the time, the selection of 0.277-inch bullet weights and styles was limited. You could get 100-, 130-, and 150-grain component bullets. Compared to most other big-game calibers, the options were fewer.

On the other hand, there was a wealth of 28-caliber bullets. You could commonly find weights between 100 and 175 grains with plenty of stops in between. This is less of a factor today but there is still a broader selection of 7mm bullets than 270.

As I went back to O'Connor's tales, I noted his high praise of the 7x57mm Mauser cartridge. He was handloading it to higher pressures than the modest levels of US factory ammo, and he and Eleanor obviously did quite well with it so loaded. So that was that—my goal became a 7x57 on a strong action.

My first 7x57 was *not* a strong action model. My parents gave me a surplus M95 Chilean Mauser rifle for Christmas when I was about 14. I wasn't yet handloading so fed the Mauser both factory hunting ammo (175-grain RNSPs were the only US loads then) and some FN-labeled surplus FMJ ammo with 154-grain spitzers.

I could hit informal targets with reasonable regularity at our favorite shooting spot on the bluffs above the Trinity River. But we lacked a formal range with benches. When a public range opened while I was in high school, I was able to see what the old Chilean could do on paper.

To make a short and sad story shorter, the old Mauser printed 8-inch groups at 100 yards. In my young and inexperienced mind, the problem had to be bullet diameter so I set up to slug the bore. As I was tapping the lead slug through the bore from the muzzle, it fell out when it was still far from the chamber. The diagnosis was terminal—the throat was seven inches long!

The 7x57 search could have gone on hold while I attended university, but the guys I was hanging with were also shooters. That kept the quest alive but not productive. The pre-64 Model 70 was gone by the time I entered university in 1965 and were already priced out of my reach. I saw several candidates in magazines and at gun shows. A short-run Ruger #1 in 7x57 caught my eye but was too much coin for my student wallet. A friend bought it so at least I had visitation rights.

An importer advertised a commercial 7x57 rifle on a 98 Mauser action with a Euro-styled stock that, on paper, looked awesome. When I saw one in the flesh, the ardor left me; the bluing was poor and the stock looked like a piece of wood off the outhouse, and didn't quite fit the metal bits. That importer must have invented the term "gap-osis".

Dejected, I let the idea go for a while. Then in 1972, not long after I landed a real job, Ruger announced two items: they would produce a long-action M77 bolt rifle; and they would do a limited run of them in 7x57. It cost me \$150 new. I finally had the strong-action and the caliber.

Its light, 22-inch barrel is capable of groups just over an inch at 100 yards with common hunting bullets —certain better than “minute-of-deer” accuracy. It remains one of my favorite rifles even though it is neither the most attractive nor the most accurate. It satisfies me deeply.

Now about loading that cartridge to meet its potential. The American ammo industry set the 7x57's maximum average pressure (MAP) at 51,000 psi, slightly behind the original 257 Roberts loads at 54,000 psi and well under the 30-06 at 60,000 and the 270 Win at 65,000. European loading practices for this cartridge are to go higher. Although there is not an exact conversion, we worked out that European factories were loading it to around 58,000 psi if tested on US equipment.

The action is the key to doing this. If a commercial action in 7x57 is also chambered for 30-06 and similar cartridges, you have enough safety factor to load the 7x57 to higher levels than the “soft” 51,000 psi of factory ammo. The newer +P standard for the 257 Roberts is 58,000 psi, about the same as European 7x57 ammo. I'm a professional ballistician with years of experience in pressure testing, and I decided to limit my 7x57 handloads for my Ruger to the range of 58-60,000 psi. I don't need more.

I worry about any military conversion. Obviously the limits of the M93 and M95 Mausers must be respected. In theory the M98 should be OK but I know these were made in a wide variety of facilities during the war years to varying standards of metallurgy and quality. If you build a custom rifle in any caliber on a military-surplus action—even the vaunted Mauser 98—select a gunsmith who is an expert in these actions and heed his advice.

I have some “apples-to-apples” pressure/velocity numbers for 7x57 handloads showing what you gain by loading to Euro practices. This was data for experimental bullets that aren't available so I won't reveal the propellant type lest you try something you'll regret.

The data labeled “SAAMI (US)” is loaded to no more than 96 percent of MAP, typical of factory ammo and published Speer data. The second set labeled “CIP (Europe)” dances right up to the 58,000 psi mark. These data are for a 140-grain bullet fired from a 24-inch test barrel:

	SAAMI (US)			CIP (Europe)		
Propellant	Max Charge, grains	Velocity, ft/sec	Pressure, psi	Max Charge, grains	Velocity, ft/sec	Pressure, psi
Propellant A	44.5	2654	48,129	48.0	2852	58,806
Propellant B	40.5	2600	47,159	43.0	2788	56,668
Propellant	46.0	2658	48,415	48.0	2772	54,417

C						
Propellant D	44.0	2656	48,278	47.0	2824	57,243
Propellant E	39.5	2617	48,521	41.5	2748	56,574

Loading "Euro" gives an increase of 150-200 feet/sec over US standards, letting the 7x57 give fair chase to newer 270 Winchester factory loads and handloads with 140-grain bullets.

