

The \$500,000 RIFLE

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #65 –



I kept one for myself, as a souvenir and to shoot. It is 54 caliber with brown steel furniture, serial #857PY01081 (made in 1982).

Luck is often described as being in the right place at the right time, with the ‘special knowledge’ and ‘right tools’ to take advantage of a situation -- and an understanding of and willingness to take risk; certainly that’s a good description of luck in this instance. It all started when the Browning representative walked into the gun shop, in February of 1983, to discuss the new Browning product offerings. He also advised that Browning was discontinuing the Jonathan Browning Mountain Rifle and had reduced the price considerably, from last year’s \$449.95 retail price.



Percussion Cap, Powder, patch and ball – a cartridge without a case.

The ‘special knowledge’ was being an owner and shooter of muzzle loading rifles and believing that shooters would want to buy this rifle in the spring and summer –

allowing us to take advantage of generous early-payment discounts. The ‘right tools’ were having a Browning account, the gun shop to receive to and ship from and the experience to get advertisements in place right away.

Risk? There really wasn’t much; an order of at least 16 guns would allow for fall dating - thus the discounts for early payment. We placed the first order, set the price at \$295 each and sent ads to Shotgun News, Black Powder Times and Muzzleloader magazine -- and waited. Then the phone started ringing – wow!

The rifles were available in 45, 50 and 54 caliber with either brass or brown steel furniture. Browning provided us with the quantity remaining for each model; the largest quantity being in 45 caliber, with brass furniture, and there were only about 150 of the 54 caliber guns with brown steel furniture.

Success often creates its own challenges; as soon as the demand was evident, we wanted to ‘corner the market’ -- but only had a \$10,000 line of credit. The representative suggested that we call the sales manager, not the credit manager, tell him our plan and ask for more credit. It worked; our credit limit was raised and we bought all the models that were in limited supply – paying for them as soon as they were sold. Then we asked for an even higher credit limit and bought all the remaining inventory.

"Then the phone started ringing - wow!"

In the course of just a few months, the little-known Midway Arms, Inc., in Columbia, MO sold over \$500,000 worth of Jonathan Browning Mountain Rifles. It was just luck; we were in the right place at the right time . . .



Larry Potterfield

At the Gun Shop
7450 Old Highway 40 West
Columbia, MO
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The Possibles Bag and Powder Horn carry everything needed for shooting and cleaning.