



PART II *A rifle that performs as good as it looks.*

Kilimanjaro

story and photos by
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Any man with enough moxie to buy a failing custom gun company just as the economy lurches into the deepest ditch since the Great Depression is clearly a man who enjoys taking risks.

ERIKEIKE, OWNER OF KILIMANJARO Rifles, sent me two of his magnificent creations, one chambered in 9.3x62mm, the other in .300 H&H, both with Mannlicher stocks, early 20th century cartridges married to early 20th century stock design. It was a move right in character for a risk-taker.

The full stock has been around for as long as handheld firearms have existed. Musketeers in China during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) carried full-stocked firearms, as did soldiers of all nationalities right through World War II, but on sporting rifles the full stock went out of

fashion more or less with the perfection of the bolt-action in the late-1800s. Except for Mannlicher-Schoenauer. As a sporting rifle, M-S was introduced in 1903 in 6.5x54mm and very quickly became one of the most popular European deer rifles. (*In The Short Happy Life* of Francis Macomber, Hemingway has Macomber's wife kill her husband with a Mannlicher 6.5.)

They were manufactured in half-stock, with a 23.5-inch barrel, and as a full-stock carbine with an 18-inch barrel. A carbine, technically, is any rifle shorter than a musket and originally developed for use by cavalry, and since a musket typically measured

over five feet, we could really get wrapped around the axle here, but that's what M-S called it.

M-S was the only company, as far as I know, that manufactured full-stock sporting rifles, so today the full-stock has come to be called a Mannlicher stock. It also comes with a reputation.

Near the top of my list of Stupid Things I Have Done (if published it would run to almost as many volumes as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) is the fact that I once sold a full-stocked Mannlicher-Schoenauer chambered in .270 Winchester. I sold it because after putting anywhere from three to seven bullets—depending on its mood—in a circle the size of a 50-cent piece, it would begin to wander all over the map, sending bullets anywhere from Albuquerque to Wausau. And that's the problem with Mannlicher stocks: they can be, to quote Erik Eike, "as finicky as a cat."

Which is, in part, why Eike has custom loads worked up for each of his Mannlicher-stocked rifles. The .300 H&H he sent me came with a box of 200-grain Barnes all copper TSX bullets, and the 9.3x62 with a box of 286-grain Barnes TSX, and after I stopped drooling over the sheer beauty of the guns, I drove out to the range with my heart in my mouth.

I went with my heart in my mouth because so very few things in life ever live up to our expectations, and as a gun writer I don't enjoy having to say bad things about the products that are sent to me. But I know what Mannlicher stocks can do to accuracy, and I knew there was no way I could put 20 or 25 rounds through each of those rifles without getting embarrassingly erratic patterns. I hadn't counted on Kilimanjaro. Both rifles not only lived up to my expectations, they exceeded them.

The .300 H&H (belted rimless) magnum (not to be confused with the H&H Super 30 Flanged magnum that was developed for double rifles) has largely been surpassed in both sales and performance by the .300 Winchester magnum and the Weatherby .300 magnum (and possibly the .308 Norma), and a glance at ballistic charts will show you why. But it's a shame because the H&H has much to offer. It is a good, all-round, long range cartridge with a significant increase in energy and velocity over the .30-06 in a very tapered (8-degree shoulder) case which makes for smooth, trouble-free feeding.

The 9.3x62 is almost unknown in this



country. The bullet diameter is .366, putting it in between the .35 Whelan and the .375 H&H. The biggest problem with it (other than the issue of obtaining ammunition) is that for those of us unused to the metric system, it is easy to get confused. And for good reason. There were, at one time, as many as 11 different 9.3s made, not to mention a number of other 9mms. Most are now obsolete, but in addition to the 9.3x62, the 9.3x64 Brenneke and the 9.3x74R (rimmed) are both still around. All of the 9.3s are overkill for deer, but they are excellent choices for elk or moose, and a great source of comfort in the bear country where elk and moose are found.

The .300 H&H came with 22-inch Lilja barrel and was built on a Sako 85 action. Kilimanjaro reworked (called 'truing') to align the barrel and the action, eliminating vibration and ensuring consistent headspace. They also replaced Sako's recoil lug system with their own.

The 9.3 came with a 20-inch Lilja barrel and was built on their own Serengeti action which they describe accurately as, "a blend of the best of attributes of the Mauser 98, Winchester Model 70 and Sako action designs."

I don't have enough space in this column

to rhapsodize over these guns, so let's cut to the chase. Everything worked, mechanically, just as it should, but in rifles it is accuracy that matters most and an inaccurate rifle, or an inconsistently accurate rifle, is about as useful as a three-legged horse.

Both Kilimanjaro rifles rate right up there among the most accurate I have ever had the pleasure of shooting, and the 9.3x62 rates as one of the top three or four. Take a look at the photo; that is a five-shot group.

Accuracy costs money, so do you really need a hunting rifle that accurate? Oh, yes. Yes you do. Apart from the ethics of making a clean kill, that kind of accuracy does for your shooting confidence what Viagra is supposed to do for your sex life.

Sing ho for Africa and golden joys! ☎

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