

By John Steinhorst

Pylinski Arms

Accomplished gunsmith Laurence Pylinski started his prolific career after three years of active duty as a machinist in the United States Army. While in the military, he received several championship titles in rifle and pistol competition as well as winning the New York State military small-bore championship in 1982. His expert skills as a machinist and his lifelong passion for shooting and firearms would send him across the nation to answer his calling.

After earning an associate's degree in mechanical engineering at Mohawk Valley Community College in New York, Laurence gained another degree in gunsmithing from Trinidad State Junior College in Colorado. Following his formal education, he was employed as a machinist/gunsmith by Pete Grizzel in Oregon. For several years after that, he worked in Texas at Alpha Arms, and then Ron Coleman Gunsmithing, focusing on sport-shooting firearms. Finally, in 1988, he proudly began his own Virginia-based company specializing in gunsmithing for clay target shooters.

"The biggest obstacle in starting was money," says Laurence. "I started on a shoestring (budget) and have built the



Pylinski Arms' mobile shop has been servicing shotguns at clubs across the country for nearly two decades.

business from there to include an extensive inventory of parts."

Nearly two decades later, Pylinski Arms has continued to operate as a suc-

cessful business serving serious shotgun shooters. Expert services include mechanical repairs, stock alterations, choke work, lengthened forcing cones, recoil reduction, trigger work, and four-way adjustable combs in addition to general shotgun cleaning and maintenance. While his company's focus remains servicing shotguns rather than selling merchandise, Laurence's policy is to ensure the quality of new products on the market when recommending them to customers.

"The firearm manufacturers have helped me grow my business as they have helped me through hard times with being patient and understanding when needed," states Laurence. "I have in turn helped them when an issue arrived in the shop, and I have covered the repair out of my own pocket to repay them for their understanding."

"The most difficult part of running the business is deciding what items to

Laurence Pylinski offers expert repairs, alterations, maintenance, and gun fitting for the serious target shooter.



inventory for the shotguns worked on,” says Laurence. “I need to have the part in stock to be able to perform the repair in a timely fashion and keep customers’ downtime to a minimum while onsite at events.”

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Since founding the company, Laurence has traveled throughout the country much of the year to attend shooting events. In addition to the World Skeet Shoot and National Sporting Clays Championship held in San Antonio, Texas, he journeys to about 36 major competitions each year, like the Grand American and the Pennsylvania and Ohio State championships. Traveling gives Laurence the ability to service shooters at crucial times during tournaments. As the company’s sole proprietor, he duly benefits by meeting interesting people and potential customers while also being able to see the country.

“When I attend an event, I can’t tell if that event has been beneficial to my business sometimes for one or more years,” Laurence adds. “It takes that long, sometimes, to realize the benefit from that by referrals and repeat customers.

“I attend as many as 30 events in a year’s period. Some of the events are at the same clubs, and some rotate to another location yearly. So I have serviced 80-plus different clubs over the past 20 years.”

Laurence understands that gun maintenance is essential

for safety and stresses the need to have guns serviced regularly. In the process of servicing a client’s firearm, it is common for him to find and fix trouble before it affects a gun’s performance. Pylinski Arms also offers gun-fitting services, and Laurence lists gun fit as the most important factor in proper shotgun shooting. He recommends that people shopping for shotguns, especially new shooters, educate themselves with information regarding appropriate dimensions to make the best purchase available, whether for competition or recreational shooting.

“I do not sponsor any one shooter per se,” states Laurence. “I do, however, at times donate work to young shooters who come in and need work done and can’t afford this work. I feel that this is my way of helping out because our junior shooters are the future of the shooting sports.”

The future of Pylinski Arms greatly depends on the direction the target sports are headed as well as the present economic situation. However, the quality and timely gunsmithing provided by the company, plus word of mouth, ensure that the thriving business will continue to service shooters across the country for some time.

“It is anybody’s guess where the business is headed in the next 10 years,” says Laurence. “If I am fortunate enough to continue my touring for that time, I will be very happy. I am looking to continue as I have for at least five years, and then slow down and concentrate on fewer events and prepare for the transition into retirement seven to nine years after that.”



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