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I attended the "Quigley" for the second year in a row and I was asked to tell all of you about it. I am getting older and figured the Quigley and the York were matches I should attend while I can still enjoy them. This is about the Quigley. I still haven't attended the York. The match flyer sets the tone for the match. It starts "Quigley 2016", Twenty-fifth annual, MATTHEY QUIGLY BUFFALO RIFLE MATCH, The biggest rifle shooting event in Eastern Montana since the Custer Massacre. The match is the second week of the June shoot at Friendship. They are about 1500 miles apart so shooting both events is tricky but doable.

The Quigley is a buffalo rifle match. A buffalo rifle is a rifle designed before the buffalo were all shot out. This includes any traditional single-shot or lever action rifle, 375 caliber or larger. This is a gong match and the course of fire is 8 shots on 6 metal targets over two days. The target distances range from 805 yards for the Buffalo to 350 yards for the bucket which is shot offhand. The targets are steel gongs and any verified hit is counted. The targets are about 4 minutes of angle. The Forsyth Rifle Club's motto is the targets are easy to hit and easy to miss. They verify hits with open mic walkie talkies, visually with the spotters and by hearing the ring. There are a few rules and you can check their web-site (just google Quigley). You may use smokeless powder with some restrictions, read the Quigley safety information on the web, but most people use black powder.

The match is held on AJ Lee's ranch just north of Forsyth, Montana. Al is a cattle rancher and a real nice guy. The pasture is unlike the Beaver Creek pasture. Beaver Creek has thick grass Al's ranch has thin grass. The grass is about 3-4 inches apart with dirt and small cactus between the grass. I was rolling around the grounds and had to keep pulling cactus spines out of my tires and hands. This is short grass prairie as opposed to the tall grass prairie we have here. By the way notice I didn't comment on the trees, there aren't any. Shade is at a premium so you have to dress accordingly.

Mary Anne and I dry land camped in my van for the 4 days we were there. They provide porta-potties, water and dumpster. My brother met us there along with Richard Tibbits and his wife. Richard stayed in town. Our camp consisted of two vans, a pop up awning and a table. It's very windy so we tied the awning to the van wheels. Open fires are not permitted so we used a camp stove. The two years I have attended it has been 85-95 degrees but there is not humidity so it is quite comfortable in the shade. They advise to bring cold weather gear because it can be cold.

There are many vendors. Buffalo Arms, mold makers, cross stick makers, gun makers and a catering truck. Food is available and quite good considering the location. I met a man who specializes in rolling blocks and learned about the safety's built into them. He also has parts and complete actions so if you break a part he can help. He identified my action as a #1 Military Black Powder action. The last patent date is 1873 so that makes it a black powder action. It's fun to shoot a gun that's over 140 years old.

Shooting takes two days. You register then get squared on Friday. We shot 3 targets each of two days. You shoot eight shots at each target then wait while rest of your group shoots their 8 shots. Plenty of time to take care of personal needs between targets. You also get to know those shooting in your group.

The practice days are as much fun as the match. Practice is held the week of the match; they don't put the targets out until the week of the match. In other words the locals can't just shoot them all the time.

Did I mention they had 697 shooters last year? There is always someone to shoot with or get advice from. Shoot fees were \$25 and you should expect to tip your scorer after you have finished shooting the match.

We shot Thursday and Friday and got sight settings for the match, practiced spotting and conveying sight changes. We discovered when you can't find a shot on the buffalo you probably are shooting high because the buffalo is on top of a hill. We also figured out that a puff of dust away the target might mean you hit the edge of the target and the bullet ricocheted. Next year we might learn something else.

By the way did I mention that this is cowboy country and Cowboys like to shoot. Many of them have their families with them. It's not hard to tell the real ones from the dime store or cowboy action guys. The real ones look comfortable in a harsh environment.

We took a trip to Wall Drug and last year I went prairie dog shooting. We toured a ranch of 12,000 acres while looking for prairie dogs and saw a herd of 600 buffalo walking along the river while we were atop a wall. The west is still as exciting as ever.

Pete Sheets