

AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF THE FORT ATKINSON MUZZLELOADERS, INC.

By

James E. Potter (1991, revised 2007)

No official records survive from the early years of the Fort Atkinson Muzzleloaders. The history of the club for most of the 1970s has been reconstructed from the memories of members and from secondary sources such as newspapers.

Rod Olsen is the only charter member of the club who still belongs in 2007. Rod, along with Dean Bidder and Ray Kyrol of Blair, signed the articles of incorporation on May 19, 1971. Bernie Hislop of Blair was another original member. According to Rod, the club had begun informally about 1970 and held shooting matches on the Chuck Jensen farm near Blair, and on property owned by the Kelly-Ryan Company of Blair. This latter property was about where the Blair McDonalds restaurant now stands. In the early 1970s the club began having its shooting matches at Twin Arrows, northwest of Fort Calhoun, which was a modern shooting range and auto racetrack. Meetings were held at various sites, including members' homes.

A flier that survives in the club records reveals that our club put on a "state shoot" Labor Day weekend in 1975 at the old Columbus range. Several FAML members also belonged to the Lost Creek Longrifles of Columbus and recall shooting there. In those days there was no formal state shoot program and various clubs decided on their own to hold so-called state shoots. The state shoot match program in 1975 was simple: Men and women's 25-50-100 yard rifle matches, open pistol and shotgun matches, and junior rifle matches. There's no record of who won.

There are no membership lists before 1979, nor records of who the officers were. However, the club had grown enough by the mid-1970s to sponsor the Memorial weekend shoot at Brownville, which had been started by Dr. Wendell Fairbanks (then of Auburn) in 1970. Through 1974 the Great Plains Muzzleloaders headquartered in Lincoln, with local arrangements by Wendell Fairbanks, ran the Brownville shoots.

The Fort Atkinson Muzzleloaders ran the Brownville Memorial Weekend Shoot for three years, 1975-77, with continued assistance from Dr. Fairbanks. These were the largest muzzleloading events held in Nebraska up to that time (and probably the largest ever), attracting shooters from five states. For example, in 1976 there were 175 registered shooters. The Brownville State Recreation Area was used for camping, and the range was located on land south of Brownville owned by Robert Sage. The highway that now bypasses Brownville runs through the old range area. The target frames were erected each year, taken down after the shoot, and stored in a building on the property. Almost every year it rained, turning the range and access road into a bog. Despite these drawbacks, most of those who attended these Brownville shoots look back on them as great times, and the basis for many friendships that survive to this day. For quite a few FAML members, the Brownville shoot was their introduction to muzzleloading.

Several former and current FAML members participated in those Brownville shoots from 1970-77, though they may not have been club members at the time. Virg Voss won the Seneca run at the very first shoot in 1970. Other familiar names show up in the lists of match winners published by the Auburn newspaper, including Dick Hedges, Dixon Herman, Rod and Gail Olsen, Gordy Whitcomb, Andy Russell, Ed and Kathy Wood, Jim Potter, Floyd and Rosie Moore, and Steve Schainost.

Because most of our members had to travel long distances to run the shoot at Brownville, the club voted to make the 1977 shoot its last at that location. The next year on Memorial weekend we sponsored "The Great Missouri River Spring Shoot" in the hills south of Blair at a development known as Oaken Ash. This was a cooperative venture with the Blair Chamber of Commerce and it included a barbecue, a flea market, and an evening concert by the Bluegrass Crusade band. A week before the shoot we built the range in a hollow on the property. Inevitably, it rained the weekend of the shoot. Ed Wood tried to drive his pickup into a gully on a trip down the hill to the range and had to be pulled out by a crawler. That shoot was a real mud bath. The aggregate prize was a Lemah rifle built by member Bill Ihm and won by Roland Luebke of Palmyra. We returned to this location in 1979 for a shoot May 19-20 and the aggregate prize was a Rod Olsen rifle won by Dixon Herman.

