

Jack O'Connor

2014 Newsletter 2nd Quarter

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT CARD



By HOWARD ERDMAN,
CO-CHAIRMAN

Last January, I took a few days off to spend time in the basement of the WSU library reading letters in the Jack O'Connor Collection. This is something that I have been doing since moving to Pullman in 2003, and discovering that Washington State University Library's Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) housed Jack O'Connor's papers.

(<http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/finders/cg457.htm>)

Thanks to the generosity of Bradford, Caroline, and Catherine, their father's papers are safe, secure, and available to those who, like me, are huge O'Connor fans.

The collection is a true cornucopia for those of us who spent our youth reading Outdoor Life and saving up to buy a .270. I spent many a lunch hour in the library when I worked at WSU, and still find time to take days off and trek to MASC now that I work in Lewiston. This winter I ran across a line in a letter that Jack O'Connor wrote to John Jobson on January 24, 1974, "The best thing to do in Lewiston in January is simply to relax and enjoy it." This is still good advice.

The launch of the Youth Hunter Education Challenge was not as successful as we had all hoped. Only three potential participants showed up, which was two shy of the minimum needed for the YHEC program. So, now we will regroup and work out an improved marketing plan and launch the program next fall.

Plans are underway for the annual Jack O'Connor Days, June 6 & 7. We will have the gun show on Saturday, June 7.

The first two gun shows were a great success. I have to confess that when Mark first suggested having a gun show in conjunction with the raffle drawing, I was a little skeptical. Fortunately, I kept my mouth shut because the event has been great in terms of both turnout and quality of merchandise/ exhibits. Make plans to attend this year!

We are actively exploring e-commerce so that JOCHHEC can better serve our website users who would like to make purchases. I have found several software packages that look promising. Hopefully, we can make a software selection, buy inventory, and find volunteers to manage sales by this summer.

Thanks for supporting the JOCHHEC!

About the Co-Chair: Howard Erdman has been elected to serve as Co-Chair of the JOHHEC. He is an endowment member of the NRA and charter member of Friends of Jack O'Connor. An ardent fan of JOC since his mother gave him his first Outdoor Life subscription in 1957, Howard has served on the Board since 2011. He is a Navy veteran, lives in Pullman, Washington and is the Director of Institutional Planning, Research, & Assessment at Lewis-Clark State College.

From the Director's Chair



By MIKE BUTLER, DIRECTOR

Spring is Here.....

I have been doing a little sight-seeing lately, but not far from home. As the days warm I like to head up into the

mountains, near the snowline, to look for antler sheds and begin to scout for turkeys as they move back up into the drainages from their wintering areas at lower elevation.

Spring....is one of my favorite times of year (autumn being number one). The air is crisp and still cold; the ground plants are greening, grouse are drumming, snipe are winnowing and the flowering shrubs are beginning to show color.

I love to introduce kids to spring turkey hunting. It is the perfect time to take a child afield. The weather is fairly warm; they can look for antler sheds, hunt for morel mushrooms, and take a nice nap in the warm sunny spots of open

meadows between listening for those wily boss gobblers to sound off.

I have yet to have a young hunter complain or be bored with our adventures. They are usually asking when we can go again before we even get back home.

The goal of keeping our hunting heritage alive and viable into the future is the responsibility of all hunters. When folks make excuses for not taking their kids or grandkids hunting I chime right in and remind them that if we want to keep our hunting heritage alive and well we must stay actively involved and take the time to pass on those outdoor skills to our young hunters.

This is why we, at the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center are initiating the National Rifle Association's Youth Hunter Education Challenge Program. It is our responsibility to fulfill this requirement. It gives us a solid platform to involve our young hunters in the shooting sports, receive advanced training in those skill sets to become responsible and successful hunters, and to assure our 2nd amendment rights and hunting heritage live on into the 21st century.

If you are not involved, please get involved at your local level. We all need to pass on our hunting legacy to the next generation of hunters. I also ask that you introduce a new hunter to our sport. Take them afield, show them the ropes, and by all means...make it fun

and make it an adventure they will never forget. You will not regret it.

Good Hunting!!!! MB

About the Director: Mike Butler started his wildlife career in 1975 with the Missouri Department of Conservation. Mike recently completed a 30 year stint with the Federal Government as a wildlife biologist, mainly focused on wildlife habitat restoration. He is an Endowment member of the NRA, a Life member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, a supporter of Ducks Unlimited and The National Wild Turkey Federation and is also an NRA certified Range Safety Officer. He is an avid turkey and elk hunter, and enjoys Alaska salmon fishing at least once a year.

Tech Corner



“Beyond the 270 Winchester”

By ALLAN JONES

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

We all know the powerful influence that Jack O'Connor had on the 270 Winchester cartridge. He started using it almost as soon as it was introduced in 1925, a decade before he was writing hunting and shooting articles.

In some ways, the 270 Win should have “died a-bornin’,” not from performance but rather potential acceptance issues. In 1925, the shooting public had limited exposure to bullet diameters. Centerfire rifle shooters knew the 25-caliber cartridges like the 250 Savage and the 25-35 Winchester. The 30-calibers were going strong with the 30-30, 3-4- Krag, 300 Savage, and the 30-06. The 32-caliber stuff like the 32-40 Winchester and the 32 Winchester Special were also popular. Even the 28-calibers (7mm) were getting some recognition after our soldiers came under fire from them on San Juan Hill.

But a 27-caliber? The bullet diameter is 0.277 inch. That was pretty edgy in a time of conservative cartridge choices. The only other cartridge I can find that used that diameter before the 270 Win was an obscure and short-live Asian military cartridge that was a 6.8mm.

Another factor was propellant choices in 1925. The slow-burning rifle propellants that today we take for granted simply did not exist. When you neck down a 30-06, you need slower propellants to achieve the new cartridge’s velocity potential. Look at the 25-06. In its wildcat days it offered little more performance than the venerable (and smaller) 257 Roberts. It wasn’t until after WW2 that slower rifle propellants became available, allowing the 25-06 to meet its true potential.

When I review all the technical issues of the 270 Winchester, I have to conclude that the cartridge survived and thrived due to one non-technical factor—its constant praise from Jack O'Connor.

