

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, May 12, 2014

A Look Back in Time, May of 1941: This story may indicate my egotistical memory is intact but also will elicit thoughts of "Who Cares?" I was 17, the days of the week fell as they do in 2014, and I was in the last month of my high school years at Wilmington Friends School. By a fluke, I was president of the senior class. Our class had an equal number of boys and girls; all the boys voted for me, and all the girls voted for my opponent, Eleanore Rheuby. When the votes were counted, we were tied, and she graciously said she would be secretary. After all, class secretaries in those days were always girls. I also had my priorities confused: trapshooting with my father was more important than end-of-school activities, although I wanted to go to college at M.I.T. and was told I would be accepted only if my marks were in the top quarter of the class. (I ended up with two A's and two B's that barely made it, but I should have had a C in French.)

The Delaware State Trapshooting championships were held at the Wilmington Trapshooting Association (WTA) on Basin Road near New Castle. The singles championship was on Friday, May 16, which meant I had to miss school to compete, not at all proper according to Friends School's principal, Wilmot R. Jones. On a cool Tuesday, May 6, I was the only one to break 50 straight in the Penn-Del Twilight League shoot at Brinton Lake, and old-timers hinted that I had a chance to win the state championship. The next Tuesday, in a similar "shoot" at West Chester, my score was 41, very poor indeed. Practice day for the state shoot was Thursday, May 15, so I hurried to WTA after school to practice. My father and I shot 100 targets, 75 16-yard and 25 handicap from 25 yards. I broke 98 and was rarin' to go. After dinner that evening, I went up the hill on Benge Road where Ned Touhey invited mill men from Yorklyn to shoot over his single trap, just for fun, and their scores usually ranged from 10 to 18 out of 25. I broke 25. Nothing to it.

In the 200-target championship race on Friday, it was a lot different under pressure. Unlike my usual habit of getting better the further I went, I started strong by breaking the first 50 straight, then had a 23 and a 24 to finish the first 100 with 97. Everett Read, a Delaware River and Bay Pilot from Lewes, was new to shooting, and he broke his first 75, then a 22, also to total 97 in the first 100. In the second 100, I broke a mediocre 95, without a 25 straight. Read also broke 95, so we were tied with 192. It's quite surprising that there were no higher scores, as it usually took more than that to become champion (in 1940, Izzy Keil had won with 195). I know Everett and I approached the shoot-off with great trepidation. He went first and missed his third target, and I missed right after him. My opponent also missed his fourth; this time, I did better. Both of us settled down and broke the remainder of the 25, so with 24 vs. 23, I became the youngest shooter ever to win this event. Everett Read and I became fast friends, and immediately after World War II, we traded back and forth in winning the event (I won in '47 and '49; he won in '48 and '50). In 1955, he died of a heart attack at the age of 47.

On Saturday, May 17, the doubles and handicap championships were decided. I won the doubles decisively with 96, with Leonard Lynam coming in second with 84. I shot poorly in the handicap with 84 from 23 yards, but it was enough to win the All-'Round Championship with 372 out of 400. That day, my father drove his 1913 Stanley Model 76 to the shoot, and between shooting events, accompanied by Harry T. Bullock, father of FAHP member Tom Bullock, we drove into New Castle for the very first "Day in Old New Castle." On Saturday, May 17, 2014, this car is expected to be at this same event 73 years later to the day.