

The Digital Magazine Of The Fort Wayne Chapter



Air Rifles Becoming Popular On Rifle Ranges



Fort Wayne
News
Izaak Walton League of America

the Fort Wayne Chapter

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Cover Photo

By: Patrick J. White

Chapter Photos

By Patrick J. White

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Lest we Forget... "We Are Not Just A Sports Shooting Chap-

We start each Chapter meeting with this pledge: *"To strive for the purity of water, the clarity of air, and the wise stewardship of the land and its resources; to know the beauty and understanding of nature and the value of wildlife, woodlands, and open space; to the preservation of this heritage and to man's sharing in it. I pledge myself as a member of the Izaak Walton League of America."*

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Air Rifles Becoming Popular On Rifle Ranges

Today's interview is going to take a slightly different direction in format. Instead of interviewing a single individual, we are doing an interview with a group of four individuals whose shooting sport venue is very different from most of our shooters on the Chapter rifle range. These guys shoot powderless rifles powered by air. Let me introduce them to you, and we'll get right into it. With us today are Kevin Sheehan, Jon Herman, Jeff Brinkman, and Mitch Oliver.

JLB: First of all, probably 99% of our traditional powder burning range shooters are casual shooters and maybe 1 or 2% are competitors at any level. Is that the same or different for you fellows?

KEVIN: For me, I have learned more about competitive airguns from Jon Herman than anyone. Airgunning is a passion for Jon, and he has a lot of experience. Mitch, Jeff, (Ben), and I all work at Hawke Optics. None of us are serious airgun competitors, but airgun optics is a small but important category for Hawke Optics. I have participated in several airgun competitions. Most were at airgun clubs in Ohio. I've also participated in the Rocky Mountain Airgun Challenge in Utah in the "Sportsman division" (which is competitive but somewhat casual compared to the Pro division). We Hawke guys are preparing for the "Pyramid Air Cup" competition, held on August 16-24.

JON: I would say most air gunners are casual shooters or maybe, pest control or plinking in the back yard.

JLB: When most people first hear that you are an "Air Rifle" shooting enthusiast, what is the first thing that pops into their mind?

KEVIN: It's kind of across the board. Most people are familiar with basic value-level airguns that you can find at sporting goods stores that are used for shooting varmints or backyard plinking. Others think they are just fancy bb guns.

MITCH: They are probably thinking that it's not real shooting.

JLB: How long have you been a serious air rifle shooter and what led you to this venue of shooting, as opposed to traditional powder shooting?

KEVIN: Airguns are a very fun way to enjoy shooting, as there is very little recoil. The pellets are far less expensive than traditional ammo. And the experience (in terms of ballistics, optics, accuracy, and wind, etc.) of shooting airguns out to 100 yards is like the experience of shooting regular rifles out to 500 or even 1,000 yards. When I go to Izaak Walton for a couple of hours, it's not uncommon for me to shoot 200-300 rounds. It's fun. It takes



Jon Herman



Kevin Sheehan



Mitch Oliver



Jeff Brinkman

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skill. And Ammo is not very expensive.

MITCH: I wouldn't say that I am a serious air gunner, but I want to take everything I do seriously. I have been a shooter for most of my life, a good part of it having been in the military. In my line of work, I get to deal with a lot of shooters from different shooting disciplines. Competing in events allows me to further understand what they are experiencing and learn more about the sport.

JON: I needed a hobby I could do at home. I had one small child and one on the way and it was hard for me to get to the range. I bought my first "PCP" or recharged pneumatic airgun from Pyramid Air. I've been shooting airguns now for about ten years.

JLB: Tell us a little about the equipment needed to get into air rifle shooting as a beginner as compared to a serious competitor. And what has been your approximate cash outlay for either or both?

KEVIN: You can always pick up an inexpensive "break-barrel" or "spring-powered" airgun and pellets at a local store and have a lot of fun for \$200-\$300 price range. I recently purchased an Air Venture for \$399 and an Umarex 30 for about \$450.

JON: I don't know much about break barrel pellet guns, but I know you can purchase one for a couple hundred dollars. That can get you into the game. Precharged pneumatic airguns or HPA (high powered air) guns are what I shoot. They have come a long way as far as price and accuracy and tunability, in the past ten years that I have been shooting,

JLB: What got you first interested in air gunning and when did this occur? For example, most folks my age began shooting as a youngster. When was it for you.

