



by Marshall R. Williams

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The Judge had set out to enjoy a Saturday morning with the other members of the order. As might be expected, he had come with enough guns for skeet, trap and 5-stand and looked forward to a substantial morning of shooting. However, it was mid-August, the hottest part of the year, and by the end of their first round of skeet, both temperature and humidity had hit ninety. Everyone was sweating. Breathing seemed like work.

The old men simply did not want to stand in the heat and shoot, so after the first round of skeet, they retired to some benches under the shade trees behind the skeet field. Even seated in the shade, they were having trouble keeping comfortable. The Major got a soda from the machine outside the clubhouse, but it just made him hotter and thirstier.

Sonny had the forethought to bring a large thermos of strong, black coffee, suitable in every respect for ALOOF consumption. He passed around paper cups and poured liberally. Sonny's coffee roused the old gents enough they agreed to shoot one more round before seeking the air-conditioned comfort of the clubhouse.

Topper raised the question of what the Order should shoot in an abbreviated session. Normally, they shot two games of skeet, then one each of trap and 5-stand. With a round of skeet behind them, it made sense the second round should be either trap or 5-stand. But which?

Sonny and Tully argued for 5-stand, as they could use their skeet guns and have only one gun to clean when they got home. The Major and Topper actually liked to clean their guns, so they wanted to shoot trap. The Judge never cleaned his guns and did not care what he shot, but he said, "Trap

takes less time, and that means we get out of the heat sooner. Let's shoot trap," and that decided the matter.

Afterwards, the gents hastened to the clubhouse for some of ALOOF's own good, strong coffee. The short morning meant they sat around the table longer than usual and discussions ranged far and wide. Were 8s better than 7½s at 16 yards? Could trap be shot effectively with a 20-gauge gun? And why didn't you see more 16-gauge doubles on skeet fields and sporting clays layouts?

Finally, it was time to do afternoon things. Topper said gardening was out, too hot. He invited the Judge to go pawn shopping. The Judge declined. A nap on the sofa in his air-

"Trap takes less time so we can get out of the heat sooner. Let's shoot that."

conditioned living room sounded like a better choice. The Major said he would accompany Topper, and as he got up, he said, "Same time, same place next week?"

The Judge said, "I have a better idea. It's just too hot and humid here. Let's go to one of the nice sporting clays places up in the mountains. The highlands will be at least ten degrees cooler, and we haven't had an outing in forever."

Everyone agreed to meet at the Judge's house on Saturday morning. They found something appealing about Mrs. Judge's country breakfasts.

However, things turned out differently than planned. Topper had a garden emergency, Tully had a wedding to attend, and Sonny was dragooned into going fishing. Well, "dragooned" is a bit strong, but usually he reserved Saturdays for shotgunning.

Thus, on the appointed morning, only the Major showed up, but he

showed up with verve, vim and an appetite for biscuits, gravy, eggs, sausage and waffles.

The morning was beautiful, all sunshine and light breezes, even the temperature was reasonable. However, the old men had nearly 70 miles to go, mostly in a northerly direction and mostly uphill. As the car ascended the mountains, the Major observed, "Looks like the sky is closing in."

The Judge said, "The sky is closer; we are 2,000 feet higher than when we left home."

The Major said, "Yes, but the clouds are closer. And darker."

The Judge merely said, "Umm."

When they arrived at the range, the sky was indeed close. And dark! And no cars were in the parking lot. As the Judge's head emerged from the door, a strong gust of wind grabbed his hat and sent it flying across the lot. The old man jumped out and ran after it. He finally collared it after a long chase past the first two shooting stations. Then, as he trudged back to the car, lightning struck a giant oak on the far corner of the parking lot, and the heavens opened.

He quickly got back in the car and looked at the Major. The Major looked at the Judge. Then the Major said, "I don't think this trip is going to work out."

The Judge nodded and said, "I saw a sporting goods store with a going-out-of-business sign back at that last crossroads. Let's go see if they have any bargains."

