



NEW BRAUNFELS SCHÜTZEN FOUNDING FATHERS (CAPTAIN ERNST DOSCH, EDUARD KRIEGER, HERMANN SEELE, AND WILHELM SEEKATZ) AT THE CLUB'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN 1899

LONE RANGER IM BUND

New Braunfelser Schützenverein feierte 175jähriges Bestehen

BY ANNELISE MAKIN • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY ANNELISE MAKIN

Ein Verein mit Bestand. Im Jahr 2024 feierte der New Braunfelser Schützenverein sein 175stes Gründungsjubiläum. Es ist immer noch der älteste kontinuierliche Schützenverein in den Vereinigten Staaten. Das war für mich Grund genug, wieder einmal Besuch bei den geselligen Schützen zu machen.

In meiner Studienzeit in Austin hatte ich eine Magisterarbeit mit Fotodokumentation über den Verein geschrieben. Jeder Besuch war ein bereicherndes Erlebnis, egal ob ich tolle Informationen zur deutsch-texanischen Geschichte fand, eine bis dahin mir unbekannte Fotografie entdeckte, oder beim leckeren Potluck meinen Teller aufladen durfte. Die Old-Timers von damals, Don und Hilda Rahe, Lawrence und Wally Weidner, Gladys und Kermit Greebon, sprachen noch fließend Texas-Deutsch. Ich wurde gut Freund mit vielen Schützen in den 90er Jahren. Die Sekretärin Gay Wimberley sandte mir jahrzehntelang das Jahresprogramm nach, wo immer ich auch wohnte. Leider verstarb sie vor ein paar Jahren. Auch viele weitere Mitglieder von damals leben jetzt nicht mehr. Und das Programm und die Schießergebnisse sind jetzt auf der Schützenvereins Facebook Page anzuklicken. Aber der Schützenverein geht flott weiter.

Ich war neugierig. Neulich hatte ich beim Stöbern meine alten Punktkarten wiederentdeckt. Unglaublich, dass ich solch hohe Zahlen erreichte. Na ja, ich durfte auflegen, damit

wurde das Zielen mit dem Schützengewehr kinderleicht. Es wackelte nichts mehr. Nur bitte den Atem anhalten. Und nach jedem Schuss zeigten die Pointers hinter dem Bollwerk mit ihren Paddeln die Punkte. Die Schützen-Matches waren ein Familienereignis. Um den 4. Juli herum war immer das Königsschießen, bei dem der Schweiß und die Getränke in Strömen flossen. Und weil die Schützentraktion ein gemütlich langsamer Sport ist, ergaben sich in den langen Wartezeiten manchmal die interessantesten Gespräche.

Der New Braunfelser Schützenverein ist nicht nur der älteste sondern auch der einzige überlebende Verein des früheren Texanischen Schützenbundes. Gegründet wurde der Verein am 4. Juli 1849, vier Jahre nach der Stadtgründung. Am 21. März 1845 siedelte Prinz Solms von Braunsfels, der Leiter des Mainzer Adelsvereins, die deutschen Auswanderer bei den Comal-Quellen an. Dazu hatte der Prinz einen guten Flecken Land von der Veramendi Familie gekauft, weil die Pioniere vor Erschöpfung nicht mehr weiterkonnten. Bald danach entflohen der Prinz—nach ihm wurde die Stadt benannt—auf sein deutsches Schloss zurück und überließ den Rest der beinahe zum Scheitern verurteilten Expedition dem Freiherrn („Baron“) Johann Ottfried von Meusebach. Der nächste deutsche Vorschub kam bis nach Fredericksburg im Edwards Plateau, aber bei weitem nicht in das nun abgelaufene Grant-Gebiet.



THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY KING SHOOT, 2024

Die langjährige Geschichte des Vereins, und damit überhaupt die deutsch-texanische Geschichte, wurde immer sorgsam im Schützenheim aufbewahrt. Obwohl die Schützen mit ihrem Schießstand mehrmals weiter in den Westen ziehen mussten, weil die Stadt New Braunfels enorm expandierte, wanderten die historischen Schätze immer mit. Seit einigen Jahren hat sich der Schützenverein sogar einen Historical Marker erworben. Der steht gleich an der Abzweigung zum Gelände.

„Wir haben das Gelände hier an der 391 Range Road im Jahr 2008 gekauft“, sagt der jetzige Schützen-Präsident Scott McCash. „Auf dem anderen Platz auf Highway 1863, vier Meilen von hier, waren wir zu sehr eingeschränkt, mit welchen Regeln wir schießen durften.“ Scott gibt eine Führung durch das Vereinsheim und spricht wie eine lebende Enzyklopädie. Er und sein Vize, Tom Clendennen, der wie ein Trapper aus einem Western aussieht, verwalten mit Stolz die Schätze der deutsch-texanischen Geschichte. „Ist es nicht interessant, dass beide, der Präsident und Vize-Präsident, schottischer Abstammung sind und trotzdem so engagiert mit der deutschen Geschichte?“, lacht Tom. Engagiert sind sie wohl. Mit viel Mühe bildeten sie die Alamo Vereinsflagge nach, weil dieser nun aufgelöste Verein seine Memorabilia nicht dem Vereinsheim übergeben wollte.

Die New Braunfelser Schützen waren von Anfang an stolz auf ihre Geschichte. Zum 100jährigen Jubiläum 1949 wurde die Satzung geändert, dass auch die Frauen



