

Hunting licenses now available

East Oregonian

Oregon hunting and fishing licenses are now on sale for 2017, just in time for the holiday shopping season.

A general angling license costs \$38 for residents, and \$9.75 for the Columbia River Basin Endorsement, which is required for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon fishing. A hunter license is \$32 for residents, or \$65 for a combination hunter and angler license.

Hunting tags vary by animal, including \$46 for elk, \$26.50 for deer and \$15.50 for cougar. A complete list can be found in the 2017 hunting and fish regulation books, which are available at participating stores or through the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife.

To give a license or tag as a gift, have the recipient's full name and date of birth handy along with their ODFW hunter or angler identification number, which can be found at the top of their current license. Otherwise, a Social Security number is needed for anyone who has never previously held a license.

Possible gift ideas include:

- Youth license — \$10 for youth ages 12-17. Includes angling, hunting, shellfish and the Columbia River Basin Endorsement. Add a youth combined angling tag for \$5.

- Youth sports pack —



\$55, includes combination hunting, angling and shellfish license; combined angling tag; turkey, cougar, bear, deer and elk tags; upland bird and waterfowl validations; and the Columbia River Basin Endorsement.

- Big game hunt raffle tags — range from \$4.50 to \$11.50 per ticket, with chance to win special big game hunts.

For more information, visit www.dfw.state.or.us.



In a Nov. 22 photo, Jim Bonawitz talks about his historic replica flintlock rifles in his workshop in Billings, Mont.

OLD GUNS

Montana man takes up legendary relative's gun making

By BRETT FRENCH
Billings Gazette

BILLINGS, Mont. — About 230 years ago a master gunsmith in Pennsylvania left his mark during America's Golden Age of rifle making.

Now one of the distant relatives of Johannes (aka John) Bonewitz is taking up the family tradition.

"I'm basically an apprentice," said Jim Bonawitz, a 66-year-old Billings retiree.

But if his initial fire-arm-building attempts and earlier careers and hobbies are any indication — body shop owner, street rod and street machine builder, tail-dragging plane restorer and pipe fitter — he's inherited a family gene for masterful work with his hands.

Surprise legacy

Jim became curious about his ancestor after attending a mountain man rendezvous years ago. Someone suggested he should investigate to see if he had ties to his then-unknown ancestor, a master gunsmith. After a little research, Jim became enamored with the older Bonewitz's crafting of Pennsylvania flintlock rifles — dubbed by one authority as "early American functional art" because it melded wood, iron and brass into a tool for hunting, fighting and protection of the newly formed United States of America.

"They just literally took it over the top" in that era of gunmaking, Jim said. "It's very technical when you get into that."

"I'm not to that stage in my apprenticeship to where I can justify trying to build this gun," he said, thumbing through a book with photographs of his ancestor's detailed engraving and carving work.

But he's persistently, patiently and steadily working toward it, sometimes up to eight hours a day in the small shop behind his westside home. In three years he's built eight rifles and one pistol, at first even making the barrels himself.

The firearms he's built are from what's called the Federalist period of gunsmithing — 1783 to 1830.

"The reason I like them is they are a bigger gun," Jim said, some of which ranged up to .72 caliber.

His current project is based on a .54 caliber Henry Albright design from around 1790.

Glory days

Bozeman gunsmith Bill Madden said the Golden Age, which took place roughly between the end of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, was in part driven by having a number of gunsmiths — once employed in keeping working weapons in the hands of patriots — with



In this Nov. 22 photo, Jim Bonawitz shows one of his historic replica flintlock guns in his workshop in Billings, Mont.



In a Nov. 22 photo, Jim Bonawitz talks about his historic replica flintlock rifles in his workshop in Billings, Mont.

more time on their hands. So they marketed their craft to a well-heeled clientele — plantation owners and businessmen — seeking custom and distinct firearms.

"Unlike today where you go down to the big box store and buy a gun, these were custom-built for the customer," Madden said.

The Golden Age was defined by a combination of the German Jaeger high-end guns' engraving and carving of the cheek piece and patchbox with the long lines of the French or British fowling pieces for birds, Madden explained. A patchbox was a compartment in the butt of the stock where greased linen patches used in firing the rifle could be stored.

"It was a period where gunmaking had reached its zenith in terms of embellishment — carving, wire inlays and patchboxes," Madden said. "Then it began to deteriorate and became quite plain. There are, of course, exceptions to all of this."

During this period, Bonewitz was considered "among the best," according to Henry I. Bishop, an authority on the topic. It's estimated about 30 of these Bonewitz original rifles still exist, mostly in private collections. There are similar rifles from the period that can be viewed at the Cody Firearms Museum in the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyo., as well as in the Carbon County Museum's Vern Waples collection of firearms in Red Lodge.

