



LTC Lones W. Wigger, Jr., is a champion marksman in the true sense of the word. He has won gold medals in nearly every world rifle competitive event, including the Olympics. His accomplishments include 43 National Individual Championships, 69 medals (41 gold) won in international competition, and 23 World records. Below, he talks about the shooter's diary and shares some of the secrets that have contributed to his phenomenal success.

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The shooting diary is perhaps the most important and least understood training aid you can use. The diary is a written record of everything that might be important in your shooting. It is permanent and allows you to evaluate each step as you progress. Many shooters are lazy and rationalize to themselves that a diary is not necessary, too time consuming to keep and that they will learn and progress in their shooting just as rapidly by not using one. They think they can remember everything important between shooting sessions. Using a diary won't necessarily make you a world champion but it will be very difficult to become a world champion if you don't use one. You should hedge your bet and place every-thing in your favor by learning to use a diary diligently until it becomes habit. It will be well worth the extra effort and eventually become invaluable to you as you progress in your shooting sport.

A diary is used to record all types of information that will be helpful to you in the future. Since it is impossible to remember everything you did in the previous session or training period you need to have a written resume of that training session so you can begin your new session where you left off. Shooters who do not use a diary waste precious training time re-doing and trying to remember what was previously learned and accomplished.

The amount and type of information you enter in your diary is up to you. An important point to realize is that using the diary to solely record scores will not help improve performance since numbers alone do not explain ideas, problems, experiments, or solutions. However, recording scores can be helpful in noting improvement to aid in an evaluation of changes, etc. A diary is a means of recording everything that is done anytime you shoot. Reviewing diary entries eliminates repetition of mistakes and reinforces positive accomplishments which can be used during another session. Used properly, the diary will chart your performance and enable you to maintain steady progression in your performance. Diary entries should include but are not limited to the following topics:

a. The date, place and time is always included. This information is essential when you review an entry for comparison purposes.

b. Goals the shooter desires to achieve both in practice and matches should be included. Long range goals should be established as well as short range goals. You should establish what you want to accomplish in each training session and be sure it is recorded. By writing down what you want to accomplish, you will tend to think about what you will be doing before you engage in the session, and you will be better prepared for it. Your goal will also give specific purpose to each training session and give you something to work toward achieving. You will then direct attention to making a special effort to

achieve this goal. Remember your goals must be within your capability and be realistic, although it must be difficult to achieve, requiring hard work and effort thereby giving a sense of achievement or accomplishment when attained.

c. Evaluation of goals met is another important entry in your diary. You must evaluate your achieved goals to determine your progress which will give you a guide for establishing new goals.

d. Evaluation of personal performance is one of the most important entries. Once shooting is completed, not only should you make note of physical and mental errors, but you should also include solutions to correct your mistakes. By recording performance in terms of what you did wrong, there is no positive emphasis on correction of the errors. Therefore, contributions to poor performance should be recorded, evaluated and then solutions proposed. It is extremely important that you make note of good scores and performances and analyze why. You should include the facts and feelings that you felt caused the good performance. All such information is useful in the future, especially for match preparation. Reading the diary will familiarize you with what you need to know and how you need to feel to expect a good performance. This is an excellent means of guiding you toward higher scores. Those shooters who have learned to record their thoughts in a diary will learn to analyze their performance, thus penetrating the essence of their performance as opposed to those who merely "practice" or "shoot" with- out giving the act of shooting any reflective thinking.

e. Information, techniques and ideas learned from other shooters may merit inclusion in your diary. Whenever a more experienced or advanced shooter explains different techniques that may be applicable to your performance, it is a good idea to include such information in your diary. The less experienced shooter can learn from this information and use it for future reference and possible application.

f. A very important entry in the diary especially for new shooters is equipment and or shooting position adjustments. Young shooters waste valuable training time re-establishing adjustments to their equipment or shooting positions previously learned which they have forgotten or failed to record. Equipment settings and adjustments for the sling, palm rest, cheekpiece, hook butt-plate, fore-end stop, stock length, sight zeroes, head position, feet position, grip tension, leads etc. are vital to help establish viable and workable shooting positions and the techniques necessary for good performances. Naturally many of these settings or adjustments change from time to time as performance improves or techniques change. However, a good record of these adjustments will help you evaluate and compare previous techniques and experiments and give you a starting point for each training session which is so important for you to evaluate your progress.

Any other information you feel may be important to you in the future should also be recorded. No matter what your record in your diary you must remember that to derive the maximum benefit from it, you must record all pertinent information immediately while it is still fresh in your memory. If you wait too long, the idea or impact of the idea is lost and then you have lost the maximum possible benefit.

*Lones W. Wigger*