I like 160-grain bullets in my 7x57 for mule deer and elk. My first Idaho muley showed me how much a high-SD bullet at modest velocity can do. The running buck turned away just as I yanked the trigger and the bullet struck farther back than I intended. Still, I got the deer. The Speer Mag-Tip hit him high in the right thigh breaking the femur, yet still traveled an additional 24-28 inches into the chest before stopping under the hide on the off side near the left shoulder. A lighter bullet, or one run at much higher velocity, might not have brought that deer home.

So for all you who shoot a 270 Winchester because of Jack O'Connor, I shoot a 7x57mm Mauser for the same reason.

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.

Growing Up O'Connor



“Son of Jack”

By BRADFORD O'CONNOR

My father wrote that the caribou was one of the most handsome of all the world's big-game animals, even more so than North America's wild sheep and elk and Africa's sable and kudu.

To him, the caribou was beautiful, but dumb and he considered it unethical for a hunter to take unfair advantage of the caribou's stupidity.

That is why he commanded me, his then teenage son, to put my rifle back in the scabbard that September afternoon nearly 62 years ago.

We were a few days into a month-long hunt southeast of Atlin Lakes in Northern British Columbia when two bull caribou approached our pack-horse string. Dad and I watched the bulls trot up to investigate, trot off, nostrils flaring and tails raised, after getting a whiff of human scent, then return moments later having already forgotten why they had run off in the first place.

This was the beginning of the caribou rut. The dim-witted bulls had mistaken our horses to be cow caribou. We shouted, cursed and tossed clods of dirt at the bulls, finally driving them off.

The largest sported gargantuan antlers with the most massive shovel Dad ever had seen. Its antlers were certain to have scored near the top of the record book. The urge to shoot was almost irresistible.

Dad didn't have to lecture me on hunter ethics to explain why he didn't want me to shoot that bull. I knew. Besides, the caribou season did not open until the next morning. This seemed to be a moot point because we were days away from the nearest road and lawmen, but a quite serious matter to Dad who said that getting a jump on the season was not an option.

“You'll get another chance,” Dad assured me.

He was right. On the final hour of the last afternoon of our hunt, after running nearly a mile to keep ahead of the wind, I shot a bull that earned the top medal for mountain caribou in the 1951 Boone & Crockett competition.

For a caribou hunter, this was about as fair as a fair chase can be and a far cry from popping that sex-befuddled bull earlier in the hunt.

Dad wrote about the hunt later in *Outdoor Life*. This soon triggered a stampede of hunters to the Atlin area. By the early 70s, my caribou had slipped from No. 7 to 35 in the record book.

I often wonder how many record-book caribou were taken in the rut, victims of their own self-destructive stupidity, by hunters who paid no heed to the concept of fair chase.

That hunt in 1951 was one of my first lessons from Dad on hunter ethics. No, he never lectured me about hunting ethics nor did he lecture his readers in his books, *Outdoor Life* and later in Petersen's *Hunting*.

But the message was there, an embedded part of a much larger picture he painted of the hunting experience.

He wrote in such a vivid, descriptive manner that the readers were transported on the hunt with him.

It required little of the reader's imagination to feel the lingering warmth of a grassy bed vacated moments before by a ram, to see the red autumn rust forming on arctic willows, the woodsy smell of a campfire or to hear the cackle of the pheasant rooster exploding from the nearby brush.

Dad's passion for sheep and sheep hunting was known throughout the hunting world and his message on ethics was contained in almost everything he wrote on the subject.

Alas, the message must have been too subliminal for the many who did not get it.

He fretted over his role in creating a Grand Slam hysteria. He is said to have been the fifth person to have bagged all four varieties of North American wild sheep and he laid much of the blame for making the achievement of a Grand Slam a status symbol for a new breed of affluent and highly mobile hunters.

He said too many Grand Slam seekers were so driven by greed and ego that they cared little about the sights, sounds and smells of sheep country.

They were out for instant success and prestige, accomplishing in days what required weeks of tough hunting for others before them. Out of the greed grew an industry of unscrupulous outfitters who promoted quickie hunts, often flying their instant hunters to the base of sheep mountains where rams had been spotted a day or so earlier.

I met one such hunter who had stashed his rifle and duffel in a storeroom at his office while he awaited the go-ahead call from his outfitter. He got the call shortly after he arrived at his office, hopped a flight to Anchorage, shot his ram the next morning and was back home the following day. He said that his goal was to score a Grand Slam in a year. I lost track of the guy, but he probably did achieve that goal.

In the book *Sheep and Sheep Hunting*, Dad wrote:

"I have written a good many stories on sheep hunts. Some of the boom in sheep hunting may well be laid to my doorstep. I hope that when I arrive at the Pearly Gates, old St. Peter does not hold it against me. He may well do so – and if he does, I shall not argue. I simply will bow my head, turn around and go down below where I belong."

