

The Krieghoff Gun Company was founded in 1886 as Sempert & Krieghoff by Ludwig Krieghoff and Mr. Sempert. Sempert, who had worked with Thomas Edison, was more interested in the new technology of electricity than gun making and soon departed for greener pastures in the blossoming electric industry. Not dismayed, Ludwig continued to manufacture sporting shotguns, for which the company would become famous, with the help of just three employees.

When Ludwig's son, Heinrich, graduated from High School he immediately started an apprenticeship with master gunsmith Reinhold Funk in Suhl.

After completion of his apprenticeship he started another with master engraver Theodore Heim. Still seeking more knowledge, Heinrich migrated to the famous Fabrique Nationale facility in Belgium where he studied the manufacture of barrels and component parts. From Belgium he moved on to England to study under some of the most famous English sporting gun makers before returning to Suhl in Germany – not only knowledgeable of every facet of sporting arms manufacturing, but fluent in French and English as well.

At the outbreak of WWI, like many young Germans, Heinrich was drafted into the army, but it

wasn't long before he was ordered home to support the German arms industry. He founded his own company and was soon manufacturing component parts for the famous Mauser Kar 98 8mm military rifle. After WWI, hyperinflation struck the German Mark and many old-line German sporting arms manufacturers were forced into bankruptcy and went out of business. Fortunately for the Krieghoffs, Heinrich secured a substantial order from a Dutch firm – the influx of hard currency very probably saved the day for the Krieghoff Gun Company. It was during those difficult years that Ludwig sold Sempert & Krieghoff to his son Heinrich. Following his purchase of the company,

Heinrich hired brother Ludwig Jr., an attorney, to help him manage the firm. In the post-war years the company flourished and Heinrich's knowledge of firearms manufacturing lead to a number of inventions and innovations that saw the company become one of the most successful and innovative manufacturers of drillings in Europe.

When the Nazi party subsequently took power in Germany, sporting arms manufacturers were forced to manufacture arms for the military – the manufacturing of sporting arms was banned – having a significant



KRIEGHOFF

TOM CERETTO TRACES THE COMPANY'S HISTORY AND REVIEWS THE DIMINUTIVE K20

THE FOUNDER, LUDWIG KRIEGHOFF (1886). INSET: HIS SON HEINRICH (1916).

effect on Sempert & Krieghoff.

Suhl was one of the more fortunate cities in Germany in that it was not bombed during the massive allied air raids during WWII. But sometimes, good fortune can turn bad in a heartbeat. Suhl was eventually occupied by American forces, but due to agreements decided upon at the Yalta Conference was soon turned over to the Russians – but the Krieghoffs, some of their employees and a few other German gunmaking families were fortunate to be escorted out of the city by the Americans before the Russians arrived. The Russians subsequently confiscated all of the machinery in Suhl and sent it back to Russia. After confiscating everything that was not nailed down, they dynamited the Krieghoff buildings on Rimbach Strasse.

After WWII the Krieghoff's fortunes took another turn for the worse. With little in the way of possessions, and very little money, they set up a modest manufacturing facility in the small town of Heidenheim a few miles north of Ulm. With all manufacture of firearms in Germany banned by the Allied powers, Krieghoff, like other arms companies, could only produce air rifles.

Heinrich Krieghoff's son, Heinz Ulrich – who owns Krieghoff today – returned from duty in the German army in 1946 and started an apprenticeship with the Voith Company, a large manufacturer of turbines. When some of the restrictions on gun manufacturing were eased by the Allied powers, and after completion of his apprenticeship at Voith, Heinz Ulrich joined his father's firm and the Krieghoffs were once again able to start manufacturing drillings – the product they had originally become world famous for.

In 1950, the Krieghoff Company moved to Ulm, a city famous as the

birthplace of Albert Einstein. In 1957, Heinrich was approached by a group American and European sportsmen and urged to start producing an American shotgun design, the Remington Model 32, which Remington had stopped manufacturing in 1941. He agreed – and after a couple of years of development the Krieghoff was put into production.

