

Appleseed Boot Camp

By Susan Hogue

It's something I never thought much about. After all, I can hit a deer or rabbit, so I thought my brother was crazy when he told me I needed to go with him to an *Appleseed Boot Camp* and learn to be a rifleman. Truth is, I would not have gone had it not been that women are allowed to attend *free* in 2009.

Now that I have been to one of these remarkable events hosted by the *Revolutionary War Veterans Association*, I believe it's a necessity to let people know there are those out there whose mission is to teach others how to be riflemen.

After all, competence with a firearm is the most fundamental pioneering skill anyone can possess. Being able to build your homestead, raise your animals, or stock your pantry does no good if you can't defend your home, your livestock, and your larder. Perhaps, had I been quicker with my rifle, I would not have lost so many chickens to coyotes.

Before my *Appleseed* experience, I figured my point and click shooting

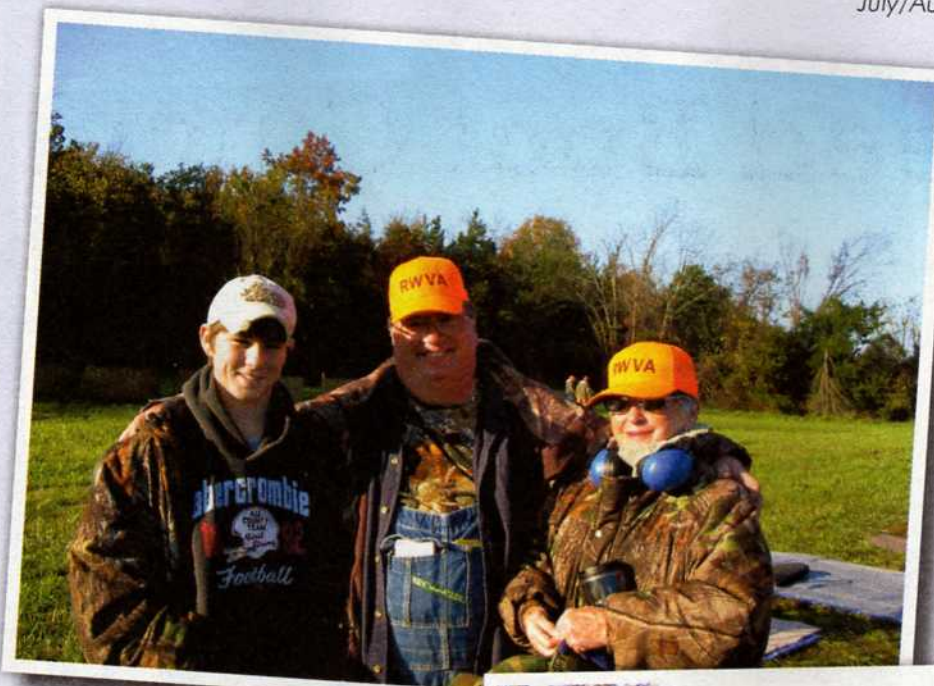
was pretty good. My brother, Kurt, had given me most of my shooting lessons years ago in the California desert. We had a great deal of fun, but to me it was just recreation, not something I thought I might need to survive, and certainly not something I thought I would fear the loss of having the right to do. More recently, my shooting lesson consisted of my hus-

band putting a paper plate against a stump about 40 yards away, giving me a 30-30, saying, "Look down the sights and aim at the plate. When you've got it there, pull the trigger." I did as instructed, and then he went and picked up the plate and said "Ok, that'll kill a deer; you're good to go." That was it, end of lesson. I had no idea how much more there was to it.



He registered for a "Boot Camp" and kept telling my mother and me that we just had to go, and how the "RWVA really is encouraging women to attend," and that we better "get out there and exercise our 2nd Amendment rights." He persisted until we caved in; I went to the website (www.appleseedinfo.org) and signed up Mom and myself.

Bob, my other brother, helped us get together the things we needed. He had done all the reading and reminded us to bring lawn chairs, a cooler packed with food, and plenty of water.



sling and why they are so important to accuracy. I had only used a sling to carry my rifle through the woods; I didn't know it was a shooting aid.

Next, Guy went over the three shooting positions: standing, sitting (which includes kneeling), and prone (laying down). Guy had Oddball show us these positions as he pointed out the particulars of each. For example, in the sitting position, he stressed proper elbow placement in front of the knees to make you steady and lessen the effect of recoil. He showed us how to place our feet to get ready to drop into a sitting position, and how to transition smoothly.