KEVIN: I attended a couple of airgun competitions as part of my work in optics. I wasn't shooting, I was just exhibiting our Hawke scopes. The whole time I wished I was shooting rather than just watching. That was in 2019. After that, I bought a nice airgun and began practicing at Izaak Walton. I attended a couple of events with airgun clubs in Ohio and fell in love with it.

MITCH: Shooting air rifles at squirrels, rabbits or birds was always a common scene that you could find me in as a kid. As of late, work has shifted me towards shooting air rifles again.

JON: I was 39 when I got into airgunning.

JLB: Tell us a little bit about the air rifle brands that you are shooting today. Are they the same brands that we are familiar with in rim-fire and center fire firearms?

Mitch: I'm currently shooting Kevin's FX Impact .30 cal with a Hawke Sidewinder 6-24 scope.

Kevin: I will be shooting a Umarex .30 cal also with a Sidewinder

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6-24.

Jeff: Jon loaned me his FX Crown, also in .30 cal. This is a cool gun that Jon has customized, and it shoots great. It has some very unusual custom upgrades that Jon made himself. He calls it the "Frankencrown".

JON: I typically shoot a brand manufactured by FX Airguns. They are precision guns made in Sweden. It also depends on the discipline. For long range big bore, I shoot a brand called Airforce Airguns. They are made in Texas. I have guns from Turkey, Germany, and Spain. There are awesome airguns made from all over the world. Russia makes some of the best also. Calibers range from .177 (20ft.lbs.) up to 45 caliber (600 ft. lbs. and up.) They make airguns that go 1,000 ft. lbs. and higher.

JLB: Is there a particular diameter projectile that is most common in the air rifle venue?

KEVIN: For backyard plinkers, most shoot .177 or .22. More serious air gunners often shoot .25 or .30. But it depends on the type of competition. For field target, for example, there is a foot-pounds limit, so many will shoot .177 or .22. For Benchrest, Marksman, and Speed competitions .25 or .30 are most popular. Some events also have "big bore" competitions that use .357, .457, or .50 cal. By the way, many states now allow big bore air guns for large game hunting. The .457 and .50 cal pellets are often used for this.

The most common pellets are called "diablo" pellets, which are the traditional dome-shaped pellets with a "skirt" in the back. However, slugs are becoming increasingly popular. The slugs are shaped like a traditional bullet. They are very accurate and extend the effective range of the airgun significantly. Many Benchrest competitions limit the pellets to traditional dome-shaped, but often have separate competitions for slugs.

JON: Competition air guns generally fall into these pellet sizes: Field Target typically: .177 (20ft.lbs.) up to 45 caliber (600 ft. lbs. and up).

JLB: What is the distance that you guys normally shoot? My granddaughter is a national athlete shooting air rifle and she shoots both air rifle and small-bore rifle. Her air rifle shooting is done indoors at 10 meters.

KEVIN: At the IWLA range, I spend almost all my time at 100 yards. The Ohio airgun clubs have competitions for 50yd and 100yd. Larger events have competitions for 50 yard and 100 yard, and sometimes 200 yards for slugs. Distance can exceed 200+ yards for big bore, which is not-so-common but growing competition.

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JON: Most competitions range from 10- 500+ yards. I generally shoot from 50 yards to as long a distance as available.

JLB: In my research, getting ready for this interview, I've learned that air rifles come in two general classes, one known as "Precision" and the other as "Sportster". Am I right about that or is there a different designation, and if so tell me a little about the differences. Are there formal competitions for both classes?

KEVIN: Some competitions, such as the "Rocky Mountain Airgun Challenge" in Utah and the "EBR" (Extreme Benchrest) in Arizona have both a Pro division and Sportsman division.

JON: Typically, they come in small bore, .177- .25 caliber. Big bore, .257- 72 caliber. Any caliber could be considered "precision" depending on what you want the gun to do. Usually, the more expensive the gun gets, the more "precision" the gun becomes. You get what you pay for. That's not saying you couldn't buy a cheaper gun and make it into a precision gun.

JLB: What about these air rifle competitions? How far does one have to travel from Fort Wayne to find an organized air rifle competition?

KEVIN: Ohio has 5 or 6 airgun clubs where you can shoot benchrest or field target competition almost every weekend. The largest airgun competitions in the country are the Pyramid Air Cup (usually August in Ohio), the Rocky Mountain Airgun Challenge (usually in June in Utah), the EBR Extreme Benchrest (usually in October in Arizona, and the Northeast Airgun Classic in New Hampshire in April, (I think).

