

# The Guns of '95

*A preview of rifles and shotguns from Gray's shooting editor.*

by Terry Wieland

It is not often these days that a genuine *event* occurs in the gun business. Every year, new models come and old models go. Some may be news, but they are not *events*. This year, we have an *event*—the resurrection of the A.H. Fox double gun, a turning point, perhaps, in American shotgun history.

The new Foxes are being produced by the Connecticut Shotgun Manufacturing Company under the direction of Tony Galazan and Dick Perrett. Their guns are not reproductions and they are not look-alikes—they are a continuation of the old Fox line after a 46-year hiatus. Under an agreement with Savage Arms Company, Connecticut Shotgun Manufacturing is producing the Fox under the old patents, so it is mechanically and aesthetically identical to the original.

The new line is limited to 20-gauge guns in five grades based on old Fox catalogs; even the engraving patterns are the same. And the serial numbers pick up where Savage left off when it discontinued the A.H. Fox line in 1948.

The Fox guns date to 1905 when Ansley H. Fox gathered a group of investors to form A.H. Fox Gun

Company and market his latest and best design. In 1929 the company was bought by Savage Arms, which continued to make the original A.H. Fox guns until 1948.

The biggest factor in the demise of the Fox was the increasing cost of hand labor, which all fine doubles require in generous amounts. The new Foxes are made possible by a combination of ultra-modern

## The Best of '94

**THE SHOTGUN:** *The A.H. Fox Double-Barreled Shotgun, from Connecticut Shotgun Manufacturing Company.*

**THE RIFLE:** *A tie between the Winchester and Marlin Model 1894 Centennial limited editions.*

**THE SCOPE:** *Swarovski Optik's PH line of 30mm tube variables.*

**THE BINOCULAR:** *Swarovski Optik's new SLC Mark III.*

manufacturing methods and Tony Galazan's prodigious abilities as a toolmaker. Using investment casting to produce blanks as close as possible to finished dimensions and computer-controlled machining to reduce them to very fine tolerances, Galazan allows his staff of Austrian gunmakers to devote its precious time to finishing the guns rather than roughing them out.

The final products are, on average, better finished than were all but the highest grades of older Foxes. Although only 20-gauge guns are now available, plans for a 16- and

even a 28-gauge are in the works. There are no plans for a 12-gauge.

The lowest-priced gun, the Fox CE Grade, sells for \$5,650; the Exhibition Grade is \$25,000.

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to shoot a new Fox, I have looked at them and hefted them and I can assure you they feel more like a London "best" than they do a production double gun.

I don't know if we can thank the sporting clays deluge for all the fine new sporting and field-grade over/unders coming on the market, but everywhere you look there is a new gun or an old gun reconfigured to fit the subdued field image of sporting clays.

Take, for instance, Weatherby shotguns. They are well-made and beautifully finished and balance and shoot well. But the stocks have always left me cold because of the white line spacers and high-gloss finish. I can stomach these on a trap gun, but they are just not suited to a field gun.

Recently, though, Weatherby has moved away from slavish adherence to the California look in its rifles and shotguns, and you can now buy both the Athena (side-plate/boxlock) and Orion (boxlock) guns in a stylish "classic field grade" pleasing to my conservative eye. The rounded half-pistol grip is a feature others should copy from the Weatherby. For my money, it makes the gun.

Beretta can always be counted on to see a need in the marketplace and fill it with a good product. This year, Beretta has introduced four new O/U models, including one called the 686 Essential, billed as a "basic, no-frills gun at an entry-level price." Other new models include the Silver Perdiz O/U in configurations suitable for trap, skeet and sporting clays.

Similarly, Browning has a new