

I Must Have Died and Gone To Heaven

By Jay DIY

I never stopped to think where I would go to shoot my Thompson Sub-Machinegun (TSMG) while I was in the process of acquiring it. Since I had moved to Alabama, I had been shooting with a friend out in a country pecan orchard, with permission, of course. We had been shooting revolvers muzzle loader, and shotguns, and the orchard conditions weren't that bad. True, it took a while to find all the "hulls" (empty shells that is, not pecans), and the weather can always sneak up on you outdoors! The old hay bale pile might or might not have a good place to hang a target, and getting out in the orchard was not a trip fit for the little family sedan. But, after all, it was FREE to shoot there, and I could put up with a lot for FREE.

My TSMG arrived and I was having second thoughts about taking my very expensive gun out in the sometimes wet knee high grass, and dodging rain squalls and thunderstorms. I had never used a shooting range, but it looked like I might need to shoot somewhere a little more civilized. There were a couple of outdoor ranges that I had heard of that were 30 to 40 miles away, and I was not looking forward to that. Then a friend of mine mentioned that he had seen a sign for a shooting range at a little local pawnshop that was sort of tucked back from the road. I had seen the storefront before, but had not stopped. Necessity being the mother of invention, I went to visit. The store had all the shooting supplies I needed for reloading, and lots of new and

used guns to drool over on each visit.



Best of all, there is a beautiful indoor range.

When I saw it, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. The range is 25 yards long, and has 3 lanes. It has good lighting, heat for cold days, air conditioning for hot days, and great ventilation for those "full-

auto" days (My favorites!). It is about 3 miles from my house, and costs less than \$20 to shoot all day if you want. I have a yearly membership that pays for itself after two trips per month. Each of the three shooting stations has controls for a personal overhead light and for your target conveyor. There is a waist high platform at each station that may be used as a rest or table. It also folds down to let you do some stockless "from the hip" shooting. Leather shot filled rest bags are provided for gun accuracy checks, and there are stools and auxiliary tables for staging. The left two lanes are for pistol only while the right most lane has a bullet trap that will accept rifle level energies as well as pistol fire.

Since I am shooting 45 ACPs, I stay on the pistol lanes in case some one with a rifle should want to shoot. The range is in the basement of the store and is mostly under ground. It has the steel overhead bullet deflecting plates and concrete block walls. The nice smooth (grassless and weedless) floor makes getting my empties picked up a breeze. Brooms and dust pans are provided, and I always sweep up the lanes after I am done. There is a pile of target "bits" to police since I shoot 300 to 500 rounds during an outing to the range.

I am fortunate enough to be able to go to the range on week day mid-mornings, and I have the place to myself! For those that want to watch with out ear and eye protection, there is an observation room that is immediately behind the shooters. There is also a soda machine in the observation room so you can wet your whistle. Shooting is a thirsty business! I look back at those days out in the orchard and thank my lucky stars that I found my local treasure.



In Memory of H.J. Miller who passed away March 2005. He was my good friend who loved to go along when I went out to shoot my TSMG. We jokingly called him our supervisor.