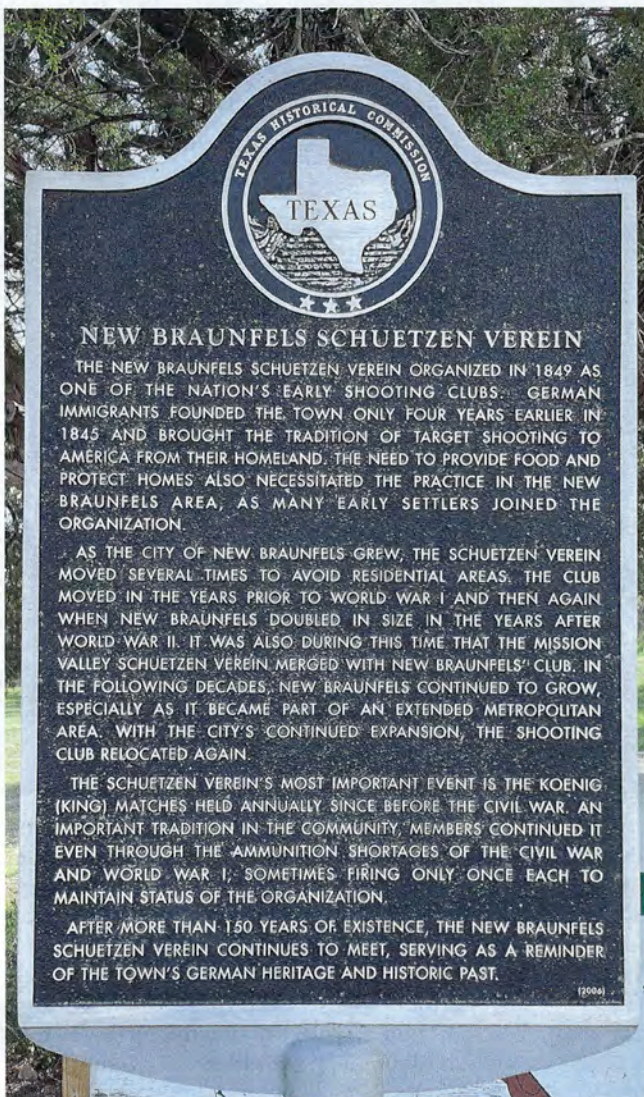
FLATTERSCHEIBE TARGET HELD BY GAY WIMBERLEY, 1990S

und Jugendlichen mitschießen durften. Seitdem gibt es jedes Jahr außer einem König auch eine Schützenkönigin und die höchst begehrte, freihändig umkämpfte Hugo Sattler Gedächtnis Medaille. Geschichtsschreiber par excellence war damals Walter Mittendorf. Er sammelte seine Informationen von der New Braunfelser Zeitung und allen erdenklichen Vereinsquellen.

Im Jahr 1890 formierte sich der „Texanische Schützenbund.“ Es gab zum ersten Mal ein Bundesschießen in New Braunfels. 43 Vereine wurden eingeladen, von denen 20 zum Sportwettkampf antraten. Ein Theater namens „Die Lützower“ wurde aufgeführt, Tänze und Feuerwerk abgehalten und als Höhepunkt ein wunderschön gesticktes Banner von 14 Damen der „Rosenstadt“ überreicht. Auf der einen Seite war das Schützenemblem abgebildet, auf der anderen die Inschrift: „Dem Neu-Braunfelser Schützen-Verein, gegründet am 4ten Juli, 1849, gewidmet von den Damen der Stadt zum 4ten Juli, 1890.“ Von da an wiederholten sich die Bundeswettbewerbe jedes Jahr, bei der um die „Bundesmedaille“

gekämpft wurde. In diesem goldenen Zeitalter gab es so viele Schützenvereine wie Dörfer im Hill Country

Einige Jahre später, 1899 beim 50. Jubiläum, entstand das bis zum heutigen Tag ikonische Porträt der vier überlebenden Gründer des Schützenvereins: Mit Flinten und Pokalen in Händen posieren die Pioniere Captain Ernst Dosch, Eduard Krieger, Hermann Seele und Wilhelm Seekatz für ihr historisches Foto. „Die 4 Herren haben trotz ihres hohen



HISTORICAL MARKER AT TODAY'S SCHUETZEN-VEREIN GROUNDS

Alters von morgens bis abends auf dem Schützenplatze stramm ausgehalten und Capt. Dosch nimmt es immer noch mit den jungen Schützen auf", berichtete die Neu Braunfeler Zeitung.

Über die Jahre änderten sich die Wettbewerbe, Spielregeln und Ausrüstung nach Mode oder Laune. Zum Beispiel gab es früher ein Flatterscheibe, ein Truthahn-Schießen und eine eiserne Bajazzo Zielscheibe. Das ist nun vorbei. Diese geschichtlichen Exponate sind nur noch im Vereinsheim ausgestellt. Aber kein Jahr verstrich ohne das Königsschießen, wenn auch wie in Kriegszeiten nur drei Teilnehmer zugegen waren. Und seit längster Zeit schießt man nur noch schwere .22 Kaliber-Flinten, die speziell für den Sport und die Auflage-Treppchen (prone shooting) adaptiert sind.

Geschichte zu verwalten ist ein schwieriges Unterfangen. Schon zu Mittendorfs Zeiten gab es Verluste zu beklagen, wie eine verschwundene Bajazzo Zielscheibe. Auch das von Ernst Dosch gestiftete Gewehr, aus Deutschland mitgebracht, war nicht mehr auffindbar. Aber glücklicherweise tauchte das Schützen-Banner wieder aus der Versenkung auf und ist jetzt in einer Schutzhülle im Vereinsheim zu sehen.

Beim New Braunfeler Schützenverein hat sich vieles geändert. „Wir haben jetzt keine Pointers mehr“, sagt Scott McCash. Das waren meistens Jugendliche, die sich ein



TROPHIES AND MEMORABILIA ARE ON DISPLAY IN THE CLUB HOUSE.

Taschengeld verdienen. Sie saßen in einem Bunker, hinter einem Erdwall verstärkt mit rohen Balken in 100 Metern Entfernung, und zogen die Papierscheiben nach jedem Schuss neu auf. Sie deuteten mit ihren Paddeln die Punkte durch die Schießscharte an. „Aber es ist direkt unmöglich, noch jemand zu finden, der das macht. Also haben wir seit einigen Jahren Kameras auf die Zielscheiben gerichtet. Und an der Feuerlinie haben wir Bildschirme.“ Wie Scott klar deutlich macht, Tradition hin oder her, hat auch bei den Schützen die Technik Einzug gehalten.

Die Gewehre haben sich seit 1894 transformiert. „Damals schossen sie natürlich mit Vorderladern“, berichtet Scott. „In den 1870ern ging man zu Zentralfeuerwaffen über. Nach dem ersten Weltkrieg war dann hochkarätige industriell hergestellte Munition für .22er Kaliber auf dem Markt. Man konnte sie in jedem Hardware Laden kaufen und trotzdem noch etwas treffen. Nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg hat der Club ausschließlich mit .22 Kaliber geschossen.“

„Im Gegensatz zu was dir die Leute erzählen, ist es durchaus möglich, mit einem .22er Kaliber weiter als 25 Meter zu schießen“, grinst Tom Clendennen. „Wir hatten gerade ein Match, bei dem es über 200 Meter ging.“ Er weiß, wovon er spricht. Natürlich geht es nicht nur um Geschichte, sondern auch Sport-Liebhabelei und Geselligkeit.



