

Viva Las SHOT Show!



Dad (Dave)

Mom (Tina)

Time changes can be brutal. Adjusting to a three-hour time difference late at night after a five-hour plane ride leaves one ready for bed, not adventure.

This past January I had the opportunity to attend the 2019 Shooting Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show (SHOT Show) in Las Vegas, Nevada. It was my first time to Vegas, as well as my mom's. My parents attended as well: my dad as the competition equipment specialist for Olmsted Armory and my mom as his spouse. My parents and I had a lot of fun guessing what show the people on our flight were heading to: the SHOT Show or World of Concrete, both of which were taking place at the same time. It turned out that our next door neighbor was attending the World of Concrete show and staying in the same hotel as us! Upon disembarking the plane, I immediately heard slot machines –

flashing bright lights greeted us and it took me a minute to adjust to the new environment.

Less than an hour later we had picked up our SHOT Show badges for the next day and survived our first Uber ride. I was thrilled to find that our room was on the 14th floor, the hotel lacking a 13th floor due to popular suspicion. Essentially, because the elevator buttons simply jumped from 12 to 13, we were really staying on the superstition-laden 13th floor.

The next morning, we got up early and walked to the Sands Expo Center, walking through the Venetian to reach it. Later that first day, my parents exposed me to the Grand Canal Shoppes, also in the Venetian. They were beautiful – I felt as if I was in Italy – storefronts looked like apartments and a water-

filled canal sprinkled with gondolas and gondoliers wove throughout the area.

I met my mentor, John Phillips in the press room on my first morning of SHOT Show, Tuesday, January 22. This was the highlight of the trip as without his advice and support I would not be where I am today. I had been corresponding with him since April of 2017, but had never met him in person. It was incredibly special.

He introduced me to many people in the outdoor industry, some of whom I had been corresponding with digitally. That was perhaps the greatest thing about the SHOT Show – meeting people I had corresponded with or heard about but had never met before. This does not mean that keeping track of faces and names was easy. The first



I felt right at home meeting representatives from Berger Bullets, Lapua, SK Ammunition, and Vihtavuori. Here I stand with Morgan Joy-Twenter, digital-media, communications and sponsorship manager.

thing one should do upon arriving at SHOT Show is to get a badge holder and store business cards in the back of it. Write notes about the person you met, when, where, and who they are on each card as you get them. Attending SHOT Show also gave me the opportunity to meet Andy Fink of *Junior Shooters* magazine. I have been writing for *Junior Shooters* since 2016 but had never met anyone involved with the magazine besides a fellow writer, Ben Moody, on the 2016 NRA Y.E.S. trip.

The SHOT Show itself is incredible. Many told me about the sheer size of the show but I did not expect the elaborateness of some of the booths as well as the amount of money that goes into putting on the show. I walked the floor of the show for three days without hardly

sitting down. I went from meeting to meeting with companies and people I had set up meetings far before the show with. It was surreal to be a media member attending SHOT Show. I had the opportunity to go to different luncheons and events as well as had access to the press room for breakfast.

Somehow, five members of Sycamore Hill Rifle Club (SHRC), a small high power service rifle competition club in Northeast, Ohio were in attendance at the 2019 SHOT Show, including two officers of the approximately 60-person club (Ray Kling, president of Sycamore Hill Rifle Club, and myself, Secretary of SHRC). I found this incredible and it meant a lot to all of us who were there. It was a great comfort to see so many people I knew at the show. It was an incredible contrast, blue-collar rifle club, often mud-covered, compared to the splendor of Las Vegas.



John "Bubba" Phillips has been an enormous help to me and has always been there for me to answer all kinds of questions and offer advice. I would not be where I am today if it were not for his deciding to mentor me long distance: from his home in Alabama to my home in Ohio.



The size of the show could be overwhelming and it was easy to lose one's sense of direction. The variety of offerings was unbelievable.

On another day, overwhelmed after a long day on the floor, I stepped outside the Women of the Gun event for some fresh air, only to meet Kristy Titus. She is an influential big-game hunter, competitive shooter, and has many instructor certifications. Kristy has accomplished so much more; this is just a short list. Jokingly, on the plane ride from Ohio to Las Vegas, I had mentioned to my mom that I might meet the woman who designed my necklace at the show. "My necklace" being a part of the Montana Silversmith's Kristy Titus collection. I do not have a lot of jewelry, but my parents bought the necklace for me for my eighteenth birthday. I had just shot my first deer, a nice buck, a season or two earlier and wanted to try to make a necklace commemorating it. I had not figured out how to make something that looked nice, that I could wear to important events. The necklace my parents chose had a silver deer antler with turquoise, my birthstone, embedded in it.

Little did I have any idea that while sitting outside the event, Kristy would come up and introduce herself, wearing a necklace identical to the one I had brought with me and had worn the day before! I asked her



about it and told her the story behind mine – she was beyond excited. It was so nice to see the passion she exudes for what she created. It is an indescribable feeling when I learn of how my writing or photography impacts people. It was wonderful to be on the opposite end of that, serving as an example of what Kristy designed her line for: to empower young women in the outdoors.

