

The Los Angeles Silhouette Club

The Birthday Present

By: Glen E. Fryxell

Birthday cards are nice, and birthday cake is mighty sweet, but neither has very much substance, and in the final analysis *substance* is what life is all about. It's the sum total of our life experiences -- our successes, our failures, lessons learned, lessons taught, damages suffered, damages repaired, relationships built, and relationships lost -- our substance -- that ultimately defines who we are. We have a choice in determining what this definition will be. We have a choice in determining who we are to become, simply by the choices we make today and have made in the past.

Recently I had another birthday (#49, if the numbers matter to anybody). I didn't need any more ties, and I don't wear aftershave, or boxers with cartoon characters on them, so the birthday presents typically given to middle-aged men have little value to me. Not wanting to clutter up my home with such "stuff", this year I asked for no presents, preferring instead to focus my energies on my family and my passions. I simply don't feel that my family has an obligation to buy me presents on my birthday. As the man of the family it is more important to me to focus on providing leadership, guidance, and support than it is to be showered with frivolous gifts. The only person who can really understand my motivations, my goals, my wants and needs, and therefore know which tools I need to achieve them, is *me*. I have always felt that the person who whines about not getting what they wanted for their birthday is an idiot because they were too stupid (or proud) to get a present for themselves.

Yeah, I know, I could always buy myself a gun for my birthday, or maybe another bullet mould, or perhaps another hunting knife. Been there done that. No, I didn't want *stuff*, I wanted activity, I wanted to add the sights and sounds, the colors, flavors and textures of real-life experiences -- I wanted to go hunting! My birthday is in the spring, and an off-season spring hunt would be just the ticket. A couple of months in advance, I made arrangements for a hog hunt starting the day after my birthday, and invited a few friends to join me. Now it was time to start thinking about which gun, load, etc. was going to get put to use.

I hunt primarily with handguns, and primarily with cast bullets. I am fascinated by cast bullet metallurgy, physics and terminal performance. For many years I have been studying cast bullet performance in the hunting field and I am always interested in learning more. For years, I have been impressed with the performance of cast hollow-points (HP's) on game, and I have been working to better understand how they work



Bullets from the RCBS/Cramer 44 300 Gr mould.

and refine the design to fit my vision of ideal bullet performance. Recently, I had Erik Ohlen (proprietor of [Cast Bullet Hollow Point Service](#), phone (541)738-2479, [email Erik](#), convert an RCBS .44-300-GC SWC mould to a Cramer-style 2-cavity HP mould, with the HP pin cut with a 7 degree taper, .150" cavity mouth, extending .250" into the bullet, with a rounded tip. Erik returned the mould, modified just as I had requested. It casts beautiful bullets, and I was able to cast very quickly with it (200 bullets in less than half an hour!). Tests revealed that it was an accurate bullet out of the .44 Magnum at about 1325 fps (21.0 grains of Winchester 296), and that it expanded very nicely at that speed. But tests are one thing, how would it perform on game?



RCBS/Cramer Style 44 300 Gr
HPGC.

were made, and the hunt was upon us in no time at all.

Four of us (Bob, Erik, Steve and myself) met up at the cabin the night before we were to start hunting. The weather was kind of topsy-turvy and conditions were cool, wet and muddy. It started snowing on us before we even finished unpacking. We had a nice chat with Shane and Angie (the ranch managers) and found out that the roads were sloppy enough that we weren't going to be able drive any further than a few hundred yards into the interior of the ranch. This was clearly a hunt that would be conducted entirely on foot. The stormy weather had concentrated the animals down into a sheltered basin, out of the wind, at lower elevations, where the overnight lows weren't as extreme, and the freezing precipitation wasn't as severe. They also had a permanent water supply in the pond at the bottom of this bowl, and for the hogs, there were also some shaded slopes that tended to stay muddy this time of year, so they had some mud to root around in.