BARBEQUE IS READY AT THE KING SHOOT, 1990S.



THE PRINGLE FAMILY OF SHOOTERS: (BACK) PATTI, DAVID; (FRONT) MEREDITH, ALLEN, 1990S.

Aber die Geschichte ruht allein auf den Schultern des Lone Rangers, des New Braunfelser Vereins. „In der guten alten Zeit hat jeder Verein einmal die anderen zum Preisschießen eingeladen“, sagt Scott. „Aber jetzt sind jedes Mal wir dran, ob beim Alamo Preisschießen oder beim Boerne Preisschießen. Alamo hat traditionell Wurst mit Sauerkraut und den besten hausgemachten Kartoffelsalat serviert. Diese Verantwortung fällt nun auch auf uns.“ Er lacht, obwohl er und Tom den ganzen Vormittag mit Aufräumen im Vereinsheim beschäftigt waren.

„Wir tun unser Bestes, an die breiteste Basis von Schützen und Geschichtsforschern zu appellieren“, erklärt Tom. „Jetzt ist die Geschichte, wie du siehst, hier rund um uns.“ Und er breitet seine Arme aus in Richtung Schaukästen und Memorabilia.

„Ausstellungsstücke verwalten, Zielscheiben warten und alles gut in Schuss zu halten ist schon viel Arbeit“, sagt Tom. „Scott und ich investieren eine Unmenge Zeit in den Verein, genauso wie einige andere. Aber bezüglich der Wartung ist es Arbeit. Natürlich komme ich hier auch zu meinem Vergnügen, obwohl ich etwas Nützliches tue.“

„In den 33 Jahren, die ich hier lebe, ist so viel verloren gegangen“, betont Scott. „Wenn man sich diese alte Karte anschaut, und das ist nur eine partielle Liste der Clubs, dann gab es hier eine Fülle von Vereinen. Dies sind nur diejenigen, die unsere Mitglieder hier dokumentieren konnten.“ Die Karte zeigt etwa 60 Punkte von ehemaligen Vereinen, die daneben namentlich aufgeführt sind.

Aber der New Braunfelser Schützenverein schießt fleißig weiter. Das Programm steht der Öffentlichkeit auf Facebook zur Verfügung. Und Gäste sind bei den Veranstaltungen jederzeit herzlich willkommen. Man darf auch gerne einmal seine Schießkunst ausprobieren und das Potluck reicht auch für ein paar mehr.

Der New Braunfelser Schützenverein ist der erste und letzte seiner Art. Engagierte Mitglieder sorgen dafür, dass die Tradition weitergeht. Wer sich für die Aktivitäten des Vereins interessiert, kann auf Facebook mehr erfahren.

STATUTEN

Der deutschen Schützenkompanie zu Neu Braunfels

1. Die unterzeichneten bilden eine Schützenkompanie.
2. Diese besteht aus den unterzeichneten, und denen welche, von den von den selben zum Beschluss durch das Comittee aufgefordert werdem, lauter jungen unverheirateten Männern über 17 Jahren.
3. Das Comittee besteht aus vier Mitgliedern und dem Kapitän.
4. Das Comittee hat über die Aufnahme neuer Mitglieder abstimmen zu lassen, es besorgt die Verwaltung des Eigenthums der Gesellschaft, ernennt einen Kassierer aus seiner Mitte, welcher über Einnahmen und Ausgaben Rechnung führt. Er sorgt für Beitragserhaltung der Wartung und bestimmt die regelmäßigen zusammenkünfte der Gesellschaft. Das Comittee wird auf drei Monate gewählt. Die erste Versammlung zur Wahl findet Sonntag, den 19 ten Oktober 1873 statt. Das Comittee bestimmt den monatlichen Beitrag.
5. Zur Bildung einer Gesellschaftsasse zahlt jeder unterzeichnete fünfzig cents, wer später der Gesellschaft beitrith zahlt einen Dollar Eintrittsgeld.
6. Bef regelmäßigen Zusammenkünften sollen wenn möglich alle vierzehn Tage statt finden.
7. Die Gesellschaft hat den Anordnungen des Comittees unbedingt Folge zu leisten.
8. Über den Ausschluß eines Mitgliedes abzustimmen. Wer austritt oder ausgeschlossen wird, hat keinen Anspruch auf das Eigenthum der Gesellschaft.
9. Fremde werden nicht zugelassen.
10. Jedes Mitglied verpflichtet sich für sämtliches was in den Versammlungen verkündet oder gesprochen wird, geheim zu halten.
11. Wenn eing Mitglied der Compangnie sich verheiratet, so ist es ihm erlaubt in der Gesellschaft zu bleiben, aber es soll kein verheirateter Mann als Mitglied aufgenommen werden.
12. Der Vorstand hat jedesmal solange sein Amt zu werwalten, bis ein neuer Vorstand gewählt worden ist.
13. Die Gesellschaft kann diese Statuten wenn es passend erscheint umändern, zur Aufrechterhaltung der vorstehenden Statuten verpflichten wir uns durch ensere Namensunterschrift.

Neu Braunfels, den 9. ten Oktober A.D. 1851

Heinrich Scholl
Valentin Pfeiffer
Friedrich Müller
H Sade
Rodenich Scholl
Christrogh Pfeuftor
Wilhelm Kreuser
Karl Wäldr
W. Bassrior
Adolf Ludwig
H. Fischer
C+A Buster
Emil Kraude

J. Mareder
F. Fechter
Laurer
F. Brauner
J. Wenzel
H. Penshorn
C.H. Herbst



TOM CLENDENNEN SHOWING OFF THE LOUIS SIMON MEMORIAL MEDAL.