What about other 27-caliber sporting cartridges? Obviously they did not exist

before the 270 Winchester. The first practical, albeit non-commercial, variant was the 270 Savage. Rather than a revolutionary cartridge, it was more an expediency for owners of Savage 99 rifles in 250 Savage that had worn-out barrels. The original bore could be “freshed out” to shoot bullets intended for reloading the 270 Winchester. The resulting cartridge proved to be a good one, capable of pushing a 130-grain bullet in the ballpark of 2750 ft/sec at the muzzle. However, it never received the recognition of being converted to a commercial cartridge.

The first popular upgrade of the 270 Winchester came in about 1943 when Roy Weatherby necked down and shortened the 300 H&H Magnum case to create the 270 Weatherby Magnum. It was Weatherby’s second proprietary cartridge after his 300 Weatherby and proved popular enough for Roy to start a commercial operation at the end of WW2. However, his cartridges remained “proprietary,” meaning they were commercially available from only Weatherby Inc., until 1994. In that year, all the Weatherby cartridges were accepted by SAAMI, making them true “commercial cartridges.”

The 270 Weatherby was popular but not hugely ahead of the original Winchester cartridge in velocity. Any gain was largely due to the fact that Weatherby installed 26-inch barrels on their early rifles, allowing 50-90 ft/sec more velocity than a 24-inch barrel.

Today, there is still not a big performance increase in the 270 Weatherby of the Winchester version, especially when you go “apples to apples” with barrel length. When we

developed the *Speer Reloading Manual* #14 in 2007, we shot all-new data for the 270 Weatherby with the latest propellants. The highest velocity we found for a 130-grain bullet was 3267 ft/sec. The highest velocity we achieved with the same bullet in the 270 Winchester was 3117 ft/sec. Both were tested in pressure barrels 24 inches long. That is a 150 foot/sec velocity increase—about five percent—gained by burning 12 percent more propellant.

It wasn’t until the 270 Winchester Short Magnum arrived about 2001 that a 27-caliber cartridge equaled the velocity of the 270 Weatherby (in lab-tested handloads) without a huge increase in charge weight. The Short Mag can make 3250 ft/sec from a 24-inch barrel with only a few more grains of propellant than the Winchester.

The last commercial 27-caliber cartridge was the 6.8mm Remington SPC in 2004. Originally developed as a military cartridge, Remington offered it in several commercial models. Based on the old 30 Remington case, its smaller head diameter makes it suitable for use in the AR semi-auto rifle platform. However, size matters here and the 6.8mm Remington loaded with 100-grain bullets finishes the velocity race behind the old wildcat 270 Savage.

The 270 Winchester will be 90 years old next year. Has it been bettered by newer developments? One man’s opinion—mine—is “not really” if you are working with a standard-length rifle action. If you are building an ultra-light rifle, a short action can save $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound depending on configuration. In that case, the 270 Short Magnum is the only choice to maintain performance

parity with the old veteran 270 Winchester.

If you like a long action you certainly have the option of the Weatherby version; it is a fine cartridge. But for me, nearly 50 years of reloading experience and decades of "living inside" a pressure-test barrel have given me some strong opinions. For me, the old saying, "Dance with the one what brought you," would have me shooting the 270 Winchester.

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



"The Winter of 1948"

By CAROLINE O'CONNOR-MCCULLAM

We moved from Tucson to Lewiston in 1948. Vernon Speer had sent my dad

Chamber of Commerce pamphlets extolling the beauty of the two rivers that embraced Lewiston and the loveliness of the hills to the north. The photographer was obviously feeling overly creative; nothing looked remotely the same when we got there. Vernon Speer even found a house which filled the bill: a two-story colonial-style house with four bedrooms and a bath and a half, and there was even a small structure behind the house that would serve as a trophy room. It seemed quite a step up from our little stucco house in Tucson. My dad bit. He bought it sight-unseen. The realtor, by the way, was Hank Kaufman's mother. Our fate was sealed.

My mother dreaded moving to a small town in Idaho. She feared that it would be blazing hot in summer and desperately cold in winter. She was right on both accounts.

We arrived in July of 1948. As my mother predicted, it was indeed blazing hot, but there was a swimming pool within walking distance and we all survived, my mother hosing us in the evenings to cool us down, and also hosing the roof to try to cool the roasting-hot bedrooms. We kidlets were soon assimilated into school -- my brothers in high school and my sister and I at the normal school a couple of blocks away. And our lives went on. And then fall arrived, and then the leaves fell, and then winter was upon us. It is still remembered as The Winter of Forty-Eight. The thermometer plunged. Fierce winds raced up the canyon. We were blasted with icy rain, and then the temperature plummeted further. The old furnace in the basement churned and labored to keep the house warm enough. My father hammered away upstairs as usual on his manual typewriter, wearing warm sweaters.

It snowed and snowed, until the snow was almost two feet deep. It was sometimes so cold that the hairs in our nostrils froze. The world looked grey-blue. At first, we were enchanted -- we were Arizona kids to whom snow seemed a miracle.

Mother made snow ice cream when the snow was fresh (recipe forthcoming at another time.) We slid down the hill in front of our house and threw snowballs and made snowmen until it was so cold the snow wouldn't compact. It was such fun. But as the weeks and months wore on, with us slogging and shivering through yellowed, crusty snow to school and my parents slipping and sliding to the grocery or post office, the fun began to pale. We longed for sunshine and

warmth. My dad filmed my mother standing in front of our house in a shabby fur coat; a forlorn robin sitting on a naked branch, feathers fluffed against the cold. Both she and the bird looked absolutely miserable. My father made a trip to his office in New York that winter and reported that the weather there wasn't much better than in Lewiston, but my mother was miffed at being left behind and said she'd much rather be cold at Sardi's or 21 than struggling with us four children in Lewiston.

My dad was told of a large elk herd that had come down from the frozen heights to seek grazing in an area down by the Clearwater River. There was also an awesome ice jam up the Clearwater that was to become legendary and needed to be seen. My father was eager to see his first elk herd in Idaho. So we were dressed in thick coats and scarves and packed into the car -- a 1948 mint green Dodge sedan. This car had replaced the famous 1939 Ford woody station wagon (whose purchase had been necessitated by a new baby -- me -- in that year.) Like the venerable 1939 Ford woody, the new Dodge had no heater. My dad thought of automobiles as a rather reckless extension of the horse and buggy, which of course had no radio and no heater, and what idiot would need a heated car in Arizona anyway?

