



The Journal of the German Gun Collectors Association



DIETRICH APEL  
B. MAY 14, 1929 D. OCTOBER 27, 2016



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Der Waffenschmied 1927 Franz Jaeger ad

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Bequeme Handhabung.

Beschreibung etc. unison und portofrel.

**F. Jäger & Co., Suhl i. Th.**  
Gewehrfabrik.

4181

Der Waffeschmied 1910 Fr. Jaeger ad

**Neuester Hahndrilling**  
mit Patentscharnier.

Oberhebelverschluss  
Greenerriegel  
Verstärkte Basküle  
Kurze Schösser.

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Beschreibung und Preislite unison mit portofrel.

**F. Jäger & Co. Gewehrfabrik Suhl i. Th.**

Der Waffeschmied 1911 Franz Jaeger ad

Der preiswerteste und am meisten begehrte

**Hahndrilling**  
mit Greenerverschluß Marke Herold

**Selbstspann.-Drillinge**  
mit der besten besonderen Spannung für den Kugellaut. D. R. P. mit Simson-Jägerverschluss, sowohl :: wie Blitz, Anson & Deely und Vertikalblock. ::

**Selbstspanner-Flinten**  
äußerst preiswerte  
verschiedener Systeme mit und ohne Ejektor, sowie alle anderen Arten von Jagdgewehren.

Ziellernrohre, Fernrohrmontagen etc.

**F. Jäger & Co., G. m. b. H.**  
Gewehrfabrik Suhl i. Thür.

Der Waffenschmied 1911 Franz Jaeger ad



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hunting and sporting firearms.  
A 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

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Our title Der Waffenschmied  
("The Gunmaker") and our  
masthead come from a gunmakers'  
magazine published in Germany  
between 1881 and 1915.

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# *Editors' Notes*

**T**his fifth special issue of *Der Waffenschmied* celebrates the life and contributions of Dietrich Apel to the German Gun Collectors Association and German gun making heritage/history.

We offer pictures from Dietrich's family and gun smithing career as well as his leadership in activities of the GGCA. We also share samples of Dietrich's writings for GGCA's journal *Der Waffenschmied* that we feel display his encyclopedic knowledge and range of interests. Also included are two reprinted articles about the Paul Jaeger company, for which Dietrich worked after arriving in America. Finally, we include a personal tribute from John Neumann, one of Dietrich's most loyal friends among GGCA members.

Enjoy! Remember!!

**Waidmannsheil!**

*(coeditors)*

Christine Apel-Cram

Tom Devers

Richard Hummel

John Neumann

Jon Spencer





# On the Shoulders of Giants

by Richard Hummel, editor *Waidmannsheil!*

I'm just back from a trip, climbing mountains, and re-exploring canyons and plains I have visited before. More precisely, I have recently completed re-reading all of the 42 issues of *Der Waffenschmied* that Dietrich Apel created during his genesis leadership of GGCA. Dietrich Apel left this world October 27, 2016 and we attempt to remember and commemorate his life and role in birthing the GGCA.

My mountain-top experiences involved confronting anew the Dietrich legacy of leading us to encounter the giants of German sporting arms history. Not all, of course, but names within Dietrich's family: Gustav Kersten, Franz Jaeger, Paul Jaeger, and Dietrich Apel, himself.

As news of Dietrich's death rippled through the firearms culture, the tributes and attempts to encapsulate his contributions emerged immediately. The first one I encountered came from Jon Spencer, Dietrich's long time assistant with GGCA business affairs. He tersely, deftly tossed a lariat loop around the man's measure.

*I remember D as a hard-working, focused, imaginative, and dedicated visionary. He had a valuable background and a clear idea of his goals,*

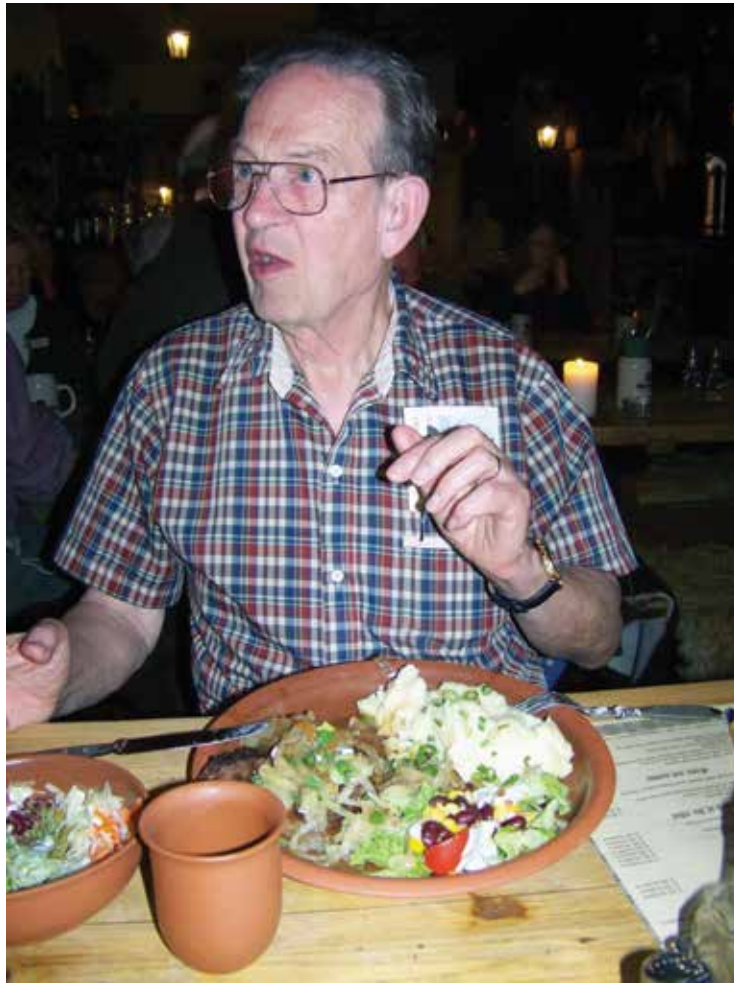
*and was willing to use his personal resources--money, space, and time--to accomplish them. As a benefit of his personal history, he had a valuable background related to the German gun business and his own professional life led to contacts not only with gun related firms in Germany, but also consumers, technicians, and aficionados in the US. If you remember, our first tour to Germany (an imaginative and bold step that is still reaping benefits today), was mainly to visit his business's vendors, and the shows we attended were some that he attended as a vendor. Consider that since he has not been involved with the association for some years that his guidance and influence are still being felt. Membership has continued to grow, many original members are with us still--some having 'picked up the banner' or become life members. The magazines continue his wish of adhering to a high standard of quality in content and workmanship. Our journal continues to be, as he wished, to be of historical importance and of archival quality. Decisions that Dietrich made have made this possible, as well as the Association becoming financially solvent.*











Rereading the 42 *Der Waffenschmied* issues created by Dietrich, I heard again and again Dietrich's voice exclaiming that he had ignited a firestorm of research and activity in pursuit of knowledge of German sporting arms that burned way beyond his control, and pleaded for others of us to step forward and continue to fan the flames. I timidly reply, "Dietrich, we have answered your call with vigor!." Whatever success GGCA has achieved in recruiting, pleasing, and retaining members must be credited to Dietrich's inspiring, amazing leadership at the head of the front ranks in the beginning.

We collect and offer here some photos of Dietrich's life and choice tidbits of his life history that I especially relish remembering. Also, with the generous permission of *Double Gun and Single Shot Journal*, we reprint the recent article (*DG&SSJ*, Winter 2016, pp. 15-30, Vol. 27, No. 4) by J.E.Fender entitled "The Legacy of Paul Jaeger, Inc." This wonderful article details a greater part of the history of Dietrich Apel's forebears, a history Dietrich did not live to complete himself.

Despite many urgings, I regret that Dietrich never seemed to complete a description of his life story, only offering snatches/glimpses of portions. We gathered a few that many of you have read before, but will fondly remember.

One of my favorites appeared in *Der Waffenschmied* No. 16, as part of Dietrich's telling of the Jaeger family association with the engraver Klaus Willig.

*"After I had graduated from high school in Suhl, my grandfather Franz Jaeger convinced me to serve an apprenticeship as a gunsmith in his shop. Because opportunities to escape Eastern Germany were shrinking fast, I rushed through an accelerated apprenticeship facilitated by the old masters. The day after I became a journeyman, I caught a train to Berlin, fearing that this exit route could be closed at any moment. I flew out of Berlin in a British plane that had brought coal to the isolated city and evacuated refugees on its return trip.*

*I arrived in West Germany in 1949 with no money and very few belongings. But because Paul Jaeger, my uncle in America, had written to the American Air Force headquarters in Wiesbaden, a job was waiting for me at the Wiesbaden Rod and Gun Club of the American Air Force. I had to live with another family in one room, but I had a roof over my head and started to earn my first money. At the time we were building sporting rifles from surplus Mauser actions and machine gun barrels.*

*When my uncle, Kurt Jaeger, also arrived from Suhl and needed a new beginning, we founded our own gun shop in Mainz across the river from Wiesbaden. The American servicemen were our customers. Two rooms served as our shop, office and living quarters, but we had all the work we could handle. At that time I went to Schweinfurth to learn some engraving from Emil Willig.*

*I remember being in the small shop on the second floor, hammering away on a practice plate and breaking chisel points without end. Poor Emil Willig must have been very frustrated and I gave up engraving for good shortly thereafter. But...this was the beginning of a renewed working relationship between the Jaegers and the Willigs that lasted until two years ago when I changed jobs and became an editor and tour guide.*

*Emil Willig engraved many rifles and 8 shotguns for the American Jaeger customers in Germany and shortly thereafter for Paul Jaeger in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. These engravings were quite a bargain for the Americans. At one time you could get four Marks for one dollar. But all engraved pieces were signed Kurt Jaeger, Mainz; thus, many think that Kurt Jaeger was an engraver. This was a holdover custom from the old days in Suhl and elsewhere which has fortunately ended: The shop owner's name, rather than the employee engraver's name appeared on the engraving. Today we would not think of ordering a fine engraving and not have the engraver sign it.*

*When I was in charge of the Paul Jaeger company in Jenkintown, our 50th Anniversary and the NRA show in Philadelphia occurred in the same year. To celebrate the occasion and honor Paul Jaeger, we had a double booth at the show and brought back the finest Jaeger rifles from our customers. We had a gunsmith working on one end of the booth and an engraver on the other end.*

*There are hundreds of Willig-engraved guns in this country. From 1950 to about 1970 the Willigs engraved exclusively for the Jaegers. Kurt Jaeger retired in 1976 and sold his business in Mainz. He is still alive but quite old and memory loss has set in.*

Also, with the generous permission of J.E. Fender, the author, and *Double Gun and Single Shot Journal*, we are delighted to reprint the recent article (*DG&SSJ*, Winter 2016, pp. 15-30, Vol. 27, No. 4) by J.E.Fender entitled "The Legacy of Paul Jaeger, Inc." This wonderful article details a greater part of the history of Dietrich Apel's forebears, a history Dietrich did not live to complete himself.



# The Legacy of Paul Jaeger, Inc.

*Having Served Hunters, Shooters, and Gun Collectors for 60 Years*



— by J. E. Fender —

German firearms and their technology have been intrinsic to the warp and woof of American heritage and prowess from the earliest beginnings of our nation. German-speaking immigrants brought with them their *Steinschloss Büchse* (flintlock) rifles, more generally known since their introduction as *Jäger* rifles, although in German *Jäger* or *Jaeger* is simply the word for *hunter*. The design of a heavy caliber relatively short overall length rifle was well settled on the European mainland, and was readily found in Austria, Holland, the Czech and Slovakian countries, and the Nordic countries. These *Jäger rifles* very quickly evolved into the versatile, well balanced, and certainly graceful firearms with longer barrels for greater accuracy and smaller calibers for flatter ballistic trajectory and longer range

that we know today as the American long rifle.

Although this evolution began initially in the German settlements in eastern Pennsylvania, the advantages of this firearm design ideally suited to the American frontier were readily apparent to and quickly copied by gunsmiths who had emigrated from the British Isles. While there were superficial, stylistic differences between the long rifles crafted by German-speaking and English-speaking gunmakers (flintlocks sourced from the British Isles generally had the pan forged integral with the side plate, while Germanic flintlocks were fitted with pans attached to their side plates with pins) some 300 years after the basic design evolved, it is extremely difficult to determine whether English and German locks predominated.



*The Jäger home and factory provided a beautiful view of the surrounding countryside.*

Suffice it to say that today anyone contemplating creating a pre-revolutionary flintlock rifle may certainly select either style of flintlock and be historically accurate. As was most probably the situation in 1720 through 1750, choice will depend upon price and availability.

When the British government formally, and more than a bit grudgingly, recognized that Americans had successfully wrested their independence from the British Crown in 1783, German was the second most widely spoken language after English in the United States of America, a position the language maintained until the anti-German hysteria of the First World War when even speaking German was viewed as unpatriotic. In 2016 some 48 million Americans can claim German ancestry. An urban legend persists that only one vote defeated German over English as the official language of the United States. There is no official United States language, although English has been the *de facto* language due to the language's predominance. The basis of this urban legend was a petition made by German residents of Virginia to the United States Congress to have a certain portion of the laws of the United States printed in German. This petition was denied by the Congress in 1795 by a 42–41 vote in the House of Representatives.

This prefatory information acknowledges the great debt owed to German technology, manufacturing, and workmanship since these attributes have immeasurably enriched American connoisseurs' enjoyment of fine firearms. An early though certainly not the first proponent of highest-quality German firearms for the American market in the early 1920s (the names Adolph and Pachmayr come readily to mind), particularly the double guns and single shot rifles of greatest appeal and interest to readers of the *Double Gun Journal*, was the Pennsylvania-based firm of Paul Jaeger, Incorporated. Paul Jaeger (31 July 1901–3 February 1993) was actually born in New York City. His father, Franz Jäger (9 March 1876–26 December 1956), the German spelling of the name which Franz anglicized to Jaeger, was one of ten children and may well have become a farmer had not his mother's sister married Gustav Kersten—inventor of the *Kersten* locking system for break-action firearms—and never to be confused with the British Greener locking system or called a “double Greener”—encouraged Franz's interest in firearms. Franz devoted himself to learning the craft, and immigrated to the United States in 1898 where he partnered with brothers Karl and Edmond Bittner to form the Gun Improvement Company, Bittner & Jaeger, Proprietors 34-235 Broadway, New York City. Franz met and married a German woman of Jewish extraction employed as a children's governess by a wealthy New York family, Fanny Strauss (7 June 1876–3 July 1962),

and Paul was the first child born of that union.

The primary business of the Gun Improvement Company was the manufacture and fitting of an excellent single trigger that Franz invented and patented to replace the triggers of double barrel shotguns. The single trigger mechanism was well received by American shotgunners and demand quickly exceeded the production capability of the Gun Improvement

Company. At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States had acquired an overseas empire, recovered from the deep recession of 1897, and was undergoing an economic transformation through the rapid expansion of industrial development and large-scale agriculture. This economic transformation required labor, lots of labor, and the American economy enjoyed almost full employment. Despite the ever-increasing demand for the Jaeger single trigger, Franz Jäger wished to build a complete line of firearms to his own designs, but Franz and his partners could not locate the skilled barrel makers, stockers, and artisans needed to manufacture complete firearms.

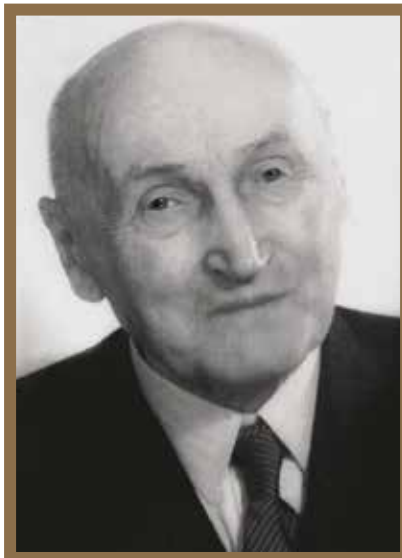
Unable to obtain the necessary skilled labor in the United States to build complete firearms to the same quality lavished on his single trigger mechanisms, a frustrated Franz Jäger decided to return to Germany shortly after Paul was born. In early 1903 Franz, Fanny, and young Paul left the United States, though at the suggestion of one of the Bittner brothers who came from the area, Franz made a brief detour to Liège, in the French-speaking Walloon region of Belgium to study the gunmaking industry centered in that city before continuing on to Suhl. Franz was very familiar with Suhl since he had apprenticed as an actioner in nearby Zella Mehlis, and Franz opened a small shop and immediately began manufacturing his single triggers. The Jäger single triggers proved very popular, and soon a network of prominent gunmakers in the Suhl and Zella Mehlis area was sending firearms to Franz' shop for conversion to the single trigger. From this somewhat humble beginning Franz eventually founded his

eponymous *Gewehrfabrik* (Firearms Manufacturer) Franz Jäger & Company.

