

# ACSNews

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ABILENE CLAY SPORTS  
STEVE ELLINGER, AIA

JANUARY 2006



## Dallas' Ladd Webber Wins the Santa Clays Classic



Event winner Ladd Webber and Lee Baldwin

### Posts an Impressive 95 on the Scoreboard!

Dallas Gun Club member **Ladd Webber** received an early Christmas gift by winning the Abilene Clay Sports Santa Clays Classic Sporting Event. Ladd racked up an impressive score of 95 to win the annual holiday tourney. A near perfect day of shooting with seasonal cool temperatures of 55 degrees made the day a true pleasure. Targets were set by ACS General Manger Don Dunn and were regarded by many to the best ever at ACS! The fried catfish lunch served as a delicious break between the morning and afternoon shooting rotations. The event drew 42 competitors. Look for other winners in this holiday classic below. Congratulations to Ladd and the other winners of this fun tournament! ACS first event of 2006 is January 8<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendars now!

### Santa Clays Classic Sporting Event Winners

Master: Ladd Webber  
AA Class: Mike Rogers  
A Class: Roger Bush  
B Class: H.T. Gleason  
C Class: Mike Webb  
D Class: Royce McWhorter  
E Class: Garrett Fairbanks  
Hunter: Richard Greenawalt  
5-Stand: Frank Sanchez



### ACS Loses Longtime Member

Mr. John Richardson, longtime active member of Abilene Clay Sports passed away on Friday, December 17<sup>th</sup> after a long illness. Our prayers and thoughts are with the family.

### ACS to Exhibit at Sports Show!

Abilene Clay Sports will be exhibiting in the first ever Abilene Youth Sports Expo on January 7th at the Abilene Civic Center. ACS will staff a booth during the event that will showcase our organization to all attendees of the event. Sports organizations that promote baseball, basketball, golf, soccer, tennis, and now clay target shooting will meet the public, show what we have to offer, and hopefully sign new members and participants to our great sport. Again, ACS is partnering with the community to make Abilene a better place to live.



Janice Griffin and Donna Lewellen during the Santa Clays Classic on December 11th

## New Officers Elected for 2006 at Abilene Clay Sports

A new slate of officers has been elected to serve as the Board of Directors during the 2006 year at Abilene Clay Sports. The following were elected during the annual membership meeting held on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

<b>President:</b>	<b>Steve Ellinger</b>
<b>Vice-President:</b>	<b>Ron Batts</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Dale Scoggins</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Brian Huntley</b>
<b>At-Large:</b>	<b>Doug Krietler</b>
<b>At-Large:</b>	<b>Mike Webb</b>
<b>Past-President:</b>	<b>Frank Sanchez</b>



Steve Ellinger, President



Ron Batts, Vice-President



Dale Scoggins



Brian Huntley



Doug Krietler



Mike Webb



Frank Sanchez

## Abilene Clay Sports Member Profile Mr. Frank Sanchez



**Frank Sanchez** likes to break things. His ability to break clay targets is well known, but he also likes to break records, such as holding the longest continuous office of the President of our organization. Frank is also the unofficial "club chef" offering his culinary skills to an always hungry membership. Frank is originally from Colorado City where as a boy he enjoyed a tremendous amount of hunting and fishing with his friends. *"We all grew up together, in a small tight knit rural town where hunting was one of the only things to do."* In 1978 Frank moved to Abilene where he attended McMurry College playing football for the Indians and earning a Medical Technology degree in 1983. Frank is the director of the diagnostic lab at West Texas Hospital.

