

ATA article for November 2018

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

November is in many states and provinces slow, or down time, for registering targets. The Satellite Grands of 2018 are complete and 2019 Grands won't start for a few months. A lot of shooters take a break from heavy competitive shooting.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to attend every Satellite Grand venue except for two – one being the Heartland Grand at Ackley, Iowa. For the last couple of Grand Americans, I had the privilege of shooting on a great squad that included Dale Stockdale. Dale owns the range that hosts the Heartland. If you have the time and interest, Dale gave a great interview (which was on the ATA website and can be found there or on YouTube). Dale describes how his father took some acreage out of corn production on their farm years ago and built a trap field. Over the years, more and more trap fields were added until now there are 17 fields. The shot fall area is – you guessed it – a cornfield. The theory was “if you build it – people will come”. The Stockdales built the fields and people came! What a wonderful success story and what a legacy.

Coincidentally, I was recently watching a rerun of a 1989 American fantasy/drama/sports film “Field of Dreams”. Kevin Costner starred as a novice, Iowa farmer (Ray Kinsella). He, his wife Annie and daughter Karen lived and worked on this family farm. Ray had had a troubled relationship with his father John who had been a devoted baseball fan. John passed before Ray could mend the relationship. As a teenager, young Ray typically knew “everything” and denounced Shoeless Joe Jackson as a “criminal” because of his role in the 1919 Black Sox scandal which resulted in Shoeless Joe and seven other players receiving a lifetime ban on playing their beloved sport baseball. While walking in his cornfield one evening, Ray heard a voice “If you build it, he will come” and sees a vision of a baseball field with all the bells and whistles including full night lighting. Ray convinces his wife Annie that they should build the field and a ball field was built. To do so, productive corn acreage was removed which imperiled the financial viability of the farm. The ball field was surrounded by corn.

A number of additional voices and visions followed and one thing led to another until long deceased Shoeless Joe emerged one evening from the corn and started practicing on the baseball field. He asked Ray permission to bring friends to play and, shortly, the other seven members of the 1919 Black Sox came to practice. Eventually there were so many long deceased baseball legends that they turned practice into spirited games.

I will leave it to you to watch the movie to see what “go the distance” meant and “people will come” and “ease his pain”. Ray eventually gets his opportunity to reconcile with his dad. The farm was saved because “people came” and paid to watch legends of the past play baseball. The movie ends with the lighted baseball field front and center and a long line of car lights en route to watch baseball. At one point a question is asked by one of the players to Ray (Kevin Costner): “Is this heaven?” ... Ray responds...“It's Iowa”.

I hope to participate there some day. I hope more and more ATA shooters will also be able to visit the Stockdale “fields of dreams”.

Paul Shaw,
Ontario Delegate