The club also began having a winter rendezvous at Fort Atkinson State Park in the mid-1970s. I think the first one was in 1975. The 1976 rendezvous was February 7-8, 1976, and the *Omaha World-Herald* ran a photograph in the Sunday paper showing several club participants including Andy Russell, Fred Gregerson, Rod Olsen, and Jim Potter. The *Lincoln Star* also ran a story about our camp that weekend. Muzzleloading events were unusual enough in those days to attract the media. The reporters always seemed incredulous that anyone would want to camp out in snow and subzero temperatures. At the early Fort Atkinson winter shoots the camp was down below the bluff on the old river bottom. There were a few shooting matches, some hawk matches, and sometimes a stew pot. Occasionally the weather was nice, but as a rule it was bitter cold. Plenty of Yukon Jack helped keep the internal furnace going. Old timers will recall the year Greg Kibbie sampled some "Indian Trade Whiskey" and had to scuttle back to his tent on all fours. After the Game Commission had reconstructed part of the barracks up above, we were allowed to camp there and use the fireplaces, as well as continuing the tipi camp below the bluff. The winter rendezvous was held at Fort Atkinson through 1985.

There is only scanty information about club officers in the 1970s, but some hints can be gleaned from newspaper accounts. Rosie Moore was the secretary during the Brownville years, and Rod Olsen was president in 1976. Gordy Whitcomb was also president in the late 70s.

Throughout the late 1970s the club looked for property for a range. We had regular monthly meetings that held the club together (Sax's Pizza in Fremont was the main location). About 1978 member Skip Harrington located some property to lease near Prague, Nebraska, and we had started to develop it for a range when we found out that we needed approval from the Saunders County Zoning Board. Despite the agreement of the landowner, other neighbors protested the plan and the board turned us down. We also installed a temporary range in a pasture in Washington County, which was arranged by member Floyd Moore.

Our officers for 1978 were Bill Ihm, president, Gail Potter, secretary, and Rod Olsen, treasurer. The best solution to our range problem seemed to be to buy some land and to raise funds, we decided to hold a gun show at Kennard. Rod Olsen secured the Kennard auditorium, which held about fifty tables, and we had our first show in February 1978. Chili and hot dogs were the main kitchen fare. The Kennard show seemed so promising that we also started a gun show at Davey, and held the first one March 3-4, 1979, on which we made a profit of \$225, despite a major ice storm that weekend. Bill Ihm was the Davey show chairman.

For the next few years, we put on two gun shows each year. In 1980 we

made \$587 at Kennard and \$1,094 at Davey. We were on our way to having money in the bank. In 1982 the Elkhorn Valley club offered to give us their fall gunshow in Fremont if we would eliminate the Kennard show in the future. That year, we did three gun shows, with our first Fremont show September 18-19. The last year for the Kennard show was 1982 and after the March 1983 Davey show, we decided that we should devote all our efforts to the show in Fremont. Starting in 1984, the Davey show was taken over by the Rock Creek Renegades.

The beginning of the end of our search for land occurred in the summer of 1979. Our officers that year were Greg Kibbie, president, Rose Kibbie, secretary, and Rod Olsen, treasurer. Greg located a piece of property on the Elkhorn River south of Winslow. After inspection and voting, we decided to purchase the property for \$23,900 on a land contract from Francis and Gloria Anderson of Omaha.

Before we could proceed, we had to go before the Dodge County Zoning Board and get approval for the land to be zoned for recreational use. Greg led a delegation to present our case, and because we had discussed our plans in advance with the neighboring landowners, we were able to gain their support at the public hearing. The zoning board approved our request on August 29, followed by the Dodge County Board in October 1979. We closed the deal in December and the first event at our new range was a 1980 New Year's campout, beginning a long-standing tradition. Attending this event were Ed and Kathy Wood, Bill Reynolds, Dale Parker, Skip Harrington, Gordy Whitcomb, and Jim Potter (and maybe others whose names didn't get into the newsletter). Of course, there was no clubhouse then, and the camping was truly primitive. Bill and Dale built a bark shelter about where the privy now stands east of the road in the woods. In order to make our annual payment of \$3,200, the club dues were raised to \$100 per year. The club then had thirty-one members.

