

Guns of My Father



By Mike Detty

December 7th, 1941 is a date that will always be remembered as one that tested our country's mettle. In the three- and one-half years that followed Americans cemented their place in the world as a leader, liberator and compassionate ally. Beyond that, our country flexed its industrial might producing unimaginable amounts of war materials, faster and in numbers that our enemies could have never predicted.

Japan had awakened a sleeping giant and vastly underestimated the will and resourcefulness of their chosen enemy. The generation that had lived through a devastating depression and were used to getting by with less were ready to sacrifice even more. The attack on Pearl Harbor united our country like no other event.

A young Marine Sergeant assigned to the Sixth Defense Battalion on Midway Island was supervising his battery, repacking the gear work of his 3" anti-aircraft gun with grease on December 8th, 1941. "Dog" battery had engaged countless Zeroes and when Japanese destroyers steamed into range, they started slamming rounds non-stop into them. The 3" guns' grease had liquified and run from the elevation and windage gears. Not only had the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on this day but they also laid down a barrage on Midway and Sand islands, strafed and had intended to land troops until steady and accurate fire

dissuaded them. They had underestimated the resolve of the Marines and the two Japanese destroyers turned tail, abandoning their invasion. Several men were lost in the December 7th attack on Midway, but it could have been much worse.



Above: Mike's father Sgt. Detty in WW2

Over 3500 miles away, in San Diego, a 16-year-old high school sophomore had her older brothers help her assemble a rabbit hutch to supplement the family meals when meat was rationed. Weekends often involved her and her friends from the school flag team pulling wagons through their neighborhood collecting scrap tin, rubber, brass and even silk. Everyone pitched in with the common goal of defeating the evil of the axis.

Sergeant Detty was still on Midway for the second, larger naval battle in early June 1942. Historians agree that Japan never recovered from the losses suffered in this battle. Most of the troops had been on the island for over a year. They were recalled to Hawaii and the 2nd Marine Division was reconstituted, reequipped and reinforced for future island-hopping campaigns. Detty turned in his old doughboy helmet for the new GI steel pot and traded his Springfield '03 rifle for a brand-new M-1 Carbine. Not long after returning to Hawaii Detty received orders for a week of leave at his home in Goodland Kansas before traveling on to Quantico Virginia for a two-month Warrant Officer class. When he returned to Hawaii, he was a Commissioned Warrant Officer-a rank that usually required years and years of Marine service.



Above: Sgt. Detty with his issue 1903 Springfield Rifle

Before the war started US Army Ordnance sent out a request for a carbine to be used by support staff and officers that would increase the hit probability over that of a handgun and have an effective range out to 300 meters. The weapon should weigh no more than 5 pounds and be semi-automatic in operation. Winchester ballisticians developed the .30 Carbine cartridge before a weapon had even been designed to shoot it. Though several companies submitted prototypes for consideration it was a rifle developed by Winchester, using David "Carbine" Williams floating gas piston that was selected. Standardization of the M1 Carbine was approved just 6 weeks before the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Midway islands. Production began in August 1941 and ran to August 1945, accounting for over 6 million rifles.

From the carbine's 18" barrel the 110-grain FMJ bullet develops approximately 1990 feet-per-second velocity and generates about 967 foot-pounds of energy. That's roughly twice the energy of a 230-grain FMJ .45 ACP round leaving the Thompson submachinegun's 10.5" barrel. The M1 carbine weighs half of what the Thompson did and the cartridges themselves weighed half also. M1 carbines were initially issued with 15-round magazines.

Auto-Ordnance is now manufacturing beautiful facsimiles of the M1 Carbine. It should be noted that while there were originally 10 different companies that produced carbines during the war years, Auto-Ordnance was not one of them. New rifles produced today include zero surplus parts. Each and every component of the gun is of new manufacture, and the result is an aesthetically exquisite and handy carbine capable of excellent accuracy and is sure to appeal to every martial arms collector!

My test sample sports a beautiful walnut stock with what collectors call the "low wood" design and it has an oval, rather than "I" cut for the sling and oiler. The stock appears to be the happy medium between a "straight" stock and the "pot belly" variety.

Its handguard is the earlier 2-rivet model and the Auto-Ordnance M1 also has the early style, flat top bolt. And its safety is also the early style which pushed right to left to go off “safe”, like a cross bolt safety on a hunting shotgun.

The gun has the original flip style rear sight with two apertures, one for 100-yards and the other for 300-yards. It has the early style Type 2-barrel band with sling swivel and Auto-Ordnance parkerized the metal parts a matte, non-reflective black.

