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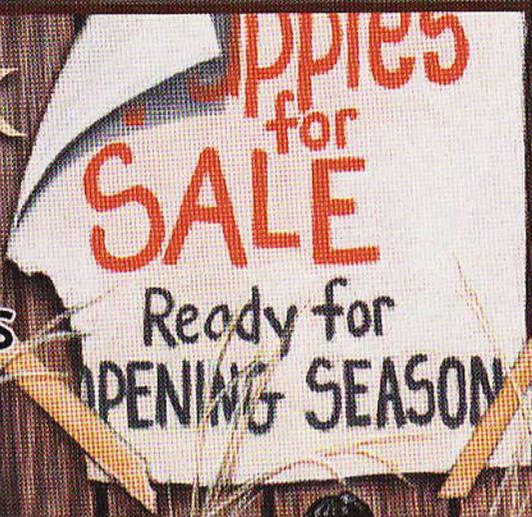
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# LOOK WHO'S TALKING

by Connie Mako Miller

**T**ake it or leave it. Following their first encounter of the clay-bird kind after punching out a 22x25, not many champion shooters voice that "take it or leave it," less-than-enthusiastic indifference to trapshooting. Surprisingly, Olympian and All-American trapshooter Paul Shaw did! Fortunately, he decided not to leave and gave trap a second shot (so to speak), taking away trophies and leaving only shattered targets and empty hulls.

Paul is a Canadian living in Collingwood, Ontario, which is on the Georgian Bay of Lake Huron, about a 90-mile drive north of Toronto. Winters are double digits below-zero cold and drives to the range are often triple-digit (kilometers) long. To be a shooter in Paul's area of Canada, you have to be determined!

Actually, determined is the word Paul's wife Beverley used when describing her talented husband. Determination has taken Paul around the globe, across the States and into the winner's circle while competing in International Bunker Trap, International Doubles Trap and ATA American-style trap. His first registered Ducks Unlimited shoot was in 1979 shooting a ribless Remington semiauto field gun. That led to serious ATA trap beginning in 1981. In 1986, he won a place on the Canadian International Bunker team. Between 1986 and 2003, Paul competed in Pan American Games, World Cups, Canadian Nationals and the 1996 Olympics. Over the decades, he has shot several versions of trap. He was named to the ATA All-American Teams in 1991, 2000-2003, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The other years his eyes were trained on bunkers. Because of that, minimum targets and other requirements weren't completed, which made him ineligible for the All-Americans Teams. As Paul noted, however, even if he had been shooting lots of ATA trap, there is never any guarantee he would shoot well enough to earn the points to make the All-American Team because it is always tough.

My burning question was: Does ATA trap seem easy compared to Bunker? To my surprise, Paul didn't

MEET:

