

TUSCO RIFLE CLUB

By
Dave Engelhart

Since 1934 TUSCO RIFLE CLUB has stood to protect the right to own firearms and provide a safe, friendly environment to promote the hunting and shooting sports. The CLUB was formed as a family membership organization of like-minded individuals and families to teach firearm safety, hunter education, youth events, wildlife conservation, women's safety classes and provide competitive shooting events that benefit existing members, guests and future generations of shooters. The CLUB has been associated with the NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION (NRA) since its' inception.

The CLUB was formed in NEW PHILADELPHIA by the merger of the New Philadelphia, Dover and Urichsville Rifle clubs and began meeting and shooting in the basement of THE OHIO SAVINGS & TRUST building on the square. The founding fathers were Sam Bond, Dr. W. W. Belknap, Bill Bichsel, Howard Eichel, Archie Mastreano, Charlie Thompson, Al Broadhurst, Roy Carruthers, Ralph Cecil, Ralph Finley, Edward Glasser, Robert Newton, Dr. R. E. Rainsberger, Raymond Rolli, Scott Romig, Jessie Romig, Phillip Romig, Burion Scott, Warren Tonklin, Mervin McQueen, Dean Frye, Clarence Rife, Ted Senasenbauger, and Harold Smutz.

It was not long until the membership grew to 50 members at which point the OHIO SAVINGS facility would not accommodate the membership. The CLUB acquired the site in Schoenbrunn, formerly used as a turn-around and car barn at the end of the New Philadelphia streetcar line, from The Ohio Edison Company. The CLUB incorporated as a non-profit Ohio corporation in 1937 with this land purchase. The members began the construction of a 100-yard rifle range and a pistol range.

The Schoenbrunn site was not large enough to hold scheduled shoots, so the CLUB held their two-day matches on a rented range at the Wardell Farm on Crooked Run Road. This was during the Depression years, so the cost of the shoots was 10 cents. Matches consisted of shooting paper targets with 22 caliber rifles and live turkey shoots. The winner would receive the turkey. Other winners would receive a bag of potatoes or farm raised produce, all donated by members who were farmers.

The CLUB almost went out of business during the war years (1942/1945) because the members left were the older generation. This fate struck many clubs throughout the US. It was only through the fact that the CLUB was debt free and the members who were too old to serve our country in uniform "paid forward" to make sure the CLUB survived.

After WWII, the Club held twice-a-year NRA Sanctioned 22 Prone Shoots at the Schoenbrunn (Brightwood) location. Rod West, a well known local shooter, was the Shoot Director. These NRA Shoots brought shooters from all over Ohio and neighboring states to the club. This put TUSCO on the map.

It was during this period that the Club began to hold game dinners, chicken cookouts, and member banquets. These gatherings were a TUSCO staple for over 25 years. The Schoenbrunn Moravian Church on East High was the location for these activities until the present club house was constructed.

In 1973 the STATE of OHIO purchased the Schoenbrunn location in order to construct US Route 250, a by-pass between New Philadelphia and the Twin Cities. Up until this land purchase, membership was limited to 85 members. As a trustee, Dorothy Bond was instrumental in opening up the membership.

The CLUB then purchased the present location outside of Midvale for \$15,000.00. The purchase was funded by CLUB members buying \$100.00 bonds with the land as collateral. Most members did not take payment when the bonds were due. This is yet another example of members "paying forward".

During this interim time from the purchase of the Midvale property until a clubhouse was built, the Club met at the Production Credit Union facility located in "Green Gables" west of New Phila.

The 370-acre site in Midvale was developed by members working on weekends and the donation of materials and equipment by members and their employers. An example of this work effort would be a two-day event where a member would bring a 4 X 8 piece of plywood or roofing material as their shoot fee. The members would bring their donated material on Saturday morning, work all day, enjoy a chicken cookout prepared by their wives and then return on Sunday for a shoot. The membership grew over the next ten (10) years as improvements were made to the site. By 1980 there were 500 members. Membership was a family affair. The wives participated in the construction activities by cooking, cleaning and painting. It should be noted that many of the wives participated in shoots as well.

The Club sold timber in the 70's to fund the construction of the Main Clubhouse. The timber sale was conducted by Herb Bambeck who held the auction, paid for advertising the sale and donated his services which is yet another example of "paying forward". The Club's timber assets are a renewable resource that future generations will be able to harvest to further develop the property.

