

Black Powder Enthusiast Vent Their Smoke Poles at Blanket Shoot

By Peter Sarr

Local black powder shooters gathered at the Marbletown Sportsman's Club property on Scarawan Rd. in Stone Ridge on Sunday February the 6th to compete against each other in a test of marksmanship. They use guns called muzzleloaders. These are guns that are loaded through the barrel. Basically, you have to build a charged round in the barrel. 1st, a measure of powder is poured in, then the bullet, or "ball", is set with a patch (a small piece of cloth) and pushed with a rod down to the end of the barrel. Finally, when the shooter is ready to shoot, he pulls the trigger which ignites the powder to send the lead ball to the target.



Al Troccia

Many of the guns were "flint locks" that use a flint to ignite the powder. Flint lock muzzleloaders were developed in the mid 1500's and are the predecessor of all modern firearms. In American history they harken back to the days of Daniel Boone. In fact Mike Cassatta says, "I like using muzzleloaders because of the challenge in using the primitive weapon for target shooting as well as for hunting". Some of the shooters, like Phoenicia resident Vin Berstien, even dress in period clothing to look the part of hunters from the frontier days.



MSC club member Mike Cassatta

Out on the course, the dozen or so men walked in small groups along a snowy and scenic trail to take turns shooting at 11 targets stretched out along a half mile path winding through the woods behind the club house.

The shooters had several different targets to shoot at. Quite a few were steel plates. Some were steel bottles or sections of well casings that rang loudly when hit with the lead bullets. Another was pieces of coal hung with thread that were very difficult to hit. Still another was a card set so that they had to hit the edge of the card and cut it in half! Even with the difficulty of the shots, I was amazed at the proficiency and ability of the shooters that I accompanied as they navigated there way through the woods from target to target. After finishing the course the competitors

returned to the club house for lunch consisting of hot dogs, hamburgers, coffee, and soda served up by club President and Stone Ridge resident, Jeff Budik.

Then, after the men warmed up a bit, came the "blanket" part of the event that you may have been wondering about. Here's how it works. Each competitor brings a gift of some sort and places it on a "blanket", in this case a beautiful Elk hide.



Then at the end of the shoot the scores are tallied and the guy with the highest score gets the first pick of the gifts, then the next highest picks a gift, and so on until everyone gets a gift. The top shooter on this day was Mike Cassatta, who like 2 other shooters hit 8 of the targets, but came closest to the X in the tie-breaker.



Rich Rockwell and Vin Bernstien

This was Marbletown Sportsman's Club's 1st black powder shoot of the year and was run by Rich Rockwell of Stone Ridge. Rockwell's wife, Angie, took care of the sign up table, and many club members helped set up the course. Of the event Rockwell said, "I was very pleased with the turnout. The participants said they liked the course and the variety of targets". He also said that he will be "holding more shoots like this in the future", **the next shoot will be on May 15th**, says Rockwell, "but it won't be a woods walk like today, it will be held at the range, and we will be shooting targets similar to the ones we used today".

If you are interested in shooting black powder at the club, you can visit the clubs web site at, www.marbletownsportsmanclub.com, or call Rich Rockwell at 845-687-8750, or contact him by E-mail at mzldr@aol.com.



Paul Brasky, Tom Harris, Steve & Paul Granberg