JON: There are formal competitions around in pretty much all air gun disciplines. It depends on how much gas money you want to spend and the hours behind the wheel that you want to invest.

JLB: The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), in a recent report has said that the trend in shooters is: "Shooters don't want to drive far to find a range to shoot". Is this in any way an impediment to air gunners in finding a place to shoot.

KEVIN: It's a relatively small sport with relatively small participation but seems to be growing very rapidly. Generally, you can shoot airguns at basically any range and depending on where you live, you can often shoot in your own backyard.

JON: There are smaller venues a couple hours away from Fort Wayne, pretty much every weekend. The bigger ticket competitions are usually in Arizona, Utah, Upstate New York, and Eastern Ohio. They are a lot of fun and great people to hang out with.

JLB: What about velocity? Surely it can't be the same as used in "powder" shooting, can it?

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JON: Velocity depends on the projectile. Pellets are much like 22 LR cartridges and are more accurate at slower velocity. The slower velocity being more accurate keeps competitors below subsonic speed. Slugs, as we air gunners like to call more of the traditional bullet, prefer the faster speeds. Generally, the heavier and the longer in length the "bullet" is, the faster they can go. Airgunning overall, is not so much about speed, as it is about accuracy.

MITCH: Velocities usually range from low 800's and can exceed low 1,000 fps. Benchrest competitions will usually be shooting at 100yds. Larger bore rifles, such as .357cal or .50cal can be used out to 200+yds.

JLB: Starting as a beginning shooter level to the most serious air gun shooter. Who are the most common air rifle manufacturers out there for each and what is the price range?

KEVIN: You can pick up a basic spring powered gun at a sporting goods store for less than \$200. Crossman and Gamo are very common in the beginner area. Some high-end precision PCP (pre-charged pneumatic) guns used for competition or hunting are often \$1,500 - \$2,500. FX, Daystate, Benjamin, and Air Arms are some of the very popular models.

JON: You can pay \$200 to \$1,000 for a Benjamin. A Beeman will run you \$150 to \$600. A Crossman will cost anywhere from \$200 to \$500, and a Gamo is about the same.

JLB: As most of you know, my granddaughter is a national champion air rifle athlete and she shoots indoors at 10 meters, a tad over 10 yards, at a target ring smaller than a quarter, with a 10 ring the size of a pencil point, using a rifle weighing just over 12 pounds. How does this compare to what you guys do as far as target size and rifle weight?

JON: I don't know much about Olympic style airgunning, but generally the guns I compete with are usually a lot heavier and more powerful. Weight is generally not a concern due to most being bench rest competitions.

JLB: What about position? Do you do most of your everyday shooting standing, kneeling, prone, or sitting?

MITCH: Most of my shooting for air rifle is mainly done from the bench. This allows you to focus more on the fundamentals of shooting and remove any variables that might have some effect.

KEVIN: Most of my time is spent on Benchrest. I think most casual shooters spend most of their time shooting Benchrest.



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JLB: My granddaughter, in competition, wears some of the most exotic shooting paraphernalia imaginable. Something that looks like a canvas straight jacket, and leggings to match, special shoes and it takes her about 15 minutes to get into her shooting togs. Is this the norm for the competition that you are competing in?

Jon: There are different Field Target Divisions. One is Hunter, in which you are allowed a Shooting Stick. Another, National Target, allows shooting jackets, gloves and all of the attire. And then there is the Open Class, with no shooting sticks or shooting attire.

Kevin: Our competition is a lot more casual. T-Shirts, shorts, and Flip-flops work for most shooters. And Jon adds a "Tin Caps" ball cap turned backwards, accessorized with sunglasses!

Mitch: And, you see some guys in athletic-labeled polo shirts, finished off with khakis, But most of us show up in jeans, a flannel shirt and a ball cap.

JLB: Why would someone want to consider becoming an air rifle shooter, as a compared to deciding on small bore 22lr rifle?

Kevin: Well the skill set to shoot an air gun at 50 or a 100 yards is the same as needed for small bore rifle. But a can of .22 pellets costs about \$22.00, while shooting a 22LR is about 10 cents a shot. Air gunning is very inexpensive.