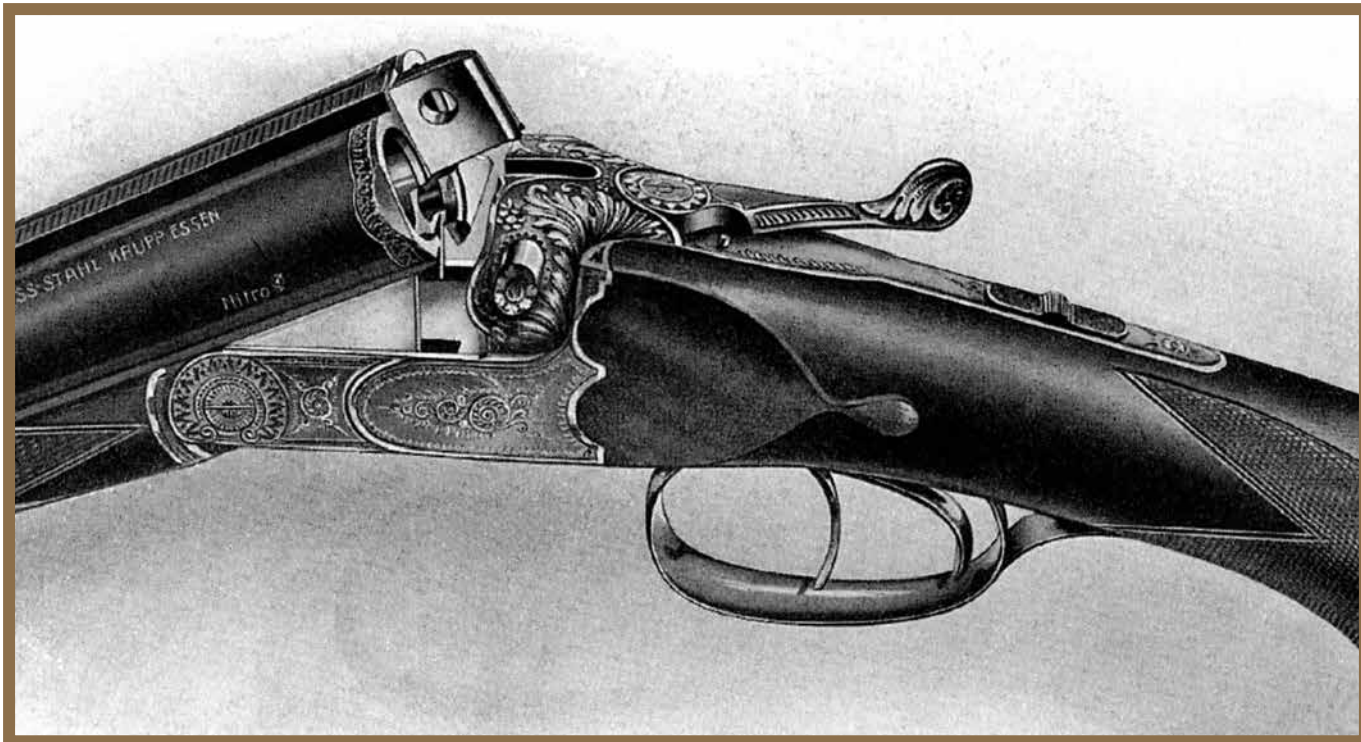
Franz' company prospered, and during the period 1900 through 1938, Franz was granted 23 patents for firearm inventions or improvements by Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. In addition, Franz received eight utility patents from Germany (in the Austrian and German patent systems “utility patents” may be granted for products, not processes and methods, and the patent is valid only for 10 years). Variants of the inventions or innovations made by Franz Jäger are still used today in the German firearms industry, particularly the *Vertical-Block Verschluss*



*Gustav Kersten*  
*Franz Jäger*







*Franz Jäger gun*

breech-locking system used by Blaser and Merkel in their powerful double rifles. Franz continued to refine and improve his firearms, and immediately prior to the onset of World War One, his company employed some 50 artisans. Franz' company built various bolt-action rifles, but Franz' real passion was the manufacture of the finest *bockbüchsfliinte* (over/under shotgun/rifle), *büchsfliinte* (side-by-side shotgun/rifle), *bergstutzen* (over/under rifle, small caliber over a large caliber), *drilling* (side-by-side shotgun with rifle barrel underneath), and *doppelbüchsdrilling* (side-by-side double-barreled rifle with shotgun barrel underneath).

There is no record that Paul, now the oldest of four children (sister Selma, 9 November 1904, and brothers Kurt, 17 April 1906, and Erich, 30 September 1908), completed any formal program as an apprentice gunsmith, and Paul, while frequently in his father's factory, had to observe the centuries-old dictum regarding children "of being seen but not heard." In fact, Paul may not have considered a career in the firearms' industry for, following his graduation from the *gymnasium*, the German equivalent of the American high school, Paul matriculated at the School of Engineering, Köthen (one-time home of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach),

some three hours via train from Suhl. While at the School of Engineering, Paul completed a *practicum* in tool and machinery designs, mechanics, and metallurgy, which earned him a diploma in mechanical engineering.



*Eighteen-year-old Paul Jaeger's school photograph as he matriculated at the School of Engineering, Köthen, for the 1919–1920 school year. A rather serious Paul—but even then he was smiling.*

The world in which Paul, and everyone in Germany, lived from early 1919 onward was one of economic and political chaos. The victorious western powers compelled German leaders to sign the draconian Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919, appointed five years exactly from the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, which ceded territories to Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, and Poland, demilitarized and occupied the Rhineland, forced enormous reparations to be repaid in gold or foreign currency—even though the western powers knew Germany could never repay such staggering debt—and most humiliating of all, forced Germany to accept the "War Guilt Clause" which laid upon Germany the complete responsibility for initiating World War One. Famine was epidemic, German wartime deaths and casualties had exceeded seven million men, and the economy was destroyed by hyperinflation. In late 1923, for example, the official exchange rate was Five Trillion (that is the number "5" followed

**Besonders für stärkste Ladungen geeignet.**  
Verschluss-Beschreibung Seite 7

**Selbstspanner-Drillinge**  
mit Jäger's Vertikalblock-Verschluß  
besonders zu empfehlen mit  
Jäger's Kugelspannung,  
kombinierter  
Herold-Sicherung  
(Seite 4-6)



Nr. 80  
Gewicht in Kal. 16 und 8 J.R. ca. 3,1 kg  
Ohne Mehrpreis auch als Kurzdrilling

Nr. 80 Kruppstahlläufe, alle drei Läufe mit rauchlosem Pulver staatl. geprüft, linker Schrotlauf Würgebohrung (ehoke), Schrotläufe Kal. 16, 12 oder 20, Kugellauf beliebiges Kaliber, auch für ausländ. Kugelpatronen, Signalstifte oben, seitliche Greener-Sicherung, Silberperlkorn, besondere Spannung für den Kugellauf, selbsttätiges Visier, auf 100 m eingeschossen, feiner Maserschaft, feine englische Arabesken- oder Jagdgravierung, feinste Arbeit

Nr. 80 F Derselbe Drilling wie Nr. 80, mit feinstem Maserschaft, feinsten Gravierung nach Angabe

Nr. 81 Drilling wie Nr. 80, jedoch etwas einfacher ausgestattet, gewöhnliche Schieberumschaltung

Diese Modelle sind auch als **Doppelbüchdrillinge für starke Ladungen** (Seite 13) besonders geeignet. Mehrpreis **Bock-Büchflinten** mit übereinanderliegenden Läufen, Kugellauf **obenliegend**, kosten mit diesem Verschluss in der Ausstattung entsprechend Nr. 81 Ausstattung wie Nr. 80 wie Nr. 80 F

Drillinge sowohl wie Bockbüchflinten auch mit **Spezial-Seitenschloß** (Seite 14) Mehrpreis

28


### F. J. Jäger guns

by 12 zeroes) German marks to one U.S. dollar. Young Paul Jaeger saw no future for himself in post-World War One Germany. Fully aware that the United States of America was a land not of privileges but of equal rights, and that even if indigent, an honest, industrious, and frugal person would be able to fashion a comfortable life, Paul decided in 1927 with whatever financial assistance his family could spare, and with his mother's prayers and his father's blessing and encouragement, to return to the land of his birth and citizenship—with New York City as his destination, also because his father retained some business connections there.

In 1927 the United States' exuberant celebration of Charles Lindbergh's epic non-stop, solo transatlantic flight was just another manifestation of the wealth and excess of the post-war optimism of the "Roaring Twenties" that masked the financial plight of the agricultural sector and the naiveté of the reckless speculators who were purchasing stocks "on the margin," believing that the stock market would continue to rise indefinitely. "Black Thursday," the 24th of October 1929, was still more than two years

in the future, and upon his arrival in New York City young Paul quickly found employment as a gunsmith with the highly regarded importer and dealer of best-quality European sporting firearms, Von Lengerke & Detmold.

Paul quickly saved enough money from his earnings as a gunsmith to return to Suhl and marry his fiancée, Annelise. The newly married couple moved into a boarding house at 896 Melrose Avenue (in the borough of the Bronx). We know that Paul was still residing in New York City in early 1930 because the decennial census of April 1930 showed Paul and Annelise residing at the 896 Melrose Avenue address. This address was confirmed by an interesting family memento, a letter to Paul from his family in



**Selbstspanner-Drillinge**  
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(Seite 4-6)

Nr. 80  
Gewicht in Kal. 16 und 8 J.R. ca. 3,1 kg  
Ohne Mehrpreis auch als Kurzdrilling

Suhl postmarked 10 October 1928—which was delivered "Mit Luftpost" aboard the inaugural transatlantic flight of the rigid airship *Graf Zeppelin*.

Paul transferred seamlessly to working for Abercrombie & Fitch in 1928 when that upscale sporting goods emporium acquired both Von Lengerke & Detmold (as well as that company's Chicago branch, Von Lengerke & Antoine), and the

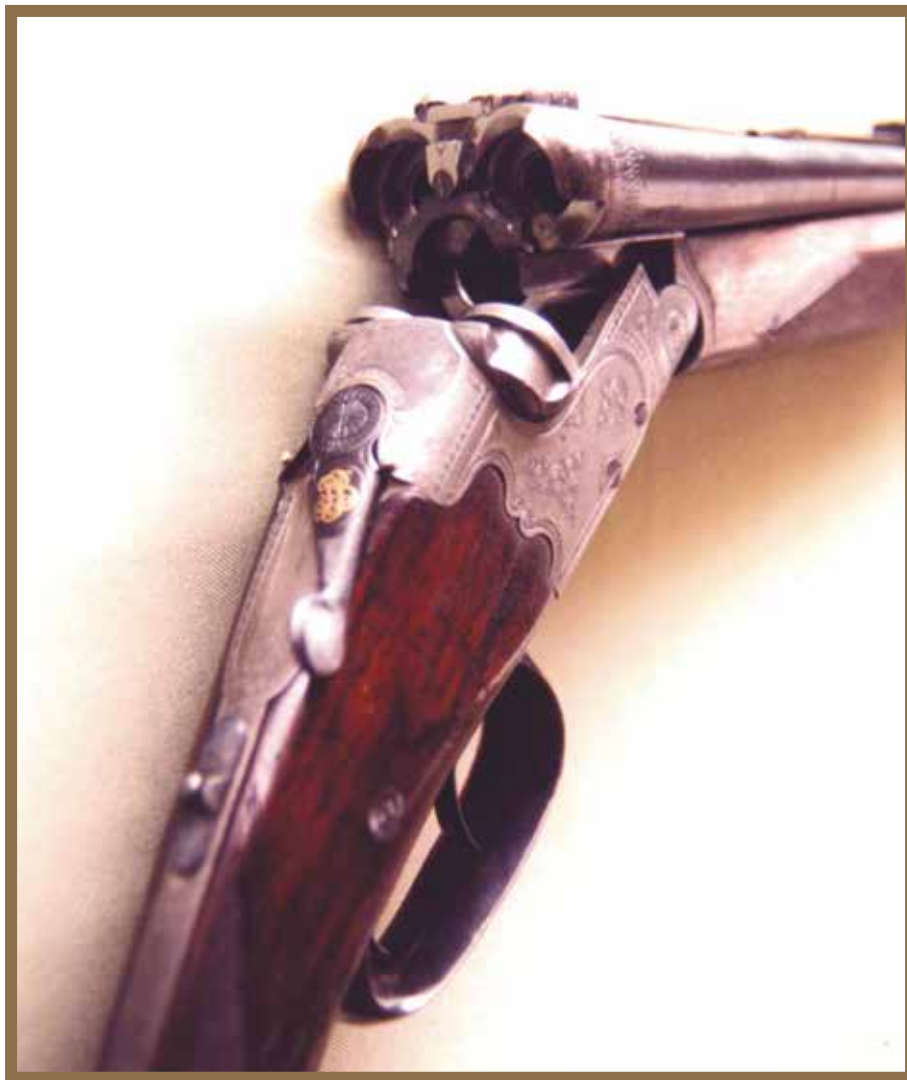


gunsmithing company Griffin & Howe. The acquisition of Griffin & Howe brought a number of gunsmiths into Abercrombie & Fitch, and Paul's lack of seniority meant that he was "rightsized" out of his job. However, his talents and work ethic were already recognized in the fine firearms community along the New York–Philadelphia axis, and despite the dramatic economic impact of the onset of the Great Depression, Paul was offered and accepted a mid-1930 employment opportunity from the well-known Philadelphia-based gunsmithing firm of Reginald F. (R. F.) Sedgley.

The period of time Paul worked for Sedgley is not known, though he probably was on the payroll intermittently until immediately prior to America's entry into World War Two. Sedgley's sales during the Depression were anemic, and Paul exhibited a robust entrepreneurship that led him to strike out on his own, at least on a part-time basis. In the August 1934 issue of the *American Rifleman*, a brief one-half-inch advertisement captioned "Restocking Supplies" offering custom firearm components

appeared, giving Paul's address as 130 Apsley Street, Philadelphia. One year later the one-half-inch advertisement was captioned "Gunsmithing Supplies" and Paul was offering a circular. Two years later Paul had moved to larger premises at 4655 Fernhill Road in Philadelphia, and was offering "Gunsmithing Supplies" in a 16-page brochure, and in addition to offering a "Single Shot Vertical Block Action," he also offered "a modern Single Shot Action for Center Fire Cartridges." The brochure featured a plethora of gunsmithing accessories sourced from Germany, and also advertised "Imported Hunting and Sporting Shotguns and Rifles" with a black and white photograph of what in all likelihood was a Franz Jäger over/under shotgun. Paul asserted that he was "representing leading European manufacturers specializing in Custom Built Field and Trap Double Barrel and Over & Under Shotguns, Combination Guns, Double Barrel Rifles and Repeating Shotguns," and "on request . . . will be glad to make quotations on Imported Hunting and Sporting Shotguns and Rifles."

Although unable to be confirmed at this late date, there is some anecdotal evidence that Paul had advised his first United States employer, Von Lengerke & Detmold, on the nature and quality of firearms suitable for importation from Germany. In any event, Paul Jaeger had inaugurated what would become a successful business model of



*F. J. Jäger*

providing complete equipment and services for American hunters and competitive shooters, with an emphasis from the beginning on quality European (primarily Austrian and German) double guns.

Paul quickly removed from the 4655 Fernhill address when he was able to rent the top floor of a hardware store in Jenkintown (a suburb of Philadelphia) in late 1936. Paul built what became a very profitable gunsmithing and firearms and accessories importing business, "Paul Jaeger, Incorporated." Four years later, as the wars in Europe and Asia intensified to the point that American companies were mobilizing for the production of war matériel, Paul suspended his gunsmithing operations to focus on producing components as a sub-contractor to defense industries mobilized in the Philadelphia area. As an American citizen by birth, Paul devoted his skills and equipment wholeheartedly to World War Two defense work, understanding that his customers were not the Department of War or the Navy, but the soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen serving on the front lines. However, Paul was gravely concerned about his relatives in Germany living under the Nazi regime.

Understandably, Paul had no contact with his family during the war years, and the time immediately following the defeat of Nazi Germany was particularly troubling when Paul learned that his beloved mother, Fanny, had been swept up by local police officials in February 1945 in the *Altentransporte* (elderly transports) for the "crime" of being Jewish and older than 65. Fanny

was sent to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt (now Terezin in the Czech Republic), but most fortunately Theresienstadt was liberated by advancing Red Army forces in early May, before Fanny could be transported onward to Auschwitz-Birkenau for *Sonderbehandlung* or “special treatment”—immediate gassing of all upon arrival. Since the Suhl area was still occupied by American military forces, the Soviets turned the liberated concentration camp inmates from Suhl over to the American

*Paul Jaeger*



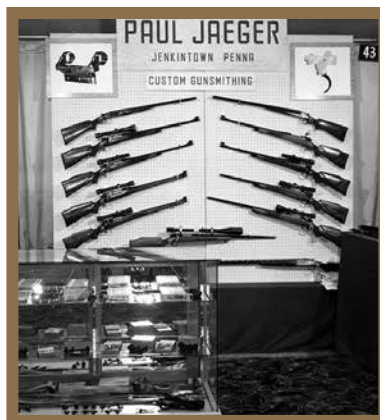
appear before “Contract Renegotiation Boards” to adjust their profits downwards, Paul Jaeger’s defense work had barely covered his labor, material, and overhead expenses. But at war’s end he presciently recognized the opportunity to provide sporting rifles to returning American servicemen eager to resume the hunting and shooting interests they had voluntarily set aside for the war’s duration. Paul was able to purchase most of the inventory of actions and barrels from the defunct Sedgley Company (the name lives on still on Sedgley



*The Jenkintown storefront  
Jaeger rifles and products*

forces, who returned a traumatized and emaciated but very much alive, Fanny, to her anxious family in mid-May 1945. With war’s end, Paul was able to provide aid to his parents and relatives in the form of “Care Packages” dispatched to them during the very difficult post-war years.

Unlike a large number of companies, large and small, engaged in World War Two defense work, later decried as “War Profiteers,” who were subsequently forced to



Avenue in Philadelphia) and set about building extremely serviceable, accurate, and reasonably priced rifles. Tapping into this vast, long denied market before the major American firearms companies could retool to peacetime production of commercial firearms, gave Paul an immediate economic boost that allowed him to hire skilled gunsmiths and expand into a retail shop at 211 Leedom Street, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. Paul designed and manufactured firearm accessories such as precision adjustable triggers, replacement safeties for rifles utilizing the Mauser-style “wing” safety



when scopes were mounted, various side mounts for scopes, both permanent and quick-detachable, and the quick-detachable sling swivels, so useful and popular that the swivels were copied as soon as patent protection expired.

