

Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association

History

1940 – 2015

The Hamden Fish and Game's 75th Diamond Jubilee was celebrated on Sunday, May 17, 2015 at Anthony's Ocean View. It was a wonderful time for all to enjoy the club's accomplishments, members getting together to reminisce, and to remember our fallen hero P.F.C. Eric Soufrine. Members may be justly proud of their individual contributions in keeping our club advancing. It now falls upon our young member's shoulders to keep the dream alive.

Revision # 2

4/30/15

Written by:

Michael J. Mongillo

Note

The history was written with the assistance of many members' oral histories and in particular Jerry Lehr and Charles Turner, both of whom provided invaluable insights. Also used were a collection of newspaper articles from 1940 to 1960 collected by John H. Kennedy. If upon reading this work you find errors, problems, and or omissions, please contact the author. The history contains 75 years of experiences of which the author has only scratched the surface.

2014-2015

Prologue

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association otherwise known as the “club” is celebrating its 75th year anniversary. This is the reason why this history is being written.

The “club” over the years has proven to be a refuge for its members. A place, for a brief period of time, where one can become lost and or totally engrossed in the possibility of hooking an elusive trout, or putting a shot string in exactly the right spot to break a speeding skeet/trap target and or place an arrow / bullet in the precise spot aimed. It is a very small spot upon this earth where its members can rejuvenate their spirit, enjoy the shooting sports, and have an opportunity to join with lifelong friends in recapturing their youth and or once again relive those very special moments. These one hundred and five acres of land have proven to be a haven in escaping a tremulous world and an ever changing society. It also helps in coping with the over whelming problems of raising a family, continuing a career and juggling constant financial pressures. It is amazing that such a small and insignificant four letter word “club” can have such a positive influence on the inner being, heal a spirit and shut out life’s harsh realities. It is, and will continue to be, our second home where we can continue to enjoy the outdoors, our favorite sports and most of all our very special friendships.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------|
| Prologue | | 2 |
| 1940 | Getting started | 3-6 |
| 1950 | Growing Years | 7-8 |
| 1960 | Setting the foot print for the future | 9-12 |
| 1970 | Clash of values | 13-15 |
| 1980 | Pendulum begins its swing | 16-19 |
| 1990 | Change is in the wind | 20-22 |
| 2000 | Growth years | 23-25 |
| 2010 | Gun horrors | 26-29 |

1940

Getting Started

The Hamden Fish and Game was formed in February 10, 1940 by eight men steeped in the shooting and firearms manufacturing culture of South Central Connecticut. They also possessed an intense desire to hunt and fish, and when the opportunity presented itself to purchase land in order to enjoy their outdoor pursuits they stepped up and seized the moment. James Kennedy, Byron Catlin, Earle Brunsmade, Dom Maturo, Jim Clement, Frank Tirone, Anthony Masselli and Al Arrigoni raise \$5,000 and purchased 87 acres of land from Connecticut Light and Power Company on the Hamden Cheshire border. The land was well suited to their needs and more importantly was the very last bus stop on the Connecticut Transit Bus route making the land and all it had to offer accessible. Consider for a moment that the Charter Members had also considered an area consisting of 250 acres for \$8,000 located in Cheshire at the present site of Cheshire High School, athletic facilities and surrounding housing developments. What a difference it would have made to our organization and to the town of Cheshire. Suffice to say, the decision was based solely on the ability of the Clubs members to get to the property; and as the bus was the primary mode of travel, the choice was obvious.

On February 10, 1940 Albert Arrigoni was elected president, James Kennedy, Secretary and George Gundelsheimer, Treasurer. The club consisting of 25 members held its first meeting and for many years thereafter at the Mount Carmel library. By 1941 the club had grown to 100 members. On December 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy", the attack at Pearl Harbor put the world at war. The hopes and dreams of all Americans were put on hold until the Japanese and Axis powers were defeated. Many club members changed their type of camouflage to help win the war.

Bill Lehr, the son in law of charter member Frank Tirone was part of the crew of the USS Monahan DD354 which sortied on December 7, 1941 from Pearl Harbor in search of a Kohyoteki Class Midget Submarine. The destroyer was given a heading and rammed the midget sub. It then dropped two depth charges and sunk the sub. Bill, within a twenty minute time span, also witnessed the destruction of the USS Arizona. He fought in the Battle of Coral Sea May 4-8, 1942 and later the Battle of Midway June 4-7, 1942. In 1943 Bill volunteered for the submarine service and served aboard the USS Sawfish until the war's end. The Hamden Fish and Game has its first real hero. Those that remained behind went to work in factories producing the incredible demand for arms, ammunition and other materials of war to keep our fighting men amply supplied. Working in the war industries 60 to 70 hours per week left little time for club members to enjoy the abundant fishing and hunting opportunities. When the rare times arose and they could enjoy the outdoors, they bundled up their bamboo fishing rods, creels, boots and nets; or if it was the hunting season, they would take their Model 21's or Model 97's, hunting gear and dogs on the bus to the club grounds. The club by 1945 had 30 miles of stream to fish and over 4500 acres to hunt. Early on, the times on the bus going or coming from fishing or hunting were filled with laughter and amusing tales.

As the war continued and if perhaps a Western Union Boy Messenger boarded the bus, the usual banter hushed to a church like setting. The messenger boy was bringing to some family the wire no one ever wanted to receive. Upon opening a telegram with tear clouded eyes it read, "The Secretary of the Army regrets to inform you". The bus over the war years made countless trips with its passengers up and down Whitney Avenue while noticing the ever increasing gold star flags draped in home windows. Another son had given his life to make us free.

In 1942 the club purchased its first \$500.00 war bond and continued to do so until the war ended. 1942 also bought about a new labeled night crawler, called the Jap Worm. They would sneak up on the trout and stab them in back with the fish hook. In 1944 the first pheasant pens were built and 200 to 300 pheasants were released for the hunting season. It was extremely important to the members that all game, including deer, when harvested would add to a family's diet. The rationing of food, tires and gasoline made the bus trips critical so that the fish and or game could be brought home. The addition of fish and or game was a blessing to the meager family meals endured at the home front.

On December 5, 1944 300 insulators supporting telegraphy wires were shot from the poles apparently by young marksmen armed with trusty 22's. Police investigated the incident and while no action was taken by the authorities those "young marksmen" were dealt with in a time honored fashion and they had to stand when eating their meals as their back sides were in need of healing.

The Battle of the Bulge from December 10, 1944 to January 25, 1945 was Germany's last gasp in an attempt to turn defeat into victory. It was also a time when future club member, Bill Mancavitch stood bravely in the way and helped stem the Nazi's quest. On December 19, 1944, with temperatures in the teens, a strong wind and snow flurries, Cpl. Mancavitch and his two man light machine gun section, part of the 101st Airborne Division, were ordered to hold a small crossroad near the town of Stavelot. Cpl. Mancavitch's orders were to be interrupted, "Stand or Die." The club's future ardent fly fisherman's luck held when the Panzer tanks ran out of fuel less than a mile from his crossroad position. The Panzer tanks facing him were commanded by Col. Peiper, a Nazi who had earlier ordered the execution of 150 American POW's at Malmedy. One can only imagine Cpl. Mancavitch and his crew's fate, if they were captured. At about the same time P.F.C. Charles Turner fighting in the battle was taken prisoner. He was extremely lucky no to have been shot by German forces. He and his fellow prisoners were herded into a box car sealed by nails. They were transported for several days to a temporary prison camp. Within a short time they were transferred to a prisoner work camp. He and others were forced to work in a mine which would serve as an underground factory. When Charles was captured he weighs 180 pounds and upon released four months later he weighs 90 pounds. He was sent to a military hospital in Framingham, Mass. and upon his rehabilitation sent the rest of the war guarding German prisoners of war.

Finally, 1945 arrived and after four terrible years of war it is over, and the men and women come home. The home coming is marked with great parades and elated parents and love ones embracing their heroes. History would record their action as the "Greatest Generation".

The club's membership increased to 300 senior members and 100 associate members.

