



Tennessee Gun Parts

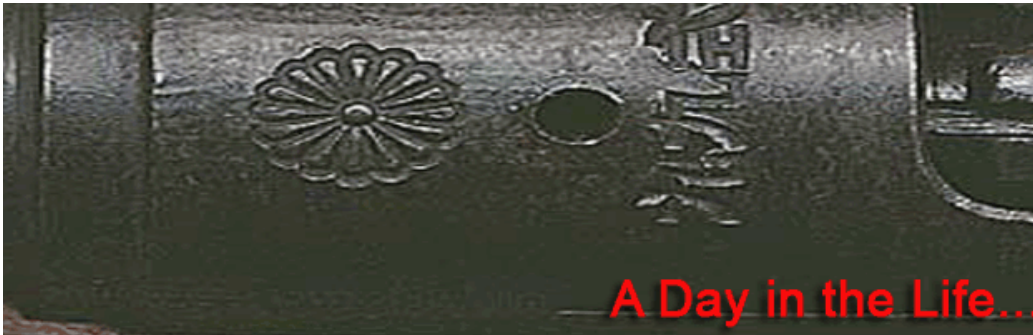


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Article by Mark Trope

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One might suppose my 'life' had several beginnings. The iron ore for my action, barrel, trigger, etc, was mined on one day. The tree that became my stock had been felled several years prior. But, I prefer to think my life began the day the last inspectors stamp was struck, and I was crated along with many more of my kind. I heard the inspector say that this last production lot of rifles was nowhere near and beautiful on the outside as the rifles made early in the war. Yet, on the inside, where it counted most, I was smooth, and well manufactured.

The crate I was in was hurriedly placed on a truck along with many other crates. The trip to where I would be issued to a soldier was a slow and arduous one. The American Air Forces pounded the industrial centers with almost total impunity now. The roads were in bad shape, and destruction was everywhere. Air raids were common. On the way to the delivery point, the driver had to stop the truck often at checkpoints. I thought we might never get there.

Finally we arrived. The crate was opened and I was issued to a young soldier. He, like all the other soldiers was reminded that the 'Mum' stamped on me made me the emperor's personal rifle. The soldier was to fight bravely, since he like all the others, held the emperor's personal rifle, and the honor of the emperor was at stake.

The young soldier carried me on a ship. It seemed that supplies of all kinds were in very short supply. Yet, the young soldier and his comrades were told they were chosen to deliver the smashing blow to the American, Australian and British barbarians. Not only were they to drive them out of the home islands, but, push them right back into the sea.

The young soldier wiped me constantly, and gazed at the Mum, it reminded him of his duty; he thought of the glorious victory that lay ahead, and he was a little ashamed of the seasickness that came over him. He thought that perhaps it was good there was so little food on the ship. What did a man with seasickness need of food? Besides, as all his

comrades remarked, after the great victory, there would be plenty of time for food, drink and women!

The young soldier carried me ashore. He and all his comrades were astonished to see the soldiers who had been there a long time. Their uniforms were ragged, and they all had a glazed look in their eyes. The old timers said little. They placed the newly arrived soldiers in defensive positions around the airfield. The young soldier was told to toss away my sliding action cover. He was told it made too much noise, and would give away his position.

I felt bad as he tossed away a piece of me, but I forgave him for that. All his fellow soldiers did likewise. They realized the old timers had survived numerous battles; and were only trying to train the youngsters, and extend their lives.

The young soldiers discussed among themselves when the battle would come. They didn't have long to wait. The US Navy began to pound the island with naval gunfire and wave after wave of aircraft dropped bombs. Ground troops moved in and began to squeeze the defenders a bit at a time.

The young soldier fired me time, and time again at the invaders that seemed to move almost ghost like among the jungle trees and brush. He told his sergeant that he was almost out of ammunition. The sergeant told him they were cut off from supplies, and to get the ammunition of a comrade that had died in the next foxhole.

The young soldier gripped me tightly as he scrambled to the next foxhole. He moved a bloody body and found the ammunition. Just as he was about to reload me, shots came out of the brush, and he felt a searing pain in his chest. His arms flew back, and as he lost his grip on me; I was flung out into the sandy soil.

A flamethrower clicked on, and I was slightly scotched on the right side of my butt stock. Mercifully, the young soldier who had carried me, and fought so bravely, was already dead before the flamethrower set his body on fire. I lay on the ground for the entire night while the few remaining defenders were slowly silenced.

In the morning, a US Soldier picked me up. I noticed many of the rifles that had been manufactured and shipped with me were now in the hands of US servicemen. I was a bolt-action rifle, quite different from the semi-automatic rifles the US soldiers carried. Yet, all were implements of battle and we did our jobs, regardless of what side we fought on.

The soldier who now held me wiped the dirt off of me and worked my bolt back and forth. He looked down my sights and at my muzzle. He commented to his friend that my caliber was smaller than their 30/06's, but that I seemed very sturdy. He said I was a fine war trophy. He seemed like a decent fellow after all.

Then I found out I was to be defaced one more time. It was required that my Mum be ground off as a gesture to the emperor. After it was done, the captain of the ship told all the soldiers that they would have to place all of our bolts into a drum. They could get a bolt as they left the ship in San Francisco. Thank goodness the soldier who had me tied a cloth around me with his name on it. I was reunited with my proper bolt in San Francisco; most of my fellow rifles were not so lucky.

After the US soldier separated from the military, I returned home with him. He showed me to his father and brothers. For almost a year I was in a gun rack along side civilian hunting rifles. Then in the fall, I was taken to a range and fired with some expensive, European hunting ammunition. That fall, I killed a deer, the next fall another.

I was luckier than many of my fellow military rifles. I saw some of them on the range. Many had their stocks cut off, or holes drilled in them for different sights, scopes, etc. I wasn't changed. The fellow that picked me up took good care of me. He put boiled

linseed oil on my stock. He kept my action and barrel clean and oiled.

Years passed, then decades. The fellow wasn't as young now, and he needed glasses. Iron sights were harder for him to see now. He had married, and had a family. As a Christmas gift he received a scoped sporter rifle. I was put in the back of a closet. When the closet was painted, I got a few small drops of pale blue paint on my stock.

Every few years I was taken out, and a few rounds were fired through me though. The fellow remarked that ammunition for me had gotten extremely expensive. But, he still liked to shoot me. I enjoyed going to the range and shooting holes in the paper targets.

As time went my owner was growing older and had some health problems and as a result he shot me less and less. He stopped hunting, and then stopped shooting. I was all but forgotten in the back of the closet.

One day I heard the family talking about a funeral, the fellow had passed away. Several weeks later the closet was cleaned out. The fellow's son took me to a store that sold military surplus arms. I was sold to the storeowner, and put on a rack with other military arms in the store.

I felt bad about all these changes in so short a time. But then, men who seemed to know a lot about me were holding me, and looking me over. They knew what arsenal had made me and knew my approximate time of manufacture! They commented that my action was one of the strongest ever made. They knew about my chrome-lined bore and even knew why my Mum had been ground off. These men made me feel better.

In less than a week, one of the men who came to the store almost daily purchased me. He didn't seem worried about the scorched spot on my stock, or the ground off Mum. I had a new home! Not only that, but he planned to shoot me in military rifle matches. He gave me the first proper cleaning I had had in many years. He hand loaded ammunition tailored just for me.

My new owner took me to a military rifle shoot. I was shot against M1's, Enfield's, Mosin Nagant's, K-98's etc. I get shot on a regular basis now, and I'm well cared for. I get to do what I was designed and made for: shooting! I really enjoy this new life.

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