In 1986 the Club became sanctioned by the International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association (IHMSA). This was accomplished through Chuck Matthews' interest in this new shooting sport, the assistance of former IHMSA Ohio State Director, J. D. Jones and top competitor Blackie Sleiva. TUSCO was an IHMSA Big Bore-only club listing 10 targets each; chickens, pigs, turkeys, and rams. Realizing the potential of the TUSCO facility, IHMSA Match Director Mark X Urbank petitioned the TUSCO Trustees to expand the targets offered on the Main range to 20 each in Big Bore and add 20 each in Small Bore. The expansion was approved and with the generous loan of a bulldozer and a backhoe from Club President Chuck Matthews and countless volunteer hours of labor, most notably from Larry McClintok and Bill Urbank in October 24, 1987 TUSCO held it's first Region 3 Championship Match. Over 100 competitors from the 38 IHMSA sanctioned clubs in the four State Region were in attendance! This marked the beginning of TUSCO as a Championship Range. As IHMSA grew, so did TUSCO. 1989 brought another expansion of the Main Range and the addition of Field Pistol to the TUSCO offering, boasting 10 each of the half-scale, half- distance targets.

Fast forward to 2000 and the IHMSA International Championship in Fort Stockton Texas. The announcement was made that the IHMSA's Eastern Permanent Range in Oak Ridge Tennessee would no longer be able to host International Championships

and IHMSA was looking for a new site. The group known as TUSCO Silhouette was in attendance at that meeting and Mark X Urbank approached the newly elected President of IHMSA with an offering of TUSCO Rifle Club as a potential site. May 2001 IHMSA President, Steve Riddle, and Region 3 Director, Randy Hillyer, met with Mark X. Urbank to examine the TUSCO facility. Totally impressed with the TUSCO facility, Steve Riddle gave the go ahead for an engineering plan. Mark completed the plan and with the blessings of the TUSCO Trustees presented the plan to the IHMSA Executive Committee and Board of Directors. The plan was approved and IHMSA agreed to 85% funding of the project so long as it could be the new Eastern Permanent Range.

Extensive project work began in October 2001. Over 7,600 cubic yards of earth was moved and 50 yards of concrete poured, more than doubling the width of the Main Range. The installation of the power reset targets was completed in the Spring of 2002 and in August, the Inaugural Match, the 2002 IHMSA International Championships christened the range. The TUSCO facility remains IHMSA World Class facility hosting the International Championships for competitors and their families from all around the world. In addition to the Internationals, TUSCO Rifle Club hosts annual IHMSA Ohio State and Region 3 Championships as well. Club matches are held the first weekend of the month from May through November.

The IHMSA pistol targets have allowed TUSCO to offer a special reduced-range version of BUFFALO SHOOTs using these same metal targets March through October. Buffalo shooters use single shot black powder rifles shooting cast bullets.

Today, there are 1,066 members and their families, two club houses, an indoor 50-foot pistol/rifle range, a trap range, 100-yard 22 range, a 100- yard rifle range, 50-yard pistol range, 300-yard Main range, utility range for machine gun use and the new MATTHEWS 600-yard range.

Community involvement and a family atmosphere have been the keys to TUSCO's growth throughout the years. Today the Club holds shoots practically every weekend and some evenings which are open to the public. Attendance is free to spectators with a very nominal fee to participate. Do not worry about having the right equipment. The TUSCO SHOOT DIRECTORS will make the firearms and equipment available for first time shooters to "try their hand." Other shooters will be happy to help you get started and direct you in the proper handling of firearms.

Youth activities and shooting for women have been a key to TUSCO's recent growth. The very successful WOMEN ON TARGET events are held twice a year. The women's events were started in the mid 80's by TUSCO personnel. Youth Events include KIDS ON TARGET, BOY SCOUT CAMPOVER & MERIT BADGE, HUNTER SAFETY, 4-H EVENTS and YOUTH DEER HUNTING. These are some of our outreach events that the club offers to non-members and their families.

In 2008 the CLUB was honored by the NRA as the "2008 OUTSTANDING CLUB OF THE YEAR". At the presentation ceremony Kimberly Hobart, representing TUSCO, received this prestigious award from NRA President Ronald Schmeits and Executive Vice- President Wayne LaPieere in Washington, DC on behalf of the Club. The award was based on outstanding achievements of TUSCO's dedicated membership highlighted by providing over 150 matches that are open to the public, International

Silhouette Competition, five youth events including two "Kids On Target", two Hunter Safety and one Boy Scout Merit Badge, plus two "Women On Target" clinics and by giving back to the community by providing the facilities to five law enforcement departments as well as hosting the Ohio Police and Fire Games. This past year's award is one in a string of awards the Club has received over the years. The Club was presented with the Meritorious Achievement Award in 1965 at the NRA Annual Meeting held in Seattle, Washington. The Club has earned an NRA Achievement Award in most years since the NRA began presenting the award.

TUSCO's ranges are made available to local, state and federal law enforcement personnel to train and qualify. The Ohio Police and Fire Games are held bi-annually on TUSCO's ranges. Buckeye Career Center uses the ranges to teach firearms safety and training to students enrolled in their law enforcement classes.