Spirits were high that night as we feasted on white chili and talked of guns, bullet moulds and knives. We told hunting stories and compared notes on bullet performance and favorite cartridges and loads. Erik told us about some of the bullet moulds he had modified, and we discussed some of the new ideas that he wanted to try. We stayed up chatting around the fireplace longer than we probably should have, but the conversation was so productive, and so much fun, that none of us were thinking of bed.

The next morning got started with coffee, bacon, sausage and scrambled eggs. The light snow that fell the night before was still there, and the ground was frozen hard, so the mud wasn't much of an issue early in the morning. We saw a group of hogs on the way into the ranch, but passed them up since it was so early in the hunt, and because each of us had specific types of hogs that we

were looking for in terms of size, color, etc. and while this group had some nice hogs in it, we wanted to look around at a few more before pulling the trigger. We parked the rigs up on a nearby finger-ridge and fanned out to sweep the hillside on our way down to the pond. This maneuver came up with nothing. We swept a saddle, a nearby ridgeline, and then walked up another road. Nothing.

We went back to camp for a lunch of venison stew, and to mull over our options. We ran into Angie and told her what we had seen, and she told us that the group of hogs we ran into first thing in the morning was all there was at the moment (there had been some heavy hunting pressure over the last couple of months). After lunch, Erik and Steve decided to hike up and check out some of the upper hills, and Bob and I decided to stay closer to where we had seen the hogs and try to ferret them out of the woods. Bob had decided to go for the larger sow we had seen that morning, while I was looking for a smaller meat hog in the 150-250 lb class (due to freezer space limitations). As we worked our way through the woods, Bob and I found the group of hogs about a quarter mile in front of us, feeding along the edge of the woods, with the blonde sow front and center. Suddenly, she just started wandering across the field, straight towards us, heading for the catch-basin below us to get a drink of water. Bob looked at me with a big grin on his face and said something about "meeting a blonde for a drink", and started down the hill towards the catch-basin. He got into position just as the blonde sow reached the edge of the woods. She stopped momentarily to look things over, and then wandered into the shadows towards the small pool of muddy water. Bob's 1894 Swedish Mauser 6.5x55 carbine (aka "Bubba") snapped to his shoulder, and seconds later barked sharply. The 325 lb blonde sow simply collapsed in her tracks, and then slowly rolled over onto her side. The sow had been facing him almost dead-on, angled only slightly to his left. The 140 grain Remington PSP had entered in her left cheek, raked down her neck along the spine, ruptured tissues in both lungs and the major vessels over the heart, and came to rest in her lower abdomen. That's almost 4 feet of penetration -- none too shabby for a moderate velocity (~2400 fps) load that 's over 110 years old!

When Bob shot the sow, the rest of the herd scattered off into the woods. Bob settled in to the gutting chores with his pet Bark River hunting knife (with the blaze orange scales so he can't lose it!), while I went hiking over hill and dale to establish radio contact with Angie (to get Bob's hog picked up), and to find the rest of the herd. After making contact, I swept back through the basin and checked out the pond, only to find that there had been no animal traffic through the area since that morning. I went back to help Bob and got back to him and the blonde sow about the same time that Angie got there with the truck and trailer. Angie got the sow loaded up onto her trailer and took



Bob, Bubba and the 325-lb blonde sow.

her back to the skinning shed, where she got right to work. It dropped down into the 20s that night, so Bob's pork was chilled very nicely.

That night Bob fixed us an Italian dinner with raviolis in marinara sauce, salad, and red wine. The fire box was stoked and the story telling started anew. It was another good evening of guns, hunting stories and such.

