

Martin Dorney

- a lifetime of shooting and a wealth of knowledge

by Media Officer Rachael Andrews

For many of his 90 years, firearms and target shooting have played a large part in Martin Dorney's life and the new milestone isn't getting in his way. In fact, the keen pistol shooter spent his birthday weekend in August 2011 competing in the Combined Metropolitan Pistol Clubs (CMPC) Black Powder Championships at the Sydney Pistol Club, casually stating, "What else would I do!"

Born on August 6, 1921, at Randwick in New South Wales, Martin is married to Mary and is known by many *Australian Shooter* and *Australian Hunter* readers as the man behind Martin's Firearms - the New South Wales gunsmithing business.

Martin's passion for firearms began at a young age, when his uncle, an Army Lewis-Gun instructor, took him to Army carnivals, which were held regularly at the time, and helped him try out rifles. This became a yearly activity until Martin was old enough to purchase his own firearm.

Martin began his target shooting career at the Liverpool Anzac Rifle Range, shooting a .303 with the AGM Rifle Club. When this range closed some years later, Martin joined the Maroubra RSL Rifle Club and commenced shooting .303s at the Malabar

Rifle Range.

It was around this time that Martin became interested in pistol shooting. In about 1953, Martin and a group of fellow shooters, including John Sarkis, Ivan Connolly, Ben McCarthur, Captain Leo Hilligan and Ron Hayes, formed the Sydney Pistol Club - the first pistol club in New South Wales. Pat Hills, the Lord Mayor at the time, was the patron of the club and along with Lionel Bibby and Jack Davey, provided a lot of assistance. The club used the range at the Wynard Pistol Range and range officer Angus Klose was very helpful to the new club.

"We were able to send a team to compete in the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and at the time, we had to pay our own travel and hotel expenses," Martin said.

He says that at the time, there were no laws in New South Wales to owning a target pistol and the team of shooters were forced to use their own firearms, bought legally for 'self defence'. Martin shared a .38 Detective Special revolver with another shooter. "It had a 4" barrel with fixed sights," he said.

The more Martin became involved in sports shooting, the more his interest grew in how firearms work and how to repair them. He said that as a gunsmith, he admired the design and work of legendary firearms designer John Browning and his favourite handgun - the 1911 Government .45 ACP pistol.

"Gunsmithing in Australia is a dying art," said Martin. "The government over the years has not encouraged firearm ownership and has curtailed courses in gunsmithing.

"Rifle and pistol ranges are being closed down and there are few places to target shoot."

Martin has become interested in Single (Western) Action Shooting, which requires two holstered revolvers, one double 12-gauge shotgun and a lever-action rifle. He said he enjoys the event, which gives shooters five or six scenarios in a day and he takes on the alias of 'Hoot Gibson'. ●



Martin celebrates his 90th birthday with his wife Mary at the Sydney Pistol Club event on August 8, 2011.



Friends at the Sydney Pistol Club helped Martin celebrate his 90th birthday when he took part in the CMPC Black Powder Championships in August 2011.



Martin prepares for the shoot.