But Dad's message was not totally lost. I like to believe that he had played a role in an awakening of hunting ethics and a growing awareness that to preserve our hunting heritage we who hunt must clean up our act. I am convinced that this is true because many of the leading hunter-conservationists of today have told me that they were great Jack O'Connor fans and were inspired by his writings.

Today, most of the shenanigans that tarnished the image of hunters and hunting in the 60s and 70s are unthinkable. Resource managers -- with the enthusiastic support of most hunters -- have gotten tougher on game-law violators and associations of guides and outfitters have done a commendable job of policing their own members.

Hunters pump vast amounts of money into wildlife conservation through organizations such as the Wild Sheep Foundation, Safari Club International, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Game Conservation International, Ducks Unlimited and a host of others.

These hunter dollars protect and enhance wildlife habitat and support critical research into disease and nutrition, migration patterns and relationships between predators and prey.

I like to believe, too, that Dad's writings -- and sometimes rantings -- contributed to a heightened environmental awareness. In Arizona, he witnessed the devastating impact of overgrazing on a fragile desert and its wildlife and he saw the same happening after his move to Idaho.

In public meetings, magazine articles and in letters to the editor, he warned that the frenetic dam-building activity of the 1960s and 1970s would inundate an important Idaho elk winter range and devastate the great steelhead and salmon runs of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers. He locked horns with the Corps of Engineers and the many who saw cheap hydroelectric power and river barging as a panacea for all society's ills.

The dams were built anyway. Since then, the states and federal government have pumped millions if not billions of dollars to stave off extinction of some of the fish runs. Today, there even is serious talk about removing some of the dams to restore the runs.

Dad was a prolific writer, a workaholic who often boasted until his late 60s that he never had taken a true vacation.

He slept in his office so he could get to his Royal typewriter quickly in case he woke up at 2 in the morning with a story idea, which he often did. He'd carry paper and a pen with him almost everywhere he went, often pausing in mid-conversation to jot down an idea or observation.

Dad's hunts -- all of them, even his afternoon sashays from home or office into the Arizona desert for quail or jackrabbits or in later years for upland birds or rock chucks in Idaho -- sooner or later showed up in his writings.

That Dad wrote more than 1,500 articles for hunting and fishing magazines, authored two novels, an autobiography and about a dozen books on hunting and firearms was known to most of his fans.

Few, however, are aware that he wrote romantic novellas and other articles for *Redbook*, *Mademoiselle*, *Readers Digest*, *Esquire*, the literary magazine *Midland*, and other magazines popular in the 1930s and 1940s; Or that that he once was a cub reporter in Chicago at the time of Al Capone and later was a Hollywood correspondent; Or that his western novel *Conquest* was banned from the El Paso library because librarians thought the salty language of the book's characters would shock readers.

Literary critics gave the book highly favorable reviews, as they did later with a second novel, *Boom Town*, but that did little to placate the good citizens of West Texas where there was talk of publicly flogging him. The book created such a stir among the pious that he was forced to quit his job at Sul Ross College in Alpine where he taught English and journalism.

Blessedly few knew something else about Dad: He was a prankster who rarely passed up the chance to pull off a practical joke.

One victim was Lee Sproul who had hunted tigers with Dad in India in the 1950s.

Sproul, a kindly, soft-spoken East Coast lace manufacturer had been invited to visit Father and Mother at their home in Lewiston, Idaho.

Before Sproul's arrival, Dad found a ramshackle house nearby with a porch stacked high with junk and a yard littered with rusting car bodies and old washing machines.

Dad fetched Sproul from the airport, then drove to the old house, opened the trunk and began to unload Sproul's luggage.

After an awkward silence, Sproul cleared his throat and said: "But, Jack, I am sure I will be very comfortable here."

For the rest of Sproul's stay, he was fair game. Even Mother got into the act, putting rubber novelty-store vomit on the poor man's jacket. Sproul was very forgiving, because he and my parents remained good friends.

Mother – bless her soul – was a willing collaborator in other pranks. The victims usually were sorority friends my sisters Cathy and Caroline had invited home for the weekend.

Mother would start serving dinner by announcing that she was developing a toothache. As the dinner progressed, her moans became louder and louder until, finally, Dad would say:

"Eleanor, I have to pull that damned tooth out."

And, she'd whimper: "Oh, don't, Jack, please don't."

At that moment, Dad would head into the kitchen and emerge with pliers in one hand and an elk tooth, its roots painted gory red, hidden in the other.

As the horrified girls looked on and Mother would scream in mock agony, Dad would pretend to pull the elk tooth from her jaw.

The joke was great fun until the night a panicked coed fled to a nearby house and phoned the police. Minutes later, a squad car pulled up and two burly cops pounded on the door, demanding to know what the hell was going on.

In the fall of 1953, Dad sent a letter to me in Korea written on stationery filched from a mortuary. I learned later that he had sent others letters with stationery taken from such places as churches, collection agencies and used-car dealerships.

Dad could not pass up a good gag even if he knew it could put his career at great risk.