Trigger pull on my test sample registered at 6.5 pounds, exactly what you’d expect for a military long gun. There’s some creep in the take-up and some over travel but it is predictable and serviceable. Because of my range limitations I was forced to bench the test gun at 50-yards and use the issue iron sights. All groups were fired from a seated rest using a DOA Tactical portable shooting bench and a Caldwell rifle rest for support. Five shots were fired for each group and three groups were fired with each load. The best group is listed in the accuracy table.

AMMO	VELOCITY	ENERGY	GROUP
Federal Power-Shok 110-Grain Soft Point	1954	932	1.22”
Magtech 110-Grain FMJ	2023	999	1.37”
Remington 110-Grain Soft Point	1976	953	1.34”
AVERAGE			1.31”



Above: Mike Detty at the range with the Auto-Ordnance M1 Carbine

You can see that the Auto-Ordnance carbine has plenty of inherent accuracy. My test rifle shot to point-of-aim and ran well with every ammunition I tried. There's just something fun about shooting a five-and-a-half-pound centerfire rifle! I was able to fire some very quick double taps with the Auto-Ordnance carbine and found it to be a quick handling weapon. Its recoil is negligible but, like I mentioned earlier, the .30 Carbine round generates twice the amount of energy than a .45 ACP round from a 10.5" barrel. Stoked with the right loads it is a perfect ranch/ATV gun that should handle every chore it is tasked with. Even without a sling it carries like a dream and one-handed carry is effortless. The M1 carbine doesn't have the intimidating looks of an AR-15 and in that respect might even make sense for a patrol carbine for a law enforcement officer or natural resources agents in areas where political correctness trumps common sense.

MANUFACTURER	Auto-Ordnance Auto-ordnance.com
MODEL	.30 Caliber Carbine AOM130
OPERATION	Semi-Automatic
CALIBER/CAPACITY	.30 Carbine, 15-Round magazine
OVERAL LENGTH	35.75"
BARREL	18"
WEIGHT	5.4 Pounds
SIGHTS	Blade front, Flip Rear Sight with 100-yard and 300-yard Apertures
STOCK	Walnut
FINISH	Metal Parts Parkerized
ACCESSORIES	One 15-Round Magazine
WARRANTY	One-Year
SUGGESTED RETAIL	\$1,387

Once back in the Pacific theater CWO Detty was given a new assignment as a Joint Assault and Signal Corps (JASCO) unit leader. His new job required him to land in the first wave of island landings, pinpoint strategic targets and direct Naval and aircraft fire onto them. In addition to the M1 carbine he was now issued a 1911A1 .45 that he carried in a chest rig that positioned the gun over his heart. Guadalcanal was mostly secure by the time he returned to theater, but it served as the perfect training ground for future island invasions.

Designed by John Moses Browning, the 1911 pistol was adopted ahead of the first world war and saw its first action with the military with Black Jack Pershing's punitive expedition into Mexico in 1916 in pursuit of Pancho Villa. In 1926 the pistol was rebranded the M1911A1 and outfitted with shorter triggers, reliefs cut in the frame, an arched mainspring housing, longer grip safety tang and shorter hammer spur. These changes were made in an attempt to help those with smaller hands shoot the gun better and prevent "hammer-bite" where the web of the hand is pinched between the grip safety tang and the rear of the

hammer. In all, over 2.7 million 1911 pistols were manufactured in its service life which stretched from 1911 to 1985 when officially replaced by the Beretta M9 pistol. But I can almost guarantee you that you'll still find 1911s in the armories of our most elite military units.

During the rush to arm American troops during WWII several different manufacturers, including Colt, Remington-Rand, Ithaca Gun Company, Union Switch & Signal and, believe it or not, Singer (the sewing machine manufacturer) produced M1911A1s. While these wartime 1911s are collectible and expensive, Auto-Ordnance is producing their version of the historic "Ol' Slabides" pistol with some modern updates.

Externally the Auto-Ordnance 1911A1 looks very much like its military counterpart. It sports a very utilitarian matte black finish and brown plastic grips just like the WWII gun. Its all-steel construction will give veterans and reenactors that old familiar feeling, but Auto-Ordnance has outfitted their pistol with a Series 80-style firing pin safety designed to prevent an inertia firing of the gun if dropped on its muzzle. This passive safety places a mechanical block to the firing pin unless pressure is placed on the trigger.

