



A Seal of Training Excellence

Pennsylvania Gunsmith School

Gunsmithing Insights™

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The Newsletter of PGS

www.pagunsmith.edu

Quick Glance at PGS:

- PGS' eight-member Program Advisory Committee (PAC) meets twice annually to make sure our 2500 clock hour program both meets and exceeds employer expectations. Representatives from business, military, and entrepreneur sectors offer insights on current issues and review program objectives, content, facilities and instructional materials to assure PGS graduates are more than prepared for their new careers.
- PGS students and graduates can contact our Placement Office for job leads and resume assistance.
- PGS Director George "Chief" Thacker holds a patent on a unique barrel assembly breech design, allowing adaptation of an over and under shotgun by left or right handed shooters. See his article and photo on page 2.
- PGS' newly designed website has expanded information on the school and many pictures of both students and firearms. Check it out soon at www.pagunsmith.edu.
- PGS students who reside in the borough of Avalon enjoy small town atmosphere and walking distance to school, stores and banks. Yet, they're just 15 minutes from bustling and vibrant downtown Pittsburgh. Some of the best hunting and fishing in the east is located a short drive away.
- Newcomers to Pittsburgh should know: "Yunz guys" or "You-uns" means you; a sandwich is better with fries and coleslaw on it; Mars and Moon are boroughs, not celestial bodies here; "warsh your hair in the shawr" means exactly what it says!

A Day in the Life: Gander Mountain Gunsmith



A favorite destination of many PGS students is the local Gander Mountain Store for hunting and other outdoor gear. Many graduates, however, are finding a professional home there as an in-store Gunsmith.

They may be drawn to the nation's largest team of Gunsmiths by the competitive wages, benefits and bonus package. But it's the intangible things, like the tremendous support and career growth that keeps the PGS graduates fulfilled, and helps explain the growing retailer's low turnover.

"Where else can you work with customers and co-workers who are passionate about the same things you value — hunting, fishing, conservation and the like?" asked Roy Christensen, Gunsmith Coordinator for Gander Mountain.

With 15 gunsmiths at the Kenosha, WI Gunsmith Shop and another 120 at stores throughout the country, Gander Mountain expects to hire an additional 15 to 20 Gunsmiths by the close of 2008. "Recruiting is a constant process, even with our low turnover, due to Gander Mountain's growing need for Gunsmiths," Christensen noted.

About two-thirds of an average day is spent on repairs and bench time, and one-third is customer service, according to Christensen. "It's very important to be able to communicate effectively with customers — listening, responding, and then translating their requests into exactly the custom or repair work desired."

He constantly monitors customer jobs and trends, like the current popularity of gun refinishing, to make sure the gunsmiths are well prepared for the tens of thousands of firearms brought in each year.

One way he accomplishes this is by sharing his findings as a member of the PGS Program Advisory Committee (PAC); see note at top left. Co-worker Bob Daugherty, Gunsmith in Charge of Quality Control for Gander Mountain and a 1972 PGS graduate, is also a PAC member. Together, the two men hire and mentor gunsmiths for 115 stores in 23 states (see pg. 2).

Interested in learning more about Pennsylvania Gunsmith School? Visit our web page, www.pagunsmith.edu and contact us at PGS@PAGunsmith.edu or phone at 412-766-1812. School visits are welcome. Please schedule yours in advance so we can serve you better!

Day in the Life, continued...

The typical firearms serviced are valued at \$2000 or less. “We service the average man’s firearms, and strive to provide the customer with quality work at a reasonable price,” he said.

“We’re especially excited about the growing demand for gunsmith services in the southern states, from Texas east to Florida, and look forward to serving the hunters, competitive shooters and sportsmen and women in that area of the country,” Christensen said.

PGS Director Awarded Patent



Now in his sixth decade of Gunsmithing instruction and recently marking his 55th anniversary as school Director, George Thacker (also known as “Chief” at PGS) could surely be considered an expert in his field.

And all experts have an image of their model of perfection. Michael Jordan – the consummate jump shot. Steven Spielberg — the ideal movie. Donald Trump — the perfect tower.

So Chief designed the perfect hunter’s shotgun. And patented it, with 34 points of patent so that the design cannot be copied or manufactured by others.

Chief’s new spin on the side-break over-and-under design was developed over the course of several years.

Once the design was done and capable of being manufactured (a requirement for a design patent), a patent attorney helped oversee the development of the standard drawings required by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

“There’s never been a barrel assembly breech block design quite like this,” explained Chief, who was in the very first graduating class of PGS, established in 1949. A crack shot and avid hunter, he was first introduced to the sport by his uncle and PGS founder, A.W. Thacker.

One of the inspirations behind his design was a personal one; he is a “lefty” and wanted a firearm that could be utilized by both left and right-handed shooters. The concept allows for adaptation by either, a versatile enhancement.

Improved safety is also achieved by Chief’s invention. “Not only does it eject shells to the side of the shooter’s body, my breeching system provides a much more secure means for locking the weapon in firing position than exists in current models,” he explained. Congratulations, Chief!

Be one of the many PGS graduates who left their day job to pursue their dream job of Gunsmithing. Contact PGS today!

Meet our PGS Placement Director



“I meet you both coming and going,” she says with a smile. Maria Bergman has served as Placement Director at PGS for the past five years and has helped scores of students begin their Gunsmithing careers. She even works with many past graduates checking out the job market as they contemplate a change.

“I meet prospective students on their initial visits, begin gathering information on their geographic and job preferences during the fourth semester, and see them through the hectic weeks before graduation as they prepare resumes and schedule interviews with the many employers from around the country who contact PGS for our highly coveted graduates,” she said.

Many of the employer representatives are PGS graduates who visit the school to recruit, or call on a regular basis to inquire about upcoming graduates.

“With their versatile training in machine tooling, welding and carpentry, in addition to Gunsmithing skills like bluing, chambering and custom alterations, the students’ resumes are quite impressive, landing them positions at a variety of employers,” said Maria.

“It’s rewarding to help them get started on their new career, whether they are age 20 or 50,” she added.

Federal Aid Changes Benefit Students

Effective last year, three changes will greatly benefit students: Federal Pell Grant (gift aid) amounts will be increased. Subsidized Stafford student loan interest rates will gradually decrease between now and 2012. And Stafford student loan borrowing amounts are increased to \$3500 (from \$2625) for first year students, and to \$4500 (from \$3500) for second year students, as of July 1, 2007.

Prospective students can apply via the FAFSA, at www.fafsa.ed.gov. PGS School code: 016508.

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