

tions and thought I had learned a great lesson this time. The real lesson didn't come until the next day.

My wife, Barbara, and I were on our way to a vacation at Glacier National Park and out of contact when my family, neighbors, and two different fire departments did the actual learning at the Boomershoot site. It turned out that even small chemical spills from damaged but undetonated targets would spontaneously combust after absorbing moisture overnight, then getting exposed to sunlight next day. This caused a grass fire that burned up several large hay bales and threatened to burn into some nearby woods. The Clearwater Potlatch Timber Protective Agency spotted the fire with one of their planes and dispatched a pumper truck and pickup loads of men to fight the fire. I paid a rather large bill and took away a much different lesson than what I thought I would. The lesson was that I should not have Boomershoot during fire season. This lesson was reinforced by stern warnings from the fire warden.

Even avoiding fire season we have had more fires than I can count from targets that burned instead of detonating, tracers, and poorly placed fireball targets. Some required buckets of water and lots of people stomping on the grass but none required a pumper truck or airplanes or large bills to pay. I did melt my shoe laces stomping out one fire, however.

JAMES' FRIEND BRANDON, then 15 years old, helped with Boomershoot every year until he graduated from college and moved out of state. He liked the event so much, he even volunteered to work for free. I didn't take him up on his offer and continued to pay him.

Each year more and more people attended. The much-needed help to handle the increased target production capacity, entry confirmation, and range officer duty came in the form of volunteers. The shooters wanted to help and I gave people that put in a day or more of labor a free entry.

Of particular note Ry Jones became my "unindicted co-conspirator," as he

sometimes describes himself. Ry and I scheme nearly year-round on how to make Boomershoot better.

Stephanie, from Chicago, volunteered to handle public relations and marketing. I met her at the Gun Rights Policy Conference in Washington, D.C. in 2000. She immediately recognized something I was only dimly aware of. Boomershoot could be a gold mine of positive media for gun rights. She sent out media releases then followed up with calls to newspapers, magazines, and television stations.

Over the years we got positive coverage from not only the local news outlets, but *Newsweek*, *Outside Magazine*, and KING 5 Evening Magazine out of Seattle. The Evening Magazine Boomershoot episode was nominated for an Emmy. Michael Bane made a *Shooting Gallery* episode out of Boomershoot 2010, which aired in January 2011.

I now have volunteer staff of about 30. Scott, who drives every year from Virginia, is usually the first to show up and the last to leave. Barron and Janelle live close by and have participated in so many explosives experiments and private Boomershoot parties, entertaining guests from as far away as San Diego, Canada, and India, that I couldn't begin to count them. It is these volunteers and the tolerance of my long-suffering wife who puts up with my many weekends and evenings spent working on Boomershoot over the years that made Boomershoot possible.

EACH YEAR WE LEARNED IMPORTANT LESSONS and came up with something new to try to make the event



Boomershoot 2003 had fireball targets for all the shooting positions. PHOTO BY JASON MOUNT

better. The biggest changes came in production, construction, and deployment of the targets. The pop cans laying on the

ground in 1998 gave way to half-pint milk cartons in 1999. Several generations of target construction later we settled on zip-lock bags inside of small cardboard



14 pounds of explosives, 13 gallons of gasoline, a bunch of road flares.

boxes. This year the zip lock bags probably will be replaced with shrink-wrap bags on the outside of the boxes.

In 2000, the milk cartons were placed on 18-inch-long surveyor's stakes for better visibility and to reduce the damage from fragmenting bullets that struck the ground just ahead of the



One shot created the Boomershoot 2012 fireball reflected in Ry's daughter Anna's glasses.

targets. The first targets were mounted on the stakes with duct tape and then, after a couple generations it became rubber bands. I sometimes say, "Boomershoot is held together with rubber bands."

We use thousands of them. Boomershoot 2000 was also the first year we attempted to make a fireball with gasoline being dispersed by the explosives. It was a failure. Real life is not like Hollywood where gasoline bursts into flames from gun fire, and explosives and fuel don't guarantee a fire.

By Boomershoot 2003, Ry and I had nearly perfected fireball targets. It took us a year of experimentation and testing before we got something that worked fairly reliably. We had a steady drizzle of rain that morning and we put out a couple dozen targets each with a gallon of gasoline for the shooters. We did a demo with