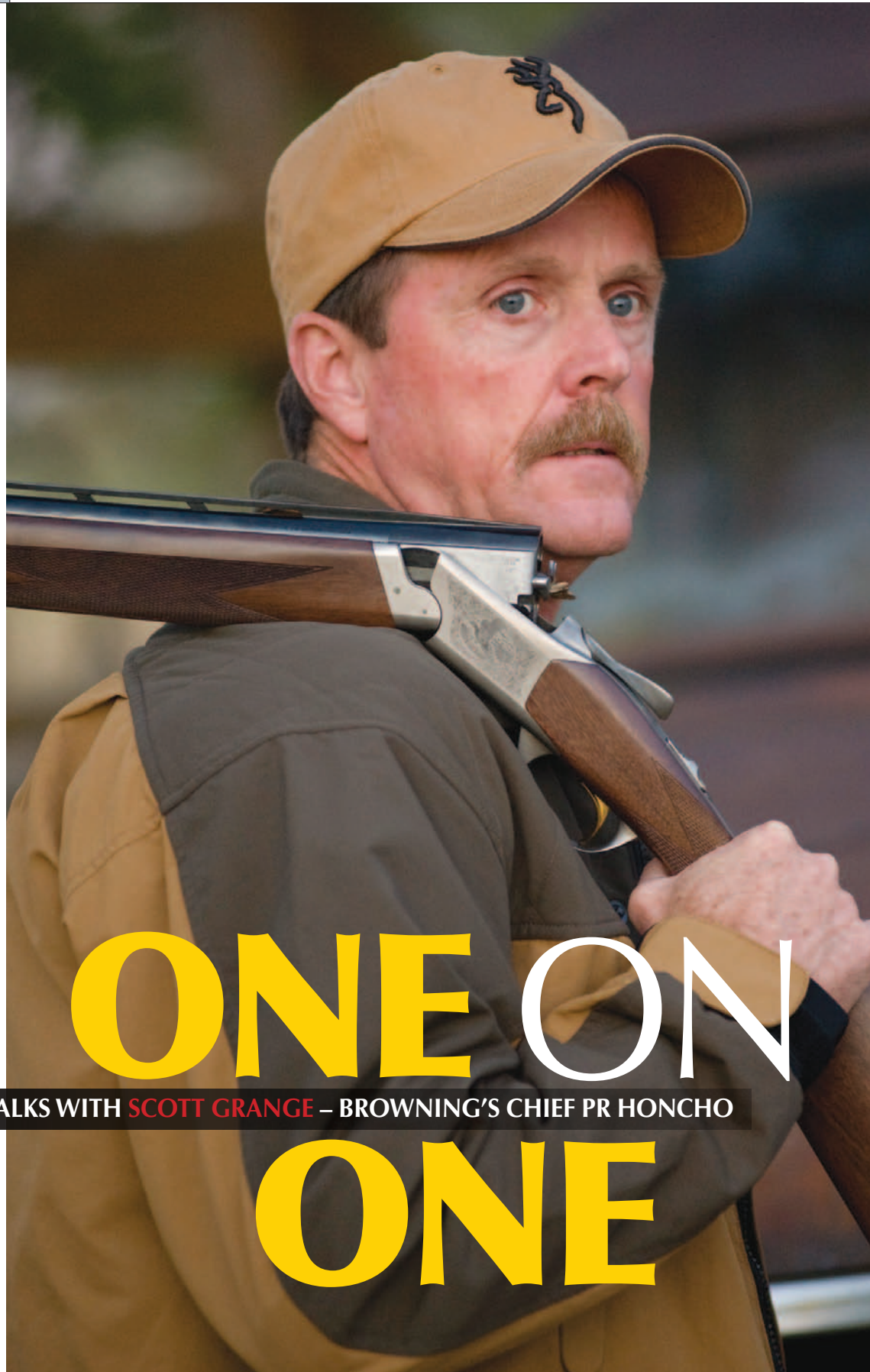


Scott Grange is a wiry kind of a guy. He's soft spoken, but he probably has a wicked left hook – so you don't want to test him. Within a few minutes of meeting him you realize that he can beat you to the top of any mountain, but after knowing him awhile you can bet he'll let you get to the top first – but don't test him on that either. Watch him briefly ahead of you on a sporting clays course and you see his natural shooting ability is capable of turning target after target into dust. If he's adjacent to you on a high-volume dove stand you watch in awe as bird after bird comes spinning down – while his bird boy keeps clicking on his counter. You know you are not going to beat him there either!



ONE ON ONE

NICK SISLEY TALKS WITH SCOTT GRANGE – BROWNING'S CHIEF PR HONCHO

Early Days

Born to hunt and shoot, even before he could pull a trigger on a real gun, old family photographs of Scott with his father and his younger brother always show this youngster with some kind of gun in his hand. Born in Ogden, Utah, he still lives in the same



SCOTT GRANGE – 1972.

community – as do his brothers and sisters. His first job, at age 15, was banding and raising pheasants at the nearby Wasatch Hunting Club. Of course, by then he was already an ardent hunter and shooter. His dad and his older brother (by 10 years) were also “hunting fools,” as Scott describes them. Browning,

based right there in Morgan, adjacent to Ogden, meant that both his dad and brother were die-hard Browning fans – his dad shooting an Auto-5, his brother a Superposed.

