

The modest storefront of M. W. Reynolds deceives the uninformed passerby as a masquerade ball mask disguises an alluring woman. The



shop is located at 3463 South Broadway in Englewood, Colorado, on the west side of a somewhat inauspicious commercial stretch of thoroughfare that runs dozens of miles north and south. Just a few yards north are the excellent El Tepahuan Mexican Restaurant and the recently renovated Edward's Cigar Shop. Contiguous to the south is the aged Paradox Lounge.

On view through its front windows are Filson clothing, a modest oak chest of drawers, fly fishing tackle, leg-of-mutton leather gun cases and an original

watercolor of a hunting scene. As an oyster hides a gleaming pearl, the exterior offers no hint of the bounty of elegant treasures inside. Open the door and an intimate world of art and craftsmanship devoted to the shooter, the fly fisherman and the lover of fine books draws you in as iron filings to a magnet.

The day I entered the shop to prepare this article was typical of any day's visit. Mark Reynolds, the owner, was behind the low display cabinet that serves also as his desk, typing into his computer data

A REVIEW BY MICHAEL G. SABBETH

M. W. REYNOLDS

Traditional Country Sports

MARK REYNOLDS HOLDING PERAZZI MX-8 SPORTING GUN ENGRAVED BY MAURO DASSA OF INCISIONI DASSA.

from a stack of BATF forms. The bell tone that activated when I opened the rear door got Mark's attention – and that of Chester, his English Setter.

I'd visited the shop dozens of times, yet each visit was unique – evoking recollections of my visits with my dad to Abercrombie & Fitch, "The Greatest Sporting Goods Store in the World," on Madison Avenue and East 45th Street in Manhattan. Although it was a half century ago, I recall vividly my sense of awe at what was enclosed in that magnificent gun room on the seventh floor. Beauty and craftsmanship appealed to me even then. Salesmen wore ties and jackets and took seriously the art of the gun and all its accoutrements. But more alluring than the guns and the safaris and the well-tailored staff was a sense of pride; a sense that beauty and excellence mattered; that they were valued and worth pursuing.

Those memories and ambiance are recreated at M. W. Reynolds. Abundant dark wood cabinets and display racks create an atmosphere of sophistication and exclusivity. Soft pastel colors cover the walls. In what is likely the gravitational center of the interior, a lush brown leather couch resides

BRUCE KORANSKI, PRESIDENT, ROCKY MOUNTAIN VINTAGERS, HOLDING A WATSON & HANCOCK SIDELEVER LIVE PIGEON GUN AND CLAY TARGET DESTROYER.



ASSISTANT ED BARUTH READY TO SHARE A WEE DRAM WITH CUSTOMERS.



GUN RACK AND BERETTA SO5 SPORTING CLAYS MODEL.

between two leather chairs, balancing the area devoted to the guns with that dedicated to fly fishing. Appealing to the senses and intellect, an ionizing quality in the air stirs the soul.

M. W. Reynolds is a special place and there is no place like it within hundreds of miles. Mark offers an enviable array of high grade shotguns for the wing shooter and the collector. He showed me a newly arrived pair of Purdey over/under guns in .410

and 28 bore as well as several Holland & Hollands, a Piotti side-by-side and, among others, a soul churning matched pair of Henry Atkins sidelever hammerless ejector guns that cause one to ponder obtaining second and third mortgages!

Many of his local customers are both wingshooters and clay target enthusiasts of different degrees of seriousness. Our Rocky Mountain Vintager members, clays shooters all, drop in routinely. Quite a few guns are swapped and sold.

In addition to a full line of hunting loads, Mark offers an array of loads appropriate for his wingshooters and target shooting clientele.

The target shooter is interested in the strength of the action, reliability and ease of maintenance. For many target shooters, the boxlock action is preferred and the

lesser price enhances their desirability. Mark always offers a broad selection of such firearms. Exceptions exist, of course, and Mark pointed to a Beretta SO5 Sporting sidelock. The bridle, Mark explained, is machined as an integral part of the lockplate, giving the lock great strength and durability and the capability to shoot hundreds of thousands of rounds.

Although Mark has acquired a well-deserved reputation for offering 'best' quality game guns, he always has a few target guns available and every now and then magnificent ones tip toe into the shop on consignment. "I do tend to attract some fine target guns," he said with authentic modesty. He picked up a Perazzi MX-8 sporting model engraved by Mauro Dassa of Incisioni Dassa in Collebeato, Val Trompia, Italy. Deep ornamental chiseled engraving covered the action except for the stunning bank note bulino engraving of a Labrador on the action's underside.

In addition to a full line of hunting loads, Mark offers an array of loads appropriate for his wingshooters and target shooting clientele that shoot the older vintage guns, including those with Damascus barrels. Fiocchi 1150fps target loads and low pressure RST cartridges in 2³/₄ and 2¹/₂ inch configurations are stacked on the wooden display case in the showroom's center.

Although the turnover rate is considerable, an extensive selection of rifles is available, including custom bolt rifles and, from time to time, intriguing double rifles ranging from those suitable for close-in deer or boar hunting to exotic doubles for dangerous African game. Every now and then a shotgun/rifle drilling or a combination gun can be found relaxing on the gun rack.

Personal Attention

Its website text begins with the description that M. W. Reynolds is “a retail and on-line sporting shop specializing in the finest new and vintage traditional field and angling products.” The next sentence captures Mark’s philosophy. “We strive to deliver quality goods and personal attention from a bygone era.” Perhaps that’s why his emporium reminds me of Abercrombie & Fitch.