THE CLUB'S FLAG FROM 1890 IS NOW ON DISPLAY AT THE CLUB HOUSE, 1990S

Schuetzen Vereins in Texas

BEXAR COUNTY

- 1 Bexar
- 2 Cutoff/Schertz
- 3 Germania
- 4 Helotes
- 5 Kirby/Salado
- 6 LaCoste
- 7 Leon Springs
- 8 Leon Valley
- 9 Lookout
- 10 San Antonio
- 11 Selma
- 90 Standard
- 91 West End

BLANCO COUNTY

- 12 Blanco
- 13 Twin Sisters

CONCHO COUNTY

- 14 Lowake

DEWITT COUNTY

- 15 Garfield
- 42 Gruenau
- 43 Lindenau
- 44 Nordheim
- 45 Pilot Knob
- 46 Turner
- 47 Wied Hall

FAYETTE COUNTY

- 48 Round Top

RUNNELS COUNTY

- 72 Ballinger

COMAL COUNTY

- 16 Alamo
- 17 Bracken
- 18 Bulverde
- 19 Comal Creek
- 20 Comal Springs
- 21 Concord
- 22 Cranes Mill
- 23 Davenport
- 24 Fischer Store
- 25 Goodwin
- 26 Goodwin #2
- 27 Guadalupe Valley
- 28 Herrera
- 29 Johannesberger-Jaeger

- 30 Jonas Ranch

- 31 Kendalia

- 32 Lone Star

- 33 Millers Branch

- 34 Mission Valley

- 35 Mountain Valley

- 36 New Braunfels

- 37 Pantermuehl Ranch

- 38 Post Oak Valley

- 39 Sattler

- 40 Sorrel Creek

- 41 Spring Branch

- 88 Deutsche Gebirg

- 89 Schiller

- 92 Smithson Valley

- 93 Vogel's Valley

- 94 Tell/Tom Creek

- 95 Waco Springs

GILLESPIE COUNTY

- 49 Baron's Creek

- 50 Bear Creek

- 51 Grapetown

- 52 Hubertus

- 53 Scharfschuetzen

- 54 Schmidts Hall

- 96 Tivydale

GUADALUPE

- 55 Cibolo

- 56 Clearford/Converse

- 57 Clear Springs

- 58 Cordova

- 59 Elm Creek

- 60 Green Valley

- 61 Laubach

- 62 Live Oak

- 63 Lone Oak

- 64 Marion/Germania

- 65 Schumannsville

- 97 Orth's Pasture

- 98 Zorn

HARRIS COUNTY

- 66 Houston

- 99 Crescent City

HAYS COUNTY

- 67 Austin Hill

- 100 Maxwell

MEDINA COUNTY

- 68 McDonna

- 103 Quihi

KENDALL COUNTY

- 69 Boerne

- 70 North Creek/Joshua

- 71 Kruetzburg

- 101 Sisterdale

- 102 Wasp Creek

TRAVIS COUNTY

- 73 Austin

WILSON COUNTY

- 72 Floresville

- 73 Coletto

VICTORIA COUNTY

- 74 Ackermann's

- 75 Frankfurt

- 76 Herrera

- 77 Belmont

- 78 Mountain Hill

- 79 Kuhn's Helle

- 80 Sandy Elm

- 81 Neches Creek

- 82 Riverside

- 83 Bismark

- 84 Echo

- 85 Elm Valley

A LISTING OF TEXAS CLUBS





NEW BRAUNFELS SCHUETZEN VEREIN

BULLSEYE

Celebrating 175 years of the German tradition of marksmanship competition in New Braunfels.

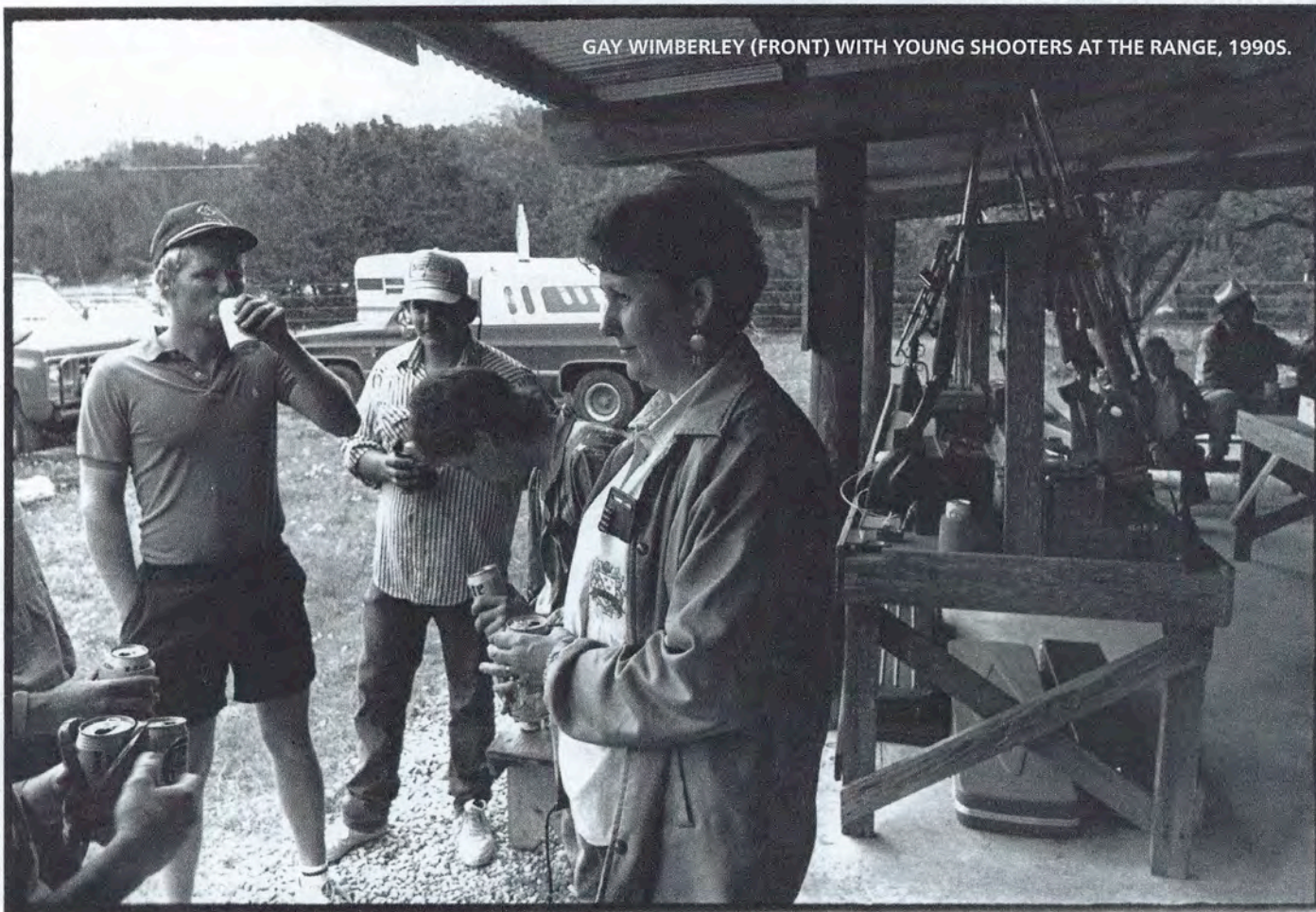
BY ANNELISE MAKIN • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY ANNELISE MAKIN

