



by Marshall R. Williams

The Judge and the Major had enjoyed an abbreviated morning of ALOOF shooting, one round of skeet and one of 5-Stand. The other members of the Order had begged off, although ostensibly for different reasons: Sonny was fishing with a friend, Topper had a gardening project and Grundoon had a family gathering. Nevertheless, the limited availability and increased cost of ammunition did not encourage attendance.

The Order always shot skeet first in the Saturday morning liturgy because the old men believed skeet helped to smooth out one's swing and visualize one's leads. Both of these helped with the other games and, based on skeet's reminders of these fundamentals, the Order usually first shot two rounds of skeet.

Since the shortage of ammunition had its effect on their practice, the round-table question of how to get in more practice dominated the two old men's conversation. As they drank their second cup of good strong ALOOF coffee and contemplated the empty seats around the ALOOF table, the Major thumbed through the latest copy of *Shotgun Sports* magazine and noted an ad for "The Ultimate Practice Shooting System." Showing it to the Judge, he said, "I wonder what this 'system' does."

Looking at the ad, the old man said, "It appears to use lasers to simulate shooting a gun. You stick a laser in the muzzle of your gun, it shines a dot on the wall, and you swing and pull the trigger to show where you shot. There's something that projects a moving laser dot on the wall so you can track and shoot a moving target, too."

"Do you think it would work?" asked the Major.

"Yes," replied the Judge. "It reminds me of a simpler idea using flashlights. The flashlight 'sorta' worked, but the flashlight rarely aligns with the gun barrel, the light is always on, and the beam is wide, so you can't tell much. These laser devices might solve all those problems. Let's look at the website and see what it says."

The Ultimate Practice Shooting System website was a professional production and very informative. There was an excellent video showing how the devices worked and a listing of the available options. After a little study, the Judge said, "The basic device is called a LaserShooter. It mounts in the muzzle, is self-centering, can be adjusted and has a trigger switch. The basic model uses a red laser or a green laser at extra cost. It comes with one

gauge adapter, but you can buy adapters for all the popular gauges."

Reading further, the Judge said, "The LaserShooter allows you to point your gun to track the lines made by the corners of the walls and ceiling and see just how smooth or jerky your swing is. Tracking the lines where the wall meets the ceiling is how I learned to pull a trigger without stopping my gun. That was a long time ago. The LaserShooter improves on the idea."

"If it shows when you stop your gun, old rifle shooters like Grundoon certainly could benefit," said the Major.

The Judge added, "It also can be used to determine whether a shooter's stock fits him. You mount your gun, aim at a spot and see whether the laser hits where you are looking."

"How does it throw a target? What's the thing that projects a moving dot on the wall?" asked the Major.

"That part is called a LaserPro," replied the Judge. "According to the ad, it can project a single dot or two dots that will travel across your wall. It says you can control the speed and the width of its travel. The picture shows a box with adjustment buttons, and the price is \$385. The ad says you can buy two and throw real doubles."

The whole Order gathered for the "grand opening" of the box containing "The Ultimate Practice Shooting System."

Looking farther down the webpage, the Major said, "Look, here's a wobbler that makes the LaserPro oscillate side to side so the targets look like a wobble trap threw them."

The Judge added, "And here's a huge banner with a skeet and trap range on it. It's nine feet wide and four and a half feet high. What a background for skeet and trapshooters! Bit pricy at \$370. Maybe I can chalk an outline on the garage wall to see whether we need one."

"The website says the ideal way to really groove your mount and swing is to practice it 10,000 times," said the Major, "and practicing for 10 to 15 minutes a day can give you as many as 200 mounts. That's eight rounds of skeet at no cost. That would save a lot of money."

"And I bet that would improve your shooting from the new wheelchair," replied the Judge.

"How much does a system cost?" asked the Major.

"Lemme see," said the Judge. "The red LaserShooter costs \$159 in a single gauge, but the green laser costs \$100 more. I wonder why."

"Green lasers must cost more," replied the Major.

"Should we buy adapters?" asked the Judge. "We have a lot of different gauges."

"I think we ought to start with just the 12 gauge," replied the Major. "If we like it, we could buy adapters later."

The Judge looked through the catalog pages, scribbled some numbers on a scrap of paper and said, "The whole thing including the wobbler and the huge banner could run into quite a bit, but it looks like our best buy would be a package with a red LaserShooter, just one gauge adapter and a LaserPro. That package costs \$498. We could buy one, try it and see what we think. And the laser modules have a lifetime guarantee."

"It's a bit pricy," said the Major, "but if the system works, what we save in rounds of skeet will quickly pay for it. Do you want to go halves?"

"Okay," said the Judge. Pulling out his cell phone and charge card, he punched in some numbers, punched in some more numbers and three minutes later said, "It will be here Wednesday."

Wednesday evening meetings at the Judge house were nearly as liturgical as their Saturday morning sessions, and the whole Order gathered for the "grand opening" of the cardboard box containing "The Ultimate Practice Shooting System."