In 1986 Dieter Krieghoff, who has a degree in business administration, established Krieghoff International in Ottsville, Pennsylvania – all distribution, custom work and repairs for North America are done at this facility.

Any story about the Krieghoff K32, K80 and K20 would be remiss without some mention of the Remington Model 32 and its development. In the late 1920s and early 1930s Remington manufactured pump, automatic and side-by-side shotguns, but had no over and under shotgun to compete with the Belgian Browning being manufactured at Fabrique Nationale in Belgium for the Browning Company of Morgan, Utah. In 1930 Remington secured

the rights to manufacture and market the Peiper over and under shotgun. Development was turned over to Remington's resident genius, Oliver H. Loomis, and his development staff who immediately started making improvements to the gun. Twenty-two months later, in 1932, the first Remington Model 32 shotguns were ready to be shipped from the Remington facility in Iliion, New York.

From 1932 until production ceased in 1941 only 5,053 Model 32 shotguns were produced. However, it is surprising just how many are still around and being shot – testament to the quality of the original design. Sales of the Model 32 were discontinued in 1946, primarily due to high cost of manufacture and low demand. Another factor in the Model 32's demise was that most returning veterans of WWII were familiar with the Garand semi automatic military rifle and were impressed by its reliability and firepower. An inexpensive reliable semi automatic shotgun with one in the chamber and three or four up the pipe had great appeal to freshly

discharged servicemen with empty pockets. Those veterans influenced the next generation of shooters and hunters in the United States.

What those sportsmen – and Heinz Ulrich – saw in 1957 was a basic design that was superior to any over and under that was being manufactured at that time. Krieghoff took the best features of the Remington Model 32 and made significant improvements to the trigger, ejectors and fore-end iron and made an excellent shotgun even better.

Unique to the original design, and still used on Krieghoff shotguns to this day, is a sliding breech cover that locks the action and provides protection to the shooter in case of blowback gas and residue from a ruptured shell or pierced primer. The breech cover is also self-adjusting for wear. When locked up, the Krieghoff action is as tight as a rusted lug nut on a Model A Ford. The extra long receiver and oversized trunions also contribute to the strength of the K series shotguns.

The other unique feature carried over from the Model 32 and continued in the K series shotguns is the lack of a center rib. This was done in the original design to dissipate heat during prolonged skeet and trap competition. Instead of a center rib securing the barrels together, the barrels are secured at the muzzle by a strap that allows the barrels to expand and contract during prolonged competition – particularly in hot weather. These unique features were carried over from the Remington Model 32 to the Krieghoff K32.

Introduced in 1980 as the successor to the K32, the K80 has also been meticulously upgraded over the years. It now sports a mechanical trigger that features a crisp trigger pull that is the envy of the industry.



L TO R: WALTER BRASS, HEINZ-ULRICH KRIEGHOFF AND DIETER KRIEGHOFF (1970).

