



Dealing With The Neighborhood Dealer

Acquiring a Clean, Classic, Enfield Number 4 MK2

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I love it when a retail gun store opens, especially one that openly courts the Mil-Surp shooter. It's great to have a place to stop to in at lunchtime or on your way home from work. When the same group of fellows check in there all the time, it can get real friendly. Swapping loading data, showing off tight group targets, discussing who is the guy to beat at the next match, who just got a new truck, and talking guns, guns, guns! Now, in no way does this parallel what happens when our wives go to the beauty shop...any similarity is strictly coincidental, of course. ☺

The gun shop owner will order Mil-Surp rifles from the large wholesalers, but better than that, many individuals will come in and sell the store a Mil-Surp arm they no longer have a need for. In this way many interesting and unusual pieces that may no longer be readily available get back into circulation. It's great when a rifle that hasn't been on the market for 8 or 9 years is back on a gun dealer's rack.

Dealing face-to-face has the advantage of a buyer giving a prospective purchase that critical hands-on inspection. Of course there's no guarantee a clean gun will be a great shooter, but then again, neither will most new-in-the-box sporters hold MOA! Often, the dealer may get several examples of a certain model arm from an estate sale. The customer gets more choices this way. Estate sales or collectors who decide for whatever reason to either dispose of an entire collection, or simply thin out duplicates is a real treasure trove for the man looking for high quality Mil-Surp arms.

It was such a situation that lead me to Randy Ward's West Texas Military Surplus, 2413 – 34th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79412. 1-806-785-GUNS, westtexasms@sbcglobal.net

The Lee-Enfield bug had bitten me...hard. When it comes to bolt-action, magazine fed, Mil-Surp rifles for rimmed bottleneck cartridges, British Lee-Enfields are the best of the breed. Randy acquired a private collection and hooked me up with a super-clean Lithgow

SMLE, Type 1 MK III*. I couldn't have been more pleased with this rifle.

When I was ready for a No. 4 MK2, Randy had no less than 3 prime examples in the store. Talk about hard decisions! All 3 rifles were extremely clean & functional. All of them would have qualified as "special select" from a wholesaler. If a rifle is being acquired to shoot, then the barrel is the prime consideration. Sharp, clean, lands & grooves and a good crown are what make a barrel. Cast bullets of several different sizes can be carried in the pocket and tried in the muzzle as a "field gauge" for land and groove size. Next are the action, bolt, safety, trigger & sights. Last is the stock. In this case it was a toss up. The one with the best trigger got a new home.

One of the unique things about working with a neighborhood Mil-Surp gun dealer is it allows one to build a relationship with the dealer. This is hardly possible with a mail order wholesaler. When your neighborhood dealer knows exactly what your tastes are, he will keep you in mind and give you that all important "heads up" phone call when something on your "must have" list comes in. I know fellows who have enough trust in their dealer so that when the dealer calls and describes a gun over the phone; that call alone is enough to secure the sale, sight unseen.

Working with a neighborhood Mil-Surp gun dealer has other advantages. One can always do trade-ins or work out lay-a-way and payment plans. Most gun dealers are also collectors. Often a customer may acquire, or get a lead on a gun that the dealer is looking for. One can only imagine the mutual benefits from helping the dealer get that much sought after piece that is on his "must have" list.

Besides the fact you can quickly add to or thin out your Mil-Surp collection; working with a local dealer can be just plain fun. Check him out. As Humphrey Bogart said to Claude Rains at the end of "Casablanca": "Louie, This could be the start of a beautiful friendship."

It almost sounds like...

I'm disparaging mail order from large wholesalers by C&R holders. Not at all, for some fellows (holding a C&R) mail order may be their best option.

Most large mail order concerns are quite honest as to the way they rate the quality of guns. A buyer should be aware of a company's reputation, and their return/exchange policy before ordering.

In many locales there may not be a Regular FFL holder that carries Mil-Surp arms, or be inclined to handle them. In cases such as these, mail order is a great thing.

Of course, the Fed-Ex and UPS driver will get to know you (and your significant other) quite well.

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