The associate membership was a proving ground for future senior members. It was an apprenticeship. 1945 was the beginning of the dog trials. Clyde Campbell, the future father in law of Bill Luciano, was the first judge and organizer. In 1948 "The Ralph Auletta Trophy Tray" was given to the club by the Auletta family in Ralph's name. It was awarded on an annual basis to the all age pointing dog winner. The first winner of the all age pointing class was Caesar, an English setter owned and trained by Salvatore DeMaio. 1948 saw the addition of a non- pointing class, designed for retrievers.

The following members took responsibility for an annual field trial: Andy Fucci, Harry Conte, Michael Mongillo, Frank Ferrioulo, and the Fonda Brothers. Many members with a passion for bird dogs who also chaired the dog trials names were lost to history's ashes. The trophy was to be retired only after a member placed first on four different occasions with an all age pointing dog.

That feat was accomplished on October 8, 1986 by Michael Mongillo with his English Setters, John Roy Patches, Snoopy of Blue Ridge and Mike's Lady. Unfortunately, due to the loss of all the clubs hunting land and the resultant loss of interest in bird dogs, the field trial ended in 2002.

The non-pointing class composed of retrievers proved over the years to be as popular as the pointing class. Bob Walton and his superbly trained Labs won the non-pointing ribbon 10 times.

On January 1, 1945 the Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association approved and printed in the New Haven Register its sportsmen policy: "Cardinal tenet of the Hamden club's gospel holds that strong organization of Connecticut sportsmen on a county and state wide basis is essential if the conservation of the State's fish, wild life and other sporting resources as to be practiced to the fullest possible extent for the benefit of every sportsmen in the state".

The membership in the later part of 1945 and early 1946 began the task of clearing areas of trees and bushes to set the site for a future club house, skeet and trap fields, picnic area, baseball field, trout pond and fly casting area.

February 18, 1946 saw the advent of game dinners being held at the Masonic Temple in Hamden. Members contributed all types of game and make the dinners a huge success. They were held annually at the same site for over 30 years. 1946 also saw on November 7 the Turkey Shoot, a new event, which is still held to this day. It took a great deal of explaining to the general public that no turkeys were to be shot. The explanations and other club news during that era were printed by the New Haven Register and Journal Courier and also featured Italian newspapers. The shotgun type games were held in order to win "live turkeys" and are very similar to the ones held today. The event was somewhat over run and made more exciting by the 100 pheasants released in anticipation of the hunting season.

The monthly meetings were made far more interesting and brought better meeting attendance when on June 12, 1946 with the advent of Ralph Morrill, lead taxidermist Peabody Museum provided detailed discussions on wild life preservation and ended with an exciting, never seen before, 16 mm film. It soon became a prized event and continued for 20 years. 1946 also brought the wring of hands and cries of "we can't afford it" when dues were increased from \$5.00 per year to \$10.00. Much to the membership's pleasure the first trap field was opened with a hand fed trap. If you wanted to take your trusty old shot gun out and shoot those flying targets, then it required you take a turn in the trap house setting the target, pulling back on the arm and releasing the trap as near to the call as you possibly could. It sounded a lot easier than it really was, working the spring was a tiring effort, and the distance from where you sat in the enclosed house from the trap line was 20 or so yards. It made precise target presentations impossible.

Perhaps even more difficult for the trap boys/shooters was the absence of hearing and eye protection, so if one got a target within 30 seconds of when it was called, it was considered a good pull.

These shooters were part of the "Greatest Generation" and as the years went by and they continued to shoot without ear protection they became known as the "Deaf Generation". At a monthly meeting in 1948 Louis Gaetano reported that 750 trap targets were thrown for the month, a record to date. While there should have been 220 clay targets remaining, but when counted there were 650 targets, he commended the trap boys for reusing unbroken targets. Both "Butch Richard Amendola and Chuck Turner cocked, loaded and released skeet and trap targets on call for several years at the princely sum of .50 cents per squad.

1947 provided the club with another first; Oscar Vought was named Man of the Year. This tradition is handed down over the years. It is a very sad commentary that no record of all the great club members so honored was kept. They know who they are and so do their peers. They can be proud of their contributions.

In 1948 the State of Connecticut Board of Fisheries and Game introduced the first set of hunting regulations:

1. No hunting on Sunday
2. No shooting from vehicles.
3. Report all game harvested.
4. Do not shoot within 500 feet of a building.
5. No hunting from a ½ hour before sunrise and ½ hour before sunset.
6. 2 cock pheasants per day were to be harvested.
7. 2 partridge per day were to be harvested.
8. 5 gray squirrels per day were to be harvested.

The advent of a set of hunting regulations also caused in 1948 the hunting license to be increased from \$3.35 to \$4.35. Membership wondered will this never end, and in order to enforce the hunting regulations David Docherty appointed game constable in 1944 is reappointed.

Former Marines and soldiers, now club members, have at last a place to shoot. A rifle range constructed solely with the hard work of members was built with nearly 100 yard range and the ability to set targets at varying lengths. Portable benches were built and used. The competition was fierce but fun and inexpensive. Surplus ammo and guns were readily available as was ammo and guns from Winchester, Marlins, High Standard, Mossberg and Kodiak Arms where many of the members worked.

1950

The Growing Years

In the early 1950's the membership was bemoaning the loss of hunting land because of "bad sportsmen, game hogs, shooting to near buildings and livestock, no respect of the land owners, too many bad guests and abusing hunting privileges". It seems that no matter what the date the "Hunting Jerk" ruins it for all of us. It's like the famous philosopher Pogo stated, "We have met the enemy and it is us".

An April 22, 1951 article in the New Haven Register cited: ardent hunter and fisherman, member of the Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association Earle Brinsmade had planted hundreds of trees on club and state properties in order to eliminate land erosion and to give all of Gods' creatures shelter and food. He was praised for his good works as the "Modern Day Johnny Appleseed". He continued his devotion to nature until his death in the late 1960's.

Once again the lives of most all Americans were put in a state of upheaval when the North Koreans invaded South Korea on June 24, 1950. Many Americans enlisted and many were called back into the service. Such was the case of life member Sandy Soufrine who enlisted in the United States Marine Corp in 1951 and was discharged in 1954 as an E3 Corporal. He served as a rifleman MOS 0311 and was stationed in Korea with How Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines. His outfit relieved the Canadian forces in the defense of Seoul against a Chinese onslaught. He was severely frost bitten during that action. His unit was awarded two Presidential Citations. Unlike his counterparts of WWII, there were few, if any, parades; and he, like his fellow warriors, came home, took off their uniforms and went back to work. Americans were more interested in the fin size of the new Cadillac or who was going to win the World Series. He and his veteran brothers were part of the "Forgotten War". Sandy, upon his return, enjoyed the club activities and introduced his sons, Mike and Wayne, as well as his grandchildren to all the club had to offer.

During the Korean Police Action and on November of 1951, the club's new house was dedicated. It was entirely built in 15 months by club members. It served as the clubs main meeting hall until 1984 when a new facility would engulf the 1951 structure.

The club membership was becoming more and more interested in skeet/ trap shooting. The original trap field with its hand fed trap machine gave way to a two field skeet lay out and one trap field. The trap field located near the present day five stand site or field four had its own member trap house and the main club house served as the skeet house. Little was realized at the time that this was the beginning of friction and strife in the years to come. The move was chaired by Ed Vailette and he was able to redo the fields and equip them with state of the art Winchester traps purchased from the disbanded Winchester skeet fields located on State Street in North Haven.

The fields served the club until 1985 when under the guidance of Joe Simeone, life member and noted architect. He used NSSA plans and was ably assisted by Bob DeFrancesco, four field combination skeet and trap layouts were planned and went before the Hamden zoning and planning commission on October 4, 1984. Joe made an opening statement concerning the need for skeet and trap field's expansion and answered a number of questions from the committee. The commission approved the expansion with the following caveats; no lights for evening shooting and with the exception of the semi-circle walk ways the fields were to remain all grass. The fields were completed in 1985.

The actual construction was done by club members. Joe Macolino and his crew built the skeet and trap houses, the skeet and trap cement walkways was completed by Ralph Purafactio and his crew, while the fences separating the fields were completed by Michael Mongillo and his crew.

1954 a committee was formed to improve the rifle range with the establishment of a 100 yard range and the installation of bench rests. The annual dinner was continued, and the club at its new picnic area began the club outings which are still held in high regard to this day.