Frank's first clay target was broken as it sailed off his brother's hand trap. The guys would make a trip to one of the local ranches and spend the afternoon breaking the clays. Frank enjoyed the activity, but admitted that they did not have a diverse knowledge of the clay target sports, or even an idea of how he would go on to become one of the most dedicated and accomplished competitor in the west Texas area. Frank lived in Abilene for ten years before he was even aware that there was a clay target shooting club in Abilene. *"I heard someone*

*mention the club, drove out by myself and have not looked back since."* That was in about 1992 or 1993. What a difference ten or twelve years can make. The next few years saw Frank actively participate in registered skeet, even taking on the task of running the shoots for a couple of years. Frank however saw a significant loss of area skeet shooting activity about that time, and decided that working two or three days for a shoot that drew only ten participants was not what he wanted to do, and did not promote the vision of the club that he had. Although Frank would like to see an active skeet and trap program return to Abilene Clay Sports, his true interest is now sporting clays, where he has excelled and even won the state "B" class

championship a few years ago. "I really like the variety and difficulty level of the sporting clays targets." "Every club is different, and like golf, offers a new course challenge at every club." Frank hammers the sporting clays targets with his trusty and loyal Beretta 391 12 gauge with a 30" barrel, but would welcome a Beretta SO5 in his gun vault at anytime. Fast Winchester Super Sports are his cartridge of choice.

So how long has Frank Sanchez served as President? "Seven years I believe" remarks Frank. That may be a record. "I cannot recall any leader of this organization serving for that length of time." Those seven years have been some of the most productive in the organization's history. According to Frank, the things of which he is most proud is the clubhouse renovation, and the extension of our lease with the City of Abilene to a twenty-five year contract, both of which required a lot of time on Frank's part. The addition of a general manager position has also been significant to the clubs growth. "Anyone with even the slightest business since can see the benefit." "The place always looks good, has increased our sales, our non-profit and registered events, and our member participation." Indeed the results have been obvious. The organization is on a rock solid financial footing and we have a facility of which we can be proud. ACS is hosting 21 sporting clays events in 2006, with requests for event dates occurring on a regular basis. "We could not have done that just a few years ago." Our club is now actively partnering with the City of Abilene to offer a chance to non-profit organizations to raise funds. To date, ACS through our clay target program has helped numerous non-profit organizations raise hundreds of thousands of dollars. "How many clubs in Abilene can say that?" In addition, ACS also simply offers the people of Abilene a chance to participate in a fun sport at the nicest clay target club in west Texas. "Our target rates are also very attractive, offering shooters the opportunity to break a lot of targets at a very attractive rate." That, more than anything else can make one a good clay target competitor"

Although Frank has now concluded his long term service as President, he will remain on the Board of Directors as Past-President, and in that role will continue to serve the organization well. "We need to continue to bring on new and fresh Board members with good ideas and a willingness to work to make things happen for the good of the club. I would also like to see a return to a club championship for members only." "We also need to continue to promote the family aspect of the sport." Frank has in fact actively included his family during the last seven years, including his wonderful wife Mary Ellen. Mary Ellen, when not teaching school has helped Frank when it was needed most, stepping up to the plate running the clubhouse, loading targets, picking up trash, and even getting hit squarely between the eyes with a clay target at a distance of 4 feet from the trap! Fortunately she was wearing glasses and her injuries healed rather quickly, but her contributions to the club have been duly noted. Sons Vincent and Anthony have also pitched in and occasionally shoot as well. ACS not only owes Frank a round of applause, but Mary Ellen and the boys as well! Abilene Clay Sports owes a lot to Frank Sanchez. His dedication to the club, the sport, his family, and our love of what we do has been unmatched. **Job well done!**