Mitch: I would tell them that air gunning is a great way to get into sports shooting. At the end of the day, a 22LR is still a firearm and for kids or even an adult that hasn't been on a range, it can be pretty intimidating. Airgunning is a great way to introduce your kids, or grandkids, to shoot. But more importantly, getting them to understand gun safety and how to handle a firearm.

JLB: The National Sports Shooting Foundation is telling us that the trend in new shooters, is shifting from those who have been shooting since they were a kid, to adults with a "first firearm" experience. Do you see any comparison with Air Gunners?

Jon: Absolutely, as the sport grows, the more people of all ages are getting into it. And, there are a lot of older guys and girls who are experienced shooters that are shifting to air rifles. Air guns have come a long way from what it was twenty years ago.

JLB: Guys is there anything that I have left out that you'd like to share with our readers?

Mitch: Yes... don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone a bit. It is always good to try something different and if the price of ammo is keeping you away from the range, then get yourself an air gun, a tin of pellets, a Hawke scope and get out there!



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Jon: Airgunning has been an adventurous and relaxing hobby. The sport has grown by leaps and bounds over the last ten years. You can do about anything that you want to, within the law. You can just do some plinking around the house or take it to the next level. I really do get competitive and I need to remind myself that it is just for fun. You can win a lot of money in competition, but it's more for sport and camaraderie with like-minded people. The technology of the

guns practically doubles each year and it is fascinating to watch the sport grow and evolve.

JLB: On behalf of our readers, I want to thank the four of you for spending some time with us, and sharing your passion for this type shooting. I have learned a lot, and have really enjoyed the time with you.

Kevin: Thanks for having us and giving us a chance to talk about our favorite sports shooting venue.

Poor Man Fish Survey

The Board has been discussing Walton Pond as an under-utilized asset of the chapter. We have a few fishermen, that we know of, and allow primitive member camping pondside in the grassy area, but we do little in the way of marketing this little gem. We priced an electric shock survey and explored a grant to cover the expense but nothing came of it. This was to be step number one of a two step restocking program.



We do know that the eastern side of the Lake is very shallow, promoting the growth of moss in the summer and that the deepest section is immediately to the left of the dock. For years, we had a sign up that no bass under ten inches were to be subject to "catch and release".

Problem is, the only bass caught seem to be in the ten-inch range, as shown in the

photos of member Brian Doepke's early evening catch in mid August. Brian says that he can catch bass on surface lures and that they all run about this size. In the Spring, these small bass can be seen prowling the shoreline, **but is this as large as anyone is catching?**

We'd like to hear from some of our other fisherman about your "catches" as to fish type and size. Thus, the title of this piece, "Poor Man Fish Survey". You can help by sharing your thoughts on this area with any one of our Board members. Our funds are limited and your Board wants to spend them wisely.

Besides the restocking, the Board has briefly discussed adding two travel trailer spots for member access, as well as some type of weed control. The Travel trailer sites would be Class B camping with no electricity or water hook ups.

Give us your thoughts on what we should be doing with this area to make it more of an amenity, than just looking good.

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Monarch Migration Has Started (Migration from Canada to Mexico will pass through Indiana)



Monarchs are on the move! It's official. Earlier this month, monarchs began migrating south from Winnipeg, Canada (50° N). Here in Indiana (~40° N) we are on track for a fairly typical migratory season in terms of when to expect the butterflies. Unless we experience extreme September temperatures (90+ °F) we should be seeing our monarch populations passing through with peak numbers occurring mid-month. Unfortunately, it

does look like this will be a down year in terms of overall numbers. Those of you who joined us last year know we struggled to find monarchs and struggled even more to actually net and tag them. Finally, it also looks like there is a grow

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Fort Wayne Chapter Playing An Important Role In Saving the Monarch



Milkweed has almost been irradiated in many sections of the United States, and this is unfortunate, as this plant is extremely important as a food source to Monarch larvae (Caterpillars).

This photo, taken by Ron Hessert is our Milkweed patch on the backside of one of our range berms that has tripled in size since first discovered. Your FW Chapter NEWS has carried several articles on the North American migratory Monarch butterfly. The Monarch has recently been added to the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) Red list of endangered species. Not only the Monarch butterfly, but the beneficial insect population as a whole.