1955 saw the beginning of the end to the club's effort in raising pheasants for the hunting season when "raccoons invaded the pens and killed 100 pheasants and another 40 died when they pecked at the dead carcasses". The incident reoccurred in 1957 when 40 pheasants are killed either by fox or raccoons.

A spirited discussion was held at a monthly meeting on December 7, 1956 concerning the purchase of land to be used for hunting. Club factions concerning the purchase of additional land for whatever use were beginning to form, and those factions continued for years. Each faction more interested in their particular activity thwarted all proposals that enhanced the club as a whole. When the fishermen, rifle shooters and even the clay target shooters felt the hunters were pushing for a much greater part of the financial pie, the land proposal was denied. History will recall in each decade the proposal for additional land purchase followed the same voting patterns.

The Boy Scouts availed themselves to the club grounds on June 16, 1957 when 200-300 scouts joined together at their annual Scout Jamboree. The Hamden Fish and Game cosponsored the event with Troop 3 of Mt. Carmel.

On November 17, 1958 Frank Tirone, charter member, was killed when his Jeep's brakes failed on a steep incline on Still Hill Road while stocking pheasants. Also injured were Joseph Ciardi internal injuries, Edward Sperl, broken arm and William Merlone, cuts and bruises. In the News Letter dated November 1958 was the following," It was the saddest blow that our club has had since its organization and we all feel that we have lost part of ourselves."

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association on December 16, 1959 fulfilled its name. While the club was located in Hamden and primary function was hunting and fishing, the last part of our title was fulfilled, a vote by the Board of Governors completed its name. The main club house site of 83 acres was deemed a game refuge and no hunting will ever be allowed: hence it fulfills and completes our title, "Protective Association".

1960

Foot print for the future.

The 1960's began as the fifties left off; it is a time of prosperity, new homes and fast high finned cars. It is also the beginning of the end for the club's hunting and fishing. New homes meant land was being developed, shopping centers were being built and the need for parking became inexhaustible. The club expanded to 300 members and 100 associates, dues were now \$30.00 per year and everyone was required to work 10 hours. Prior to this time, only the associate members were required to work. Change was in the air and in a far off place called Viet Nam. A war was building and soon America would become embroiled in that conflict.

During the 60's skeet shooting was beginning to take hold and one of Hamden's members started on the road to become Connecticut's premier skeet shooter, Dom Piscitelli. Others were beginning to get the urge to shoot. It was the bird hunter who first became addicted to the new sport. Imagine being able to shoot at targets that resembled birds all year. It just doesn't get any better. The Board of Governors voted the skeet and trap fields would be opened on Wednesdays, Saturday and Sundays.

A winter skeet and trap league was formed in 1965. Sal Amendola, a hard working member of the club who served as treasurer and head of the kitchen committee, son Butch died of cancer. The club shooters, a very tight knit group, brought in front of the Board a proposal to rename the winter league to read "The Butch Amendola Winter League" in honor of Sal and Eva Amendola. The proposal passed unanimously.

The club in 1964 began sponsoring a junior member to attend a Conservation Camp. Chuck Turner Jr. one of the first juniors selected. The camp offered information concerning hunting and fishing. It also emphasized ecology with special attention to trout rearing. Classes were also offered in swimming and canoeing. It was a wonderful experience for junior members. Participation ended with the lack of junior members interested in participating.

1966 Mr. Robert Hastings was accepted as a member. This unassuming gentleman, avid angler, belied the important role he played in our country's history. Bob, a retired Secret Service agent, was assigned to President Roosevelt and later, President Truman's personal protection detail. Details of both President Roosevelt and President Truman remain classified but it might be inferred that he was present at the first Atlantic Conference from August 9-12, 1941. President Roosevelt boarded the USS Potomac on the afternoon of August 6, 1941 presumably for rest and fishing.

He was secretly transferred that evening to the battleship USS Augusta. It was necessary to keep his trip to Newfoundland, to meet Sir Winston Churchill, secret due to the U-boat threat. A secret service agent, disguised as the President, dressed in his fishing clothes including the famous fedora hat and ivory cigarette holder and sat aft in the president's fishing chair as the USS Potomac cruised up and down the Massachusetts's coast line. This allowed the public as well as the press to witness his whereabouts.

There were a total of twelve conferences that Bob, in his role as a secret service agent, may have participated ending with the Yalta conference on February 4-11, 1944. Upon the death of President Roosevelt on April 12, 1945 Bob was transferred to President Truman's personal protection detail and remained with the detail until President Truman left office on January 20, 1953. He then was transferred to the Secret Service headquarters and served as a Treasury agent until his retirement in 1965.

The rifle range use had increased many times over with the influx of surplus ammunition and rifles. You could buy and have sent to your home a Springfield 03 for \$39.00 and a grade match would cost the princely sum of \$41.50. If you were not able to afford those prices, a 98 German Mauser would cost \$18.00 and 30-06 ammo was being sold for less than a penny per round. While this all sounds exciting, the average worker was making less than \$50.00 per week. To put the cost in perspective, the author of this history graduated from Central Connecticut State College in 1964 and entered the teaching field at \$4000.00 per year. When taxes and retirement were deducted, there was very little money to live on much less purchase some of the "great deals". It was an invigorating time: Jackie Kennedy's pillbox hats, a renewed belief in the United States and Camelot, to live in America until that fateful day on November 22, 1963 at 12:30 PM our president, John F. Kennedy, was gunned down by Lee Harvey Oswald using an Italian 6.5 Carcano scoped rifle purchased under an alias for \$19.95. The world stood still in shock and the changes began. The political left never allowed a great tragedy to go unused in order to push their anti-gun control agenda.

The club remained stagnant during the 1960s when club members were satisfied with the club's direction, and change was being met with heated discussions primarily during the summer months when the monthly meetings were held at the picnic grounds.

Perhaps the mosquito population had something to do with the short tempers. The internal struggles that permeated the club's lack of positive movement were due in part to the influx of new members being at odds with the older established members. It became a question, what was important and how things were going to be done in the future.

The 60's societal changes, values redefined, riots, violent deaths, hippy movement, drugs and the Viet Nam War were problems viewed differently by the wide range of club member's ages; hence the inability of the club membership to work in a cooperative way was nearly impossible.

The trout stream so valued and loved by the fishermen was lost in 1976. Stan Cesko, if he were alive, would have had tears in his eyes when in 1960 he was instrumental in starting with a crew of dedicated fly fishermen in improving the stream from Willow Street to Tuttle Avenue by cutting trees, unblocking stream holes, deepening holes, setting rip rap for stream movement improvement and the countless other jobs so necessary to make the Mill River a premier trout stream. The duck hole, red bank, Tuttle Street holes were all sites established and or improved as trout holding areas by Stan and his crew. He was later joined by Bill Spegal in the stream improvement effort.

The Regional Water Authority denied use of the stream by the club because of an anti- gun philosophy adopted by the Water Authorities Governing Board. The loss might have been due to the Club's Board of Governors missing a renewal date which might have started the denial process.

During the 60's the newsletters were filled with game receipts offered by member's wives. The newsletters of November 1964 were especially noteworthy and following receipts were the mainstay of that publication.

Pheasant-Hunters Style

By Emilia Tirone

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Pheasant | 4 small onions |
| 8tablespoons Olive Oil | 1 clove garlic |
| 1 large green pepper | 1 cup canned tomatoes |

Preparation; Cut cleaned pheasant into serving pieces, sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste, roll pieces lightly in flour.

Heat oil in saucepan and brown pheasant on each side for about ten minutes. Remove stem and seeds from pepper, slice lengthwise. Mix with onions, chopped garlic and tomatoes. Add everything to pheasant, cover pan and simmer slowly for 40 minutes, then add mushrooms and continue to simmer for another 15 to 20 minutes. Makes 4 to 6 servings. (Variation, after pheasant is cooked adds ½ cup dry white wine and simmers until wine has cooked off.)