So, there was no heater ... get that, at 25 below? But off we went, over the bridge to North Lewiston and then east up the Clearwater. We eventually saw the herd of elk, milling miserably about in a field, but could see only dimly through windows thick with frost. We were too cold to get out with my dad and look more closely at the elk. By that time

aching inside our mittens. My brothers were blowing puffs of fake cigarette smoke. All four of us were complaining (I was whining.) My mother was stiff and silent. It was a bust. On the way back we stopped and saw the ice jam -- a jumble of enormous slabs of filthy ice.

We were all too cold to be very impressed. When we got home, Mother filled the bathtub with hot water and thawed us out, one by one.

My mother soon afterwards came across one of the Chamber of Commerce pamphlets that had seduced my dad into moving to what she considered a god-forsaken place (she eventually warmed to it.) Lewiston was described as "The Banana Belt", because the winter temperatures in the valley were usually a good ten degrees higher than in the surrounding areas.

THE BANANA BELT. THE BANANA BELT, INDEED! Oh, how often she quoted it to my father during the rest of The Winter of Nineteen Forty-Eight. By the way, the next car my father bought had a heater.

About the Author: Caroline O'Connor McCullam, Jack O'Connor's youngest child, lives on Mercer Island, Washington, and works in Seattle as a registered nurse. She has 3 sons, all of whom live in the area, and 8 grandchildren. Her hobbies are traveling, doing watercolors (badly), learning languages, cooking, music, and reading good stuff.



Guest Writers

“A Custom Rig with a Beer Budget”

BY ALEX SHARIF



Often, when we hear about custom rifles, pictures of rifles made by competent gunsmiths with likes of Tom Burgess, Roger Beisen, Kenny Jarret, etc... costing thousands of dollars come to mind. Well, it all depends what one is looking for in a custom rifle. Beauty aside, I would think that the general consensus out there is that **accuracy and repeatability** are the two most important factors in what every hunter or shooter seeks, period.

Yours truly stayed away from building a custom rig for years as I had no way of justifying the price. Every time I contacted a custom rifle builder, I was quoted half my yearly salary and a one year wait. However, that changed in 2009 when after much research and debate, I came to the conclusion that all being equal, the barrel is the **single**

most important factor in the accuracy equation. Since then, I have had built at least a dozen rifles for myself and friends, each proving to be a success story. This is what prompted me to write this article and share my findings with you.

I can assure you that with a budget of around \$1,200, anyone can have a custom rifle build. Find a used rifle within your budget (\$500 is very reasonable for a Rem 700 or a Win M70) that you like the looks of the action/ stock and the rest, I will explain.

There are several beautiful/reliable actions out there, but from an economical stand point, none is better, more reliable and easier to accurize than the good old Remington 700. No wonder most action builders blue print the Rem 700. One can virtually get all sorts of parts and enhancement gizmos to compliment a M700 action. It is also extremely easy to true and adjust. The stock; well, stay away from Tupperware as it will not bond to epoxy. Wood and fiberglass are both fine and allow glass and pillar bedding which are a must for shot to shot repeatability. Finally, get an off the shelf barrel from one of the top barrel manufacturers. These would be; Lilja, Shilen, Krieger and likes. They often stock standard hunting contours in many of the standard bore diameters with common twist rates so you don't have to endure the 3 month or longer manufacturing period. These barrels run in the neighborhood of \$350. For another \$350, most reasonable gun smiths will true your action, chamber your barrel and glass/pillar bed your stock.

Let me share with you some of the highlights of my last build which turned out to be a great rig and aided me in bagging the trophy of my life last Fall. I started with a new Remington 700 Mountain Rifle in 270W. The barrel came off and was sold immediately. I chose that rifle because it already came with a slim and limber B&C Medalist stock and a stainless steel action. I then got an off the shelf stainless pipe from Mr. Dan Lilja in the 7mm bore with a 1 in 9 twist and a #3 contour. I was then all set to go. The truing, the chambering and the glass bedding came next. However, in order to increase my accuracy potential and also to utilize the maximum powder space in my case, I fashioned the following.



"EFF7" ready for deployment.

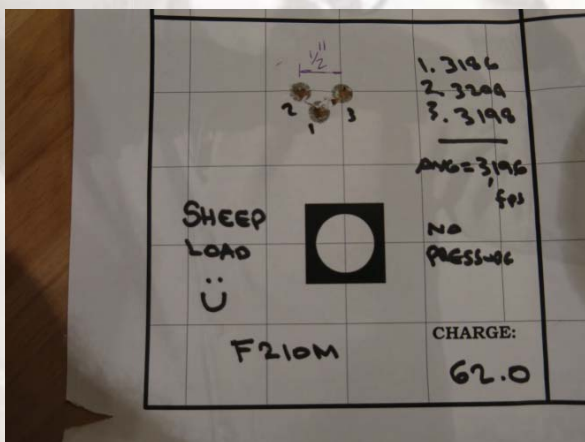
I settled on the type and weight of hunting bullets I was going to use. For the 280 AI caliber that I was building, I chose the 150 grain Stout/efficient Swift Scirocco spitzer. This bullet has proven itself to me over and over again as a great killer of thin and thick skinned game. I then made a dummy round with a length 50 thou clear of my magazine length so that chambering wouldn't be an issue and gave that dummy round to my smithy. He would then use a throat

reamer and chamber the barrel in such a way that when my rounds sit in the chamber, I would be 20 thou from the lands. Besides the barrel, this exercise in my opinion is a huge contributor to accuracy. When you buy a factory rifle or even when your smithy uses a standard finishing reamer, you lose this capability. The chamber will end up being what the reamer cuts and if you try to extend your COL to approach the lands, you may end up exceeding your magazine length which then turns your rifle in to a single shot rig. In addition, what this enables you to do is to "stretch" that magazine capacity where you can now fill with good slow burning powders, increasing your velocity and accuracy. According to many including yours truly, experience has shown that most standard cases shoot more accurately with the case at or near full capacity. In theory, this also makes sense as a full case would provide a more consistent internal pressure in the case. When all was said and done, my rig which I nick named "EFF7" (meaning an "efficient 7") weighed 8 lbs to the nose with a Leupold Mark AR in 3-9x40 (with a Mildot reticle) and Talley one piece bases/rings. That, to me is an ideal weight, both for hauling up and down mountains and for providing the steadiness required for long shots.