As we move along in the story, it is possible to rely more upon the club records, which are mostly complete after 1979. After 1980 the club history centers on the range, and is known to many of the members. However, the highlights of our years as land barons are worthy of review.

The officers for 1980 were Ed Wood, president; Jan Whitaker Ihm, secretary; and Rod Olsen, treasurer. We revised the bylaws, which are essentially the ones we have today, adding the offices of range officer and activities officer. Our first range development involved putting rock on the road in the spring of 1980, and sinking a well. By fall, we were ready to hold our inaugural shoot. We had sixty-nine registered shooters and roasted a hog. (As I recall, it was very tasty.) In November, Wayne Robidoux drew up plans for a clubhouse, which was erected on January 24-25, 1981.

Ed was reelected president for 1981. Bryce Clifton was secretary; Dale Parker, the treasurer; Virg Voss, the range officer; and Wayne Robidoux, the activities officer. The 1981 winter rendezvous was held as usual at Fort Atkinson. We finished the clubhouse structure in April. Of course, it took a while longer to really finish it, but at least it could be used. We began holding our winter club meetings at the Farmers Mutual Insurance Company in Wahoo. In May we held a shoot on Memorial weekend. By November the minutes reflect the first discussion about riverbank stabilization, though up to that time, we had experienced no significant flooding.

Our 1982 officers were Chuck Reynolds, president; Bryce Clifton, secretary; Dale Parker, treasurer; Bruce Johnson, range officer; and Jim Potter/Steve Schainost, activities officers. We again held a winter rendezvous at Fort Atkinson, February 6-7, and a Memorial weekend shoot that attracted fifty shooters. In August we bought an Allis Chalmers tractor from the Eastern

Nebraska Gun Club for \$450. In September we did the Fremont Gun Show for the first time. Larry Voecks was the gun show chairman. We held our fall shoot on October 16-17 and decided to put in a bid for the 1983 state championship matches.

Chuck Reynolds was reelected president in 1983. The other officers were Dixon Herman, secretary; Dale Parker, treasurer; Bruce Johnson, range officer; and Jim Potter, activities officer. The year started off snowy. Rod Olsen and Jim Potter were the only members to make the New Year's Eve party at the range by walking in. The snow was a precursor of more precipitation that came in the spring. We again had our winter campout at Fort Atkinson. In March, neighbor Wilbert Mueller warned that our privy, then on the bank southwest of the clubhouse, was in danger of floating away. We had to cancel our spring shoot due to flood damage to the dike road. In order to repair the road we hired a contractor whose driver deposited a dump truck in the slough next to the dike road. Despite this temporary setback, considerable improvement was made to the road in the summer of 1983, though flood damage to the range forced us to relocate the state shoot to Cairo. The club did host the state shoot there over Labor Day. We made \$4,762. at our fall gun show, again chaired by Larry Voecks.

Elected as officers for 1984 were Steve Schainost, president; Dixon Herman, secretary; Creonne Harrington, treasurer; Bill Reynolds, range officer; and Wayne Robidoux, activities officer. Improvements to the interior of the clubhouse included the installation of bunks. The New Year's rendezvous was again plagued by snow, but Dale Parker ran a snowmobile shuttle to carry participants and supplies into the range. We were able to have the winter shoot at Fort Atkinson in February. At this time we began to hear discussion about an NRD project to stabilize the Elkhorn River. Our club was in favor because once again, our spring shoot had to be cancelled due to flooding. This definitely was not our year, because flood damage also cancelled our fall shoot. In August we put several feet of new soil on the dike road and worked into October repairing damage to the firing range, including moving the 100 yard targets between the 25 and 50 yard targets. From one to four feet of topsoil was deposited on the range by floods.