Roast Duck

(With White Dry Wine)

By Frances Capone

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 young duck 5lbs. | 2 oranges, peel, remove seeds and pulp |
| 1 tablespoon of salt to rub duck | 2 tart apples, peel, cut into cubes |
| ½ teaspoon pepper | 1 teaspoon salt for dressing pepper |
| 5 tablespoons of melted butter | 1 orange rind, chopped |

½ cup white dry wine

Clean duck carefully, singe and wash inside and out. Dry and stuff with blended ingredients. Sew up opening. Place duck on a rack breast side up in roasting pan. Allow 20 to 25 minutes per pound at 450 degrees. Baste every five minutes using drippings and or orange juice to keep duck moist. Serve on hot platter, garnished with glazed orange slices. Will serve 4 to 5.

Rabbit and Polenta

By Mrs. William Lehr

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 large rabbit | 3 tablespoons Olive Oil |
| 2 cloves garlic | 1 can tomatoes |
| 1 lemon | Dry wine, Sherry or Sauterne |

Rosemary

Marinate rabbit overnight in first four ingredients. Put fresh Olive Oil in a pan and brown. Crush one clove of garlic over rabbit and brown real well. Add rosemary during browning and add 1 cup of wine. Let cook about ten minutes, add tomatoes and let stew about 1 hour.

Polenta

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 box yellow cornmeal | 3 to 4 quarts water |
|-----------------------|---------------------|

2 teaspoons salt

Bring water to rolling boil in a large heavy pot. Add cornmeal slowly, stir constantly with large handled wooden spoon and keep adding cornmeal slowly. Try not to make lumps. If it does lump, get a strong armed man with long handle d spoon and let him stir while you pour in the cornmeal. After the cornmeal thickens it will not lump. Lower heat and cook for 45 minutes under a low heat, stirring occasionally.

1970

Clash of Values

Ed Valette, in his first stint as president, proposed the building of a pond in order to assist many of the older members who do not have the physical capabilities to fish the stream. Robert Ryan, club secretary was given the responsibility; and in 1978 developed a plan to dig a pond adjacent to the stream for fishing. The Board of Governors quickly approved the plan. In hind sight the pond construction was fortuitous in that the Mill River trout stream so highly valued by the club's fishermen was lost in 1976. The Bertorleono Construction Company contacted the Club and a contract was developed. The construction company would dig the pond and use the gravel for the Route 40 extension. The club was paid \$25,000. It was a win/ win situation, the club members had a new fishing facility and the club treasury was enhanced by \$25,000. Trout were stocked in the pond to the fishermen's delight, and over the ensuing years other species of fish become embedded: such as bass, perch, sun fish and eels all complimentary of visiting ducks and geese. An unexpected pond use was in the training of duck retrieving dogs. Club members involved in duck hunting took advantage of this new facility. Over the years, this unexpected pond bonus was put to good use by Bob Walton and Mary DeFrancesco, avid duck hunters, were they honed their labs skills. When the duck season began, their dogs were more than ready.

The pond became a place of quiet beauty, serenity and action. Bob Ryan's vision and Ed Valette's fore thought provided all club members with a lasting tribute; and upon Bob's passing, the pond was named "Ryan's Pond".

The hard work and dedication of Charles Turner Sr. was recognized in 1977 as "Man of the Year". His love of the club would extend throughout his life time

The Viet Nam war ended, and the men and women came home not to parades or even indifference but ridiculed by the hippie generation who for the most part escaped service by going to Canada. They came home without uniforms because they were harassed and shown no respect. Jane Fonda posed proudly with the Viet Cong anti- aircraft gun emplacement which had just shot down an American flier. She will be forever known as "Hanoi Jane" and should have been prosecuted as well as those who fled to Canada. These heroic men and women never lost a battle to the Viet Cong but their leaders, President Johnson, Secretary McNamara and other politicians lost the war and sacrificed 58,168 brave souls.

Can we be having the same heated discussion again - buy land? Once again the meeting in 1975 was thrown into turmoil. A property in Killingworth had become available. It had 363 acres of meadows, forest, ponds and streams all for \$250,000. Could the club possibly pass up this opportunity? Back and forth the discussion ranged and it was easy to see the factions reforming, under 40 year's old yea, over 40 years old nay. Financial plans were presented to pay for the land, all to no avail.

The final argument put forth by the over 40 gang sealed the fate of the land purchase, "How can we continue with the name Hamden Fish and Game Protective Society if the club is located in Killingworth". How can anyone escape that logic? The vote to purchase the land failed.

Dom Piscitelli continued his skeet shooting excellence not only by winning many skeet shoots but by being the first skeet shooter in Canada and Massachusetts to break 100's in the 410 gauge. He accomplished these feats using a Winchester Model 42. It was then and even today an almost impossible feat. Dom took over the Butch Amendola Winter Skeet League and led it into the eighty's.

Chuck Turner took great delight in a wonderful joke played at Dom's expense. Chuck made two aluminum skeet targets. Dom was engaged in a friendly skeet match for coffee. The score was tied and at station six he called for his doubles. Both targets left the machine and after Dom fired the targets remained unbroken. Two lost targets gave the coffee to the opposition. After the coffee had been consumed the aluminum targets were given to Dom and the club house roared with laughter.

In 1972 Joe Ivan took responsibility for the trap league, and Dom Piscitelli opened up a gun shop located on Dixwell Ave. Hamden. Many club members bought their first rifle or shotgun at Dom's shop. In time, his store became a mini Cabalas and every possible fishing and hunting equipment was available. If you didn't have all the money to buy that used Model 12, Dom would let you pay it off on a monthly base.

The store became a regular stopping off place for many Hamden Fish and Game members. Every Friday night for years 20 or so regulars at shop's closing time traveled down Dixwell Avenue to the Venice Pizza Shop to enjoy a pie and beer. The gun store became so popular it was given the nick name of the Hamden Fish and Game's annex club house. Controversy, of course arose as most of Dom's regulars were skeet shooters and the flames were stirred back to the clubs monthly meetings. Bob DeFrancesco and Zeke Zona, now life members, worked part time at Dom's for years as the little gun shop prospered. Those of us that thought it would never end were shocked into reality when Dom in the 1989's sold the store and died in 1991 of an aneurism while helping the new owners.

To know Joe Ivan was to love him. He was always in search of the perfect skeet gun; hence he bought and sold too many to count. He never did reach skeet nirvana, but there are many instances at skeet shoots still when many of the shooters own Ivan's "old guns". He prided himself on getting the best possible deal for himself, but when it came to youngsters, like boy scouts, he would do anything for them at his own expense.

Bill Luciano became President; Clyde Campbell was his father in law. He tried very hard to get the club working together. The heated arguments in the picnic groove continued over the allocation of funds. The dues were raised to \$50.00 as well as an assessment of \$10.00 per hour for work time was added. These funds, coupled with funds from special events, brought in just so much capital. More was needed. The argument escalated. The only areas that could be raise were skeet and trap shooting fees.

It became even more heated, why should skeet and trap shooters bear the financial burden when rifle/pistol shooters were not charged, fishermen and hunters still got their constitutional allotment of 5000 dollars per year?

There were no easy answers, only always enough votes to increase shooting fees. The club was in need of road work, rifle range safety improvements and building upgrades. Somehow all got done over a period of time but the shooters were not mollified.

Sadly, Bill died in a tragic work accident, when he fell from his crane into a concrete pour fitted with rebar and his club dream were unaccomplished.

Mr. Louis Borrelli was accepted as a member in 1974. He had a storied past that might very well match the exploits of dime novels detective heroes. He was an officer in the Department of Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco and as a new agent he was assigned undercover work. His assignment was to infiltrate the Mafia and bring to justice those individuals making and selling illegal alcohol, straw buying firearms and then reselling those firearms to convict felonies, and finally ending the fraudulent printing of tobacco stamps. During his seven years of undercover work he brought to justice numerous members of Mafia family. It was a difficult and stressful time for him and his family but due to his strength, values and ethics he not only survived but prospered. When his undercover work ended he continued in a number of different assignments when he was finally appointed Connecticut Bureau Chief and soon after New England Bureau Chief. He was often teased by his contemporaries, especially Dom Piscitelli, that his lack of skeet shooting expertise gave the bad guys, he had come into contact with, the upper hand.

The raccoons and fox have had their last feast at the expense of the Hamden Fish and Game as the pens were removed to make way for the new fishing pond. It was reported there was not a dry eye in any of the predators who resided in the area.