## Paul Shaw

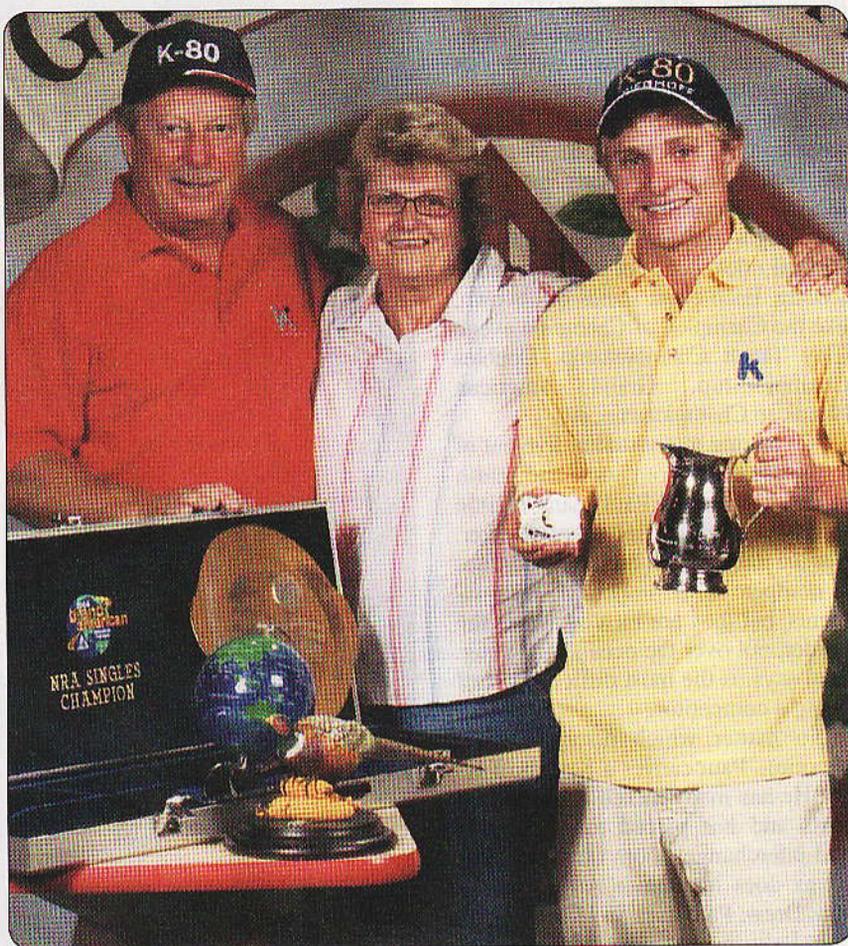


Photo by M. Alan Lovelace

*Paul, wife Beverley and son Drew display a few trophies won at the 2006 Grand American.*

give me an immediate "Why yes, American-style trap is easier." Instead, he said there are "degrees of difficulty." Paul pointed out targets in ATA trap don't travel as fast and the angles are not as severe as International Trap, but you have to break a perfect score to be competitive, a 200x200 to win in Singles 16-yard competitions. At the International events, misses are sometimes seen within the winning scores. Often competitors in contention will have lost a bird or even several. Because of the differences between the two games, Paul doesn't believe one is easier than the other.

International Bunker shooting, Paul said, has given him a great deal of discipline, along with coordination and good reaction time. He feels Bunker has probably been an overall help with his ATA shooting. Regularly, he shot both disciplines. I would have thought

the unique timing and varied rhythms of International Trap would require strong thought and extra practice to then shoot ATA trap. For Paul, shooting a couple rounds puts him back into whichever discipline he is shooting; however, he warned when you try to shoot both at the same time, you're probably not as good at either as you might be if you focused on one.

As far as enjoyment, for Paul, ATA trap wins out slightly over International Trap for several reasons. One is the language barrier on the International fields. Paul speaks English and a little French, but with so many different nationalities all speaking their own languages in International events, striking up a conversation is difficult at best. On the other hand, the Olympian joked, "When someone misses the target, you might not understand what they're saying, but you understand what they

mean!" Ah yes, the universal language of lost targets.

Another factor of International shooting Paul found different was, "In International Bunker everything is based upon the one competition." If an International shooter has a bad day or round, the entire competition is blown, for it is based on cumulative scores, whereas the Grand American, for example, with 10 days of events, has many separate competitions and, except for the High-Over-All and High-All-Around titles, does not use cumulative scoring. Each event stands on its own, like the Champion of Champion event, Clay Target Championship, Doubles Championship, Grand American Handicap Championship, etc.

Not having to constantly live out of a suitcase away from home and hearth is another reason Paul leans a little toward American trap over Bunker. Yes, he has to travel hundreds of miles to compete in the major ATA tournaments, but they are located across the border, not over the ocean. Traveling, Paul says, is the most difficult part of being a competitor.

No matter which discipline he's shooting, Paul carries a Krieghoff K-80. He has many mixed and matched parts and has pieced together guns and interchanges them fairly regularly, as does his Junior All-American son, Drew. Paul uses an Unsingle 34" barrel during the Handicap tournaments. For Singles and Doubles, 30" barrels are attached to a Fajen stock. Nothing is written in stone as far as configurations of the guns, however; he may change stocks, barrels and



*Paul shares the podium with Dan Carlisle and Ken Blasi at the 1987 Pan American Games in Indianapolis.*



*Paul with former World Champion Alex Assinoff of the USSR in 1990.*

receivers at will. There's no custom-made stock, either. Paul says he has always conformed to or contorted himself to the gun.