## Who's Shooting in December?



Leroy Bolt



Joy Ellinger



Marysa Travieso

Richard Greenawalt



# Santa Clays Classic

December 11, 2005

# ABILENE CLAY SPORTS, DISCOVERING OUR HISTORY AND BEGINNING

## Part Two

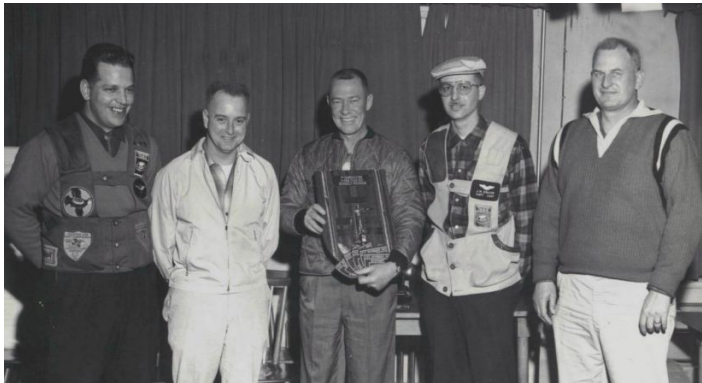
Steve Ellinger, AIA

The sport of skeet shooting had been around only about 28 years before Abilene's Ira Yaw decided those interested in the sport needed a *new* place to shoot skeet in Abilene. Ira and his son Alan owned Abilene Marine on Treadaway, and consequently spent a good deal of time on and around Lake Fort Phantom. So when Ira decided those living in West Texas needed new skeet and trap fields, the wide open property around Lake Fort Phantom seemed like a logical place to locate the facility he was envisioning. Ira also knew the City of Abilene controlled most of the area around the lake, and with his dealings with Abilene Marine and lake business, he also knew the right people to ask. Times were easier in 1958-1960 to get things done, and Abilene was much smaller then, so the City of Abilene was completely agreeable to lease a parcel of property to those asking for most any agreeable and logical reason. Later, others such as those that fly the model airplanes also asked for leased property around the lake with similar success. All of which was good for the sports and good for the City of Abilene. After some discussion, a suitable

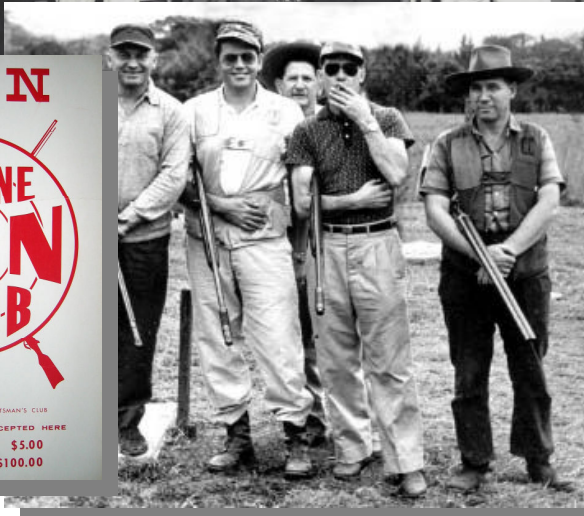


Mr. Ira Yaw

parcel of land on the east side of the lake was located and Ira and a few others began to lay out what was to become Abilene and West Texas's new skeet and trap club, proudly christened as the "*West Texas Sportsman's Club.*" As can be seen in the accompanying site photo, there were two trap fields, both of which threw yellow dome, and all back targets over the lake, the west field was over the water more so than the east, and two skeet fields facing a northeasterly direction. Ira also included a 100 yard rifle range in the layout. The trap, and skeet fields, along with the rifle range was the extent of the initial construction. The exact source of the funding for the initial construction is not known, but according to those that I have interviewed, Ira most likely paid for the initial development, with subsequent construction costs being obtained from the charter members and what little profits were actually derived.



Construction was well done, with cast in place concrete trap houses, concrete block skeet houses, and a paved and covered firing line for the rifle range. The trap fields had regulation paved yardage lines, some of which are still visible today after 40 years. The skeet fields contained concrete pads, not the semi-circular walk layout often seen in skeet field design. The concrete skeet field shooting pads still exist below the mounds of grass and prickly pear now dominating the property. Remarkably, the trap houses appear that with some cleaning and clearing, they could be outfitted with electricity, traps, and be throwing targets!