The rifle range safety problem of ricochets was addressed. Members rolled up their sleeves and began to place thousands of used tires in a 30 degree upward angle in order to absorb the down range shots. The base consisting of six tires deep that was gradually slanted upwards with continuing tire rows until a height of ten feet was obtained. A berm was created to shield skeet fields three and four from errant shots or ricochets from the rifle range. The far hill at the back end of field four was cleared of brush to enhance the shooting, and as a side benefit provided an area where the deer could feed and watch skeet shooters miss.

1980

Pendulum Begins Its Swing

Here we go again, 1981 and hunting land was down to less than 500 leased acres. The club was in the process of losing the state pheasant stocking program. Land became available at 60 Cook Hill Road in Cheshire and had approximately 100 acres that bordered Water Company property. The cost was a reasonable \$60,000. Plans were once again developed and laid out to finance the project. The land was suitable for hunting, granted as it was mentioned, it was not like the Killingworth section, but it would provide for a schedule hunting process. The plan was for an X number of hunters in a morning hunt and a like number of hunters in the afternoon only on Saturday with both a morning and afternoon stocking. The X factor was to be determined. Like its predecessors it failed. We were at a point in time when the surrounding areas and much of Connecticut did not have areas available in sufficient size and at a cost the club could afford to expand. Many members felt as an organization we did not have the foresight and or courage of our charter members. We have failed ourselves and those Charter members who gave us this wonderful opportunity.

Dom Piscitelli continued his winning ways and was recognized by the National Skeet Shooter Association with his induction in 1984 into NSSA Hall of Fame. He was the first member of the Hamden Fish and Game Association to be so honored but not the last.

At long last and just prior to his death Gene Appicella was recognized as "Man of the Year" in 1985 for his year's hard work and dedication to the club. Gene was a friend to all. He was a gentle soul who without hesitation provided assistance to any club member. He and wife Barbara was a popular couple that exhibited all the good things the Hamden Fish and Game represented.

The Winchester Gun Manufacturer closed its doors on December 1980. Many club members who were employed by the Winchester firm were out of a job. Larry Turi, comptroller was transferred to Ilion, New York, Fred Rooks an engineer who was the primary designer on the Super X 1 shotgun retired prematurely and Zeke Zona moved on to Marlins. The club was also hurt by Winchester's demise due to the loss of guns donated to the club for various club functions, the ability to purchase guns and ammo at greatly discounted prices as well as members being able to tap into company resources for repairs and dead rack purchases.

The club once again rolled up its collective sleeves; and for the first time in a long time, worked together in creating a new club house. W.I. Clark had a butler type steel building located on Dixwell Ave. that would be donated to the club if we as a club could dismantle it and truck it to our Willow Street site. Thirty-five plus members armed with an assortment of tools tackled the job and in two weekends disassembled the building.

Sal Amendola, of the Amendola Trucking Company, donated his company's time to transport the steel disassembled jigsaw puzzle to the club site. A foundation was poured encompassing the existing cinderblock clubhouse and increased the width by fifteen feet on either side. Kramer Iron provided the extension girders and work done by scores of club members reconstructed the facility. In approximately one year of work members dedicated the new "Club House" in 1986. Of special note Tony Masselli constructed the fireplace and outside chimney, while George Richette and Joe Ruggerio took charge of finishing the structure's interior. They used the old time honored "bartering system" to complete the halls appointments. It seated 125-150 and since its inception the hall has been used for all club meetings, dinners, Christmas parties and the like. It will always be an invaluable addition.

The picnic area in 1985 was in a state of disrepair. The roof over the picnic tables had rotted away and fallen in on the picnic tables. It needed immediate attention or next year's outing would be in jeopardy. A good deed finally paid off when Troop 91 of Cheshire requested permission to camp at the picnic site. The presentation to the Board of Governors was made by junior member Mark Mongillo, a future eagle scout. The Board approved the request. While the scout's camped and cooked over their fires, Mark could not but notice the grounds had fallen in disrepair. He asked his scout master if he could repair the facility as his Eagle Scout project. It was approved at the scout's level and Mark made a presentation to the Board detailing his Eagle Scout Project plan and if the club would furnish the materials he would, with the troop, complete the work. Mr. Kurt Evans, a club member, agreed to be his counselor and would provide over sight and sign off when the work was completed. All the repairs were completed in 20 working days with no less than seven scouts and two adults in attendance each working day. The new picnic area was once again the outing site. Mark received his Eagle Scout award on April 14, 1986 with Mr. Evans in attendance.

The Great Eastern Skeet Shoot held at Lordship, Stratford, Connecticut a Remington Facility was a premier skeet shoot. The Hamden Fish and Game had three junior members win Great Eastern championships, Carl Amendola, George Capone and Kevin Piscitelli. While all three Hamden Fish and Game junior member's wins were remarkable, it was Kevin, a chip off the old block, who won his championship while burdened with a broken foot. His leg in a cast, he was pushed in a wheel chair by Sal Amendola to each station, where Kevin stood, broke his targets and won. The club was indeed proud of all three young men's accomplishments.

The road in 1988 was finally repaved and needed drainage pipes were installed to prevent stream water when flooding to wash out the road. Speed signs had to be erected. One member leaving the club house, perhaps not at his best, drove his car into the pond. He wanted to sue but the type of insurance we have makes us as all equal owners, he would it fact be suing himself. Case ended.

New members got together and proposed setting up an archery course and made a proposal to the Board of Governors which was quickly approved. The committee chaired by Chuck Turner used land adjacent to the picnic area for the archery course.

Realistic big game animal targets were purchased as well as a tower built to simulate an elevated tree stand structure. The archery facility provided the club with another interesting area for members to participate in. In the eighties it was a common sight prior to the Super Bowl to have Zeke Zona selling squares on the Super Bowl board. Zeke, a wise and shrewd gambler, in 1984 extolled the virtues of the "Oakland Raiders" and how the opposing team need not show up. An equally shrewd Scott Mongillo saw a great possibility to make a dollar. Obtaining a dollar from his dad he approached Mr. Zona and bet him a dollar the Oakland Raiders will not be Super Bowl Champions. Zeke was delighted to take the young junior members money and get one up on his dad. The bet was finalized. Scott said to Mr. Zona, "I will have my dollar now, please". Zeke retorted, "The game has not been played". Scott informed Mr. Zona it wasn't the Oakland Raiders who were in the Super Bowl but the Los Angeles Raiders. With a smile on his face, Mr. Zona handed over his lost wager and Scott walked from the club house with two dollars. He had conveniently forgotten to repay his Dad.

The 80s saw a revitalization of America. Ronald Regan gave us, as Americans, pride in ourselves and our country. Iran would not release our embassy personnel held illegally for 444 days until President Regan was sworn in. The country was feeling good about the revitalization and perhaps so did the club. A healing process began and monthly meetings became much less confrontational.

The hunting land in 1989 was for all purposes nonexistent. Pheasants were being stocked in the Naugatuck State Forest. The forest was a terrible place to bird hunt. The real down side of the area was the club's inability to control who hunted. The Naugatuck State Forest was open to all hunters and as a club we could not regulate who hunted our birds. In a matter of two seasons the stocking of birds came to an end, and as a side result the field trials disappeared.

The club constitution required \$5000.00 per year to be used for stocking birds. When that proved to be no longer possible, the constitution was amended to read the \$5000.00 may be used for preserve type hunting. A contract was drawn between Millstream Hunting Preserve and the club to provide cooperate discounts to club hunters as well as a club reimbursement for birds harvested. It proved to be an acceptable alternative. The days were long gone and a distant memory when after work a club member could take his Model 12 and setter out into the Hamden Fish and Game leased hunting land and pursue the wily pheasant.

The Butch Amendola winter league became the center for some diabolic humor, Chip Murano and his partner had a two bird advantage in the last week over two junior member's ages 13 and 14. In order to gain some advantage a Chip Murano "dummy" was hung in effigy as Chip and his partner took to the field. Chip was not intimidated by the diminutive dummy and grinds, with great elation, the two junior members into the ground.