In the early 90s, as a student at the University of Texas at Austin (UT), I set out to write a thesis about the New Braunfels Schuetzen-Verein (marksmen's clubs) and by the time I finished, I was one of them. The New Braunfels Schuetzen (they spell it with "ue") morphed into my home away from home across the seas in Bavaria. As I took pictures and researched the history, I became part of it. Some of my photos of Vereins members long gone are now kept in the massive display shrines at the club house. Recently, I dug up my old score cards and couldn't believe that I shot this well (rest style). But the dearest memories were of swapping stories, breathing in the historic significance at the Vereins hall, and lining up to share delicious potluck or a Texas barbecue feast. I fondly remembered the then "old-timers" Don and Hilda Rahe, Kermit and Gladys Greebon, and the young generation under Bill and Gay Wimberley, who ran the club. Dang, was it *gemütlich* there!

The New Braunfels Schuetzen-Verein was founded on July 4, 1849, and celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2024. It is not only the oldest continuing German shooting association in the U.S., but also the only surviving Verein of the former New Braunfels Schuetzenbund.

The Schuetzen-Verein is almost as old as the town itself. New Braunfels was founded on March 21, 1845, by Prince Carl Solms-Braunfels. The prince was spearheading the vastly underfunded and eventually ill-fated colonization efforts of the German Adelsverein. The idea was to lead the immigrants to a remote land grant far out west, but as exhausted as they were they would not have survived the trip. Instead, Prince Solms bought land from the Veramendi family by the Comal River, declared his goal reached, and quickly retreated to his plush castle in Germany. Thousands of immigrants arrived over the next three years. Many perished in epidemics on the coast and in the struggling colonies. The Germans got as far as Fredericksburg (about 80 miles from New Braunfels). The settlers who survived the early epidemics soon flourished by skill, industriousness, community sense, and sweat equity.

Among many associations, soon a Schuetzen-Verein was formed in New Braunfels. The Schuetzen, regardless of how much German heritage there is in New Braunfels, always struck me as the most authentic part. People still spoke German there. Back then as now, the club house displays its treasures like a museum of trophies, certificates, flags, score cards,



Scheiben (targets), rifles, photos, and other paraphernalia. Aside from much needed rifle practice for hunting and home defense, the practices were also very popular social occasions.

The most prominent historian for the New Braunfels Schuetzen-Verein was Walter Mittendorf who compiled information for the 100th anniversary of the Verein (in 1949) from club records, the *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung*, and personal interviews.

According to Mittendorf, in 1890 the Schuetzen fervor was at its height. The New Braunfels Verein became a driving social force, creating the Texanischer Schützenbund, because even back then New Braunfels had the *älteste Schützenverein im Staate* (oldest shooting club in the state). Invitations for the Schützenfest on July 4–6 were sent out to 43 clubs, and bands, fireworks, balls and a play called “Die Lützower” were arranged. As a highlight, fourteen young ladies from the “City of Roses” (New Braunfels) presented the club with a silk banner beautifully embroidered on its face in white silk with the Schuetzen-Emblem, target, and two crossed rifles. On the back side in green silk appeared the embroidered inscription *Dem Neu-Braunfelser Schützen-Verein, gegründet am 4ten Juli, 1849, gewidmet von den Damen der Stadt zum 4ten Juli, 1890.*

At the Schuetzenfest, 12-ring targets were used and four shots each were fired at the 125-, 175-, and 225-yard distances. Some twenty clubs participated. The so-called Bundesschießen continued in the years thereafter taking turns at various club locations, such as Houston, San Antonio, Vogel’s Valley, Green Valley, Cut-Off, Bulverde, and others. The German Schuetzen were mostly competing among themselves—they had peculiar rules, conducted business in German, and enjoyed the camaraderie. In 1892, the Bund started awarding a Bundes-Medaille to the member with the highest

combined rest and offhand score.

Not long thereafter, at the 50th anniversary in 1899, the most iconic Schuetzen photo shows four of the founding fathers, Captain Ernst Dosch, Eduard Kriegner, Hermann Seele, and Wilhelm Seekatz. This picture was presented to the Verein at the centennial celebration by Emmie Seele Faust, daughter of Hermann Seele. The *Neu Braunfelser Zeitung* dated July 6, 1899 states: *Die 4 Herren haben trotz ihres hohen Alters von morgens bis abends auf dem Schützenplatze stramm ausgehalten und Capt. Dosch nimmt es immer noch mit den jungen Schützen auf.* (The four gentlemen, despite their advanced age, endured from morning to night at the range and Capt. Dosch can still challenge the young shooters.)

As the Schuetzen-Verein evolved through a series of shooting games, regulations, celebrations, and prize options, the tradition settled on .22 caliber rifles. No matter how much the annual competitions changed, no year passed without the annual King Shoot in New Braunfels. At the 75th anniversary, the club intended to revive the old .32-40 and .38-55 Schuetzen-Rifle game, but with mixed results. “While many of the old riflemen were present with their old rifles, still only a few were able to muster acceptable scores,” writes Mittendorf.

During the centennial year (1949) in which Mittendorf actively participated in the 100th Koenig-Schießen, J.E. Lloyd won the Centennial gold medal as Schuetzen-Koenig for having the best center shot. Walter Rompel, with the highest combined score, was awarded the Louis Simon Memorial medal, with his name engraved on the next chain link. Among the seven women to compete for the first time, Mrs. Hilda Rahe won the Queen medal. From the mid-70s, the associate members could also become members after reaching



OFFHAND SHOOTING, 1990S.

nineteen years of age.

