

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

# Outdoors

Phoenix, Sunday, April 5, 1970 ☒○

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**BEN AVERY**



## Hood's reward well deserved

An Arizonan, Milt Hood, president of the Tucson Rifle Club, was honored here last night as outstanding National Rifle Association rank and file member in the nation for 1969.

The honor was given Hood during the 99th annual meetings of the nationwide sportsmen's and shooters' organization.

Naturally, I am prejudiced because I nominated Milt for this honor. But the ovation he received justified his selection for work in building the new Three Points Public Shooting Range at Tucson, and his many years as a high power rifle shooter on the Arizona civilian team at Camp Perry and at tournaments throughout the West with the Tucson Rifle Club.

Milt is chief engineer for the Pima Mining Co., at Tucson, and is studying at the University of Arizona nights for his master's degree in mining engineering. A former Marine, he got his engineering degree at the UofA under the GI Bill of Rights after World War II.

During the annual members meeting, a report was made on growth and development of the NRA over the past 10 years. I well remember the board of directors meeting 10 years ago when first plans were laid for observing the 100th anniversary of the NRA in 1971 — next year. At that time there were 325,001 members, virtually all competitive shooters. We thought then we would be doing well to reach 500,000 members by 1971 and set that as a goal.

But two years later Sen. Thomas Dodd started his antigun campaign and in three years NRA membership topped 500,000, and a new goal of one million members was set.

We topped the million mark in 1968, the year antigun forces took advantage of the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy to pass Dodd's bill. As of the end of 1969 membership totaled 1,007,080, reflecting loss of around 100,000 members in the past few months.

But NRA's work has grown tremendously. Its annual budget is up from \$2,170,000 in 1959 to \$7,106,600 in 1969.

Marksmanship courses were up from 483 a year to 1,226; students graduated from 12,638 in 1959 to 81,840 in 1969; instructors certified grew from 52,707 to 117,933; the number of hunter safety graduates grew from 824,806 to 4,557,006.

The number of classified shooters increased from 108,591 in 1959 to 161,607 with the biggest gain coming in pistol shooters from 37,227 to 63,987.

It takes a lot of work to handle the frequent changes in classification of this many competitors, and to handle the records of 486 high power rifle tournaments, 878 smallbore tournaments, 1,399 pistol tournaments, 54 shotgun tournaments, plus air gun and international tournaments held each year, in addition to training activities, club activities and publishing the American Rifleman magazine.

As a result, the NRA headquarters staff grew from 160 to 284.

This 99th annual convention of the NRA has two big tasks. One is planning for the greatest shooting competition the organization has ever undertaken — the 40th World Shooting Championships to be held this fall in Phoenix. The other is planning for next year's observance of the 100th anniversary of NRA's founding by a group of New York State National Guard members in 1871.

At the World Shooting Championships in Phoenix the NRA will host shooters from all over the world. Some 2,000 of them are expected. This will be a fitting prelude to celebration of the 100th anniversary of organized marksmanship training in America.

Programs for the world matches were mailed just ahead of this convention, and the NRA has budgeted a total of nearly \$1 million to make this one of the greatest world matches in history.

This means a great deal to Phoenix and Arizona because our Black Canyon Shooting Range will be in line for other great international matches if ability to conduct such an event is proven.