In 1938, Ray Brown, editor of *Outdoor Life* asked Dad if he wanted to be the magazine's gun columnist to replace Ned Crossman who had committed suicide. Brown liked the two sample columns Dad wrote, but there was the formality of filling out the necessary employment forms.

Dad apparently had neglected to fill in his date of birth. Brown sent the following message in the terse language of the telegram:

HOW OLD JACK?

Dad's reply: JACK FINE . . . HOW OLD RAY?

Brown, who was well known for his explosive temper, must have been in an exceptionally mellow and forgiving mood because Dad got the job and remained with *Outdoor Life* until he retired in 1972 and went on to write for Petersen's *Hunting*.

I once attended a party in Reno hosted by a longtime friend and hunting companion of Dad.

“One thing I admired most about your father was that he was the only outdoor writer to admit that he’d occasionally miss a shot,” he said.

Dad did miss, but rarely.

One of my earliest hunting memories was of tagging along with Dad for coyotes and antelope jackrabbits in the desert north of Tucson. I saw him down two coyotes in a row, one at 250 paces and the other at almost 300. Over the years, I accompanied Dad on big-game hunts in Mexico, Arizona, Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, British Columbia, The Yukon and Africa and I can’t recall seeing him botch a shot.

Luck often plays a major role even among the best shots. On our last upland hunt together a few months before Dad’s death in 1978, a big pheasant rooster flushed from a clump of brush about 50 yards from us. I didn’t shoot, but Dad shouldered his 28-gauge Arizaga, said “well, hell,” and fired, dropping the bird.

We paced off 70 yards. The rooster was hit by a single No. 6 pellet, embedded in the side of its head.

Dad was known as the father of the .270, which is not quite accurate. But he was so keen on the caliber in his writings that the .270 became the pet rifle of thousands of Jack O’Connor fans. He’d readily admit to me that the 30.06 was in the same league as the .270 yet somewhat more versatile. It was a 30.06 loaded with 220-grain “solids” that Mother used in Zambia in 1969 to kill her first and only elephant.

His love of the .270 and his affection for such kindred calibers as the 30.06, the .280 Remington, the 7x57 and .257 pitted him against gun writers he dubbed the Big Bore Boys who preached that the .270 and its wimpy brethren were inadequate for elk and foolish choices for deer.

Dad argued that it was not the caliber so much as where the shot was placed that counted. An elk shot in the lungs is just as dead with a .270 as with a .458, he wrote.

His jousts with Elmer Keith, the leader of the Big Bore Boys, provided years of great entertainment for readers of outdoor magazines.

Though Dad has been dead for 35 years, I still receive dozens of letters, phone calls and e-mail from his fans.

Some are from men in their twilight years who had read, met or had corresponded with Dad. Yet a surprising number are from hunters and gun enthusiasts in their mid or late 30s who were barely old enough to read during the peak of Dad’s writing career.

What is most gratifying to me is that my adult grandsons -- Riley, Michael and Andrew Pleas -- are devout fans of their great grandfather, worshiping a man who died four years before Riley, the eldest, was born.

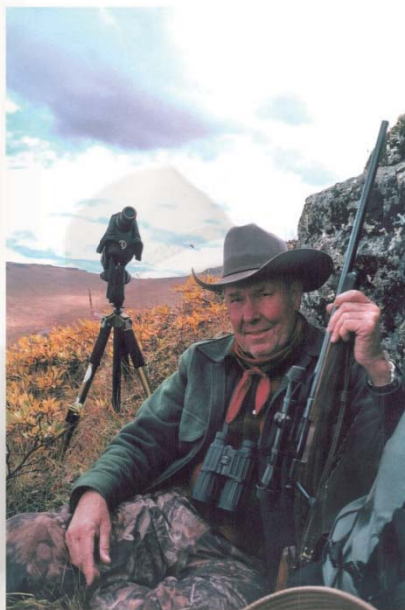
These young men will never hunt tigers in India or Urial in Iran and it may be that they never will afford the stratospherically high cost of a Big Five African safari, but they have inherited a fondness for fine guns, are good wing shots and have shown a love and respect for what they hunt.

This is the Jack O’Connor legacy I cherish most.

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

in 1952. 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 60th wedding anniversary this year. The O'Connor's have two children (John in Denver; Pamela in Seattle) and six grandchildren.

O'Connor Family Firearms History



“Eleanor O'Connor’s Arizona Favorite – The .257 Roberts”

by ELDON “BUCK” BUCKNER

In 1934 the O'Connor's moved from Flagstaff in Northern Arizona's high country of ponderosa pine and snowy winters to Tucson's desert heat and cactus. Here Jack

became the first professor of journalism at University of Arizona while soon achieving recognition as a top ranked gun and hunting writer.

That same year Remington introduced their commercial version of a .25 caliber wildcat cartridge developed by eastern woodchuck hunter Ned Roberts. Developed by necking down the 7 x 57 m/m case, the cartridge was capable of pushing bullets weighing 60 to 120 grains at then impressive velocities. Originally called the .257 Remington, the name was changed to .257 Roberts in honor of its inventor and introduced in Remington's Model 30s rifle.