As the old men arrived, the Judge said, "Let's sit at the dining room table. It offers everybody a better view and more room than my cluttered reloading room."

Everyone sat down, and the Judge carefully slit the packing tape. The cardboard box yielded a nice black, plastic protective case containing all the parts of the basic package and a large, thorough and well-illustrated instruction booklet.

Among the accessories was a bull's-eye target with lines radiating from its center like the points of a compass. Each segment was labeled to show the stock faults that cause an improperly stocked gun to pattern in that direction. The Judge used cellophane tape to attach the target to the wall at eye level. Next, he placed the LaserShooter in the muzzle of the ancient 870 he called his "Old Friend," attached the little ring to his trigger finger, pointed at the bull's-eye and "fired" the gun. The laser dot was dead-on. The Order had seen the Judge bust thousands of targets with his "Old Friend," so this did not surprise anyone.

Then pointing the gun at the corner of the ceiling, he tracked the line it made with the wall all the way to the opposite corner. As he swung along the line, he repeatedly pulled the electronic trigger and the little laser dot appeared to move smoothly along the line.

Then the others took turns tracking the ceiling and watching the red dot pop up and move a little along the line. When Grundoon tried it, the little dot did not continue smoothly, and he had an epiphany, "I do stop my gun!"

"You can overcome that with practice," said the Major. "Ten thousand repetitions ought to do it."

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"That works great," said the Judge. The members murmured their agreement, so the Judge set aside his "Old Friend," and turned on the LaserPro and fiddled with the knobs a bit to see what each one did.

One wall of the dining room had a large mural of a pastoral scene, and the Judge said, "The mural isn't a skeet and trap field, but it should give us some perspective. Let's try the LaserPro on that."

The old man aimed the LaserPro at the mural and turned it on. Sure enough, the little dot appeared and moved left to right across the scene. By adjusting the knob, the old man had it traveling on the wall about where he wanted it. Then he adjusted the knob, and the dot reversed itself and started going right to left.

The Major tried the Judge's "Old Friend" from his seated position and declared, "It almost exactly traces the path of skeet targets."

"And you shoot high when you sit in your 'war wagon,'" said the Judge.

Then the Judge pointed the LaserPro at the corner of the wall, and the laser dot made a sharp turn around the corner. Sonny said, "Why that looks like a dove."

"What happens if you point it straight up?" asked Topper. "Maybe like a high duck crossing or a high incomer." The Judge aimed the LaserPro at the ceiling, and by rotating his angle, the dot

tracked like a high-crossing duck or a high incomer.

"I can't hold my gun and the LaserPro," said the Judge.

Grundoon spotted a little white box in the carrying case and said, "Here's a mini tripod." Removing it from its box, he said, "It can sit on the table, and it has a ball mount on the top. You can point the LaserPro in any direction, straight ahead, straight up or even sideways to make a trap target."

Looking at the controls on the LaserPro, the Major said, "Wow! This thing has a microphone. You can make it throw a target when you yell 'pull!'" The little assemblage tried that, and it worked as well as a trapper pressing a button. No, it worked better. A human trapper could be late or even early, but not the LaserPro.

The old men liked the new shooting system, so the question was how they could share it. The Major, who had a sweet tooth, suggested they meet at the Judges' every night to practice.

Mrs. Judge had been following the proceedings from her kitchen and said, "If you do, you will have to bring your own desserts."

That made the old men consider a plan to pass it around on a weekly rotation, but the consensus was that one week on and four weeks off was inadequate for the needs of the Order. The matter finally

was resolved when Sonny, Topper and Grundoon agreed to buy a second one to share.

That caused the Major to observe, "With two LaserPros, we can throw crossing doubles just like real skeet."

"I foresee improvement in our shooting," said the Judge. **SS**

Editor's note: For more information on the "Ultimate Practice Shooting System", see the Robert Louis Co. ad on this page or visit the store section at www.shotgunsportsmagazine.com.

A retired bureaucrat, Marshall Williams is what he calls "an old fart." He first fired a shotgun in 1947, a 12-gauge Browning Auto, when he was 7 years old. Even at that tender age, he exercised the discreet judgment which would guide many of his later ballistic decisions: Given a choice between red and green shells, he chose green because they "looked less dangerous." He hit the paper target and saved the empty as a souvenir, and guns and shooting have been his passion ever since. Marshall believes every shot should be a learning experience. ALOOF is an imaginary club made up of dear friends who exhibit all the Judge's own foibles, which he tries to purge and correct by writing it all down as if someone else is making the mistakes. The Judge is a bit crotchety, but the other members are all splendid people, men of good will, who make Saturday mornings a pleasure when they raise a cup of good, strong ALOOF coffee to toast shotgunners everywhere. The first ALOOF appeared in *Shotgun Sports* in May of 2000, and many of those are available as back issues by calling (800) 676-8920. The Judge and the other members of ALOOF can be contacted at aloofinc@hotmail.com.

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