Throughout the years the Club has produced numerous great marksmen both as individual shooters and team members.

1. Sam Bond, a Club Founder, was the National Short Range Champion in 1934; State Outdoor Champion in '37 & '39 and State Indoor Prone Champion in '36 & '40. Sam's 1934 World Record, a perfect 400, the first ever fired, has never been broken and will always stand as the target size was replaced years later. Sam's last championship was the National Mid-Winter Championship at Saint Petersburg, Florida in 1950. Sam became a member of the Board of Directors of the NRA in 1946.
2. Dorothy Bond, Sam's wife, was active in Club affairs and became the Chairman of Woman's Activities for the Ohio State Association of the NRA. In that role Dorothy promoted the need to teach women to shoot. Her efforts created women events at NRA sanctioned shoots.
3. Annexing the 1936 State Championship were the TUSCO CLUB members: Dr. E. D. Schumaker, Sam Bond, 'Sig' Miller, Dr. R. E. Rainsberger, Scott Romig, Ralph Cecil, Don Vinning and Bauren Scott.
4. A six man team returned to TUSCO from the National Club Team Championship with the National Title in 1941. Team members were: Dr. R. E. Rainsberger, Clarence Ripley, Sam Bond, Scott Romig, Team Captain Harry Humrighouse and Coach Bauren Scott.
5. Charlie Thompson, was a performer with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Charlie was a trick shooter with the show.
6. Tom Paumier was the 1987 World Champion in the quadriplegic with assistance division winning one gold and two bronze medals in the quad class competition held in England. Tom also brought home several medals from the 1992 Paralympics games held in Spain.
7. Numerous Junior Rifle Team members earned state and national honors throughout the years, with many receiving financial assistance or scholarships to college based on their shooting skills. Twins Bill & Jill Caldwell earned shooting scholarships to Xavier College. Both

earned an opportunity to try out for the Olympics.

8. Kimberly Hobart holds seven (7) national records with a 45 caliber pistol and three (3) with a 22 caliber pistol. She also holds two (2) combined 22/45 NRA Conventional Bullseye 3-Gun Pistol records. Kimberly has won the High Woman Overall National Championship five (5) times and the High Civilian Woman's National Championship eight (8) times. She won a GOLD MEDAL shooting with the USA Mayleigh International Team in 2002. Kimberly is a member of the Les Bear Pistol Team and the USA Civilian Pistol Team.

Thousands of volunteer hours have gone into the development of the Club. The volunteers gave their all "PAYING FORWARD" to make the Club what it is today. A "SPECIAL THANKS" should go to: Paul Lang, Chuck & Tim Matthews, Steve & Cheryl Snyder, Clyde Walters, "Pappy" Stemple, Mark Urbank, John Seibold, Dan Paumier, Forest Sanders, Jack Fox, Howard "Red" Jenkins. The events held at the Club and the Club's development would not be possible without the thousands of hours countless volunteers have donated to making the Club what it is today. A very special "THANK YOU" goes to those volunteers throughout our 70 plus year history. Our community has benefited from the Club each year as hundreds of shooters and their families visit TUSCARAWAS COUNTY to enjoy the shooting sport at TUSCO.

At his passing, Gene Von Allman remembered the Club with a \$10,000.00 donation for youth activities. The fund were put into a trust called the Von Allman Youth Trust. The interest from the trust is used to fund youth activities at the Club. Through the generous donations of members and area businesses the trust continues to grow.

Over the next 100 years, the Club will continue to strive to create opportunities for all residents of Ohio to enjoy the shooting sports. Our history began with a gift in 1934 from our FOUNDERS - and not a small one at that. Creating a rifle club that is the envy of many as they "PAY FORWARD". To continue this legacy we need the help of existing members, their families and the community to "PAY FORWARD" with donations of time and money for this is the critical need of the Club to build an endowment, providing resources for capital improvements and land acquisition in order to expand the Club's reach to non-hunters and shooters as we address the needs of those enjoying the sport. You can become part of TUSCO's future by:

1. Current Gift: Contributing via check, the transfer of securities, or real estate, you can fund a program immediately and take a full tax deduction.
2. Estate Gift: By including TUSCO RIFLE CLUB, INC. in your will, as part of a living trust or as a beneficiary of financial assets, you establish a legacy that will live on after you are gone.
3. Life-Income Gift: Creating a planned gift, such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder unitrust, you can receive income for retirement while providing support for future generations.

To learn how you can become part of TUSCO's legacy contact the Club President.

The Club history was made possible through newspaper articles, newsletters and the

memories of numerous members, including: Chuck Matthews, Charlie Ebright, Sony Sedares, Fred Turner, Jim Eichel, Jack Fox, Phil & Connie Kinsey, Bill Murray.

