

# 'Siluetas Mexicana' Proves Boon To Tucson Rifle Club

By TOM FOUST  
Star Outdoor Editor

A shooting sport that has been popular in Mexico for 30 years has finally spread across the border and it may be the greatest thing that ever happened to the Tucson Rifle Club.

"A year ago we were down to 25 or 30 members," frankly admits Milt Hood, president of the Tucson group. "We had just finished the Three Points Range and to tell the truth we needed some new blood to help support it. We had to admit to ourselves that straight competitive target shooting wasn't going to do the job; we needed something to drag in more participation by the average sportsman."

Rod  
And  
Gun

As it turned out the "something" the Rifle Club needed was "Siluetas Mexicana." Hood, who says membership in his club has jumped to nearly 100 during the past year, is convinced this type of shooting may be the savior of rifle clubs all over the country.

According to Fernando Hage, president of the Cananea Rifle Club, the business of shooting at targets shaped like animals began around Mexico City 30 years ago, only then they used the real thing rather than life-sized targets cut out of iron. Sheep, goats, pigs and chickens were staked out at varying distances; the first shooter to draw blood got the animal.

"The Mexican Federation, which is the same as your National Rifle Association, didn't like using live animals," explains Senor Hage, "so they switched to paper cutouts. But punching holes in pieces of paper didn't satisfy the shooters. They finally began using metal silhouettes that would fall over when they were hit.

"Now silhouette shooting is big all over Mexico. We even have inter-club national matches."

It's been said that silhouette ranges in some of the larger Mexican cities like Mexico City and Guadalajara are quite elaborate with electrically operated targets and grassed ranges where contestants relax at tables and are served their favorite refreshments by white-coated waiters while they await their turn on the firing line. As is usually the case at Mexican events, a gala fiesta atmosphere prevails.

Senor Hage says they began shooting silhouettes in Cananea 10 years ago but it has only been in the last six years that the sport has really boomed. A league was formed by clubs from Cananea, Agua Prieta, Naco and Nogales and regular matches were scheduled every two weeks between spring and fall when hunting seasons are closed.



## Tough Targets

Adalberto Arvisu, president of the Nogales Rifle Club, prepares to shoot at sheep targets 500 meters away during a Mexican silhouette shoot last Sunday at the Three Points Range. Shooters are restricted to standard hunting rifles and they must shoot offhand.

javelinas at 300 meters, turkeys at 385 meters and sheep at 500 meters.

Contestants take 10 shots at each of the four species making for a total of 40 shots. They are scored on the targets they knock over, 10 points for each hit. In some events the course is cut in half with five shots at each species.

Mexican Federation rules are strict. Rifles are limited to standard hunting weapons (.30-06 and .308 seem to be the most popular) with no more than eight-power scopes. All shooting is offhand.

seconds, which is all the time the rifleman has to get off five shots. The distance is 400 meters.

"Another appealing factor," points out Hood, "is that you don't need expensive target rifles, shooting jackets or any of the other equipment associated with competitive target shooting. The same rifle you use for hunting will do."

Bill Taylor has been named chairman of silhouette shooting for the Tucson Rifle Club.

Several Tucson shooters began participating in the Mexican matches. That's how the Tucson Rifle Club hit on the idea of using silhouette shooting to breath new life into the club. It worked so well that this year Tucson was granted membership in the league.

"The Mexicans have been very helpful," says Hood. "They invited us to participate in their league and they have gone to the last mile to help us get started. When we hold a match up here we can always count on good participation from Mexico."

This was quite evident at a league match last Sunday at the Three Points Range. There were 80 contestants, a good portion of them from Sonora. Phoenix was represented, too.

The Tucson range, much like all silhouette ranges, is set up like a shooting gallery. The targets — 10 of each species — are placed at varying distances, chickens at 200 meters,

It looks easy, but scores indicate that it's not. Shooters are classified either A or B. A Class B shooter who hits 10 targets in two official matches is promoted to the A ranks and there he stays regardless of his future scores. A rifleman who hits half of the 40 targets can usually figure on taking home a trophy. Last Sunday, for example, Ruben Castillo of Cananea overcame a strong wind to score 18 hits and was awarded the high individual trophy. The best anyone has ever done on the Three Points range is 25 out of 40 by Doug Campbell of The Tucson club.

"In this type of shooting you're only limited by your imagination," says Hood. "For instance if all you had was a 100-yard range you could set up a .22 cal. silhouette match using maybe rabbits, crows, chickens or whatever."

In Mexico they sometimes include pistol shooting in matches. Senor Hage tells of a challenging innovation with a moving sheep silhouette. The target travels 150 meters in 38

"I wasn't a member of the Rifle Club before," Taylor says. "My friends and I are hunters rather than target shooters. We found that we were running out of space to sight in our rifles so when the Rifle Club started this silhouette program we joined. Now we're really wrapped up in this thing."

In addition to the league matches — two each at the five league cities — the Rifle Club schedules special silhouette events like the husband-wife team competition coming up May 10. All events, even the league matches, are open to non-members.

Hood, who recently returned from the National Rifle Assn. convention in New Orleans, says as far as he knows Tucson and Nogales, Ariz. are the only cities in the United States where silhouettes are currently being shot.

"Considerable interest was expressed in silhouettes at the NRA convention," Hood says, "and we have had requests for information from other states, but I don't know of any other silhouette ranges in the United States right now. Phoenix is considering a range and I know of at least one club in California that's quite interested."