The American prosperity induced by World War Two increased after the war's end and increasing numbers of American sportsmen now had the time and wherewithal to hunt in Africa. Ernest Hemingway had extolled the virtues of the "sporterized" Springfield .30-06 that served him so well on Hemingway's late 1933 African safari to the point that American hunters wanted similar rifles. Significant numbers of hunters desiring similar rifles for African hunting came to Paul Jaeger, and beginning in the late 1940s as African hunting outfitters reorganized to accommodate post-war demand, a large number of rifles built in Paul



Jaeger's shop were taken to Africa. The 1903 Springfield actions were available in small numbers after World War Two, but Paul preferred FN Mauser actions and various FN Mauser variants as the bases for custom rifles built in his shop.

I commissioned Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, to stock the rifle I took on my first African safari to Mozambique in 1972: a .338 Winchester Magnum utilizing a Savage 110 Left-Hand action. This rifle so exceeded my expectations for utter reliability and accuracy, that I had the Paul Jaeger firm stock two other rifles for me, as well as accomplish the re-stocking of a J. P. Sauer drilling to accommodate a left-handed shooter. All the work was delivered on time, on budget, and with total client satisfaction; when I acquired a Winchester Model 21, 20 bore that required re-stocking I did not hesitate to send

*Paul Jaeger with a pheasant shot on the farm of his good friend, Chet Piotrowski, in Schwenksville, Pennsylvania, approximately one hour's drive north of Jenkintown. The shotgun is a Belgian-made Masquelier, a line Paul Jaeger incorporated and imported until the company went out of business.*

*Early Paul Jaeger catalog, probably circa 1954-55, illustrating double guns and combination guns that Jaeger was importing (most made on special order) from Germany and Austria.*

## QUALITY GUNS



IMPORTED – GUARANTEED – SERVICED

BY

PAUL JAEGER, INC. — JENKINTOWN, PA. 19046

that shotgun to Paul Jaeger for a new buttstock.

The first double shotgun imported by Paul following the end of World War Two was the Belgian Masquelier side-by-side with enhancements more likely to appeal to American shotgunners. The Masquelier shotguns were well made, and proved to be very popular: Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, im-



*Pictured at right: Swiss-trained gunsmith, Alfred W. Gallifent, whose emigration from Switzerland was arranged by Paul Jaeger.*

ported the Masquelier until the company changed owners. Paul also sourced high-grade double guns from Franz Jäger, marked “Made for Paul Jaeger” as well, though very few double guns were imported directly from Suhl due to the very high import duty of 50 percent assessed on products originating from behind the Iron Curtain.

By 1951 the Jaeger enterprise had grown to the point that Paul was severely backordered in the gunsmithing operations while he had to devote more time to overseeing the retail store, order fulfillment for catalog items, and coordinating the engraving art desired by clients that was performed in Ger-

many by superb master engravers, Emil and Claus Willig—who were kept very busy engraving firearms for Paul Jaeger, Incorporated. Paul needed another gunsmith on staff, so he invited a nephew, the son of his sister, Selma, Dietrich Apel (14 April 1929), who had served an apprenticeship as an actioner and stockmaker under his grandfather, Franz Jäger, to come to the United States and work for Paul as a gunsmith. Dietrich as well as his uncle, Kurt Jäger, had managed to flee Communist-ruled East Germany, and in 1950 the two established a small gun shop, Waffen-Jäger, in Mainz, West Germany. The clients initially were American service personnel only since at that time the Allied Powers (United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) occupying Germany forbade citizens private firearm ownership.

In addition to engraving for Paul Jaeger, the father and son Willig team also engraved numerous firearms for American service personnel clients of Kurt Jäger. Since Kurt Jäger’s name as the owner of the Waffen-Jäger shop was also engraved on the firearms sold to Americans, Kurt Jäger has erroneously been described by some sources as an engraver himself. However, Kurt Jäger was never—nor claimed to be—an engraver. The small shop prospered and Kurt Jäger, recommended by some of his service personnel clients, was offered the opportunity to manage the rod and gun club at the major U.S. Air Force command and operations center at Wiesbaden.

Dietrich, 23 years old and newly married, had just been accepted into an engineering school, and he had to choose between two career paths. With more than a little encouragement from his uncles in Germany, Dietrich accepted Paul’s invitation—and advancement of funds, to be repaid later, for the new couple’s travel expenses. In April 1952, Dietrich Apel and Eve left Germany via train to Paris for a very brief visit, then on to the

French channel port of Le Harve and embarkation in a third-class compartment aboard the SS *Île de France* (the same ocean liner on which Ernest Hemingway and Marlene Dietrich had met in 1934 when Hemingway returned from his first African safari), and then on to the United States experiencing the same emotions arising from the momentous transition from one life to another that his uncle had felt some 25 years earlier.

Dietrich worked as a gunsmith for Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, from mid-1952 through 1970 when Bill Ruger fortuitously hired Dietrich to work for him at the Newport, New



Hampshire factory. Ruger had designed the Red Label superposed shotgun, and some components had already been manufactured, but there were still problems in manufacturing and assembly processes. Dietrich was placed in charge of the assembly department for all Ruger firearms manufactured in the Newport factory, and he developed the silver-brazing technique for joining and assembling the Red Label's double barrels. Dietrich found northern New Hampshire similar in climate and topography to the German State of Thuringia,

dealers who easily obtained Federal Firearms Licenses and undersold the established retailers.

The company was operating at a loss across all product lines. Sadly, the quality of the work performed by the gunsmiths on staff had fallen below the Paul Jaeger, Incorporated standards, and the company was not generating the revenues necessary to remain a viable business, much less fund growth. There has been much speculation about the reasons behind the decline of Paul Jaeger, Incorporated. In truth, though, and



*Color photograph of Ruger number one single shot rifle with full length "Mannlicher" fore-stock. (Leupold scope—most likely 1-4X is in German claw mount.)*

*Below: .375 H&H double rifle built by Paul Jaeger Gunsmiths (D. Apel and A. Gallifent) on the Ruger Red Label frame. Original 20-gauge barrel set also shown.*



where Suhl is located, enough so that he put down some family roots in the Upper Connecticut River Valley of that state, with his children attending school in the region, and with his daughter remaining to work at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center following her graduation from nursing school.

In 1977 at his uncle's request, Dietrich returned to Jenkinstown to assist in the management of Paul Jaeger, Incorporated. The retail store which, following the booming economy of the post-war years, had been situated in a good location on the main traffic artery from center city Philadelphia to northern destinations, was now lost in the expansion of amorphous suburbs and accompanying traffic congestion. Firearm dealers and gunsmiths who had patronized Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, for their tool and accessory needs, now purchased what they needed from wholesale distributors. The retail firearms trade was being siphoned off nationally by the "kitchen table"

certainly without intending any disparagement, Paul Jaeger himself was the proximate cause of his company's decline.

Paul Jaeger, along with countless millions of people in Europe and the United States, was a product of the Great Depression, and unless you were alive during that period of economic turmoil, distrust and despair, it is difficult to comprehend how the Great Depression shaped perceptions and habits. Thankfully, I was born in the opening months of World War Two, but I vividly recall observing my parents' and grandparents' frugalities, and their considerable fears that the wartime and post-war economy would collapse and return them to those dark days of privation, and reignite the trauma of uncertainty. Such fears of the present and dread of the future are assuaged when a person possessed *something*, and once *something* is possessed the desire to *control* it becomes overwhelming. A person adapts, but as Charles Darwin

Selbstspanner-Doppelflinte  
mit Simson-Jäger-Schildzapfen-Verschuß



**Modell 8**

Läufe aus Flußstahl Krupp-Essen oder gleichwertigem Material, Schaft mit Pistolgriff und Backe oder englisch, englische Gravur

**Modell 9**

Wie vorstehend, aber mit Seitenblenden am Verschußstück, Gravur englisch oder mit Jagdstücken, schönes Schaftholz

**Modell 10**

Feine Ausführung, feines Maserschaftholz, sehr feine englische oder Jagdstückgravur mit ziselierten Muscheln.

Die vorstehenden Modelle werden bei entsprechendem Mehrpreis auch mit selbsttätigem Hülsenauswerfer (Ejektor) geliefert.

20

100 D.P.I.

*A. Simson-Jäger (above) and Heym double rifle (below).*

**Rifle No. Three: The Buffalo**  
**Friedrich Wilhelm Heym Company**





reminds us, no adaptation is permanent, because the perfectly adjusted perish when their environments change.

Paul Jaeger sold innovative quality firearms-related products of his own design and manufacture, but competitors quickly copied his quick-detachable sling swivels and finely adjustable triggers—and undersold his products. The Jaeger quick-de-



*Gunsmith Don Baughman putting the finishing touches on a Krieghoff he has just stocked. Don Baughman went on to work for Krieghoff International in Ottsville, Pennsylvania.*

tachable scope mounts were marvels in their day but other quick-detachable scope mounting systems were developed, and they were less expensive. A multi-product business spreads its overhead and general and administrative expenses over the entire product line, and if one product declines the business owner is confronted with the prospect of either terminating the unprofitable segment, or if the segment is retained, allocating expenses from the other, profitable segments, and thus reducing the operating capital of the entire enterprise.

But Paul Jaeger, Incorporated's business model failed to reposition the enterprise to accommodate changing market conditions and consumer desires. As futurists such as Alvin Toffler have

observed, "nothing is more dangerous than yesterday's successes." Paul Jaeger, Incorporated's failure to plan for succession is common to many once successful companies. It is certainly understandable, when viewed through the prism of their experiences, for those entrepreneurs who created profitable business to want to retain their control. But for a viable enterprise to perpetuate itself, the issue of

succession—who will lead the enterprise when the originator departs—is a vexing problem not ameliorated by procrastination. Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, like so many businesses large and small, simply failed to stay in touch with its market, and did not take into account technological changes in the fine firearms business—but this in no way compromised the reputation of the company he built, or the quality of the gunsmithing work that a plethora of satisfied clients still hold in the highest esteem. Dietrich Apel returned to Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, determined to restore the company to profitability in keeping with Paul Jaeger's original vision for the company. He was aided immeasurably by Harvey Salwen, a long-time client of Jaeger's, and Mike Bennett, both highly talented and successful financial consultants who joined the company's Board of Directors and assisted with raising additional operating capital. The company's restructuring saw new stock-making equipment brought on line, new catalogs and marketing, displays at major venues such as the annual National Rifle Association conventions, Game Coin, the Safari Club International conventions, and explored possible joint ventures with companies such as Orvis.

Of particular interest to readers of the *Double Gun Journal*, Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, was perhaps the first company to see the advantages of the very affordable Finnish-made Valmet double guns, and marketed Valmet firearms as soon as they became available from the Scandinavian manufacturer. Aided by his good friend, retired U.S. Army colonel and writer, Tom Turpin, Dietrich established a good working relationship with Peter Bang, then

manager of the Heym Company located in Müennerstadt, Germany, and convinced Heym to build double rifles for the American market. While still expensive, Heym doubles were far less costly than British or other Continental double rifles. Through Dietrich's association with Dieter Krieghoff, who had established Krieghoff International in Ottsville, Pennsylvania, the parent Krieghoff Company in Ulm, Germany, was persuaded to introduce a double rifle at a retail price then under \$10,000. Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, successfully sold the first Krieghoff double rifles imported into the United States, but this double rifle proved so popular that other dealers clamored for them as well.

Dietrich's prior association with the Ruger Company resulted



*Krieghoff double rifles*





in the idea of a double rifle built on the Ruger Red Label frame. The first double rifle was chambered for the .45-70 cartridge—which was also my choice of cartridges when I collaborated with the late and very much lamented master gunsmith, Gary Stiles of Homer City, Pennsylvania, to build a double rifle on a Belgian side-by-side frame to prove the concept. I recall seeing a double rifle in .375 H&H caliber in the Jaeger retail store in late 1979. Very few of these Ruger double rifles were built; but the fact they were, illustrated the technical abilities of the Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, gunsmithing staff.

Unfortunately, the market niche in which Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, competed was increasingly coveted by much larger companies with far greater financial resources and the capital for mass marketing. The early 1980s saw United States' inflation and interest rates spiral into double digits; hard-pressed consumers had no choice but to reduce their discretionary spending to absolute minimums. The sharp downturn in the United States' economy led to the failure of thousands of small companies nationwide—Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, among them.

By the mid-1980s the Jaeger Board of Directors was forced to acknowledge that the 50-year-old company of Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, was no longer viable. A 51 percent controlling interest in the company, which included the gunsmithing equipment, was sold to Dunn's of Grand Junction, Tennessee, a then well-known retail mail-order company, though with little experience in custom gunmaking, that wanted to expand into custom-made firearms. Dietrich moved to Tennessee initially, but Dunn's was never able to capitalize on the Paul Jaeger cachet, and Dunn's itself subsequently was liquidated in bankruptcy. Dietrich was able, however, to buy

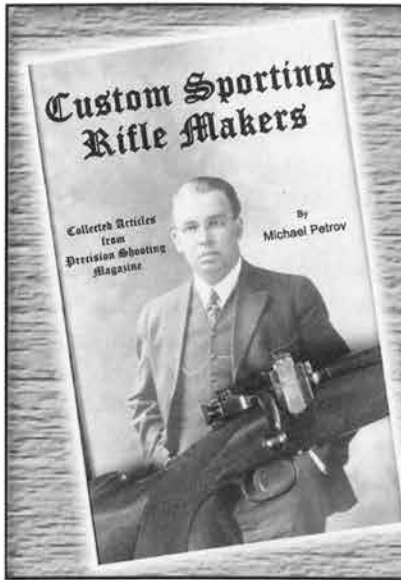
back the intellectual property rights to the Paul Jaeger name.

Dietrich returned to northern New Hampshire where he established New England Custom Gun Service, initially in West Lebanon. New England Custom Gun Service flourished, and ultimately Dietrich turned over the company to his associates. Today the New England Custom Gun Company can provide all the custom gunsmithing services that Paul Jaeger, Incorporated, once provided, and a greatly expanded inventory of firearms accessories and gunsmithing supplies, including the Jaeger detachable scope mounts mentioned previously.

The personal trait that made the self-effacing Paul Jaeger so remarkable and enduring was his smile. I met Paul Jaeger on four occasions at his retail store to refine the specifications of the work I had engaged his company to do. Every time I met with Paul he was impeccably dressed in coat and tie, and his unfailing "Old World" courtesy always made me feel that I was the most important client ever to walk into his store. And Paul Jaeger was always smiling. In researching this article for the readers of the *Double Gun Journal*, Dietrich Apel very kindly made available to me voluminous materials from the Jaeger archives. I have examined multiple dozens of photographs of Paul Jaeger—and I have yet to find a photograph—beginning when Paul was a student at the Köthen School of Engineering—in which he was not smiling.

And that is how Americans who appreciate the highest quality German and Continental double guns should remember the legacy of Paul Jaeger, Incorporated. We would be much the poorer in our knowledge of fine gunsmithing and German firearms had not Paul Jaeger at a major inflection point, determined to return to the country of his birth and begin a new life.

(Ed. Note: Michael Petrov provides the German-American gunmaker profile in this issue. Michael Petrov passed away in February 2014, leaving behind a wealth of writings on 20<sup>th</sup> century gunmakers in the U.S. With the permission of Mike's wife, Janet, we have reprinted his August 2011 article about Paul Jaeger, from *Precision Shooting* (Vol. 59, No. 4)



# Custom Sporting Rifle Makers

## Part Twenty-Nine

### Paul Jaeger 1901-1993

BY MICHAEL PETROV ©

Paul Jaeger was born in New York City on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1901. His father was Franz Jäger (*German spelling*). Franz was born in 1876 in Rampitz, near modern-day Leipzig. Franz apprenticed as an actioner in Zella Mehlis, Germany, then opened his own gunshop in Halle. He later moved to New York, met and married Fanny Strauss, who was also from Germany. After Paul

was born, Franz began to work on his own ideas. He took out his first US patent No. 674843 filed in 1900 for a single trigger mechanism for double barrel shotguns. Franz was in business with brothers Carl & Edmond Bittiner also of Germany under the name of **The Gun Improvement Company**. The company was located at 234-235 Broadway, NYC. Their main work was installing the single-trigger on shotguns. When he was unable to find the skilled

workmen he needed to expand the business he moved back to Germany, locating in Suhl. Franz installed single triggers for other manufacturers and gun owners. Between 1901 and 1914, he obtained eight patents. His US Patent No. 928,628 in 1907 listed his address as Suhl, Germany. An order from abroad for good but reasonably priced stalking rifles brought the Magnus brothers together with him to establish the Magnus-Jäger Company. They set up manufacturing facilities in Mäbendorf near Suhl, but he soon barely escaped bankruptcy. At least two of Franz Jäger's patents are still used by major gun companies today. It should be noted that one of Franz's brother-in-laws was Gustav Kersten, the inventor of the famous Kersten locking system. The locking system was designed for break-action firearms in which the barrel has two top extensions that fit into recesses in the breechface, both of which have a hole for the passing of a horizontal cross-bolt which is found mainly today on German/Austrian over/under shotguns.

After basic schooling Paul apprenticed with his father as a gun-





maker but soon entered engineering school. Because Paul was an American citizen he was able to return to the US in 1927. His 1927 address was listed as 47 West 75<sup>th</sup> St., NYC. It is purported that Paul went to work in NYC for both Von Lengerke & Detmold and Abercrombie & Fitch. He later moved to Philadelphia and worked for R. F. Sedgley.

I'm not sure when he left Sedgley but his first ads for custom gun parts show up in August of 1934 with an address of 130 Apsley St., Philadelphia, PA. This address stayed the same until May, 1936 when he moved to 4655 Fernhill Rd., Philadelphia. In October of that year he was still selling custom rifle parts, but now also offered to rebuild rifles. I was lucky to acquire a Paul Jaeger catalog from his Fernhill Road address. The catalog listed set triggers both single and double for 1903 Springfields, Enfields and Mausers. He also sold stock blanks, inletted stocks, sights, trapdoor buttplates as well as grip caps, German scopes and other items for the custom rifle builder.

