



# Father of the

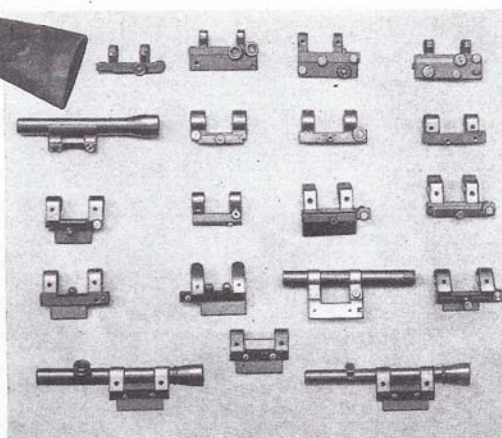
Determined to Give Hunters the Finest, Simplest Telescope Sight Possible, an Obscure Watchmaker Overcame Ridicule and Indifference to Gain Recognition

By  
JACK O'CONNOR

SOMEWHERE on the plains of Wyoming, a beautiful buck antelope swings into view, stretching out like a greyhound, running fleet as the wind. A hunter, who has waited for such a shot all his life, raises his rifle, looks through a little, glass tube, swings smoothly ahead of the fleeing buck, and fires. It's a hit—and the hit means a trophy he'll always be proud of, a trophy made possible by that little, glass tube that brought the buck three times nearer, helped him shoot more accurately, and enabled him to tell that the buck had the head he was looking for. Such scenes are being repeated all over the world every day.

Sportsmen may not know it, but all of them are indebted deeply to a brown-eyed, gray-haired man who lives and works in a wide place in the road near San Francisco, Cal. The man is Rudolph Noske, or "R. Noske," as he prefers to call himself. The wide place in the road is San Carlos, a village known to fame only because Noske chose it as the place to build the telescope sights and mounts which go all over the world. Almost every major advance in the construction of telescopic sights and mounts in the past fifteen years has originated in the fertile brain of that keen-eyed German-American. Practically single-handed, he took the hunting 'scope out of the experimental class and made it a deadly instrument of precision. With courage and fortitude, he stuck to his task of perfecting glass sights when most American sportsmen considered them silly, newfangled gadgets. Now, in late middle age, he is receiving his reward for long years of toil and ex-

Noske shows that 'scope, when properly mounted, does not affect balance of a rifle. Right, old and new types of mounts

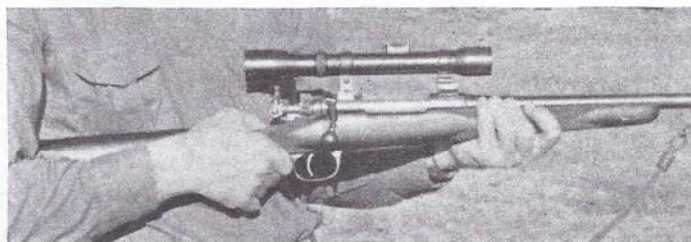


periment, in respect, in honor, and in enough of the world's goods.

Let's take a look at the telescope sights with which the more daring and advanced American riflemen were experimenting before the World War. All were German. Most were bulky. Without exception, they were mounted so high above the bore of the rifle that the hunter had to perch his chin on the comb to see through them. The mounts were all bridge mounts; that is, they were directly over the bore. They marred the beauty of the rifle when the 'scope was removed, and most of them soon became so loose that it was impossible to retain the accuracy of the rifle. The elevation was in the tube of the 'scope itself, but the windage was in the mount. Often the only way to obtain windage was to pound the mount one way or the other, hoping in the meantime that the strain did not ruin the expensive 'scope.

Yet, in spite of their many imperfections, these German sights were the best and almost the only telescopic sights.

Noske dates the real interest in glass sights to the return of America's World War veterans. The riflemen among them had seen and admired the German 'scopes, and many of them had a healthy respect for the German snipers who used them. When a sniper's bullet almost hits a man at 600 yards, he is likely to think the person who fired the shot knew how to see and to hold. Some of the veterans brought 'scopes back with them, too. They passed them around, talked about them, tried to use them—sometimes with fair success. At the same time, hunters began to realize that big game hunting under modern condi-



Pre-Noske style 'scope and mount. A German 4X Gerard, fitted to a Mauser with bridge mounts