Officers for 1985 were the same as in 1984 except Kathy Wood, who was elected secretary. The club had continued to make its land payment while at the same time accumulating some reserve funds. In 1985 we refinanced the land contract for three years with an early payoff option. We learned that the NRD river project had been voted down, so we began getting our own rubble for bank stabilization. Two hundred trees were planted on the property. We held our winter shoot for the last time at Fort Atkinson. In May the dike road flooded again. By July we had fixed the road with rubble and expanded metal, spending some \$3,000. Our 1985 fall shoot, September 21-22, was the first at the range in several years. In December we voted to pay off the land. We then changed the dues structure to provide that only new members of two years or less would be required to pay the \$100 dues.

A new slate of officers was elected for 1986: Russ Dockweiler, president; Dixon Herman, secretary; Dale Parker, treasurer; Bill Strong, range officer; and Ed Wood, activities officer. Fred Stinemates and Bryce Clifton accepted the job as gun show coordinators for 1986 and continued in that capacity through 1988. The winter shoot was held at the range for the first time and we sponsored an indoor shoot at SHOTS range in Omaha in March. We were awarded the state shotgun matches. In March the dike road washed out, and was repaired with five loads of rock. The range was reseeded and the club

bought a Ford tractor, mower, and blade from Jim Potter. During the summer we put fourteen loads of rubble along the dike road. On August 16-17 we held the state shotgun matches at the Fremont Ikes with thirty-two shooters. Due to range damage there was no fall shoot.

The officers for 1987 were Russ Dockweiler, president, John Goldsberry, secretary; Elaine Dockweiler, treasurer; Bill Strong, range officer; and Ed Wood, activities officer. We were able to hold our winter shoot at the range on Feb. 21-22. There was a small flood in March but no serious damage. We had a summer shoot June 13-14. This was the year we put up a metal target shed, added the porch on the clubhouse, and built the berms behind the targets. The club bought a boat.

In 1988 Bill Reynolds became president; John Goldsberry and Elaine Dockweiler remained secretary and treasurer respectively; Steve Bunck was activities officer, and Dale Parker was range officer. The winter shoot was February 20-21. We purchased a flagpole for the Museum of the Fur Trade and one for the club. We planted more trees. A tree fell on our boat so we bought another boat. The club hosted the state shotgun matches again at the Fremont Ikes range on August 6-7. Virg Voss won the state shotgun title. In September we voted to build a tractor shed. Our fall shoot was October 15-16.

The only change in officers for 1989 was that Dixon Herman replaced John Goldsberry as secretary, and Gary Strong joined Bunck as co-activities officer. The year was relatively uneventful. The winter shoot was February 18-19 with nineteen shooters. The tractor shed was completed in April and May. A new gun show committee of Larry Goldsberry, John Mitchell, and Steve Bunck took over for the 1989 show. Our new flagpole was erected and the fall shoot was October 21-23. No flooding occurred this year.

Jim Potter became president in 1990 along with Dixon Herman, secretary; Russ Dockweiler, treasurer; Steve Schainost, range officer; and John Mitchell, activities officer. Unfortunately 1990 was a flood year. It began with the regular New Year's event, followed by the winter shoot February 17-18. In April we built a new firing line and declared Fred Gregerson's privy to be a historical site. In June came the rains, which destroyed the firing line, caused a washout on the bank, and damaged the Ford tractor. Fortunately the rubble helped keep major bank erosion to a minimum. In due time, and at considerable expense, repairs were made. The fall shoot October 27-28 attracted seventy-five shooters.

The only new officers for 1991 were Secretary Dennis Villwok and Activities Officer Ed Krause. Only one member (the president, Jim Potter) and his faithful dog made it to the clubhouse on New Year's 1991, walking in because of snow drifts on the range road. This situation persisted, forcing two cancellations of our winter shoot, which was finally held in April. We were able to gravel the firing line, reroof the Oval Office, and build a shower enclosure in May, followed the next month by our annual bath from the river. Moderate range damage was sustained. FAML had been awarded the state matches to be held at the Cairo range Labor Day weekend and the shoot was a success, with 137 shooters. The fall shoot was the last weekend of October, just before the first major snowstorm of the year.

As 1991 closed, the Fort Atkinson Muzzleloaders had forty-five members (families and individuals). The following list is the club membership from December 1981. Seventeen of these families belonged to the club in December 1991.