The efficient 280 AI (far right) next to a 7mm Rem Mag and a 7 mm Weatherby. My load is at par with both cartridges using 20% less powder, beltless and milder on the shoulder.

My next exercise was to break the barrel in properly. I follow Dan Lilja's prescription religiously. Why? Because it has worked for me and I have no reason to change it. In case you were wondering, he has it posted on his website. When it comes to load development, I always choose the best brass (Nosler in this case), match primers and true/tested powders. I also develop my loads only after I have fired the brass once in my chamber. I have noticed that fired brass always shoots different and in general, velocity is lower compared to that of new brass.



My "Sheep" load!

On the EFF7, I was able to cook a load using the 150 Scirocco II bullets, launching them at 3,200 fps out of my 25" pipe and printing 0.5 MOA groups on a consistent basis. The rifle was



3 shot group at 300 yards in 20 MPH wind.

done in July, I spend August and September on load development and field shooting at various ranges and in late October, I was able to connect with my dream Bighorn ram at a distance of 400 yards with a single shot.



The EFF7's Baptism Party ☺

There, you have it; A simple custom made rig that will most likely shoot sub 0.75 MOA on a day in, day out basis. Now you can start planning your own.

Amen

About the Author: Alexander Sharif is a principal structural engineer by trade working for Fluor Corporation but with great passion for anything to do with the outdoors and everything that involves a projectile. He lives in Calgary, Alberta and enjoys a modest 220 plus days in the great Canadian outdoors, hiking, biking, xc/bc skiing, fishing, shooting and of course hunting big game and upland. He loves sharing his passions with his brethren thru his weekly pictorial slideshows.

“Long Range Hunting”

Reprinted with permission by John Barsness

BY JOHN BARSNESS



One of the latest hunting trends is shooting big game at long range. Some

hunters have always been fascinated with long-range shots, but the number increased greatly in the past decade, due to one small item, the laser rangefinder.

The biggest problem in long-distance field shooting has always been knowing (not guessing) the range. Rifles, sights and bullets had been capable of very accurate long-shooting for decades, but only at known ranges. There wasn't any practical way to accurately determine range in the field, though a few shooters used unwieldy artillery rangefinders for very deliberate shooting.

Other hunters firmly believed they were incredibly gifted range-guessers. I hunted with one of these a couple of times, and he always bragged about how he could judge range very well because he'd worked on a survey crew when younger.

Once he and another friend were along when I shot a whitetail buck across a wheatfield. After we walked out to there to tag the buck, I asked him to guess the range. He considered for a few seconds and said, "Just about a hundred yards."

My other friend happened to have a rangefinder in his pocket. He aimed the laser at the spot where I'd shot from, and said, "One hundred and eighty-eight yards." The laser range-finder has also shut up every other self-professed super-estimator.

The first hand-held laser rangefinders weren't very reliable even at 400 yards,

where they really became useful to rifle hunters, but within a decade vast improvements had been made. Today several will reliably range out to 1500 yards or even further.

At first this ability to know the precise range brought forth an abundance of ballistic reticles. Their promise was that a hunter knowing the range, and knowing which dot or sub-crosshair matched that range, could easily pick off deer at 500 yards.

It didn't quite work that way for most people, because they didn't have the facilities to actually shoot their new wonder-scopes out at 500 yards, where they'd find that theory and reality sometimes didn't mesh. Also, many hunters didn't grasp the concept that if they changed the magnification of their scope, the reticle didn't match the trajectory of their bullets anymore.

While ballistic reticles remain popular, they run out of precision at around 500-600 yards, and many long-range shooters don't consider that long range. To be able to precisely shoot beyond around 600 yards requires different equipment. Oh, the rifle can be the same, but instead of a ballistic reticle the scope must have accurate and repeatable adjustments. Instead of picking which dot or sub-crosshair to place on a distant deer, the elevation adjustment is clicked to change the sight-in range to, say, precisely 835 yards.

This sounds simple, but beyond about 600 yards another factor also comes into play. Changes in elevation, temperature, humidity and angle all affect how many clicks are required to re-zero at 835 yards. This means the truly modern long-range hunter needs more than a laser rangefinder. He must also carry an electronic weather station, plus a GPS to determine elevation above sea level. Oh, and an inclinometer to measure the slope of the shot. All this data is punched into a hand-held computer's ballistic program, which tells how many clicks are required for the scope to be re-zeroed at 835 yards. These days the hand-held computer is often part of the shooter's cell phone.

Some of you are shaking your heads, wondering what hunting has come to. Others are thinking this stuff is way cool. Whatever your reaction, high-tech is part of modern big game shooting.

Today's hunting magazines and Internet chat rooms often seethe with debates about long-range hunting. Often, however, the debate isn't just about whether or not such hunting is ethical, but how well a new cell-phone ballistics program really works.

As information and technology spreads, more hunters call themselves long-range hunters. I was at the mid-winter meeting of my local rod and gun club when one of the new members volunteered the information that he'd taken both a buck mule deer and a bull elk at over 1000 yards last fall. This

raised a few eyebrows at first, but when the new guy talked about how many \$1500 scopes he owned, many of the eyes under the eyebrows glazed over.

As a professional rifle loony one of my jobs is to try everything, so I've been fooling around with long-range hunting rifles for at least the past decade. My shooting, however, has all taken place on paper and varmints, not deer and elk. I've found that yes, an accurate rifle, laser rangefinder and a computer ballistics program will allow us to make hits with the first shot at previously unheard-of ranges.

However, my longest hit took place on the second shot at a prairie dog. The rifle was a heavy-barreled Savage .22-250, the scope a Zeiss 6-24x with exposed adjustment turrets, these days often called "tactical" turrets. I'd shot this rifle enough that year to know where to click the elevation turret at any range out to 900 yards, where the scope ran out of elevation adjustment.

