

“Vaya con Dios, Hawkeye”

Hawkeye (10678) aka David Pierce
January 2, 1951 - March 19, 2003



About May of 2000, I visited a club just outside of Austin called "The Tejas Caballeros" and met this cowboy shooter name David "Hawkeye" Pierce (10678). He explained to me what this sport was about ... even showed me his pistols and then proceeded to shoot the courses that day. As I watched him shoot, I was very impressed ...not with Hawkeye's shooting <wink>, but with the sport! I then somehow, I still don't know how, came up with the guns I needed to shoot my first course of Cowboy Action Shooting.

My first shoot was with the Tejas Pistoleros out of Houston. This was Hawkeye's home club. When I arrived the night before and settled into my hotel room, I couldn't sleep thinking about how excited I was about this shoot. When I woke up the next morning, it was raining and my heart sank in my chest. I thought for sure they were going to cancel the shoot and I would have to wait another day. "NO WAY!" They were going to shoot even though it was raining lightly. Of course as everyone in that club knows, all new and first-time shooters to the club must be instructed in the ways of cowboy shooting by my friend David "Hawkeye" Pierce! I remember that day well because I had the best time.

I look back to that time and think to myself, "What is it that made me fall in love with this sport?" I'm not sure if it was the challenge ... or the different style of shooting from what I was used to ... or if it was how nice everyone was. I just couldn't put my finger on "Why?". Well after thinking about it for awhile, I finally decided that it was not any one thing, but many things. People in this sport have nothing to hide in the way of trade secrets or skills. Everyone was willing to be a teacher and help me along that day.

Well since then I have learned a lot from many people in the Tejas Pistoleros Club, but the one person who took me under his wing so to speak was Hawkeye! He went over many things with me ... not only about this sport and its people, but also about reloading, gun care and way too many other things to even remember in one article.

Times have changed and I have become a much safer and better cowboy shooter. BUT ...There was this one time I was shooting out at Tejas Pistoleros and had just run a course of fire out at the stagecoach and had really messed up my time by shooting the course wrong and getting a procedural. Tumbleweed Kate (10679), Hawkeye's wife, was at the unloading table and asked me what went wrong. I remember explaining to her that it had been a few months since I had shot last and that I was really excited. I told her that I felt like a puppy dog who has seen the tennis ball and loses it completely with the excitement of the thought of play ... or in this case "the thought of shooting." Well since that time, the story has kind of stuck with me and every time I mess up on a course of fire, my wife looks at me and says, "Tennis Ball syndrome right?"

Well, after a time, I came to be called "Weedhopper" by my mentor Hawkeye. Awhile back, we were both in the Trailhead Shoot out at Columbus and were sitting around during a down range period. In the photo (off to the side), you'll see Hawkeye holding up a tennis ball. It looks like he is showing it to me, but he was actually showing it to a dog that you can just barely see behind me. We came to call this photo "The Dissertation of a Tennis Ball." As you look at the photo, you can almost hear Hawkeye saying to me, "Weedhopper, when you can take this tennis ball from my hand, then ... and only then ... will you be ready!"



Well, I worked at it, and I listened, and I got a little better. Hawkeye made sure that I met a lot of very good people from all walks of life who helped me get just a little bit better ... while making sure that I never lost sight of the fun side of being a cowboy. And you know, it really surprised me one day ... Hawkeye and I were having a cup of coffee under the canopy of his trailer one morning before a shoot. He pulled out a pebble (We had long since lost the tennis ball.) and said, "Weedhopper, you have done well. You have earned this. I'm very proud of you." Of course, I thought it was going to be like one of those Charlie Brown cartoons where Lucy pulls the football away at the last minute, but Hawkeye explained that I had finally learned how to have fun and how to shoot well without worrying about either one. I remember at the time still not wanting to take it ... I didn't want to be better than him, I just wanted to make him proud. Coming from my best friend, it meant a lot to me ... and the memory will stay with me always.

Two and a half weeks later, Hawkeye passed away suddenly from an aortic aneurysm ... the day before Trailhead. It hit us all pretty hard. We weren't ready for him to go.

Hawkeye always said that he didn't want anyone to make a big fuss over him if and when he ever bit the big one. He said it in that same tone of voice that he would use to tell someone "Don't ever point that pistol at me again or I'll kick your ass and then I'll throw you off range!"

Well, at the risk of gettin' our asses kicked, we will make a fuss over him. We'll remember him every time we drive down the dirt roads that he and Doc worked so hard to keep in shape, ...every time we pick up that rifle or pistol that he tuned up for us, ...every time we rig up a low-boy trailer and haul some load of salvaged timber, ...every time we move a load of dirt to reclaim more useable firing range from the lowlands, ... every time we put a first-time shooter through the safety indoctrination.

It's damn hard to let go of a man ... a friend ... who put so much of himself into the club, the sport, and his family and friends.

While he leaves behind a huge collection of good deeds, accomplishments and friends, his most important legacy to us is the effort that he put into making each of us aware of our individual responsibilities for preserving our liberty and our right to bear arms. We will remember him telling us:

Join the NRA!
Join the TSRA!
Write your congressman!
Be Active!
Protect your rights!
No one else will do it for you.

Hawkeye,

Vaya con Dios!

Your Brothers in Arms
Blacky Vela (33223) & The Tejas Pistoleros

David A. "Hawkeye" Pierce
(10678)
LaPorte TX
January 2, 1951 - March 19, 2003

National Rifle Association
Texas State Rifle Association
National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association
Yaupon Creek Silhouette Association
Single Action Shooting Society #10679
Tejas Pistoleros, Board Member & Vice President
Texas Historical Shooting Society