# Hunting 'Scope

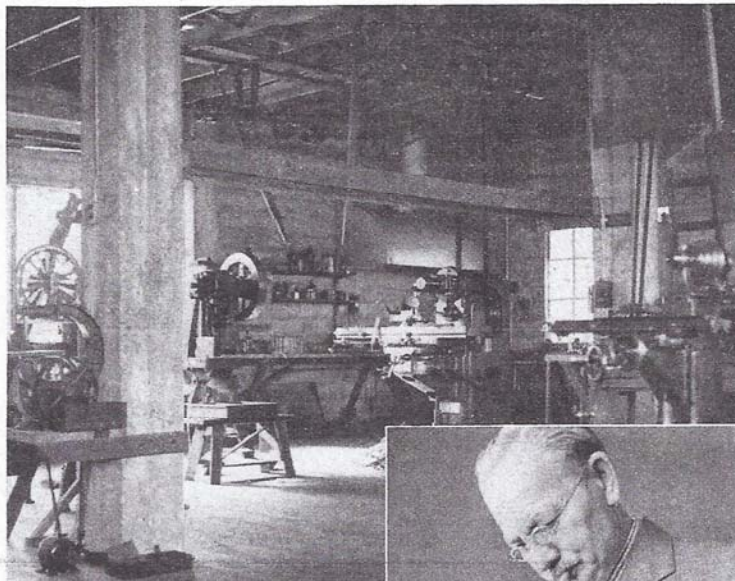
tions demands the advantages of glass sights. The game was scarcer, wilder, and more difficult to bag. The time was right for a successful hunting 'scope and mount, and, as usually happens, the time produced the man.

Just after the World War, Rudolph Noske was working as a watchmaker in San Francisco. Quite unknown to himself, he had exactly the right training to solve the old problem of how to mount 'scopes strongly and rigidly, so they would be reliable under the rough conditions faced by the military sniper and the wilderness hunter. Noske was a skilled machinist, and he had studied optics for three years in Chicago. In addition, he had served his apprenticeship in the Old World, where youths are willing to work without pay until they master a trade. He had patience, foresight, and vision; but, most important of all perhaps, was the fact that he had a quick, daring, and original mind.

"How did you happen to become interested in telescope sights?" I asked him when I interviewed him in his little San Carlos factory.

"Women," he said in the faintly German accent which he has retained in spite of his thirty years in this country. "If it hadn't been for women, I'd never have gone into the business. In my work as a watchmaker, women used to give me the devil. I was looking for some trade or business where I would not have to deal with them, and I found it in glass rifle sights."

A German, who landed in San Francisco, broke, after the World War, decided Noske's destiny. He had the agency for a German make of binoculars and 'scopes, and showed some



Interior view of Noske's modest factory at San Carlos, Cal. Right, the inventor inspects a new 'scope



of them to the watchmaker, who was immediately interested. Noske took over the agency, working nights and Sundays, trying to sell glass sights to California's riflemen. But he had a hard task. Many persons were interested, but most of them were suspicious. He sold some 'scopes, but they did not give the expected satisfaction. The trouble, Noske decided, was in those German mounts, so he started to develop a mount of his own.

In 1920, he worked out his first side mount—the one that is the grandfather of all side mounts made anywhere. Possibly, if he had been a gunsmith instead of a jeweler and machinist, he would have gone on trying to improve the then existing bridge mounts. Instead he tried something entirely new.

Mounted as at left, the 'scope does not interfere with bolt handle. The view below shows clearly the long eye relief



He attached a plate to the left receiver wall of a bolt-action rifle by pins and screws, and he cut across it a tapered notch for the locking pin. The windage was obtained by a graduated clicking-screw in the removable portion of the mount, and the 'scope itself was attached to the base by interlocking male and female dovetails. The idea was bold, it was original—and it worked. When the 'scope was removed, the rifle was not all cluttered up by the base. Windage was easily, quickly, and positively arrived at. Furthermore, one could remove the 'scope, put it on again, and have the same center of impact.

The problem of attaching glass sights to rifles had been solved, but the news seemed slow in leaking out. Noske's earliest mounts, hooked up to German 'scopes, were used on rifles fired hundreds of times in tests at Camp Banning. They were the only ones to come through (Continued on page 113)



## Father of the Hunting 'Scope

(Continued from page 43)

with flying colors; all the rest failed miserably.

Other men, knowing they had solved the problem, would have sat back, pleased with themselves and with the world. Noske wasn't like that. In the next few years, he worked out fourteen different models of mounts, some good, some not so good—but all of them daring. In the front office of his San Carlos factory, he has an example of every model he produced. When you see the contents of the box in which he keeps his old models, you realize that almost every idea in the line originated with his keen brain. The side mount? That's R. Noske's idea. Clicking, minute-of-angle windage? That is Noske's, too. Windage and elevation both in the mount? Not so long ago that was hailed as a major innovation, but Noske had tried the idea and discarded it as impractical some years before.