Paul is not a stickler for a specific ammo and feels there is no one piece of equipment that has pushed him to the podiums of success. He's a self-taught and self-sponsored shooter. Seldom do his guns get completely disassembled for a thorough cleaning, but he is religious about wiping them down after shooting. Let's see, no special brand of ammo, no formal lessons, no custom stock and no fastidious gun scrubbing — with those traits, Paul, for the most part, defies all the recognized components for winning scores, yet he's out there crushing targets (he had a Singles

## Paul Shaw

### Olympic & ATA Trap Star

**Place of birth:** Collingwood, Ontario, Canada

**Home:** Collingwood, Ontario

**Age:** 58

**Occupation:** A lawyer with Shaw, McLellan & Ironside

**Prior occupation:** I was a teacher for three years while working on my undergrad degree.

**First job:** I worked on the farm where I grew up from a very early age right through to when I left to go teach.

**Weirdest job:** Between years at the university, I traveled in Canada and spent the summers playing soccer and working for a couple companies. One was a feed company, where I would bag and cart feed for animals all over the factory. That was a tough job, but in the evenings I worked for what was called "The Group for Good Government." We would go out and talk to people about political issues. I remember one time a lady chased a colleague down the hall with a canel! But there's probably nothing weirder than practicing law; you see everything!

**FAVORITE:**

**TV show:** The History and Discovery channels and *Report on Business*

**Italian dish:** Spaghetti

**Car:** I have a little 1975 Mercedes sports car that is a favorite. It is in need of some repair, so I haven't driven it for awhile, unfortunately.

**Number:** 5

**Shotgun shells:** Any and all brands — 3-dram loads for Singles; handicap loads for yardage; and 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -dram 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ s or 8s for the first shot of Doubles and a heavy 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  load for the second shot.

**Movie:** *Gone With the Wind*

**Actor:** Morgan Freeman

**Shotgun game:** ATA-style trap and some Bunker

**Pet:** Chester, a 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ -year-old yellow dog.

**Hobbies:** I hunt a little and like duck, pheasant and goose hunting. I like to go trout fishing. I haven't had much chance to do these things over the years, but I do a little white-tail deer hunting. I got a large buck last fall just before he got me! I enjoy chess and card playing. Soccer, hockey, curling and baseball are some of the sports I used to be active in.

**Adult beverage:** Decaffeinated Diet Pepsi

**The one piece of equipment that has helped better your scores:** There isn't really one piece of equipment that has helped better my scores; however, a reliable shotgun and good ammunition are key to bettering scores.

**Quality you possess:** You would probably have to ask others about that. My wife tells me it's "determination."

**Who you most admire:** I can't say as I admire any one person in particular, but I take my hat off to not just the people who do well but all the people who take the time to participate. There are a lot of people out there who, if they had the time, could make the All-American Team (they have the ability). I am fortunate in the type of job I have that I am able to make 7-10 competitions and take my work with me. I admire people who are able to work, raise a family, contribute to the community and things like that and still shoot and do well. No disrespect to the full-time shooters, but maybe we need a professional class that makes their livelihood from nothing but shooting. They serve a pretty significant purpose as role models, but, for the most part, are in a class of their own.

**The craziest thing you did in high school:** I used to do some dumb things. A smoke bomb in the girl's washroom was one of them.

**The smartest thing you've done:** My wife says it is marrying her.

**The stupidest thing you've done:** I've done so many stupid things over the years, it would be hard to grade them.

**Your personal motto:** You get out of life what you put into it. The harder I work, the luckier I am.

**Your greatest extravagance:** Trapshooting!

**If you won the lottery:** It depends on the lottery amount. I wouldn't change my lifestyle much, maybe make things a little bit easier here or there. If it enabled me to have additional time where I wouldn't have to work, I'd want to involve myself with some charitable pursuits that would make a contribution to society.

**Your utter misery:** Having to conduct a court case when a big trapshoot is taking place.

**Your biggest regret:** I have a great ability sometimes to go long on a stock that is motor-ing south and vice-versa but, like trapshooting, it is the challenges that keep one's interest.