In this catalog he lists the

"Jaeger" telescope mounts. These are side-mounts made in Suhl, Germany. The Jaeger side-mount went through quite an evolution and I'm not sure I have seen them all. The first mount I saw has a hook both front and back on the base with a lever that tightens it on the mount. It's interesting to note that the picture of the side-mount in the German Jäger catalog shows the mount on a 1903 Springfield. The only rifle I have seen this mount on is a Mauser stocked by S.R. Griffin

with an H.M. Pope barrel in 7x57 made well before Griffin & Howe was formed. The second design that was bought and sold by Paul Jaeger has rows of teeth on both the base and mount and there seems to be several different types of these. These same mounts with the teeth were sold by Stoeger under their name. These mounts with the teeth were made in Suhl and I don't know

*Continued on next page*



**Rom 1935**

Weltmeisterschaft und Weltrekord  
gewonnen mit der

**U. A. Z. Record-Match-Pistole, Modell 210 D. R. G. M.**

Sämtliche Jagd- und Sportwaffen / Reparaturen

**Jdo Anschütz, Zella-Mehlis 9**  
Gewehrfabrik, Inh. Frz. Merkel

*Anschutz pistol ad from Der Waffenschmied 1935*

**Präzisions-Scheibepistole „VENUS“**  
D. R.-G.-M. Kal. 22 short und long.

Von hinten zu reinigen!

**Letzte Neuheit!**  
Kein Vordergewicht!

**Scheibepistole „Venus“ mit Blockverschluss.**

Spannung erfolgt durch leichtes Herabdrücken des Hebels. Abgeschossene Hülse wird automatisch ausgeworfen. Lauf mit feinsten Zügen, vorzügliche Schußleistung, Doppel-Support-Visier, auswechselbares Federsattelkorn, Schaft mit Daumenlage. Länge 41,5 cm, Gewicht 1300 g.

Preis mit einfachem Stecher M. 54.—, Preis mit dreifachem Stecher M. 56.—.

**Nur echt mit Marke VENUS.**

**VENUSWAFFENWERK OSCAR WILL, Zella bei Suhl**

*Schuetzen opistol ad from Der Waffenschmied 1913*

## Custom Sporting Rifle Makers – Part Twenty-Nine...

*Continued*

if Franz had anything to do with making them or not. They seem to

be found on a wide range of makers' rifles. The Jaeger-Philadelphia catalog shows this mount with teeth on a "Herold" .22-Hornet rifle sold under the Charles Daly name but made by Franz Jäger. The modern single and double lever Jaeger mount was

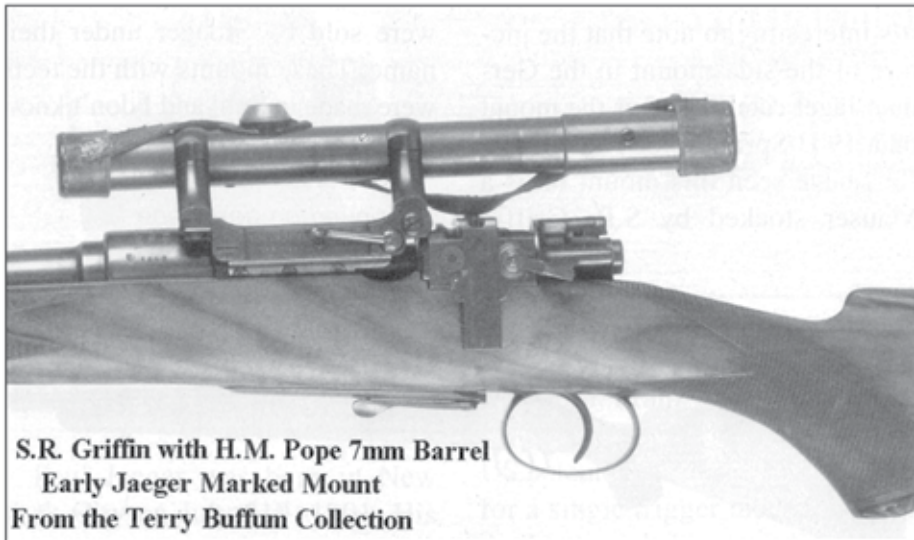
introduced after the Second World War.

Over the years that I have collected information on the pre-war Paul Jaeger rifles, the total number found is four (4); that's it, only four. Shortly after he started advertising to make custom rifles the war broke out so there are not a lot of them around. The rifles he made in Philadelphia are marked on the barrel in a single line "P. JAEGER PHILA. PA." These would have been made prior to April, 1940 which was when he moved to Jenkintown, PA. I have seen two rifles marked on the barrel with just the one word "JAEGER." However I am uncertain when they were made but both have post war receiver sights.

The pictured Philadelphia-Jaeger rifle has about everything offered in his catalog. A checkered and engraved buttplate, engraved grip cap, side-mount and single-set trigger. The single-set trigger is set by pushing the trigger forward. Of all the different set triggers I have used on both Mauser and Springfield rifles this is, by far, the best. In the unset condition it is a nice crisp trigger pull that I would welcome on any rifle. In the set position it can be set so light that a touch will fire the rifle.

I have seen pictures of the two other Philadelphia-Jaeger rifles but have not handled them. They do not differ from the one pictured in any great detail. The third rifle was given to the NRA Museum by a member of the Jaeger family. I am told that this rifle showed typical Suhl workmanship and it's believed that it was made by Franz Jäger and sold by Paul.

During the war Paul Jaeger made loading dies and precision tooling for the war effort. The only thing I know for sure was that he



S.R. Griffin with H.M. Pope 7mm Barrel  
Early Jaeger Marked Mount  
From the Terry Buffum Collection



Typical Post-War Jaeger Stock



*Zeiss ad from Der Waffenschmied 1921*



*Will ad from Der Waffenschmied 1910*



made some or all of a flare gun. When the war ended Paul was in a perfect position to supply rifles, parts and tools to the returning service men. Post-war Jenkintown-Jaegers are marked with a single line on the barrel, "PAUL JAEGER-JENKINTOWN, PA." Pictures in his post-war ads show rifles that look a lot like Sedgleys but all the rifles I have seen do not. A style was soon developed as to stock design and cheekpiece and they stayed with that same style. I understand the post-war rifles are serial numbered and I have observed a few with numbers on them. Because my main focus is pre-war I have made no effort to catalog the serial numbers or the different workmen at Paul Jaegers. One stockmaker I did learn about was Fritz R. Voigt who marked his stocks "FRV" under the buttplate. An opportunity then for someone with an interest in Jaeger's to investigate this.

Paul Jaeger retired in 1977 and died February 3, 1993 at age 91.

### KURT JAEGER:

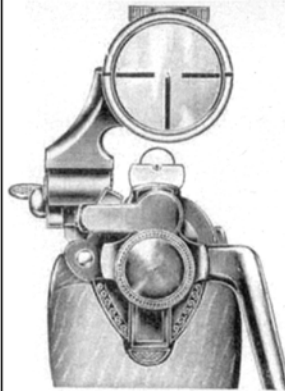
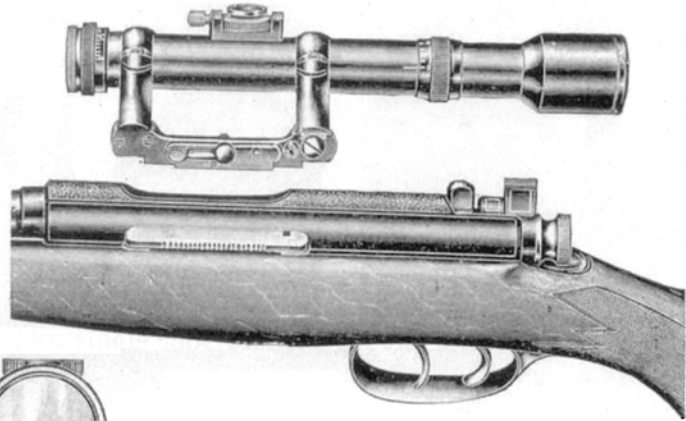
Kurt Jaeger was Paul Jaeger's younger brother. Born in 1906, he stayed in the family business in Germany. After the war he escaped to West Germany and opened a gunshop in Mainz with his nephew Dietrich Apel. He also managed the gun shop of the Wiesbaden Rod & Gun Club at the (USAF) Wiesbaden Air Base Wiesbaden, Germany. Kurt was well known for engraving although he did not personally do any engraving himself, he employed the folks who did the engraving. Paul Jaeger's *Gun Engraving* catalog states "Through our connections abroad we offer the

## Jaeger-Philadelphia-Catalog

### "JAEGER" TELESCOPE MOUNTINGS

JAEGER MOUNTS are made for Hunting Telescopes. They are constructed and built to withstand all the hard use of hunting. When attached they are one solid unit with the rifle but it will require only a few seconds to attach or remove the scope without any tools or coins. Only steel is used for all parts—no castings.

All mounts have Split Rings, and can be easily fitted to the telescope without taking same apart. Can be furnished with clamps for Hensoldt and Zeiss scopes with prismatic ribs.



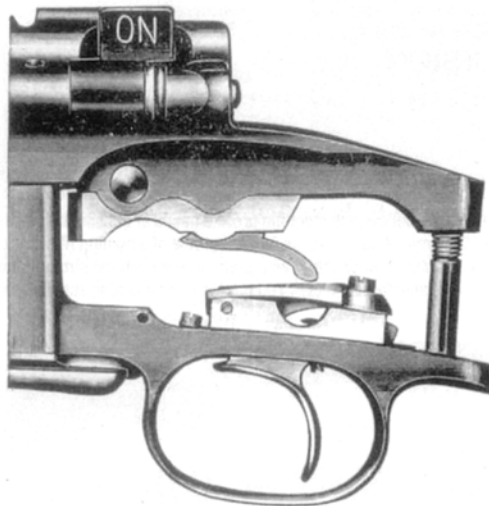
#### QUICK DETACHABLE SIDE MOUNT

The dovetailed base is fastened permanently to the side of the receiver. The mount, after sliding on, is locked by a clamp of unique design, worked by a lever. Teeth-like projections engage in corresponding notches when closing the lever, assuring unequalled rigidity. A neat, light mount suitable for all rifles with side ejection. Iron sights can be used with attached scope. Weight complete with base 8 ounces. Dovetailed windage adjustment with two opposed screws.

Price for 22 m/m or 26.5 m/m Scopes .....	\$24.00
Mounting and targeting at 100 yards .....	5.00
Extra Base for mounting Scope on other Rifles ...	5.00

### SET TRIGGERS

#### JAEGER SINGLE SET TRIGGER FOR BOLT ACTION RIFLES



The small finger space in most bolt action trigger guards makes the use of a Double Set Trigger impracticable. The new Jaeger Single Set Trigger has the position of the regular trigger and can be used as such with a light, clean pull. It has the additional advantage against the double set that the triggers cannot get mixed up at a quick shot. The mechanism is set by pushing the trigger forward until it clicks. Can be regulated by an easily accessible screw.



Paul Jaeger



Dietrich Apel



Franz Jaeger

Kurt Jaeger

Gustav Kersten

## Custom Sporting Rifle Makers – Part Twenty-Nine..

*Continued*

services of some of the best remaining German Gun Engravers, **employed** by Kurt Jaeger.” Engraved Jaeger marked guns I have seen all show first class work.

### DIETRICH APEL:

Paul Jaeger’s nephew Dietrich Apel was born in 1929 at Suhl, Germany and after schooling served a two and half-year apprenticeship as an actioner and stock maker under his grandfather Franz Jaeger. After the war Dietrich soon escaped to West Germany and by June, 1949 was working at Wiesbaden Rod & Gun Club as a gunsmith. This job was arranged with the help of Paul Jaeger by a letter Paul wrote to General Curtis LeMay, commander at Wiesbaden. Apel was granted a visa in 1952 and arrived in the USA in March of that year. When Paul Jaeger retired in 1977 Dietrich Apel took over the business. In 1985 the business was sold and in 1986 Mr. Apel started **New England Custom Guns Service** in New Hampshire. In 1998 Dietrich Apel founded the German Gun Collectors Association, a source of information, research, and fellowship for those interested in the collecting and shooting of German hunting and sporting guns. They can be contacted at [www.germanguns.com](http://www.germanguns.com).

I would like to thank Dietrich Apel for the family photographs used in this article.




659

Trotz der größten Material- und Fabrikations-Schwierigkeiten sind

7420

# Zielfernrohre

bewährten Fabrikats stets sofort ab Lager lieferbar.

Versand solcher mit 2,5- bis 3,5 facher Vergrößerung sofort nach Eingang der Bestellung, mit 4- bis 10 facher Vergrößerung innerhalb 4 Tagen möglich.

— Lieferung nur an Wiederverkäufer. —



## Hermann Wetzel, Optische Anstalt, Rathenow.

Abteilung II: Optische Jagdinstrumente.

Telescope ad & Binocular ad from *Der Waffenschmied* 1916



## Another Historic Marker in Suhl

A small group of friends and former neighbors gathered in front of the former Franz Jaeger residence and gun factory to unveil historic marker #6. The inscription reads:



*In this building was located from 1908 through 1945 the Gun Factory Franz Jaeger & Co.*

*Franz Jaeger began with a one man gun shop in 1903 and, enabled by many patents expanded to a gun factory with 50 employees.*

*After the decommissioning in 1945 he continued to work as a one man shop for the BUHAG Cooperative through 1965.*

*Developments:*

*The Simson-Jaeger lockup and the Jaeger Vertical Block lockup for hunting guns. In 1914 the Jaeger .32 Auto. Pistol, the first to use stamped steel parts.*



*The friends and supporters of the gun museum Suhl*


*The marker was donated by Dietrich Apel, USA, nephew of Franz Jaeger*

My thanks to Mr. Dreifke, the new owner of the house, who allowed the installation and did a great job restoring the house after years of neglect. Thanks also to the friends of the Suhl Waffenmuseum for making it possible.

—Dietrich Apel

### Firearms Engravers & Gunmakers Exhibition<sup>SM</sup>

Jan. 31 - Feb. 2, 2003



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## From the GGCA

### New: 2003 Calendar

We now have a calendar available that features twelve stunning, full-color photographs of sporting guns for the year 2003. Every gun is a masterpiece and comes with a short provenance. The firearms are one of a kind works of art by American, German, English and Italian gunmakers. The calendar also features holidays, moon phases and room to mark down your next hunting trip.

Order the wire-bound, 12"x 9" calendar at \$12.95; GGCA members, \$10.00.



### Club Patch

With input from other club members, John Neumann has created a club patch. Order it for \$10 from Hans Pfingsten, 49131 Recuerdo Lane, Morongo Valley, CA 92256, tel. 760-363-6018.

### Club Name Badge

Rick Zobelein has designed a name tag with our Logo in color that you can order for \$9.50. Send your payment with the name you want engraved on it to Hans Pfingsten.

# Emil and Claus Willig, Father and Son, Engravers and Artists

by Dietrich Apel

A few of you, like those who came to the Safari Club conventions in February of 1985 or were stationed in Germany and participated in the Rod & Gun clubs for the American servicemen, may have heard the names before or even have a gun that was engraved by them. But there are many others who have a Willig engraved gun but don't even know it. Read on and you will find out why.

The Willig family had links to the Jaeger family for three generations. The story begins in Suhl where Emil Willig was born in 1894 and where Franz Jaeger began his career as a gun manufacturer in 1903.

Both were drafted into the Prussian

army in World War I. Emil served an apprenticeship as an engraver either before or right after the war, most likely under the master engraver Emil Völker who worked for Franz Jaeger. I remember hearing stories to this effect as I was growing up in Suhl; Claus also heard the Völker name mentioned at home. I remember that when I was quite young I often sat on the workbench next to Mr. Völker, fascinated by the constant tapping of the engraving hammer against the chisel and the endless turning, this way and that, of the engraver's vise. Most amazing was the end result, a perfect engraving.

After the hard war years came the even



*Emil Willig and his wife and Claus Willig with his sister.*

harder depression years. Many people in Suhl were out of work and had to leave town. The terms of the Versailles treaty were particularly stringent when it came to



*Emil Willig explaining one of his paintings to his children.*



*A Masquelier shotgun imported from Belgium by Paul Jager and engraved by Emil Willig.*





*The famous Duerer hands copied by Emil Willig.*

---

gunmaking. Emil Willig left Suhl for Schweinfurt in 1928, where he found work in a ball bearing factory, "Kugel Fischer". His skill as an engraver was now applied to the making of steel letter stamps, some of them very small. Paul Jaeger also immigrated to the United States in 1929. Contact between the Jaeger and the Willig families faded away.

Emil Willig gave up gun engraving altogether at that time, but he painted and sculpted as a hobby and both Claus and his sister were exposed to the arts during their

early years. Claus was born in 1939, the year World War II began. Hard years with never-ending bombing attacks followed; fortunately, the Willigs and their house survived in good shape. Much of the work for the ball bearing industry was moved to small villages and towns in the vicinity in an attempt to avoid large bomb targets.

When the war ended in 1945, officers of the American army took over the Willig house because it had a bathroom, a luxury not everybody had at that time. Claus praised the occupiers for taking good care of the house and letting them grow things in their garden. For more than two years the Willig family like many others was

housed in the mansion of Mr. Schaefer, the owner of Kugel Fischer, the ball bearing factory. Emil started to make jewelry from 2 Mark Hindenburg silver coins and from scrap gold for the *Amis*. When a gunsmith, Mr. Lapp in Kronungen, had inquiries from the servicemen for engraved guns, Emil Willig dug out his engraving tools and once again became a gun engraver. An American serviceman by the name of William Carter found Emil Willig and became his first direct customer. Claus is still in touch with the Carters in Spokane, Washington after all these years and has visited them.

