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Burnaby Now
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Dear Editor:

Please consider this account of how I got my first rifle for publication as a letter to the editor or as a guest editorial.

I thought you'd like it because it has to do with Barnet Rifle Club which is in Burnaby.

When I turned forty, I decided it was time to reconcile with my father. He and I had been estranged since I was a teenager.

I knew this meant picking up a Christmas present he had given me when I was twenty years old: an old war-surplus Mauser rifle. I'd refused to accept it. At the time, I couldn't have cared less about rifles, history, or even my family name. I knew that he'd been hurt by my refusal to accept his present.

But I didn't know anything about rifles or Canadian gun laws. So, I'd have to learn. I soon discovered just how much there was to know!

I wrote to my father to tell him I would be down the next summer to pick up his old Christmas present. He didn't say much, but I thought he sounded pleased.

I called the RCMP to find out about what I had to do to take possession of "my" rifle. A friendly woman at the Coquitlam Detachment told me that I had to get a "Firearms Acquisition Certificate" [FAC]. The FAC cost \$50 to apply, meant the police had to investigate me, and it required that I pass a 12-hour course in firearms safety. She gave me a list of people who taught this course. In calling around, I discovered that prices varied from \$100 to \$275 for the firearms safety course. So, I signed up to take the course at Barnet Rifle Club, where it cost \$100, and I'd only have to wait two months for the next one to start.

After passing the course, I answered the 35 questions on the RCMP application form. Some of these questions were quite personal, some didn't seem to make any sense at all, but most appeared quite reasonable. I asked my wife and my employer to sign for me as two personal references are required, and took the completed application form, my passport photo, a certified cheque for \$50, and a certificate saying I'd passed the firearms safety course to the Coquitlam RCMP.

Three months later, I received my FAC in the mail from Victoria. Now I was ready to pickup my rifle. I hadn't realized how much was involved in getting a firearm in Canada.

When I picked up the rifle, boy was my Dad happy! He didn't say much, but he joyfully explained the history of the Mauser rifle to me.

To drive back home, I disassembled the rifle. I made sure it was unloaded, removed the bolt, and locked it in the trunk.

Since getting the old rifle back home, I've learned how to shoot it. At first, I was surprized how difficult it was to hit the bullseye at 100 yards! But with practice, I got to be a decent shot! When the rifle is not in use, I keep it locked up in the closet.

Was it worth it? Yes, I think it was. My father and I talk with each other now. I learned a lot about rifles, Canadian gun laws, military history, and myself.

This Christmas, I gave my son a rifle. I'm looking forward to shooting it with him.

Cordially,

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