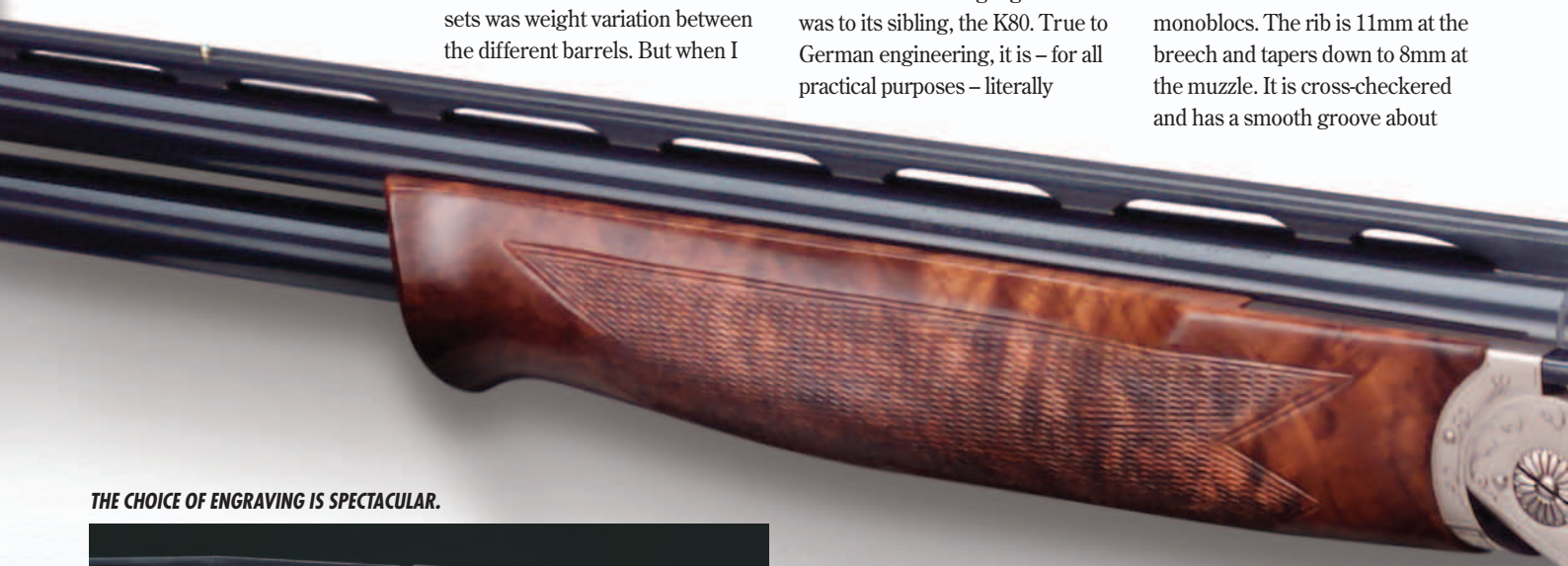
K20 REVIEWED

The triggers on my K20 demo are the best I have ever used, and over the years I have seen and used a lot. When I first received my K20 three gauge set I recalled that the problem with most three barrel sets was weight variation between the different barrels. But when I

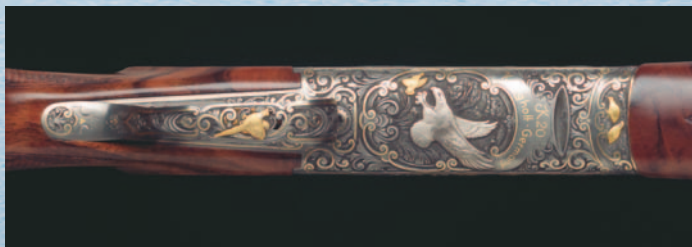
weighed the K20 barrels on my gunsmith's electronic scale we were both surprised that there was only a one ounce spread between all three barrels. We expected them to be close, but not that close.

I also wanted to see how similar the scaled down 20 gauge receiver was to its sibling, the K80. True to German engineering, it is – for all practical purposes – literally

lumps are also unnecessary. The sliding breech lockup negates the need for any of those items. I doubt that it is possible to get the chambers closer together than they are on the K series shotguns – not until a quantum leap in metallurgy allows thinner chamber walls and monoblocs. The rib is 11mm at the breech and tapers down to 8mm at the muzzle. It is cross-checked and has a smooth groove about



THE CHOICE OF ENGRAVING IS SPECTACULAR.



identical to its big brother. All of the improvements that have been made to the K80 over the years are evident in the K20. The often criticized slab sided receiver looks even handsomer on the downsized K20.