But pioneering mounts for hunting 'scopes while trying to eat was no easy problem. Noske alternated at his trade of watchmaking and his dream of perfecting his mounts. He sat up until long after midnight, answering letters from riflemen who were interested enough in the newfangled idea to write to him, but who were still too suspicious to buy one of the gadgets. Capt. E. C. Crossman encouraged him. So did Capt. Grosvenor Wotkins. Some riflemen actually bought his mounts, so he stayed at his self-appointed task.

Life had prepared him for hard knocks. He had worked all over this country and Mexico, been beaten up by a gang of toughs in Saint Louis, and escaped the wrath of Mexico's Pancho Villa by the skin of his teeth. It took more than the indifference of the public to stop him.

He began experimenting with telescopes themselves as well as with mounts, and he produced his first glass sights a year or two after turning out his first mounts. Since then, the development of his 'scopes has gone hand in hand with his work on mounts. Although he originated the side mount and windage in the base, he abandoned the idea to his competitors, and put both windage and elevation within the tube of the 'scope itself. He got that idea from Capt. Wotkins, he says, and the idea was revolutionary.

In 1929, he brought out the first 'scopes with long eye-relief, another revolutionary idea. Behind it is an interesting story. One Sunday, Noske and his wife went for a picnic in some near-by hills with the hope of bringing in some small game. With him, Noske had a German combination over-and-under, which fired a 20 gauge shell in one barrel and a .22 rifle cartridge in the other. Upon it, he had mounted one of his 'scopes with the three inch eye-relief that was then standard. Noske saw a cottontail rabbit, raised his gun, sighted through the 'scope, and pulled the trigger of the 20 gauge by mistake. The edge of the 'scope cut his eye severely and knocked him completely out. When his wife brought him to, she learned that the accident had given him an idea. In the next few weeks, he worked out the principles and an Eastern optical firm agreed to grind the lenses. Long eye-relief, an idea which has been copied by at least one

well-known German maker, was born.

Besides keeping hunter-riflemen from getting cracked in the eye, long relief solved other problems. With the 'scope perched high above the bore, the rifleman often found it difficult to hold closely enough, as the high position kept him from "cheeking" the stock. But, with the existing rifles and their high bolt-lift and Mauser-type safeties, it was either mount the 'scope high enough to clear the bolt or undertake an expensive altering job. Now any Springfield or Mauser will take a Noske 'scope, mounted as low as anyone would wish.

AN EARLIER improvement, one which came before Noske had developed internal windage, also was the result of an accident. Noske had sold a mount to a famous Eastern sportsman, bound for Alaska to hunt moose. The sportsman found exactly the moose he was looking for, a huge fellow with a record head, but he emptied his rifle at him at 100 yards and never connected. Later he discovered the reason. His guide, a simple chap who had never before seen such a contraption, had fiddled with the windage screw, and as a consequence, the hunter had missed the moose by four feet. The disappointed sportsman wept on Noske's shoulder, and, from that time on, the windage became harder for curious fingers to operate.

In early models, the transverse locking screws, which secure the removable portion to the base, were made so that, in an emergency, the rifleman could turn them with his fingers, although they also were slotted for a coin or screw driver. But Noske discovered that some of the users always tightened them with their fingers, and that, as a result the screws burred and did not give satisfaction. The screws in the newer mounts have to be turned in with a coin.

For general hunting at relatively short ranges, where there is much timber, Noske is a firm believer in relatively low power. He recommends his 2½X sight for all-round use. The 4X is good for long, open-country shots, he says, but not for the woods. One of his favorite stories concerns four big bucks he saw running through the brush but which escaped when he couldn't find any of them in the field of his 4X 'scope quickly enough to shoot. He also believes that a simple post, like the one he evolved, in spite of the complicated examples he had seen from Germany, is the best for big game hunting. Ordinary cross hairs are best for vermin and target. He supplies both types, as well as a combination of post and cross hair.

Noske is the father of the side mount and the grandfather of every mount of that type in the world today. He was the man who first used the pins that make all such mounts possible. His keen brain worked out internal adjustments, simple reticules, long eye-relief, and the low, painless mounting without alteration of the rifle.

In that neat, little San Carlos factory, where he and his two assistants are assembling and machining the 800 telescope sights and mounts he expects to sell this year, he has several inventions to show those who visit him. Not all of them have to do with telescope sights, either. Remember that he is a machinist, an optician, and a watchmaker!

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