# The Los Angeles Silhouette Club

## Long Range Plinking with the 30-30
By: Jim Taylor

During Shootists Holiday 2004 I decided I wanted to do some long-range shooting with my old Model 94 Winchester 30 WCF. I shoot mainly cast bullets in it and for long-range work the RCBS-180-FN GC is my preferred mold... mainly because it's the *ONLY* heavy mold I have for the gun! I acquired it some years ago, it shoots accurately in the old Winchester, and I have seen no reason to use anything else.

The Whittington Center in Raton, NM is the premier shooting site in the United States and possibly the world. A large number of shooting ranges are housed on it's 50 square miles. All ranges are situated so that any shot fired downrange - no matter what the angle of elevation of the muzzle is - will not exit the property. This allows for aerial shooting and extreme long-range shooting on many of the ranges.

On the High Power Range some distance past the last bank of targets stands a steel silhouette of a buffalo. Situated in a clearing in the trees, the silhouette is 6 feet high and 10 feet long. It is a tough target to shoot because is located almost 1130 yards from the firing line!


I enlarged the Buffalo as much as I could without distorting it too much. At close to 5/8 of a mile it presents a small target.


Tom - taking a whack at the buffalo with his 356 Winchester

My handloads in the 30-30 pushed the 190 gr. bullet at 1800 fps so I was not worried about the ability of the load. My big problem I figured - and it turned out I was right - was the rear sight. Shooting on the range I found I ran out of elevation at about 600 to 650 yards. I could get on the 500 yards rams OK, but past that it began to require "Kentucky Windage".

As you can see from the photos, the clearing where the Buffalo stands is about 60 feet wide. It is actually deeper than it looks, but the ground is pretty hard. With good binoculars or a spotting scope the shots in the clearing can be see fairly easily. But getting them INTO the clearing presented a real challenge.

Once I ran out of elevation with the sight I began holding over. Eventually I was sighting to the left of what appeared to be a dead tree

that was well above the Buffalo target. Trying to read the wind drift, I moved to the left

Me shooting while my spotters try to see the hits.


Photo of sign sent by 30wcf.

and after 30 shots (yes... 30) I was rewarded with a bullet strike just over the back of the target.

Trying to maintain a repeatable sight setting in this manner is really tough. My next 15 or so shots were into the clearing, some over, some under, all with 5 feet or so of the target. Then the wind shifted and I started missing the clearing again. Mic McPherson was coaching me by this time and said that perhaps the wind had changed direction completely "out there". I began holding the opposite direction and by the time I was 2 target lengths to the side I was back into the clearing with my bullet strikes. In the next 10 shots I hit the Buffalo solidly one time. Yep.. that's it. One hit on the target for about 70 shots.

While I did not do all that well I learned a lot and next year I will be prepared with a rear sight that will have enough elevation. You have to have a repeatable sight setting to hit a target that small at that distance. You can get them mighty close, but that's about all.

My shooting partner Tom used a Model 94 in 356 Winchester. We were never able to get a shot into the clearing with it, the gun being equipped with factory buckhorn sights. There was no way to tell whether we were left, right, up or down. You just could not see any bullet strikes in the trees that far away, so you were always guessing.

It has gotten me fired up to do some more long-range stuff though. And it showed me that my cast bullet handloads in the old .30-30 will do the job if everything else is working.

For those planning a vacation - drop by the Whittington Center in Raton, NM. Take at least one long-range gun and try your hand on the Buffalo. It's still there.