**Your greatest fear:** Canadian government bureaucracy and encroachment into firearm ownership. We have no Second Amendment; we have no guaranteed property rights. Death and taxes are guaranteed.

**Changes to trap you would like to see:** Targets are tough, but maybe what they should do is make them tougher. That's going to discourage a lot of people who like to have big scores, but I think the tougher the targets are, the easier it is to distinguish between the best shooters and otherwise. In pristine conditions, you will often have people in many different classes, down to B and even C Class, with 100 straights. That doesn't separate many people, does it? I'm not saying the targets aren't tough enough; I find them pretty tough the way it is, but maybe they should consider making them a little bit tougher — wider angles, faster speeds. I think they do a pretty good job with the classes and yardage the way they are.

average of 99.18% for 7,200 targets in 2006). Sort of makes you want to rethink everything you thought to be true about trapshooting, doesn't it?

Come to think of it, it might be

thinking (and bundles of talent) that have put Paul into the upper levels of trap. He self-assesses his shooting as he goes along and tries to avoid waiting for a miss to happen before

## MEET: Paul Shaw

correcting a potential problem. For example, if he's not hitting a target the way he thinks he should have hit it — perhaps hitting the top side — an amendment is made to his approach. Paul explained, "If you can tell, for instance, you are knocking the tops off, you are starting to shoot over them. If you can recognize that and make an adjustment before you actually lose a target, that is what consistency and good scores are all about."

Consistency and good scores were a trademark at last year's Grand American. At the inauguration of the new ATA homegrounds in Sparta,



*At the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Paul enjoyed a little downtime.*

Illinois, Paul took away champion trophies for the Harlan Campbell Jr. Singles, Deborah Ohye Singles and NRA Singles and tied the high score of 98x100 in the Donnie Thornton Handicap, ultimately winning third place. On the 2,200 targets of the White Flyer 2200 Championship, Paul came in fifth overall, breaking a 2,142. It was a grand Grand for the Shaw family, as 19-year-old Drew was the Junior Champion of Champions and tied the champion of the Patrick McCarthy Doubles event by shooting 100x100 and winning the Junior trophy.

To prepare for major competitions like the Grand American, Paul tries to

## MEET: Paul Shaw

get his work caught up as best he can so he doesn't have distractions while he's shooting. "I try to work and plan ahead," he told me. Paul is able to complete most of the pressing work at his office and, in this age of computers, faxes and cell phones, takes along catch-up work to finish between trap events. The work comes from his partnership in the law firm of Shaw, McLellan and Ironside. Paul is an attorney with a broad base of clients and cases. In many different courts, he handles criminal and murder cases, civil litigation, matrimonial disputes, specialty litigation, corporate law, real estate and business law. These days he can more or less pick and choose which cases interest him.

Essentially it's his job Paul credits for his appointments to the All-American Teams. His work, Paul said, is a real complement to shooting. It affords him the versatility of being able to arrange his schedule so he can travel and compete. At the trap competitions, he locks himself away between rounds in a quiet place to do drafting, research or reading. His work as a lawyer with a large caseload

## MEET: Paul Shaw

takes focus and concentration, which may help him with the concentration and focus needed for successful shooting. Another plus is drafting, research and reading are tasks he sometimes can't find time to do at the office. His work may follow him around, but if it didn't, he wouldn't be able to attend as many competitions because he would be tied to his desk.

It's fortunate Paul's career helps him practice concentrating and focusing, because the winter climate of his home keeps him away from the trap

fields. Except for a bi-weekly winter league, he only competes during part of the year, curtailing his shooting after the Northeastern Grand. Practice comes in the form of tournament targets during the target season, and, of course, those are birds he finds necessary to shoot with serious purpose. Paul believes some shooters spend a great deal of time on practice but don't truly center their attention on the job at hand. That's why he's deliberate about any targets he shoots. "I think you have to expect not to miss. I think it is

one thing to say to yourself, 'I'm not going to miss,' but then you have to be realistic with yourself. Sometimes you are going to miss," Paul said, "but I think you have to have confidence in yourself to know you have the ability to break every single target that comes out. If you don't break it, you should know why you missed it."

