

MIDDLETOWN PISTOL RIFLE ASSOCIATION, INC.



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10/10/03, Middletown, NY. Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association was awarded the "Club of the Year" award from the Orange County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs at the Federation's annual dinner at Kuhl's Highland House in Middletown. Bill Diana and Carmine Montalbano attended the dinner to accept the award.



Bill Diana, (left,) and Carmine Montalbano, (right,) accept " Paul McKenzie, Club of the Year" award from OCFSC President, Carmen Heitzman, (center).

MPRA MEMBERS AT FRIENDS OF THE NRA DINNER



PHOTOS FROM MAY 2002 MEETING





Shooting sports get reprieve, but all is not well

July 20, 2003, By Ken McMillan

Times Herald-Record, kmcmillan@th-record.com

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Bill Diana of Middletown is 53 years old and as happy as a teen-ager. Why? Because he's going to make his debut at the Empire State Games this week. "This is a chance of a lifetime, to make it to the Olympics," albeit on the state level, Diana said. "I've been dancing around like a young kid for days." Only a month ago, his dream would have been unattainable. A cost-cutting decision by the executives of the Games eliminated shooting from the multi-sport competition, as well as water polo, open women's field hockey and fencing. "I felt very, very hurt," said Mount Hope's Bill Mielke, who had been active as a shooter and coach for the past 20 years. "I really think the Games are one of the best things that New York state does, especially for the young people." So rather than voice one complaint about being banished and going away silently, the competitive shooting community went into action. Hundreds of phone calls and letters were filed away to politicians, who then lobbied successfully to have shooting reinstated for the 2003 Games in Buffalo. "It's great. Everybody is glad to have it," said state shooting chairman Chuck Meyer.

Not all is well, though. The shotgun events will not be included in this year's Games, and the number of competitors is down to about 80 from the maximum allowed of 96 for the rifle and pistol events. "We lost some because they couldn't quite make changes in their work plans and vacation plans," Meyer said. Also, shooters will not be housed or transported to and from the Games so they will have to pick up their own costs. The Games will provide only a uniform shirt, hat and medals.

Mielke said he was able to pull together only a three-man rapid fire pistol team for this week's event, with free pistol and women's sports pistol going by the wayside. Mielke, 69, Diana and David Valachovic of Wappingers Falls make up the pistol team.

Diana will coach a junior team consisting of Middletown area shooters Jenna Hansen, Jay Hansen, Ashley Alston, Nicholas Bertucci and Matt Golben. The Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association has donated \$1,000 to offset the costs for lodging, transportation and meals.

Meyer is still unclear about why his sport was eliminated in the first place. The reasons offered to him included the high costs of renting shooting ranges, moving the equipment to the sites and providing security at the sites; the high costs of providing transportation to out-of-the-way ranges; a reduction in the number of entrants at regional tryouts; and, the fact that the same people compete every year. There is also an underlying notion, offered by several competitors, that eliminating shooting was a decision based on "political correctness."

Executive director Fred Smith said there have been financial cutbacks in the entire Games program. "I hate to see our numbers go down at all," Smith said, "but the other side of the coin is we absolutely have to do so within a budget."

Carmine Montalbano is a rare breed these days. For more than 38 years, Montalbano has devoted much of his outdoor life to teaching kids how to safely use firearms and become better competition shooters.

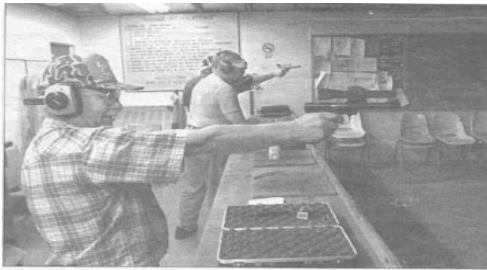
Through his activities with scouting and working with the Middletown Pistol Rifle Association, he and his fellow outdoorsmen have touched the lives of literally hundreds of young adults. There's no doubt that it's a labor of love for him and the many others who give their time to these types of programs.

Since its inception in 1995, this Middletown club has distinguished itself from the crowd by fostering some exceptional shooters. For one thing, the club has five expert shooters in the four-position National Rifle Association small-bore .22-caliber rifle. Young adults like Patrick Murray, Mike Ieradi, Matt Van Vorst, Crystal Comfort and Paul Gallo are great role models for other kids today.

There are several former members of the Middletown Pistol Rifle Association who have gone on to even greater national achievements. Todd Moissett, formerly with the team, joined the U.S. Navy and is currently shooting for the Navy team. According to Montalbano, on his first outing, Moissett won the coveted Admirals Cup and also has won several interservice competitions. He will compete in the U.S. championship later this year.

