

# Incidentally . . .

Speaking of cryptic conversations . . . we were listening in the other day while the NRA's Public Relations Division (both of them) were 'at work'. The conversation sounded like something out of a Treasury Department report.

"If you can top two million four hundred and forty thousand it's yours."

"That's easy." Lights flashed in the smoke-filled air. "What do you say to two million seven hundred and ten? There it is."

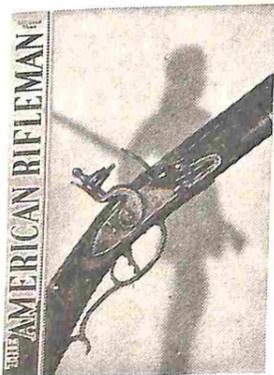
"Well, to uphold the NRA's prestige I'll have to beat that."

He did too. He racked up a cool three million, plus four free games on the pinball machine at Washington's fabulous Touchdown Club to make off with the seventy-five cents in stakes . . . and fifteen minutes of radio time to beat the drums for this month's National Convention and the National Championship shoot-offs. Seems like there's more than one way of getting publicity. Sometimes a fine touch on a pinball plunger is a help.

We like to remember the time last winter . . . on the day of the annual banquet for the Board of Directors . . . when the Public Relations boys threw a buffet luncheon for the press and radio men of the city. It wound up as an around-the-clock series of card games with just about every Washington sports writer and broadcaster involved at one time or another. Seems that U. S. Naval Academy publicist Jerry Flynn had arrived in town to introduce new Navy football coach George Sauer to the press but, finding the sports departments bare, had to drag Sauer

to NRA hotel headquarters to meet the boys. Said the papers: "Sauer Reports in to NRA" . . . which is as good, publicitywise, as any headline.

It isn't always beer and skittles for NRA's tub thumpers. Sometimes they work . . . like when there's a copy deadline for the RIFLEMAN . . . or when they're preparing



## COVER

Robert P. Holland's fine study of a Kentuck Rifle shows an example of the famed American arm in the collection preserved at historic Fort McHenry, near Baltimore, Maryland. The old fort of 'Star Spangled Banner' fame, is now a mecca for visiting gun collectors, with its Berkeley Bowie collection of American firearms. Incidentally, this month marks the 168th anniversary of the Battle of King's Mountain (October 7, 1780), which stands yet as one of the classic examples of accurate rifle fire versus bayonets and inaccurate muskets. Like many another of this country's first battles, King's Mountain was a victory for American rifles and American riflemen.

releases for one of their campaigns . . . safety, national championships, legislation, intercollegiate and interscholastic matches, and whatnot. There are eight or ten of those campaigns a year. Then there are personal-ity and promotional articles for other magazines, radio and television scripts, outdoor shows and exhibits which have to be arranged and set up.

When something special happens . . . like when Olympic winner Art Cook came home . . . there are arrangements to be made for special interviews, personal appearances on radio and television, luncheons, stories, Cookie's return, even coming as it did at the height of the baseball season and the beginning of football, grabbed a lot of space for the shooting game.

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When a really big event like the Nationals is over the guys act like the proverbial disgraces (only equipped with ultralight special copy every night for each news service, ice, paper, magazine, and radio station requesting it,

but there is the continuing battle of trying to jazz the statistical people into getting results out on time for deadlines. Between those battles they nursemaid the press representatives on hand, or try to persuade Mary Doe on firing point 102 to pose for a flash picture, or arrange an interview with hotshot Joe Blow, who is on the third relay of Match 4 and the first relay of Match 5 and who has got to get chow after that to be ready for Match 6.

Like the Thespian with his curtain calls or the miser with his gold, the NRA's publicity guys judge their success (or lack of it) by their press clippings. Something like 750 come in from three clipping services during a normal month . . . and that's a lot of lines of newspaper space. After a special campaign, of course, returns are much higher. From a public relations viewpoint these indicate how the shooting gospel is being received by press and (consequently) public . . . and also provide a sounding board of US thinking on firearms subjects.—J. S.