FAML MEMBERS DECEMBER 1981

Bryce Clifton, Fremont
 Frank "Oly" Coleman, Omaha
 Lyle Cubberly, Omaha
 Fred Gregerson, Bennington
 Chris Hagemann, Bellevue
 Rick Harper, Logan, Ia
 Skip Harrington, North Bend
 Rick Haneline, Kennard
 Dick Hedges, Lincoln,
 Dixon Herman, Omaha
 Bill Ihm, Davey
 Donnie Jensen, Blair
 Bruce Johnson, Papillion
 Greg Kibbie, Valley
 Warren Kohn, Omaha
 Harold Krueger, Fremont
 Steve McAllister, Gretna
 Don Major, Council Bluffs, IA
 Rod Olsen, Kennard
 Dale Parker, Omaha
 James Potter, Lincoln
 Mike Reinhardt, Lincoln
 Bill Reynolds, Omaha
 Chuck Reynolds, Omaha
 Wayne Robidoux, Lincoln
 Andy Russell, Lincoln
 Steve Schainost, Lincoln
 Bruce Schlaebitz, Papillion
 Steve Skog, LaVista
 Fred Stinemates, Fremont
 Jerry Stroud, Omaha
 Greg Thomas, Logan, IA
 Brent Thone, Blair
 Virgil Voss, Omaha
 Gordy Whitcomb, Fremont
 Ed Wood, Lincoln

The history of the Fort Atkinson Muzzleloaders since 1992 reflects continued improvements at the club range, and a high level of member participation in muzzleloading activities throughout the state. The stability provided by a permanent range, combined with a cadre of dedicated long-time members, is the secret to our success. This update will briefly summarize some of our achievements since the original club history was written in 1991.

Our 1992 officers were Dave Strong, president; Dennis Villwok, secretary; Russ Dockweiler, treasurer (who remained in this office through 1999); Bill Reynolds, range officer; and Fred Stinemates, activities officer. Longtime members Fred and Helen Gregerson were made honorary life members in March. We had our usual winter and fall shoots this year, without interference from Mother Nature, and our Christmas party was December 18 at the Holiday Lodge in Fremont. As before, our major fundraiser was the Fremont Gun Show in September, chaired by Larry Goldsberry and Steve Bunck. To encourage participation in club events, Ed Wood donated a fancy shooting pouch to be raffled, your name to be entered each time you attended a club activity. Larry Shenk was the lucky winner at the Christmas party.

Several officers were reelected for 1993, but Greta Herman became the secretary and Carl Eckhardt was activities officer. This year turned out to be

a "weather" year. The winter shoot was snowed out in February, snowed out again in March, then the range flooded when the snow melted. We had to spend \$1,800 on dirt work and range repair. We had flooding again in July. We did get in our gun show and the fall shoot. Longtime member Greg Kibbie died in November, and the club voted to make Rose Kibbie an honorary life member.

The year 1994 dawned with Rich Erlenbusch as president; Greta continuing as secretary; Andy Russell, range officer; and Steve Schainost, activities officer. The club voted to donate traveling trophies for the state subjunior and junior championships in memory of Greg Kibbie. (The trophies were presented at the state shoot.) In August we built three new privies to supplement the well-used "Oval Office," along with some new loading benches at the range. Our old tractors were tired and we started a search for a better one, to cost not more than \$2,500. In November we purchased a John Deere with a loader. We moved the Christmas party to KCs in Fremont this year.

All the officers were reelected for 1995. We decided to begin a tradition of holding a July 4th fun shoot, potluck, and fireworks event at the range. The event was well attended, everyone had a good time, and no one blew themselves up. The club spent some money this year to put ten loads of concrete along the riverbank. We also voted to bid for the 1996 state matches at Cairo when the state convention came around. Vern Livasy and Dave Strong took over the gun show from Larry Goldsberry and Steve Bunck.