The next morning Bob and Erik needed to get an early start, so they headed out right after breakfast. Steve and I headed into the ranch and parked just inside the gate. The sun was out, and things were thawing quickly so the mud had gotten pretty bad, and we didn't dare drive any further without 4-wheel chains. The hogs were back in the meadow again, along with a 4-horned ram and a shaggy merino ram. I swung wide and slowly worked my way up the edge of the meadow, slowly angling my way sideways towards the hogs, without looking directly at them. There was a little black boar that I had my sights on, and eventually I got into position for a shot, and missed him. At the shot, the rest of the herd milled about nervously, and the little black boar ran a tight circle, eventually slowing down and trotting uphill, to my left. I snapped off another running shot at him, and missed again, and this time he lit the after-burners and sprinted all out for the woods 150 yards away. I watched him closely as he ran away, and he showed no signs of being hit. Steve and I followed his trail up into the woods, and found no blood, hair or other indications of any kind of hit. As I worked my way back down to the meadow, I found part of the herd still feeding alongside the edge of the woods. A nice little 175 lb boar worked his way alongside the edge of the woods, about 25 yards off, and gave me a good broadside presentation. The Model 29 came up and barked once. The 300 grain cast HP hit the little tan meat hog hard, just behind the left shoulder, and knocked him forcibly off his feet. He kicked a few times, then all was quiet. Steve went off to try to find the hogs, and I radioed in to Shane that we had one down. Rolling the tan boar over, I saw that the 300 grain cast HP had indeed exited (as expected), right through the middle of the far shoulder.



44 Mag w/RCBS 300 Gr HPGC & expanded bullet (recovered after being shot through a gallon jug, into dry newsprint and both are tough on a bullet, this HP held up very well).

made possible.

I got a good look at the wound channel during the skinning and gutting chores. The wound channel revealed that the 300 grain cast HP had expanded well, and that the front half of both lungs were shredded and bloodshot. The bullet had just missed the heart, but had cut some of the major vessels above the heart, and passed just under the spine. Both of the holes inside of the ribcage clearly indicated excellent expansion, as did the 6" of damage done to the both lungs. There was a moderate amount of bloodshot meat in both shoulders, but nothing extreme (like you might see with say a .30-06). All in all, the 300 grain cast HP had performed superbly, and I was very pleased with the cast HP design that Erik's handiwork had

All of this was happening "in the 11th hour" as I needed to hit the road by noon for the 4-hour drive home. As a result, I got so wrapped up in getting the hog taken care of, getting cleaned up and packed, etc. that I forgot to take pictures!

The trip home was something else -- I drove through rain, sleet, hail, and snow, and then I hit high winds on the bridge over the Columbia river. When I pulled into the driveway, I was glad to be home. It had been an eventful day.

A couple of days later, I got the hog cut-n-wrapped. I boned out the shoulders, ribs, etc. to make spicy breakfast sausage, peeled out the loin roasts, and cut out the hindquarters for Carolina barbeque. That weekend I made some Carolina barbeque with one of the hindquarters to celebrate Carolina beating Duke in Tyler Hansbrough's last home game in the Dean Dome. Man, was that good!

All in all, it was a good couple of days. Yes, I missed twice, but I still ended up making a good shot, and "bringing home the bacon". I spent quality time with good friends, and I learned some new things about cast bullets. We ate well, hunted well, and shared many stories. When it's all said and done, good friends, good bullets and good tools combine to make a hunting camp with real substance, the kind of hunting camp that you find your mind wandering back to long after you've left. It is a very satisfying feeling to build memories with quality folks in such a hunting camp.

In the final analysis, Birthdays Past don't really matter much because we're no longer that 8 year-old kid who wants a black Sears 3-speed bike, a pony ride, or that fire-engine red Matchbox 1965 Mustang for his birthday. And birthdays future are fun to think about, but we don't really know what they will look like, and perhaps they might not arrive for us. The only birthday that matters is the Birthday Present, and it just makes sense to celebrate it in such a way that makes our lives richer, and helps us to achieve whatever goals we have set for ourselves, and shapes the substance that will ultimately define each of our lives. Happy hunting and happy birthday!

- Glen E. Fryxell

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