

Who is Jim "Whizzer" White & S&W Supply



My nickname of "Whiz" was a carryover from my father who played football in college against Byron R. "Whizzer" White, the late US Supreme Court Justice many years ago. My father was a very successful EVP with Armour & Co in California running their West Coast Sales Division. He was a "Whiz" at golf and making friends.

I had never shot a single trap target until 1972 when I worked for the late Governor Richard F. Kneip at the State Capitol. I only shot a couple of rounds and didn't even own anything more than a Remington 1100 field gun. Dale July, a state singles champ, worked at the DOT building where I was a Section Manager. Dale took me under his wing and taught me to shoot and to shoot fast.

I returned to SD from Houston at the insistence of Governor Kneip, who'd met me at the National Governors Conference in Houston where I worked for Brown & Root as a safety coordinator. Dick was a helluva nice guy and never forgot his loyal friends in state government.

I returned to SD too late because I elected to stay in Houston to finish up some Masonic work at the Gray Lodge in SW Houston. Dick was ending his two-term reign as Governor when the President appointed him as the Ambassador to Singapore. Without a job, Dick insisted that I join him in Singapore to work on his staff. Unfortunately, I was unable to join him because my recently widow mother was diagnosed with cancer. My sister was living in England, so I was elected to stay with my mother. I'd lost my father in a tragic car accident in my 20's and mom needed family around, so I stayed. I then stepped into a secondary occupation of teaching mathematics (had to pick up a second BS). I had one BS in mathematics and had worked for a short time for the USAEC in nuclear and conventional weapons design and development.

My first trap introduction came in league shooting in the summer of 1973. A league shooter friend, Bob Moore, convinced me to attend an ATA registered shoot one Sunday about 60 miles away (he never showed by the way). It happened to be the last shoot of the season and I didn't shoot anything spectacular. I did meet some great guys during league who were there competing. They kept insisting that I needed a "trap gun." I joined them again the following spring in league and that started my 35 year jump into competitive ATA shooting.



All my shooting friends were 27 yarders. I wasn't smart enough to know what that meant. Consequently, they convinced (tricked) me into participate in all the back-fence shooting games. I got fairly good at it, to the point I was taking home some money – very necessary to a beginning teacher. At the end of the spring league, we shot summer league, and that meant that I was always being pulled along to registered shoots with these guys; Roger (State HDGP Champ) and his wife Terry (Women's All American), Andy Meier (State Singles Champ) , best friend Bob Gallant, John Bracken (State Champ), and Willard Lage (State Singles Champ). These friendships have stood the test of time and even today we are all very, very good friends.

For me shooting got to the point that it was not uncommon for me to win Class A or AA Singles, something in handicap (22 yards then for a beginner), and even something in doubles. A couple of times I even packed into the gang's car HOA or HAA. In those days a guy could

make enough money shooting to pay for his shootings costs. I was, however, reminded a several times that I was hogging trophies and that I might be walking home next time!

At a small June 1974 shoot in Rapid City I won a new 870 Trap. I had to endure a couple of rounds in a shoot-off with another older gentleman who'd also shot a 98. I eventually wore him down and beamed at the ownership of a new true trap gun.

The next month I was asked to help work at the Rushmore Trap Club by the owners. The club was hosting the SD State Shoot, so naturally, I shot it, and shot it pretty well. A BIG "Thanks" in part to Ray Stafford. During the shoot, Ray bent my barrel on my new trap gun to make it shoot higher. I shot pretty fast, and Ray felt I need it to shoot higher. It worked. I'd shot a couple of 100x100's and the gang thought that was pretty cool for a new-comer. I thought everyone did that often; more often than I did.

At the shoot's completion I ended up on the 23½. I was kind of unhappy that I had to shoot from the 22, because many new shooters were shooting from the 20. My 20 yard card was in the mail a few days later, but I could not accept it with the yardage wins at state.

A great gentleman whom I shall never forget for obvious reasons was the Remington Rep, Don Tate, out of Montana. What a great ambassador for Remington Arms Company. He approached me at the end of that state shoot and suggested that the next month I should really think about attending the "Grand". I had absolutely no clue what he was talking about, but my good friends, the Sorenson's and Meier's, said they'd accompany me there.

Roger and Terry made it painless for me by making all arrangements for flights, lodging, car rental, etc. Reservations were made and off we flew to Vandalia. Upon our arrival at registration and squadding, they insisted that I play all the money.

I loved the place. There was everything you could think of for shooting. I was entertained watching Britt Robinson (who became a good friend in later years) shoot doubles, the master Larry Gravestock, and Susan Natrass. I had the pleasure to meet Joan Davis, the editor of Trap & Field magazine. She and I became pretty good friends, and we managed to get together for dinner several times. We kept in touch for many years.