One afternoon a prairie dog stood up at a lasered 820 yards, and I clicked the scope, held slightly into the very mild breeze, and shot. The bullet kicked up dust an inch to the right of the prairie dog's hind legs. If the prairie dog had been a mule deer buck, and the rifle a .300 magnum instead of a .22-250, the deer would have been dead. Instead the prairie dog ducked for second, then stood up again. I held a little higher and two inches more into the wind, and the second shot flopped the dog.

Eventually I decided to try clicking-and-computing on larger game. The rifle chosen was a custom 6.5-06 that groups 140-grain Berger VLD's into a half-minute of angle out to very long range. After my experiences with accurate long-range varmint rifles, the 6.5-06 was a step up. While planning a pronghorn hunt in a high valley in southern Wyoming, I couldn't quite bring myself to carry a mini-computer in the field. Instead I used the ballistic program that comes with Bryan Litz's fine book, *Applied Ballistics for Long-Range Shooting*, to predict the VLD's path at 7000 feet of elevation, at 60 degrees Fahrenheit and 20% humidity, the probable combination for my early October hunt.

I live in a southwestern Montana valley at about 4000 feet above sea level, so one late-summer day drove into the nearby mountains to 7000 feet above sea level to range-test the rifle and load in "Wyoming conditions." I'd mounted a 10x Leupold Mark 4 scope with ¼-MOA adjustment, and the rifle had been carefully sighted-in on a 100-yard down range in the valley. Up in the mountains I set up a target at 500 yards, using a Leica laser rangefinder, then clicked the scope according to my computer-generated trajectory chart. Three shots landed at the right level on the target, though about six inches left due to a mild crosswind.

I moved back to 600 yards and clicked the scope again. At that moment the wind almost died, and I shot three times

as quickly as possible, holding only a couple of inches into the mild breeze. When I checked the target there was a 3-shot group circling the aiming point. More practice confirmed that my long-range pronghorn rifle was now dialed-in.

Finally I drove down to southern Wyoming and, at an elevation of 7100 feet on a day very close to 60 degrees and 20% humidity, shot an old buck pronghorn at 162 laser-measured yards. The elevation knob on the scope never got touched.

Upon returning home I called my old friend D'Arcy Echols, the well-known custom riflemaker, because D'Arcy had drawn a New Mexico pronghorn tag. He'd also put a "tactical" scope on his rifle and practiced out to 600 yards. After giving him my report, D'Arcy revealed that he'd taken his pronghorn at around 120 yards, by spending most of an hour crawling closer. I guess there's just no changing old habits.

Figuring out the load and dialing-in the 6.5-06 was fairly interesting, but I'd done some of that already with prairie dog rifles. While I kind of like shooting at prairie dogs at longer ranges, in any prairie dog "hunting" there comes a time to settle down and shoot a bunch at under 300 yards.

This is because the real purpose of prairie dog shooting isn't to see how far away we can occasionally hit a 1-pound rodent, but to thin some rancher's over-populated dog town. This isn't accomplished by shooting beyond 300

yards. I've shot prairie dogs with some really fine shooters, including a couple who've won the national benchrest match called the Super Shoot. None has ever been able to consistently hit prairie dogs much beyond 300 yards.

A pronghorn's chest, however, is a lot bigger than a prairie dog, so hitting a pronghorn's lungs really isn't much of a problem with a rifle that shoots 3-inch groups at 600 yards. The problem in Wyoming and New Mexico was not the rifle but the hunter, who evidently finds the stalk more exciting than the shot. At least that's the conclusion D'Arcy and I came to during our conversation. We each looked at a pronghorn buck standing across the prairie and thought, "Let's see how close we can get."

At first I guessed this was merely the force of habit, ingrained by over 35 years of pronghorn hunting, but one day I was rereading the little book entitled *Meditations on Hunting*, by the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset. All most folks know about this book is a very short quote—the reason I was rereading the book, in order to get the quote right: "One does not hunt to kill. On the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted."

I found the quote quickly, but hadn't read the book in a few years and read some more. The following pages suddenly made a lot more sense. Ortega y Gasset discusses the change that came over hunting after it ceased to be necessary for our daily food, and our technology continued to grow. The

following is a series of short quotes, condensing that section:

"As the weapon became more and more effective, man imposed more and more limitations on himself ... in order to avoid making the prey and the hunter excessively unequal.... The confrontation between man and animal has a precise boundary beyond which hunting ceases to be hunting, just at the point where man lets loose his immense technical superiority—that is, rational superiority—over the animal....

"Nothing stands in the way of our discovering what hunting is as much as this inopportune rush to involve reason in the definition.... Reason's most important intervention consists precisely in restraining itself... So, far from hunting's being a "reasoned pursuit," reason can be described more appropriately as the greatest danger to the existence of hunting.

"It is necessary that the hunted animal have his chance.... This is what hunting really is: a contest or confrontation between two species of instincts. But for this to occur, it is necessary that those instincts—not only the hunter's, but also the prey's—function freely.... "

Aha! I silently said to myself. Ortega y Gasset is saying that in order to preserve hunting as a natural act, we must repress our superiority in reason and technology. Otherwise we bypass the animal's defenses, and hunting becomes mere killing.

This is precisely the problem with modern long-range "hunting." A rifle in itself does not bypass an animal's defenses, but when we combine a rifle with a laser range-finder and a computer, we reach the point where "man lets loose his immense technical superiority." This is precisely why D'Arcy and I did not shoot our pronghorn bucks at 600 yards, even though we had the technical capability, though we didn't realize exactly why at the time.

Many hunters have voiced their concern about the ethics of long-range hunting, but for the wrong reason. The standard objection is that long-range shooting can result in wounding an animal, instead of a clean kill. The technology exists for clean kills at very long range, and many shooters have mastered that technology. But the long-range shooter who justifies his accomplishments by suggesting that any clean kill is an ethical kill is, according to Ortega y Gasset's reasoning, plain wrong.

I was discussing this debate with a dedicated long-range shooter, when he suggested I read a short essay written by one of his friends, another long-range shooter. The essay was well-written and logical, but in the end all it really stated was: "I have the skill to shoot animals at long range, and I like to do it. Therefore it's right." The flaw in this sort of reasoning is basic: Not everything any individual likes to do is necessarily good, even if it requires skill.