At the time of the centennial, Mittendorf bemoaned the (temporary) loss of the Schuetzen-banner, which is now again on exhibit at the club house. Mittendorf also lamented the disappearance of Ernst Dosch's rifle that the Captain's pioneering grandfather had brought to town. And a peculiar Bajazzo target—a 250-pound heavy, slightly concave-convex iron disk—had also vanished. Another Bajazzo, to Mittendorf's chagrin, had been melted by a scrap metal dealer. For this type of target “the bulls were painted on and painted over when distorted by bullet spatters”.

Over its long existence, the Schuetzen-Verein moved around to many locations. Every time the city limits moved closer, the Verein had to move farther out of town.

“We bought our property here at 391 Range Road in 2008,” Schuetzen President Scott McCash says. “It was just a little farm-to-market road, and now it's five lanes and solid traffic all the time.” Scott and club vice-president Tom Clendennen are cleaning up the range after a prize shoot the day before this Sunday afternoon for my spontaneous visit and showed me around the premises. Although their names don't sound German, they are now the guardians of the proud German Schuetzen traditions. “At the other place on Highway 1863, about 4 miles from here, we were really limited on what we could do. This place here has been a true blessing.” The hall looked large, bright, and was air-conditioned. Even more memorabilia were on display from what I remembered from my college years. A historical marker was added to the premises by the entrance gate.

As Scott gives me his take on history, three young French journalists, walk through the historic hall's doors and I won-

der how they got lost in this part of Texas. They listen spellbound to Scott's narration and then view the trophy cups plastered with plaques, the 1890 handmade flag, and the endlessly long Simon medal. This medal alone proves that Schuetzen history goes way back.

As often as the Verein had to relocate, most of their shooting games and rules stayed the same except for the loss of the score pointers. During the construction of the Bulverde site, Mittendorf described the construction of a concrete pit behind which the target pointers went to work. Until a few years ago, pointers, hired teenagers, used to hunker behind concrete walls to operate the *Zugscheibe*. After a shot was fired, the pointer pulled in the paper target behind the bulwark and pushed out another clean target for the next shooter. The pointer signaled the score with special paddles to the score keeper 100 yards away. This system has changed now. “Finding anyone who wants to point the target any more has become impossible,” Scott says. “For the last three years we have had cameras recording our targets and at the firing line we have a television screen.”

For the last hundred years or so, the New Braunfels Schuetzen have shot .22 caliber rifles with iron sights at 25-ring paper targets over a 100-yard distance. Lately, 200-yard shooting matches have become part of the program again. Most games allow the muzzle rest (prone) style, where the shooter gets to anchor the gun barrel on miniature stair steps, suitable for Schuetzen of any height. Other aids to keep the rifle as steady as a rock, according to Mittendorf, had previously resulted in too many identical high scores. It is harder to be successful in the off-hand competitions such as the much-coveted Hugo Sattler medal. Aside from the King/Queen



QUEEN VIRGINIA STEVENS, SIMON MEDAL WINNER TOM CLENDENNEN, AND KING DAN HUEBNER AT THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY SHOOT, 2024.



TOM CLENDENNEN AND SCOTT MCCASH — NBSV PRESIDENTS— AT THE SCHUETZEN-VEREIN

shoot, several prize shoots and matches under the auspices of the Texas Single Shot Rifle Association are held.

"When the club was formed in 1849, they would have been shooting muzzle loading rifles," Scott explains. "Later, in the late 1870s, it progressed to centerfire rifles. After World War I, high quality fabricated ammunition for .22s was available. You could go to any hardware store downtown and buy match quality ammunition and a ready-made rifle and come out and be competitive on it. After the WWII era, the club shot exclusively with .22s. The Texas Single Shot Rifle Association still carries on the centerfire, single-shot rifle games."

"We are trying our very best to appeal to as broad a segment of historians and shooters as we can," Tom says. "Now, the history is here." He swivels with open arms to point out all the significant memorabilia. Schuetzen game is a little hard to explain because it does not earn you fame in the sports world. "This weekend we had a single-shot, centerfire rifle match over 200 yards," Tom continues. "We also shot our single-shot .22s at 100 yards. And contrary to what people might tell you, it is possible to shoot more than 25 yards with a .22." A .22-silhouette range will soon appeal to a still broader range of potential members, especially young Schuetzen.

Not all Texas Schuetzen are the same. "Compared with Fredericksburg—although both of us shoot off a rest—their sights, guns, and game are just completely different. And you can't take one of our guns up there and shoot it or bring theirs down here and shoot our game," Scott says.

Some of the memorabilia displayed, like the Flatterscheibe, a star-shaped target with small and large bulls' eyes, are legend but have been relegated to history. And there is a Central Texas map that shows more than 60 dots for the old Vereins from the former Bund. Of those, New Braunfels is the

only one left.

"In the old days, each club would host a prize shoot. But today we are the sole remaining club of that Schuetzenbund," Scott says. "Now it's up to us to have the Boerne prize shoot or the Alamo prize shoot. At the Alamo prize shoot, they traditionally served sausage and sauerkraut and the best homemade German potato salad that I have ever had. That's what we serve now in remembrance of it. We try to keep those traditions alive as best we can."

And so the New Braunfels Schuetzen-Verein, the Lone Ranger of the Bund, continues according to schedule. Each year, the chain of links on the Simon medal continues to grow, as Scott and Tom and their crew have committed themselves to the historic preservation of the Verein. "Curating the exhibits, working on the targets, and keeping everything working and functional is a lot of work," Tom says. "Scott and I are putting in a tremendous amount of time and other members do, too. But as far as keeping track of it, it's work. It's a place that I come to play, even though I might be doing something useful."

The town, which has pushed the club always farther west, has grown a lot. "When I moved here in January 1961, there were 3,000 people living in the corporate limits of New Braunfels, now it's about 103,000," Tom says. "None of these people are from the German belt of Texas. These are people mostly from New York and California. They have no idea of the history and tradition of this area. Most of them can't say a German word, I bet."

"And so much of the stuff has gone away in the 33 years that I've lived here," Scott adds. "If you look around here on this map," he points to a framed picture, "you'll see a partial list of all the old clubs. There was many more than



even what's shown on there. That's just the ones that the members were able to document. And from all these, there is now just us left."

"Yeah, it's interesting that the president and the vice-president of the club are not German but both Scotsmen," Tom laughs. "And they are both so heavily engaged in preserving the German history." And they will go to great lengths to do

so. In a painstaking effort, they recreated the Alamo Vereins flag because the recently dissolved club wouldn't contribute the original flag to New Braunfels Schuetzen curatorship.