He also stressed what seemed to me at the time to be an overabundance of ammo. When the day came, he packed us up and, like a good son and brother, carted us to the range.

Mom kept saying, "I don't know why I'm doing this; I'm going to look like an old fool." I wasn't too sure myself that I wouldn't look like only a slightly younger version. We were both very wrong.

As we arrived, the smiles came out, the instructors greeted us warmly and said, "Ladies, if we can help in any way to make you more comfortable, you just let us know."

We walked down a long path to where the "shooting line" was set up. This is where we picked a spot to put down our tarp and lay a piece of carpet over it. Five yards back from the line, we set up our chairs and put our cooler down. All rifles and ammo went on the carpet, along with ear protection and any other shooting paraphernalia we brought.

Instructors in training wear orange hats and full instructors wear red hats. Shoot bosses wear green hats.

Our shoot boss, who called himself "The Guy," started our training with safety lessons; we took one step at a time. 1. Always keep your muzzle



pointed in a safe direction. What is safe? Keep it straight up or pointed down range. 2. *Never* load your rifle until the load command is given. 3. Keep your finger *off* the trigger until your sights are on the target. 4. Everyone is a safety officer. We had to be able to chant our lessons in unison before we moved on to our next lesson.

Then with help of "Oddball," another of the instructors, the demonstrations began, first on how to use a

In the prone position, he taught us to keep our right leg bent as close to 90 degrees as possible (unless you're a lefty), and even to keep your heels down as flat as you can.

After many demonstrations, safety rule refreshers, and explanations of firing line commands like, "Cease fire is not a yellow light," we got to shoot.

We started with one-inch square targets to get sighted in and so the

*"To preserve liberty,
it is essential that the
whole body of the people
always possess arms,
and be taught alike,
especially when young,
how to use them..."*

—Richard Henry Lee, ¹⁷⁸⁸

instructors could see what kind of skill we had. Oddball took great care of my mom, Memajeane. He helped her with her sling and went over how her rifle worked. She needed to use a chair, and that was ok; they said over and over, "However you have to do it, make it work for you."

After some time on sighting in our rifles, we got lessons on minutes of angle (MOA), inches, minutes, clicks, and what that all means to figuring out how to adjust your sites and scope. After that we got to shoot Redcoat targets, then the Army Qualification Test (AQT). The guys working the line kept a close eye on us to make sure everything stayed safe. They also scanned, assessed, and assisted each shooter.

When I came back the next day, Guy asked an instructor named Scott to work with me on the side to get caught up. Scott's perseverance was truly my gain, and by midmorning of the following day I earned my rifleman patch. To top it off, he taught me how to shoot one of his own weapons, and he found me another rifle and a shorter stock to put on it. He is still teaching me, as he and his fellow "Appleseeders" have become friends and family.

My mom had a fantastic time at boot camp, and attained her rifleman



patch. Since then she bought a new rifle and is doing her part to promote the cause.

My brother, Bob, also achieved his rifleman patch—in fact, I believe that everyone attained rifleman by the end of the week. These guys made sure to help each person overcome and adapt to achieve their goal of rifleman. It didn't matter what kind of rifle they brought, what their physical limitations were, or anything else.

If it broke, they fixed it. If it didn't fit, they made it. If it was dirty, they cleaned it. And if you didn't have something, someone else was willing to share with you. I've never been a part of anything like it before.

At lunch there were history lessons (what I called storytime). Guy told the real story of Paul Revere over the course of a couple days, and it was riveting.

Some of the people—whether participant or working volunteer—came from across the country and used their vacation time to attend the boot camp.

After getting your rifleman patch, you get the honor of becoming a new instructor in training and then you can work during the weekend

Appleseed clinic that follows boot camp.

During that week of Boot Camp, I took my son on his two days off from work, and then my nephew on his two days off from school. I hope to take many more people to an Appleseed this year.

The RWVA is a non-profit American Heritage Organization. These people are real America-loving patriots—men and women that value the Constitution and our rights. They are the kind of people I was afraid no longer existed. They don't just talk perseverance—they live it—and they are a growing family of like-minded people with a common goal, which is to save our country.

To be independent and self-reliant you need to know the fundamentals of marksmanship. I also believe that exercising our rights is the best way to help in the battle to keep them. The Appleseed course schedule is online at www.appleseedinfo.org. If you can't find a clinic close enough to attend, consider hosting one at your local shooting range. Δ