

# A CELEBRATION OF *Excellence*

A National Firearms Museum exhibit  premiere – “Exceptional Arms” – spotlights dedication, generosity of American Society of Arms Collectors.

By American Rifleman Executive Editor BRIAN C. SHEETZ



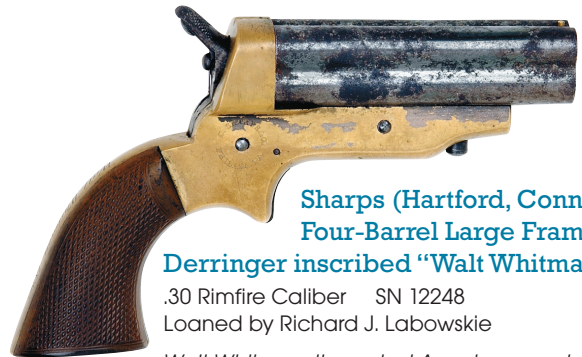
Joseph Barnes' 20-ga. fowler isn't much to look at. The plain cherry stock is oil-stained and split, the metalwork is brown and pitted, and the original flintlock ignition mechanism is long gone.

As with other guns in the National Firearms Museum's new "Exceptional Arms" exhibit, however, the Barnes fowler's incredible provenance more than makes up for its condition. According to its owner, Tom Grinslade, who acquired the gun and an accompanying powder horn at auction a decade ago, the artifacts are documented to have been used by Barnes at Concord, Mass., on April 19, 1775, in the opening battle of the American Revolution. As a collector of the most serious stripe, Grinslade doubtless harbors a solemn pride in the knowledge that his treasure rang out as the earliest Americans made one of history's greatest bids for freedom.

Grinslade and his fellow members of the exhibit-sponsoring American Society of Arms Collectors take concern for the historicity of firearms seriously. And it is that scholarly concern and appreciation for the accomplishments of fellow collectors that brought many of the organization's 250 members to the March 13 exhibit premiere at NRA Headquarters.

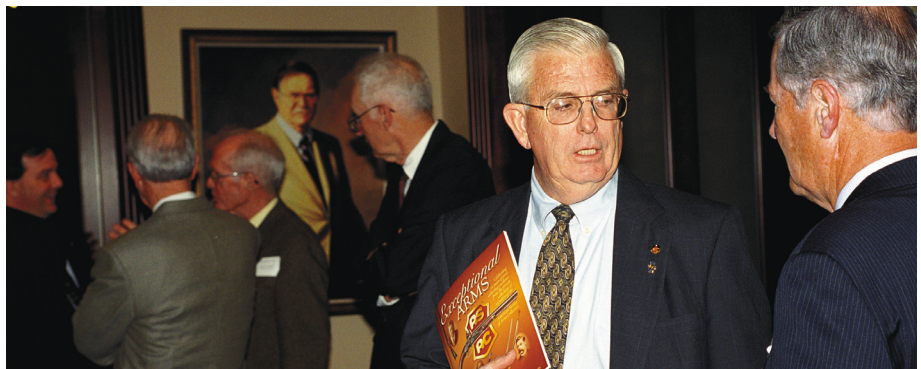
Together with NRA officers, staff and guests, ASAC members were able to see first-hand the nearly 100 *crème*

*continued on p. 70*



**Sharps (Hartford, Conn.)  
Four-Barrel Large Frame  
Derringer inscribed "Walt Whitman 1870"**  
.30 Rimfire Caliber SN 12248  
Loaned by Richard J. Labowskie

*Walt Whitman, the noted American poet and pacifist, once owned this repeating derringer. At the time of the inscription, Whitman resided in a poor and dangerous section of Washington, D.C., and no doubt bought and retained this handgun for personal protection.*



American Society of Arms Collectors immediate past President Robert A. Sadler, III, discusses the exhibit with Allan D. Cors (far r.), a member of the NRA Board of Directors and president of The NRA Foundation. Cors is also a member of ASAC.