Remington Arms was giving out a packet of collector's game sketches for every 100x100. I REALLY wanted one. On two occasions, I missed my first bird out and ran 99, but never shot a perfect 100x100. Because Don Tate informed the Remington folks I was coming, the Remington folks gave me a locker at their booth to store my gun and items in and were extremely helpful to me. They also had plenty of "goodies" in the locker every morning for me. Through that earlier arrangement by Don Tate, I was befriended by Gene Porter. Gene was the Midwest Regional Manager for Remington Arms out of Kansas City. He was an absolute jewel and I've tried unsuccessfully to locate him over the years. My last contact was that he planned to retire in Roanoke, VA.



Gene was a spitting image of and as friendly as my late father, so it was easy to get along with him. Gene and Don were responsible for Remington Arms Company offering me employment as a shooting pro for them in 1976. A job I turned down, as I did not want to work out of Bridgeport and my new bride emphasized that!

Oh, Gene got me a set of those prints because he said I was the only guy there dumb enough to shot 99's by missing the first target out every time.

Gene even presented me with his personal “1 of 375” Champion’s Belt Buckle given out by Remington that year at the Grand buckle right there on the spot for my win in the Vandalia Handicap event. All other champions had to wait for theirs in the mail.

In two handicap events, including the Grand American, I was a contender, until it seemed my last two posts. I “*could not stand posterity*,” as Gene put it. I think the best I could end up with were a 94 & 95. The GAH was won that year by a John Steffens from Minneapolis with a 98. I really enjoyed that evening shoot-off. I was complaining to anyone who would listen (and there wasn’t a sympathetic ear in that crowd) about how I could never keep my head in all 100 targets. I was quick to notice that the word “sympathy” does not exist in a competitor’s vocabulary – no one cares.

The next day Roger and I continued our bet of 10¢ a target for the day including the Vandalia Handicap. I was a few bucks ahead, when I left Roger to lead off my squad in the Vandalia Handicap. Roger’s wife, Terry, watched me start off, but left when I missed my 7th target. I never missed another. Later, when I walked up to Roger, he asked how I did. I said, “*Rog, I think the most that I can owe you is a dime!*” With a puzzling look, he didn’t quite understand what I had said. Then after a couple of seconds, his eyes beamed and could not believe what had happened. I asked him, “*Did you run a hundred?*” “*No.*” he replied. I responded “*Then you probably owe me.*”

I was a nervous wreck walking off the line after breaking the 99 with a group of guys who continually told me to go for it, and they would not do anything to disrupt the harmony. I wished I’d kept their names – man what a great squad to lead of wonderful gentlemen.

Luckily, I’d played every single option and purse that week (that amount of money scared the hell out of me), but Roger and Terry said I had to do it. I made more money in that event than I could imagine. I would gross more payoffs that week I was there, than I’d make in more than a year’s teaching. I then knew the true meaning of “Grand.”

Buford Bailey of Big Springs, NE, “*Mr. Singles*” as they called him, had been watching me shoot. As I shot my 100th target, he walked up to line, grabbed my hand and with his big Nebraska farmer hand congratulated me. He’d been a big winner at our state shoot the month prior. I watched him smack 300 in a shoot-off against Don Schilander (another true gentleman) from ND for out-of-state singles champ. They’d both run 100x100 to get to the shoot-off. I watched Buford and Don shoot the eyes out of targets-for such a long time that ultimately Don missed his flight back home. Wow, what an inspiration. Buford broke 100’s and 200’s like it was just a simple everyday act. At shoot-offs, Buford would walk to the line with 4 boxes of shells and a pint or two of milk. I’ll never forget that. I also remember watching him break 100x100 in a 50+ mph wind at a registered shoot in Cheyenne. I’d never seen a windier day to shoot.

Buford grabbed me as I left the field saying something like, “*Jim, you needed a real trap gun.*” Ljutic’s booth was absolutely directly behind the trap I finished on. Buford picked up my leather Shamrock bag and walked me in to meet Mr. Ljutic. After Buford told Al I needed a better gun, Al’s remark was “*He’s not good enough to shoot one of my guns.*” This is a true event and Jimmy Ljutic and I have had a laugh about it a couple of times. Buford, not missing a step, smiled, grabbed me and walked me back towards the admin building where I ordered a brand new TM1 Perazzi. That gun got me the rest of the way to the 27 in short order. First thing I did was trade it for another Perazzi –dumb me! Oh, I ordered my first P/W 800B reloader then too with some of my winnings.



I returned to South Dakota to prepare for the fall opening of school. I was teaching in the Ellsworth Air Force Base’s school system. Back home a few of the older shooters who knew my father (1 or 2 handicap golfer), and following an interview by the local newspaper, and the sports editor’s statement that “*You are a whiz at shooting*” tagged me with my

father's handle of "Whizzer". To this day I swear some folks do not know my given first name. My secretaries in the school district years used to answer calls for "Whiz." They knew that had nothing to do with public education. The handle has stuck with me these 40 years.