Of course, part of the reason long-range "hunting" has become so popular is

instant gratification. We want what we want, and we want it now, one reason the Internet's so successful. Combine instant gratification with shorter hunting seasons and there's all sorts of justification for shooting an elk way out there.

A couple of years ago I ran into an acquaintance from Colorado, where rifle seasons are typically much shorter than in more lightly populated states such as Montana. He reported that he'd killed a bull elk at 900 yards. "He was bedded in a place where he couldn't be stalked, and never moved for four hours, so I had to shoot him there." Imagine, four whole hours. Of course, in a five-day season four hours can seem like a long time. However, a bedded elk shot from half a mile away doesn't get much chance to use its natural prey instincts, not when the human at the other end of the half-mile has a laser rangefinder, miniature weather station and hand-held computer.

Of course, long-range shooters counter this by asking why all the objectors don't hunt with spears, which would certainly bring the prey's instincts into play. This may seem like a clever point, but isn't.

Spears weren't used by "primitive" people in order to make the hunting a more even contest between humans and, say, a woolly mammoth. Spears were used because they were the highest technology available to people who lived by hunting. If they didn't kill a mammoth now and then, they would starve. Mammoths were regularly run

into swamps, often by fire, in order to make killing with spears easier.

The same was true of any weapon used by people who truly depended on the meat of the hunt. The animals were given as little chance as possible, by humans using both their brains and the best technology available, whether a spear, atlatl, boomerang, or bow and arrow. Or even a cliff and a club, one of the primary buffalo hunting combinations used by plains Indians before they acquired horses.

Many modern hunters restrict their technology by using bows and muzzleloaders. Of course, both weapons have become increasingly sophisticated. Today there's as much of a technological leap between a recurve bow and a compound bow as there is between a hunter with an iron-sighted .30-30 and a long-range shooter with a 6.5/.284 and a daypack full of electronics. In fact many bowhunters who use compounds also use laser rangefinders. Modern "black powder" hunters use scopes, jacketed bullets and smokeless powder—and laser rangefinders—but rarely use actual black powder. Instead the normal "powder" charge is 2-3 pellets that somewhat resemble short cartridges.

A few years ago I read an article about Gary Alt, the former black bear biologist from Pennsylvania who was eventually put in charge of that state's deer hunting. Alt eventually got run out of that job by hunters who didn't like the changes Alt proposed, such as not

shooting every buck that grew spike antlers.

What really struck me about the article, however, was a quote from Alt about his own deer hunting: "I like as little between myself and the deer as possible."

Of course! This is what Ortega y Gasset is saying, simplified. This is exactly why some hunters (including me, and many of my friends) have started using less technology as we grow older. Those who bowhunt have abandoned compounds for recurves and longbows, and those who hunt with rifles have abandoned scopes—if their eyes allow it. If their eyes have grown too inflexible for irons, then they've gone to fixed-power scopes, sometimes even "vintage" scopes such as 2-1/2x Lyman Alaskans. And yes, they still kill deer, elk and pronghorn every year.

Before the laser rangefinder I used to estimate range with the reticle of my scope. This is pretty easy to do, and allowed me to shoot accurately out to around 400 yards. It's particularly effective with a fixed-power scope, because the scope can never be set on the wrong magnification. And that's what I'm going to do again, this fall, along with my normal amount of iron-sight hunting, because I like as little as possible between me and the deer.

About the Author: John Barsness was born and raised in Bozeman, Montana and lives in Townsend with his wife Eileen Clarke, a novelist and game

cookbook author who's also the CEO of their website, www.riflesandrecipes.com "Long-Range Hunting" originally appeared in their on-line magazine, Rifle Loony News. They spend most of their field time in Montana, but also travel the rest of North America and other parts of world in search of good hunting and game cooking. John's articles have appeared in all the major hunting and shooting magazines in North America, as well as Big Sky Journal, Fly Fisherman, National Geographic and Sports Illustrated.

“The Best Little Hunting Camp That Was” *Reprinted*

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BY EILEEN CLARKE



It was just a little cabin in the woods. With a little creek twenty steps out the back door. In summer, we walked out from the breakfast table with fly rods rigged and stomachs full, for the little rainbows that hid among the deeply shaded rocks and rapids. For the lefties among us, it was a bit more friendly since the cabin, the creek and the willows belonged to a left-handed angler who pruned it to fit his cast. But we righties didn't complain. The rainbows weren't fished often enough to be more than half-bright, and the stream

was there for the asking. All you had to do was show up at cocktail hour-- anyone, any day--and you were welcome.

There was a sign on the little bridge Norm built over the creek: Beware of Trolls. But here there was nothing to be wary of. Here were friends, and strangers who soon became friends. What lit this little cabin up, was sharing. Food, drink, the work of dragging animals out of the woods, the misery of missing, we shared stories--hunting stories, from the heroic to the positively silly, from spring bear to last light. And the best of them grew out of Thanksgiving week. That was our last week of rifle season, and for Norm's lifetime, it was the place to be.

Norm called it The Gathering of The Clan. Iron Mike was a cop who'd dropped by at cocktail hour 23 years before and came back every Thanksgiving; Willie lived just down the canyon, but Norm had first laid eyes on him when they were both 12, and discovered each other poaching the same fishing hole on Long Island. My husband, John, started hunting with Norm as an 8-year old with a BB gun on his shoulder, and that cabin was where John brought me the first Thanksgiving week after we were married.

It was the first hunting camp I knew: I shot my second whitetail ever just across the Troll Bridge, my first elk on the ridge above the house, and took my only bull moose in the next drainage. Norm had gone duck hunting, not

expecting any moose killing to happen right away, and came home to a 34-inch bull in his garage, unabashedly grateful that he'd missed the hard work for once. (Norm was the one who enlightened me to the joys of bird hunting; they were more fun, he pointed out, and a lot easier to drag out of the woods.)

Most of you may know Norm Strung from the pages of *Field & Stream*. But he and his wife, Sil, were our friends. It was a given: if you were there and a season was open, you'd be invited to hunt (or fish). And given everything you needed to get it done. One year, we stayed through Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Only thing open was birds, but neither of us had brought shotguns. Norm offered to lend us some. Do you have shells? No. He lent us those, too.

