



www.westernclaytargetnews.com

On Target Publishing
 P.O. Box 150
 Dorena, OR 97434
 541-946-1718
 FAX 541-946-1305
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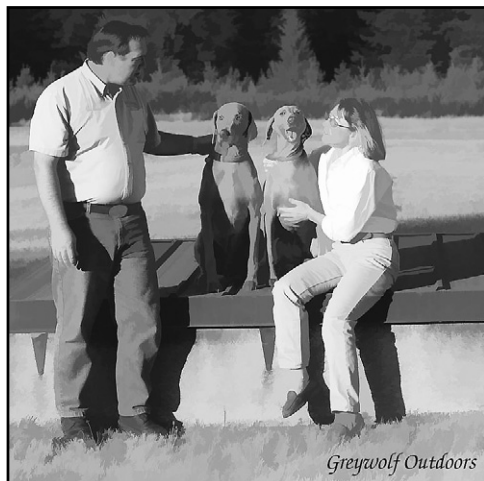
PUBLISHED MONTHLY

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The Center of the Shooting Universe



Since I first began shooting trap, I've heard this mantra chanted by various people over the years. "You've got to give something back to the shooters." You may have heard it, too. It means that gun clubs or the people who put on shooting events need to really dig deep and provide an exceptional incentive for shooters to show up, with the idea being that the shooter is the center of the shooting universe. After all, they are the people shelling out their money, and they need to be taken care of handsomely, at least the small percentage of them that actually win.

I may have bought into that concept early in my career, but as I've gotten older I've realized that the shooter is not the center of the shooting universe. The true center of that universe is the gun club.

Gun clubs are where shooters gather and practice their hobby, where they tell stories and socialize. Where they blow off a little steam and try to get better at something they enjoy. Gun clubs are where shooters get away from the grind of the job or household chores, where they volunteer their time for the betterment of the club and the people who visit, where they try to make something better that they hope will last long after they are gone. Gun clubs are the places where competitions are staged so shooters can become champions and shooting associations can exist to record their feats.

Without a gun club, the shooter becomes a guy watching sports on TV who happens to have a shotgun in the closet, a fisherman because there's no place to shoot, or a bird hunter confined to a season, shooting a few weeks a year. It's a little hard to envision a group of Perazzi and Krieghoff owners up on a landing blasting away at a box of hand-thrown targets. Gun clubs turn a shotgun owner into a recreational shooter and a competitor.

All it takes for a gun club to flourish is a large group of people doing an endless amount of planning and work, yet the vast majority of any club's members are not engaged in their club in any meaningful way. Maybe it's time for all shooters to acknowledge the true center of the shooting universe. Maybe its time to ask how you could lend a hand at your gun club. "You ought to give something back to your gun club."

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 Back issues may be purchased for \$5.00 each (postage included), subject to their availability.
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On Target (USPS 7-549) is published monthly at 37196 Row River Road Dorena, OR 97434
 Periodicals postage paid at Dorena, OR 97434

POSTMASTER
 Mail address changes to ON TARGET
 P.O. Box 150
 Dorena, OR 97434

ON THE COVER:

Hood River's Rick Kobayashi is in perpetual motion the weekend of his club's Icicle Shoot. From greeting to cashiering, to lighting the charcoal and shooting, he is like the energizer bunny, he never stops.

Famous for his game shooting prowess, the "little gambler" was a top Junior trapshooter in his youth and later developed a passion for live birds, helice, or you name the game. The more challenging the better and a little side wager just makes it all the more interesting.

He is also famous for his infectious personality. Rick is just plain fun to be around. The Icicle Shoot, now in it's 17th year is party central, with great food and better story telling. It would be impossible to go and not have a good time.

Photo by Wendy Guernsey