Mark has been in business just over six years. Prior to his leap into the gun trade, he’d been in the corporate world for twenty years managing technology departments. “I arrived at the point when I decided to create my own business and do something I knew and loved,” Mark shared. “I’m trying to be about quality. I strive to buy hand made items, especially those made in the United States whenever possible. I view this shop as a throw back,” Mark explained, “for weaving through all of this is the love of history.”

In my role as a writer and as an interviewer, I’ve spoken to many people who have decided to pursue such a dream. Always the driving force is passion. Mark grew up hunting and fishing since he could walk. As he got older, he started collecting antiques and filling his home with marvelous historical items. “I love antiques,” Mark exclaimed. “I was always looking for something as I was growing up that blended antiques, sporting activities and history. This is what I have created.” The cadence of Mark’s words slowed as his mind churned his thoughts as if making brioche dough. “I imagine the world as it existed when the gun was made. No computers; no CAD and no electro spark reduction machinery. Just men and their pride. It causes my spine to tingle. I love it.”

An example of the special attention we patrons enjoy is the wee dram or, frankly, several drams, of fine Single Malts that Lloyd or Ed, Mark’s assistants, promptly offer upon entering the shop. (On a great day, peanuts and

smoked almonds may be available!) Scotch in hand, I tend to meander over to the bookshelves which house a library of volumes to drool over. No field of the sportsman is omitted in this collection. I’m drawn to the aged classic *Salmon and Sea Trout* by Sir Herbert Maxwell. There’s *Favorite Flies* written in 1892 by Mary Orvis Marbury and *The Derrydale Cookbook of Fish and Game* by De Gouy, Volume I and II, dated 1937; and *Fishless Days* by an author who chose the perplexing pen name Sparse Grey Hackle. Thoughts dance through my mind of staying overnight, pillaging all the Scotch, getting comfortable on that enticing leather couch and reading until the eyes fall closed, thinking of the great adventures some have lived, turning pages, some of which are over one hundred years

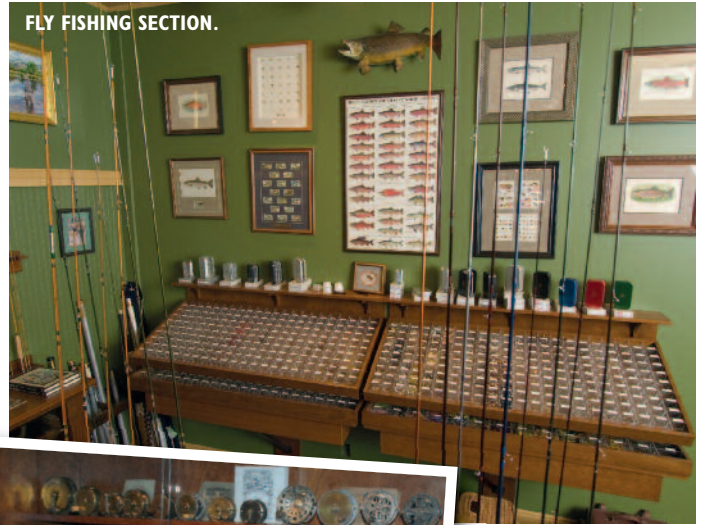
old, and experiencing a tactile thrill no iPad or Kindle can ever offer.

Accessories and clothing are as elegant as the guns. The luggage is predominantly by Filson although Mark has recently begun selling Beretta luggage. Most of the leather goods are manufactured by Galco and one can often find discontinued collectors’ items. A few luscious goods by other makers populate the shelves. Clothing lines include preeminent makers Filson, Barbour, Beretta and Purdey.

Mark points out with pride that it is a rarity for a small shop, indeed, any shop, to offer highest grade bamboo fishing rods, collector quality reels and a complete library of books on bamboo and rod building along with finest ‘best’ guns. M. W. Reynolds is such a rarity. At last count, Mark had some thirty thousand flies in stock and dozens of highest quality graphite rods, but his passions are bamboo rods and world-class reels. In addition to lesser known makers, Mark sells Daryll Whitehead rods, some exquisitely engraved by Italian gun engraver Paolo Barbetti, rods by Colorado’s own Mike Clark from Lyons and rods by Glenn Brackett of Sweetgrass Rods in Twin Bridges, Montana. An enviable selection of Hardy reels, some collectible classics, line the shelves.



FLY FISHING SECTION.



taking risks. He is working with AyA, for example, to offer a round body boxlock side-by-side game gun with signature engraving and stunning wood. He works closely with local

The Perpetual Student

Mark is a student of his field. He studies his craft. He has a natural ability to spot both quality in guns and flaws. His prices are fair, both for what he sells and what he allows for trades and consignments. In the upscale gun trade in the age of the Internet, it's a small world. "The consumer is very well informed," Mark said. "They ask detailed questions. Honesty and integrity are the keys to success."

M. W. Reynolds is a hub of activity in the Denver gun community. Many seminars on hunting and Vintager events are hosted at this shop. Mark does gun appraisals for estates and other evaluation needs. He travels to auctions around the United States and in London and puts his money where his passion is. Mark stays ahead of the gun trade curve by developing new relationships and

and nationally recognized experts for gun repair and gun fitting.

Mark's love for the shooting sports is illustrated in this anecdotal detail – for details illuminate the big picture. A few weeks ago he attended Holt's Auction in London. He saw a ledger book from the Joseph Lang firm, dating back to the 1890s. "The handwriting was perfect, so meticulous it looked as if it were generated by a computer. What pride; what discipline! I love that stuff," said Mark. That 'stuff' keeps him motivated, keeps him going, providing the finest guns and fly rods and accessories the world has to offer. Ideally, one would visit M. W. Reynolds in person and savor the richness of its offerings, but whether one visits in person or through the Internet, we are all beneficiaries of his hard work and passion.

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