

# ACSNews

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ABILENE CLAY SPORTS  
STEVE ELLINGER, AIA

DECEMBER 2005



## Russell Griffin wins the Mayflower Classic

### Abilene Clay Sports Annual General Membership Meeting

The Annual Abilene Clay Sports general membership meeting will be held on **December 7<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm**, at the Abilene Clay Sports club facility. This is the meeting that both north and south range members are encouraged to attend in order to discuss matters that affect both ranges. General business and election of officers will occur at that time. All members are encouraged to attend. If you want to have an impact on the future of our organization, make plans to attend and voice your opinions! Contact ACS President Frank Sanchez for any agenda information at 325.692.9002.

**Abilene Clay Sports,  
Our History and Beginning  
See Page 5!**



From Left, Texas A&M skeet and trap team member Casey Hart, Chief USA Junior Olympic shooting coach Tim Perry, and Casey's father, Tom. The group visited ACS in November.



**Russell Griffin** topped a field of 53 competitors to take the lead at the Abilene Clay Sports Mayflower Classic, occurring on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Windy conditions made breaking the 90's a tough task with several of the stations having targets that seemed to dance with the wind! The targets were set by ACS General Manager Don Dunn. Lunch was all the pizza you could eat! Other winners are shown below. ACS will have one more event in 2005, on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Make plans to attend! Congratulations to Russell!

### Winners for the Mayflower Classic

#### Main Event

Master Class: Russell Griffin  
AA Class: Lynn Talley  
A Class: Coy Bailey  
B Class: Shane Davis  
C Class: Michael Lundstrom  
D Class: Don Dunn (targets only)  
E Class: Harvey Duff  
H Class: Royce McWhorter

#### 5-Stand Event

Master Class: Frank Sanchez  
AA Class: Lynn Talley  
B Class: H.T. Gleason  
D Class: Russell James  
H Class: Royce McWhorter

