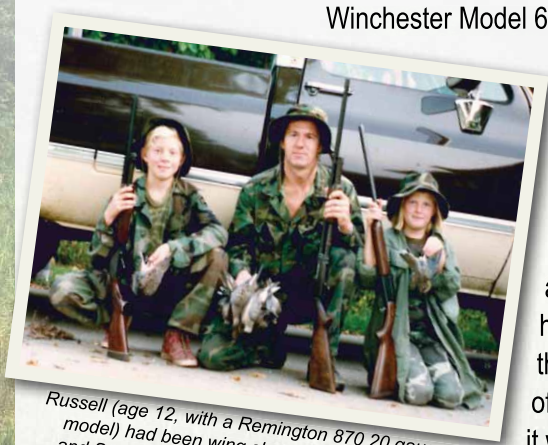


FIRST RIFLES for the KIDS

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #78 —

On their respective fourth birthdays, each of our two children received his/her first rifle and got to shoot it. Now at four years of age, they didn't get to keep these rifles in their rooms; we kept them in the vault and brought them out regularly during the spring, summer and fall - so they could continue to enjoy their fourth birthday presents -- and learn how to safely handle and shoot them. Looking back, my recommendation to parents today might be that they wait till the kids are six or seven -- and take lots of pictures.

Back in the late 1970s, no gun company made a .22 rifle small enough for a four year old, so I bought an older single shot .22 rifle and spent a few evenings after work converting it for the intended use. Russell's rifle is a Winchester Model 67 youth model.



Russell (age 12, with a Remington 870 20 gauge youth model) had been wing shooting for a couple of years and Sara (age 10, with a Winchester Model 37 youth model) was just getting started in 1986.

It was made in the early 1960's and someone had poorly cut a hole and fit a Kennedy half-dollar into the right side of the stock. As it was no longer of interest to gun collectors, I got a

pretty good deal. Being a youth model, it had a 20" barrel -- which was fine; I just had to shorten the forend and reshape it, then shorten the butt and re-fit the buttplate. Thinning and sanding the stock eliminated the half-dollar pocket and 30 coats of Tru-Oil finished it off.

When Sara turned four, she was a bit smaller than Russell had been at that age. In my mind, she needed a lighter rifle and one that cocked on closing rather than by pulling



The top rifle is Russell's; it's a Winchester Model 67. Sara's below is a Remington 514.

back the hammer -- as on Russell's Model 67. The Remington Model 514 was the answer. This was also a 1960's production gun, with the straight (non-tapered) barrel, making it a bit lighter. I had the barrel shortened to 16-1/4" and the front sight reset; then I shortened, reshaped and refinished the stock as on Russell's gun, two years before.

Our former four year olds now have children of

"...re-purposed by loving hands..."

their own, and they still have the presents they received on their fourth birthday. Of course, the grandchildren are all learning to shoot with these .22 rifles made by Remington and Winchester in the 1960's and re-purposed by loving hands in the 1970s. Though we couldn't fully appreciate it at the time, these were gifts that truly have kept on giving.



Larry Potterfield
MidwayUSA
Columbia, Missouri
7 October 2014



Pure entertainment; what great fun to watch kids or grandkids break balloons with a .22 rimfire. A golf tee, between the lip and the knot, holds the balloon firmly to the ground.