Jack bought one of the new rifles for Eleanor to replace her lower powered .25 Remington and had it custom stocked and fitted with a new Noske scope. This rifle, with its 24 inch barrel and loaded with Jack's various hand loads, proved very accurate and effective on Arizona whitetails (Coues' deer) and desert mule deer as well as ideal for coyotes and jack rabbits. Jack soon had a .257 of his own, used it primarily as a varmint rifle, but shot a few deer and one bighorn ram with it.

Eleanor used her Remington .257 with great effect on Coues' deer, javelina, countless jacks and coyotes and in 1941, shot an impressive buck antelope during Arizona's first modern day season.



Eleanor and rancher Frank Siebold with a Coues deer she shot in 1945 with her Mauser 93 in 257 Roberts.

The O'Connor's did a lot of hunting for Coues' deer in the rugged desert mountains of Arizona and Sonora, Mexico in those days. They frequently used horses but such hunts always required a lot of through hiking too. Eleanor's rifle proved to have one major drawback. At 10 ½ lbs., it equaled 10% of diminutive Eleanor's body weight, similar to an average man carrying 18 pounds. When carried in a scabbard it tended to pull a saddle sideways. More often than not Eleanor would tire out at the end of a long day and Jack would have to carry both his and Eleanor's rifles back to the horses or camp.

Jack was soon convinced that Eleanor needed a lighter rifle. In 1941 he swapped a standard Mauser action to a well-known Phoenix barrel maker Bill Sukalle for a shorter Model 93 Mauser action and had him fit a light 22 inch barrel to it. Sukalle trimmed down the trigger guard and tang, thinned and altered the bold handle for low scope mounting. A light Weaver 330 scope was mounted on Weaver B mounts and all shipped to Griffin and Howe in New York to be custom stocked. The finished rifle arrived back in Arizona in 1942 weighing just under 7 ½ lbs.

Eleanor christened her new rifle that fall on a running white tail buck at 300 yards. A few days later Jack's 12 year old son Jerry used it to take his first buck on the Siebold's ranch in the Canelo Hills near Patagonia.

Eleanor's little .257 saw lots of use during the 1940's, with frequent Sonora deer hunts, where the limit was 3 per person each trip, spring javelina hunts, and numerous family outings for jacks and coyotes.

In 1946, at age 13, youngest son Bradford used his mother's rifle to take his first deer on Major Healey's ranch in the Huachuca Mts., as he related in an earlier issue of this newsletter.



O'Connor's son Jerry, with a nice buck shot with his mother's new 257 Roberts in a Mauser action configuration.



Eleanor with an antelope jack rabbit shot on the run with a Remington model 30 in 257 Roberts.

Eleanor's rifle was used often until the O'Connor's moved to Lewiston, Idaho in 1948. Eleanor was busy with four children and most of her hunting was for local pheasants and quail. The boys were both soon serving in the Korean War. Then, in the early 1950's, Eleanor tried a lightweight custom 7 x 57 built for Jack and promptly claimed it as her new big game rifle.

Eleanor's .257 languished in the rifle rack until it was gifted to Jim Rikhoff's wife Janet in the 1960's. Even more petite than Eleanor, at 4 ft. 11 inches, she successfully used the .257 on red stag during stalking ventures to Scotland.

In December, 1971, the Rikhoffs' son Jimmy, age 10, used the rifle to shoot his first buck on Harry Tennison's Texas ranch.

While researching for the gun section I authored for the O'Connor biography in 2001, I learned that Ron Troy, an O'Connor fan I'd met thirty years earlier, had acquired the .257 from the Rikhoff's.

In 2007, Ron wrote to tell me he was selling the .257 through an auction house in case I was interested. I bought the rifle.

Eleanor's rifle has experienced a few changes through the past 70 years. When I received it, the metal had been re-blued, a different scope mounted, the stock shortened from its original 13 ¼ inches and the original trap door steel butt plate replaced by a thin, red, white line rubber pad. I promptly replaced the pad with a solid ¾ inch black one which increased the stock length to 12 ½ inches – about right for a youngster or petite lady. The original Weaver 330 scope and top mount had been replaced long ago with a Noske side mount base and G&H rings which held a Bushnell Banner 4x, which I replaced with an early Lyman All American 4x with a post and crosswire reticle similar to the post in the original Weaver. With the heavier scope it now weighs 8 lbs.

The model 93 action does not have the added safety of a rear locking lug like the model 98, so Jack loaded Eleanor's cartridges with then considered mild loads of 37 ½ grs 4320 or 39 grs 4064 behind 100 grain bullets; loads that are currently listed fairly stiff in today's loading manuals.

I finally took time to try Eleanor's rifle in April 2012. Knowing how much it had been used, my accuracy expectations were not high. After carefully cleaning the barrel, bore sighting and firing a fouling shot, I fired three shots at 100 yards. The load was 40 grs 4064 behind Sierra's 90 gr. hollow point, which gave no sign of high pressure. I was some surprised to find three holes in a tight cluster which measured 5/8 inch center to center. Other loads of 37 ½ grs 4320 and 45 gr H205 (now obsolete) behind two different 100 gr Speer bullets grouped within an inch.