I'd spent so much money there in Vandalia in 1974 that I could not afford a much desired Life Membership. I borrowed cash from the Sorenson's to pay for it right there and had Frank Little and Buford Bailey sign my Life Member application. The ATA issued checks in the mail for my winnings, so I had to wait a short time to really see what I'd actually won. I did try to stay ahead of the daily cash-outs before they hit \$600.

Oh, by the way, I was NOT the Vandalia Champion. I lost the shoot-off to Ruthie Keim of Teaneck NJ ... missing my 99th and 100th target.

With that shoot-off win, she became the first woman in ATA history to win a major handicap event. I figured I paid the ultimate sacrifice to women's lib. I was reminded many, many times to "stay in the game" especially in shoot-offs. For, you see, I dropped my last two shots thinking I was way out of the game and just wanted to end it all. I "shot myself in the foot" dropping those two targets, because one would have tied for another round, and two would have given me the win. I resigned to the contentment with my winnings.

I made the 27 yard line the following August. I used to have "pity parties" about the fact that I could not even hit my foot from the 26½. I'd requested reviews, but my State Delegate and (ATA President), Randy Clark, confirmed that my 3 yard penalty was to stand for a year. The win at the Grand moved me from the 23½ to the 26½. It took me all of the next summer to break a descent score to win that extra half yard; the traditional 27-yard "Beer Bath" followed. I've been there ever since. I did get a reduction that lasted one week, but none since.

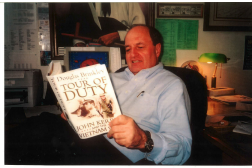


We here at my club feel that to win in a shoot-off is the best way to win. The shooters are all winners; it's just the top shoot-off winner who claims the trophy. I believe that my club has more 27 yard GOOD shooters per capita than about anywhere else and always has. We have shooters at the club like Matt and Foster Bartholow of current ATA fame, and a young group of kid who can kick the back sides of us older folks on a daily basis. All Americans Fred Nagle and Al Tomnitz (now deceased) are/were all top SD shooters who we all shot against and with many, many times at shoots.

My last ATA shoot was my state shoot where I tied for state handicap champ. I shot off in 100° heat and that about killed me. I decided that if it isn't fun, I was not going to go through that again.

Roger and Terry Sorenson, Bob Gallant, and I traveled all over the Midwest for many, many years shooting. Our relationship blossomed into S&W Supply Company. Roger left the business many, many years ago after selling his construction company and moving to Las Vegas. S&W has remained true to helping the shooting sports and will continue.

I have met some of the greatest people in this sport. From the pros like Ray Stafford, Britt Robinson, the Russio brothers, Gene Sears, to the president of Remington Arms, and others like Dick Baldwin, Jack Mitchell, Mr. Andrews, Remington's president, as well as other non-pros who have become friends. It truly is a sport where friendships are made based upon personality and shooting ability and not the size of your wallet, although that helps.



I retired as a school administrator in mid 2000, but have kept this shooting sports business going. I have had the distinct pleasure of meeting some of the kindest, friendliest, wealthiest, honest people in shooting sport. My customer base ranges from many hundreds in the US to others in Canada, Nova Scotia, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Brazil, the UK, South Africa (that's a wonderfully unique story), Australia, Sri Lanka, India, Germany, on-and-on. Not a day goes by that I am amazed at my customer base.

I shipped the Valley Gun Club in South Africa several W-W trap machines many years ago. I suggested to one of their principles they should become and host trapshooting as an ATA club. After contacting *Trap & Field Magazine* and the ATA, they now host the South African Grand.

I have been extremely lucky to have fallen into a niche of terrific shooters who liked to "kick butt" and taught confidence and that on any given day ANYONE can beat ANYONE! I also was not afraid to experiment. Long ago I had Perazzi Italy build me a special stock, long before adjustable combs; a stock that shot so high (7/8"-1" drop at comb) no one else would even try to shoot my gun. I also had Perazzi Italy make me a butt-stock with a pad that was convex, rounded OUT... that fit like a glove. I experimented with chokes... Herb Orre did the choke on my gun, and Allen Timney put in his trigger the night before I won the Vandalia Handicap.

Well, that's me, now at 70 years old and can still smack the back-fence targets. I consider myself honored to know many of you, where shooting ability was not the issue, simple friendships and a good laugh were always more important to me, as was a good game of pitch, gin, or cribbage.

Keep practicing, do it from the 27, and don't listen to everyone's advice!

Jim "Whiz" White
Rapid City South Dakota