**JOIN**

**THE ABILENE GUN CLUB**

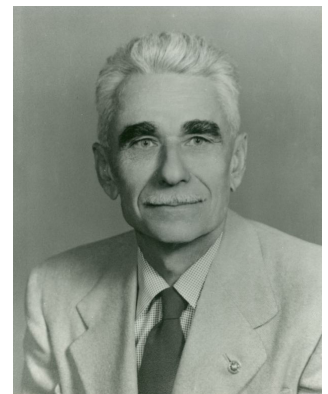
FORMERLY THE WEST TEXAS SPORTSMAN'S CLUB

Applications & Renewals **ACCEPTED HERE**

Annual Membership **\$5.00**

Life Membership **\$100.00**

Soon it became clear that someone was needed to run and manage the club C.E. "Dan" Daniel was employed as the first employee of the club and ran the facility quite well through the initial period of growth. Mr. Daniel was employed at Longacre's Gun Shop during the week, and his position at that business placed him in



Mr. C.E. Daniel

an ideal spot to promote the club. Membership in the West Texas Sportsman's Club was \$5.00 per year.

Shooters typical of the era



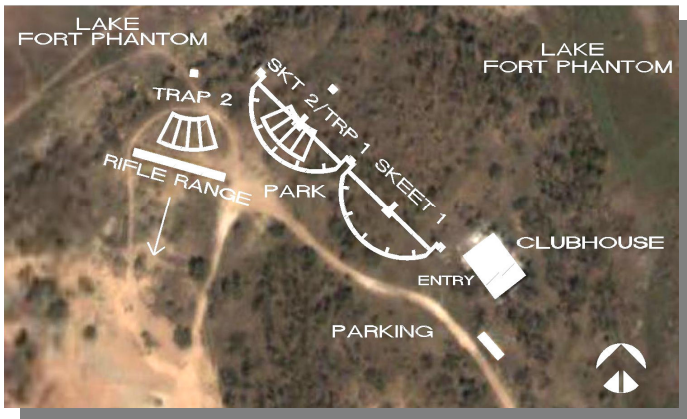
**Mr. Frank Rodriguez**

***“That was more money than I ever envisioned”***

That rate remained in effect for quite a few years, with a life membership available for \$100.00 available a short time later. Membership grew rapidly and regular weekend shooting numbers ranged from 15-25.

In 1959, Mr. Daniel was driving his 1952 Chevrolet pickup along Abilene’s Mesquite Street, near what used to be the old Key City Drive-In, where he spotted five 11-13 year old boys playing football in a vacant lot. Mr. Daniel casually asked if the boys wanted to earn a little extra money that day. “Sure” said the boys. After a short visit with the boy’s mother, Mr. Daniel was on the way to the club, with the five boys riding along in the back of the truck. One of the boys, Mr. Frank Rodriguez, now 58 years old and a resident in Merkel fondly remembers the experience. “*That day playing football resulted in four solid years of work at the club.*” The other boys were Frank’s brothers Martin and Robert, and their two friends Richard and Lewis Pena. All of the other boys are still in the Abilene area today. Mr. Daniel over time became a second father to the boys, working them hard, teaching responsibility, and paying them 25 cents per round of skeet or trap. “*That was more money that I ever envisioned, especially for boys that did not have any*” remarked Frank Rodriguez. I would take the money and buy those old toy wooden tops.

Mr. Daniel would leave his house each Saturday and Sunday morning, pick up the five boys for throwing targets and general labor, drive to the club and be ready for business at 1:00pm. The boys that Mr. Daniel employed at the club spent most of the day sitting in the houses throwing targets, and at other times, unloading cases of targets from trucks, and then placing them in the skeet and trap houses. “*When we were not pulling targets, we picked up hulls and empty boxes. We worked hard.*” The traps had a long handle that the boy would lean into and pull all of the way back in order to cock the machine. “*The thing that I remember most about the club was how nice the people were.*” “*On tournament days, we would spend all day in those houses, hot and fighting wasps. We were fed sandwiches and all we could drink, and, we threw a lot of targets.*” The boys would be paid daily out of the income derived by the shooting, sometimes five or six dollars a day. Later years saw the removal of the manual traps and replacement with, at the time, new electric Winchester-Western single stack traps. By then the boys were about 16 years old, and had developed other interests moving on to other things. “*Those times were really fun, and the money we made, was really good, especially to a boy that age, and in the very early 1960’s.*” Frank and the other boys never went back to the club after that time, the experiences becoming just a memory. “*I have not been to a skeet and trap club since that time.*” When I showed Mr. Rodriguez the photos of the club ruins that exist today, he said “*you are showing me things that I have not seen or thought about in over 40 years.*” I also told Frank that I had found intact targets at the site; 40 years later marked “Blue Rock”. “*That’s also a name I have not heard in many years,*



