

# New Military Veteran Concurrent

*By Susie Fluckiger*

Military skeet shooting began during the Second World War when skeet was used to teach the principles of aerial gunnery. The first “World Wide Military Invitational Championships,” a 200-targets 12 gauge event, was held the week before the 1959 NSSA Championships with an expectation to increase shoot participation. In 1961 the first Armed Forces Skeet Championships was held and attracted a total of 257 entries—the second largest NSSA skeet shoot of the year.

In 1975 the Armed Forces Skeet Association (AFSA) was born when NSSA President Lt.Gen. Kenneth E. Pletcher, USAF endorsed and seconded a motion by Commander Talbott to form the organization. Lt.Gen. Pletcher was elected the first president of the Association, Colonel Chub Madden, USMC, vice-president and Commander Cotton Talbott, USN secretary/treasurer. AFSA continues to run and govern the Armed Services Skeet Championship.

Col. Chris Naler currently serves as president of AFSA and has advocated for a more inclusive association via a new military veteran concurrent. I sat down with Col. Naler to discuss AFSA, the Armed Services Skeet Championship and the new military veteran concurrent.

**SSR:** *Did you ever meet Lt.Gen. Kenneth Pletcher, the first president of the Armed Forces Skeet Association?*

**CN:** No, I didn’t know him but I believe the DNA that began the Association continues to thrive through Ed Hughes, Cotton Talbott and Pat Knutson—some that served with Lt.Gen. Pletcher. I call Pat Knutson the Iron Man of AFSA. Pat served 14 years as the treasurer. Guys like him and even Mike Brazzell, NSSA’s historian as well as AFSA’s historian, keep the heart and soul of the Association in good staid and operational.

**SSR:** *When did you begin your term as president and what are your goals for the Association?*

**CN:** I began my two-year term in May at the 2013 Armed Services Skeet Championship. My major goal for AFSA is to make the Association more inclusive to all members of our military family. We do that by expanding our military portfolio from a dual entry membership to a tri-membership. For those who are currently serving in uniform, in active or reserve status, we have the military concurrent. Then we have our retired military, those who are retirement eligible through either a medical retirement or after 20 years of service. But the truth is only 12 percent of the military who serve ever become retirement eligible. What we have added this year, effective November 1, is that those who have served honorably, with an honorable discharge, regardless of the duration of their time in the military, qualify for the new military veteran (MV) concurrent. Now the Association will truly recognize all of NSSA’s service members—those currently in uniform, those that are retired and those who have served honorably for any given number of years. This provides three ways to recognize our military service.

There are a lot of NSSA members who served in Vietnam or were drafted during the Vietnam War; some served overseas and others were stationed in the States. They served their time and then moved on to be productive citizens. The population that served their four or six year contract, either in Vietnam or more recently, is now invited into our fold. Regardless of duration, we are interested in service. If they served honorably and can provide a DD-214, they can now shoot the Armed Forces Shoot as an MV and participate in their local state and zone shoots with their new concurrent. We’re excited to have the brotherhood and sisterhood of the men and women that served in uniform, or are still serving, come together once a year and renew bonds.

**SSR:** *Chris, what’s been the response from prospective MV shooters?*

**CN:** I appreciate that question. The emails and phone calls I’ve received in the last 90 days are humbling. Perhaps I’ll sum up one veteran’s comment because this reflects several sentiments, “For 30 years I’ve wanted to shoot the Armed Services Skeet Championship since I was discharged in the early 1980’s. I’ve already made my RV reservation and I’m bringing my wife and dogs to the shoot.” That’s a sincere gesture of the type of camaraderie of serving this great nation invokes to those fortunate to don the uniform. This veteran served honorably for four years post-Vietnam and has never forgotten his bond of service.

**SSR:** *Explain how NSSA members sign up for the new concurrent.*

**CN:** Let’s say you served two tours in the U.S. Army and recently honorably discharged and learn about the new military veteran concurrent. You show up at the Armed Services Skeet Championships and want to know if you will be eligible to shoot as a military veteran. Yes, you are. You will have a two-man team opportunity to shoot with another military veteran; maybe a buddy you haven’t seen since 1983 when you served together in the 101<sup>st</sup>. This new military veteran can shoot on the base/club teams as well.