The team currently has 13 young members and always has room for more. For information, call Montalbano at 845-355-2102.

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Members of the Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association practice at their range. In foreground, Larry Kirby takes aim with his .22 caliber pistol.

We've got a line full, to begin shooting, he told them. We can start. Duncanson, sporting a .22 Ruger, took his spot on the line, one of 10 competitors. Many of the others were half his age or younger.

Thirty minutes of shooting ensued. Each man fired 30 rounds at a bull's-eye 50 feet away. They were shooting for points, determined by how close they came to the bull's-eye. Duncanson finished in fifth place with a score of 241 out of a possible 300. The winning score was 264. Not so long ago, Duncanson was among the club's best shooters. He is a six-time club pistol champion, most recently in 1996. The champions are determined by their cumulative match scores in a given year.

I try, but my scores just aren't what they used to be and they never will be, he said with a laugh. The passage of time has left him with an arthritic trigger finger and reduced eye-hand coordination, the chief reasons for his lower scores.

These days, Duncanson is the respected elder of the approximately 165-member club. Or, as club secretary Jerry Molnar put it, He is the grand old man of Middletown shooting. That's what I call him. >

July 18, 2001 DESPITE AGE, DUNCANSON STILL ON TARGET

MIDDLETOWN:By Marc Davis, The Times Herald-Record mdavis@th-record.com

The retired city police officer first got involved in competitive shooting back in 1934. Fay Duncanson's face lights up when he talks about his favorite pastime pistol shooting. Duncanson is an 89-year-old Middletown resident with the energy of someone half his age. Just ask the members of the Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association.

Duncanson has been a MPRA member since the late 1960s. After so many years, he's still active in the club's weekly pistol shooting competitions. Last Thursday was typical. Duncanson was eager to start the night's .22-caliber pistol shooting match. So he urged his fellow members to stop gabbing and take their positions at the firing line.

As the grand old man," he is subject to friendly barbs from fellow members.

You started shooting when Smith and Wesson invented the gun, right? club president Charlie Clark teased him after Thursday night's match. Actually, Duncanson became involved in competitive pistol shooting in 1934, 12 years before he joined the Middletown Police Department,

which he served until retiring in 1974. Duncanson, a 1931 Middletown High graduate, has been to countless shooting matches over the years. That includes representing the Hudson Valley 10 times in international rapid fire competition at the Empire State Games. And he still competes in the Orange County and Ulster County Pistol Leagues during the fall and winter. Duncanson's wife, Marjorie, passed away in 1993. He remains active because I live alone and this gives me the excuse to get out and be with people. Duncanson sees himself continuing as long as I feel I can do it and I'm safe, that I'm not going to cause an accident to anybody else and myself.

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All MPRA members belong to the National Rifle Association. And they are mindful of the responsibilities that come with owning guns. The MPRA members won't pat themselves on the back for their safety-first outlook. They believe they are practicing common sense. They also believe they are representative of gun club members throughout the country.

WHO THEY ARE MPRA members have spouses, they have children, they are gainfully employed or retired. Many have served in the military. Edgardo Ruberte, the MPRA's vice president, served in Vietnam and Desert Storm. These days, he is a New York City transit authority supervisor residing in Montgomery. Ralph Vitagliano of Monroe served in the Navy during World War II. Diana, a self-employed auto mechanic living in Scotchtown, was a member of the Air Force reserves from 1969-75. Bill Mielke of Howells served in the Navy and owns a florist shop near Howells. Not everyone has a military background. Sue Pallak of Rifton, one the club's best pistol shooters, is an accountant. And then there's Dubin, a retired junior high school science teacher who lived on Long Island before moving to Florida. **CLUB TARGETS SAFER SHOOTING**



Larry Kirby checks out a steel target.

TONY SAVINO/The Record

MIDDLETOWN: Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association members say they recognize the responsibility that comes with gun ownership.

By Marc Davis, The Times Herald-Record, mdavis@th-record.com Ed Dubin has been on safari in South Africa and Zimbabwe. He has hunted antelope and warthog. Dubin, a 64-year-old Florida resident, has a lifelong affinity for guns rifles and pistols. When not hunting, he can often be found at the Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association's shooting range. Dubin thrives on the challenges presented by competitive pistol and rifle shooting, what fellow club member Bill Diana described as chasing that mysterious bull's-eye. Dubin has spent countless hours practicing and competing, forever honing his accuracy. You can find a lot of people like Dubin at the MPRA and the mid-Hudson's other shooting clubs. The 168-member MPRA hosts shooting matches, and members many of them hunters also compete in the Orange and Ulster county pistol leagues and in tournaments throughout the country.

