

FORGING PRECISION



The Journey of Jeremy Cushman, Senior Gunsmith at Krieghoff International

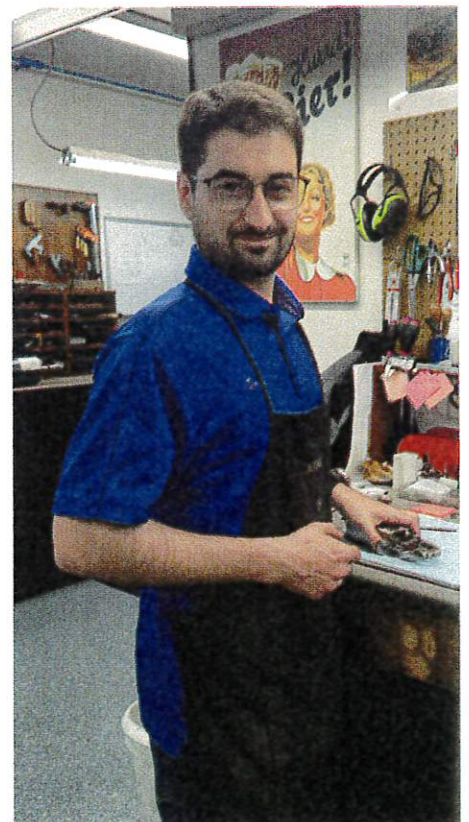
PART III OF OUR SERIES ON GUNSMITHS AND THEIR PATHS TO THE BENCH

//// by jacque snellenberger

By the time Jeremy Cushman completed his training at Pennsylvania Gunsmith School (PGS) in 2018, he wasn't just ready for a job, he was prepared for a career that demanded perfection, patience, and pride. Today, a Senior Gunsmith at Krieghoff International, Cushman plays a pivotal role in keeping the company's legacy of precision alive and trapshooters breaking targets with confidence.

For Cushman, choosing PGS in Pittsburgh wasn't a casual decision. He was drawn to its emphasis on "bench hours", hands-on time spent building, refining, and perfecting skills in a real-world setting.

"PGS's curriculum stood out to me," Cushman explains. "Each semester builds on the last, from polishing, bluing, and cerakote (ceramic-based thermoset composite coating) application to stock making, machining, and ultimately building custom firearms. The practical



structure of the program, along with the ability to specialize in areas I was passionate about, made it the right choice."

The city of Pittsburgh, with its balance of urban energy and outdoor getaways, also played a role. Between professional sports, concerts, and weekend trips to Moraine State Park hiking and fishing with classmates, it offered a lifestyle that complemented the intensity of his studies.

Upon graduation, Cushman had three job offers on the table. But Krieghoff International stood out. "It was an easy decision. The quality of work, the chance to learn from the best in the industry, and the opportunity to meet the same high standards I'd set for myself—it all aligned perfectly," he says.

At Krieghoff, he quickly found that his schooling had prepared him for a standard of precision most could only aspire to. His work is not only technically demanding, but also artistically rewarding.

Cushman's role reaches far beyond the workbench. As a metalsmith, he provides service both in-house and at events, where keeping high-performance firearms in top condition is critical. From regulating barrels and adjusting point-of-impact to fitting new components and installing release triggers, each task must meet a trapshooter's exacting expectations. "Trapshooters are demanding—and rightfully so," he says. "When I can tailor a K-80 to a shooter's needs and see them perform better because of it, that's the ultimate reward."

While Cushman's daily work centers around the K-80, Krieghoff's commitment to legacy firearms means he also spends time restoring and upgrading models like the K-32, KS-5, and KX-5. "We regularly update K-32 receivers to K-80 specs. You're taking something built in the early '70s and giving it a second life with modern components. It's incredibly satisfying,"



he says.

With over seven years under his belt, Cushman has faced no shortage of challenges, but that's what keeps the work exciting. "The hardest jobs are usually the most rewarding. Whether it's restoring a 50-year-old gun or hand-fitting K-80 parts with microscopic precision (think one file stroke), every task is a chance to improve." Polishing and bluing, a process both grueling and gratifying, remains one of the toughest aspects of his role. "It takes grit," he admits, "but when you see a finished restoration, it's all worth it."