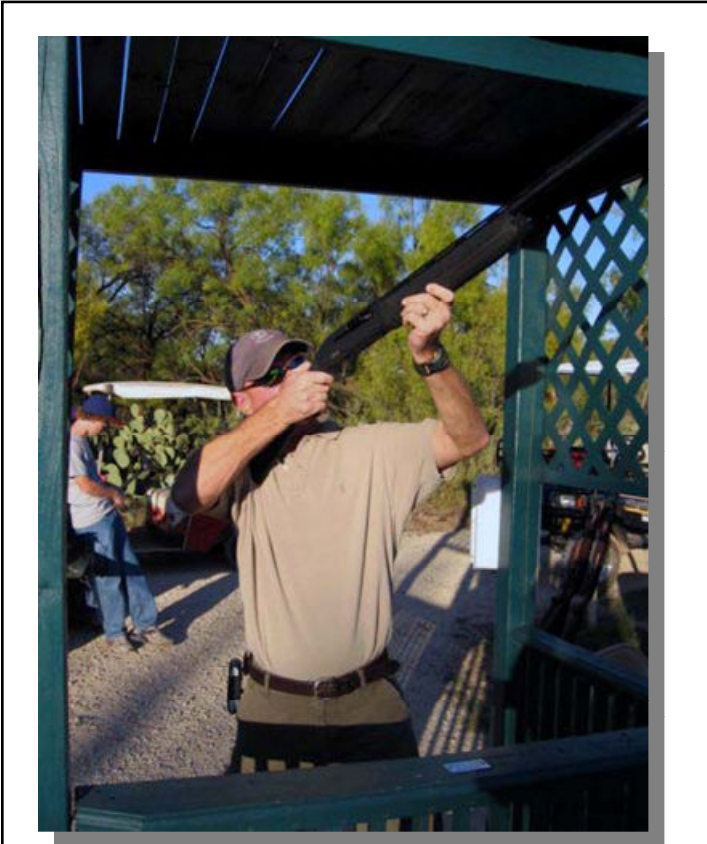


# Our Final Event of the Year is Almost Here!

Registered Sporting Event: December 11  
*Look for 2006 event dates on page 6!*



**Shoot Info. Call 325.692.9002**



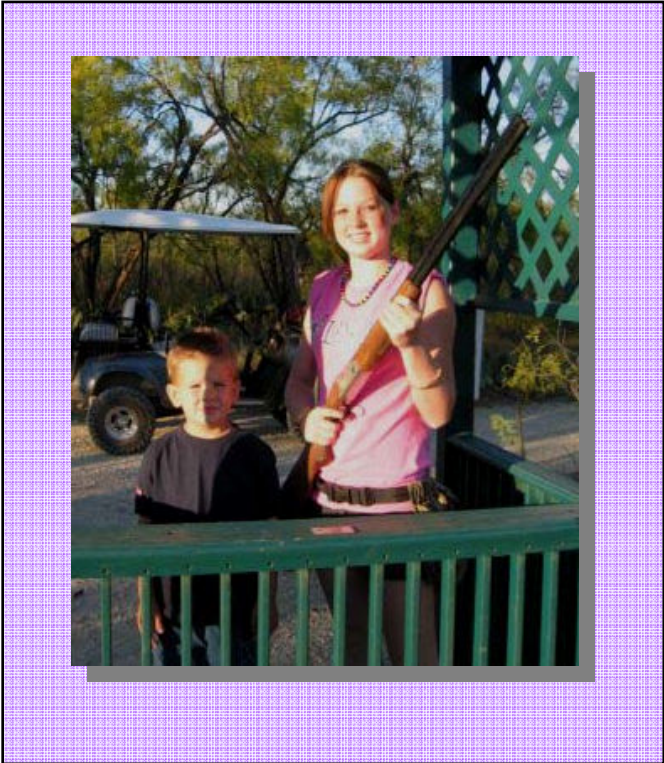
Faculty member Bart Pursley at the Lincoln Middle School shoot and cookout at ACS on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

## ACS Hosts Lincoln Middle School Faculty

Abilene Clay Sports was host to a number of faculty from Lincoln Middle School in November. The group enjoyed a late afternoon round of sporting clays and perfectly prepared hamburgers by Patti and Don Dunn. The exceptionally warm temperatures made for a great day of shooting. Faculty member Bart Pursley commented *"this is a lot of fun; I think we will be back!"* That same sentiment was echoed by other faculty members who enjoyed the afternoon at ACS!

## Entertain Your Customers at Abilene Clay Sports!

If you are looking for something unique with which to entertain you clients, customers or family, why not consider an afternoon at Abilene Clay Sports. Attractive rates are available but dates are booking up fast! ACS offers one of the best clay target shooting parks in West Texas. Complete packages are available by contacting ACS General Manager Don Dun at 325.692.9002, but don't wait, as choice dates for 2006 are going fast. Give your business associates a day they will remember.



***Any afternoon is a great day to shoot sporting clays, skeet, trap, or helice! It makes a great family activity.***

## ACS Member Profile, Mr. Terry Bailey

"Never a dull moment" is how Terry Bailey describes clay target shooting at ACS. This month's featured member is Mr. Terry Bailey from Hamlin, Texas. Forty four year old Terry and wife Deana are in the farm and ranch business, but enjoy clay target shooting at every opportunity. Deana also raises horses, and Terry has also been involved in roping and cutting horses. If Deana is not using the EX-Go for the horse operation, Terry can be seen making his way around the sporting course. Sporting Clays is his passion, and he seldom misses an opportunity to bring one of his prized Browning XS Sporting guns, which he has in all gauges! Terry got his start in clay target shooting as a boy with his dad shooting trap in the Hamlin and Aspermont areas. He has also been an active handgun shooter and loves to hunt. Good friend Larry Callan invited Terry to some area sporting clays events and he was hooked! Shortly afterward, Terry entered some of the non-profit fundraiser events at ACS and promptly purchased a membership. He has not put down a sporting clays gun since. Terry has recently won several state gauge championships in his class, so his practice has definitely paid off. What does Terry like about sporting? *"The variety and difficulty of the targets is great"*, remarks Terry. The facility improvements such as the clubhouse renovations and the improvements to the sporting course are also high on his list of great things that have been done lately. But when asked what has been the most important factor that has elevated our facility lately, Terry states that the club is definitely *"moving foreword"*, which must be done if we are going to grow, but we should consider a 50 target prelim event in the future. If you have not met Terry, take the opportunity to strike up a conversation with this champion shooter. You might just learn something about horses, shooting, or how to sneak away from the house with the clay cart!