The Jaeger family came once again into



*In the Willigs' living room.*

---

*The young Claus Willig inspecting his work.*

---



*The stand with sheet music must share space with a pantograph.*

---



*The Willig house in Schweinfurt, Germany. The original shop was behind the windows in the second floor. The new shop on the right was added in 1975.*

---



*In the well-organized shop you can see a computer and a machine used for rolling gold and silver to the right thickness.*

---

*Willig, continued*

the picture. After I had graduated from high school in Suhl, my grandfather Franz Jaeger convinced me to serve an apprenticeship as a gunsmith in his shop. Because opportunities to escape Eastern Germany were shrinking fast, I rushed through an accelerated apprenticeship facilitated by the old masters. The day after I became a journeyman, I caught a train to Berlin, fearing that this exit route could be closed at any moment. I flew out of Berlin in a British plane that had brought coal to the isolated city and evacuated refugees on its return trip.

I arrived in West Germany in 1949 with no money and very few belongings.

But because Paul Jaeger, my uncle in America, had written to the American Air Force headquarters in Wiesbaden, a job was waiting for me at the Wiesbaden Rod and Gun Club of the American Air Force. I had to live with another family in one room, but I had a roof over my head and started to earn my first money. At the time we were building sporting rifles from surplus Mauser actions and machine gun barrels.

When my uncle, Kurt Jaeger, also arrived from Suhl and needed a new beginning, we founded our own gun shop in Mainz across the river from Wiesbaden. The American servicemen were our cus-

tomers. Two rooms served as our shop, office and living quarters, but we had all the work we could handle. At that time I went to Schweinfurth to learn some engraving from Emil Willig. I remember being in the small shop on the second floor, hammering away on a practice plate and breaking chisel points without end. Poor Emil Willig must have been very frustrated and I gave up engraving for good shortly thereafter. But...this was the beginning of a renewed working relationship between the Jaegers and the Willigs that lasted until two years ago when I changed jobs and became an editor and tour guide.

Emil Willig engraved many rifles and



*Below: Rifle No. 4 of the Safari Club Big Five Masterpiece Collection rifles engraved by Claus Willig.*





shotguns for the American Jaeger customers in Germany and shortly thereafter for Paul Jaeger in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. These engravings were quite a bargain for the Americans. At one time you could get four Marks for one dollar. But all engraved pieces were signed *Kurt Jaeger, Mainz*; thus, many think that Kurt Jaeger was an engraver. This was a holdover custom from the old days in Suhl and elsewhere which has fortunately ended: The shopowner's name, rather than the employee engraver's name appeared on the engraving. Today we would not think of ordering a fine engraving and not have the engraver sign it.

There are hundreds of Willig-engraved guns in this country. We'd like to hear from you if you are the owner of one of them. From 1950 to about 1970 the Willigs engraved exclusively for the Jaegers. Kurt Jaeger retired in 1976 and sold his business in Mainz. He is still alive but quite old and memory loss has set in.

But back to Claus, who loved to play the violin and wanted to become a musician. He had to conform to his father's wishes to become an engraver first. He did so grudgingly and they had their fair share of father and son differences of opinion. But Claus now admits that father was right. Playing the violin is still a major part of his

life and the music stand is always close at hand in his shop. Playing chamber music with a group of friends is the most pleasant pastime for him. He keeps his three violins in the living room, not far from the shop.

Claus owns three treasured violins; one has a story with which I am familiar. When I was in charge of the Paul Jaeger company in Jenkintown, our 50th Anniversary and the NRA show in Philadelphia occurred in the same year. To celebrate the occasion and honor Paul Jaeger, we had a double booth at the show and brought back the finest Jaeger rifles from our customers. We had a gunsmith working on one end of the booth and an engraver on the other end.



*At left: The Willig engraved Lion Rifle, part of Safari Club's Big Five Masterpiece Collection made history when it sold at auction in Las Vegas.*

*Above: The American Legacy revolvers, owned by Mr. Ancarrow.*

*Willig, continued*

Claus Willig was the guy on the other end. While there he met a German violinmaker, Helmut Keller, who was well respected among musicians. And what do you think happened thereafter? Helmut Keller built a violin for Claus and Claus engraved a rifle for Helmut. Both were very happy with the deal.

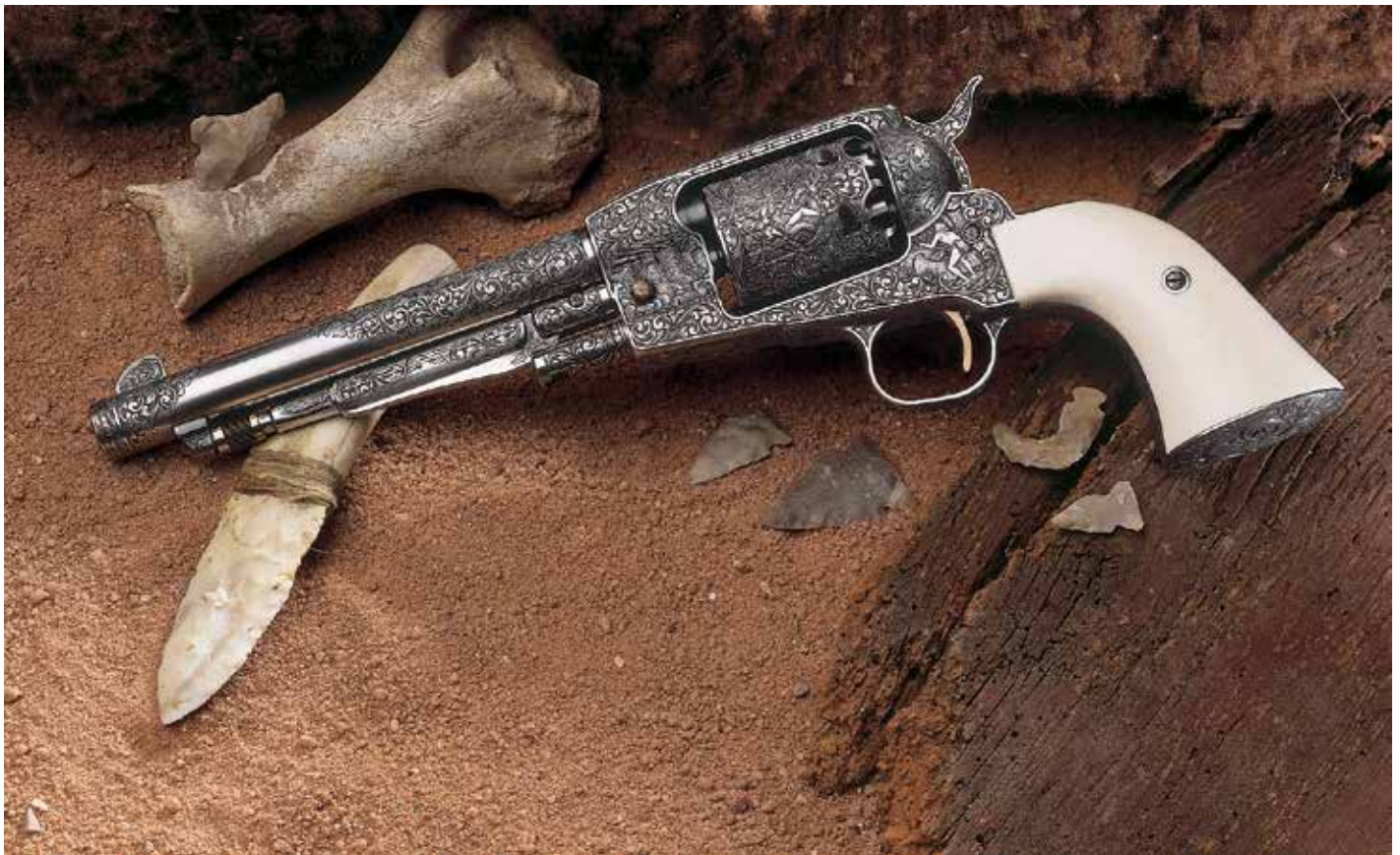
After Claus completed middle school, he served an apprenticeship under his father for 3 1/2 years and his *Gesellenstueck* (the work he had to present to the masters) won first place recognition for all of West Germany. For two to three years he worked for his father as a journeyman, then spent 2 1/2 years (five semesters) at the “Institute

for the design and forming of metals” in Solingen, which he completed with a Masters Degree in 1963.

He returned home to work in his father’s shop, but for his own customers. Emil Willig died in 1973 and the mother in 1975. In 1975 Claus got married and added a spacious shop to the house. As his artistic skills became ever more known, he was commissioned to do major projects, requiring not only outstanding craftsmanship, but also great artistic talent. Now most of his customers live in Germany or Switzerland.

The very first engraved floor plates done for the American servicemen, mostly through the NCO clubs, were flat engrav-

ings without inlays. Few pre-WW II German guns had inlays. Soon silver inlays became popular, followed by gold inlays, both flat and in relief. Claus developed his own method of cutting the outline of an animal from sheet silver or gold, then creating a cavity with the identical outline. After the plate is properly attached to the steel, he sculpts and shades the body. He also smelts his own gold of the proper hardness by combining 95% pure gold with 5% silver and copper. The gold ingot is rolled to a sheet of the desired thickness. Wire of different diameter is made by pulling strips of gold through ever-smaller holes in a wire gage.



*The American Frontier West revolver.*





*Willig, continued*

with the landing on the moon. Revolver No.3 is described in the article that appeared in *Deutsches Waffenz Journal* and reappears in this Journal.

- The one-of-a-kind Big Horn Sheep Rifle built for the Foundation for American Wild Sheep sold at auction in Nashville, Tennessee.
- A pair of revolvers with exquisite gold border work and game animals engraved for Mr. Ancarrow.
- The “Masterpiece Edition: Game Animals of North America”
- The Wapiti and the Moose Rifle.
- The Australian rifle by Ziegenhahn.
- Ruger Old Army Revolver with “The

Industrial Revolution.”

After reading this impressive list and seeing the picture of Claus Willig’s work you might conclude that he only takes major commissions. Not so. He likes smaller projects between the major ones and does them with the same dedication to perfection.

You can reach Claus Willig at:  
Siedlerweg 17  
D-97422 Schweinfurt  
Germany  
Tel. 011-49-9721-41446  
Fax 011-49-9721 -44413  
E-mail: Claus.Willig@t-online.de



*Above: One of the most popular and oft-repeated engravings by Claus Willig.*





*Peter Doering*

friend in a similar way, feel free to contact the German Gun Collectors Association at 603-469-3438 or [jaeger@valley.net](mailto:jaeger@valley.net).

## Franz Jaeger Award

*New at the Gold Medal Concours—for Excellence in Firearms Design and Engineering*

This new award singles out valuable or unique gunmaking technologies, whether unrecognized in their time or too far ahead of their time, that were overcome by new technologies, failed commercially or were simply forgotten.

Franz Jaeger was a German gunmaker who earned a number of patents for sporting arms, two of which are still in use today. The award is sponsored by the German Gun Collectors Association. It was suggested by Dietrich Apel, Franz Jaeger's nephew, and is underwritten by Apel and John Neumann, president of the German Gun Collectors Association.

## In memoriam: Hans Eggert Pfingsten

1937–2004 by Marcia Pfingsten and Dietrich Apel



Hans in his all-too-short lifetime was one who loved German guns and the tradition that goes with them.

Not only did he love them, but he also studied them and shared what he learned with many others. For years he had worked on a book about these guns and their makers, and we all hope that a way can be found to bring this book to print in his honor.

This is what his friend, George Hoyem, has to say about him: "I met Hans at an antique arms show in the Los Angeles area about ten years ago and we were friends from then on. His knowledge of German sporting guns was so vast that I found I could go to him for the answer to any question I had on a particular gun."

We thank Marcia Pfingsten for sharing with us their life's story.

Hans was born on January 4, 1937 in Itzehoe 35 miles north of Hamburg, the third child of Leopold and Irmgard Pfingsten. World War II overshadowed his early years: the hardships a war brings, the fire bombing of Hamburg, and the absence of his father, a captain in the German army. At the end of the war in 1945, the family revitalized the liquor and wine business founded by his great-grandfather in 1879.

He had an early interest in guns. At 12 years of age he found a machine gun buried in a ditch, took it home and hid it in the attic. After he found ammunition for it, he fired it into the attic floor for lack of another place to shoot it. He tried to cover up the

damage to the ceiling in the floor below, but did not get away with it. His father made him turn in the gun to the authorities.

Hans was a rebellious teenager who would rather read and draw than attend school. At age seventeen he began a four year apprenticeship as an automobile mechanic and ended up working for Ford while restoring cars on the side.

In 1963, 26-year-old Hans came by ship to the United States with two suitcases. He stayed with his sister in Long Beach, CA where he learned English and found a job as



*The Pfingsten family.*

a mechanic at a Volkswagen dealership. Only two months later his father died and Hans had to borrow money to return to Germany. Although he had planned to only stay two years in the States, the loss of his father and the great freedom he enjoyed in America changed his mind. He bought property in Morongo Valley, built a house and planted trees for the rest of his life.

But before he settled down, he experienced his own "Gold Rush." When he read about gold mining in Northern California, he packed up his VW van and headed north to find out what it was all about. He hooked up with a group that used VW engines to run their dredges during the

summers of '66 and '68 and returned many summers after he married. He met Marcia in 1969 while she was a senior at UCI and married her later that year. Hans worked at different VW repair shops before he opened his own shop in Garden Grove and later in Orange.

The Pflingstens moved permanently to Morongo Valley in 1978. Marcia's parents built a house nearby. Hans worked for his father-in-law in his construction business and eventually took it over. To the cabin on 3 1/2 acres in the high desert above Palm Springs they added a garage, a four-stall car port, a 3,000 square foot house and planted a large orchard. They lovingly raised four children, and had a wonderful marriage because they encouraged each other's pastimes.

Hans' interest in guns was nurtured in his childhood by hunting with his father and maternal grandfather, who held a high position in the forestry department of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Hans inherited his father's Drilling and several other guns and began collecting when he arrived in America. He began buying and selling German and Austrian guns in the 80s and considered taking up gun engraving. Instead, he started writing about guns about 10 years ago, dictating while Marcia punched it into their very early and very expensive computer. When he met his friend Bruce Hamilton, a graphic arts computer expert, Hans bought the right equipment and became proficient with a digital camera and computer.

To close this account about the Pflingstens, Marcia told us a story with a happy ending about Hans.

At the June 1998 Las Vegas gun show, Hans bought a rifle and started to walk back to the Imperial Palace Hotel. He did not have a case for the rifle; other pedestrians saw it but did not seem concerned about it. One man remarked laughingly: "Well, that's one way to cover your losses." Hans heard

somebody yell, "don't move." He turned around and was confronted by two policemen in their patrol car with drawn revolvers. Hans looked around to see whom they were yelling at and saw three more patrol cars screeching to a halt near him. After Hans had shown them his identification and cleared all background checks, one officer drove him to his hotel and told him that he had never before drawn his gun, that his hands were shaking and that he was glad that nobody had seen him behind the car door.

Over the years I had heard of a guy in California who knew a lot about German guns. When Hans signed up for our second tour to Germany, I learned that he was that

guy.. He showed up with a manuscript for a book on German gunmakers, and I believe that our tour helped him with his endeavor. I also know that he became a good friend of the German engraver Hendrik Fruehauf and of his brother, the actioner Marco Fruehauf. We all miss Hans.

**Der „Simson-Jäger-Verschuss“**  
 ist der einzige Verschuss, der eine wirkliche Stärkung darstellt, ohne mit Komplikationen oder anderen Nachteilen verbunden zu sein.

Der größte Vorteil des „Simson-Jäger-Verschusses“ besteht darin, dass jeder der beiden nebeneinander liegenden Läufe eines separaten, in der Richtung der Seifenachse liegenden Hakens besitzt, wodurch die seitliche Zerrung und Hebelbewegung (das Pendeln) der Läufe, welche die Hauptursache der Verschusslöcherungen bildet, völlig aufgehoben wird. Der Verschusskasten ist im Charakter und im Winkel so stark, dass ein Zerreißen ausgeschlossen ist.

„Simson-Jäger-Doppelflinten“ mit und ohne Ejector, werden für alle jagdlichen Zwecke und auch als Taubensportgewehre gebaut, sie wurden den forciertesten Proben mit rauchlosen Patronen unterzogen.  
 „Simson-Jäger-Doppelbüchsen“ liefern wir für die stärksten Patronen.  
 „Simson-Jäger-Drillinge“. Für Dreilaufgewehre bildet der „Simson-Jäger-Verschuss“ eine besonders wertvolle Erfindung, weil er die Verwendung schwerer Nitroladungen gestattet. Wir bitten, illustrierte Broschüre und Wiederverkaufsformate zu verlangen.