In the next year Zeke Zona and his son Anthony also had a two bird advantage over arch rivals Mike Mongillo and Bob DeFrancesco. The Zona's had long been great shooters but were noted for possessing large proboscis and mustaches. On the last Sunday league morning as Zeke and his son went to shoot their round of skeet Mike and Bob were at the skeet fence facing towards the club house. As Anthony Zona, the lead off shooter approached the pad for station one both Bob and Mike turned around wearing large plastic black framed glasses with incredibly large pink noses and equally large black mustaches. Anthony saw the sights and went on to miss three out of the five shots at station one. Bob and Mike as well as Zeke were convulsed into laughter.

Joe Ivan in 1989 was in a shoot off with a club member, whose name has been lost to history, for high gun in C Class. The shooters were called to the line as a light rain fell. The shoot off was in a double's format, miss and out, starting on station three. The referee showed the shooters a doubles presentation and as the referee was ready to start, Joe was fumbling with his shooting glasses. His opponent turned to Joe for the customary hand shake and saw Joe's shooting glasses. The glasses had miniature wipers going back and forth. His opponent was convulsed in mild hysteria, turned and called for his targets. He missed both. Joe calmly removed his windshield wiper glasses, put on his regular shooting glasses, and ink balled both of his targets. With a combination of a royal strut and stroll he walked to the club house while on lookers had their knees tightly held together for fear of wetting their pants in laughter.

1990

Change is in the wind

As we ushered in the 1990s, the Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association turned 50 years old. A gala event was planned under the chairmanship of Michael Mongillo at the Foxon Country House. Over 200 members and their wives enjoyed wonderful hors d'oeuvres, open bar, sit down dinner and Italian pastries at \$50.00 per couple. It was an eye opener to see men who at the club wore only one shirt dressed elegantly with a suit and tie, men who always wore a hat and at the dinner are now hatless and bald and those who gave the impression of not having enough money to buy a cup of coffee wore more gold than an Inca Indian chief. It was a wonderful time and all who attended wish more of our members could have been with us to celebrate the occasion. Perhaps we will see them at our 75th anniversary.

August 2, 1990 the United States in Operation Desert Storm began the attack on Iraq in order to expel them from Kuwait. Iraq, in an attempt to control the oil from the Middle East, conquered its neighbor Kuwait. President Bush stated, "This will not stand". In what was known as the first television war, Iraq was vanquished and nearly destroyed. American servicemen finally came home as heroes and brought to the club a new maturity.

The club was fortunate to have a bevy of new skeet shooters enjoy the four field skeet and trap combination layout. The cost was elevated to \$2.00 per round. The Butch Amendola Winter skeet league was at an all- time level with nearly 100 two man teams. Sadly in 1991 one of Connecticut premier skeet shooters, Dom Piscitelli, passed away. In his place, to keep the winter league functioning, Dan Prince stepped up to keep the league intact. Joe Ivan continued with the trap league and was still in pursuit of the magic gun.

1992 the Dom Piscitelli Memorial 12 gauge skeet shoot was held to honor Dom's many accomplishments in skeet shooting as well as his contributions to the Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association. George Giannotti shot a brilliant 100. He was the shoot champion and was presented by Kevin, Dom's son, an inscribed bowl to commemorate the occasion. George went on to win many club championships as well as many NSSA registered shoot championships.

The Hamden Fish and Game recognized for the first time in 1991 one of its female member as "Lady of the Year". This tribute was extended to Mrs. Barbara Appicella. Barbara was the heart of the club. Her warmth, good nature and positive attitude made the club a better place.

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association are justly proud of our club members inducted into the Connecticut Skeet Shooters Hall of Fame, Mary DeFrancesco 1990, and Jerry Mastriano and after his passing Dom Piscitelli in 1993 and Bob DeFrancesco 1996. Bob, or as he is commonly known "Bobby D", went on to set a world 12 gauge record long run of 2402 targets from May 11, 1997 to June 26, 1998 when the streak ended. He shot in every tournament in which he was entered and never withdrew from a registered shoot due to weather conditions, field conditions or quality of thrown targets. He was a true champion and the Hamden Fish and Game continues to be proud of his accomplishment.

Early 1995 new skeet machines were purchased and installed on fields two and three as well as a new trap machine for field one. The fields were upgraded with new sod and grass as well. The skeet houses were painted and reroofed. The fields and club grounds looked great.

Ryan's pond in the 1990's had proved to be a huge success. It had become the home for snapping turtles that each spring made their way out of the pond to lay their eggs onshore. Heron and egrets made the pond their new home as did ducks and geese. Fishermen enjoyed getting bonus fish now in the pond compliments of duck and geese visitors. The sun fish proved to be a big hit with the younger junior members, while some of the older fishermen began to brag about two or three pound bass they caught.

The anticipation of the opening day of fishing season had been augmented by a father/ child sleep over held in the club's main hall. Pizza and soda were consumed, stories were told and no one really got any sleep. When morning arrived at 6:00 AM, breakfast, prepared in the kitchen, was provided. After breaking the world records for the number of pancakes consumed it was off to the pond to hook that dreamed about trout. Lines were cast into the water at precisely 7:00 AM and by 8:00 AM 60% of our enthusiast young fishermen were sound asleep.

Archery had been catching on with groups of archers using the faculties almost every day prior to the hunting season. In an area near the archery range bocce lanes were constructed and have proved to be great entertainment at picnics and other outdoor activities. More events were planned for club member children as for example, the Christmas party where Joe Ivan or Joe Ruggiero acted as Santa Claus. Santa was driven to the club house steps in our new John Deere tractor and it proved to be a big hit with the children. The Easter Egg Hunt chaired by Michele Ivan was a "sweet" success due to a marked area which was solely used by the younger children and another area for the older kids. Both areas were inundated with a super ample distribution of Easter candy. A free family picnic hosted by the club for its members was catered by Joe Ruggiero and his kitchen gang. They did a fantastic job and no one left hungry. All these events proved to be so popular that they are continued to this day.

The rifle range once again needed to be repaired. The tires, installed ten years ago used to stop ricochet have lost, to erosion the soil packed around them. The tires had seen their better day. The roof over the shooting benches had leaks and needed attention. The berm also needed to be heightened and the wild brush had to be removed. The hill adjacent to field four needed to be cut back. Work parties were scheduled and the work was completed.

The club awarded Michael Mongillo in 1997 the "Man of the Year" award as a past president, years of work on the Board of Governors as well as his work in promoting all club functions.

The winter league was still going strong but the awards dinner usually held in a restaurant with a sit down dinner had begun to fade. The club main hall now became the award dinner site with the kitchen preparing the food. The winter league had become a rather somber Sunday morning of shooting much like attending a wake. Chip Murano stepped onto the scene and began to participate in the shooting activities, and in a millisecond the Sunday morning took on a far different atmosphere. Chip proved to be very fast on the uptake, had an amazing sense of humor and had the ability to make a fool of anyone entering the club house doors. He said to one member, when you went into the service it was the Roman Legion, when another of his friends entered the conversation, he parroted, don't use big words, and when viewing a photo he asked the bearer, is that an x-ray? When taken out of context perhaps the statements might not appear to be funny, you just had to be there to appreciate them. His ability to make people laugh is only one small part of Chip's personality. He continued to be a club leader, past president and served on the Board of Governors in many different capacities. Above all, he made Sunday morning during the winter league a great place to enjoy the repartee.

The Board of Governors decided to present and award to Joe Ruggiero as Man of the Decade. Joe spent countless hours in all major building projects, as well as took care of the day to day club needs. He had also taken on the burden as kitchen chairman in providing dinners for the Winter League Awards Dinner. Having the kitchen open every Sunday for the Winter league, club picnic, and monthly club meetings and more than can be listed. He, like no other member, deserved the award of Man of the Decade 1990-2000.

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association celebrated its 50th golden anniversary on May 19, 1990. The affair was a huge success that was culminated by the awarding of the Man of the Decade as well as the Frank Tirone Memorial Trophy to Gerald Lehr, Frank Tirone's grandson, for outstanding service to the club. The anniversary dinner was chaired by Michael Mongillo.