Mr. Terry Bailey

***"Abilene Clay Sports is definitely moving foreword"***



***Sandy Clause Says "ACS Gift Certificates make great gifts and stocking stuffers for that clay target shooter!" Certificates are available at the clubhouse.***



Next Station!



Curtis Anderson squad



Elaine Schultz and Tom Duke



Kevin (yes that's her name) Talley



Michael Coleman



# The Mayflower Classic

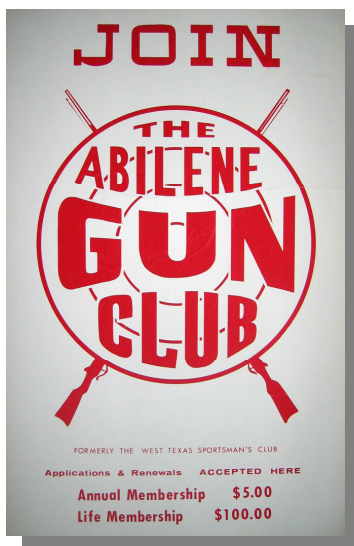
November 13, 2005, Abilene Clay Sports

# ABILENE CLAY SPORTS, DISCOVERING OUR HISTORY AND BEGINNING

## Part One

Steve Ellinger, AIA

Over the years there have been millions of clay targets thrown at our facility at Lake Kirby. During that time there have been thousands of people who have attempted to break them with a shotgun. Most people know that the club at Lake Kirby has been around a long time. Some even know that our 40<sup>th</sup> year at Lake Kirby is approaching. But what most folks don't know is that our near 40 year old facility is not the first clay target shooting facility in Abilene. Abilene Clay Sports started life in 1958 as the "West Texas Sportsman Club", having skeet and trap shooting, as well as a rifle range for those who were into benchrest shooting. Later that name was changed to the "Abilene Gun Club", with the clay target arm of the organization again being renamed in 2000 to "Abilene Clay Sports" as it is known today. The first clay target shooting facility in Abilene and West Texas for that matter was located north of Abilene near Lake Fort Phantom. Constructed in approximately 1958, the West Texas Sportsman Club facility was a very active skeet and trap shooting facility (sporting clays had not been invented yet), with regular weekend attendance near 30 coming from Abilene and all over West Texas.



**Original membership poster circa 1967 found behind wall at Bible Hardware during remodel several years ago.**

As a young boy of 5 years of age in 1963, or near that time, I accompanied my father and one or two of his friends to the Fort Phantom Lake facility club on at least one or perhaps two occasions. I still have a *very* vivid and detailed memory of that trip, watching the targets fly from the skeet houses, and seeing the men break them with authority, most shooting a Remington 1100 or Winchester model 12. Of course at such a young age, I was more interested in gathering up the warm paper hulls that hit the ground, enjoying the distinctive aroma of a freshly fired paper hull. While the men were shooting I was told to "sit here, be quiet, and don't run off." The nearby lake offered a lot of opportunities for a 5 year old! My seat was on the hood of our family car (a 1958 Oldsmobile I think) parked directly behind skeet station 4. That was a pretty neat place to a young boy to say the least. We soon left however, went on to other things, and new activities replaced the memory of the gun club visit, at least for some time. Although my father, an optometrist, shot very well, (he was an aerial gunner in a B-24 during the war so he knew how to hit a flying target) he was never an *avid* skeet or trap shooter, so if we ever went back to the club, it has been lost in my memory. But the details of that one visit has been embedded in my mind ever since, simply filed away as a childhood memory.

*Fast foreword 43 years.* I have been an active and avid sporting clays competitor for the past 13 years or so, and a registered skeet shooter prior to that. I dabble a little in trap and helice. As I have participated in this great sport during the years, I have often had memory flashbacks to that time in 1963 when I visited the Fort Phantom facility with my father. About a year and half ago I began wondering what ever became of the original West Texas Sportsman Club skeet and trap range. Was there anything left, perhaps an old foundation, or something? Although my memory of that skeet field was rock solid, everything else was sketchy. Where was it located? How do I get there? What was the layout? Most of the original founders and participants have moved on, passed away, or in poor health, so simply asking around was not that easy. Some of our current members

had been there many years ago. Understand however that when the facility was closed in 1966, there was really no reason to go back for anything, so location details and memories by past members were sketchy at best.