Cushman emphasizes that gunsmithing isn't for those seeking instant success or big money, but it is for those who love the work. *"You won't always be the best, but you can always be the hardest working. Skill comes with experience. Every challenge is an opportunity."* To those considering a future in gunsmithing, he offers this perspective: *"I've never once dreaded going to work. That kind of satisfaction is a wealth of its own."*

Cushman's role at Krieghoff has expanded beyond the bench. From restoring K-32s to overseeing quality control on new guns and mentoring incoming staff, he's helping shape the next generation of gunsmiths. *"I have a sharp eye and a steady hand,"* he says with quiet confidence. *"But more than anything, I try to pass along the mindset that was instilled in me: Observe. Analyze. Act."*

At Krieghoff, where tradition and innovation intersect, Jeremy Cushman is ensuring that every firearm and every gunsmith continues to meet the highest standards in the industry.

Pennsylvania Gunsmith School (PGS)

For over 75 years, the Pennsylvania Gunsmith School (PGS) has trained the artisans behind that perfection.

Known as the "Harvard of Gunsmithing Schools", PGS produces gunsmiths who don't just fix firearms, they refine them, elevate them, and tailor them to the demands of the most exacting shooters.

Founded in 1949 to retrain WWII veterans, PGS has always focused on real-world, hands-on gunsmithing. At a time when traditional apprenticeships lasted up to a decade, PGS created a focused, full-time education model that fast-tracked students toward mastery. PGS is a family-run institution, led today by G. Robert "Bob" Thacker, the son of longtime director George "The Chief" Thacker. Bob practically grew up in the shop, building his first custom rifle at age 12. That deep personal connection to the craft remains central to PGS's identity: instructors who care, training that's personal, and a community rooted in passion for the firearm world.

Over the decades, the school has expanded its facilities, modernized its tools, and built a reputation that reaches far beyond Pennsylvania. Today, students from across the country, including many with aspirations in the shooting sports, travel to Avalon, PA, to train at this elite institution.

Today, the school's Master Gunsmithing Program continues that legacy, blending time-honored craftsmanship with modern technology. From action tuning and barrel fitting to stock shaping and recoil optimization, students learn everything they need to craft competition-grade firearms, especially the kind that thrive on the trap range.

Trapshooters understand better than anyone: a gun is an extension of the athlete. A well-balanced, precisely tuned shotgun can mean the difference between a personal best and a missed opportunity. At PGS, future gunsmiths are trained to think like shooters. They learn to adjust and modify firearms with an eye for balance, rhythm, and reliability, the kind of refinements that translate directly into points on the

leaderboard. Whether it's smoothing an action for faster cycling, fitting a custom stock for improved shoulder mount, or tuning a trigger to break like glass, PGS-trained gunsmiths know what performance feels like and how to deliver it.

As trapshooting and other clay target sports continue to grow in popularity, so does the demand for custom firearms and specialized service. Graduates of PGS find opportunities in gun shops, custom shops, manufacturers, and the competitive circuit itself. Many even go on to launch their own businesses, becoming trusted gunsmiths to local clubs and serious shooters alike. Other graduates have gone to work in such fine companies like Griffin and Howe and Cesar Guerini. Others interested in the rifle making side went to Allegheny Arms, Ki Precision, Shaw Barrels, Precision Rifle Works, and many others.

Another part of the school's success is the Career Services department that works directly with employers to help students land on their feet after graduation — often with a polished portfolio.

For anyone serious about trapshooting, whether you're chasing your next ATA Grand or just looking to improve your personal best, the quality of your firearm matters. And behind every great shotgun is a gunsmith who knows how to make it perform at the highest of quality. At Pennsylvania Gunsmith School, that's exactly what students learn: how to build, shape, and fine-tune firearms that rise to the challenge, just like Jeremy Cushman did! ■