2000

Growth Years

A new game is in town. NSSA comes to the Hamden club with what was known as a five stand shotgun game. Five shooters on line were offered a variety of passing shots, vertical shots, and targets skipping across the ground, incomers, away and in any combinations. The presentations were singles or doubles. The club members became mildly interested. A short time later Ken Gagnon from Rhode Island made his debut at the club with a similar five stand set up. It proved to be a real hit. The five stand game could easily be adapted to a regular skeet field. When the five stands is not in operation the skeet field could still be used. John Knott and Vin Palmeria took on the responsibility to adapt field four as the club's new five stand site. Under the direction of the chairmen, Tony Calvacola and Pat Massaro provided invaluable work to help get the five stands in operation. In rather short order field four bristles with seven new stations with various types trap machines that not only threw standard skeet targets but an all new strange vocabulary of targets with names as the rabbit, midi, and battue all painted in a strange green color. From its humble beginnings it had become an event open every Saturday from April to November with a huge following. It now attracts member's friends and has become a great source of new memberships.

The price for shooting was increased to \$3.00 per round in skeet and trap.

Ed Vailette was once again elected president and he continued into the next decade. He brought about an era of club cooperation, growth and club members satisfaction. While strife was ever present, it was minimal and one member could disagree without being disagreeable.

U.S. Repeating Arms, the former Winchester Arms company, closed its doors on January 17, 2006. Once again, many club members lost jobs and the club lost a great friend. U.S. Repeating Arms had been a great sponsor to all club activities. The gun manufacturing had been doomed in Connecticut. The great work force remained to make a company viable, but our state legislature is tax crazy and not business friendly.

Due to the growth of the club, a new barn like structure had been erected next to the rifle range. It housed targets for the skeet fields as well as targets for the five stands. It was built large enough to store equipment and for all the numerous items necessary to keep the club grounds in good repair.

It seemed impossible, as we were going about our business that fateful day of September 11, 2001 two commercial jet liners could hit New York's twin towers by accident, another hit the Pentagon, and still another, because of the passengers brave actions crashed in a remote area of Pennsylvania. Soon all America knew we were under attack by extremist Muslims.

Enduring Freedom started on October 7, 2001 to rid the Taliban from Afghanistan and continued. Young men, club members and their children joined the all-volunteer Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force to stop the extremist Muslims from attacking America ever again. They fought and they persevered.

If the World War II generation was called the Greatest Generation, then these young men and women might very well be called the Gallant Generation. Unlike other wars America had fought, this one did not end and our brave men and women set aside their dreams, careers and passions to answer the call, and the club suffered for it.

The rifle range with its poor background, crack and heaved cement floor and leaking roof was torn down and completely restored at a cost of \$20,000. The shooting area had been enclosed with a new cement floor, windows, benches and shooting areas all designed for safety and were sound proofed. New target holders were put in the range at various distances to easily hold target racks. The berm was improved and the club now has a rifle range that complimented its surroundings, user friendly and safe.

The club had installed a security system in order to keep track of those who were not members and may be up to no good. It has proved to be a positive deterrent to vandalism.

A program had been started with Quinnipiac College Department of Forestry and Land Management to utilize Ryan's pond as a teaching venue. Each year in the March/April time frame the senior classes in the above named department learn to fish as well as identify wildlife, vegetation and pond growth. Some club members, as avid fishermen, have taken the time to assist the class leaders.

In 2004 John Knott was approached by a representative of Sprint Company concerning the possibility of erecting a cell tower on club property. Mr. Knott made a presentation to the Board of Governors and it was approved. The cell tower proposal was presented to the State of Connecticut and at that meeting only one neighbor was in attendance and was in favor of the proposal. The State of Connecticut approved the club's request and within seven to ten months the tower was in operation and became a tremendous source of revenue. As part of the contract every time a new receiver was added to the tower the club's payments were increased. The Board earmarked the funds from the cell tower to be used solely for major projects and not for the day to day club's operational expenses. Any withdrawal from the cell tower must be approved by the membership. Hopefully, the cell tower arrangement will last for years to come and the financial security it has provided will enable the club's continued growth and prosperity.

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association must take off their collective hats and say thank you to John Knott for his efforts as a member and attorney in acquiring the cell tower contracts. His efforts have allowed the club a certain measure of financial security it never had before.

The skeet fields received new machines and the price of shooting rose to \$2.50 per round. More and more shooters had been taking advantage of the skeet fields during the summer months, but unfortunately the winter league had lost shooters.

Tom Considine had become the new chairman of the Butch Amendola Winter Skeet League and David Buonome chaired the winter trap league. Each task required a great deal of record keeping and accurate score recording. Bob DeFrancesco continued in scheduling two Register Skeet Shoots each year. The New Year's Hangover Open continued to be an amazing success.

The last straw for the gun manufacturers, Marlin Firearms closed its doors on March 2007. Frank Keanna President, honorary Hamden member and a staunch support of all club activities left the scene. It was a great loss and one never to be filled.

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association had a new idol. Mary Alice DeFrancesco was inducted into the National Skeet Shooting Association in San Antonio, Texas in 2004 and continues to hold the ladies world record long run in the 410 gauge at 265 set on September 15, 2002. She continues to be a grand lady and a dedicated skeet shooter who at the drop of a hat will help anyone at most any time improve their skeet shooting abilities.

Gerald Lehr, grandson of charter member Frank Tirone competed in the skeet events at The World Police and Firemen World Games held in Canada from June 29th to July 5, 2005. He won the all-around Gold Medal as well as a Silver and Bronze medals.

2010

Gun Horrors

Ed Vailette had been reelected and the club continued to prosper. The grounds, thanks to Joe Ruggerio and Bill Hicks, have never looked so good. Bill Hicks was the behind the scene worker. He gets the jobs done with very little recognition. He will be the future back bone of our club.

The membership had been using all the club's venues especially the rifle range where new members enjoyed the rifle and pistol shooting. The IDPA pistol league had been held every Thursday evening at the range and had great success. It could only be open to those members having a State of Connecticut pistol permit. If one could only look to the future to see how important that pistol permit would be.

The club had experienced a lack of prospective candidates for membership and decided to enter the 21 century and use the internet to get our message out. Chris Sette designed a web page, and the message went out. In no time at all we had received requests for membership and the ranks were filling. In all good things problems began to rear their ugly head. The way members in the past had been inducted into the club, was by members in good standing recommendations. The names that were coming over the internet were a concern to the Board. The Board had no idea as to the merits of the individuals and some problems occurred. The Board continued with the internet but now all perspective candidates must come to the club and get acquainted with the membership and must be sponsored by a member in good standing before they are allowed to submit an application.

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association had another first; Bob Defrancesco had been elected President of National Skeet Shooting Association. His term runs from January 1, 2013 to December 30, 2015. Not every club can brag that they have as a member one who is or was a president of NSSA. Bob continues to be Bob and will help you with your skeet game, order components, run register shoots, fix loading presses and fix any gun at any time. One of the young men under Bob's tutelage, David Ballerini, in less than three years of registered skeet shooting has been named honorable mention All-American. David has the potential to walk in the shoes of all the great Hamden skeet shooters. He is also a bright and a dedicated club member who can be a future leader guiding the club to continued success.

Bobby "D" was recognized, at a party given in his honor, as NSSA President on Nov. 30, 2012. Michael Mongillo served as emcee and was assisted by Joe Ruggerio. Bob's lengthy accomplishments in shooting as well as his leadership roles in NSSA were highlighted.

The evening overview was presented in book form entitled "One hundred straight is only the beginning". Many Connecticut Hall of Famers took to the podium and spoke of Bob's commitment and dedication. Perhaps the most poignant moment came as both of his sons wrote of Bob's role as a father and how fortunate they were that Bob was their role model, teacher and mentor.

The lack of accurate record keeping previously mentioned with "Man of the Year" awards also concerned past Presidents. They have been listed in alphabetical order, unfortunately the years served have been forgotten nor is the list near complete: Al Arrigona, Earle Brunsmade, Robert DeFrancesco, Larry Fazone, Frank Ferrioulo, Robert Gurenser, James Kennedy, William Luciano, Michael Luzzi, Chip Murano, Jerry Massimino, Anthony Masselli, Michel Mongillo, Robert Olsen, Joseph Ruggerio, and Ed Vailette, Oscar Voit. These men all stepped up to do a job and make our club a better place. Each had their strong points and their failings but in the end they all tried.