Dave Fischman was elected president for 1996, with Peg Fischman as secretary, Dale Parker as range officer, and Dennis Villwok as activities officer. Russ Dockweiler continued as treasurer. We did receive the award of the state shoot for fall 1996, to be held by us at the Cairo range. We decided to present a senior state aggregate as a demonstration. This year we began hosting an annual proficiency test for hunters wishing to participate in the blackpowder season at Fontenelle Forest. Some range flooding in July prompted placement of 6 loads of gravel, 2 loads of rock, and 12 loads of concrete.

Our club ran the state shoot and presented traders bucks as prizes, to be redeemed at the state convention the next January. Our fall shoot was shut down on Saturday due to high winds. Ed and Betty Krause were made honorary life members.

Officers remained the same for 1997. Wayne and Gloria Robidoux were voted honorary life membership. Highlights this year for range improvements included extending loading benches the length of the firing line. The hallmark of 1997 was the fall shoot, October 24-26, which featured rain on Friday and Saturday and a major snowstorm Saturday night. Only a handful of members and guests showed up for the weekend, and those that stayed Saturday night awoke to a white landscape with falling limbs and crushed tents (ask Schainost). We had to have a work party in early November to cut up the downed limbs, though the worst of the storm hit to the south in Lincoln and Omaha. Some of the members struggled through snow to get home, only to find things were worse there.

We had a new officer slate in 1998: Jack Gewinner, president; Dave Strong, secretary; Andy Russell, activities officer; and Larry Goldsberry/John Gibney, activities officers. The weather pretty much cooperated this year and our regular events were held. The July 4 fun event featured a fish fry by member Phil Todd, who had caught some tremendous catfish off the bank at our range. Dave Fischman took on the job of building a custom rifle for a raffle celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of the United Nebraska Muzzleloaders Association, to be presented at the 1999 convention. Member Ed Wood was building a custom shooting pouch to go with the rifle.

All of last year's officers were reelected for 1999. The first big news was that Dixon Herman won the Dave Fischman rifle and Ed Wood pouch. During the year, we continued to discuss ways to encourage member participation and changed the bylaws to reduce the delinquent dues grace period from six months to three months. Our normal events included the winter shoot, the July 4 fun shoot, the Fontenelle Forest qualifying, the gun show, and the fall shoot. We featured a chunk shoot at the July 4th event this year.

Other noteworthy events of 1999 included Dave Fischman becoming one of the gun show chairmen, and the construction of a covering firing line at the range. Plans were also being made to extend the tractor shed. A major policy review of the club bylaws brought recommendations to increase membership modestly, to provide more ways to involve prospective members before they join, and a plan to require NRA membership as a condition of club membership.

The story of the club during the last seven years is briefly told, for most of our current members will remember it. The officers in 2000 were Dennis Villwok, president; Connie Gewinner, secretary; Greta Herman, treasurer; Chris Hagemann, activities officer; with John and Steve Gibney, range officers. The winter shoot was February 12-13. We voted to require mandatory NRA membership for each club member and instituted an applications/questionnaire for new prospective members. Dave Fischman and Dave Strong were the gun show chairs. In April we made an addition to the tractor shed. This was our first summer to use the covered firing line. Jason Parker, a former member as a kid with his parents, Dale and Sharon, was the first person with a FAML background to compete in the Olympic Games as a member of the U.S. shooting team in Australia. Chris Hagemann became the first known FAML member to win medals at the NMLRA national shoot.

In 2001 we had the same officers as last year. Longtime member Virgil Voss moved to the southland, and became an honorary member. The winter shoot became a spring shoot this year. FAML entered a team in the NMLRA Charter Club postal shoot, consisting of Dixon Herman, Jim Potter, Chris Hagemann, and Dave Fischman, which took second place nationally. Our Christmas party was held for the first time at Farmer Brown's in Waterloo.

Jim Merriman became president in 2002, along with Peg Fischman, secretary; Greta, treasurer; Chris Hagemann, activities officer; and Carl Eckhardt and John Gibney as range officers. Buck Miller and Bill Reynolds became honorary members. The club hosted the state shoot at our range for the first time. We were dismayed to learn at the Christmas party that our president, Jim Merriman, had been diagnosed with ALS.