**New Haven Arms  
(New Haven, Conn.) Henry Rifle**

.44 Henry Rimfire Caliber SN 8610 Circa 1864  
Loaned by Vincent L. Rausch

*During the American Civil War, a number of Henry rifles were specially engraved for presentation to individuals who had distinguished themselves on the field of battle. This embellished Henry rifle has patriotic motifs, including a central shield flanked by two furling flags on the rifle's brass receiver.*

## NOW SHOWING: *Exceptional Arms*

*“Exceptional Arms”* celebrates nearly 100 arms from the private collections of members of the American Society of Arms Collectors (ASAC). “Many of the arms in this exhibit are genuine national treasures that have never been on public display,” said Executive Director of NRA General Operations Craig D. Sandler. “NRA is honored to work with ASAC and thrilled to unveil these rare and unusual firearms.”

The exhibit is arrayed in three different theme groups. “Exceptional Arms” highlights those guns that are considered the finest and rarest of their type. Among them are a Confederate-made Dance Brothers revolver, a Walker Colt and two North & Cheney pistols. “Historic Arms” features guns and swords associated with individuals of historic note. Theodore Roosevelt’s Hawken rifle, once the property of famed explorer Kit Carson, is on display in company with a pistol owned by Walt Whitman and John C. Garand’s personal M1 rifle, serial No. 1,000,000. The third theme explores the beauty of military blades. Swords from the time of the pilgrims up to the War Between the States display the extravagance and beauty that marked the height of the swordsmith’s art.

Forty members of ASAC lent cherished arms from their personal collections for this unique exhibit, one that is unprecedented in the society’s 50-year history. Founded in 1953 by Harry C. Knode and 26 fellow collectors, the ASAC is limited to 250 collectors. It is no exaggeration to state that the members today comprise the most dedicated and influential arms collectors in the country.—PHIL SCHREIER

Photos by NRA staff

**Remington (Ilion, N.Y.) New Model Army Percussion Revolver**

.44 caliber SN 51246 Loaned by Elliott L. Burka

*A highly embellished revolver, this Remington was cased with accoutrements and received gold-plating and engraving accents. Upper-end Remington arms like this example were strong competitors to Colt’s line of percussion revolvers.*



NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre presents a plaque to American Society of Arms Collectors President George E. Weatherly acknowledging NRA’s grateful appreciation for ASAC’s contributions to firearms scholarship and to the NFM’s historic temporary exhibit.





**Hawken (St. Louis, Mo.)  
Plains Rifle**

.58 Caliber

*This original half-stocked Hawken rifle was owned by noted frontier scout Christopher "Kit" Carson and given by him to Edward F. Beale for saving his life. The rifle was in turn given by Edward's son, Truxton Beale, to President Theodore Roosevelt, who presented it to the collection of the Boone & Crockett Club at Sagamore Hill on Long Island, N.Y.*



de la crème firearms and swords that 40 of their own members loaned the museum for its unique presentation of American arms and armor.

The event coincides with the 50th anniversary of the ASAC, a non-profit educational social organization whose purpose is, "For the mutual benefit of its membership in the preservation and study of, and the dissemination of information on arms and armor." The group publishes members' scholarly papers on arms of all types and then distributes them to libraries, museums and institutions of higher learning throughout the world free of charge. It also awards academic scholar-

ships and provides publication grants to assist authors.

Addressing the crowd, NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre presented ASAC President George E. Weatherly with a plaque recognizing the group's tremendous financial contributions to the William B. Ruger, Sr. Endowment and to the NFM. Ruger himself was an ASAC member and donated \$1 million to establish the museum. LaPierre acknowledged that NRA's gun-collecting membership "played a key role in the development of the National Firearms Museum," which he called a "world-class collection of firearms." Weatherly admitted to being "completely overwhelmed" by both the presentation and the exhibit.

ASAC member Allan Cors, who also is president of The NRA Foundation, told those assembled their interest in firearms was the "common bond" that brought them together. He also praised the museum staff for its excellent work in telling the story of some of America's most historic arms.

