

THE CUMBERLAND RIFLEMEN'S EARLY HISTORY

CHAPTER 2

The First Club Officers

Robert Masilotti	President
Joseph Martelli	Vice President
Butch Magolda	Treasurer
Fred Rosi	Secretary
Robert Courter	Executive Officer
Dan LaFerrier	Range Officer-Pistol
Fred Brown	Range Officer-Rifle

First Meeting Place

A small group of rifle and pistol shooters met at a gravel hole on Union Road in Vineland on Saturday afternoons to have impromptu rifle and pistol matches. Soon afterwards, a housing development went up across the street and that marked the end of our gravel hole range.

Our next gravel hole range was on Garden Road and only lasted for two shoots. At this juncture, Robert Masilotti invited us to meet at his home on Boxwood Drive in Vineland to form an NRA Club. Thus, the Cumberland Riflemen Club was born in Bob's basement.

We applied for a Club Charter while continuing to search for a location for a range. Finally, a property was discovered on Rt. 49 (our current location) and the owners gave us verbal permission to shoot on their property. This information was published in an earlier edition of the Cumberland Magazine.

"The Good Old Days"

Soon after receiving our Charter, I received a letter from the Director of Civilian Marksmanship who informed us that as a chartered NRA Club, we were eligible for government surplus arms and ammunition. At about the same time, the Club agreed with the land owners to pay the taxes, \$108.00 for 108 acres of undeveloped wilderness (according to the City of Vineland Tax Map). The land belonged to the Smith family, a father and his three sons, who were roofing contractors from Vineland. All of this was accomplished on a handshake.

The Club continued to grow as word spread throughout South Jersey. AT this time, we received a letter from the Department of the Army advising that Springfield Rifles were now available to NRA chartered clubs only. All that was needed to purchase one was an NRA Membership Card, serial number and \$17.50 for each rifle. This included shipping, handling and delivery by U.S. Mail. Most members immediately signed their wives into NRA membership and applied for two rifles. They were 1903-A-3, 30/06 Springfields and graded serviceable as issued. They were shipped from the Rhode Island Arsenal.

Most of the rifles were in excellent condition. Of the two I received, one was brand new with a manufacture date of 1928. Most of these were packed in cosmoline and required a lot of time and solvent to clean.

The next application we received was from DCM for ammunition. The amount was based on the number of matches the Club was planning. We figured out a projected match schedule by the number of shooters. That amounted to about 10,000 rounds of 30/06 ball ammo (non corrosive FMJ). About a week later we received notice that they had been shipped by Railroad Express to Vineland. The cost was \$26.00! Can you imagine that? It's something that will never happen again.

After Joe Martelli and I picked up the ammo, we began having Springfield matches on what is now the Pistol Range. The Firing Line was the tree line of what is now the Pistol Range parking lot. We built two-by-four target holders across the front of the impact area and this arrangement gave us 100 yards. Matches were fired from standing, sitting and prone positions. Each shooter received 65 rounds-5 sighter and 20 rounds for each position. The Club rule was if you drew the ammo for the match, you fired the match that morning. No live ammo was to be taken off the range. This ammo was Korean War issue that came in vacuum sealed can, and appeared brand new when opened.

By this time, the Club outgrew Bob's basement and we moved our meetings to the Elk's Lodge on North Sixth Street in Vineland. The Club continued to meet there for about two years.

Our next rifle acquisition was for four bull barrel 22 cal. Rifles for the beginning of the small bore Junior Rifle Club. These were from a college ROTC rifle program that had been upgraded to newer and better rifles and consisted of three Mossbergs, one Winchester with micrometer pipe sights, slings, two spotting scopes and 5000 rounds of 22 cal. long rifle ammo.

Some of our Cumberland Riflemen members also belonged to the Eagles Club on Quince Street in Vineland. One member, Vince Law, mentioned that the Eagles Club had a four position 22 cal. range in its basement. They also had steel lockers for storing rifles and ammo for safety. Our space included a side room where shooters could wait their turn. Three of our Cumberland Riflemen were already Certified Instructors; James Craft, George Haughey and Norbert Vondra volunteered to start the Junior Program. After all the paperwork, insurance, NRA Rules and Regulations, Training Manuals and shooting position charts, we were ready to start. Our first group consisted of sons and daughters of Club members. We were off and running. Vince Law continued to request the use of the Eagles Club for us. He later became a Certified Instructor.

Needless to say, the Club membership continued to grow. Among the new members was John Bertino, a Civil Engineer from Vineland and Bill Otto, a land excavator from Port Elizabeth. Their professional skills were quickly put to use with many weekend work parties to survey the property, lay out a new plinking range, sighting in range and remodeling of the rifle and pistol ranges. Last, but not least, was the design and lay out of the 600 yd. rifle range.

Club members worked with brush hooks and chain saws to first clear the 600 yd. range area. Fireplace wood was free for the taking by Club members. Work party crews under John Bertino, established range elevations so that Bill Otto could begin work with his bulldozer. Range layout plans were obtained from the NRA, which included target frames and safety requirements for crews pulling targets. Military teams, who had already used the smaller pistol/rifle range donated field phones and communication wire for the new 600 yd. range.

Thanks to Club members, Pete Suhmann and Dan LaFerriere for their assistance in writing Chapter 2.

Fred E. Rosi, Historian