D. R. G. M. No. 239934.  
 D. R.-Patent angemeldet.

**WAFFENFABRIK SIMSON & CO., Suhl i. Thür.**

*Der Waffenhandler 1906 Simson-Jaeger Verschuss ad*



# A PHOTO GALLERY OF THE LIFE OF DIETRICH APEL



*Top: Dietrich at Beinfield Arms show 2008 Phil Schrier, NRA  
Bottom: Dietrich at his desk in N.H., 2014*

*Top: Dietrich and wife Eva on their wedding day, September 10, 1951  
Bottom: Dietrich holding scoped rifle he may have stocked*





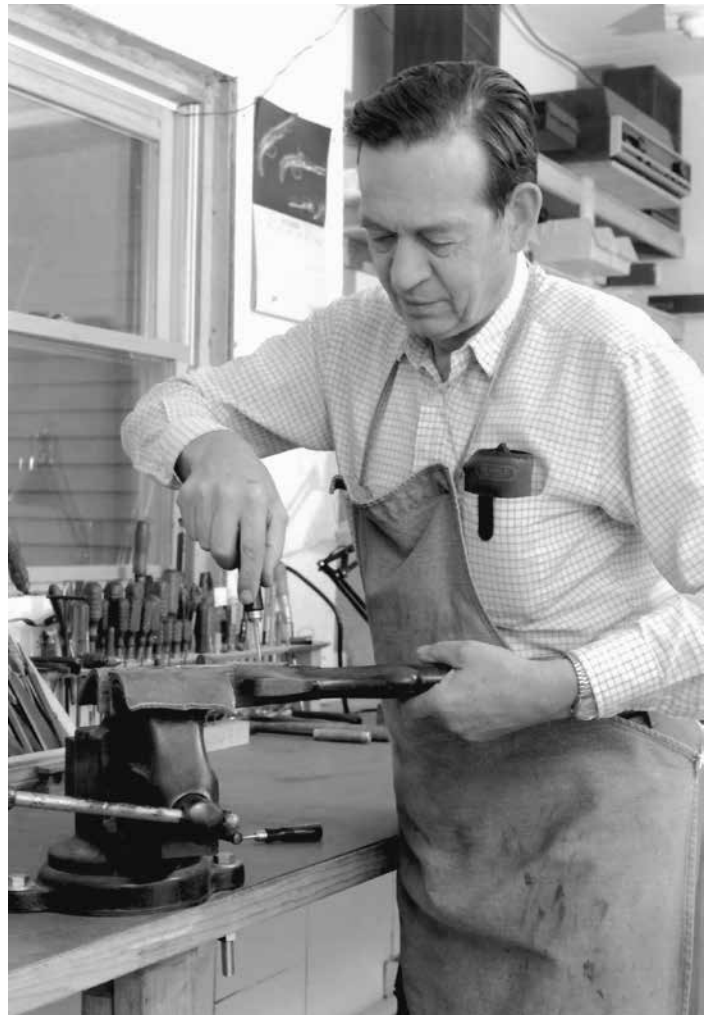
*Dietrich inletting action on left-hand stock*



*Dietrich measuring shotgun cartridge pattern on wall*



*Dietrich with sidelock in hand*



*Dietrich with screwdriver at work*





*Dietrich using compass on stone wall*



*Suhl 1946*



*Suhl 1946*



*Dietrich at Paul Jaeger's ca. late 1940s*





*Dietrich working as Wiesbaden Rod & Gun Club ca. 1946, Wiesbaden, Germany*



*Dietrich's house and NECG site*





Wiesbaden, Germany  
APO 633, USAF

9 March 1960

SUBJECT: Letter of Recommendation.

TO: Whom it may concern.

This is to certify that Mr Dietrich A p e l, has been employed under my supervision as a Master-Gunsmith since June 1949.

Mr Apel has shown keen interest in his work and his workmanship has been of the highest quality. Mr Apel intelligence appears to be above average and if given an opportunity to further his education, it is the opinion of the undersigned that he is capable, willing, and will make the most out of this opportunity.

*Joe L. Fernandez*  
JOE L. FERNANDEZ

Letter of reference for Dietrich Apel from Wiesbaden Rod & Gun Club 1950

ORIGINAL  
TO BE GIVEN TO  
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

**CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION**

No. 8136117

Petition No. 7348

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Date of birth May 14, 1929 sex Male  
complexion Medium color of eyes Blue color of hair Dk. brown height 6 feet 0 inches  
weight 152 pounds visible distinctive marks None  
Marital status Married former nationality Germany

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

*Dietrich Apel*  
(Complete and true signature of holder)

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA }  
COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY } S.S.

Be it known, that at a term of the Common Pleas Court of Montgomery County held pursuant to law at Norristown, Pennsylvania on September 8, 1960 the Court having found that DIETRICH APEL then residing at 203 Orlemann Ave., Oreland, Pa. intends to reside permanently in the United States (when so required by the Naturalization laws of the United States), had in all other respects complied with the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this eighth day of September in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty and of our Independence the one hundred and eighty-fifth.

*W.H. Rothmiller* Prothonotary  
or Clerk of the Common Pleas Court

By \_\_\_\_\_ Deputy Clerk.

It is a violation of the U.S. Code (and punishable as such) to copy, print, photograph, or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Dietrich's citizenship certificate 1960



# Franz Jäger's best invention!

by Dietrich Apel, his nephew

For years I have been collecting information about the Jaeger family and the Jaeger gunmakers with the intent to write their story, always postponing it with the excuse that I needed to find more information. If I am honest about it, I got myself into a hell of a fix when I founded the German Gun Collectors Association that brought never ending obligations and demands on my time seven days a week.

But then the discovery of a very early Franz Jaeger gun forced me into action. You will remember reading in the last Journal about a Jaeger Drilling that was brought to the Illinois Vintagers event by a member and how we discovered what it really was. When the owner, John Farwell, donated it to our Association, specifying that it should go on display in a German museum, it triggered the creation of the



Franz Jaeger

Franz Jaeger Award for Excellence in Firearms Design and Engineering, and a unique trophy that was awarded for the first time at the Vintagers in Millbrook, New York.

Franz Jaeger grew up on a farm, togeth-



The Jaeger factory with living quarters



The Jaeger Vertikal-Blockverschluss



Closeup of the engraving on the gun shown on the front cover



The U. S. Patent document

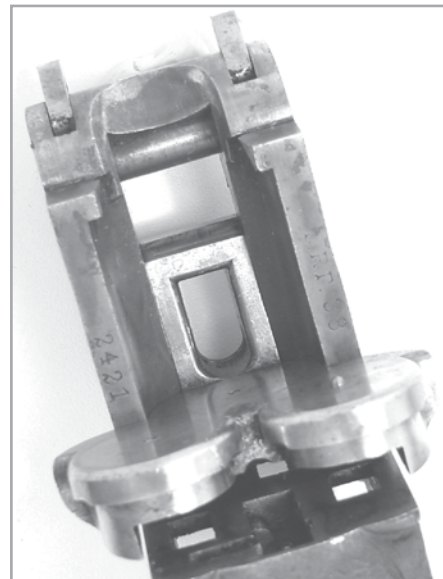
er with nine brothers and sisters. Only one son could take over the farm from the parents, and the others had to find their way in the world. Franz Jaeger's mother was the sister of Gustav Kersten, an armorer in the Prussian army and also the inventor of the Kersten bolting system, also called the double Greener. His story will be told at another time. But it was Gustav Kersten who used his connection to the gun makers and

arranged an apprenticeship for Franz in Zella-Mehlis, the gun making center that borders on Suhl.

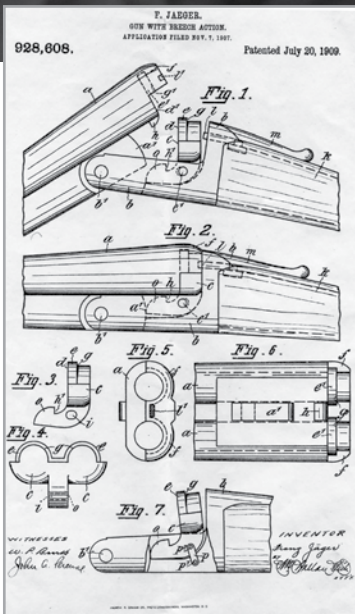
After he completed his apprenticeship and became a journeyman, Franz opened his own business in Halle on the Saale River, but closed it again to emigrate to America. He found work in New York City and soon opened his own business with a partner. He patented his first invention, a

single trigger for double guns, while in New York. However, he returned to Germany in order to find the craftsmen that could execute the many ideas he had in his head. After a short stay in Liege he went to Suhl, opened his own shop and spent the rest of his life there.

But now to the subject of this article: his best invention out of 11 German patents, 8 DRGMs and 12 foreign patents



Here you can see the tongues on top of the block and the forward extension with the rectangular opening that wraps around the rear lump of the barrel.



How the block slips in place. Note the groove on the lower left. The block pivoted around pins that protruded from both sides and allowed removal of the block when the barrel was taken off.



Here you can see the grooves in the underside of the integral barrel extension. The arrow points to a unique little feature, a lifter that pushes out the rifle cartridge a little farther for easy removal by hand.

The patent drawing.





actioner to fit all the components flawlessly and without any unsightly gaps. It was related to me that it was Franz Jaeger's brother Paul who not only had the skill to make these guns, but also to make the first prototypes without detailed engineering drawings. He joined the Germany army in 1914 at the beginning of World War I and unfortunately met his end at the western front the same year.

At this time I know only of five Jaeger Vertikal-Block Guns. One is owned by our Association and is on exhibit as a permanent loan in the Hunting and Fishing Museum Schloss Tambach.

A second gun was completed by the Kuchenreuters in Cham using an original Franz Jaeger action. It was made for a Mr. Beyer, an authority on guns and a good customer and friend of Franz Jaeger. It was written up in *Deutsches Waffen Journal* and I will have an interesting story to go with it in a future Journal.

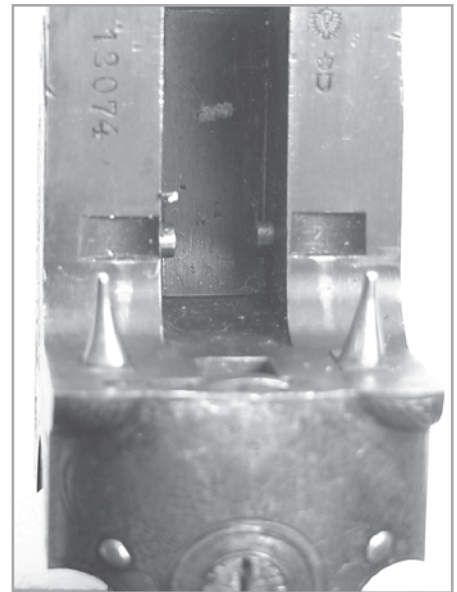
The third gun made news earlier this year and was brought to your attention in our last Journal (# 27). I promised to tell you more about it. To refresh your memory; it was donated by Mr. and Mrs. John Farwell to our Association with the specific request, to repatriate it to Germany for display. This will happen but is still being explored.

The fourth gun has only survived as a barreled action, is shown on these pages and will one day be whole again. Please note the long firing pin noses that were integral with the hammers. Later models had bushed and spring-loaded firing pins that were self-contained in the breech block.

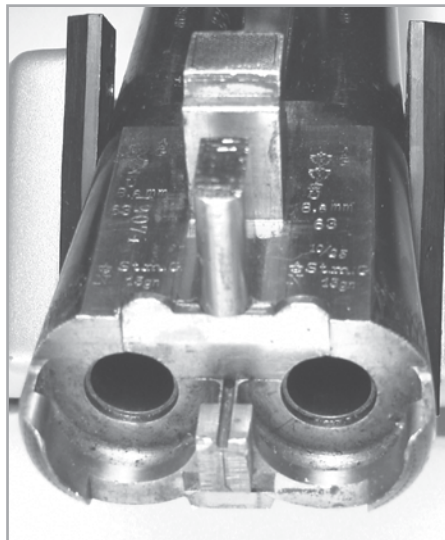
I know of a fifth gun in Europe that is in beautiful and original condition and there may be others. But no matter how many still exist, they are rare guns and if you own one or know of one, I would like to hear from you.



*This is all that survived of what was once a double rifle.*



*Note the long firing pin noses.*



*The Merkel stalking rifle*



*The Blaser stalking rifle*





**Drilling D 99**  
The perfect combination for hunting small game, when wild boar, roe deer and red stag may be expected as well.

*The Blaser Drilling*

What makes the gun that was donated by the Farwells so special? It is marked with the Jaeger name and has the inscription *DRGM – DRP beantragt* which translates to *Deutsches-Reichs-Gebrauch-Muster, Deutsches-Reichs-Patent applied for.* The DRGM is also called a small patent. This then tells us that the gun was made before 1906 when the patent was granted. Comparing it with a drawing in the Jaeger 1910 catalog, we find a great similarity and surmise that this was possibly a prototype used for experimentation and promotion that was later sold to a gun dealer. What is also different on the gun is the fact that the breech block was held by threaded pins and could not be easily removed like on later versions.

It is also very interesting to us, because it contains another Jaeger Patent #210263 granted in 1907, the *Jaeger Seperate Kugelspannung* (separate rifle cocking mechanism), also called a hand cocking device. It was one of the first ones and many others by other makers with small variations followed. It is indeed a safety device that is better than any safety can ever be. The gun was carried with the hammer

spring totally relaxed. A thumb slide on top of the grip was pushed forward quickly to compress the hammer spring when the rifle barrel was to be fired. Most quality German guns have this device today.

The Jaeger patent was first resurrected by the Blaser Company in Germany and later by the Merkel Company. While Merkel promotes their gun with the Jaeger bolting mechanism using the Franz Jaeger name, Blaser was able to get a new patent by

making slight changes but also gave up some of the original advantages on their Drilling that I call the upside-down Drilling. It has the rifle barrel on top.



*The Blaser big bore double rifle*

## The gunmakers in Suhl today

by Dietrich Apel

If you had visited Suhl before the beginning of World War II you would have been impressed by how many citizens were working in the gun factories, in smaller gun shops, in machine shops and even in their homes. Most old houses had a workshop attached in the back, and you can still see them.

As soon as Hitler came to power he started the re-armament of Germany, bringing jobs and prosperity to Suhl also. With the beginning of World War II the production of hunting and sporting guns in the bigger factories was greatly reduced and eventually stopped all together. Most of the younger men were drafted into the army, and laborers from occupied countries were housed in the factory grounds to keep the war production going. Only some of the older small makers continued to make guns in their shops, while others were brought back to the factories and produced small numbers of guns from existing raw parts.

All work came to a sudden end when American troops occupied Suhl. The story about the years that followed is too long to be covered in this Journal, and although I was there, I hesitate to write about it because I felt lucky that I could go first to the western part of Germany and come to the United States in 1952. I hope that during our visit in Suhl in June we can meet with some of the gunmakers of Suhl to tell us what the years under a Communist government were really all about.

When the wall came down and the two Germanys were re-united, over 2000 people worked in the government owned gun industry in Suhl. All economies in the countries behind the iron curtain collapsed and massive unemployment followed. Most companies were disowned by the former Communist government and turned over to the *Treuhand*, a government agency that was formed to find buyers to keep

these companies alive and connect them with the open markets in Germany and the world. The process was difficult and suffered many setbacks.

The Suhl gunmaking conglomerate called *Suhler Jagd- und Sportwaffen* was first sold to a group of investors who declared bankruptcy after a short time and had only lined their own pockets. The company was then owned jointly by a bank and by the famous Steyr Company in Austria, only to be sold again to Heckler & Koch, a prominent gunmaker in Oberndorf where Mauser used to be located. They changed the company name back to Merkel and supported it with their management know-how and ideas for new products. It came as quite a surprise when the announcement came that Merkel was sold again, this time to a company in the United Arab Emirates. We heard that the company is doing well, is employing about 150 people, and has a hard time to find enough skilled people.

What follows is a list of all the other gunmakers and engravers in Suhl and vicinity that are still in business today. We got to know some of them, and some of our members ordered guns from them. We thank all the gunmakers in Suhl and vicinity for carrying on, and despite almost insurmountable difficulties, kept the great gunmaking tradition alive. We also hope that the restored museum will bring more and more visitors to Suhl and tell the world that **Suhl was down but not out.**

### Today's gunmakers in Suhl and vicinity

Johannes Möller, Albrechts, Gunsmith  
Dieter Gebeke, Erlau, Gunsmith  
Walter Hartleb, Schleusingen, Gunsmith  
Marko Frühauf, Schleusingen, Gunsmith



Norbert Reif, Schleusingen, Gunsmith  
Lutz Hennenberg,

Schleusingen Rappelsdorf, Gunsmith  
Helmut Adamy, Suhl, Gunsmith  
Wolfgang Schilling, Suhl, Gunsmith  
Manfred Seeber, Suhl, Gunsmith  
Albert Wilhelm Wolf, Suhl, Gunsmith  
Merkel Jagd- und Sportwaffen, Suhl  
PARDINI Deutschland, Suhl, Gunsmith  
TJF Jagdwaffen in Suhl, Suhl, Gunsmith  
Heinz Stubenrauch, Suhl, Gunsmith  
WTS Waffentechnik Suhl, Gunsmith  
Joachim Heym, Suhl, Gunsmith  
Ralph Schröter, Suhl, Engraver  
Michael Richter, Suhl, Engraver  
Renate Winter, Suhl, Engraver  
Otto Engelhart, Goldlauter, Gunsmith  
Jost Keiner, Suhl-Goldlauter, Gunsmith  
Lorenz Keiner, Goldlauter, Gunsmith  
Günter Retz, Goldlauter, Gunsmith  
Knut Keiner, Heidersbach, Gunsmith  
Fa. Ziegenhahn, Zella-Mehlis, Gunsmith  
Schilling, Zella-Mehlis, Gunsmith  
Werner Wahl, Zella-Mehlis, Engraver  
Helmut König, Zella-Mehlis, Engraver  
S. Scheerschmidt, Zella-Mehlis, Engraver  
Gabriele Hackl, Zella-Mehlis, Engraver

*The gunmakers who work at Merkel are not listed.*



# A walking tour to the former and present gunmakers in Suhl

by Dietrich Apel

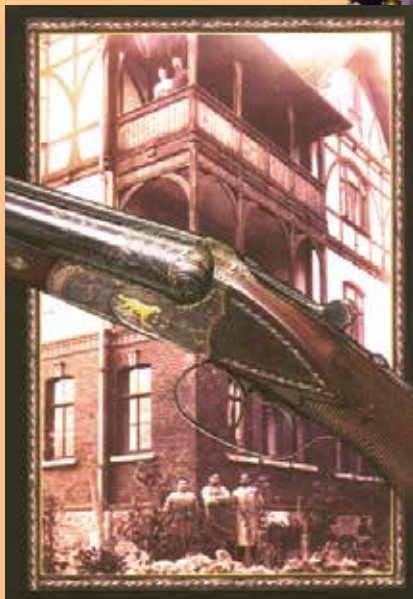
During all my personal visits to Suhl and those with groups of members, I have always felt that the town should do more for visitors that come to Suhl because of their interest in the guns and the gunmakers of Suhl. In the following pages we suggest a way to do it and we would be happy to help perfect the map and add information about the various gunmakers. My sincere thanks go to Mr. Gerd Manig for his enthusiastic support and to the *Rhön-Rennsteig Verlag* for allowing us to use their map.