Auto-Ordnance also uses a slightly elongated thumb safety that allows the shooter to more easily engage and disengage it. It is not technically correct for this period weapon but a very nice update for anyone who would want to use this pistol for defensive carry. For that same reason Auto-Ordnance throats the barrel to allow use of modern defense ammo including hollow points. Unfortunately, at least for my testing Auto-Ordnance decided to stick with the M1911A1 tiny sights.

After firing my first group I went back to my car and got a pair of "readers" that I normally keep handy for reading restaurant menus. My second group was half the size of my first and I was actually pleasantly surprised by the amount of accuracy the Auto-Ordnance M1911A1 possesses. I fired all groups at 25-yards from a seated rest utilizing a DOA Tactical portable shooting bench and rested the gun's dust cover on a Millett BenchMaster for support. I fired three, 5-shot groups with each ammunition and the best group is listed in the accuracy table.

AMMO	VELOCITY	ENERGY	GROUP
Aguila 230-Grain FMJ	852	370	2.21"
Colt National Match 230-Grain FMJ	819	342	1.85"
Federal 205-Grain Syntech Defense	865	340	2.12"
AVERAGE			2.06"



Above: Mike Detty shooting the Auto-Ordnance GI 1911

For an untuned 1911 right out of the box this amount of accuracy was unexpected. Like the M1 carbine, the M1911A1 proved 100% reliable with every ammunition fired. I was impressed with the fit between the slide and frame and also the precision with which parts such as the grip safety and thumb safety were fit. If you value history as much as American craftsmanship and ingenuity, the Auto-Ordnance M1911A1 will appeal to you!

MANUFACTURER	Auto-Ordnance Auto-ordnance.com
MODEL	1911A1, GI Specs SKU: 1911BKO
OPERATION	Semi-Automatic
CALIBER/CAPACITY	.45 ACP, 7 + 1
OVERAL LENGTH	8.5"
BARREL	5"
WEIGHT	39 Ounces
SIGHTS	Standard GI; Blade Front, Drift Adjustable Rear
GRIPS	Brown Checkered Plastic
FINISH	Matte Black Finish
ACCESSORIES	One 7-Round Magazine, Cable Lock
WARRANTY	One-Year
SUGGESTED RETAIL	\$925

In San Diego the young girl graduated high school a year early and started taking classes at nearby San Diego State college. Both of her brothers were officers in the Army Air Corps and were stationed overseas. In her spare time, she helped out at her father's medical practice and also at her mother's drug store.

CWO Detty made it through the Tarawa invasion relatively unscathed, though it was costly in terms of Marine casualties and devastating to the Japanese. Nearly all of the 4500 enemy soldiers were killed in the four-day operation. Suicidal nighttime banzai charges were costly yet repulsed by well-entrenched Leathernecks. "Bodies stacked up like cordwood around our fighting holes," the elder Detty once told his son. "If my carbine ran dry, I'd fire my pistol and throw grenades. Lulls between the charges gave us a chance to reload and get ready for the next wave."

Detty's luck ran out on Saipan. On the third day of the invasion, while directing Naval gunfire from a destroyer's 8" guns, the concussion from an enemy shell burst knocked him from the smokestack of a sugar beet refinery. The coconut trees that broke his fall also broke his back but saved his life. The war was over for Detty, and he'd eventually be evacuated to the Great Lakes Naval Hospital in Chicago where he'd spend 9 months in a body cast. He'd still be there on V-J Day (September 2, 1945) and later recounted that he put aside his feelings of guilt for not being with his buddies on Tinian and Okinawa and replaced them with a fondness for clean sheets and pretty nurses.

Sidebar

"Providing you can make the teams you'll practice and work out all day. The evenings will be yours. A lot of guys take night classes at nearby San Diego State University," said the recruiter. It sounded like Heaven to Detty. Play sports for the Marines and get a college education and get paid to do it.