SAFETY CONSCIOUS

Broach the subject of gun safety and every MPRA member recites without fail the three fundamental safety rules set down by the NRA:-- Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.

-- Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

-- Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

Signs featuring these guidelines are posted at the club's firing range. George Heitz, like everyone else, abides by the rules. Heitz, a 67-year-old Walden resident and retired elementary school teacher, joined the MPRA in 1961, a few months after the club was incorporated. He said no one has ever suffered a gun-related injury in the club's history. Heitz said the same of the Wawarsing Sportsmen Association, of which he also is a member. Dubin makes similar statements about the three shooting clubs he was affiliated with on Long Island. MPRA matches are supervised by club members. A competitor can't cross the firing line until the supervisor has visual confirmation that all firearms are unloaded.

New club members must participate in two club matches before they are given keys to the shooting range. Veteran members monitor newcomers to see they abide by safety rules.

'WHY DO YOU NEED A GUN?'

Not everyone shares the club members' interest in guns.

Those interviewed for this story had no horror stories to share regarding encounters with anti-gun supporters, although many have been peppered with questions, sarcastic comments or dirty looks.

Why do you need a gun? is a common question Dubin has been asked.

Mielke recalled a recent conversation he had with a female customer at his florist shop. Mielke casually mentioned he coaches the Hudson

Valley pistol team that competes in the Empire State Games.

The customer was aghast.

She just made a face, she didn't say anything, he said. I just told her and I dropped it when I saw she made a face.

Many club members believe the media fan the flames whenever there is a gun-related fatality. The members point out fatalities occur when people misuse guns.

Safety has always been a priority with firearms. It has to be, Ruberte said.

LEAGUE LINEUPS

(Clubs competing in two popular shooting leagues in the mid-Hudson.)

Orange County Pistol League
Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association
Monroe-Chester Sportsmen Club
Black Rock Fish and Game Club
Dutchess County Pistol Association
Pleasantville
Master Class (public range in Monroe)
Ulster (represents variety of clubs located in Ulster County)
Woodbury Field and Stream Club
Ulster County Pistol League
Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association
Morgan Hill Game Association
New Paltz Rod and Gun Club
Rondout Rod and Gun Club
Ulster Heights Rod and Gun Club
Saugerties Fish and Game Club

The leagues run September through March. The matches feature bull's-eye shooting. Individual and team scores are kept.



August 26, 2001

PALLACK AT HOME ON THE RANGE MIDDLETOWN: The longtime Monroe resident is competitive in a sport that doesn't attract many women. By Marc Davis, The Times Herald-Record, mdavis@th-record.com



Sue Pallak

Sue Pallak sighted down the barrel of her .22 caliber Hammerli pistol, focusing on a bull's-eye target 50 feet away. The scene was a pistol match held two weeks ago by the Middletown Pistol and Rifle Association. Pallak was competing against four other club members all men.

Pallak and the others had already fired 20 rounds each. Ten rounds remained. Pallak and company were waiting for the signal to resume firing.

Pallak, the 2001 New York State Indoor Conventional Pistol women's champion, was in that frame of mind where you are standing there with a blank mind, she said. It's very easy for your mind to jump to your family or to your job. And you don't want that to happen.

Pallak remained locked in when the target switched into shooting position. She fired five rounds in the blink of an eye. Five more rounds followed moments later.

She finished tied for second with 266 points out of a possible 300. Her fianc, John Paris, came in first with 291 points.

Pallak, 48, shrugged off her performance. A longtime Monroe resident, she'd been busy in recent weeks preparing to relocate to Rifton. She had little practice time.

I shot a 266, which is lower than the average for my (expert) classification, she said, hich starts at 90 percent of 270 (out of 300).

Pallak, an accountant, is among the MPRA's best pistol shooters. She also is the only woman who competes in club matches. Seven of the club's 168 members are women.

The sport doesn't attract many women, according to Pallak, who also competes at the Empire State Games, in the Orange and Ulster County pistol leagues and out-of-state tournaments. She estimated less than 10 women competed in the state indoor championship in March. She said about 10 women competed in the Orange County Pistol League's 2000-01 season.

She is the OCPL president.

I think a lot of women get a firearm because they want to have one for personal protection, she said. So they come, they learn how to handle it, and that's as far as their interests go.

Pallak has been competing since 1993, around the time she joined the MPRA.

If a woman starts to come around, I think she will find that other shooters, both male and female, are very supportive, Pallak said. There is no talking down because of being a woman.