Scott went to Bonneville High School in Ogden, graduating in 1972. Right out of high school he went to work as a greens keeper at the Ogden Golf and Country Club – plus he took a part-time job in the Browning Research and Development division as a ‘testing tech’. What’s a testing tech? It’s the guy who gets to do all the shooting – testing all the guns. He attended Weaver State College locally, got married and kept up with his two jobs while attending school. He stayed with Browning until 1979 – when he went on a seven year hiatus with the Union Pacific Railroad. But his heart never left Browning. When a position opened in 1986 he came back.

He bought his first Browning in 1971, a Safari Grade bolt rifle in .270 Winchester – and the first animal he shot with it was a big 5-point bull Elk in the Uinta Mountains east of Salt Lake City, up against the Wyoming border. “I still remember the price (\$375) for that Safari Grade Browning,” Scott told me. Of course, this model is

no longer offered but on the used market they go well into four figures these days.

Scott’s first shotgun was a 20 gauge Mossberg bolt action. “Don’t laugh,” Scott comes back quickly. “I could operate that bolt for two or three shots as fast as anyone could run a pump gun.” His next shotgun was a Browning, a 20 gauge Auto-5 that he bought from a friend of his father. The guy was an ardent waterfowler around the Great Salt Lake and that shotgun had plenty of use, but it kept on ticking for Scott for as long as he owned it.

His first handgun purchase is an interesting story. He bought a Smith & Wesson K-22 revolver (a .22 rimfire) from one of his high school teachers – after class, right there in the classroom. Imagine doing that in this day and age! Throughout high school, Scott and his buddies had their shotguns or rifles in the trunks of their cars parked in the school lot so that immediately after class they could head for the woods, marshes or fields to hunt deer, ducks or pheasants. How times have changed.

Scott continued testing guns at Browning until 1992, when he became a Product Manager of the Browning Fishing Division. That part of the company was sold off in 1994, so the brass made him Sales Manager of their Premium and Incentive Division. That task lasted until 1997, when Browning purchased Winchester - United States Repeating Arms Company (USRAC). He then became the Winchester Product Manager.

Travis Hall, who moved up the Browning ladder to a Vice Presidency, had been working PR, but he gave Scott a new title – Director of Public Relations and Shooting Promotions, requiring him to travel worldwide and to establish a closer relationship with outdoor writers.

Since he had first started reading outdoor magazines, Scott’s ultimate dream was a Dall sheep hunt. In September of 2003 he took writer Ron Spomer with him into the Chugach Mountains of Alaska. Naturally, Browning paid for Ron’s hunt and the company would have paid for Scott’s trip – but he insisted on paying his own way. “I



GRANGE WITH HIS BEAUTIFUL DALL SHEEP TAKEN IN THE ROUGH CHUGACH MOUNTAINS OF ALASKA.

didn't want anyone to ever think that a sheep I had mounted on my wall wasn't all mine." (Yet another insight into the type of guy Scott Grange is.) Both took great full-curl sheep. As with most sheep hunts, this one was very physically taxing – the Chugach are as steep, wild and tough as they come. Scott didn't shoot his fine ram until the eighth day of their 10-day hunt. I recall reading about that hunt some months later when Spomer wrote it up for a magazine.

A pump gun lover, Scott bought an Ithaca 12 gauge model 37 early on – and used it until Browning came out with their BPS pump in 1977. This is the gun he has hunted with most over the intervening years. For sporting clays he shot a Citori Special Sporting 20 gauge. His last purchase was a Cynergy 20 gauge Sporting with 32-inch barrels that he shot in Argentina on doves and pigeons shortly after Browning came out with that model. That's now his current clay target gun.

Current Markets

What does Scott think about the current market for firearms? "For dealers, 2008 was a good year – and it is continuing into 2009. Most of those dealer sales were in handguns and so-called 'black guns.' Scott explains that Browning is not in the black gun business, "but because dealers have done so well selling them, their pockets are swelling – to the point where they are now ordering Browning shotguns and rifles as we speak. Business is certainly picking up and our SHOT Show experience in January was good. However, 2009 could be a less than banner year, but at Browning we are optimistic. We also have a lot of new products and new dealer incentive plans that should be a big



“We are also making strides environmentally, and we have to keep doing this. Many clubs are now throwing the Winchester AA Biodegradable targets. I'm also noticing that many more corporate events are shooting only steel shotshells.”

help to us in the upcoming months.”

What about the future of clay target shooting? As a member of the NSCA Advisory Board, Scott had just returned from their winter meeting in San Antonio a week before our interview and was able to tell me that, “the number of participants who were shooting last year was down, but the numbers of targets shot were not. Here's why. It was costing a lot to travel last year (still is), but once shooters arrived at a shoot they simply shot more targets. No wonder – they'd paid a lot to get to the shoot. That travel was a significant expense. So why not shoot more targets once there? And they did.”

