

2016 STATE SERVICE RIFLE CHAMPIONSHIP

NOT JUST IRON SIGHTS ANYMORE!

By Jim O'Connell and Mike Barranco

We had a nice turnout at Coalinga for the California State Service Rifle Championship with nearly 80 competitors. This was the first big match that allowed the use of scopes on the service rifle and competitors are starting to have success with them. There were a few scopes on the line, with people trying out a variety of products.

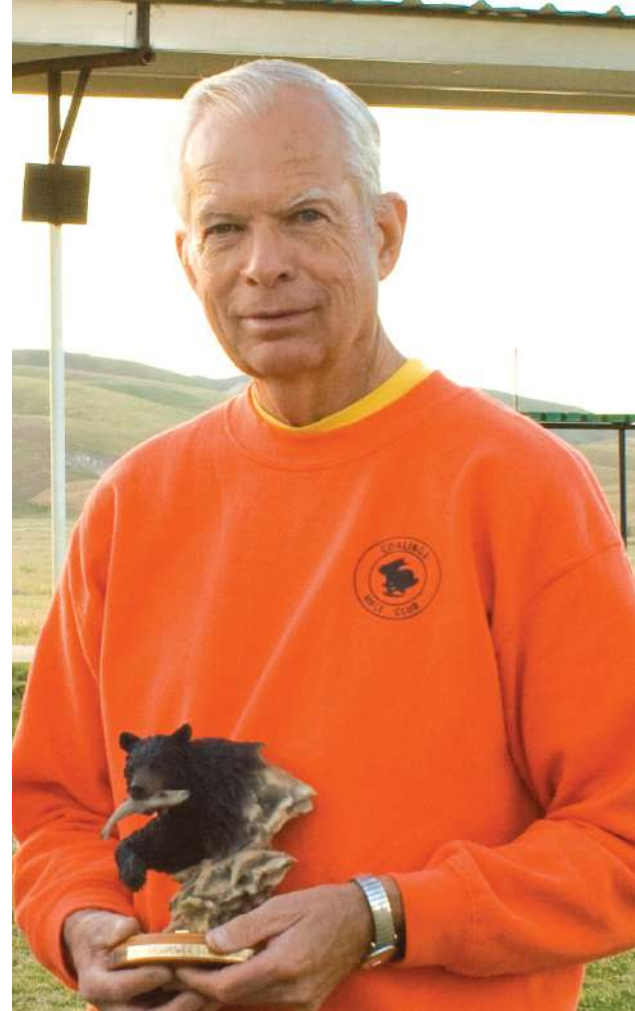
The weekend started with the club match on Friday, a good warm-up with over 50 shooters. The Nye's made their presence known with Scott taking First Marksman – 709-12X and Nathaniel taking First Sharpshooter with a Master score of 760-10X. First Expert went to Brian Maguire, 760-9X. First Master was Johnny Fisher, 783-28X. First High Master was Bob Gill, 783-21X and the match winner was Jim O'Connell, 788-40X. While the latter three shot with scopes this weekend, they're not strangers to high scores with iron sights.

Robert Taylor got off to a good start, as he often does, winning the standing match with a 196-4X. John Milo Train won the sitting rapid with a 200-9X, edging out Fisher and O'Connell by two X's. The prone rapid match went to Morgan Owen with a fine 200-10X; young eyes and iron sights beat the best scope score by five X's. The scopes led the 600-yard match though, with O'Connell at 195-8X and Gill one point behind.

The 2016 California State Service Rifle champion was Jim O'Connell, 789-27X. Jim might be the oldest person to win the service rifle championship (he claims to be at least 35 years old) and the first to win with a scoped rifle. The overall class winners: Marksman – Joyce Van Curen, 710-8X; Sharpshooter – Joe Blacksmith, 739-14X; Expert – Scott Bonivert, 758-15X; Master – Johnny Fisher, 778-22X; and High Master – Bob Gill, 786-32X.

Special awards: High Woman – Joyce Van Curen; High Junior – Forrest Greenwood; High Senior – Dirk Seeley; and High Grand Senior – Jim O'Connell. The big winner was Greenwood, who took home a new White Oak Armament service rifle upper thanks to the generosity of Jim O'Connell.

Sunday was the CMP Excellence in Competition match and our State Trophy Individual Championship. With over 70 shooters in at-





tendance, and 55 non-distinguished competitors, five will receive leg points. Bronze medals went to Justin George, 472-11X; Brian Maguire, 473-5X; and Tim Bengston, 480-9X. The silver leg went to Matt Early, 483-13X. John Bickar, an accomplished pistol shooter, won the gold leg with a 485-8X. Bob Gill posted a 486-15X to win the State Trophy Individual Championship and claim his third Bear Trophy at Coalinga this year.

The bronze leg for Justin George was the last points he needed. The CMP will present Justin with Distinguished Rifleman Badge number 2279 at the National Matches in August. Congratulations to Justin. And congratulations to Jim and Bob for each winning another Bear to add to their collections.

We saw several new shooters this weekend, some new to service rifle and some new to Coalinga. Thanks to all who attended. If you haven't shot one of the state events at Coalinga, you're missing some great matches. Thanks to Jim O'Connell, Dirk Seeley, and all the others who work to put on our state championships.

Top Left: 2016 Service Rifle champion Jim O'Connell.

Top Right: Thanks to a CMP/NRA rules change, for the first time scoped service rifles competed with traditional iron sight service rifles.

Left: Todd Greenwood and his Leupold VX3 scoped service rifle.

Left Inset: Bob Gill, another many-time champion, and 2016 winner of the State Trophy Individual match