

WOMEN AND GUNS—PERFECT TOGETHER!

BY PAUL RAYNOLDS

Having had the privilege to be invited to the NRA's Women's Wilderness Escape as a pistol instructor in 2009 and 2010, I can tell you that this is a wonderful event! Women from every corner of the nation and from every walk of life gather at NRA's Whittington Center in New Mexico for 10 days of shooting every type of firearm imaginable.

Volunteer instructors similarly arrive from all points and immediately come together to start the laborious but very rewarding task of organizing and setting up our respective ranges; pulling gear and guns from storage, settling into our accommodations, renewing friendships with returning instructors and forging new friendships with the "rookies."

Then the guests arrive and are chock full of energy and raring to go! There are 100 women who are divided into tribes and assigned a schedule of which ranges they will visit over the next eight days. Everyone eats together at Whittington's renowned Shotgun Center and this gives instructors and guests a chance to mingle, trade stories, find coincidences, watch the abundant wildlife and relax.

After breakfast, the ladies disperse to their ranges and the fun begins! The pistol range is staffed with some of the best instructors in the country and our course of fire started with S&W .22 revolvers and then FN Five-Seven pistols. Many of the ladies were new to guns but all worked hard to master the fundamentals of pistol shooting.

Along with pistols, the guests visited the shotgun, .22

rifle, muzzle loading and archery ranges; all staffed by an incredible group of talented instructors. But the best was yet to come. The NRA provided, courtesy of FNH, a fully automatic rifle range and a high power scoped rifle range, as well!

Firing full auto produced wide smiles that took hours to fade. Yours truly also worked on the scoped rifle line where each guest fired at silhouette targets starting at 100 yards culminating with shots at the "White Buffalo" silhouette at a whopping 1,100 yards. As some of you can attest, "calling the wind" at 1,100 yards is a challenging proposition to say the very least. Yet, woman after woman came up and rang a .308 BTHP off that buffalo, creating ear-to-ear grins that may be indelibly etched on their faces forever!

All in all, the women had a great time and I would strongly urge the ladies out there to attend this unique event. After all, where else can you go to experience camaraderie, firing all sorts of firearms and meeting wonderful people, all in a beautiful and awe-inspiring setting?

For the instructors reading this, please consider applying to volunteer at WWE next year. You will be asked to work 12-14 hour days, and be away from your family and job for two weeks. You will be exhausted and your talents will be tested but it will be the best time of your life. Trust me, I've been there twice!

To find out more about the next event to be held in September 2011, go to www.nrahq.org/women/wilderness_escape.asp. ■