Despite his illness, Jim continued as club president in 2003, and was joined by Cindy Fife as secretary. Greta Schlabs (new name, same Greta) continued as treasurer, with Curt Dockweiler and Doug Schlabs as activities officer and Carl Eckhardt as range officer. Larry Goldsberry became an honorary member. At the range, we placed railroad ties for our shooting frames. In the summer we held a shoot at Ft. Calhoun as precursor to a similar event scheduled for 2004 as part of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial festival.

Dixon Herman was elected president for 2004, along with Russ Dockweiler as secretary. The other officers remained the same. In addition to our regular spring and fall shoots and the gun show, Bill Reynolds coordinated the special shoot at Fort Calhoun in late July for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial festival.

Officers for 2005 remained, except Rod Olsen, assisted by Gordy Whitcomb, took over the activities duties. We were saddened this summer by Jim Merriman's passing from ALS; he had been an active and valued member of the club for several years. Our normal shoots and gun show proceeded. The membership voted to reduce the probationary membership period from two years to one, and raise the dues for regular members to \$75 per year.

Curt Dockweiler was elected president for 2006, and Dale Parker too over as secretary. Bob Baustian was elected range officer but had to resign due to being diagnosed with cancer. Matt Clark took over his position. Bob died in early summer, about a year after the death of his good friend, Jim Merriman. This year marked our entry into the digital age with the creation of a FAML club website.

In 2007, the year this update is written, our president and secretary are Curt and Dale, and Matt remains as range officer. Russ Dockweiler and Gene Pearson are the activities officers. We considered,

but turned down, an opportunity to buy 30 acres adjoining the range on the north. Just prior to the fall shoot, new, larger windows and a new door were installed in the clubhouse. And Dave Fischman and Dave Strong, along with Peggy Fischman and Sue Strong, continued their yeoman service as the gun show "families."

The Fort Atkinson Muzzleloaders, Inc., measured from the date of our incorporation, is approaching forty years of activity. We have owned our range since late 1979, and have survived and prospered through floods, snowstorms, and the oddities of human nature. We have seen members come, go, and come back again. We have lost several to that range where no shot is less than a 10X.

Much of our success is due to the members' dedication and friendship over all these years. Of the families in the club as of December 1981, sixteen are still on the membership roster in 2007, either as active or honorary members. Most of these members/families have been in the club continuously since 1981, and several since the 1970s.

Appendix: The Fort Atkinson Muzzleloaders have long had the reputation as a "shooting" club. Oddly, we have sometimes been criticized for being interested in shooting muzzleloaders! Go figure. Nevertheless, our competitive nature (friendly though it is) has been a big factor in our longevity, and in the many improvements that have made our range what it is today. Evidence of our interest in shooting can be found in the following list of FAML state champions since the inception of the UNMLA state shoot in 1980. (Names alphabetical in each category.) (I hope no one has been missed!)

State Championships by FAML Members Rifle and Pistol Matches

Overall Champions

Russ Dockweiler - 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006
 Rich Erlenbusch - 1993,1997
 Dave Fischman - 1995
 Larry Guerra - 1983 (not a FAML member then, but a member now)
 Jim Potter - 1998, 2003
 Andy Russell - 1980, 1989, 1994, 1996, 2001
 Larry Turpen - 1990 (not a FAML member then, but a member now)

Women's Champions

Cindy Fife - 1996
 Connie Gewinner - 1989, 1994, 1995, 1998
 Patti Russell - 1982
 Greta (Herman) Schlabs - 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007
 Bobbie Turpen - 1990 (not a FAML member then, but a member now)

Senior Champions

Dixon Herman - 1996, 1997, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006,
 2007
 Bob Teal - 2002, 2004

Sub-Junior Champions

Josh Moore - 2006
 Meg Russell - 1994

Junior Champions

Brittany Fuller - 2007
 Jason Jeck - 1999

Young Adult Champion

Dustin Jeck - 2000

Shotgun Matches

Virgil Voss - 1988