I asked a few that I thought might be able to tell me of the exact location, but even those answers were hazy. Responses like "*somewhere on the east side of the lake, west side of the road, or maybe it was just the opposite*", or "*just around the bend of the lake from old man Simkins boat dock*" (if he was old in the early sixties, that pretty much ruled that out), or "*about a mile and a quarter from the old bait house*", wherever that was, or "*just past that old sign that used to be there*", wherever "there" was. Nobody could give me accurate directions. I realize that there are those still around that could simply walk right to the old property, but I simply did not know who they were, did not see them on a regular occasion, or those individuals were never around when I was in the directions asking frame of mind. To find the old property was not going to be easy, at least not for me.

In September of 2004 my oldest son Logan and I decided to take a drive to Fort Phantom Lake and see if we could find some remains of what was once West Texas Sportsman's Club. We drove over every lake road we could find, encountered



**This is the photo that I found clearly indicating the presence of the original club. Note that there are two trap fields showing, and one skeet house. But how old is the photo and is anything still there? Compare this to the layout on page 7 that I was able to determine based on my on-site findings.**



**The first thing that I found on-site. The trap house of what once was trap field two. The shooting positions behind this trap house have been covered by fill dirt, with the grade elevation about 4' higher than the top of the trap house. This trap field threw targets over the water of Lake Fort Phantom.**

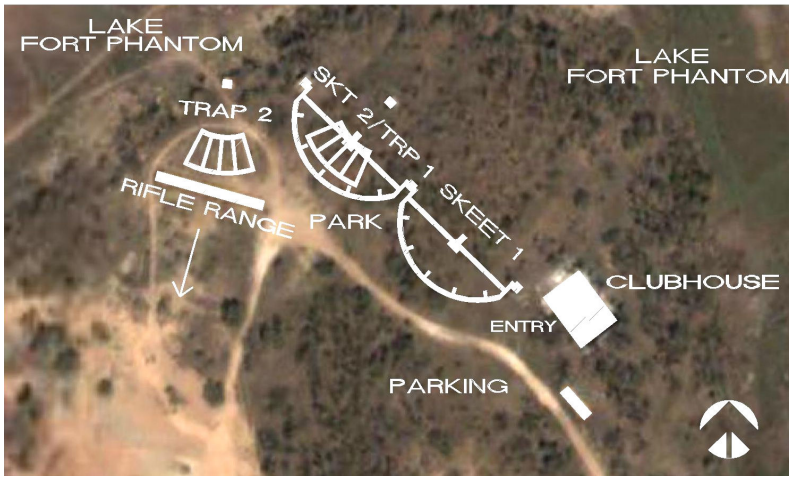
behind the trap house was at least 4' higher than the top of the house. As I moved to the east, I discovered the east trap house, and in the tall grass were the remains of the yardage sidewalks, with the concrete trap house directly ahead. The west trap field yardage sidewalks had been covered with fill material for some reason, but there was no doubt now, this was definitely the place.

I realize that there are "wanderers" around the lake that have been all through the property through the years, but I would guess that nobody knows what the ruins were, or the historical importance as it applies to clay target shooting in Abilene. But I *did* know, and I was going to spend an hour or so looking around. The east trap field (trap1) was intact, but completely overgrown. The west trap field (trap 2) was covered over but the trap house remains. The low house of skeet 1 was intact and the best of all remaining facilities. The high house was in a pile of rubble. The high house of skeet 2 was intact, but the upper portion has fallen away. The clubhouse foundation is intact, and just a few portions of the walls are present. The rest of the construction is in ruins. The clubhouse facility does tell a few stories however. It appears that the clubhouse was simply abandoned 40 years ago, and not much has affected it other than the walls falling away. There remains the old sofa where stories were told, an old frame of a clubhouse chair, even the old record player turntable with the tone arm still in the play position. A stack of new unused floor tile looks ready to install. The old rifle range sign rests nearby. The old rifle range sign rests nearby. The remains of the old club stereo system (called a Hi-Fi in those days) still lay the floor, and what remains of the spacious kitchen counter now only obscures what would have been the entrance. Forty years has taken its toll. As I walked around the property I found a lot of the brass portions of shotgun cartridges. Paper hulls were the order of the day then, but the paper tubes have long since disappeared.

