

Capricious By Nature

She can be tremendously attractive; other times not so much. Sometimes she's all you hoped she would be. When you can find her sweet-spot, she performs beyond all expectations.

But suddenly and without warning she goes psycho, becoming impossibly obstinate. You catch glimpses of why you fell for her; even sometimes approach the old magic. But your rhythms are out of synch. She embarrasses you in front of your friends.

Occasionally you reconcile your differences in a frenzied performance that leaves you awe-struck, and you remember why you fell for her. Unfortunately such intercourse comes all too sporadically. You wonder if she's worth all the frustration.



***Skin deep** – Even the loveliest of springers can be unruly psycho-bitches from hell! This lovely little thing had the funkiest trigger and rudest firing behavior of any springer I've ever shot.*

Then a new little thing catches your eye. You divorce the familiar for strange, and the cycle begins anew. You're afflicted with Springer Fever!

Such has been my on again, off again relationship with spring-piston airguns for almost a half-century. Alternately loving and hating them, yet never fully understanding the secret of their bewildering allure. In frustration I swear off them completely, only to be lured back by some mysterious siren song. Or is that a spring-piston twang? I glimpse their potentials and dream of molding them to my ideals, only to meet with failure. The pattern recurs- love, hate, repeat; hope, disappointment, repeat.

There are recurring themes. Harsh-shooting 'magnums' are replaced by mild-mannered guns which are replaced by compromises. Therein lays the quandary. Most springers exhibit certain endearing qualities, yet few meet all hopes and expectations. So the quest for the perfect springer continues in fits and starts. About the time you think you've tamed the spring-piston beast, it finds another way to kick your ass!

I'm not alone in my spring-piston torment, as borne witness by field-target competitors dumb or courageous enough to contest the piston divisions. Though owning three of the most FT-capable spring rifles ever produced, a buddy who will remain anonymous often struggles to keep just one of them in service for any given

competition. In fact at one championship he had to borrow a fellow competitor's rifle for day two of the competition. Virtue of his talent and resiliency, Leo prevailed for the win.

Again (inexplicably) dreaming of competing in the piston divisions but keenly aware of aforementioned buddy's calamities, I picked up a Theoben Evolution gas-piston rifle. Hopefully some mechanical ills can be avoided by eliminating the steel spring altogether! Time will tell if I can persevere enough to actually use it for field-target.



***FT capable-** After ironing out a few kinks, the Theoben Evolution gas-piston rifle seems less temperamental than its steel-sprung relatives. Five-shot 50 yard groups consistently go into 1".*

Very recently I found my dream spring-piston sporter on an internet auction site. Though far from cheap, when Springer Right comes along, one mustn't daudle. I didn't. Beautiful inside and out and as smooth and agreeable as this ol' geezer imagined a spring-piston sporter could be, she's definitely The One. Behold, Luscious Lucille...



I'm not alone in considering the Fienwerkbau 124 one of the finest spring-piston sporters of all time. That it was discontinued in the 1970's only inflates its reputation, desirability and market value. That Lucille was endowed with all the correct refinements by the seller increased that value considerably. Such anointments as the well-figured Steve Corcoran walnut stock, Dave Slade internal tune, and blued-steel muzzle weight and trigger-guard by Rick Eick don't come cheap. However the sum of the parts came considerably cheaper than could be replicated. And this is a case where the whole is

greater than the sum of the parts! She shoots as well as the well-sorted Theoben Evolution above; which is to say beyond belief. **No, I don't sleep with her!** You sick-o.

An upshot of increasing PCP popularity is a softening of the piston-gun market, making for some fine bargains. In taking advantage of several deals too good to pass up I've lately gone from springer devoid to piston prolific. Some recent acquisitions:



This highly customized BSA Airsporter S rifle is not particularly shooter-friendly.



The lovely little BSA Supersport XL proved very unforgiving of shooting technique.



Power and utility notwithstanding, the vintage Walther LGV possesses many fine qualities.



This R-7 features a Corcoran stock, Maccari spring, buttoned piston and fluted barrel sleeve.



This Maccari-stocked, Dave Slade-tuned FWB 124 represents excellent compromise, well done.

Competition aside, spring-piston issues are not intolerable for most shooters. Springers serve many airgunners well enough. But they can be **maddening!**

Though I'm enjoying my little stroll through Springtown... mostly, I realize spring-piston sporters may not be the best match for unstable personalities. In order to avoid my nineteenth nervous break-down (and another stay in the nervous hospital), I find I must monitor my spring-piston dosage closely.



Spring-piston pistols like this Webley can induce conviption fits in even the sanest of pistoleros.