

# Before Clay, Trap Shooters Used Glass Target Balls

If you happen to find a small glass ball in your attic or barn, it might be worth a bit of money. Before trap shooters shot clay targets they shot glass target balls, about 2 3/4 in. in diameter. The first balls were made in 1876 and became very popular at shooting exhibitions and events during the 1880's in the U.S. and overseas. Slightly smaller balls, called gallery balls, were used for traveling shows. The glass orbs were made up until the 1920's, when someone figured out that clay disintegrated, unlike glass, which left fields unsuitable for livestock or human use.

Still, glass was preferable to the live pigeons used before that, says Ralph Finch, a target ball collector and publisher of the *On Target* newsletter, who is writing a book detailing the history and value of target balls from the 1870's to the 1890's.

The shortage of pigeons and distaste for seeing dead pigeon parts littering bloody fields after an exhibition led to the change to glass. The first record of shooting them was in an English newspaper mentioning blue glass orbs at a shooting exhibition.

"Glass balls provided an even match, because they were thrown by glass ball traps so everyone was shooting equally," Finch notes, whereas live pigeons flew erratically.

The target balls sold for just over a penny each and were commonly amber or blue.

They were typically shipped in barrels of 300 orbs packed with sawdust.

Some shooters had special glass orbs made. Famous shooter Ira Paine used feather-filled target balls - his substitute for shooting at live pigeons.

"Annie Oakley was said to have had silk ribbons in her target balls," Finch says, adding other balls were filled with confetti, sawdust, water - anything cheap.

"Most any glass company could make them, although the Bohemian Glass Works, circa summer 1878, boasted selling 'one million and a quarter' since the previous August," Finch adds.

Manufacturers embossed different designs on the balls, with the most famous being the pigeon target ball, for which Finch paid nearly \$30,000, when it was thought there was only one of them. Later, two more were discovered.

Prices vary greatly depending on the rarity, but even common blue and amber balls are worth \$100 to \$150 to collectors who live all over the world. Target balls can be found for sale on eBay and through the American Glass Gallery ([www.americanglassgallery.com](http://www.americanglassgallery.com)).

Through his target ball and trap collecting and research, Finch discovered many stories about how orbs were shot placed on people's heads - usually the wife of the shooter. One



Glass target balls were made from the 1870's up until the 1920's. Some shooters had feather-filled balls made (left) as a substitute for shooting at live pigeons.



Glass ball at left was filled with wood shavings. Besides collecting target balls, Ralph Finch also collects target throwers like the one above.

graphic account relates how a man missed and shot his wife in the forehead at a matinee exhibition with families present. Another story revealed the wisdom of one woman who filed for divorce when her husband wanted her to place target balls on her head.

Target ball enthusiasts appreciate the colorful history, and Finch invites readers to

contact him for more information.

"I admit that I have no idea how or why target balls took over my life," Finch says. "But one has to accept one's fate!"

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## She'll Write A Book Telling Your Story

Parents, senior citizens or adult children looking for a personal holiday gift may want to consider a special offer by therapist and writer, Beth Lord. She will interview, collaborate and print a book about your life or a specific area of your life for \$197 through Dec. 31, 2018, compared to the regular price of \$585.

"It's a price point most people can afford," Lord says, adding it is also a good way to get the word out about her services.

"Thin books (about 8,000 words) are powerful. I like the thinness because it's not intimidating," she says. "It takes 30 minutes to an hour to read the book. You can put it on the coffee table, and people can read what they are drawn to."

The words come directly from the person she interviews over a couple of hours, then transcribes, and finally edits to capture their key phrases, energy and spirit. The final product is a book that includes the story and photos provided by the subject.

Lord's interest in telling stories started in fifth grade when she begged her parents for a tape recorder. She received one for Christmas and taped her grandmother.

The first interview that she wrote into a story was with her great-grandmother as part of a high school class assignment that earned her an A+. But it was much later, after decades of experience as an occupational therapist and practitioner of a variety of therapies, that she wrote her next story. It's about Otis, a lost bloodhound that wandered onto her property. After he left and returned again, she was able to find his owner and learn his story that he had a brain injury, which made it impossible for him to find his way home.

"I had to make a book out of it," Lord says, and it caused her to recognize a spiritual calling to help people tell their stories.

Some are legacy books, such as the one for Rose, 98, who died when the book was in the proofing stage. Other books chronicle each year of a child's life. Some clients tell the story of how they survived trials like cancer or made self-discoveries during dark periods of their lives.



Beth Lord will write a book about your life for just \$197 through Dec. 31, 2018.

Lord interviews people in person at her Seattle home or by phone or through a Zoom video meeting.

Clients receive proofs, and adjustments are made before Lord prints the final book. Clients also receive access to an eBook (to print themselves) or can get extra copies for an additional fee.

Lord offers other book options, including showcasing a business, having a group of people tell their story and helping parents record memories of their children through a series of books.

Eventually, she wants to teach others how to interview and write the books so that more people's stories can be documented. To learn more about her and her services, Lord suggests checking out her website, reading her blogs and signing up to receive her newsletter.

The process usually takes two months from interview to book. Clients who call early enough in November may have books in time for Christmas. The special price of \$197 is good for all orders before the end of the year. Books will be delivered in 2019.

"I feel like I'm the caretaker of this," Lord says. "We make sense out of our world when we tell our stories."

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Scott Carroll sells a kit that lets you build this 1/4-scale steam engine, which looks like a real Case 65 hp. model.

## Build Your Own 1/4-Scale Steam Engine

Scott Carroll has the plans and parts needed to build your own 1/4-scale steam engine. Carroll couldn't find plans when he wanted to build his own. When he finally located them, he couldn't find the castings needed. When he did, he decided to make them available to others as well.

"I looked for castings for 6 months before I was told about molds for making the parts in Canada," says Carroll. "I located a foundry. They keep the patterns and pour high quality castings for me."

Carroll sells plans and castings for a Case 65 hp., 1/4-scale steam engine. A DVD with boiler and steam engine plans as either PDF's or blueprints is priced at \$300. For \$5,000 a wannabe steam engine operator gets a kit of more than 50 grey iron castings, not including pieces like a water pump or other off-the-shelf parts.

These are not bolt together parts, but pieces that require extensive machining to exact dimensions. They also may require slight modifications, not to mention certain skills and special tools.

"To build a steam engine, you have to know how to weld, use a vertical mill and use a 14 by 40-in. metal lathe," says Carroll. "You also need to build your own boiler or have someone do it for you. I use a boilermaker who has been doing it for more than 35 years. Kits can be ordered with or without a boiler."

Carroll advises customers to build the



Kits can be ordered with or without a boiler.

boiler first and then get a set of wheels under it so it can be moved around as needed. "Then you add pieces to it as you turn them out on the lathe or mill them," he says.

It is a lengthy process. "I sold a kit to a man who is a diesel mechanic," recalls Carroll. "He has a 15-year old son he wanted to teach about steam. They have a project to work on together for several years, but when they are done, they will have accomplished something together."

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