a few locked gates and fences, looked behind a few old cabins, and walked a little kicking the grass so see if some concrete remained. We spent about an hour that day looking around. No luck. We tried again about a month later yielding the same unsuccessful effort. I surmised that the old club had been bulldozed, covered over with some new construction, or other fate and simply did not exist in any form anymore. I felt defeated, but chalked it up to just too many years of ancient history. I took comfort that at least I had the memory of my father and me at the club, and that would never be removed.

In August of this year I learned of a new computer application that gave very detailed aerial photos of virtually anywhere on the planet. I have used the program in my architectural practice on occasion and find it very useful. Playing around with it one night at home, I thought, what the heck, let's see if this application will show the property around Lake Fort Phantom. I launched the program, "flew" to Abilene, Texas, navigated to the north of Abilene, found the lake, settled in on the east side, and began a slow hover scan over the land. After about three minutes I saw an image that hit me like a bolt of lightning. There it was, the unmistakable finger like image of a long ago trap field! But wait, there to the right is another very faint image of a trap field, and what appears to be a skeet house. I felt somewhat like Dr. Robert Ballard did upon discovering the Titanic on the ocean floor a number of years ago. Ok, so not quite as historically significant, but still exciting to me. I looked to see when the satellite photo was made, but found no reference to a date. Now I knew where it was, but what was left? As it turned out, I had been very close in my previous search, but was halted by a pad lock on a gate.

The next day was a Friday, so that afternoon with a printout of the photo in hand and a camera in my pocket I headed to the lake. I drove right down the road to the property, straight into the same locked gate that I had encountered in 2004. *Rats!* Feeling a bit like Lewis and Clark at the time, I parked my pickup in the trees, found my way to the waters edge, bogged through the mud and grass, and saw nothing. It has got to be here I thought, or was my satellite image too dated and too old. As I rounded the corner in what was going to be my last effort, I saw it. There, jutting out of the hillside was a cast concrete trap house majestically staring me in the face like the presidential heads at Mount Rushmore. No doubt about it now. I have found it, and portions of it are still here! As I climbed the embankment to the property, it became obvious that something was wrong. The trap field was gone. No yardage sidewalks as was showing on the photo, plus the grade elevation



**“West Texas Sportsman’s Club”, later named “Abilene Gun Club”, circa 1963. I determined this layout based on site observations and interviews with those who used this facility.**



**The view from just behind station 4 on skeet field 1, looking at the low house. This is the exact same spot that I stood watching my father shoot skeet 40 years ago. The high house is a pile of rubble now, but there are piles of broken targets right where they fell so many years ago.**



**The remains of skeet field 1 low house, and the most intact portion of property. The target opening is clearly visible on the far wall. The houses were well built of concrete block construction. Manual traps were in place during the early years, later replaced with “modern” electric models.**

Occasionally a plastic hull was found, but that was rare, as plastic hulls came on the shotgunning scene about the time the Phantom Lake facility was closed. Plastic hulls were a prized possession for re-loaders at that time. An old leather shooting glove was found in the high house of skeet two, and target chips were everywhere, just as they fell many years ago. Rifle brass still littered the concrete firing line of the rifle range. Amazingly, it appears that the club facility was simply abandoned. The property is just as it was left, with the exception of normal weathering and the crumbling of walls normal for that time frame. No other use of the property was evident.

I wanted to find the exact position where my father told me to stay still and quite while he shot that round of skeet I remember so well. Placing myself on skeet field one, just behind station four, I was at ground zero of my childhood skeet memory. In my mind I could still hear and see the men shooting. Just then, and in an amazing coincidence of timing, I heard the report of a gun being discharged. Someone had apparently started doing some target shooting at the nearby rifle range in use today on East Lake Road. As I continued to walk the property, others had also begun to use the rifle range with the sound of firearms being discharged adding an almost surreal sound to my being at the original club facility. Here I was 40 years later, on the same property, and hearing the sound of gunfire. What a feeling!

