

The History of MidwayUSA Part 1

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #64 —

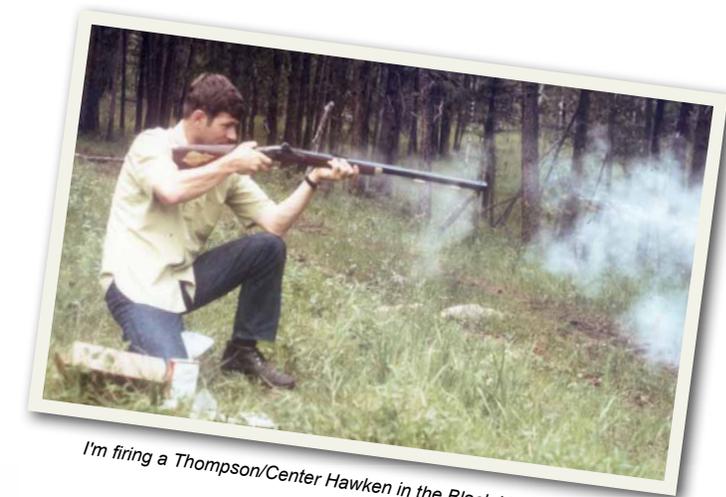
High noon, on the 18th of June was 'opening day'; but it took a lot of planning and hard work to get there. The idea of a gun shop came during the spring of 1976; there was just a year left on my Air Force hitch, and it was time to start thinking about a job. In 1972 I had obtained a Federal Firearms License (FFL) and transferred it from one duty station to the next; buying, selling and trading a few guns.

Hunting and shooting were favorite activities during my teenage years; in my twenties, organized and competitive shooting, gun collecting, reloading, bullet casting and gunsmithing were added to the list -- so, starting a gun shop was just a matter of turning my hobbies into a job. That happens often in the shooting sports industry; but 'love of the game' is not a complete recipe for success.

Brenda was supportive and in the summer of 1976 we invited my brother Jerry to join in as an equal partner. He researched the business prospect of establishing the

gun shop along the Missouri River between Kansas City and St. Louis. Columbia was his recommendation; since that was home for Jerry and his wife, and Brenda and I had lived there before the Air Force, it was an easy choice.

Needing a name, we came up with Ely Arms, Inc. -- after Ely, Missouri (hometown for Jerry and I) -- population 26, before we left. We had \$30,000 in equity (cash and guns) between us, and found a bank that would loan us another



I'm firing a Thompson/Center Hawken in the Black Hills of South Dakota - Summer of 1976

\$50,000. Many banks said no, but it only takes one.

We bought 16 acres just west of town, planning to build the gun shop on the frontage and our houses in the back. However, we couldn't get approval from Planning and Zoning, so then bought an acre of commercial property next door -- this put us a bit behind schedule.

When Brenda and I, with the kids, arrived on May 13, 1977, the building site had been leveled -- that was it; but 36 days later we opened for business.

It was a pole-frame, metal building, 32' x 48' (1536 square feet). To save money, Jerry and I did a lot of the interior work ourselves. It was a busy, busy 36 days and that's Part 1 of the History of MidwayUSA -- from idea to 'opening day'.

"Many banks said no, but it only takes one."

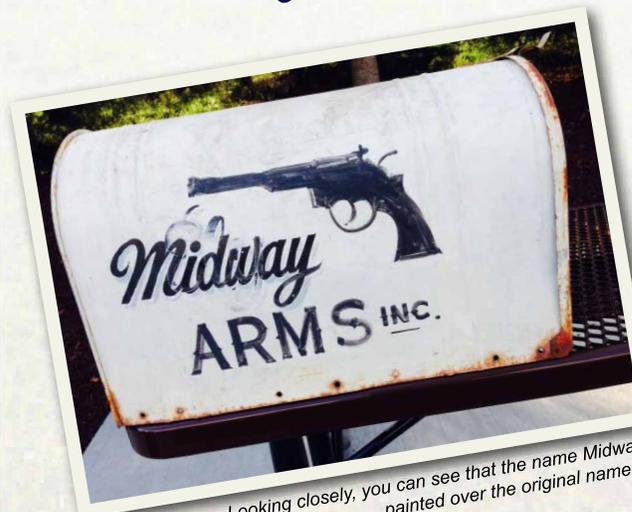
USA
Midway

Larry Potterfield

At the Gunshop
7450 Old Highway 40 West
Columbia, MO
18 June 1977



Moving Day, 12th of May in 77. That's son Russell, at the curb -- not quite 3 years old.



Looking closely, you can see that the name Midway was painted over the original name of Ely.