In Paul's long trapshooting career, I wondered what tournament or accomplishment meant the most to him. I was not disappointed when Paul answered that making the Canadian Olympic Team was at the top of his list. Shooting his way to a slot on the Olympic Team was the fulfillment of a dream.

The steps to the Olympics were not easy. Paul spoke about when he began shooting Bunker in the late 1980s and the country had to earn quota spots for the Olympics. You couldn't just go to the Olympics; someone in the country had to earn a slot. There were minimum qualifying scores (MQS) and all had to compete for the right to use the slots. In 1987 when he won the quota spot for Canada to qualify for the 1988 Olympics at the Pan American Games in Indianapolis, Paul wasn't able to suc-

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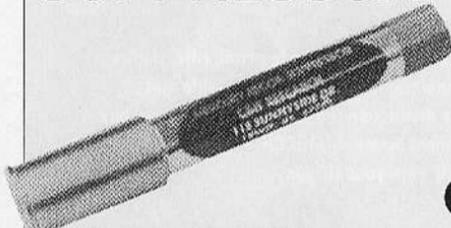
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MEET: **Paul Shaw**

*Paul with his daughter Destiny, who is now in the executive training program at the Hudson's Bay Company in Toronto.*



cessfully defend it and lost his place in the Olympic lineup. In 1996 when they were vying for a spot at the Atlanta Olympics, it was a pretty big ordeal. All those who had MQS in Canada had to compete against each other in Edmonton, Alberta, to trim the field to the top five finishers. Paul made the cut and headed to the next elimination round, the Championship of the Americas held at Wolf Creek in Atlanta in April of 1996. There, the requirement to advance was to be among the highest three shooters. Of the Canadians, Paul finished first, advancing to the World Cup. But he wasn't done yet. The World Cup was just a week or so after the Championship of the Americas. Of the three Canadians, Paul needed a first or second to make the Olympic Team. It was these successions of competitions, what Paul called "batch shoots," that put him on the Olympic Team, making it the most memorable time in his trap-shooting life.

The amazing thing I've found, not only with Paul but with other world competitors as well, is most are quite humble about their accomplishments. They don't want a big hoopla made

over them. Like right now, Paul is probably firing off an e-mail to me protesting I wrote too much about his wins when, in fact, I hardly scratched the surface. At the risk of alienating a fine shooter, I just have to tell you about one more of Paul's accomplishments.

Paul mentioned (more like I dragged it out of him) that while representing Canada, he won the individual Bronze and a team Silver medal at the 1987 Pan Am Games. That clicked with me, so I opened one of my scrapbooks and there was a writeup and picture of Paul on the podium with my shooting hero, Dan Carlisle, and American Ken Blasi at the Pan Am Games! It was ever so cool to have one small glimpse into Paul and Canada's glory by reading Joan Davis' December 1987 *Trap and Field* article. It described the shot-by-shot rounds that led Carlisle to the Gold, Blasi to the Silver and Paul to the Bronze. Going into the extra decider round of 25, Carlisle had scored a 198x200; Paul and Ken Blasi were tied with 197. Can you imagine the pressure of those last 25 targets? Carlisle let one bird, his 7th target, go

to seed. Blasi ended up with a score of 221x225 for the Runner-Up honors, while Paul's 12th and 21st birds were scored lost, giving him a 220 and the Bronze award. I sure would have liked to have been a spectator at that Indianapolis Pan Am! Everyone must have held their breath as each target was thrown, and almost certainly it was so quiet you could hear the wads hit the ground. Exciting stuff!

This month at the Grand American World Trapshooting Championships there will be thousands of wads falling. Somewhere on the 3½ miles of traphouses, there will be Paul, challenging ATA targets under the Illinois clouds with the same focus and concentration he gives his job and his Bunker targets. Join him there and give it your best shot, too, while enjoying trap's biggest event of the year! **SS**

Connie Mako Miller's shooting career began in 1969 with trapshooting lessons at the Winchester Club in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1988, she attained ATA Lady High Handicap Average in Ohio, 8th in the U.S. She was chosen for the NSCA All-American Team two times, four times Michigan State Lady Champ, five times Ohio State Lady Champ and Runner-Up in the NSCA National Champion of Champions in 1993. She began writing for *Shotgun Sports* in March, 1997.