

our sports: SHOOTING

THE BEST LITTLE SPORTSMAN CLUB IN TEXAS TURNS 60

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
STEVEN SCHILLIO



Allycenn Elliott, Tarleton
State University Rifle Team

A great Texas tradition is turning 60 but it still seems to be the best kept secret in "The Lone Star State."

You can find it just a short drive from Weatherford to Poolville in northwestern Parker County. It's a place of tranquility for those that love the shooting sports.

With the population of Parker County at 121,000, less than one-tenth of a percent of the community are members.

The Parker County Sportsman Club, a private, non-profit organization, 501 (c)(7), incorporated in 1956, with four officers and eight directors volunteering for the club, is a place that offers fine rifle, pistol and shotgun ranges, all designed with safety first in mind.

Some early members that are still active and have lifetime memberships awarded to them are Joe Pennington and George Mathis. They are veteran, tireless service members

The PCSC consists of six shooting ranges for shotgun, pistol, and rifle engagement. A new 'reactive steel' pistol Range G is under construction scheduled for a fall 2016 launch. The PCSC offers exceptional rifle, pistol, and shotgun ranges for the member's enjoyment and their continuous improvement of shooting skills; from beginners' youth shooting instructions to accomplished firearm collectors, competitors, and seasoned sporting ladies and gentlemen.

There is also a clubhouse and activities building. With shooting events and swap meets throughout the year there is always something going on.

Ron Woods, part of the management team at PCSC said, "The purpose of Parker County Sportsman Club has been, for 60 years, is to allow citizens to become part of the club, everyone is pretty much a co-owner, an honorary range safety officer, to enjoy the shooting sports for pistols, rifles, shotguns, and also they may invest in a guest badge, of course they are responsible for their guests.

"We have an excellent board of directors, officers and a lot of great, great volunteers. I serve as a co-manager along with Henry Harwood, and we coordinate and



Ron Woods and Dr. George Eichenberg

kind of 'herd the cats' as they say. We normally run about 1,000 to 1,100 members per year," Woods said.

"We are very involved with the Texas 4-H Club, the Civilian Marksmanship Program, (CMP) and very involved with offering individuals young and old to compete in our Service Rifle Group matches, we have eleven per year. We have 11 matches per year, all varying with the exception of what we had today (9-17-16), a sanctioned regional CMP match, where the rules are fairly strict, and the calibers and rifles shot within up to seven divisions."

The PCSC is a proud affiliate club of the Civilian Marksmanship Program. The CMP is a national organization dedicated to training and educating U.S. citizens in responsible uses of firearms and air guns through gun safety training, marksmanship training, and local, regional, and national competitions. The CMP is a federally chartered 501(c)(3) corporation that places its highest priority on serving youth through gun safety and marksmanship activities that encourage personal character growth and

life skills.

The PCSC Service Rifle Group (SRG) schedules three CMP sanctioned rifle competitions each year, with marksmen and sharp-shooting ladies traveling hundreds of miles to participate in the events. The Tarleton State University Rifle Team, under the direction of Dr. George Eichenberg, is a traditional 'force to be reckoned with' when attending and participating from Stephenville, Texas.

Eichenberg is a Professor of Criminal Justice, Coach and Faculty Advisor and sponsor of the Tarleton State University Rifle Team.

A former law enforcement officer, Eichenberg is now in his eleventh year of involvement with the Tarleton State University Rifle Team.

"I have shot in competitions for a number of years and I saw the opportunity of working closely with students to build interest in the shooting sports to develop safety habits to develop strong leadership. The best part of the team for me is being able to work with the students on a one-to-one basis, teaching them the ideas of leadership, the American tradition of marksmanship, concentration. I

have found that over the years the students I have on the rifle team are amongst the finest men and women we have on the campus, they're just really good people overall."

Woods is also involved with Tarleton State University.

"I work pro-bono with Tarleton as "Associate Director of Training" for the rifle team," Woods said. "We meet at TacPro, which is owned by Bill Davidson, outside of Mingus, because it is convenient for the Tarleton team. We meet with the team, we work with the young people on Friday afternoons to teach them range safety, maintenance, everything required to be competitive in the Service Rifle Division, and each spring in April at the large regional Civilian Marksmanship Program competitions north of Oklahoma City at Oklahoma City Gun Club, we always take two or three of our finest shooters who want to participate.

"It is a non-college affiliated college rifle team with Tarleton, although it is called the Tarleton State University Rifle Team, we draw from their students who want to participate. The team itself is self-funding. We pay for our ammunition and our firearms through the NRA, Friends of NRA Foundation and other grants that we apply for."

Three Tarleton State University Rifle Team members participated in the CMP match in September and told why they got involved in the shooting sports.

Allycenn Elliott, from Comanche, said, "I got into shooting 'cause my dad is in law enforcement, and it's one of those bonding things. It's one of those relaxing things to do. There's not a better way to wake up on a Saturday. "

Ryan Hussey, the newest member of the Tarleton team said, "I've been shooting for a little over six years. I got into it with my dad. He started me out with shotguns and slowly moved into rifles as I got older and got into deer hunting more. I just really like the excitement of it, the challenge, trying to push yourself to make yourself better. The constant improving that comes along with the practice that is involved with this



Ronnie Harms of Lone Star Guns Gallery and Gear participating in the 4-H Clay Shoot

sport."

