

## **The Greatest Cast Bullet Sport There Ever Was**

All of this started when I was in high school. I was just starting to cast bullets for a M1903A1 Springfield and it was a bit big for the sport so we started out using .22 rifles. My running partner and I would head to the town dump on Saturday nights when there were no dates and we'd decimate the local rat population. Times were lean then and .22s were around \$.50 a box and a set of flashlight batteries also figured into the cost. We did get a lot of shooting for the bucks we spent and had a lot of fun.

Later, after being married a while and being a bit more affluent, I acquired friends with an interest in reloading. One was a fellow in the Air Force. By this time, I'd acquired one of the first Colt Pythons in the area and also had a Colt Gold Cup .45 ACP. A .222 Remington rounded out my meager battery along with the Springfield.

One Saturday, he came to visit with his wife and after we'd loaded .38 Special ammo all afternoon and had dinner, we got to telling shooting stories. I proceeded to tell him about shooting rats. One thing led to another and we headed out to the local dump even though it was about 9:00 at the time. Me with a Python and he had a Colt Trooper .357 and a big batch of reloaded .38 Specials.

The shooting was fantastic. Better than I'd remembered it to be and we came in tired and smelly about 2:00 A.M. and caught hell from the wives.

We wuz hooked.

### ***The Game***

The local dump was populated with a large population of what were locally known as "wharf rats". These ran in size from juveniles that had been just weaned to the old gray haired "grandpas that were big as gray squirrels. Most of the population was adults somewhere in between. The population seemed to breed in cycles and about three times a year, we'd hit the "new hatch" and the shooting would be fantastic for several weeks until they got street wise.

The occasional feral feline type target also appeared and was taken in stride. Once in a great while, a raccoon or fox would be encountered but the main game was the rat.

The dump in those days was an interesting place. In those days nothing was recycled so old appliances, furniture, tree trimmings, barrels and your common everyday garbage and trash abounded. Rotten eggs from a local hatchery also gave an aroma to the place. The rats loved them. The shooting opportunities made IPSC shooting scenarios look like kindergarten.

### ***Getting Started***

At the time, I was getting into high power rifle shooting and had made friends with the Army's local Marksmanship Training Unit guys. Their gunsmith worked some wonders on my rifle and I was always assured of a plentiful ammo supply when I practiced with them on their range.

After getting to know the fellows, I was invited to clean out a big box of stuff in their reloading room. Micro lube in large supply, large and small CCI pistol primers and several 3# kegs of Bullseye. And by the way, when I needed more, just ask as they didn't reload any more and had a bunch in their bunker. I was in heaven.

I also attained the loan of two four-cavity bullet moulds. A H & G #50 for the .38s and a H & G #68 for the .45 auto. This sure beat casting Lyman #358495s and #452460s from a SC mould. I began to turn out .38 and .45 bullets by the thousands.

A plentiful supply of .45 ACP cases was also available in those days as accountability wasn't what it is today. The Army still had the M1911A1 pistol and M3A1 "Grease Gun" in the inventory and .45 ACP ammo was plentiful and mostly of Korean War vintage.

I started loading pistol ammo and soon had a pretty good stock. My buddy was also loading .38 Special as hard as fast as he could load as well.

When we each had a big stock, he'd bring the wife to visit and we ended up at the dump.

I'd take a .50 ammo can full of boxed .38 or .45 and work out of it. An old Army field jacket worked well for both the .38 and the .45 ammunition as a carrier.

The .38 Special was dumped into the right pocket (usually about 4 boxes). I'd shoot and put the empties in the left pocket. When empty, I'd head back to the car and replenish my load.

The .45 was dumped about 4 boxes to the left pocket. I had 7 good magazines for the .45 and I'd load them all and they went into the right pocket. I got to where I'd count shot and change on the 7<sup>th</sup> round so that I never had to work the slide. The .45 cases were not recovered as I had a ready supply any time I needed it.

These ammunition supply systems worked well.

We'd form a skirmish line and work the newly dumped trash. It was kind of like jump shooting rabbits except the rats were more tame and there were far more of them. I've shot over 800 rounds of both .38 and .45 in one night.

Needless to say over the two to three year period that we did this, I became a right fair game shot with a pistol.

### ***The Watering Hole***

Along about this time, the Army picked up the M-16 rifle and 5.56 mm ammunition became plentiful. I was able to get all kinds of 55-grain FMJ bullets for free as friends pulled these and seated commercial bullets for varmint use. I'd save up the pulled bullets and load 100 rounds in the .222 Remington. It was equipped with a 4X Bushnell Banner scope. I managed to zero and adjust this combo to hit dead on at 25 yards. A flashlight held alongside the barrel worked pretty well and allowed use of the rifle at night.

Below the dump was a pond of water. A tree had been bulldozed over into it. At night, the rats would crawl out on the limbs to get water. I'd load the magazine of the Model 722 and sit on a pile of dirt above it for a few minutes. Then, I'd hit them with the flashlight and start blasting. When the magazine was empty, I'd switch off the light, reload the magazine and repeat the process. One night, I got 96 out of a hundred rounds. Now, I can tell you, a missed rat can almost walk on water as I've seen it.

Oh how I wish that place was still there as I think the Lyman #225415HP and #225438HP would be a natural for this type shooting.

### ***The New Year's Ambush***

One year in January after we'd quit small game hunting, my buddy said he had 4 or 5 boxes of 12 gauge shells he'd like to shoot up as the regular hunting season was over. I had some as well so we took our 12 gauge pumps out on one of our hunts.

The city had picked up all of the Christmas trees after the holidays and piled them in one place over some garbage. The pile must have been 40 feet high and maybe 25 yards across. Rats kept getting away from us and going into the pile.

They'd scraped a smooth space all around and there was no danger of the fire spreading so we got the idea of getting the shotguns out and setting the trees afire.

We went back and got our shotguns and shells, pulled the plugs and loaded up. We touched off the tress. My buddy got on one side and I was on the other. We made the rules that we'd not shoot toward each other but only right and left. Flashlights were not needed. In about 15 minutes, it got going good and the rats started pouring out. It was a real ambush. I don't know how many we actually got but we counted 120 when it was over with and that's not counting the cripples.

### ***Shooting Rats in a Barrel***

One night we took a friend with us. He was shooting a borrowed Model 18 Smith & Wesson in .22 but wasn't much of a pistol shot. He kept missing rats all night long and muttering to himself. I saw a rat run into a 55 gallon drum and didn't come out. The top had been cut out so I grabbed the edge and sat it up and here's the rat running around the bottom. We called the guy over and told him here was one that he couldn't miss. You wouldn't believe it but it took him 3 shots to hit that rat. Some people and pistols just don't go together.

These shenanigans continued until about 1966 when I entered the Army. We had many good hunts and learned a lot about snap shooting small game and I suppose did the community a service.

Now, the old dumps are gone and sanitary landfills have taken their place.

I'd sure like to find one of the old ones and dust off the Python and maybe take some cast hollow points in the .223 and have a ball shooting rats with cast. For sure, it's the finest cast bullet sport that ever was.

**John Goins/aka beagle**