**Club layout, circa 1960 as determined by Steve Ellinger based on site observations and findings**



**Unbroken and undisturbed target as it landed in the lake silt 40 years ago.**

*but I can tell you that I loaded and threw many of them.*” Frank Rodriguez still works in Abilene today, and occasionally sees the other four men that were employed at the club when young boys. Mr. Daniels has long since passed away, but he has the distinction as being the first manager and operator to run the club, and a father figure to four very lucky boys. In about 1959 or 1960, other individuals interested in skeet and trap became involved. Some of these were also initially involved, but aggressively increased their participation along this time. Those included Wayne Ramsey, R.L. and W.D. Howard, Jim Clark, Marshall Clark, Foy Shiflett, Frank Harrell, Roy Caulkins, John Richardson, Bennie Jones, John Guitar, and somewhat later Jack and Joy Ramsey, and others. There were of course many more, but this group seemed to be the movers and shakers. Others such as Bruce Proctor, Ken Perry and others joined in the group later. There were also a few high school kids that were involved, such as John Clark, son of Marshall Clark, Jackie Ramsey (now Cox), daughter of Wayne Ramsey (who got interested in skeet shooting while babysitting Jack and Joy Ramsey’s kids), and Paul Melton. John Clark started active skeet shooting in 1960 while in high school and spent nearly every weekend there with his dad

Marshall. John went on to become a very accomplished shooter even making the cover of skeet shooting review. (Look for a future article on John in ACSNews). John continued his champion shooting at the Lake Kirby facility and still makes an occasional presence with *his* kids! Jackie Ramsey Cox went on to become a very successful skeet shooter and is currently an inductee in the National Skeet Shooting Hall of Fame where her picture is prominently displayed in the new NSSA museum facility. Paul Melton's awards and accomplishments in live bird shooting and trap are too many to list, but Paul like John and Jackie got their start shooting at the Fort Phantom Lake facility. In a rather funny story, Jackie likes to tell of the time that Paul, in typical Melton joking fashion, locked Jackie in the high house of skeet field one (for reasons Jackie did not disclose to me), and simply left Jackie to find her own way out.

According to Jackie, "I was locked in the high house, heard Paul drive off, and had to yell for someone to let me out! I was in that house for nearly an hour."

The first traps in the skeet houses were manual, requiring a trapper to sit in the high and low house and release the target on the call of "pull" for the high house, and "mark" for the low house. Members were soon hosting registered skeet shoots, and on other weekends traveling to clubs such as the "Big Stack Gun Club" in San Angelo, The "original" Dallas Gun Club, The Waco Gun Club and others to participate in registered events. In return, members from those clubs traveled to Abilene to participate. Except for a skeet range at Dyess Air Force Base during that time (military base skeet and trap ranges would come and go depending on the current Base Commander), The West Texas Sportsman's Club was the only place to shoot regulation skeet and trap. A round of skeet or trap cost \$1.00, with a box of 12 gauge shotgun shells setting you back a whopping \$1.50. Reloading was big business at that time, with scores of Texan and Bair single stage reloading presses cranking our rounds every night of the week in some cases so as to have plenty of rounds to shoot on the weekend. John Clark, son of one of the founders Marshall Clark said he spent many Friday and Saturday nights helping dad reload shells. Keep in mind that there were no progressive presses at that time, so cranking out a box of ammunition took 12-15 minutes *if* the loader was skilled. The famous Ponsness-Warren progressive press was introduced to the market a few years later and greatly reduced the time required. Paper hulls were the only option until about 1963 or 1964, so the shooters had to rely on paper tube hulls that would yield only about 4-5 reloads before burnout would occur just above the brass. A lot of new shells therefore were purchased, and were nearly always Winchester, Federal, or Alcan. Remington shells were almost never used since the reloading properties were poor. In later years, plastic tube shells were introduced but almost never left on the ground since they offered the re-loader substantially better life. Compare that to walking around the clay target fields today where it is rare to see a shooter even attempt to retrieve a fired hull!