The Mexicans are anxious for the sport to catch on in the United States.

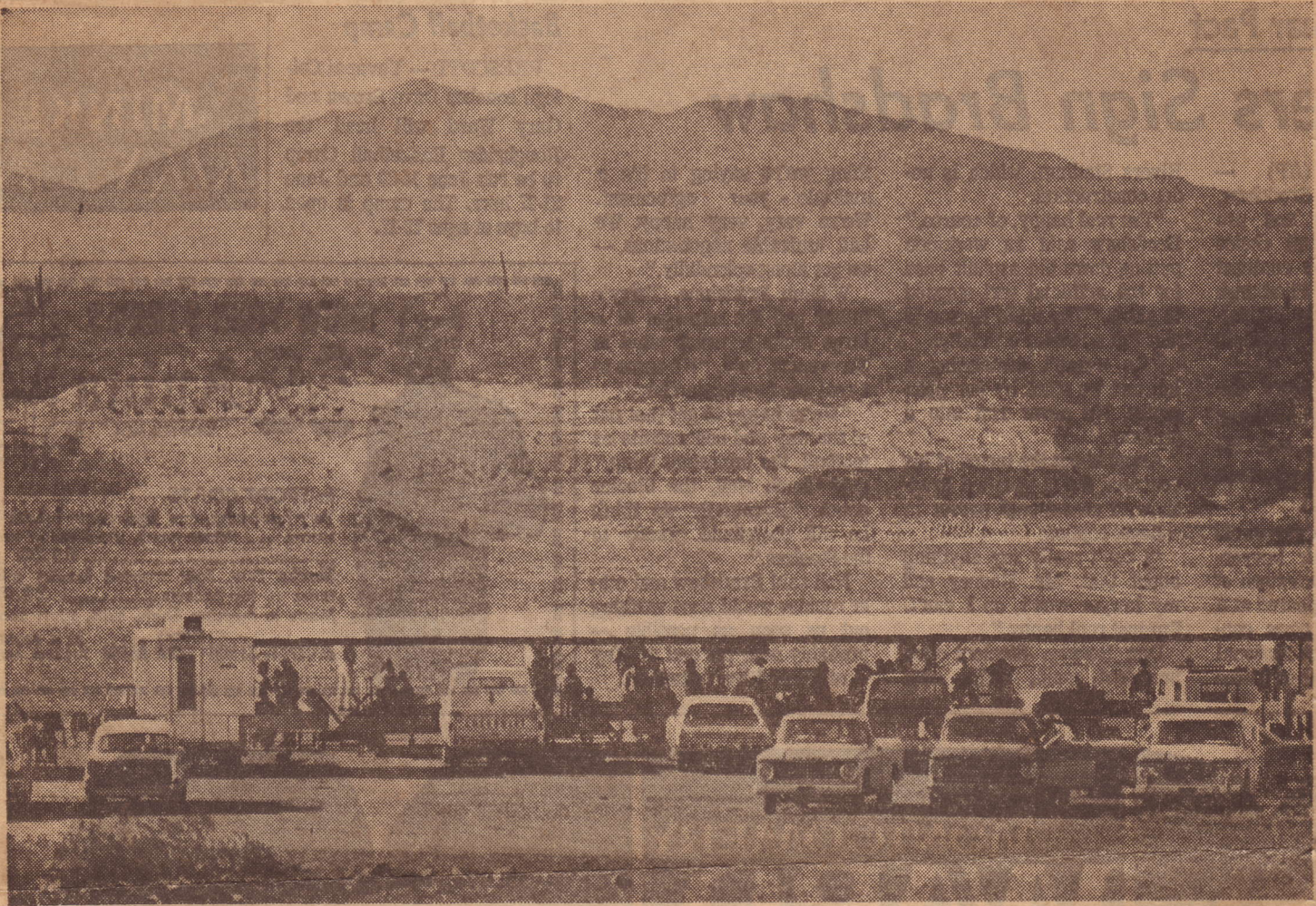
"We hope the United States picks this up," says Adalberto Arvisu, president of the Nogales, Son., club. "It's very popular in Mexico. It's a shame cities like Bisbee and Douglas don't get something started."

"I'm convinced that as time goes on Rifle Clubs are going to find they need more than straight competitive target shooting," says Hood. "They are going to need greater participation by the average sportsman and the average sportsman is going to find he needs a place to shoot. Siluetas Mexicana is a great way to bring dynamic new blood into a club. It has been a real boon for us."



## International Meeting

Milt Hood, president of the Tucson Rifle Club, chats with officers of five Mexican rifle clubs during a Mexican silhouette shoot at the Three Points Range last Sunday. From left to right are Hood, Jose Chon, president of the Agua Prieta club; Ruben Castillo, secretary of the Cananea club; Armando E. Valenzuela, president at Naco; and Adalberto Arvisu, Nogales president. Castillo was high individual shooter for the day with 18 hits. Tucson won the team trophy.



## *Mexican Silhouette Range*

The Tucson Rifle Club's Mexican silhouette range at Three Points is set up much like a shooting gallery. At the left are chickens at 200 meters, on the right javelina at 300 meters, in the middle turkey at

385 meters and in the distance sheep at 500 meters. The targets, cut out of iron, are close to life size. There were 80 contestants from Arizona and Mexico at last Sunday's shoot. (Tom Foust Photos).