

Newsletter

Land of Legend Rifle & Pistol Club

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President – *Jeff Hanger*

Vice Presidents

Rifle– *Doug Schultheis* Pistol– *Morgan Dague* Shotgun- *Paul Gelfer*

Sec/Tres.– *Fred Smith* Newsletter/PR *Larry Holland*

Opening

The range is open!!!! It is time to wipe down that shotgun, clean the dust off the rifle scope, and move the handguns from the gun safe to the range bag. That ammunition you loaded over the winter is not going to shoot itself. Call your friends, load up the car, and prepare to beat the winter blues and spring fever with one shot. If you need more inspiration, check out the website for pictures of green grass and shooting fun.

Skeet Leagues Forming

Organizational meeting for the Monday Night League will be April 30th, with the first scoring shoot scheduled for that afternoon. Contact Rick Redman for further details.

Organizational meeting for the Tuesday Night League will be April 24st with the first scoring shoot scheduled for May 1st. Contact Jeff Hanger for further details. Shooters are encouraged to bring shotguns and ammo to the organizational meeting. The best organization is a little practice.

Trap League Forming

The organizational meeting for the Saturday Morning Trap League is April 28th with the first scoring shoot scheduled for May 5th. Contact Doug Schultheis for further information.

Steel Match Updates

Rick Hupp, our steel match range officer wishes to inform potential participants that holsters will be optional for the matches this year. This eliminates one more excuse for not shooting.

Friends of the NRA

A reminder to everyone that the Friends of the NRA Banquet is coming up April 20th. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at the range or from several club members. Support the NRA as they support us. Grants totaling over \$13,000 were awarded to us over the last two years. The banquet is where that money is raised. The club will have at least one table, so join your friends for a fun evening. Also note that you can join or renew your NRA membership at the range. See Terry Baker or whoever is behind the counter.

Dues

Just a reminder that dues are due by the end of April. You can contact Fred Smith for a membership application. Also remember that NRA membership is required. If you are an NRA member You can mail your \$30 Dues check to:
Fred Smith
1934 Blue Ave.
Zanesville, OH 43701

Jim Sweeney

If you are a pin match or steel match shooter at Dillon you probably know the name Jim Sweeney. Jim frequently makes the trek from Columbus to show the younger guys how it should be done. Beyond his friendly smile and positive attitude there is more to Jim's story than many of us realized. Thanks to John Davis for forwarding this information.

WHAT A PISTOL

Friday, February 16, 2007

Todd Jones

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

NEAL C . LAURON DISPATCH

James Sweeney makes the 2 1 /2-mile walk from his home to his office each work day.

NEAL C . LAURON
DISPATCH

James Sweeney has influenced the lives of athletes as a collegiate coach since 1960. The silhouette is of Ohio State pistol team captain Teresa Meyer.

Feet dangling above the floor, the font of aged wisdom leaned way back in his office chair and punctuated his words about recruiting with laughter that could melt a polar ice cap. "You ought to try to go talk a parent into paying \$30,000 to send a kid here to shoot a pistol," he said, eyes crinkled in amusement.

James Sweeney, 72 years young, laughs often, the sound

always hearty.

His humorous nature encases a treasure trove of tales about a man who has been at Ohio State either as a student-athlete, professor or coach for all but seven of the past 55 years, the past eight as pistol coach.

The fun facts about Sweeney are buried below campus, in the basement of old Converse Hall, in the tiny, windowless office that he and Pat Cherry, the school's rifle coach since 1988, converted from a storage room.

Sweeney, as legend has it, soothes his soul by walking 2½ miles to work nearly every day — and did so Tuesday in that wicked snowstorm — from his home north of campus near Olentangy Boulevard.

He used to get his spare-time thrills by racing hydroplanes. His career of four decades ended in 1994 after he suffered five broken ribs and a punctured lung when his 120-pound boat, chugging across Sunday Lake in Michigan at about 85 mph, flipped over backward.

"You're going to the very limits of stability," he said. "You become part of the machine, hurtling down the raceway. That is such a heady feeling, to be right on the edge of disaster, and sometimes past it."

Now, Sweeney, who is single with four children, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild, settles for having the wind whip through his silver hair by cruising the country on his black Honda Goldwing motorcycle.

"That feeling of power between your knees and your motorcycle mamma's nails diggin' into your belly — what could be better?" he said.

It certainly beats the pounding Sweeney took as an OSU freshman running back in 1952. The native of Lake Milton learned firsthand about the wrath of a fire-breathing football coach, then a no-name in his second season and only later the iconic Woody Hayes.

"I didn't play for Woody; I actually played against him on the scout team," Sweeney said. "He was a formidable opponent, I dare say. We had many bruises on the scout team, but pride, too. I was rendered inoperable."

A shoulder injury ended his football career after one season and sent him into the gymnasium for rehabilitation. Joe Hewlett, the OSU gymnastics coach, asked him to join the team. Intrigued, he agreed.

"The first gymnastics meet I ever saw, I was in," said

Sweeney, who went on to earn four varsity letters and in 1956, as a senior captain, finished ninth nationally on the rings.

The sport became his life. He was assistant gymnastics coach at Ohio State from 1960 through '62 and head coach from 1966 through '77. Between those stints, he was gymnastics coach at Washington State.

Sweeney served as a professor of physical education throughout his head-coaching career, retired as an associate professor in 1994 and continued teaching at OSU with emeritus status until last spring.

"It kept me young, and it gave me a sense of how to keep my feet on the ground in changing times," Sweeney said.

So much changed in those five decades. Ohio State tuition was \$240 per quarter, including fees and books, when Sweeney earned his bachelor's degree in physical education in 1957 (he added a master's in curriculum design.) His classes took place in World War II barracks on campus.

"I was here just as they finished the old Ohio Union, which was the new Ohio Union then," Sweeney said. "I watched them build St. John Arena, and the French Fieldhouse and ice rink complex. I saw the addition

to the gym and aquatics center, which became Larkins Hall."

Minds changed, too, about the acceptance of women's athletics. Sweeney started women's gymnastics at Ohio State as a club sport in the 1960s before the gender-equity rules of Title IX took effect.

While the money and commercialism grew in college sports, Sweeney returned to coaching out of the limelight. He had enjoyed shooting guns for sport since his father taught him to fire a pistol at age 6, so he didn't hesitate to take over as pistol coach on an interim basis in 1986 and '87.

After all, coaching is teaching.

"The ultimate goal of the educator is to prepare them to learn to further educate themselves," Sweeney said.

Ohio State made him permanent pistol coach, a part-time salaried position, in July 1999, and the Buckeyes won the national championship in his first season.

A poster commemorating that achievement hangs above his green metal desk in his simple office, along with plaques and photos of some of his favorite teams and athletes.

"I've had my share of winning, but that wasn't necessary,"

Sweeney said. "It's the celebration of participation. The participation is victory in itself."

His team should keep that in mind today and Saturday while participating in the Midwest Pistol Sectionals at Ohio State with hopes of advancing to the Collegiate Nationals in March.

And the young Buckeyes, who will be on scholarship next season for the first time, should forever remember another lesson taught by their wise old coach.

"I see humor in practically everything," Sweeney said. "I love life so much. Life is a treasure. It's a one-time thing. Love it."

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