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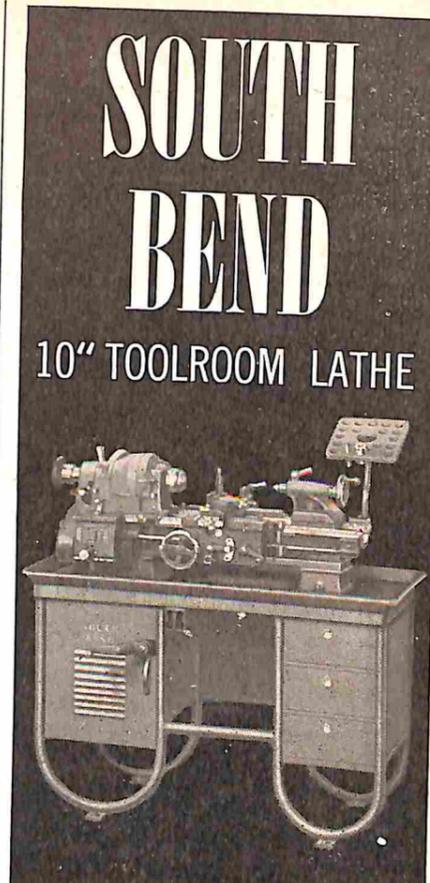
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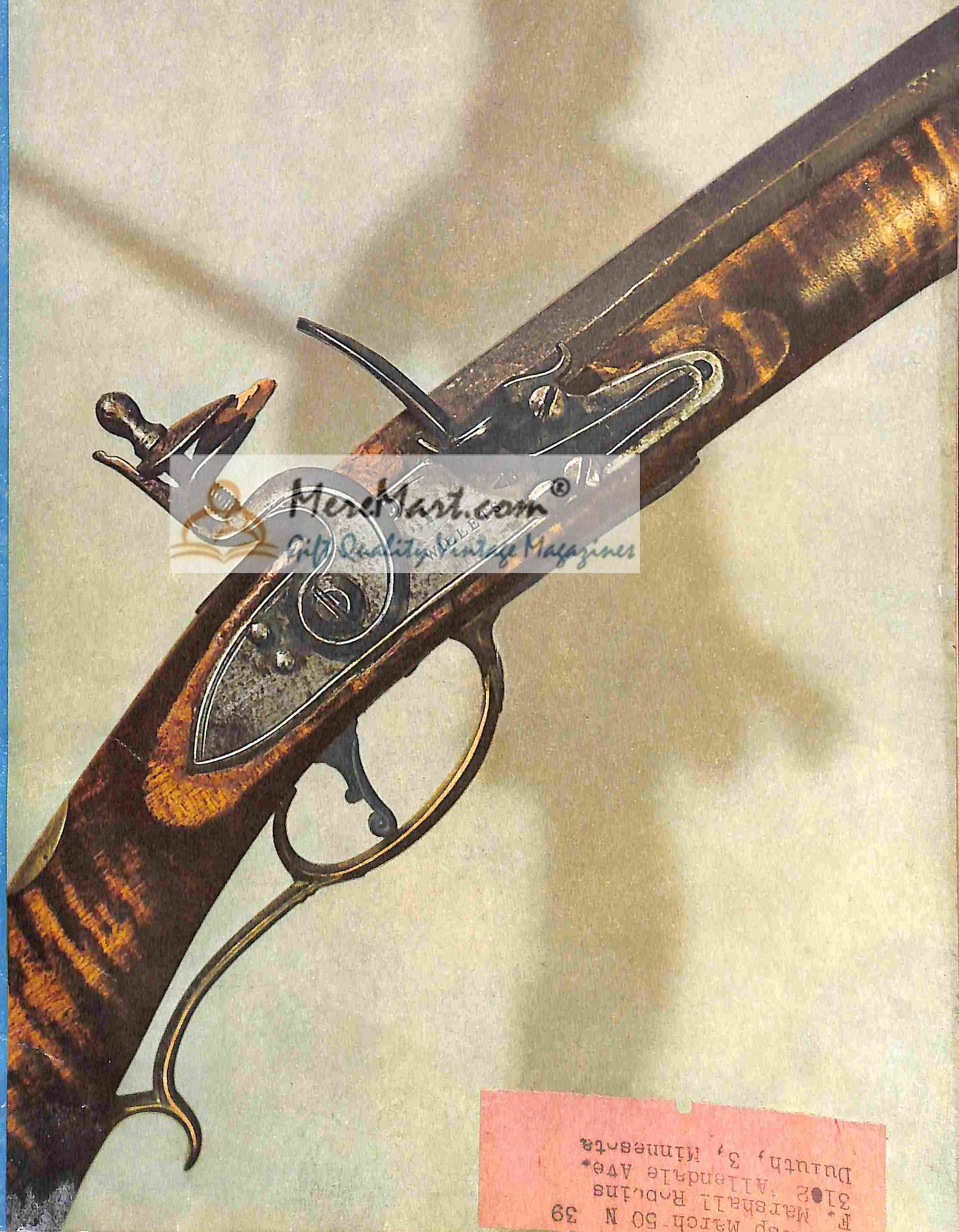
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