

ATA article for March 2019.

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

Many ATA clubs have challenges in obtaining and retaining good trap personnel – particularly trappers and scorers.

In early January 2019, the Hamilton Gun Club hosted its annual “Family Fair” shoot. This is a 100 target, non-registered team event. A maximum of six shooters can be on each team but only the top five scores count.

The weather conditions were cold and only three, two trap banks were operational. Looking at this superficially one might think that if there were more banks used, the squads could be processed much faster and not have to turn 100 targets into a day long ordeal. Many of the scorers had seldom if ever scored before. They were cold but given the conditions did a fine job. So where did these scorers come from?

I was told by one of the organizers who came from Fort Erie that every one of the helpers he had to secure and all were from the Fort Erie area. Travel time is at least 1 hour and 15 minutes each way. The kids had to be up early on this Sunday morning, dress warmly and work for, at most, minimum wage. It is really hard to get help these days and I have experienced that complaint from clubs and organizers right across the continent. Sometimes it isn't just young folks that we rely upon. Many times clubs call upon older folks who can spend long hours at modest pay doing the essential tasks that are required for the rest of us to be able to participate in and enjoy our sport.

It is easy to complain about trappers and scorers. Try complimenting and thanking them. Squad leaders need to pay attention when there are challenging situations and sometimes there is little practical choice than to substitute scorers especially in doubles where it is easier to get confused. Look at it this way – even experienced shooters sometimes argue over shooting line rule calls. How can you expect the average novice scorer to be on top of everything?

Last year I witnessed a mother sitting next to an adult child, trying to help teach that child how to score. Problem was the adult child could not subtract and had a real challenge adding. The squad I was with was very understanding and over the course of the competition that scorer got more proficient and better. You could see the confidence building as if a light bulb had suddenly been turned on. Schooling, especially math class, probably didn't go so well for this youth and somehow he had been able to get by. Math and academics were probably a big challenge and meaningless. But suddenly it became important to be accurate in adding things up and subtracting zeros from 25. Reward was a modest amount of pay and doing a job that somebody needed done (us).

Look around you as you travel from club to club. There is trap help that need the money and most appreciate the opportunity. If we can help by encouraging and working with these folks, it is a relationship that may be mutually beneficial for years.

Trap help at the Grand is great – now if we can only figure out how to delay the start of school for a week so our Grand week need not start as early?

On a lighter note, the approach one takes on issues can vary dramatically from an aggressive “in your face” confrontation to a meek, mild, conciliatory and almost apologetic stance. Here is an example of the later when a prospective firearm owner seeks to obtain a Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL) which is necessary if one wants to acquire or possess firearms or ammunition in Canada.

Dear R.C.M.P.:

I would really appreciate the privilege of owning a firearm. I know you won't permit me to acquire one for protection against people – even vile ones.

But I sure would like to try hunting, or target shooting, or maybe even collect one or more.

I assure you that I have invested hundreds of dollars already and several days of my life to take your courses and pass your tests (see Safety Training Certificate attached).

I understand you now must investigate me, track me, verify my date of birth, birthplace, sex, eye colour, height, address and have an updated photo of myself that meets your specifications.

I was hoping that my love life would be confidential but realize you need all the details – so here goes.

The current love of my life is happy to support my PAL application (see attached scented reference letter). This is apparently not adequate however, so here is the name and contact info of my most recent ex who is I expect more than willing to share her feelings about me with you.

I understand that you also need the name and contact info of all previous exes going back many years. (Attached are three sheets of contact info.) Some of these really want to share their feelings with you about me and how much they don't like guns.

Now for my job history – attached are all the details. Note: I have never worked at a post office and as for the joke I told at the office party last year – I didn't mean it.

So, onto the next item – details about my medical history. No, I have never been a patient in a psychiatric facility, have never been diagnosed as being nuts – only accused of this because I would like to acquire a gun.

You will note that the person who has signed my application as guaranteeing my photograph will be waiting for a call from you if you have any questions.

I understand and must agree that all my personal details that I am giving to you and all the information you obtain from the contacts I have given you will be stored in your database (I think they call it the Canadian Police Information Centre database) – you know – the same one that enables you to run a background check on criminals and suspects.

Thankfully, all I want to do right now is buy or borrow a trap shotgun so I can try trapshooting with some of my friends. I know that if I ever wanted to acquire a handgun for target shooting, that things will get complicated, expensive and have a lot of red tape. Thank heavens for lawyers however – my lawyer has assured me when I want to go down that road, he will open a file and help me.

And, by the way, I hope I did not act too hastily or presume you would grant me the privilege of acquiring long guns, but I have renovated my house for a secure storage area for guns and have another area in my house for ammo. I know you always have the right to send someone to inspect to make sure I have done things correctly. And, if I have missed doing something by the letter of the law, I also know you can seize everything and charge me with a criminal offence. I have made a small checklist of some of

the things I must always do to keep from having my guns seized (if you permit me to acquire them) and to keep me from having to go to court. I have highlighted just a few:

- I must renew my PAL within five years
- If I change my address and I must tell you
- I intend to store and transport my firearms and ammunition safely but if you don't like the safe way I do it or it is your opinion that I didn't follow the regulations as you interpret them, I am in big trouble
- If I ever get to own a centre fire rifle, I know I must use magazines that have a limited maximum capacity
- I stay awake at night worrying about whether I have done everything to your liking

As I come close to completing this letter, I just heard on the news that there has been another gang-related shooting in Toronto with an illegally imported gun. As I understand it, the media and the politicians are wanting more regulations, more bans and more red tape on people like me who have never done anything illegal in their life. So I will hold off submitting this letter and enclosures for now until it is known what more information you need from me.

Meanwhile – can you tell me what red tape there is in buying clubs? (Golf clubs, I mean.)

Yours truly,

I.B. Hopeful

Paul Shaw,
Ontario Delegate