

Every year there is an interesting and challenging VFS score match at the Mission & District Rod and Gun Club in Mission, BC. The 2022 match on July 3 was the ninth time it has been held. There was no match in 2020 due to the epidemic. Jim Latham and Joe Mendham organized the inaugural match in 2013 which was called the Fraser Valley Championship Match. Sadly, Jim Latham died in May of 2016. The match and the trophy are now fittingly named after Jim. Now it's the Jim Latham Memorial Match. Jim was a highly respected educator and now there is a scholarship in his name given by the University of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford. (Jim raced old cars too! That's the kind of teacher I'd like.) He was also of course greatly admired by his fellow shooters. It's a challenging match because it involves a lot of shooting (60 shots for record, 20 shots at 100, 200, and 300 yards) and because the competition is intense.

Here's a little travelogue of my trip up to our neighboring country. I'm a great believer in exchange between countries and since Canada is so close, this match provides a convenient opportunity to be an ambassador. You have to register your visit using the ArriveCan app three days, no more than that, before you travel north. Have your vaccination documentation ready to show the customs officials. It's actually pretty easy. At the border they'll want to have a look at your rifle and see your firearm information which will be on the RCMP form you've downloaded (it's easy to find on the web). Also, be sure to have an invitation from an officer at the range where you'll be shooting, preferably with the letterhead of the club on it. The club will be happy to provide this important document and it will save a lot of hassle. For their trouble the Canadian border patrol will want to remove \$25 from your bank account but then you're ready to track down where you will be sleeping that night.

The match is normally scheduled for the first Sunday of July so you may have to cancel the 4th of July barbecue you were planning. For some reason, my GPS didn't work in Canada which turned out to be okay since, while I was searching for my Airbnb, I discovered a nice park where I would later eat the supper I'd brought with me. I always drive up on the Saturday before the match. I stayed in Abbotsford, just north of the border. My host was a nice young man who didn't mind harboring an armed American.

After I checked in I was pretty thirsty, probably because it had been warm sitting in the line at the border. I spotted an Angry Otter liquor store and picked the least expensive single can of beer I could find (1/2 liter). It turned out to be an excellent lager brewed in Iceland of all places. I went to the park I mentioned, sat down in the grass and enjoyed my noodles, chicken and beer while observing several Sikh families also enjoying a warm, sunny evening, complete with rabbits and a view of Mt. Baker. It was a relaxing little picnic in Abbotsford, a good antidote to the frenetic pace of things where I live, Seattle.

I got up early and headed to the range in Mission, about 18 kilometers north of Abbotsford. Don't confuse m/ph for km/ph. You might get a ticket. As I was entering the range there was a black bear waiting for me, which I thought was a friendly welcome. He/she/they didn't bother me. So I had time to set up wind flags and get all my shooting stuff lined up on my bench. I decided to pre-load which makes for a more relaxed match and allows for time to clean the barrel. You never know what the weather is going to be like in Mission, BC on the first weekend of July. One year the wind was so strong it was blowing the targets off the backing. Another year

it was very hot, T-shirt weather. On 3 July 2022, it was a bit cool with misty light rain for a good deal of the match. You could see your breath.

As sometimes happens in the Pacific Northwest there was very little wind and it stayed that way throughout the match. It wasn't like shooting fish in a barrel however. The person with a really well-tuned rifle could do very well. And he did. Attached are the results of the eleven shooters. Normally matches shot at more than one distance are won at the longer distance and, in a sense, that was true in this match. After the 300 and 200 yard stages, Mark DuMont was four points ahead of his closest competitor, Joe Mendham, and five points ahead of Pete Talas. (We started at the longer distance.) That's a pretty good lead but not unbeatable. But, look at the scores at 100 yards shot by Mark. All Xs which translates to extra points for each target. His perfect scores at 100 yards were all he needed to pull ahead of the pack and win the 9th Jim Latham Memorial VFS shoot. He did the job with a LV 6 PPC. With this gun Mark will certainly do well in the group shoot at the club later this month. You'll see that Joe Mendham placed third which is something of a novel experience for him. He has won more than half of the nine annual matches up to this point. He was also shooting a LV 6 PPC as was Pete Talas who slipped in between Mark and Joe in the standings.

The rifles were pretty much the ones we are familiar with: BAT, Borden and Stolle actions. Bartlein and Krieger barrels. Jewell triggers. Leupold, Nightforce and Sightron scopes. There were two competitors shooting Barnard actions, made in New Zealand. The Commonwealth still has some pull up here. These are excellent actions used by a lot of Palma shooters in Canada, the UK, NZ and Australia. Congratulations to Mark, Pete and Joe for their excellent shooting.

Thanks to everyone who made the match happen and run smoothly, to the shooters who changed the targets and scored them, ordered the awards and all the other details that need to be done. It's always a group effort and that's the way it should be. The dispensing of accolades was over by 2:00 PM. After praising the winners I headed home to the Emerald City, wanting to be home by dinner time.

With the border crossing it was an almost three hour endeavor. At Checkpoint Charlie I had to show my rifle and fill out customs form 4457. I've never been asked to do this before but next time I will comply. You need to check into the US side before entering Canada with your firearm. Lesson learned but they didn't give me a hard time. Some advice about border crossing: on the way north try to arrive around midday or a little later to avoid the irritation of waiting in line when it gets busy later in the afternoon. Going back home there was no wait, just the hassle of dealing with bureaucrats with guns and minimal sense of humor. There is a lot of appealing agricultural landscape between the border and Bellingham along Route 9. Until you hit the interstate it's an enjoyable drive.

This is a really fun match and in spite of having to jump through a few hoops it has always been a rewarding time spent with our neighbors to the north doing something we all love. I'd recommend it for any shooter looking for an enjoyable match in another country. Till next time, Richard Nicol