Bailey Russell, from central California, told how she got involved with shooting.

"I got into it," Russell said, "I'm from California. I got here not knowing anybody, I've shot my whole life, but not competitively, so I looked up all the organizations at the school and found the rifle team and went and interviewed with Dr. Eichenberg and it's been love ever since. "

What she likes best about shooting is "the competitiveness, but also the personal competitiveness. You're not only competing with other people for pens or little awards or prizes, you're competing with yourself, getting better scores and better scores every time, and knowing what condi-

tions those scores are under."

Shooting also goes with Russell's roots.

"My mother is from Texas" Russell said, "and she brainwashed me in Texas, southern tradition, and it was always a dream to come here. And I'm living my dream."

In addition to the aforementioned three annual sanctioned CMP matches, *PCSC Service Rifle Group* (SRG) competitions are scheduled to be inclusive of all functional and safe rifles from throughout the world. Authentic WWI and WWII restored military service rifles originally serving from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, India, Germany, Japan, Russia, Sweden, and the United States compete in various competi-



Civilian Marksmanship Program prone position shooting

tions for Certificates of Award and bragging rights while honoring these 'Old Soldiers' that served their specific militaries in the past.

Modern military service rifles from the Korean and Vietnam eras, as well as Iraqi and Afghanistan conflicts compete during various scheduled SRG matches. A very popular event is the annual *Vintage 'Two-Man Sniper Team' Match*. This competition involves shooting authentic WWII sniper rifles and their commercial military replicas at long distance for score during a timed 'window-of-fire'. Another is the 'Open Division Sniper Match' allowing participation of any rifle caliber center-fire cartridge up to .338 LAPUA (No .50 BMG), any optic, and any bi-pod or bag rest configuration, with timed fire in the prone position from a shooting mat. Annual SRG match events are opened to the public for participation. Go to www.parkersportsman.com.

com for monthly SRG events and match specifics and descriptions.

The PCSC is active in *Texas 4-H Shooting Sports* programs and training. Participation in *4-H Shooting Sports* activities prepares Texas youth to meet the challenges of childhood adolescence through young adulthood. Execution of a progressive series of proven continuous education experiences focusing on the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) of the individual youths, the *PCSC 4-H Shooting Sports* commitment helps enhance life skills and develop social, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies throughout each stage of their personal development.

Woods said, "As of this month we have 1,030 members. We're very comfortable. If we have more we have the matrix and the association and the orientation and the safety officers to be able to generally handle

up to 1,300-1,400 members. We saw a small dip this last year because we had so many people that were involved in the oil and gas industry move on."

Financially the club is stable, because they watch their pennies. Of the \$190 annual fee to join, \$100 goes to an initiation fee, the rest is for that member joining, plus his spouse and any children under age 18 years of age living with him.

After getting to know us and interacting in a few events the new members are allowed to invest \$40 in a guest badge

"Again, for any organization, profit or non-profit, dealing with shotguns, pistols or rifles, even high-powered rifles, to survive 60 years in our society, that's pretty swell. The guys prior to me have done a great, great job. We're just trying to take it from good to great," Woods said.

Henry Harwood, PCSC Manager,



was instrumental in building the berms on the shooting ranges, clubhouse and restrooms and a maintenance building to build the target frames, and also the general-purpose building.

"We have swap meets in there, the 4-H Club shoots in there with air rifles," Harwood said. "For the kids, it teaches them safety, gun handling, sportsmanship and basically cooperation amongst themselves."

Chuck Garrett joined PCSC in 2000 and got more involved with the board of directors.

He took a break from it for about five years, got asked to come back and has been VP, and Secretary for the last year.

"Here you have freedom, but with responsibility, to shoot your guns and practicing the second amendment," Garrett said.

"This club has grown from about 300 members to over 1,000 in the time I've been involved in it. It's a good place to come and not be watched over. You are responsible for your own actions, and yet we are all 'safety officers' out here. It's the members duty to follow the rules but also to

watch and take care to make sure everyone else is safe also. That's been a working situation since 1956. We've got some youngsters that are being taught safety through the 4-H program that we have nurtured along for probably 10 years now."

To support and re-introduce the community to the PCSC, the board facilitates and manages five *Firearm Swap Meets* annually in the air-conditioned and heated 3200 square-foot PCSC Event Hall. Providing our PCSC members, non-members, local sportsman, and independent sellers with a 'one day only - 50 table venue' continues to be a local activity favorite and one of just a very few PCSC venues opened to the general public. Sales table rentals are just \$10 each for the Saturday-Only event, allowing our PCSC *Swap Meet* participants an affordable opportunity to buy, sell, or trade their collectables or merchandise. A *Firearm Swap Meet* schedule is available on our website, as well, with October 15th and December 3rd as final event dates for 2016.

With a forward-thinking board and solid plans for the future, PCSC won't be a secret much longer. 🍅



Tarleton State University Rifle Team shooters.
L-R: Allycenn Elliott, Ryan Hussey, Bailey Russell

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