**Original intact Blue Rock targets recovered from trap field 2. Yellow paint still exists 40 years later.**



### Where are the original photos of the Lake Fort Phantom Club?

*Although I have asked, researched, and asked some more, I have not been able to locate any original photos of the club. I know they are out there, but where? If you know of anyone who may have the historical images, please let me know so that I can published them here!*

As membership and activity increased, a need for a clubhouse was realized, and soon a new concrete block facility of about 1500 square feet was constructed just east of skeet field one. The clubhouse had a kitchen, serving or buffet bar, a restroom, and plenty of space for tables chairs, and a sofa. Part one of this article showed the clubs original record player and part of the sound system (called the Hi-Fi in those days I believe) still lying around today. Interestingly however, the clubhouse never saw much use other than the occasional social or meal, or a quick place to dodge a quick thunderstorm that passed overhead. According to those I interviewed for this article, a bad planning decision resulted in the clubhouse being located where the users could not see the skeet or trap fields when inside, which was apparently very important in those days. When the facility was re-located to Lake Kirby, the decision makers demanded good visibility to a primary skeet and trap range. That is the reason our current clubhouse is arranged in the matter that we see today. Most of the social activity was held in the parking areas behind the skeet fields. Indoor air conditioning was not dominant during those years, so relaxing after shooting in West Texas heat was not considered a detriment to an afternoon of fun at the club.

The club was filled with shooters each and every weekend. Shooters would arrive, sign up to shoot at a nearby wooden shed, and wait their turn while socializing in the parking area. I have not been able to locate the sign up shed location at the property today, but would assume it to be near the center of the skeet and trap filed locations. The club would draw visitors from area towns as well. One such regular visitor was a gentleman by the name of R.B. Ross, who would drive from Brownwood each and every Saturday *and* Sunday afternoon to shoot. I understand that Mr. Ross eventually constructed his own skeet field in the Brownwood area. As the skeet program continued to grow, lights were added to skeet field one and

night shooting became popular. White targets were thrown and shards of those targets were evident during my evaluation of the facility ruins in November of 2005.

As the popularity of skeet and trap shooting swelled during the 1960's it soon became apparent that more room, additional fields (especially skeet), a better designed clubhouse facility, and a longer 200 yard rifle range was needed. The problem was that there was no where to expand the facility. A lake on one side, and a somewhat major highway on the other landlocked the growth. In addition, the noise from the rifle range was disturbing to those participating in registered skeet shoots. It was also not uncommon for some rifle shooter trying to amuse himself to send a round through a skeet or trap house, or some sign at the club. It soon became apparent that another piece of property must be found. Official minutes of the organization have long since disappeared but some of the organization's officers again approached the City of Abilene explaining the situation of needing additional area for growth, and once again, the City of Abilene in clear show of support for the sport and organization, offered the property south of Lake Kirby as an option. The directors made several site visits, discussed options, and then entered into a lease agreement with the city that has now been in effect for 38 years, and was renewed for another 25 years just three years ago. This time however, a substantial change was made. Due to the noise from the rifle shooters, the decision was made to relocate the rifle range across the road where available property also allowed for a 200 yard firing line. That rifle range is still in use today. In late 1966 the last skeet and trap rounds were shot bringing an end to the short nine year life of the West Texas Sportsman's Club. In some ways it was unfortunate that such excellent construction on the skeet and trap fields were abandoned, but no one could argue that the move was essential if the club wanted to grow. After all, this was a good problem.