Most people talk about SHOT Show and the new products. While there were many neat things released at the show, it was of much more value to me to meet new people and interact with different companies to learn more about the workings of the outdoor industry. It was also incredibly important to me that my parents saw the show. I want to work in the outdoor industry and they now have a better idea of what I am working towards. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have attended and for the relationships I formed at my first SHOT Show. ☺



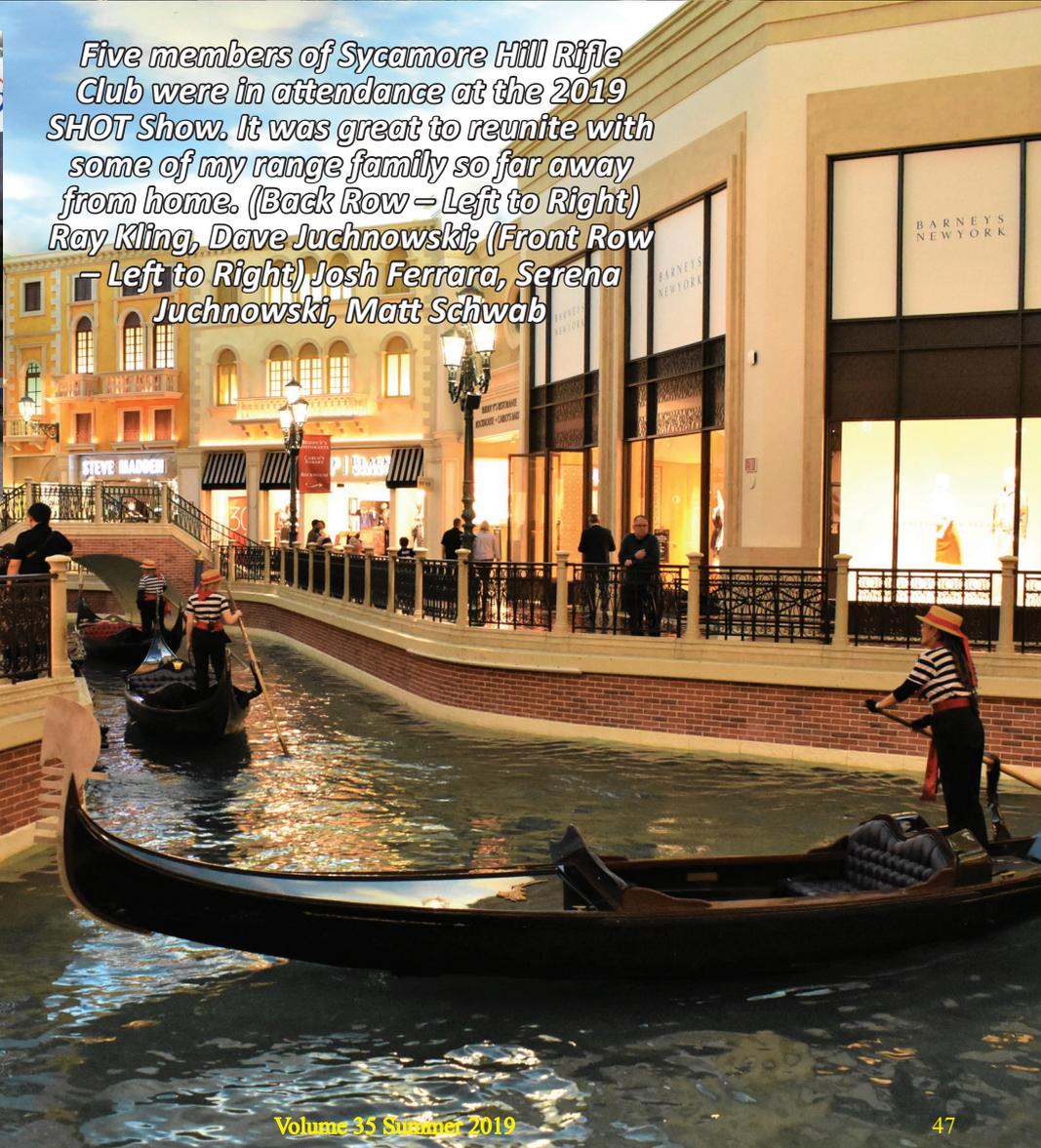
Many of the booths were elaborately constructed. The Realtree booth was my favorite, designed as a log cabin with various rooms and a chandelier.



Kristy took the time to talk to me about her career as well as took an interest in my goals. It was so special to have a photograph to remind me of our chance meeting, both of us wearing the necklace she designed this time.



Five members of Sycamore Hill Rifle Club were in attendance at the 2019 SHOT Show. It was great to reunite with some of my range family so far away from home. (Back Row – Left to Right) Ray Kling, Dave Juchnowski; (Front Row – Left to Right) Josh Ferrara, Serena Juchnowski, Matt Schwab



Walking through the Grand Canal Shoppes was absolutely breathtaking – I could hardly believe that I was inside a building when I first saw the ceiling.