Then Cors likened his fellow ASAC members to the past NRA presidents whose photographs ring the atrium in which the event took place. "You really are making a contribution to the future," he told them. Cors closed by challenging each listener to consider what he or she could contribute to benefit "the kindred spirits who are coming in the generations ahead."

As those assembled made their way to the museum, they passed by the Barnes fowler in an outer case where it stands in silent testimony to "the shot heard 'round the world."

*Boone and Crockett Club's Lowell E. Baier (r.) is welcomed by NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre.*



**Fowler and Powder Horn  
Attributed to Joseph Barnes**

20 Gauge

Loaned by Tom Grinslade

*This American-made cherry-stocked fowler belonged to Joseph Barnes, and the accompanying powder horn is marked "Joseph Barnes—His Horn Concord." These items were used by Barnes, one of the responding "Minute Men" at Concord on April 19, 1775. This fowler was later converted to percussion ignition, as were many other arms dating from this period. Though unassuming in appearance and condition, this historic grouping, known to have been used in the opening day's battles of the American Revolution and identified to a participant, is a true national treasure.*







### Springfield Armory (Springfield, Mass.) M1 Garand

.30-'06 Caliber SN 1,000,000 Loaned by Allan D. Cors

*This rifle was specially selected from the M1 production line for the significance of its serial number and carefully embellished for presentation to John Garand with an accompanying walnut case. An accessory silver en bloc clip with eight gold-plated, inert cartridges bearing the engraved names of the eight design team members was included as part of the case. This grouping also includes the wartime Springfield Armory employee pass for John Garand, as well as his Rice Medal and Certificate which bear his name.*

The Barnes fowler and many more one-of-a-kind examples of ASAC-loaned arms and armor are on view now through December 31, 2003, in the William B. Ruger Gallery of the National Firearms Museum in Fairfax, Va. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily except holidays. Admission is free. For more information, call (703) 267-1600. A special catalog on the exhibit is available for sale; call (800) 423-6894 for ordering information.



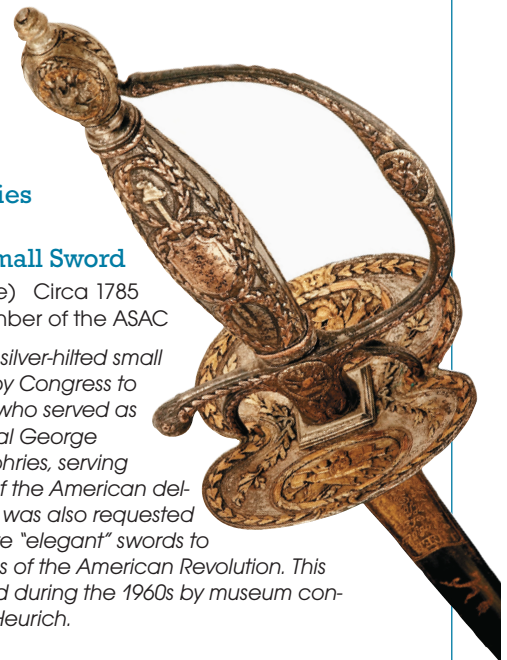
Henry A. Truslow (l.), former ASAC president, Mrs. Truslow, and Society members Richard A. Johnson (r.) and Phillip Schreier (far r.), curator of educational programs, NFM, enjoy the evening's festivities.



### David Humphries Congressional Presentation Small Sword

Liger (Paris, France) Circa 1785  
Loaned by a member of the ASAC

*This French-made, silver-hilted small sword was voted by Congress to David Humphries, who served as adjutant to General George Washington. Humphries, serving abroad as head of the American delegation in France, was also requested to obtain nine more "elegant" swords to honor other heroes of the American Revolution. This sword was restored during the 1960s by museum conservator Leonard Heurich.*



NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre discusses current issues with (l.-r.) John E. Sikorski, Anthony J. Chimblo, III, and L. Paul Potter of The Camp Fire Club of America.