The door of that little cabin was always open and it was the gateway to Nirvana. Every time I went out that door I walked by the chokecherry bush Norm had shot a bear from years before I arrived. In his skivvies, just out of bed before dawn, he'd spotted the boar grazing on the berries just before letting the dog out. Over dinner, the story would be told: it was an easy shot, the gun hanging in the den five steps from the door, always ending with how Norm had shot a bear in his underwear--and what that bear was doing in Norm's underwear The BVD bear was followed by the Potato Patch Elk. And since I was new in camp, they got to tell all the stories all over again.

The Potato Patch Elk came the year Norm and two neighbors had joined forces on a plot of potatoes. Their goal had been a year's supply of mashed, baked and fried spuds, but the irrigated vegetation just happened to attract elk. Having killed enough trophy elk in his life, and climbed the mountain behind his little cabin more than enough, Norm eschewed the climb for this one season. As dusk approached, he would walk out his door and amble through the trees and down the creek toward the potato patch, rifle in hand. Lo and behold, one evening, there was one. A cow. Norm had a cow tag, and at the shot, his fellow potato patch growers showed up to help him dress and hang the cow, and over the winter, to eat it as well.

I added The Gravy Deer to the list. I hadn't started hunting until I was an adult, so I knew how to make gravy long before I knew how to fill the freezer. But that wasn't why it was the gravy deer. That year was my first real hunting season, and I had a deer tag burning a hole in my pocket. The most basic tag in the world that everybody fills, every year, with the first forkhorn they see, but I hadn't seen a forkhorn. I hadn't seen anything slow enough for my novice-hunter reflexes to shoot. With only four days left, I was desperate enough to shoot any legal deer—which was any deer, here in the canyon—and keep my .270 A-bolt's detachable magazine loaded and in my pocket.

It was almost five o'clock on Thanksgiving Day, the turkey on one

end of the counter being carved, the goose on the other, covered in foil. I'd been assigned the gravy, and was diligently de-lumping as it thickened in the roasting pan when someone yelled, "Whitetail. In the garden."

I handed off the spoon, slid into my orange vest and jacket, and grabbed my rifle from the den as I walked out the door. I didn't realize it but I had a wagon train of helpers behind me as I snuck around the cabin and into the cottonwood trees. Across the creek, three whitetails grazed on Sil's Brussels sprout stalks. I laid the rifle across the rail fence and took the one on the right, standing clear of the other two. My train had crossed the Troll Bridge at the shot, and stood over the whitetail as I unloaded the rifle and pocketed the magazine again. He was a little button buck, and in the garage, hanging, in less time than you could say mashed potatoes, gravy and cranberry sauce.

The garage had a tiny woodstove and was perfect for hanging game. Before I'd arrived, the game hung in the pool hall, or what became the pool hall after Norm built the garage. In those days, the pool hall was where extra guests slept, necessitating a run through the swinging carcasses in the dark to answer a call of nature. The garage was an improvement. And the pool hall killed time when it was too dark to hunt. Legally.

That was one of the problems when I'd tried to start my own hunting camp. One group I started with friends, quickly

became friends of friends and second cousins six times removed, some of whom thought the food was the most important part of hunting camp, others that carrying a copy of the game regulations and referring to it now and then was too much trouble. Others had bird dogs they allowed to range miles in front, or simply bumped birds in sight, but always a few too many yards out of range.

There were exceptions. Once in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Randy Havel invited us into his camp; they'd been gathering for 25 years, it was their silver anniversary, and we were bird hunting. All great guys, all the important things important to them too, and the birds were there. A snow squall moved down from northern Canada and moved the woodcock in the night we arrived. That Sunday we hunted, it was our 18th wedding anniversary, and I thought only one camp would have been better to spend it in.

But the part I remember best at that UP camp, came in the evenings when all the bird dogs were fed and doctored, and had staked out a comfortable spot and gone to sleep. I lost count at a dozen: our Gideon, Randy's springer Molly, his son Jerry's springer, a yellow Lab named Gunner, a black named Ruger; and a herd of German shorthairs who worked close and slow in front of their own man, instead of poaching on other's territory. But the UP was too far, and Montana is our home.

Norm's camp had its coterie of bird dogs, too, but mostly they were Norm's dogs and ours. Peaceful during the chocolate Lab years, it was all-out war in the late seventies and early eighties, when we both owned black Labs. Chief (Norm's) and Gillis (ours) would get along pretty well during the day when their people were otherwise occupied. But in the evening as we gathered around the central glass-enclosed fireplace in the living room, bedlam would ensue. All quiet one minute, we'd be grabbing our drinks and jumping up on the couches the next trying to avoid the slashing teeth. This wasn't a baseball fight; for about three minutes a day they truly hated each other. Once in a while Norm would co-ordinate a tail-pulling to end the fight, but mostly it was a harshly worded command to 'Knock It Off' that finally sent the two to their corners.

It was during the first of the chocolate Lab years that I added the Peg-Legged Elk to the cabin tales. That was my first whitetail drive. A new friend had called Saturday night, the last weekend of hunting season, saying he needed meat for the freezer, and could he come out in the morning and hunt with us. Better than that, Norm told him. We'll do a drive. Norm, Sil, me, John, Iron Mike, and the new guy, Dave, started out at the first intimation of shooting light from the former potato patch. Above the patch, a series of ridges rose in tiers; the guys circled quietly around the open meadow to the first tier and sat. Sil and I headed into the cottonwood, willow and

thorn coulee below them to push brush, and any whitetail deer into them, so they could get a shot. The meat would be Dave's; and if it didn't work the first time, two of the guys would push brush for the second round. That was the plan. What we didn't know is that another group of hunters were doing something similar half a mile to the west.

Once we saw sign of our guys on the ridge above us, Sil and I started into the brush. She apparently chose a thicker route than I, because it wasn't long before I was on top with the guys, listening to Sil struggle and curse the tangled web of undergrowth. She was still 150 yards below us when we heard shots to the west. What we heard next was unbelievable. More shots echoed in the distance, but now the shots mingled with a low rumble we felt almost more than we heard.

We all turned to look west, but Norm being slightly higher on the hill, saw them first. "Elk," Norm whispered, "Coming." And in a few seconds he added, "And one legal spike in the bunch."