**SSR:** *I understand NSSA renewal slips have added a MV box for members to check. The member must provide a copy of their DD-214, proof of honorable discharge. Let's say the NSSA member is a life member or six-year member and didn't request a change to their NSSA records. What can they do?*

**CN:** If the member hears about the new military veteran after renewal, he can to the registration desk of his first shoot of the year and show his DD-214 and say he wants to enter as a military veteran as well as an age concurrent. The individual in registration verifies the DD-214 and that member is then eligible and registered for the military veteran concurrent. Upon conclusion of the shoot, the shooter needs to contact Mary Masch at NSSA (phone 210-254-1519) with a copy of their DD-214 or DD-256 (certificate) scanned or faxed. Mary will then verify the information, and add military veteran to the individual's NSSA record.

**SSR:** *The 2014 Armed Forces Shoot will be held at NSSA's headquarters, the National Shooting Complex. With the addition of the military veteran concurrent, what do you expect as far as attendance?*

**CN:** We hosted the 50th Anniversary Shoot at the National Shooting Complex in 2010 and had the largest turnout we've had in probably a decade with a 150 plus shooters. We can attribute some of that to the location and some to the prizes—particularly the beautiful Kolar gun. In fairness, Texas and Oklahoma have some of the largest populations of military shooters we can draw from. Considering our record in 2010 and the new military veteran concurrent, my optimistic goal is 250 shooters. We will get the word out via our advertisement in *Skeet Shooting Review*, our website ([www.afsashoot.com](http://www.afsashoot.com)) and *Target Talk*.

**SSR:** *What are the dates for the 2014 shoot and when can members register?*

**CN:** Our pre-shoot is called the Pletcher Open, in honor of Lt.Gen. Pletcher. That will be begin at the National Shooting Complex on Friday, May 9 and run through Sunday, 11. It is a standard open 500-target event; anyone is eligible to shoot the Pletcher. Our main event, the Armed Services Skeet Championship, runs Monday through Friday, 12–16. It is open to military, retired military and now military veteran.

Based on a general membership vote, modifications were made to the bylaws and the spouse of a military member is now eligible to shoot registered targets. This is a significant change. Prior to this year it was targets only, but now they can shoot registered targets.

As far as registration, on January 15, referees can register on the website. On February 1, shooter registration opens; that is all web based on the Armed Forces Skeet Association website ([www.afsashoot.com](http://www.afsashoot.com)).

**SSR:** *How do you decide what club's will host the Armed Forces Shoot?*

**CN:** We recently changed our bylaws with regards to an east/west rotation, meaning east or west of the Mississippi. This year, based on participation, we're focused on military friendly venues that offer an environment for our guests beyond shooting venues. Currently our minimum requirement is eight fields. I'm optimistic 2014 will force us to review our minimum requirements.

**SSR:** *Is there anything unique about the Armed Forces Shoot?*

**CN:** We actually put together service teams. Each of the five Armed Services (we do actually have seven members when we include NOAA and U.S. Public Health Service USPHS into the uniformed service definition) muster a team. There is some friendly rivalry between the service teams. We also have an opening ceremony when the Armed Services teams march in formation and shoot an opening salvo; it's a nice way to kick off the tournament.

**SSR:** *I know in the past Remington has provided guns for prizes. Is Remington still a major sponsor?*

**CN:** Yes, Remington is a major sponsor through a discounted purchase program and we have several partners who donate prizes for our banquet: DuPont Krieghoff, Krieghoff International, Pacific Sporting Arms, Lonesome Charlie's, Kolar, Briley, Winchester, and Lewis & Burke Kolar Guns. We'll always welcome more partners for our annual shoot.

**SSR:** *Chris, I know you have campaigned for the addition of the military veteran concurrent. It is an exciting change to AFSA and I wish you the best of luck for a successful 2014 Armed Services Skeet Championship.*