This past fall I used the 90 gr Sierra load to make an instant one shot kill on one of our ranch white tails – a lower neck shot as it stood looking at me at a tad over 100 yards.

As an off and on .257 Roberts user in both North America and Europe for nearly 30 years, I heartily agree with Jack's 1977 concluding comments in the revised 3rd edition (Knopf, 1978) of his classic *The Rifle Book*, first published in 1949:

"Although the cartridge will eventually become obsolete, it will probably be loaded for quite a few more years and it is still worth getting a custom made rifle for it. The cartridge gives light recoil and muzzle blast along with good accuracy and I know of no better combination cartridge for varmints, deer, sheep, antelope and game of that Class."

About the Author: Eldon "Buck" Buckner was born on a livestock ranch in Missouri, grew up in Arizona, and moved to Oregon in 1972. "Buck" is very active in various conservation organizations, especially the Boone and Crockett Club and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep. He has been a competitive shooter since the age of fourteen. He has hunted from Quebec to Mexico, Africa, Spain, Scotland, and England and has completed the Grand Slam of North American Wild Sheep. "Buck" is currently

on the board of directors of the JOCHHEC and is a contributing writer to various magazines and several of the big game award editions of the Boone and Crockett Club. Mr. Buckner also co-wrote the biography of Jack O'Connor in 2002.

Guest Writer

“A Conversation with Jack O'Connor ”



By Stephen Redgwell

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Not long ago, I spent a pleasant evening chatting with Jack O'Connor. It was relaxed and informative. You know, he really is a nice man. I can imagine what you're thinking. Steve, you've been hitting the sauce, but I swear it's true. Let me explain what happened.

Just before last year's moose hunt, I had to work on a rifle. I have a shop in the basement, outfitted with all the equipment needed by the hopeless tinkerer. It's a wonderful place where I can work undisturbed.

I had been putting in long hours getting ready for the trip. In previous years I had always taken a 303, either as the primary or backup rifle, should anything untoward happen while I was away from home. This year I decided to take a 30/06. I had made some bonded core .308 bullets and my Savage 110 would make a good test bed.

The scope had to be replaced, a new recoil pad installed and the rifle cleaned up. I had started early in the day, and by the time it was done, supper was ready. I put the rifle in my office upstairs, propped up against a bookshelf, and went to the kitchen to eat. After supper, I reloaded some cartridges and retired upstairs to relax.

I'll admit that I was tired. When you start at six in the morning and don't get to sit down until dark, it doesn't take much to nod off. I resisted the urge however. There was much to do. I needed to make some notes in my range log for the next day's testing and answer some email. After that, I would head off to bed.

I sat down at the desk and started the last bit of my "to do" list. After a couple of minutes, the silence was interrupted by a cough.

"Steve, am I disturbing you?" I turned around, and there stood Jack.

"My God, I, uh. What are you doing here?" What could you say? There he was, big as life standing beside my 30-06. And no ghostly sheen either. Jack was solid, smiling and casually dressed.

"I'm sorry if I startled you. May I sit down?"

"Certainly, but you've got me at a disadvantage. I wasn't really expecting to see you. You know, you're dead. You ARE dead aren't you?"

"Yes, of course. Is that a problem?"

"Not for me. It does seem odd though that you, especially you, would be sitting in my house! We've never met, and apart from some books and magazine articles, I don't know much about you. You're not family and I haven't been doing any voodoo things like invoking your name, so I hope that you can appreciate my situation. Just what brings you here?"

"A fair question, but not to worry, I'm not going to haunt you. I'll admit that most people would find this strange. When I was alive, if someone had showed up at my house, someone dead that is, I'd have been out the window!"

"That goes without saying. It does shake you up. Can I get you a drink or something?"

"No thanks. That's not possible now. Let me tell you why I'm here."

"Okay. Um, I hope you're not here to scold me about not owning a 270..."

"Haha! That's what most people might think, but no. I was watching you earlier when you were working in the basement."

"You were in my basement?"

"Yes. Quite the room you've got. A bit dark though."

"Well, I have been meaning to add some more overhead lights."

"You really should. At any rate, I noticed that you were putting a scope on your rifle. It's a 3x9 variable power. Can I ask why you decided on that?"

"Frankly, it's only scope I had left in the locker. Given the choice, I'd have put a 4 power on and be done with it. I don't see any use for the higher magnifications, but sometimes you just have to make do. I'll keep it on 3 power."

"I'm glad to hear that. It seemed silly to be mounting a 3x9 on a 30/06 for bush moose anyway. You'll be lucky if you can see past 75 yards."

I thought it was odd that Jack would know so much about my plans. I hadn't kept it a secret, but how did he find out? I was over the shock of his appearance and our conversation was relaxed. He continued.

"You know, I was curious about why you went with a 30/06. Normally you'd use a 303. After I saw your bullet making set up though, the reason became clear. Have you got any plans to make something heavier in .308?"

