

ATA article for February 2017

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

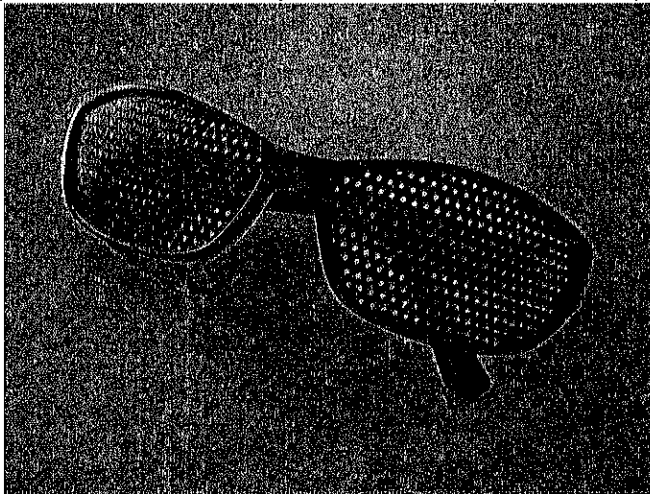
Ontario in February is typically cold. Apart from some winter league shooting and practice we are still months away from registering targets unless we head south. Keep warm Ontarionites – spring is coming.

Did you know that the average age of all annual members and active life members of the ATA is 52 years (2016)? The average age has actually been for the most part dropping over the last number of years (2012 – 55.6 years, 2013 – 54.6, 2014 – 53.4, 2015 – 51.4) [Source – ATA Records/Lynn Gipson]. Having young members is good for the future of our sport but the reason for the recent modest reduction in the average age probably needs more analysis. It may be an influx of younger shooters, attrition of older shooters or a combination of both. It is up to all of us to introduce our sport to younger enthusiasts and incentivize them to continue shooting.

Now for sad news. Few trap shooters outside of Ontario will recognize the name Fred Altman, commonly referred to as Fritz. Our Ontario shooters did not know Fritz from shooting trap, because that was not his game. He shot skeet – international skeet. But when Fritz was present in any clubhouse his cheery and enthusiastic personality was infectious. He was friends to all, no matter what type of targets you shot. Fred was in his early 80's (born in 1935) but apparently didn't know it – at least by his prolific shooting. He would practice skeet more than any shooter I have ever known. He, I am positive, shot more practice than Kim Rhode (U.S. female trap, double trap and skeet shooter extraordinaire). Fritz tried out for every Canadian National team in existence and over his many many years of international skeet shooting represented Canada at a great many international events. I am not talking about historic events – he represented Canada even recently and was the oldest shooter by far. Even after his event(s) concluded, Fritz was out on the skeet field still "practicing". He was a commercial painter by trade and to the best of my knowledge continued to put in long days working with his daughter and their work crew in painting hundreds of condos and commercial buildings each year. He was tireless in his work and with his sport. He spoke with a distinct German accent and when excited responded with a Yah Yah. He emigrated to Canada as a young man and when asked how he ended up in Canada I once overheard him say that he was dropped off by the "Luftwaffe" [as most of you know, this was the aerial warfare branch of the German Wehrmacht during World War II]. Fritz consumed from a glass jar a homemade concoction of who knows what that looked absolutely disgusting but which he swore gave him the energy boost that made him the "Eveready bunny". Fritz died of an aggressive cerebral infection on December 16, 2016. His contagious enthusiasm will be missed. And, while Fritz remained competitive at a ripe old age it gave all the rest of us a comfort level to know that the shooting sports are for all to enjoy even when chronologically advanced.

You may find my first encounter with Fritz interesting. I was representing Canada in an international trap event in the early 90's at Barcelona, Spain. The skeet shooters invited me (and other trap shooters) to meet at Fred Altman's room. We were shocked. A vivacious character was lying flat on his back on his bed. He was batting a tennis ball with one foot, then the other. The tennis ball was attached to a string suspended from the ceiling. The ball was half yellow and half red and was gyrating one way and then another with every smack of his feet. This interesting character was intensely watching the ball's every move through glasses – one lens green and one red. When he stopped and got up to introduce himself he practiced more "eye" exercises. He is the only person I have ever seen that can move one eye independent of the other towards his nose and then move the other eye in the same fashion. I had no

idea that was even possible. I noticed a weird pair of plastic glasses on the table near his bed. It had little pinholes in the lenses. (I have included a picture of a pair of glasses that illustrate what I saw.)



They are called “pinhole glasses” or “stenoopic” glasses. What in the heavens name were these? Fritz just commented that if you need glasses to read, you can use this type of eye glass and you can actually read. I didn’t believe him. I borrowed them and asked one of the older ladies that accompanied our team if she would mind trying them. At the time she was reading a newspaper. I asked her if she would mind trying them and see if she could read with them. She looked at them and apologized and said she would not be able to read anything without her prescription lenses. I persisted and she decided to humour me. To her absolute amazement she could actually read the paper. It appears that there is real science behind this. Pinholes can in many cases greatly improve clarity of vision for people with refractive error. Over the years I have sometimes used a makeshift “pinhole” device when in a situation where I am in a remote area for instance and want to thread a needle, tie a fish hook or do something at short distance that would be otherwise blurred. I simply take a piece of cardboard or similar object, punch a number of pinholes in it and look through the pinholes. The result can be amazing.

If for nothing else, I will never forget Fritz for introducing me to the “pinhole” ocular solution. If you want to know some of the “science” behind “pinhole” glasses, google it. Wikipedia has an interesting explanation.

Finally, a cautionary note. Most trap shooters I know either own dogs or have loved ones who cherish their canine buddies. I received a call one evening recently from my son Drew and his fiancé Lindsay. Their three year old Bouvier/poodle had just died of a massive seizure after getting into a “Christmas” package and consuming some sugar-free chewing gum that contained Xylitol. This artificial sweetener is toxic to dogs. In the canine body, the pancreas confuses Xylitol with real sugar and releases insulin to store the sugar. However, because there is no extra sugar present, the existing sugar that is present is removed from circulation. Blood sugar levels plummet resulting in weakness, disorientation, tremors and often seizures. It takes very few sticks of gum to kill a dog. Liver damage often results for dogs that do survive and this too is often fatal. Drew and Lindsay’s dog was not a small dog – at about 50 to 60 lbs or more. All the label said on the gum container was “contains Xylitol” (no caution like “toxic to dogs”). That is meaningless to most people. One of our OPTA board of directors is a very experienced veterinarian and was well aware of the toxic effects of Xylitol on dogs. He felt (as do I) that public awareness is important and that I should share this with the readers of my article. He also pointed out that Xylitol is present in many products – candies, toothpaste, mouthwash – even in some types of peanut butter. He asked me to advise readers that there is a lay person website known as VerterinaryPartner.com where there is very

helpful information available that includes products that are poisonous to dogs. When I looked on this website I found some of the things Bert mentioned. For instance, there is a "help line" where in an emergency you can talk to an actual veterinarian (looks like there may be a small fee). On this site it suggests people keep the following telephone number handy 1-888-426-4435. This is the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, a 24 hour service where you can speak directly to a veterinary toxicology specialist. In addition to advice, you will receive a case number which your own veterinarian can use for further consultation at no additional cost. Best to be informed – hope you don't need it.

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