At about this time in the clubs history, the original name of the West Texas Sportsman's Club was changed to the "Abilene Gun Club" (and later "Abilene Clay Sports" for the clay target arm of the organization). The exact time of the change and reason is not known, but the name Abilene Gun Club remained for many years. The vision of Ira Yaw and C.E. Daniel remains alive and active today. Ira passed away in 1976, and C.E. in 1973 but their efforts have allowed the clay target shooting sports to be a vital part of the Abilene community. Today, hundreds of thousands of dollars are raised for non-profit organizations here in Abilene through the sport that started in the little club at Lake Fort Phantom, and the big vision of Ira, C..E. and a group of good dedicated folks.

*Astute readers will notice that Ira Yaw wanted to start a "new" skeet and trap club in Abilene. Part three of this article examines the skeet and trap fields that existed even prior to the Fort Phantom club, including perhaps the first skeet club in Abilene, located maybe just 1.5 miles from where we are now at Lake Kirby!*



Remains of the old sofa in the clubhouse ruins



Partially intact low house of skeet field 1



Trap house from trap field 1

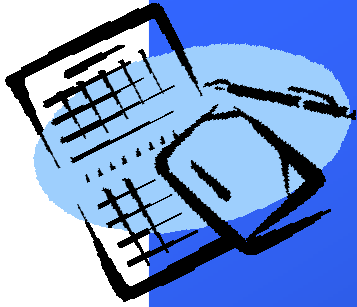


One of the concrete skeet pads still in place.

A special thanks to the following for much appreciated help in researching this article: Mr. John Clark, Ms. Jackie Cox, Ms. Jana Sojourner, Mr. Jim Clark, and Mr. Frank Rodriguez.



# Abilene Clay Sports 2006 Event Dates!



## January 8th

February 5th  
 February 9<sup>th</sup>  
 March 4th  
 April 1<sup>st</sup>  
 April 9th  
 April 29th  
 May 13th  
 May 20<sup>th</sup>  
 June 4<sup>th</sup>  
 June 17<sup>th</sup>  
 July 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>  
 July 29th  
 August 19<sup>th</sup>  
 August 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>  
 September 9<sup>th</sup>  
 September 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>  
 October 7<sup>th</sup>  
 October 15<sup>th</sup>  
 November 19<sup>th</sup>  
 December 10<sup>th</sup>

## Registered Sporting Clays

Registered Sporting Clays  
 Big Country Celebrity Quail Hunt Sporting Clays Event  
 Registered Sporting Clays  
 West Texas Rehabilitation Center Sporting Clays Event  
 Registered Sporting Clays  
 Boy Scouts, Texas Trails Classic Sporting Clays Event  
 Registered Sporting Clays  
 Disability Resources Incorporated Sporting Clays Event  
 Registered Sporting Clays  
 Abilene Christian Schools Sporting Clays Event  
 Registered Sporting Clays Event  
 Ben Richey Boys Ranch Benefit Event  
 Registered Sporting Clays Event  
 Hendrick Home Sporting Clays Event  
 Children's Miracle Network "Legends" Sporting Event  
 NSCA Nationals Championship, San Antonio  
 Meals on Wheels Sporting Clays Classic Benefit Event  
 Registered Sporting Clays  
 Registered Sporting Clays  
 Registered Sporting Clays

**SHOOT INFO. CALL 325.692.9002**



## The Very First Clay Target!

Pictured at left is the very first clay target. This target was known as the Ligowsky Clay Target, and was developed on 1880. The target was made on finely ground clay, mixed with water and actually baked. The target was extremely hard. The inventor also developed a line of trap machines to throw the targets.

## ACSNews Classifieds

Place your listings of sporting clays, skeet, or trap shooting equipment, guns, etc. that you have for sale here. E-mail Steve Ellinger at [sellinger4@cox.net](mailto:sellinger4@cox.net) on or before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month your listing.

