

On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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July 21, 2008

A New Solution

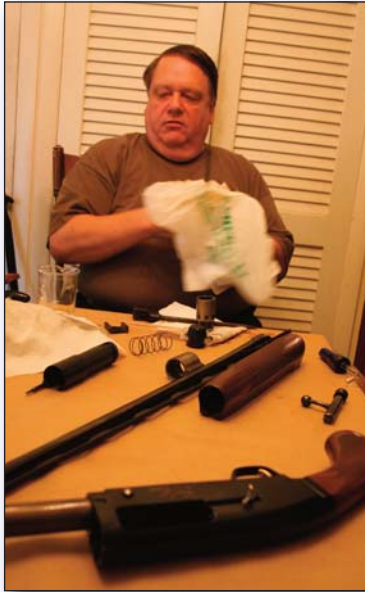
Wisconsin chemist develops gun cleaning alternative

By Dick Ellis

Here's to firing a shot for the little guy. Because, sometimes, even excellent new products can get lost in a retail world of corporate giants with long established and highly respected consumer goods of their own.

That's often true in the world of firearms and gun cleaners, where brand names and familiar products are part of a proud American heritage with little room for new players. In this case though, despite the corporate competition and traditions of excellence, a Wisconsin chemist used the philosophy that "necessity is the mother of invention" to develop a gun cleaning solution with unique consumer and even environmental benefits.

"My daughter had childhood asthma and when I cleaned my guns at the kitchen table she would have tremendous coughing fits," said John Thompson of Milwaukee in describing his inspiration to begin a new kind of journey. "I moved to the basement which was fine until winter when the smell permeated throughout the entire house through the heating system. I moved to the garage but that is not a very fun place in winter...you tend to not do as good a job cleaning the guns in the cold.":



Milwaukee chemist John Thompson shows the environmentally friendly and virtually odorless gun cleaning solution he developed prior to cleaning a .22 rifle and shotgun Wednesday night for a reporter in his home

Thompson, who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from UW-Milwaukee in 1976, decided there had to be a better way to clean a gun, in particular for his daughter. At the time under employment with the Henkel Corporation, which developed chemicals for the leather industry, Thompson embarked on a three-year journey to produce a

"... I believe it's a fabulous, very effective gun cleaner with four unique attributes... One, ... (it) is biodegradable and does not hurt the environment. ... Two, the "flash-point", an indicator of how easily its fumes will burn, is over 200 degrees Fahrenheit ... Three, because it is slower to evaporate, the consumer ends up using less ... The fourth benefit, "and biggest", he said, is the cleaners almost non-existent odor."



John Thompson, foreground, Bill Hugin and Randy Bowey on the trapline at the Fin 'N' feather Sportman's Club in Dousman. Thompson, a chemist, has developed an environmentally friendly and virtually odorless gun cleaning solution now available to Wisconsin firearms enthusiasts.



This badly tarnished gas cylinder from John Thompson's 12-gauge shotgun cleaned up nicely in short order when attacked with the chemist's odorless and environmentally friendly gun-cleaning solution.



The punishment of firing a gun regularly means dirty parts that the owner must clean. Chemist John Thompson's cleaning solution, Enviroclean FA, offers gunners an environmentally friendly, effective alternative to existing products.

solvent that would efficiently clean firearms without the adverse effects.

Between 1996 and 2000 when Henkel Corporation was bought and sold four times, finally by the Clariant Corporation, Thompson's own Ogre Manufacturing Company was born; and with it Enviroclean FA; It was Thompson's answer to dirty guns, an environment increasingly under the microscope, and most of all, a

daughter seeking a little relief.

"I don't like to bash the competition," said Thompson. "I will say that I am extremely confident that Enviroclean FA is as good or better than any other gun cleaner out there. I believe it's a fabulous, very effective gun cleaner with four unique attributes."

One, he said, Enviroclean FA, which has been approved for a patent, is biodegradable and does not hurt the environment. Two, the "flashpoint", an indicator of how easily its fumes will burn, is over 200 degrees Fahrenheit. Specifically, the flashpoint is the temperature at which the fumes will ignite if there is an ignition source present. Because its flashpoint is over 200 degrees Fahrenheit, Enviroclean FA is classified as a non-hazardous material by the Department of Transportation (DOT), and inherently, he said, a much safer product to use than most conventional cleaners.

Three, because it is slower to evaporate, the consumer ends up using less. Despite being comparatively more expensive due to the cost of raw materials used in producing the cleaner, Thompson calls Enviroclean FA cost-effective for the consumer.

"We like to say it's ogre-nomical," he

said of Enviroclean FA, developed from a proprietary blend of ingredients that will remain secret. "For example I teach Hunter Education in Milwaukee and we do our field testing in Dousman at Fin 'N' Feather Sportsman's Club. The guns need to be cleaned. We cleaned eight .22 rifles with less than one ounce of Enviroclean FA."

The fourth benefit, "and biggest", he said, is the cleaners almost non-existent odor. Many cleaners contribute to indoor air pollution. "Enviroclean FA," he said, "does not contribute."

The cleaner does, however, take care of the toughest firearms cleaning problems. One of its biggest attributes, he said, is the ability to effectively clean black powder.

"Most solvents will gum up black powder firearms," he said. "Enviroclean FA does not. You can take it and saturate the bore, let it sit a few minutes and run patches through it until it's clean. Kenyon Simpson, a national black powder champion from Indiana, called me to let me know it didn't work. I asked him if he had followed the directions. Then I got a call from someone who was just cussing me out without identifying himself. Finally he said, 'this is Kenyon Simpson, I don't like to be proven wrong.' Since then he's been one of our biggest supporters."

So have others. Enviroclean FA has received positive reviews in publications including American Handgun, American Rifleman, Badger Outdoors, Bear Hunter, and the police magazine, Law & Order. Regardless of its effectiveness, a catch-22 has kept Enviroclean FA from receiving a prominent place on the shelves of outdoor retail stores, if any place at all. When Thompson is waiting for a first opportunity in the public arena, those proprietors are waiting for the product to first gain popularity among sportsmen.

"We're just a small mom and pop organization with a really good product that was needed," Thompson said. "I really believe that. Now we need people to try it."

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