As he said it, the herd was upon us, making a panicked beeline toward the brush—just above where Sil was standing. The herd, slowed, milled, the lead cows not wanting to go back where they'd been, but knowing the safety of cover wasn't so safe. One legal spike, I repeated to myself, as I sorted through the herd's compliment of ears in my scope.

For a while nothing but ears could be seen, but then Sil must have made some movement, because the herd began to think better of their direction and head back the other way. The spike stood there, before me, suddenly alone. I steadied and pulled the trigger, and in a super-nova of panic the cows and calves stampeded stage right and left Spike to his fate. I reloaded quickly, but before I could shoot again, he was down.

All four feet flew into the air when he fell, so why was he peg-legged? He was my first elk. I couldn't bear giving him all to Dave, and the one hindquarter we kept just topped off our freezer.

That evening we stood on the deck and toasted the end of rifle season, as we did every year, then headed inside to the warmth of the wood fire, reliving the easiest elk drag in the history of the camp, because that was the real heart of Peg-Leg's story. Perhaps we should have called him Bob Sled, because despite the ridiculously hard drag across the willow thickets, no one was talking about quartering him. In fact, when we reached the ranch two-track that led to the truck, they were talking about how to slow him down. The problem was the road itself; it was the road we all had used all fall, through snow, thaw, rain, and freeze to get up and down the mountain to hunt.

That Sunday had dawned frigid and the road, running at about a 25 degree down grade, into and through the old potato patch, was frozen solid and nasty

quick, faster than an Olympic-quality luge run. As they approached it, and started lining up the elk to go down butt first, John and Norm looked at each other.

"Maybe we should move the truck into a better position," Norm said. As I remembered we'd parked it to the side of the road.

"And lower the tail gate," Iron Mike added.

"Might break the cab window," John pointed out.

"Might be worth it," Norm said, and it was his truck.

By now I'd caught on to the problem. "You're not going to let go of him?" I said, incredulously. It had to be over 300 yards down that chute. "He'll get hurt."

At that they all looked at me and laughed. "You already killed him," Norm pointed out.

Iron Mike had gotten his nickname years before, though apparently the story was not for mixed company. At least, I never heard it. Fireman Fred got his for almost burning the pool hall down. I never got one, but that morning was probably the closest I came. (It may have been chivalry that saved me. But, oddly, my first thought was to wonder how Sil had gotten the nickname Duchess.)

Peg-Leg was 22 years ago; Norm's been gone seventeen of them. One May the doctors promised him 18 months, but the procedure didn't work. By October, he knew there would never be another BVD Bear. He knew; but it was years before I knew just how much I'd lost. I've been to some great hunting camps since then, but how I miss my friend and his little cabin in the woods. More than words can say.

About the Author: Eileen Clarke is the author of nine wild game cookbooks, and a novel including The Queen of the Legal Tender Saloon and Slice of the

Wild: cut and cook game for your table. She is on the Duck's Unlimited Culinary Council, and has served as game cooking columnist for two national magazines (Field & Stream and Successful Hunter, as well as writing hunting stories for many others. She lives and hunts in Montana with her husband, John Barsness, and chocolate Lab, Lena the Velcro Dog. Eileen's and John's books are available at their web site www.riflesandrecipes.com or 406-521-0273. And no, none of her nine game cookbooks include prairie dog, coyote, wolf or gopher recipes.

Classic O'Connor

"These Deer Are Smart"

By Eleanor O'Connor- October 1938

Reprinted with permission from Outdoor Life Magazine.

"You'll see bucks alright," Si the cowboy told me. "but seeing a buck isn't getting one. Some of those big fellows up on the ridge have had a couple of hundred shots fired at them, and nobody has hit them yet." "They must be pretty smart," I said smugly

To read more about "Those Deer Are Smart" please refer to our



Jack O'Connor Archives within our website location!!!!

About the Author: Eleanor O'Connor grew up in Missouri where she met Jack O'Connor while attending The University of Missouri. After a brief courtship and then marriage, she followed Jack to Alpine, TX, then to Arizona, where she accompanied him

on numerous hunts into the arid deserts of Arizona and Mexico then later to The Yukon, Northern British Columbia, Spain, Scotland, Iran, India and Africa. Their lengthy marriage produced four children: Jerry, Catherine, Bradford and Caroline, the latter two, still survive. Eleanor O'Connor was one of the first

female writers to attempt her hand at writing outdoor stories. She is an unsung hero, hunting with JO'C across several continents but always in his thoughts and stories. Please visit our website at www.jack-oconnor.org to learn more about Jack, his family life, career, and conservation legacy

Pictures



Members of the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center receive a grant check from the NRA Foundation and Friends of the NRA for additional equipment purchases for the Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) soon to launch. Left to right; Dick Reid, Mark Yochum, Gary Evers and Mike Butler



Members of The Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center attended the 2014 Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show in Spokane, Washington the week of March 19-23rd. This is the third year in a row the group has attended this event. Pictured are Mike Butler, Director and Jerry Adameitz, volunteer. Thank you Lolo Sporting Goods, Lewiston, Idaho for sponsoring our booth for the third year in a row!!! Lots of rousing discussions about Jack O'Connor and our hunting heritage at this booth.

Miscellany

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 2014 raffle gun of the year, will be raffled off to some lucky individual. This rifle, made by Roger and Paula Biesen, is the 2nd of three rifles to be built in the "African" series. The drawing will be held on June 7th, 2014 at the Jack O'Connor Center. Be sure to come out on that day!*
- *The Winchester Model 70 Jack O'Connor Tribute Rifles are still on the street and supplies are nearly gone. 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.*
- *At the Jack O'Connor Center we now have an ample supply of books on O'Connor and also several of the out of print classics, such as The Rifle Book, Sheep and Sheep Hunting and The Shotgun Book. We also have others in limited supply. Call the Center for availability. 208-743-5043.*
- *In the 3rd Quarter newsletter we will share some thoughts on "Fair Chase", women that hunt, and getting kids back outdoors.*
- *Contributor's favorite cooking recipes.*
- *Plus, another great article from the Jack O'Connor collection.*

In our next newsletter:

- *Allan Jones, an O'Connor fan, will discuss one of his favorite topics in the next Tech Corner.*