Back at the crossroads, there was a big sign over the door that said "Everything Half Off." Just inside was a table of odds and ends that looked more like a yard sale than sporting goods. The Judge grabbed an aged 8-ounce Pepsi® cola bottle marked a dollar. The Major eyed him askew, but the Judge merely said, "For Mrs. Judge's bottle collection. She will be happy I thought of her, and anytime I can make her happy for 50 cents, it's worth it." The Major agreed.

Then they looked over ammunition. The Major picked up a lonely dusty box of 10-gauge magnum steel-shot loads. These mountains had no likely places for goose shooting, and the price tag suggested it had sat on the shelves a long time. The Judge gave him a quizzical look, and the Major said, "Gift for my nephew. He has a 10-gauge gun and does some waterfowling."

Then the Judge picked up a couple little black-and-white tubes and said, "Glory be!" He said it quietly, though. Then he hollered at the sales clerk, "Are these half price, too?"

The clerk looked at them and said, "Take 'em both for \$25." The Judge quickly paid for his things and scurried to the car. The Major followed shortly and asked, "What were those little tubes you sneaked out with?"

"Savage Four-Tenners, the first .410 insert for 12-gauge guns I ever saw. Came out in about 1963, but I haven't seen any for years."

"You mean," asked the Major, "tubes like Tully uses for skeet?"

"Yep," replied the Judge, "except Tully's are the expensive full-length type that cost hundreds of dollars a pair. Four-Tenners were cheap. In the 1960s, the first model cost just \$7.50. Second models like these cost about \$10. And, unlike a lot of the current tubes, both versions had permanently attached extractors that worked off the shotgun's extractor or ejector."

"What was the difference between the two models?"

"The early ones were solid steel and awfully heavy," explained the Judge. "These have a steel chamber but an aluminum barrel. They are a lot lighter, too, about 5 ounces each.

Savage made them for 16 and 20-gauge guns, too."

The Major took one of the tubes in his hands and said, "They are short, though."

"Yep, just 12" long," said the Judge.

Back home, the weather was still calm and only medium-hot, so the old gents set up the Judge's trap to try out the Four-Tenners.

The Judge lined up the Four-Tenner's extractor with the ejector on a Browning Superlight and pushed them into place. Then he said, "You know, in this 6½-pound gun, the extra 10 ounces doesn't feel so heavy." Then, shouldering it, he said, "And the balance point did not seem to change."

Being a guest, the Major had first honors, and he promptly popped a couple of straightaways. As he reloaded, he said, "Not much recoil."

"That," said the Judge, "seems to have been Savage's purpose, let a kid shoot a real shotgun without fear of recoil or the expense of a smaller gun."

Then the Judge tried them. The Major said, "You are getting good breaks. Say, what's the choke in those tubes?"

"None," replied the Judge.

"According to the old ads, they took the choke in the 12-gauge barrels."

"No way!" said the Major. "That shot

charge would have to jump up from .410" in diameter to .73" in diameter and then get choked down. No way!"

"Let's pattern them and see," said the Judge.

At the patterning board, the Judge tacked two sheets of brown paper to the frame, then stepped back 20 yards, explaining, "At 20 yards, I catch all the shot on a 3-foot wide paper and can see the center of my patterns. At 40 yards, so much shot misses the paper I can't tell where the center is."

The Judge then observed, "The top barrel of the old Browning is a tight Full. We can shoot that one first." After firing a tiny .410 skeet load, he removed the Four-Tenner from the Browning and slid it into his Krieghoff skeet gun. "The bottom barrel of this one is straight Cylinder. That ought to show us whether there is a difference." Again, he popped off one of the tiny .410s.

When the old men walked up to the patterning board, they saw two well-distributed patterns, one open like a Skeet pattern and the other tight like a Modified-choke pattern. The Major said, "Wow! I wouldn't have believed it; the Full-choke pattern is lots tighter than the Cylinder pattern."

The Judge looked at the patterns for a little while and finally said, "I think I am as surprised as you are." **SS**

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