Market Square with Waffenschmied



Department store at Market Square



Home and shops of H.A. Lindner

Sauer Villa



Old Haenel Forge



Meffert shops



Imman Meffert

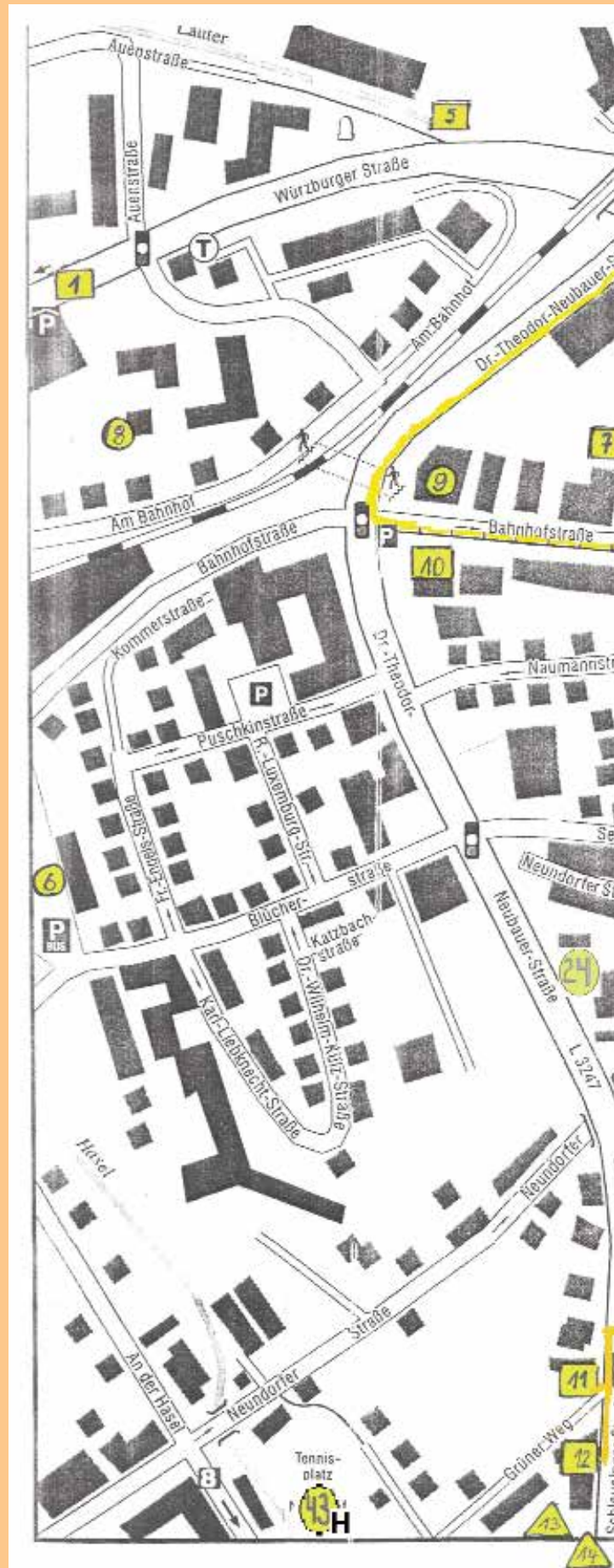


Spangenberg Historic Marker

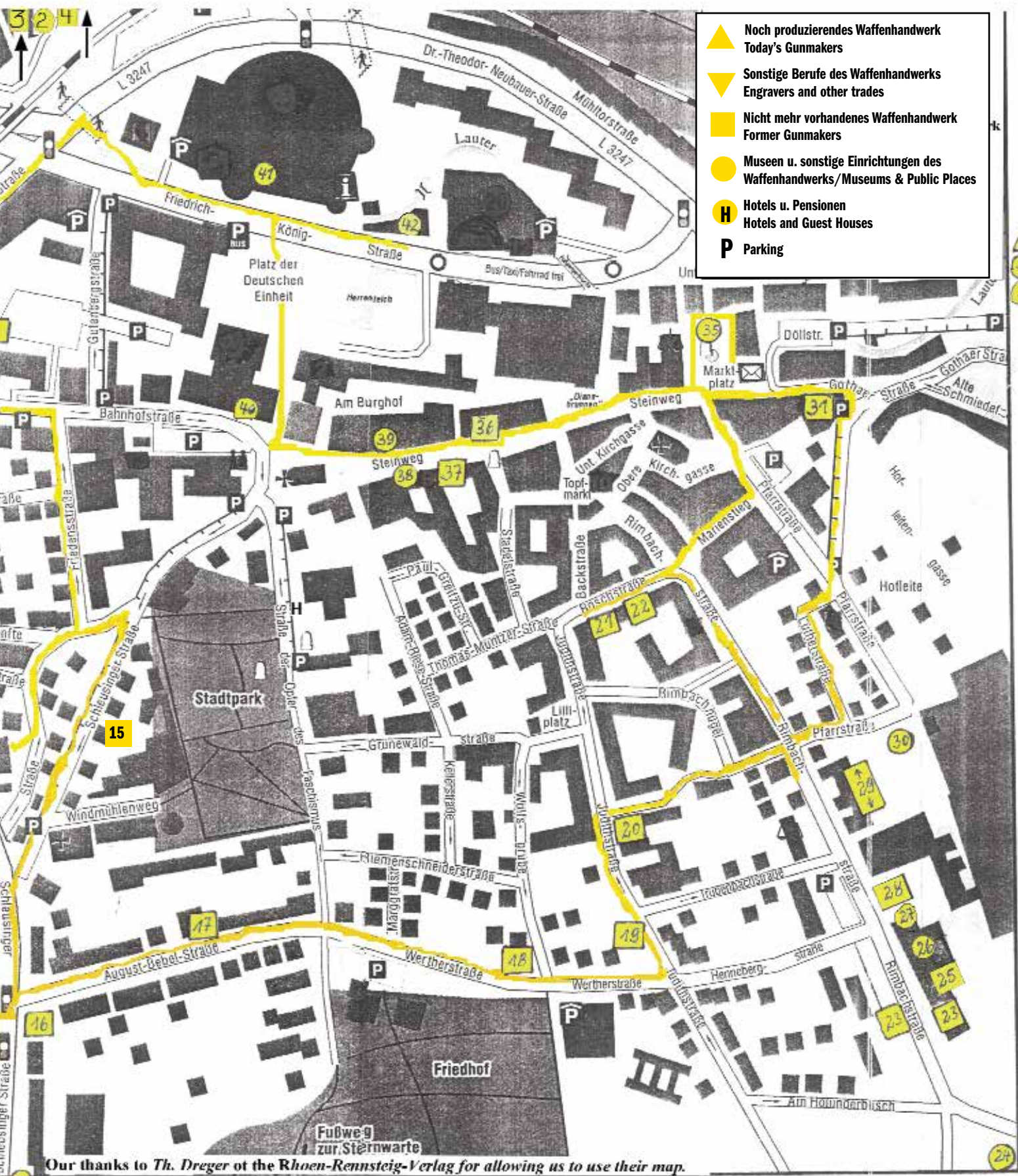
# Gunmakers of Suhl

Visit the locations of the former and present craftsmen

- 1 Simson & Co.**  
Gun Factory  
Heinrichs Miningerstr.
- 2 Gunmakers School**  
Linsenhofstr.
- 3 Franz Jäger & Co.**  
Gunmaker Friesenstr.17
- 4 Paul Meffert**  
Gunmaker  
Amtmannsweg 9
- 5 J.P. Sauer & Sohn**  
Gun Factory Auenstr. 20
- 6 Proof House**  
An der Hasel
- 7 C.G. Haenel**  
Gun Factory  
Bahnhofstr. 16
- 8 Sauer – Villa**  
Am Bahnhof
- 9 Sauer – Villa**  
Bahnhofstr.
- 10 Gebhard Merkel**  
Gunmaker Bahnhofstr. 23
- 11 Greifelt & Schlegelmilch**  
Gunmakers  
Schleusingerstr. 34
- 12 Fritz Kieß & Co. GmbH** Gunmakers  
Schleusingerstr. 36
- 13 Gebr. Adamy**  
Gunmaker Windeweg 3  
(retailer)
- 14 Merkel GmbH**  
Gun Factory  
Schützenstr. 26
- 15 H.D. Lindner**  
Gunmaker Schleusingerstr
- 16 Eduard Kettner**  
Gunmaker  
Schleusingerstr. 33
- 17 August Menz**  
(Adalbert Kaditz)  
Gunmakers  
Bebelstr. 3-7 (Erffastr.)
- 18 Bernhard Merkel**  
Gunmaker Wolfsgrube 16
- 19 Oskar Merkel & Co.**  
Gunmaker Judithstr. 60
- 20 Emil Kerner & hn**  
Gunmakers Judithstr. 57
- 21 August Schüler**  
Gunmaker Roschstr. 13
- 22 Walter Munk**  
(formerly Franz Neumann)-  
Gunmakers  
Roschstr. 7
- 23 Theodor Bergmann**  
Gunmaker  
Rimbachstr. 54
- 24 State Archive**  
(in old prison)  
Rimbachstr.
- 25 Gebr. Merkel**  
Gun Factory  
Rimbachstr. 49
- 26 Kriehoff Fighter  
Airplane School**  
Rimbachstr. 47
- 27 Technical School**  
Rimbachstr. 39
- 28 Gebr. Walter Rempft**  
Gunmakers  
Rimbachstr. 41
- 29 Heinrich Kriehoff  
Gun Factory**  
(Sempert & Kriehoff)  
Rimbachstr. 34-37
- 30 Willi Barthold**  
Author & teacher in  
Gunmakers School  
Pfarrstr.
- 31 Alfred Funk**  
Gunmaker Gothaerstr. 18
- 32 A.W. Wolf**  
Gunmaker  
Schwarzwasserweg 13
- 33 Schilling Forge**  
Schwarzwasserweg
- 34 Storage Facility of  
Gun Museum Lauter**
- 35 Market Square with  
Gunmaker Fountain**
- 36 Immanuel Meffert**  
Gunmaker Steinweg 22
- 37 Thieme &  
Schlegelmilch**  
(formerly Nimrod)  
Gunmakers Steinweg 27
- 38 Johann Wilhelm  
Spangenberg, Wilhelm  
Gottlieb Spangenberg**  
Steinweg 31
- 39 Karl Gottlieb Haenel**  
Owner of Haenel Factory  
(Residence) Steinweg 30
- 40 Town Archive**  
Bahnhofstr. 4-6
- 41 Bicycle, Motorcycle,  
Motor Scooter, & Car  
Museum**  
Fr.-König-Str.
- 42 Gun Museum**  
Fr.-König-Str.
- 43 Hotel – Restaurant  
Goldener Hirsch**  
Neundorf – An der Hasel







-  Noch produzierendes Waffenhandwerk  
Today's Gunmakers
-  Sonstige Berufe des Waffenhandwerks  
Engravers and other trades
-  Nicht mehr vorhandenes Waffenhandwerk  
Former Gunmakers
-  Museen u. sonstige Einrichtungen des  
Waffenhandwerks/Museums & Public Places
-  Hotels u. Pensionen  
Hotels and Guest Houses
-  Parking

Our thanks to Th. Dreger of the Rhoen-Rennsteig-Verlag for allowing us to use their map.

## Kersten?? I've heard that name before!

by Dietrich Apel



Most of you who like

German guns might say that, and you might even know that it is mentioned in connection with over and under guns. Meet the inventor of the *Kersten Verschluss*, a bolting system used on over and under guns that is also called the “Double Greener.” But there is much more to Gustav Kersten than just this invention.

Gustav Kersten comes from a family of blacksmiths who originally resided in Sweden. The story goes that an earlier Kersten was seriously wounded in a battle in Germany and could not return to Sweden. He ended up staying in Prussia, again working as a blacksmith; but Gustav Kersten set his sights higher and broke with the family tradition. He served in the

Prussian army, worked himself up through the ranks, and due to his knowledge of guns, became a highly respected Master Armorer in the Prussian Army. He was stationed in Strassburg through the end of World War I, and that's why his bolting system is also called the *Strassburg Verschluss*.

He grew up in a village close to where my grandfather grew up, and married a sister of my grandfather. It was Gustav Kersten who found an apprenticeship for my grandfather in Zella-Mehlis, and three generations of Jaeger gunmakers were on their way. More about this at another time.

But let's look at a very unusual invention of Kersten. Kirby Hoyt was good enough to get me in touch with Dr. Wallace, a customer of his and a life member in our Association, who bought the rifle shown on these pages. It is an unusual

and pretty rare rifle that I had not seen before.

The photos and schematics really tell the story. This must be the slimmest sporting rifle with a falling block that has all the features of a typical German bolt action rifle: a classic straight comb stock, a fairly long pistol grip with a round knob instead of a grip cap, a half round half octagon barrel with a full length integral rib, and a Schnabel at the end of the forearm. It has a shotgun type steel trigger guard and a double set-trigger. What we don't expect on a rifle like this is the Greener safety on the left side of the stock, not the best safety.

The most unusual feature and one that might have offended the very conservative gun owners of the time might be the ring on the end of the opening and cocking lever that is bedded into the underside of



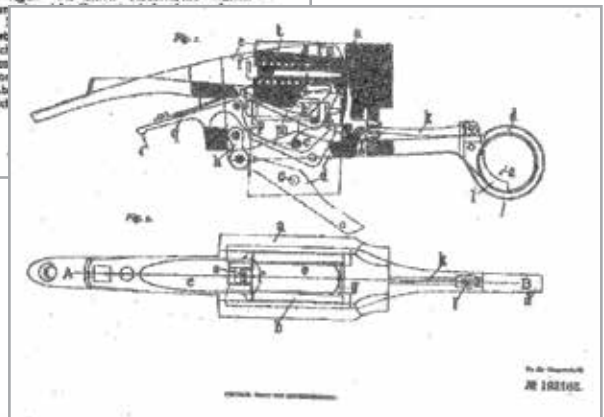




the forearm. This lever is quite functional, and if it had two wing type side extensions like on a Luger pistol toggle instead of the ring, it would not interrupt the slim contour of the rifle.

It is also a fact of life that somebody had a very similar idea before, but either did not patent it or the patent had expired. It was my luck to look for something in W. W. Greener's book *The Gun* and to discover that Dreyse used such a lever with a ring on the end already in 1838.

As a gunsmith I must point out that it must have been a very costly rifle to produce. Only a very skilled stock maker could achieve a perfect fit of the very thin walls of the wood on both sides of the action.



## The 2009 raffle gun:

# A Simson-Jaeger Drilling by Franz Jäger

with his trademark "Herold" by Dietrich Apel



When you read this article, you will have already received the number 39 *Waidmannsheil* issue that contains a sheet of raffle tickets in the center fold, showing a Drilling with which most of you are not familiar. It was made by my grandfather, Franz Jäger in Suhl, and was donated to our Association by the widow of the former owner of the gun. Our directors decided that this gun should be the Grand Prize of our 2009 fund raising raffle. By buying raffle tickets you will most of all support our association and its work to bring together the history of German guns and their makers, but you also will have a chance to become the owner of a gun with a history that is worth telling.

This gun is a very plain and basic back action hammer Drilling that was most likely made in 1905 after a patent for its design was issued in September of 1904. Franz Jäger was born on a farm in 1876, the second oldest of nine children. Only one of the sons could inherit the farm, and all the others had to find their way in the world. One of Franz Jäger's sisters had married a Gustav Kersten who lived in a neighboring village. Among those of you who study the history of gunmaking, this name will ring a bell. He became an armourer in the Prussian Army and invented the *Kersten Verschluss*, a bolt-action system that was also called the Double Greener or *Strassburg Verschluss*. It was Gustav Kersten who arranged a gunmaking apprenticeship for Franz in Zella-Mehlis, the gunmaking center next to Suhl.

Franz had a technical mind and ideas how to improve the guns of the time and bring them on the market. Since apprentices were usually 14 years old, became journeymen 4 years later and had to prove their capabilities for a few more years before they could become masters, Franz must have opened his own gun business in Halle on the Saale river in 1898 and advertised a cocking system of his own design. The only proof of this is the ad on top of page 23.

But this must not have brought the success he had hoped for, because already in 1899 he emigrated to the United States and opened a business on Broadway in New York City under the name Bittner & Jaeger and advertised in *The American Field* in November 1900. He had designed a selective single trigger, received a German patent

for it made out to "Franz Jäger, a subject of the German Kaiser" and offered to install it into customers' guns.

While in New York he met Fanny Strauss from Frankfurt in Germany, married her and their first son Paul was born in 1901. Shortly thereafter he returned with his family to Europe, looked over the Liege gun making center in Belgium, but decided to settle in Suhl instead. I remember my grandfather talking about his time in New York and how much he liked it there. His decision to return to Germany was driven by the realization that he could not find the trained craftsmen in the United States to bring his many ideas into the market. He also got to know the New York importers like Charles Daly and others who all imported guns from Suhl, and saw an



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Pacific Coast Agents, Northwestern Agents.

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Masonary Ward & Co., Chicago; Lewis Erhardt & Co., Alhambra; J. F. Schaeffer Arms Co., Kansas City; G. Kirkwood, Boston; Geo. Wright Hardware Co., Denver; C. W. & S. Lake Hardware Co., Salt Lake City; Nelson & Le Valley, Buffalo; and Gun Dealers in every city.

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SOME OF THE

## "CASHMERE GUN" VICTORIES TO DATE.

Championship of New South Wales, February 21st, 1900. Mr. C. Massey won, killing one of twelve and a possible 100, with a Cashmere Gun at an 800 yds. rise.