All is fair and well at the New Braunfels Schuetzen-Verein. It has survived against the odds in the hands of people who care. Scott, Tom and the members love what they are doing, which keeps the Schuetzen-Verein 175 years old and going strong.



What makes the Schuetzen so uniquely German?

1. The Schuetzen chose German as their business language for their Bund, which curbed interest for most other English-speaking marksmen.
2. The Schuetzen are sticklers on rules and regulations, which doesn't leave much room for change and spontaneity in the game.
3. The Schuetzen game is a perfectionist sport and can be tediously slow. You must wait your turn and take your time to place the shot.
4. Schuetzen games, like the Flatterscheibe and Bajazzo, seemed odd to the Anglo-Texans. And the Germans didn't try to popularize these games with other groups.
5. Playing nice was often put over scoring. In one tournament, Mittendorf reports, New Braunfels Schuetzen missed the target on purpose as to not discourage the other clubs.
6. A Schuetzen-Fest requires many volunteers to host a feast with sausage, barbecue, and beer. Although beer seems an odd factor, the Germans always have handled it well.
7. A Schuetzen-Verein demands major investments of time, contributions, and commitment from the leadership for the common good and enjoyment of all.



PARADE OF TEAMS AND FLAGS, 1990S.

FREDERICKSBURG SCHUETZENFEST *LEBE HOCH*

Eighty miles northwest of New Braunfels the Gillespie County Schuetzen celebrate their very own Fest every year on the first weekend of August under the harvest moon.

So goes the Fredericksburg story: On December 17, 1890, the Fredericksburg club Hubertus was organized with 29 members. Two years later, on November 27, 1892, the Gillespie Schuetzenbund was chartered. Grapetown, Eintracht, Tivydale, Luckenbach, Jaegerlust, North Grape Creek, Meusebach Creek, and Cherry Springs were the founding members. The first Schuetzenfest took place on July 29-30, 1893, reports the Fredericksburg Pioneer Museum, which hosted a Schuetzen photo exhibit in 2024.

During the 90s, when I roamed the Hill Country, the Fredericksburg federation had six clubs competing: Baron's Creek, Bear Creek, Grapetown (oldest club, since 1887), Hubertus, Tivydale, and Scharfschuetzen, whose membership is struggling now. Others, like South Grape Creek, Cherry Springs, Meusebach, Jaegerlust, and Luckenbach have folded over the years. When I think back on it, the Schuetzenfest was as much Texan as it was German culture. Imagine, cowboys with buckles and boots flaunting their German Schuetzen flags off a flatbed pickup truck. This is as Texas-German as it gets.

Compared with New Braunfels (population 117,396), which constitutes the belt buckle of the Austin-San Antonio corridor, Fredericksburg is an outlier and has worked hard to preserve its rural frontier town charm. It was founded on May 8, 1846, by a trek of immigrants under commissioner

Baron Johann (John) Ottfried Freiherr von Meusebach. In its semi-remote location 90 miles southwest of Austin, Fredericksburg has grown from 6,000 (1990s) to close to 12,000 inhabitants (2024). Several attractions—Pioneer Museum, Admiral Nimitz Museum, Oktoberfest, Christkindlmarkt, and others—serve a steady stream of tourists from both coasts and overseas. Fredericksburg's German history suits the town well. The Schuetzen culture, by necessity, is perhaps the hardest connection to the German pioneer story.

This was my Schuetzenfest experience in the 90s: A handful of people had gathered on the hill above the Bear Creek shooting range around the flags. Some had taken up position on their trucks to lineup for the parade. From down at the shooting range, one could hear Texas-German polka music. With neighborly chit chat another half hour passed. Still the band hadn't come to meet the assembly. A truck approached the hilltop with two men on the flatbed, one man holding an American flag, the other a Texas flag. It made a 180 degree turn and then the vehicle full with Scharfschuetzen on its back tore after the flag bearers. This pattern repeated itself until all the competing club teams had been escorted to the shooting range.

In Germany, the shooting clubs would march double file through the village. The Fredericksburg Schuetzen had developed the tradition to suit their flavor. On the second day, however, the Schuetzen marched by order of how well each club shot and accepted their honors.

The Fredericksburg Schuetzenfest has been held continu-

ously with only four minor interruptions during World War II and Covid. The competition takes its course at one of three suitable club ranges. The range provides ten positions with rotating targets resembling four leaf clovers in the distance. After a set of shots, a clean target turns to the top. The contestants shoot from a prone position off a tiered stair rack over 200 meters. Only iron sights are allowed, no optical devices.

Then secretary Charles Feller explained to me, "Some shoot a .22 rimfire rifle, but most of us prefer the stronger 22.250 centerfire caliber." This preference has a historic explanation. Initially, from the 1890s, the Fredericksburg clubs used .38-55 or .38-40 Winchester rifles, for which they fabricated their own cartridges to save money. But after World War II, a marksman by the name of Claude Nobles creamed off all the prizes with a 22.250 Mauser rifle. He wasn't outcompeted with any other guns. That's why most Fredericksburg Schuetzen took to the larger caliber. Some stayed with the Winchesters, which had been altered into what looks like elephant guns for the Schuetzen game. Since the Mauser took over, Fredericksburg had two different leagues and, consequently, two shooting Kings or Queens.

Before taking a stance at the stand, many Schuetzen blacken their gun barrels with an oil lamp as not to be blinded from the reflection, much like football players put soot marks on their cheeks. It's loud on the festival grounds as the guns blast. Women prepare the food; men mind the beer keg in the shade. A cooking team stokes up the barbecue coals in a remote corner. The score keeper thrones on a high perch and keeps a hawk eye over the whole assembly. Some contestants buy more pot cards for practice. The process unfolds in a time-tested pattern. Every contestant has ten shots that count; five are done on Saturday, the other five on Sunday.

Myra Klinksiek has been the Gillespie Bund secretary for many years. She keeps tabs on all the documentation and is an encyclopedia of information on Schuetzen history. Fredericksburg has also modernized. "This year, at Tivydale, we are using a camera to document the scores," Myra says. "This new technology contains some good and some bad. We learn as we go. But as always, the targets are turned to the next clean one after an hour. Teams of six compete over a 200-yard distance, the majority with centerfires. Our clubs are going strong."