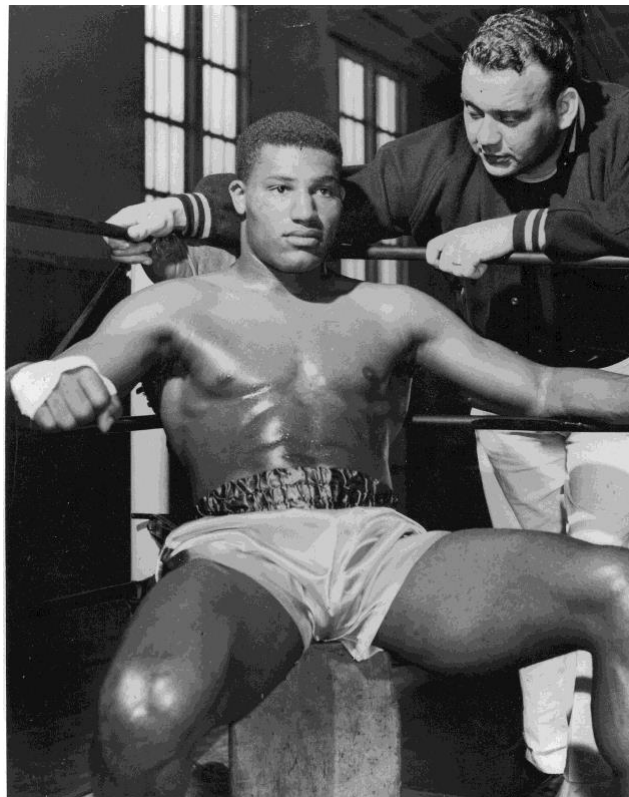
For a kid from a small farming town in Northwest Kansas this would be his ticket out. In 1939 there weren't a lot of job opportunities, and he craved excitement, travel and adventure. The Marine recruiter in Denver hadn't lied to him. After boot camp Detty made the Marine Recruit Depot boxing and football teams and even took some night classes at San Diego State. But when the winds of war started to blow Detty was transferred first to Hawaii and then on to Midway. He'd be there for the attack on December 7th, 1941 and also for the larger battle six months later. Commander of "Dog Battery", a 3" anti-aircraft unit Detty turned his sights on two Japanese destroyers that sailed into range on December 7th. "We could see troops lined up along the railing. There was no doubt they were going to invade Midway. We started slamming shells into the ships as fast as we could fire. After bombarding and strafing the island they were not expecting that level of resistance and sailed away."

Tarawa was a tough one, Detty admitted. "To see the bodies of my friends bobbing in the surf was a sight that's never left me. I'll never forget the smell and the noise. It was hell on

earth!" After the invasion was completed, every Marine passed through the makeshift cemetery to see the names of fellow warriors lost in that battle before reboarding the transport ships. "It was overwhelming," he once said.

Throughout his Pacific actions Detty continued his college education via correspondence courses, when mail caught up to him. After Saipan his hospital convalescence allowed him to rack up college credits. After his discharge in 1946 one of his doctors opined that Oregon's climate might be just the ticket to help recurrent bouts of malaria. Detty graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in physical therapy and became a licensed physical therapist.

Alone and without a family Detty was able to follow his dreams. He was re-enlisted, this time into the Army and helped coach the All Army boxing team prior to the 1948 Olympic trials. At one point in time, he was on the old Chicago Cardinals taxi squad. When he ran out of money, he'd find a prize fight somewhere. Being involved with sports is what made him happy and in 1950 he found his dream job at the Naval Training Center in San Diego. Detty was hired as a boxing coach and athletic trainer. In 1952 one of his boxers, Ed Sanders, became the first black American to win an Olympic Gold medal in the Heavyweight division.



Above: After the War, Sgt. Detty coaches boxer Olympic Gold Medal boxer Ed Sanders

But his luckiest achievement while at the Naval Training Center happened while walking home to his apartment one day. He caught the eye of a pretty brunette working the lunch counter of her mother's drug store. She'd later say, "He made a habit of stopping by for a free cup of old coffee and conversation. Mom didn't mind as she was a huge sports fan and loved to hear his stories." The two were married after a short courtship and started their family that would eventually include four children.

In 1962 Detty would be hired by the Philadelphia Eagles as their Head Athletic Trainer. It was a tough job and he'd often get home after the kids were asleep and leave in the morning before they got up for school. He'd make up for it though in the off season by taking the kids pheasant hunting and fishing.



Above: Sgt. Detty as Head Athletic Trainer for the Philadelphia Eagles

Detty was recognized for his injury treatment and rehabilitation protocols. Always an innovator, he designed several pieces of equipment that are still found in training rooms. Using scraps of neoprene from a wet suit manufacturer and his wife's old sewing machine he invented the world's first neoprene sports medicine brace. Years and many patents later he'd leave the Eagles to run his own company that manufactured neoprene sports braces. At one time he employed all of his 4 children.

Life turned out pretty special for the young kid from Goodland Kansas and he often credited the Marine Corps years for testing his mettle and shaping his "never quit" attitude. Through it all he never once felt sorry for himself or believed that he was owed anything for his service. That seems to be a common thread with folks from the Greatest Generation! God bless them all!