

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 25, 2010

The Maryland-Delaware Trapshooters' League of 1947: The date of October 25 refreshed my memory. In 1947, that Saturday was like a warm summer day, and the final shoot of the short-lived Maryland-Delaware Trapshooters' League was held at Yorklyn, with by far the largest attendance of the season. I had been instrumental (with my father's blessing) in founding the league in early spring that year, its objective being to encourage many young men to become registered trapshooters. There had been an earlier league with this name right after World War I, but it was long gone. The 1947 objective was highly successful, but the league lasted only one year.

Four gun clubs, two in Delaware and two in Maryland, were asked to participate, and each would have a team and a captain for competition fun among the clubs. The two Delaware clubs were Wilmington and Yorklyn; the two in Maryland, both new clubs, were Darlington (on Route 1 south of Conowingo) and Elkton. Wilmington was to have most of the Delaware shooters and those from South Jersey (except those in Yorklyn and Hockessin), Yorklyn had all the eastern Pennsylvania shooters who took part, and the Maryland clubs divided marksmen from that state, with Darlington picking up many from York County, Pennsylvania. Walter M. Grace, then Burgess (Mayor) of Kennett Square, was captain of the Yorklyn team.

There were scheduled 12 shoots between April and October, three at each of the four clubs. Ten of them were at 50 targets each, making it more affordable for new and younger shooters, but the mid-season shoot in late July at Darlington, and the post-season shoot at Yorklyn, mentioned above, were at 100 targets each. The attendance averaged about 85 shooters, but over 125 shot on that summer-like day in late October. Since we were back on Standard Time by that date in those days, we barely finished the program before darkness set in.

I was secretary and treasurer of the league, and I cashiered all the shoots, kept the records, and sent the scores in to the Amateur Trapshooting Association for the official averages. We gave about 12 trophies at each shoot, based on class shooting, which meant that those with similar averages competed against each other (Classes A, B, C, and D). The buying and awarding of these trophies was an additional responsibility of the secretary-treasurer. Several 50-straight were recorded during the season, but only one 100-straight, broken by J. Calvin Michael of Aberdeen, Maryland (at Darlington's 100-target event in July). The following year, 1948, Calvin was the high-average trapshooter in the United States with an average of .9880 on 2000 targets (he missed only 24!).

The league operated in the black, and the year-end proceeds were distributed among those who had taken part. If I recall correctly, the Darlington team had the highest composite score; Yorklyn was second, Wilmington third, and Elkton fourth. I enjoyed my work immensely but had to give it up for more meaningful undertakings. No one stepped forward, so all was over after October 25, 1947.