"I was thinking about a 200 grainer. A round nose. What do you think?"

"Good choice. Despite what most people believe, the 270 wasn't the only cartridge that I used. I liked the 30-06 as much, if not more, than the 270. For what you're doing, I would have used a 30-06 as well, loaded with a 220 grain round nose bullet. It's perfect for what you'll be hunting.

I've noticed a lot of new cartridges are out on the market. It makes me wonder what's going on, but the industry needs to experiment. Heck, I've done my share. In case you haven't figured it out yet, a lot of these new cartridges will fade away. Hunters will be left with the ones that stand the test of time...like the 30-06."

"Jack, I owned a 270 once. It was made by Parker Hale. But I got to tell you, the cartridge left me flat. I guess it's because of where I hunt."

"And if you'd said anything different, I'd have questioned the logic. Not liking a cartridge is okay as long as the ones you use fit the situation. A lot of my time was spent hunting at moderate to long ranges. The 270 was just the ticket for sheep and plains deer."

"What do you think about these new magnums?"

"I haven't tried any and never will. They're beyond my time. Like I said before, if they prove to be something useful that hunters taking a liking to, then they'll hang around. It's nice to have choices. From what I've seen however, they don't offer anything new really."

"They have a 270 WSM. They even ran an ad with your likeness in the background. They said something like, 'If Jack was around today, this would be his choice'."

"I'd have tried one and wrung it out. Anytime a fellow can play with a new rifle or cartridge is good."

"Don't you think that they were taking advantage by using your name to sell them?"

"Of course. Are you asking me whether it's right? Well, who was going to stop them? No one but me could ever know if it was true. It's the ad men. But 25 years have passed since I've been around. Most hunters today only know me by reputation or from books in a library.

Let me tell you something. Every man hopes to leave a legacy behind when he's gone. Whether it's just within his family, or if he's lucky, something to give the world. I was one of the lucky ones. I got to do a lot of things that your average Joe could only dream about.

Part of my legacy was the 270 Winchester. I liked it. I guess you could say that if I hadn't written so much about it, the cartridge may not have caught on. The same may well be true of these new arrivals."

"Regardless, you haven't really answered the question. Maybe I wasn't clear. Is it right to say that 'so and so' would endorse a product that they've never seen? I mean, what would Elmer Keith say if they used his name to push a new handgun cartridge?"

"I wouldn't know. You'll have to ask him. But that will be a hard thing to do because he's dead."

"Well, so are you!"

"If he shows up after I leave, you can ask. Steve, don't take it to heart. It's not you that they're talking about. Look, I can understand why you're upset, but companies have always done things like this and will continue to do so long after you're gone. It's human nature.

Look at Parker Ackley. He wasn't the world's greatest gunsmith. There were times that he was downright dangerous! But it's not so much what he was. It's more like what he left in the eyes of the world. His positive contributions stand to his legacy. Okay, not everything that he ever did was right and proper. It doesn't matter though. The good outweighed the bad. Heck, I was no saint myself!"

"So what you're saying is that it's alright for people to believe the mystique that's evolved?" "Yes. When someone has affected your life or the lives of others in a positive way, their warts can be ignored. I can't think of anybody I've met in my lifetime that was perfect, but I'll never hold their faults against them. When the good outweighs the bad, then be happy. Life's too short to be poking around in useless space."

"It'll take a while for that to sink in."

"You've got time. My time however, is up. I've got to go."

"Will you be back?"

"Maybe. I'll always be around though. I have to keep an eye on my legacy. You take care of yourself and bag a big one on your trip!"

"Thanks Jack."

And that was it. I can't really say that I saw him leave. I don't even remember what time it was or how long we talked. I'm just glad to have had the opportunity to chat with the man that so many people still talk about.

About the Author: Stephen Redgwell joined the Canadian Forces in 1977 as an air force armourer. His initial trades training was taken at the Canadian Forces School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (Small Arms) and the Canadian Forces School of Aerospace and Ordnance Engineering (Aircraft Weapons & Explosives). For twenty one years, he bounced around Europe, the US and various bases across Canada, helping to curb Communism, eliminate petty dictatorships. He has also published two fiction books and has been featured in, or contributed to, a number of publications including the Lee Enfield Digest, the Black Powder Journal, British Enfield Rifles- No 4 and No 5

Rifles (North Cape Publications), Handloader Magazine and Canadian Shooting Sports Assoc magazine among others. You will also see his work around the Web at places like www.6mmBR.com and www.thegunzone.com Since 2005, he has been teaching as a civilian instructor at the Canadian Forces School of Aerospace Technology and Engineering. He has been happily married for 30 years to his wife Tammy. Steve has three children, two grandkids and loves grouse hunting! Steve has authored a number of books about the 303 British, 7.62x51mm and 7.62x39mm cartridges. He has also written about the Lee Enfield rifle, which was Canada's principle military arm for over forty years. His books are in use with police agencies across North America. His readers include the federal government, military brass and even a US Senator!