It has been estimated that from the club's beginning in 1940 to 2015 our 75th anniversary, the club would have had approximately 4068 different members broken down to include eight charter members, approximately 1160 life members and 2,900 senior members.

Life membership was awarded to that senior member who had retained membership for 30 years and had reached the age of 65. We, as members in the present, only see a small fraction of those who have come before us and do not truly appreciate the contributions our former life members have made. It is sad that their contributions are now mostly forgotten.

The Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association members' hearts are broken. Tragedy hits home. On June 14, 2011 P.F.C. Eric Soufrine, a club member serving with Battalion B, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery, was killed by IED that destroyed his vehicle at Shewan Garrison Village, Afghanistan. Eric, a wonderful young man, was brought into the club as a junior member by his dad Mike and his grandfather Sandy Soufrine. Sandy, as you will recall, served in Korea with the United States Marines. The membership did everything it could to help Mike and his family. A pictorial remembrance has been placed over the club house fireplace as well as a stone monument at the flag pole site. The inscription reads, "Members of the Hamden Fish and Game Protective Association proudly dedicate this site to the lasting memory of Private First Class Eric Soufrine. Eric died of wounds suffered in combat in the service of our country while stationed in Afghanistan on June 14, 2011. Eric was one of us, a lover of the outdoors, hunting and the shotgun sports. Eric stands with the long line of our countries heroes and rest in the loving arms of God". The dedication was written by Michael Mongillo.

The club worked hard to contribute funds to Wounded Warriors in Eric's name as well as supports the Eric Soufrine Scholarship fund at Amity Charitable Trust Fund. The Winter Trap league was renamed in honor of Eric as was the first Register Skeet Shoot named in his behalf, with proceeds being awarded to Wounded Warriors.

The club took on a new stance with the revision of skeet and trap shooting times. The three day rule established in 1960 gave way to change of four days with the addition of Thursday in 2011 and in 2014 the Board voted to allow skeet and trap shooting seven days per week as was always the case for the rifle range. The days when no shooting was allowed remained unchanged.

A major tragedy on December 14, 2012 engulfed Connecticut and those of us who believe in the second amendment have our gun ownership right under attack. Adam Lanza, a crazed youth killed his mother and took her legally purchased guns that were unlocked and unsecured from their home and proceeded to Sandy Hook Elementary school, located in Newtown, Connecticut and slaughtered 20 school children and 6 educators and as all coward took his own life. Once again, the left seized upon this tragedy to make political gains. In record time all the anti-gun legislation were taken from files, had the dusts removed, and were enacted. Put into effect were bans on high capacity magazines and their required registration, certain rifles were banned and if a Connecticut resident owned a banned rifle he/she had to register it. Failure to register makes a Connecticut citizen a felony. If as a resident you did not have a pistol permit you will be required to get a certificate to purchase ammo and a certificate to purchase a long gun. Nothing was done to address the mental health issues but the left took the feel good type laws from their files, once again blew the dust off and got them passed. Every criminal and mentally ill individual laughs at the law because only the law abiding and tax paying citizen suffered.

It seemed coincidental that during the Sandy Hook tragedy the availability of ammo dried up. Pistol ammo as well as 22's was impossible to purchase and no one knows why. The rifle range usage dwindled and the shooters ponder. While most long guns and shot guns were available, the ammo to use them was not. Duck hunters who use a type shot shell, which is especially designed for waterfowl; called steel shot had become rare and most times was unavailable.

Components used by skeet and trap shooters in reloading such as powders and primers have become unavailable or the prices have escalated. Was it a conspiracy, was the government buying up powders, were the manufactures trying to increase the prices? No one knows and the speculation continued.

Life has been good at the club. Yes, there have been some minor bumps in the road, but that must be expected in a volunteer type organization.

The 75th anniversary has come upon us, and it cannot be the number of fish stocked, birds released or targets thrown that defines success. It was the ability of our club fathers who have over time passed on to their sons and daughters the love of outdoors, responsible gun safety and a respect for all life. It has been the ordinary members who, without realizing their safe gun handling on the skeet fields, trap fields and or the rifle range, were observed by our junior members and emulated. No young person's request for help ever went unheeded nor was the learning curves ridiculed but encouraged.

On March 1, 2015 prior to the monthly meeting a dinner composing of Philly deer steak subs and beverage was held. The dinner was provided by the kitchen committee under the direction of Joe Ruggiero. After appetites were satisfied the general meeting was held and it was announced the 75th Diamond Jubilee had been sold out at 313 attending members.

The club's legacy has been passed down for seven generations and 99% of all the junior members who have gone on to adulthood are a credit to their families, country and our club. They have become lawyers, artists, doctors, policemen, firefighters, and teachers and those who have joined the military, served our country with great distinction. If the past is any indication of the future, we are in good hand with a dad like John Pucillo and his sons John Jr. and Jake. Not only are both young men becoming excellent skeet, trap shooters and hunters but have taken on the responsibilities of opening the skeet and trap fields during the cold Sundays of the winter league prior to the starting round at 9:30 AM. These junior members and like all those who came before them are the greatness of our club.

The Hamden Fish and Game Association officially recognized its 75th Diamond Jubilee with a successfully dinner held at Anthony's Ocean View Restaurant on May 17, 2015. Ladies were presented with red roses upon arrival to commemorate the event. The dinner's host, Michael Mongillo began the affair as the audience stood with a moment of silence for members who have passed on, following with an especially composed "Grace" to commemorate the celebration as well as to honor the Soufrine family and then ending with the pledge of allegiance. The 313 members and quest who attended dined on hot and cold d'oeures, pasta, salad, fresh breads, and a choice of prime rib, stuffed chicken, stuffed sole or stuffed shrimp. Also served were pastries, coffee, tea, espresso, cappuccino and assorted cordials. Two open bars were extremely busy during the entire affair. It was especially noteworthy that in attendance were a number of life members, who for a variety of reasons had not attended club functions for years.

The dinner cost was \$50.00 per person. It was decided by the dinner committee, the dinner cost be kept as low as possible so all club members would be able to attend. The wonderful generosity of club members contributing \$20.00 to become "Friends of the Anniversary" as well as those club members and various businesses that supported the ad book with the purchase of a full page ad at \$100.00, ½ pages at \$50.00 and ¼ pages at \$25.00. If it had not been for this incredible out pouring which enabled the dinner committee to meet all the dinner expenses as well as raises funds to honor PFC Eric Soufrine.

Four raffle prizes were awarded. The primary prize, a Model 70 Winchester rifle 30/06 was donated by Chuck Hinton. The second prize, tickets to the Yankee/Angels was donated by Bill Hicks, the third prize a 42 inch T.V. was donated by the Board of Goveners, and lastly the fourth prize a Savage .17 caliber rifle was donated by Joe Buzzoto. The music was provided by Richard DePalma.

The very successful ad book and "Friends of the Anniversary" boosters were made available to all in attendance as well as to all business that supported the ad book. As was stated earlier the generosity of contributing members, businesses and boosters made the affair possible. The ad book and cover was created by Ms. Patrina Blakeslee who gave freely of her time and artistic ability. The Ad Book was printed by the Wilbur Cross Graphic Arts Department under the direction of Mr. Anthony Sansone. The Association awarded Honorary Membership to both individuals for their contribution in making the 75th celebration a success.

The celebration dinner raised \$2500.00 for Connecticut Trees of Honor Memorial and an additional \$1,400.00 for the Amity Charitable Trust Fund, both in PFC Eric Soufrine's name. Mike and Donna Soufrine, Eric's parents, were in attendance and presented with the financial contributions. Eric sister, Rebecca gave a heartfelt talk in appreciation for all the efforts on behalf Eric from the Hamden Fish and Game.

As the author of this "history" I took the position to relate as best as possible the good and not any of the difficult times. It serves no purpose to rehash old feuds, reopen festering wounds and or members who felt they were being used and then discarded. Those skeletons shall remain fore ever more in their closets.

I hope and pray that some young member will take on the task of continuing this club history as we have passed our 75th anniversary and gallop towards our 100 years of continuous operation. It is also my fervent wish that the shooting sports which we so enjoy today, will still be available for our grandchildren in our 100th year.