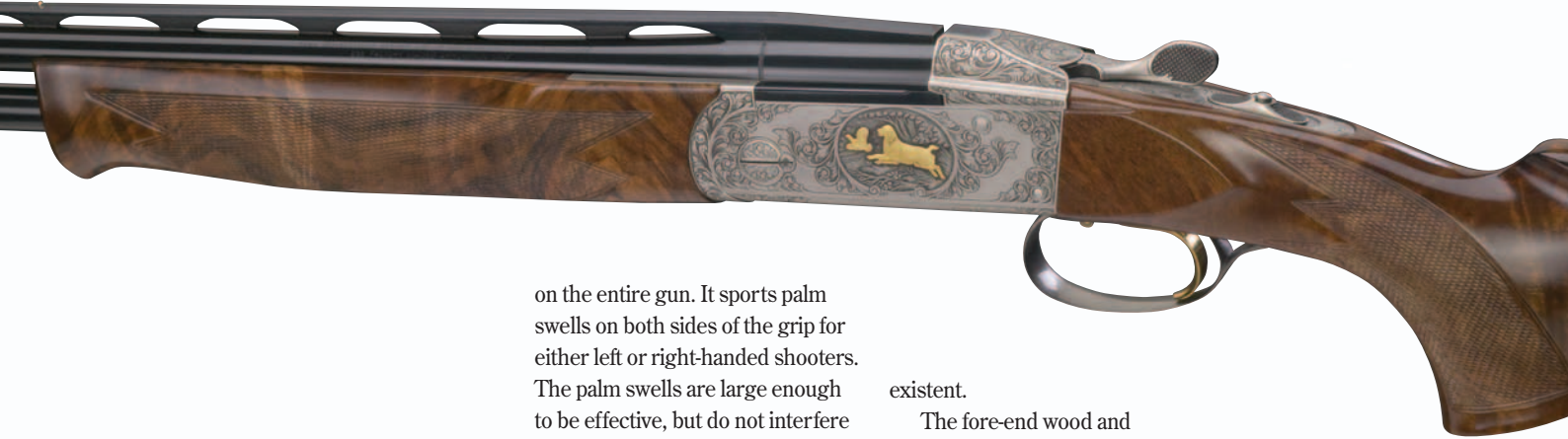
All three barrels on my K20 demo are as smooth as the hood on a Rolls Royce without a ripple or blemish to be seen. The machining is state-of-the-art. The sliding breech cover lock-up makes for a very clean looking monobloc. There are no notches machined into the monobloc or extensions on it for a bolt to engage. Chopper

4mm wide down the center of the checkering from the front end of the monobloc to the muzzle.

The wood on my demo is absolutely lovely. It's about as good as you would want on a competition gun that is going to be knocked about on airplanes and automobile trunks. I don't like to worry about things like dinging up a stock on a target gun – perhaps that's why I shoot a gun with a composite stock.

The K20 features a straight comb, with a slight hint of a Monte Carlo. The checkering is hand done and I could not find a single run-off or slip of a checkering tool

THE FORE-END WOOD AND CHECKERING IS COMMENSURATE TO THE QUALITY OF THE STOCK. THE FORE-END IS SLIM BUT FILLS THE HAND NICELY. THE MACHINING AND ENGRAVING ON THE FORE-END IRON IS PARTICULARLY WELL DONE.



on the entire gun. It sports palm swells on both sides of the grip for either left or right-handed shooters. The palm swells are large enough to be effective, but do not interfere with your fingers when they wrap around the opposite side of the grip. The recoil pad has a smooth hard insert at the top of the pad to prevent catching on clothing and eases gun mount. Recoil, even with 1,300 fps sporting clay loads, from the 20 gauge was negligible. In the 28 and .410 bore it was almost non-

existent.

The fore-end wood and checkering is commensurate to the quality of the stock. The fore-end is slim but fills the hand nicely. The machining and engraving on the fore-end iron is particularly well done. Dual ejector springs are secured on either side of the fore-end. They are very effective in hurling empties into the next county! Slots machined into the fore-end iron contact substantial looking twin cocking rods in the bottom of the receiver. Wood to metal fit on the fore-end and receiver is superbly done.