Traditionally, around 120 shooters compete for donated prizes. Food—hamburgers, sides, and barbecue—is available for purchase. Myra Klinksiek operates from a neutral platform. She doesn't belong to any club for fairness reasons, but her family formerly was with Grapetown.

History was made at the 128th Schuetzenfest (2024) when for the first time a woman won the centerfire Koenigin title with a score of 96 out of 100. Marianna Behrends had previously twice won the rimfire competition. The hosting team, Hubertus, skimmed off both the centerfire and rimfire team awards. Other prizes were given for oldest shooter (Danny Moellering, 84), and youngest shooter (Hudson Lochte, 9). According to winning order, marksmen got to pick one of the donated prizes from the centerfire or rimfire table. This event is not for strangers: club membership is a competition requirement.

Historically, the Gillespie County Schuetzenfest was the event of the year for many remote farmers of the Hill Country area. During the harvest moon, on a Friday evening, they packed up their wagons and pulled into the premises of the hosting club. On Saturday and Sunday, the shooting matches were carried out. It could have been smoking hot,



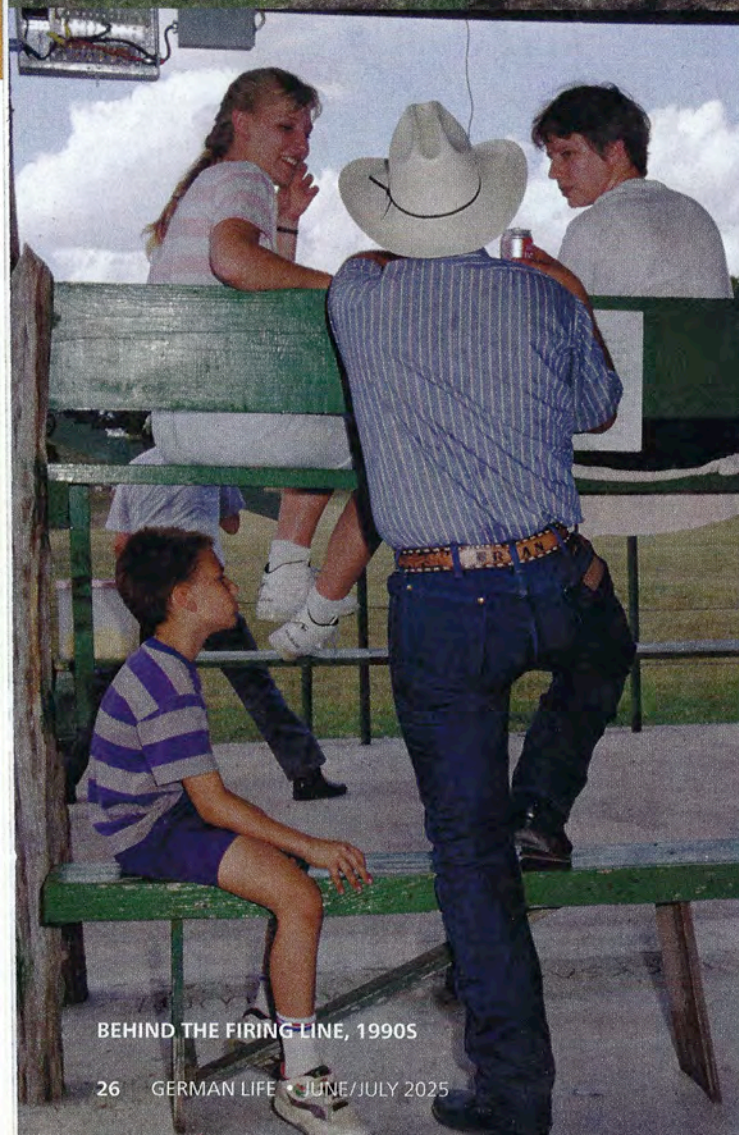
A TARGET POINTER INDICATES THE SCORE, 1990S.



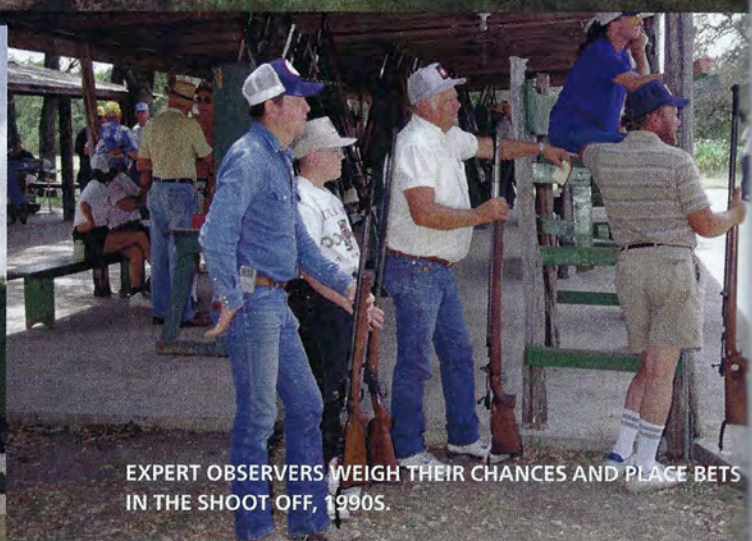
BLACKENING THE BARREL, 1990S



THE FIRING LINE WITH THE STAIR REST FOR PRONE SHOOTING, 1990S



BEHIND THE FIRING LINE, 1990S



EXPERT OBSERVERS WEIGH THEIR CHANCES AND PLACE BETS IN THE SHOOT OFF, 1990S.

but either way the smoke from gun powder and barbecue would have permeated the grounds. On the evenings, under the light of the harvest moon, people made merry with food, song, and dance. On Monday morning, the tents were broken down again and the farmer families returned to their homesteads. Imagine, the old-time logistics required horses to have enough water and fodder as well. The celebrations could be exuberant. Although the rules required repose after midnight, the oompah band might have played until the wee hours. Beer didn't run dry either. And matches beyond the shooting type were presumably made. Nowadays everybody rides home in their trucks at night and reports back to the range the next morning.

Things have changed for the Fredericksburg Schuetzen, too; and for the better, I'd say. Technology and women improved the game. *Lebe hoch, Schuetzen-Koenigin!* GL