He believes that the Scholastic Clay Target Program is providing a major shot in the arm for shooting. “If hunting declines in popularity, this program for clay target busting should pick up any slack.” However, Scott remains concerned about the cost of ammunition – probably his biggest concern for the future of clay target shooting. He's also convinced we are about to enter a political war as far as guns are concerned. A Second Amendment War is what he calls it. “In addition to that battle, we are likely to face future legislation that taxes ammo, guns and everything concerned with shooting. Anyone who cares about gun rights better belong to the NRA as no one else is going to fight these coming battles any harder,” says Scott.

Targets and People

What about sporting clays target difficulty? That subject was covered at length at the NSCA Advisory Council winter meeting. Scott believes in 'easy' targets for shooters who are trying the game

for the first time, whether these folks are coming to the gun club on their own, or they are coming to the gun club as a part of a corporate outing or maybe a charity shoot. “Gun club managers have gotten and are getting this message.” Everyone who comes to these types of events will love the sport, but we can't let them go away feeling that they are not good shotgunners – or they will not be back,” says Scott.

“Of course, big tournaments require a different mindset for target setting. Even so, C, D and E class shooters must not go away with 0 after 0 on his or her scorecard. Let the targets be fair. Have certain stations where the targets are extremely challenging, but certainly such stations need to be in the minority. Again, I think gun clubs and target setters are getting and have gotten this message.

“We are also making strides environmentally, and we have to keep doing this. Many clubs are now throwing the Winchester AA Biodegradable targets. I'm also noticing that many more corporate events are shooting only steel shotshells.

“Thankfully, sporting clays came along when it did. This sport put a new face on target shooting. Trap and skeet are still popular, but sporting takes clay shooting to new heights with totally different target presentations, different stations and different courses. Frankly, I think sporting clays would be at least five times more popular than it is if it were not so expensive – and if shooting 100 targets didn't take so much time. With that in mind, I have great hopes for 5-Stand in the future – it's faster. The club can change the targets quickly – making them easier or more challenging with minimal effort. 5-Stand also takes

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very little ground, whereas a sporting course takes many acres – and there’s no inexpensive acreage these days. Any gun club that does not have a 5-Stand is missing out on improving their bottom line and bringing more targets busters to their club.”

Whether it’s sporting or 5-Stand, Scott enjoys his Cynergy Sporting 20 gauge with 32-inch barrels. Why a 20 gauge? He’s not a big guy, so recoil is going to rock him a lot more than the big guys. But there’s more to it. Scott wants to give shooters the awareness that the Browning 20 gauge sporting guns have all the bells and whistles that their 12 gauge sporting guns have – like overbored barrels, porting, longer screw chokes and a

host of other features. It gets the job done just great.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship of shoots? In his current role, Scott is the main guy who receives requests for sponsorship. The company does have a major presence at many shoots, but budgets do not allow them to be everywhere – at every shoot. You will usually find a Browning presence at State and Zone sporting shoots, most of the Big Blasts and the NSCA Championship – as well as major skeet and trap tournaments.

Eleven years ago Scott went to Bill Bacon who manages the American Shooting Centers in Houston (TX) asking what it would

take to bring a major shoot there. Bacon came back with something like, “It only takes money,” but, of course, there was more to it than that. Browning teamed up with Cliff Moller at Briley and they started the Browning Briley Open. That event stayed at the American Shooting Centers for nine great years. In 2008 they moved the shoot to Cajun Elite Shooting Complex in Louisiana – so this Big Blast now has an 11 year history.

Browning is also heavily involved with the Ronald McDonald Charity shoots. Scott believes this series of charity shoots, and others, are an excellent way to get more non-shooters out to the gun clubs. He says that many of the participants have never shot before. “I would

like to see more charity shoots and corporate shooting outings. Both are excellent ways to get new people involved with guns. Do this with non-gun owners and we take them away from the anti-gun camp because they start to see that guns are not bad – they’re fun. I can’t emphasize enough how much we need to work at getting non-shooters to shoot. They will enjoy it – and then they’ll vote!”

As a company, Browning relies heavily on clay target shooters. “We are basically an over and under company,” Scott explains. “Sure, we have pumps, autoloaders, rifles, handguns and more, but over and under sales are our bread and butter. We take target shooting and target shooters very seriously. These folks and these guns are the cornerstone of our business.”

Important Venues

In his wrap up of our conversation, Scott says, “All the folks I grew up with were patriots – maybe honest to a fault, totally family oriented and committed to their children and their jobs. It’s a mindset. We all learned a lot about these values in the hunting field or somehow with a gun in our hands. When we are in the field or at the range, these are the times when we need to be talking about those values. Such discussions with our children don’t work nearly as well at the dinner table as they do when we espouse such values in the hunting field or when we’re breaking clay targets. This is a fact that more shooters need to consider – and as we bring non-shooters on board, those folks have to realize this as well. Hunting and target breaking teaches all of us a lot – especially if we have a mentor looking over our figurative shoulder.” ■