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**THE GUN IMPROVEMENT CO.**

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**Jaeger's Patent Trigger Improvement.**

**DOUBLE SHOTGUNS** with two triggers attached so as to permit the firing of the gun in the usual manner, by pressing forward and rear triggers or right and left barrels by pressing below the forward trigger only, or left and right barrels by pressing below the rear trigger only. The Jaeger system retains the features of the old system with all the advantages of a single trigger system. Price for Altering Double Gun, \$10.

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opportunity.

When he arrived in Suhl he first set up a small shop and continued what he had successfully done in New York, the installation of his selective single trigger for the gunmakers in Suhl and the gun owners in Germany. A small catalog about this single trigger included a pretty long list of the most prominent German gun dealers who accepted guns from their customers for this trigger installation. I have actually handled a Lindner gun with the Jaeger single selective trigger. Both he and Lindner had their shops in the same street.

My grandmother called these early years in Suhl the best time of their life, but Franz had many more ideas, and the *Simson-Jaeger Verschluss* followed in 1904. The reason this patent became known by

this double name was, that he had an agreement with the Simson Company in Suhl that they could also use his patent on their guns. In the Simson Almanac we offer for sale guns with this patent are listed. Between 1900 and 1914 Franz Jaeger received 8 German Patents, 9 Patents in other countries and 8 DRGMs (small patents). Life was good in these “golden years”, but then came World War I, a disaster for the world and many gunmakers.

But now back to his second patent. Why would Franz Jaeger waste his time on a hammer gun? Yes, the “hammerless” guns where coming on the market, but many people did not yet trust those “newfangled” guns that could not possibly be safe to handle. At first glance you might also wonder why two lumps, one under each of the two

barrels on top, could possibly be needed if all fine guns you know, including the best English guns, had the lumps between the two barrels. The four reasons I am giving you are my personal opinions, and that might not be shared by those who put a high value on tradition!

The first reason will make sense to those who have a technical mind and wonder about the fact, that even the very best guns with side-by-side barrels will become loose eventually, and that the first sign of looseness is not up and down but side to side. You can confirm this on your gun by taking the forearm off, holding the gun at the grip with both hands and shaking it sideways and up and down. You will feel even the slightest movement and will find that many guns have side-to-side looseness



**Hahn-Drillinge**  
mit Simson—Jäger-Verschluss

bet. Umschaltung zwischen rechten Schrot- und Kugellauf durch Schieb-  
Gewicht in Kal. 16 x 9,3 ca. 3,050 kg.



KAISERLICHES PATENTAMT.

**PATENTSCHRIFT**  
— Nr. 176578 —  
KLASSE 72a. GRUPPE 16.

FRANZ JAEGER in SUHL i. Th.

Verschließvorrichtung für Kipplaufgewehre.

Patentiert in Deutschen Reich am 21. September 1904 ab.

Geometrisch vorliegende Erfindung betrifft die Einrichtung an Kipplaufgewehren, zum Zweck, das Verschieben eines größeren Hahn zu einem bei gewöhnlicher Verschiebung der 2 Fehlführung.

Alle bisherigen Verschlüsse, insbesondere Drillingen mit Schließhaken am Lauf, besitzen kein Schließgewicht, welche die Verschiebegerichte rasgender sind und beweglich, so daß derselbe im Schieber oder geschwindigkeit infolge dessen rascher zu erfassen, besonders mit gewöhnlichen Gewehren auch nach mehrerer Anwendung gefällig, daß der Schieber aus Verschiebung aus der Stelle, wo sich die Bildung für die Schließgewichte befindet, nicht

Da diese eingetragenen Schließgewichte von gewöhnlicher nur von geringer Leistung wie kleinen geschloßähnlichen Hahn in noch mehr geschwindigkeit möglich, so treten die beiden Oeffnen und Schließen des Gewehres vor eine kleine Antriebskraft, welche sich bei rascher Gebrauch vollkommen selbstständig, während die Verschiebung wird.

Im Gegensatz zu diesen Verschlüssen ist bei vorliegende Erfindung die Verschiebegerichte mit dem schließlichen Schließhaken ein einziges Gewicht, welches ein Verschieben der Verschiebegerichte im Bedenken vollständig ausgeschlossen ist.

Die Schließgewichte haben einen großen Umfang und besitzen insbesondere eine bedeutend größere Abmessungen, als die kleinen Schließgewichte. Durch Gewicht der Hahn und

Ausführungen, wie sie an den bisherigen an Verschlüssen verwendet sind, so die Herstellung einer wesentlich veränderlichen. Bei den bisher üblichen Kipplaufgewehren befindet sich am Lauf ein Schließgewicht, welches in der Mitte zwischen beiden Läufen angeordnet ist. Im Verschiebegerichte befindet sich eine entsprechende Anordnung, in welche der Schließhaken einsteckt.

Diese Anordnung des Schließers bedingt, daß beim Abfeuern des rechten bzw. linken Laufes ein seitliches Zurückbewegen des Schließers auf den Schließhaken stattfindet, welche das seitliche Verschieben der Verschiebegerichte bewirkt.

Man hat jedoch schon früher versucht, diesen Schaden durch zwei seitliche Schließgewichte abzuwehren, von gleichermaßen zwei Schließern zu bilden, welche sich unter den Schließern der beiden Läufe befinden. In die Mitte zwischen den beiden Konstruktionen ein Schließgewicht aus einseitiger Form, indem die einen schließliche Mittelteil (in Gegensatz zu diesen Verschlüssen mit geringer Abmessungen) gleichfalls angeordnet.

Man wird heute ein großer Teil der Kipplaufgewehre so eingerichtet, daß sich beim Kippen der Läufe ein Schließgewicht zwischen den beiden Verschiebegerichten, welche in Verschiebegerichte angeordnet sind und so wie bei durch das Schieber raschen. Bei diesen oben genannten Verschlüssen mit einem Schließhaken in der Mitte sind zwei

first while still tight up and down. This should not be immediate cause for alarm, because all modern cartridges take advantage of the fact, that brass has a memory, which means that it expands under the



pressure of the powder gases, sealing off the rear of the barrel gas tight and

then returning to the original size for ease of extraction. Only as the looseness increases should a gunsmith be consulted. The first reason why the *Simson-Jäger Verschluss* has advantages is that a lump under the center of each barrel totally eliminates the side-to-side movement when the gun is fired.

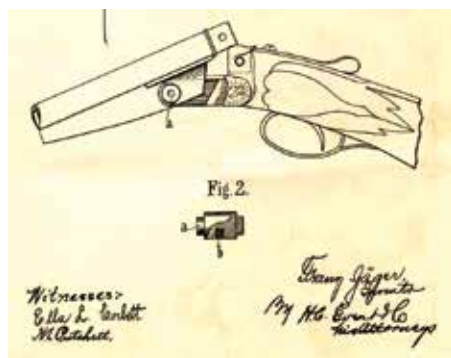
The second reason, not as important as the first, is again understood by those who think about gun design. When actions fail and develop cracks, it is usually in the corner between the water table and the standing breech, weakened by the various cavities for the lumps, the cocking levers and the slots for the firing mechanisms on boxlock guns. That is why some reject the use of aluminum for actions and why action size and the steel that is used are points of contention. The cross section on Simson-Jaeger guns is very much stronger in this critical location.

The third reason has to do with production costs versus sale price. The machining of the openings for the lumps in a conventional action was very time consuming. Today we have EDM (electro-discharge-machines) that literally burn out (erodes) these openings with great precision.

Formerly it took quite a few machining operations, starting with drilling holes, machining away the walls between the holes and finally broaching the holes to exact size in several steps, all time consuming operations. The Simson-Jaeger action

needs only one milled slot for the single cocking lever, where on conventional actions slots had to be created for two cocking levers in similar operations as for the openings for the lumps. Time is money, and the Simson-Jaeger action lowered the production costs.

The fourth reason not only lowers the production costs, but is also a stronger and more durable bolting of the barrels to the action. Conventional guns have hinge pins that are quite small in diameter. When a



gun comes "off the face" (the term used when the barrel moves forward and away from the standing breech), an oversize hinge pin or hinge screw has to be made and fitted, a time-consuming and expensive job. The Simson-Jaeger action has integral trunions on both sides of the action that are bigger in diameter and easily machined with a hollow mill. These trunions have a much greater diameter and therefore a much greater bearing surface. The patent drawing shows the open side of the action to allow easy machining. Both sides are then covered with a cover plate that is closely fitted in the rear and screwed to the trunions in front. The plates are so closely fitted, that you have to look hard to see where they end.

I have yet to see a gun with the Simson-Jäger system that has come off the face. The raffle Drilling is proof and testament to this



statement. The gun saw a lifetime of heavy use, documented by the fact that the checkering is worn to a smooth surface and that the barrels were loose up and down. The gunmaking skills of Larry Schuknecht made the Greener cross bolt

firmly hold down the barrels, but the barrels were not even one little bit off the face! The owner took good care of the gun, and the bores are in very good condition. A new owner can still get a lifetime of good service out of this gun.

In conclusion, I contend that Franz Jaeger saw in this design a way to offer a reasonably-priced gun that would give good, reliable and durable service. He used the same design on hammerless guns with Blitz Locks, incorporated his hand cocking device and offered it in various grades, some with elaborate engraving. But it was not a great commercial success for him because he could not overcome "tradition", and the design was imitated by others, especially the Belgian makers, when the patent expired.

You can find more information about Franz Jäger and his other "best" design in Journal # 28.



# Saying Goodbye to a Dear Friend

by John Neumann

My first interaction with Dietrich began with me calling “New England Custom Gun,” seeking advice and guidance as to the acquisition of my first medium heavy caliber- that being .375 H&H or perhaps larger. I had no thought that I might end up talking with the owner of the firm. My desires were not well defined as this was my first purchase of a rifle of greater than .30 caliber and my first adventure into the world of custom built firearms.

I had studied to some degree the Winchester Model 70 as produced by the custom shop. Mr. Apel - as I referred to him - asked me an extensive group of questions. This was quite intriguing to me as all of my past inquiries were quite elemental and essentially all resulted with someone asking: “How much can you spend?” Mr. Apel, on the other hand, covered my height, size, my hunting background, where did I plan to go hunting, and was I in condition to take on such a hunt. While not demeaning the Model 70 in any way, Dietrich politely asked if I had given any consideration to any of the firearms that his firm represented or more specifically had I considered a bespoke rifle.

I offered that I did not think that I could afford a custom-built rifle or one of the standard firearms provided by any of the German gun makers he represented. At this point Mr. Apel softly presented a case for a custom rifle that would have matched the opening statements of a prosecutor presenting case in the Old Bailey. Coming from a German family, supported by a strong belief that all things German were “the best”, and having essentially no resistance to the acquisition of another firearm I “pled guilty on all counts.”

Since Dietrich had me well hooked, he then offered me the opportunity to join an upcoming trip to Germany to visit those very gun makers. Having been “under the same management for roughly 30 years” at that time, I presented the travel / tour program to my wife. While her career would not let her take off at the time of the trip, she thought I should join the group. Carefully picking myself up off the floor, I contacted Mr. Apel and cemented my commitment to go.

Up until the trip, I studied all the gun makers that I could find. Mr. Apel continued to graciously answer my firearm questions and offered to work with me during my meetings with small, select group of true

gun makers - not assemblers, who we would visit during our tour of Germany.

Thus, I began a long and deep relationship with a man of deep convictions, amazing capabilities, and the capacity to convert this person’s wants into a genuine design. Dietrich’s background was legendary in the German gun makers’ guild. He was a bridge between people and ideas. One of his characteristics, which could cause some stress to people who did not grow up in a fully genetic German household, was his perseverance [translate “stubbornness”] and drive to fulfill the goal he accepted.

My first custom-build rifle was to be built by Herr Gunter Retz and his son Thorsten. While the Retz firm was not large, they did turn out yearly a modest number of beautiful firearms. My rifle had been “born” before I first saw it, but it was exactly the basis for what I wanted. So all remaining work was fitted to me. When completed, a fully Teutonic 9.3X74R Kipplauf, bearing a Hirsch in the engraving, came to live at my home.

Dietrich maintained a balance as translator of my special needs and those traits of a concierge who did not interfere but seemed to be present at just the right times. This uniqueness continued throughout our 17 year relationship. A blend of deep friendship, mentor, and mutual confidants as we dealt with the differences of intense German family structure, and the American style of life, business negotiations, and group dynamics. Dietrich was a German American, and I was born American while raised fully immersed in all German traditions and beliefs that made the core of all German families even though they may have emigrated to the United States.

Each year - except for one - I traveled with Dietrich on his German tours. On occasion he and I would discuss various possible activities, and investigate unique adventures so that not only was each tour an in-depth exposure to the finest of German and Austrian gun makers but also a cultural experience revealing what made Germany and Austria so unique and special. On one tour I had organized a small contingent of GGCA members to be privileged to hunt on the private grounds of Graf zu Ortenberg. The gracious Count had his castle staff prepared an honor review of the game taken and present a *Jagd Fest*

dinner for the hunters and even had a special pin created commemorating the event. That was the only year that I missed due to a serious illness.

Through the years the GGCA and Dietrich evolved as the Association became bigger and more complex. From the very first tour Dietrich declared his vision of the GGCA. On a bus ride during the 1999 tour Dietrich explained the foundation of the association and the first officers of the fragile “German Gun Collectors Association” were recruited among the passengers! (As I recall it, Kathy Hummel worked at the nominations committee of one, walking up and down the bus aisle recruiting officers!)

Now the Association existed but how was it to take form and evolve into a vibrant institution? Mr. Apel brought forward the periodical “*Der Waffenschmied*”. The publication was in its infancy. Many members had excellent backgrounds in journalism, writing, and organization. The periodical’s structure improved the articles; they became more technical and yet more readable. Dietrich maintained an iron fist over the writings that were published.

It became clear that the GGCA needed a much less technical publication that provided a voice for Association events, personal stories from members, and the listing of our Association’s library of publications that could be purchased by members or non-members alike. Our initial venture into products and remembrances was launched with porcelains, quality hats, table cloths, and membership patch that was designed by one of our members proved to be overly ambitious and optimistic. So, we regrouped with the decision was made to only sell books / our GGCA hats / and the special pins awarded to those who properly took game with their German or Austrian firearms. This auxiliary and initially less auspicious publication came to be called “*Waidmannsheil*.”

While all of this was going on the GGCA found itself at the Beinfeld Arms Shows held each January in Las Vegas. Through Mr. Apel’s business and personal relationships the GGCA had a place in the custom firearms room alongside not only famous gun makers but also a goodly number of well renown purveyors of some of the most beautiful firearms in existence. With a bit of hard work, an annual banquet with a meeting was held in a private dining room at the now non-existent “Riviera Hotel and Casino”. Often the leaders of world famous arms makers and the tremendous optics firm of Schmidt & Bender would come to

participate in our dinners.

In the early years, I was privileged to serve a term as President of the GGCA; an honor which meant and continues to mean a great deal to me. The Association gained members and diversity. But the one component that haunted the GGCA was raising sufficient funds to pay for everything it was trying to do and keep those activities at the highest possible quality level. Dietrich continually poured his own personal funds into the GGCA. Members provided quality items of all types for the annual auction, and some even donated firearms. But the rising costs continued to sap the Association’s strength.

The Association came to a difficult time. Dietrich had been handling the business affairs from his home in New Hampshire and the strain upon Dietrich led him to recruit a new volunteer to take over that function. Disagreements over how to continue the business management led Dietrich to step aside from continued participation in GGCA activities. But one person who came to be a new member was Mr. Tom Devers. He actually collected firearms of a different maker but we “converted” him rather quickly to be a collector and connoisseur of fine German and Austrian arms.

Tom is astounding in his ability to make friends, build business relationships, and quietly lead. He became the President of the GGCA at the right time. His personality restored energy and vitality to the overall membership. He, too, used his own personal funds and staff from his own firm - the Vin Devers Mercedes Benz Dealership of Ohio, which he co-owns with his brother. Creation of many things occurred under Tom’s guidance and membership in the Association grew both in private memberships but also in the all-important business memberships.

Dietrich had decided that another one of the changes that came about was too difficult for him to cope with. That decision that was decided by the membership, was to enlarge the exposure of the Association’s studies to include all firearms that were “Germanic.” Dietrich insisted German & Austrian firearms needed far more study and there was neither the need nor the energy to expand our study to involve all “guns Germanic.” So the gentleman who started, nurtured, funded, and founded the GGCA initiated his own web site to continue the work that he so deeply believed in. The GGCA was able to become financially stable by Tom’s guidance, his own gifts and those of others.

Dietrich continued to create new articles, reviews,



and discussions on the personal web site he created. He funded it for years as long as he could and then ultimately transferred it Mr. Larry Schuknecht who had stood strong as the Librarian of the GGCA. Mr. Schuknecht continues to underwrite the web site to this day.

The separation of Dietrich personally from the GGCA will never remove his driving energy to create it. Without him the GGCA would never have come into existence. But the GGCA is now recognized around the world as the center of study for all arms “Germanic.” With Tom Devers’ guidance of the Association and Dr. Richard and Mrs. Kathy Hummel’s unending devotion to the production of the beautiful publication of “*Waidmannsheil*,” the GGCA has evolved while continuing to be the guiding light to everyone who loves firearms, German, Austrian, or Germanic.

So, may we remember our beloved Dietrich for all the amazing things that he did, and what he shared with us that we could have never have experienced without him. The GGCA is a vibrant and ever-growing organization that was started by one man who planted the seed of vision..... Dietrich Apel.

Dietrich was a dear friend to me and he and I shared much together. The years have gone by all too fast but my memories will last forever of the man with a rasp in his hands, bent over his bench working on a block of steel - a man who dreamed of a future we have all come to live in. Thank you for every moment we shared, Dietrich. Take care my friend.....

Yours Always und *Waidmannsheil!*  
John Neumann, Jaeger