"The Incredible Antelope"

By Jack O'Connor- September 1943



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A couple of friends of mine drove up in front of my house one day with two buck antelope. They almost caused a traffic jam, and one passer-by, who stood gaping at them, said, "Good Lord, there just ain't any such deer!"

That is about the usual reaction to the first sight of that amazing creature.....

To read more about those incredible antelope please refer to our Jack O'Connor Archives within our website location!!!!

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.

Member Pictures



Scout Yochum, 13, lives in Clarkston, Washington and shot these two nice deer in 2011 and 2012. In October 2012, Scout bagged the mulie buck (left picture) near Asotin, Washington; a shot at 450+yards. The nice Idaho whitetail buck (right picture) is from above the Clearwater River in 2011. She shot this buck at 250+yards. Scout is a National High School Rodeo finalist, honor student and plays school sports. She is the daughter of JOCHHEC member Trever Yochum.



Mark Yochum, Co-Chairman, Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center, shot a nice 4x4 whitetail killed on his birthday while walking on foot from his cabin in "North Central Idaho". Mark makes the challenge to other O'Connor fans....."I am the first to show off a JOC logo (on my cap)....so where's yours?"



Blair Hansen shot this Missouri whitetail buck and capped a bit of a reunion with both an old friend and a farm on which I hunted deer last in the late '70s. Arriving a day before the Missouri season, I scouted some of my old haunts a bit, found this buck's territory and found a spot where I wanted to start my hunt the next morning (opening day, November 10th). Arriving early in the pre-dawn darkness, the wind was where I had hoped, and I took up a spot in the edge of some timber overlooking a bean field and other fingers of timber. As the day dawned, deer were really moving, a couple

of smaller bucks were chasing does and generally being rambunctious, but by about 8 o'clock I'd seen nothing of a bigger buck.

I decided I needed to move a bit, still hunting the edges of timber and pasture and bean fields when I saw a group of deer standing in the middle of a large bean field. They were silhouetted against the eastern sky. Even at nearly 600 yards I could clearly see the buck's antlers, and I realized that my heart was skipping a beat. I remember Jack O'Connor's words "The big ones always look big," in "The Art of Hunting Big Game in North America," and this one did. I was able to sneak through some brush and into an overgrown fence row to what looked like adequate range (it was 285 yards, according to my laser range finder) and I had a pretty good rest on the top of a fence post in the fence row. The plot began to thicken as I realized when I raised my .270 Mauser rifle (built by Al and Roger Biesen) and peered through its six-power scope that I could see only the top quarter of the buck's body, due to the slope of the terrain and the unharvested beans. I held high on the back, squeezed off, heard the bullet strike, and recovering from the shot and working the bolt, could not see the buck, just the does moving off.

Cautiously waiting from my shooting position for a minute or so, I left stepped into the open and began walking to where I expected to find the buck. After about 50 yards or so, he jumped up and began running toward me, really carrying the mail. As I jumped to the ground for a sitting shot he closed the distance to a bit under 100 yards, then apparently seeing me, changed course, offering a quartering shot. I swung the rifle through him, squeezed off knowing that my bullet would need to traverse nearly the length of his body to reach the heart lung area. I heard that bullet hit as well, and saw him make a big flinch as he disappeared into a wooded area. I followed, and found him quite close, experiencing that mix of elation and melancholy that only hunters know. The first 130 grain Nosler Partition bullet had apparently stunned him and knocked him down with a shot high on the back just back of the left shoulder; the second had struck him in the left ham and had ranged forward into the right lung as I had hoped. Both bullets exited.

The reunion with my old friend and quail hunting partner Charlie and fine hunting country that seemed to be speak to me again after all these years was a wonderful experience and a lifelong memory. The buck, killed with my favorite rifle, made the experience magnificent. I'd like to think Cactus Jack would have approved...

At the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center:

- ***A copy of Jack O'Connor's .375H&H rifle, currently on display as the 2013 raffle gun of the year, will be raffled off to some lucky individual. This rifle, made by Roger and Paula Biesen, is the 1st^h of three rifles to be built in the "African" series.***

The drawing will be held on June 1, 2013 at the Jack O'Connor Center. Be sure to come out on that day!

- The Winchester "Show and Shine" for 2013 is now in the planning stages. Anyone that has a Winchester or custom 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. We will get you on the list for the drawing/gun show and shine.***
- The Winchester Model 70 Jack O'Connor Tribute Rifles are on the streets and only limited supplies are still available. If you are lucky enough to own one of these "limited run" rifles be sure to order your gun case from the Center. Please read the accompanying paperwork that came with your rifle for ordering details.***

In our next newsletter:

- Bruce Young, an O'Connor fan, will discuss one of his favorite topics in the next Tech Corner.***
- An exciting Alaskan sheep hunt entitled, "Last Chances in the Chugach" By Chet Fitzgerald.***
- "The Ambler Experience" by Jim Cox provides an interesting recount of a caribou hunt out of an Eskimo village near Ambler, Alaska.***
- Plus, another great article from the Jack O'Connor collection.***