In many ways I was amazed at how much of the facility remained. It would have been much too easy for the City of Abilene to simply use the property for something else, and with the fill materials covering trap field two, the Fort Phantom Lake facility may soon disappear completely. There is nothing of the club visible from any accessible lake road, and the presence of the locked gate indicates that access to the property is not generally available. Using my original satellite photos, and field observations of the remains, I overlaid a plan of what I think was the club layout at the time. You can see this in the photos included in this article, along with detailed images of other portions of the facility. It was quite a feeling to be able to walk the grounds where it all started here in Abilene. There are individual’s memories I will discuss in part two of this article that started the sport here in Abilene that so many of us enjoy. Being able to walk the grounds of their vision is an almost sacred moment. Standing where they stood as they envisioned skeet and trap field layouts so many years ago invokes a “thank you” for what they accomplished.

*In the January issue of ACSNews, and part two of this article, I will explore the club activity at that time, who started it, who built it, who managed it, why it was located where it was, what went on during shoots, the clubhouse activities, and why it was relocated to Lake Kirby only nine years after such as well built facility was opened. I will also tell which of our current active members intentionally locked a lady skeet shooter (who went on to be inducted into the National Skeet Shooting Hall of Fame) in the skeet high house!*



Trap one, as seen from the 16 yard line, number three position. Note the trap house nearly obscured by the growth.



The remains of the clubhouse facility. The facility contained a restroom, full kitchen, and sitting area.



Part of the original "Hi-Fi" system still in the clubhouse, after 40 years.



The yardage walks for trap field 1 remain

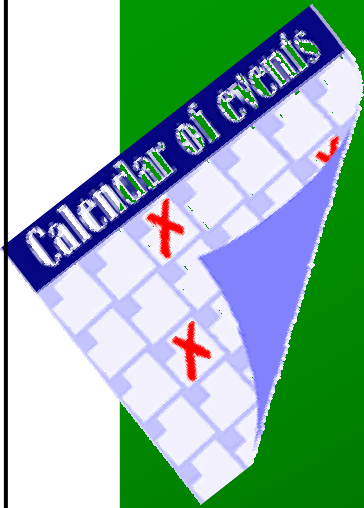


Target chips lay just where they fell so many years ago. Many old paper hulls remain, but plastic hulls are scarce, as they were only marketed about the time the club closed. At right is an old leather glove found in the high house of skeet field 2, and the trap house for trap field 1.





## Abilene Clay Sports 2006 Event Dates!



January 8th	Registered Sporting Clays
February 5th	Registered Sporting Clays
February 9 <sup>th</sup>	Big Country Celebrity Quail Hunt Sporting Clays Event
March 4th	Registered Sporting Clays
April 1 <sup>st</sup>	West Texas Rehabilitation Center Sporting Clays Event
April 9th	Registered Sporting Clays
April 29th	Boy Scouts, Texas Trails Classic Sporting Clays Event
May 13th	Registered Sporting Clays
May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Disability Resources Incorporated Sporting Clays Event
June 4 <sup>th</sup>	Registered Sporting Clays
June 17 <sup>th</sup>	Abilene Christian Schools Sporting Clays Event
July 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup>	Registered Sporting Clays Event
July 29th	Ben Richey Boys Ranch Benefit Event
August 19 <sup>th</sup>	Registered Sporting Clays Event
August 25 <sup>th</sup> , 26 <sup>th</sup>	Hendrick Home Sporting Clays Event
September 9 <sup>th</sup>	Children's Miracle Network "Legends" Sporting Event
September 14 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup>	NSCA Nationals Championship, San Antonio
To be determined	Meals on Wheels Sporting Clays Classic Benefit Event
October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Registered Sporting Clays
November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Registered Sporting Clays
November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Registered Sporting Clays



***Merry Christmas***

**From the Abilene Clay Sports Board of Directors**

### **ACSNews Classifieds**

Place your listings of sporting clays, skeet, or trap shooting equipment, guns, etc. that you have for sale here. E-mail Steve Ellinger at [sellinger4@cox.net](mailto:sellinger4@cox.net) on or before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month your listing.