Revival

Interest in the firearms, and reproducing modern replicas, has resulted in the

creation of several guilds across the United States. Madden and Bonawitz belong to the relatively small — about 30 members — Montana Historical Gunmakers Guild.

"Nationwide there are probably 3,000 to 5,000 people doing this," Madden said.

The gunsmiths trade information, suggestions and techniques via the guilds, as well as through the Contemporary Makers blog and the American Longrifle Association website.

"Most people probably get into it to make a gun to hunt with," Madden said. "Then they make one for family or friends, and finally they sell one. There are only a few really talented builders who can turn out the volume to survive, but they can sell for \$2,500 to \$25,000."

Madden became intrigued about building rifles after taking an interest in mountain man rendezvous and the blackpowder rifle era. About 20 years ago Madden built his first rifle to hunt with.

"It puts more sport in the game," he said. "It requires good hunting skills to get close enough to shoot — within 100 yards."

Jim said he doesn't shoot his rifles much anymore, concentrating instead on getting better at the many facets of building a firearm — everything from using 3-foot long drill bits to bore the hole in the stock for the ramrod, to delicately engraving the steel and brass ornamentation. His next project is to learn how to forge parts.

Despite the attention to

details, Jim likes to keep his rifles more simple in terms of ornamentation.

"I like a good, clean rifle," he said.

To that end, he's built two Lehigh Valley rifles, one in .45 caliber and another in .50 caliber; a .58 caliber Hawken; an early example of a Virginia rifle in .58 caliber; a later Virginia in .54 caliber; and a Tennessee rifle in .36 caliber. He also made a flintlock pistol for his wife. Although hanging on to his favorites, he's willing to part with his creations to fund new rifles.

Many of the techniques he learned how to perform in what's become an all-too-common way for today's do-it-yourselfers — by watching YouTube videos. He's also studied books and copied designs from photographs of old rifles to reproduce similar embellishments.

The tools required to build a rifle range from the antique — like chisels, hammers and rasps — to modern drill presses, engravers and the occasional use of a router. And let's not forget sandpaper and lots of old-fashioned elbow grease to work that sandpaper back and forth, back and forth, endlessly back and forth until the maple reaches a smooth finish. Old-fashioned linseed oil brings the wood grain to life.

"I just love the wood," Jim said, although he qualified, "Sometimes I don't like working with the wood."

The entire process starts at the butt end of the rifle barrel.

"The flash hole for the lock sets everything up for the whole rifle," Jim said. "Once you set the lock, that sets your trigger. Once you get the trigger, you figure the length of pull to put your butt plate on."

Many of the pieces are held on the rifle stock by small nails. Screws are also used, and Jim has gone so far as to make his own. But mostly he buys pre-made parts, a total of about 14 pieces that cost just under \$1,000. The rest of the investment comes in time — hours and hours of delicate hand work.

"This is basically a lost art," he said.



Photo contributed by Rita Beam

Big fish

Alvin Beam, of Lexington, reeled in this 36-inch steelhead on Nov. 22 while fishing on the Columbia River above Bonneville Dam.

A variety of ways to explore Mount St. Helens in 2017

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — Visitors will have the opportunity to explore Mount St. Helens in a variety of ways throughout 2017, thanks to programs offered by the Mount St. Helens Institute.

Institute managers said registration has opened for the numerous educational guided adventures taking place on the most active volcano in the lower 48 states.

Some of the programs for the coming year include the chance to climb to the crater rim at 8,300 feet and discover Mount St. Helens' geological story first-hand. On three occasions, a geologist will join the trek. There also will be multiple trips offering an up-close-and-personal glimpse of Crater Glacier from inside the crater.

Since 2000, the institute has offered summer and fall field seminars. Next year's offerings include backpackers trekking around the volcano, across the heart of the blast zone and through ancient lava flows on the Loowit Trail. Another session will give participants

the opportunity to learn from staff with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe about the cultural values of Lawetlat'la's diverse landscapes.

Another trip through the volcanic landscape will give participants the chance to explore winter wonderlands, forage for wild edibles and learn from Steve Olson, the award-winning author of "Eruption."

"There is an adventure for everyone," said Ray Yurkewycz, executive director for the institute. "You can climb to the rim and discover Mount St. Helens' geological story first-hand. Or catch an up-close-and-personal glimpse of Crater Glacier from inside the crater."

Fees from the programs help support the more than 200 volunteers who serve visitors to Mount St. Helens, and fund the implementation and development of the institute's youth education programs. Last year, more than 3,000 youth visited the volcano through those programs.