All Krieghoff K20 models feature adjustable point of impact on the bottom barrel, allowing the owner to fine tune to personal preference. A wide choice of engraving patterns is available for



the K20 including patterns available on the K80, elegantly scaled to fit the slim receiver. Unlike bigger brother K80, the K20 features a two-piece action body with a separate trigger plate but retains the mechanical single trigger for reliability with all loads.

To say I enjoyed shooting the K20 would be an understatement. I started out with the 20 gauge and progressed to the .410 bore.

Transitioning from one barrel gauge to the other seemed to make absolutely no difference in handling. The gun balanced just behind the trunions. Transition from target-to-target on doubles was effortless. This is one gun I did not let a lot

of different people shoot – I wanted to shoot it as much as possible myself.

There are a lot of things I like about the K20 – beside the fact it is a sweet shooting gun. I liked the large well-checked top lever. I appreciated the oversized safety with a spring-loaded button that you must firmly press to lock the safety in place. No jiggling around will knock the safety out of position. I liked the very positive barrel switch located in front of the trigger. You are not going to easily move it out of its position unless you really try to. The engraving on my demo was minimal, but adequate and attractive. The custom case it came in is very sturdy – I think it could be run over by a tank and not be damaged.

At \$17,735 I cannot afford it, but those who can are very fortunate indeed. I am going to purchase a lottery ticket and if I win, Dieter Krieghoff at Krieghoff International will get the second phone call I make. The first call will be to the local Porsche dealer. I love driving my son-in-law's Boxster! (visit www.krieghoff.com) ■

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TO SAY I ENJOYED SHOOTING THE K20 WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT. I STARTED OUT WITH THE 20 GAUGE AND PROGRESSED TO THE .410 BORE. TRANSITIONING FROM ONE BARREL GAUGE TO THE OTHER SEEMED TO MAKE ABSOLUTELY NO DIFFERENCE IN HANDLING. THE GUN BALANCED JUST BEHIND THE TRUNIONS. TRANSITION FROM TARGET-TO-TARGET ON DOUBLES WAS EFFORTLESS. THIS IS ONE GUN I DID NOT LET A LOT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE SHOOT – I WANTED TO SHOOT IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE MYSELF.

Specifications

- **Manufacturer:** Krieghoff Gun Co., Ulm, Germany
- **U.S.A. Importer:** Krieghoff International, Ottsville, PA
- **Suggested retail price:**
20 gauge: \$9,575 W/5 choke tubes
28 gauge: \$9,725 W/5 choke tubes
.410 bore: \$9,725 W/5 choke tubes
20/28 gauge set: \$13,645 W/10 choke tubes
3 gauge set: \$17,735 W/15 choke tubes
- **Receiver:** Modified box lock, case hardened. Nickel-plated steel
- **Barrels:** 30" tested 28" & 32" available
- **Top rib:** 8mm vented flat tapered
- **Chokes:** 5 included with each gauge available in your choice of:
 - Cylinder
 - Skeet
 - Improved cylinder
 - Light Modified
 - Modified
 - Light improved modified
 - Improved modified
 - Full – Full not available in .410 bore
- **Choke length:**
20 ga. 2½"
28 ga. & .410 1⅞"
- **Chambers:** 3"
- **Sights:** White pearl front and metal center bead
- **Safety:** Manual top tang push button. Can be locked in off position
- **Trigger:** Single selective mechanical and adjustable
- **Trigger pull:** 3.7 lbs. bottom and 3.9 lbs. top
- **Stock:** Hand checked European walnut #3 sporting – stock wrench included
- **LOP:** 14¾"
- **Drop at comb:** 1½" x 2⅛"
- **Drop at heel:** 2⅞"
- **Stock finish:** Satin epoxy
- **Fore-end:** #VII Schanbel
- **Engraving:** Standard scroll – many others available
- **Weight:** 7.6 lbs. Average per gauge
- **Case:** Krieghoff custom fitted three barrel