

# DEAN TOWNSEND PROFILE

BY JACQUE SNELLENBERGER

**Your Great Lakes Grand Singles Champion resides in Thornville, Ohio, a rural property with six acres and a small pond. Dean Townsend is a retired High School Chemistry teacher of 35 years and college for two.**

He was first introduced to trapshooting in 1968 attending his first Grand American. His father bought a Browning O/U the previous year and Dean drove him nuts wanting to shoot it. Dad finally gave in and Dean began registering targets in 1970. His dad, Don Townsend, may have had very little experience in shooting technique, but apparently had a wealth of experience coaching high school baseball and basketball. So he knew how to keep Dean focused early on with his patience and encouragement. Don worked hard and sacrificed much to keep the family on the road and traveling to shoots. Some of Dean's most memorable experiences in shooting were traveling with his dad to various tournaments in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and Illinois. They used to camp out in a tent and later on had a small 16ft travel trailer. "It wasn't fancy, but it was good enough for us to travel and share some great times together."

Later on he started shooting college tournaments for the Ohio State University. He made many great friends there and still shoots with some of them today. One of his teammates from that era is John Evick, his best friend who he's shot

with regularly since 1978.

Dean was asked to join the Central Handicap Committee (CHC) in 1992 by incoming ATA President Joe Loving from Michigan. He worked the Grand American that year as an assistant and was appointed by Jim Bradford following the Grand. This August will be his 30th year of service to the ATA via the Central Handicap Committee. In 2010 he was appointed Chairman of the CHC. Dean states, "Being on the CHC has been a real joy to me because of all the new shooting friends I have made which would



DEAN AND HIS DAD IN 1990

not have been possible otherwise." He's also been a member of the ATA rules committee for the past six years.

Shortly after he was appointed to the CHC, and became good friends with two shooters that greatly influenced his career. Gene Bauer, from Chicago, taught him valuable lessons about the mental side of the game and about having patience. Gene may have passed away a few years ago, but he still often hears Gene's voice in the back of his head saying, "Patience!" The other mentor that he's been long time friends with is Dallas Maynard from Etna, Ohio. For twenty years, Dallas and Dean traveled to shoots all over the

country. He learned a lot from him, especially when it comes to gun set ups, and other mechanical facets of the game. Dallas used to build ballistic missile components for North American Aviation and was one hell of a machinist and gunsmith. Dallas doesn't shoot any more, but he still fondly remembers their times spent together. And last, but certainly not least is ATA Hall of Famer Louie Morgan. He's known Louie since he was a youth shooter in the mid 1970's. The day he made it to the 27 yard line, Louie was on the squad.

Over the past 15 years or so they have become great friends and have shot together on numerous



MAYNARD, TOWNSEND, BAUER



DEAN AND LOUIE MORGAN  
AT HALL OF FAME INDUCTION

occasions. The latest was the 2023 US Open, in Sparta a short time ago. In Thursday's singles event they both broke 100 straight singles standing next to each other on the same squad. Louie, who turned 84 in May, broke his 100th 200x200 last fall at Cardinal Center, Marengo, Ohio. He is also the oldest person to ever break 100 in doubles at the Grand American in 2019. The evening of the next day Dean had the distinct honor and pleasure to present Louie for induction into the ATA Hall of Fame.

From 2002 until 2010 he was pro-staff at Ljutic Industries. He currently uses a Blaser F3 combo, which he started using in 2010 when he joined team Blaser USA. The modifications made to the stock Blaser include: a release trigger, done by Dave Simmons at Extreme Shooting Products, Teague chokes (from England) on singles and handicap, Kick's chokes in doubles. He also shoots for Team Remington Ammunition.

Dean says that every win is important to him, but winning a HOA or HAA seems a little sweeter than individual event trophies. However his most memorable wins include his first Ohio singles title in 1980 (important to him because his Dad got to see the whole thing including a two day shoot off win

over ATA Hall of Famer Dave Berlet), The 1996 Ohio Doubles Championship (he won on his in-laws 50th wedding anniversary- Luckily for him he was the lone 100 in Ohio that day and didn't have to shoot off as he would have missed the party). Another important win was his second Ohio singles title in 2003. It was just a few weeks before his Mom passed away and she was so excited and proud. He also won the HAA championship in Ohio the last year it was held in Vandalia (2005). He tied ATA Hall of Famer Pat McCarthy. Dean led off and they both broke a perfect round in the shoot-off targets. Pat led off the next round and missed a handicap target. Dean never missed and won the trophy. What makes it so special to him was in that shoot-off round he got to fire the last shot at the Ohio State shoot held for the final time in Vandalia.

In Dean's fifty years of shooting, he's had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of different gun clubs. The one thing that all of his favorite clubs have in common is that they all go out of their way to treat shooters like customers. "In today's economy shooters have become very particular about where and how they spend their money. Shooters need to feel that they are getting value when they spend

money, time, and ammunition to shoot." Stockdale G.C., Ackley, IA, Tucson Trap and Skeet, the Michigan Trapshooting home grounds (near Lansing), Brittany Shooting Park, Bunker Hill, IL, and of course the World Shooting Recreational Complex (WSRC) in Sparta, IL are all on Dean's list of favorites where they treat shooters like customers.

When choosing squads at shoots, Dean shoots with the same group at the Ohio State Championships and a different group at the Grand American each summer. Other than that, he usually shoots with shooters that are committed to the HOA event at various tournaments. He likes shooting with people he knows because they are familiar with the rules and they NEVER have any trouble on the firing line. Dean would encourage everybody to carry a rule book with them in their shooting bag. Being on the ATA rules committee he is often asked for his opinion on a rule interpretation or a situation that arises during a shoot. Dean says, "Whenever I give an opinion on a rule I always say STOP! Don't take my word as absolute. Let's get a rulebook and look it up. That's WHY we have rulebooks."

In terms of mental preparation, He tries to get a good night's rest before each day of shooting. When shooting, he tries to stick to the fundamentals and be patient. Britt Robinson once told him that often shooters miss because they call for the target before they are ready to see it. Don't get caught up in the squad timing, be patient. So, before each shot he tries to focus on head down, eyes up, don't move the gun until you see the target (this is the hard one for him), and concentrate on watching the target break (complete the shot). In doubles he tries to focus on breaking the first

target with as little gun movement as possible AND THEN gets his eyes moving to the second target as quickly as possible and acquiring a good visual lock before shooting. He says when he can do all of these things in a consistent manner, he usually breaks a good score. "Remember, trapshooting is a sport where you try to "live in the moment" and what you have done on the previous post or trap or what you are about to do to finish the event is irrelevant." What you do in the 3-5 seconds after you mount the gun is all that really counts for him.

Dean's advice to a new shooter is to take a clinic from a top shot. Don't depend on "the old sage" at the local club to help you out. There is a good chance that this individual is not a tournament shooter and has very limited knowledge that will be helpful to you in the long term. Taking a clinic, or buying a DVD, is the only "shortcut" you can take in our sport. With that being said, don't take a clinic to try to "mimic" some top shot. If you can get one or two ideas that you can build into your shooting toolbox to help you derive more enjoyment from our sport, then it will have been money well spent.

This year will be Dean Townsend's 55th Grand American. I know he will continue to do well, as he has in previous years. Due to Dean's effort and support in teaching, being on the Central Handicap Committee and others it's apparent that he respects not only the gun clubs who do it right for the shooter, but the volunteers who help our young shooters. He's eternally grateful for all those that have come before and after him that play a part in our awesome sport of trapshooting. ■