The Monarch population has decreased by about 70% and the species has been listed as endangered. The Monarch is one of the few butterfly's that migrate. They travel about 3,000 miles from the northern United States and southern Canada to winter in Mexico. These Monarch will go through 4-5 generations each summer, but it is ONLY this last one that migrates. They are the only butterflies to make such a long, two way migration every year. Amazingly, they fly in masses to the same winter roosts, often to the exact same trees. Their migration is more the type we expect from birds, but unlike birds, individuals only make the round-trip once. It is their children's grandchildren that return south the following fall.

Milkweed is terribly important to saving this species as it and the Monarchs have a symbiotic relationship, in that the Milkweed is the primary food source necessary to save the Monarch, as the larvae ingests the Milkweed that contains a chemical compound toxic to many species of birds and mammals. As Monarch larvae ingest the plant, they too become toxic to animals that may potentially view them as their next meal.

We are looking for a member family to help care for and harvest the seed pods from our patch. These will be used to start other patches on the Chapter property, to donate to the Monarch organizations, and to make available to members who want to grow a small patch of milkweed in their flower garden. If interested, email Jay at jaybutler1940@gmail.com

Chapter Honors Darrell Fish Fish Honored For Outstanding Dedication & Service

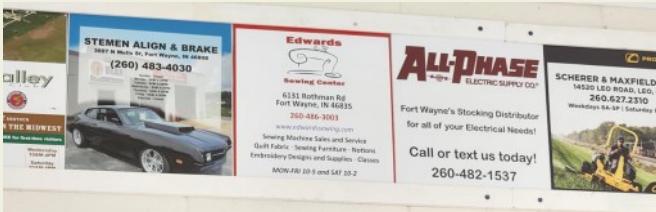
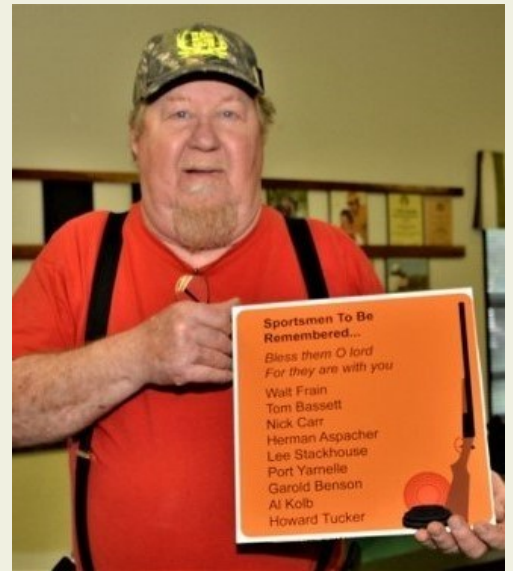
A highlight of the Fall 2023 Membership meeting was the presentation of the Chapter Distinguished Service award to Darrell Fish, a long-time member, who has given faithful service to the Chapter. Acting President John Kurtz, did the honors making mention of just a few of the services having been performed by Darrell.

The Chapter Ad program now in operation, was a result of Darrell's thinking and initiative to create a small 12x12 Ad placard to be sold to community business's, to be posted along the ceiling of our North hall and it proved quite successful. Over time, this was morphed into the current Chapter Ad program of 12x12 Placards that were first posted in the same location. This was later expanded into a combination Ad promotion carried both in our digital News magazine and the 12x12 placards were moved to our Rifle & Pistol Range to take advantage of the heavier traffic of members and guests.

We had several members selling these 12x12 Ads, but none with the enthusiasm and concentrated effort put forth by Darrell. He tirelessly traveled across the greater Fort Wayne area, carrying an Ad application with him on his Dailey travels, never missing an opportunity to tell the Izaak Walton story, closing with an offer to post the business's Ad for a very reasonable price. (See page 13 of this issue.)

Never one to sit on his laurels, Darrell is constantly looking for things to do around the Chapter, whether it be repair of the short boundary fence on the Skeet Range, followed by painting the American Flag on its board panels, or his building Wood Duck nesting boxes that have been placed in various ponds around the area.

Darrell's family, friends and Chapter members were all in attendance to see him receive this well deserved award.



PFAS In Indiana Water Supply Real or Imagined?

The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette published the following Op-Ed on PFAS

I read the Journal Gazette editorial in the Friday, August 25th editorial on PFAS with great interest. As managing editor of the Fort Wayne Chapter NEWS, of the Izaak Walton League of America, I have written several articles on PFAS and find myself in complete agreement with this timely editorial by the editorial staff of the JG.

As stated by the JG, Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), has reported that five city utilities in Indiana have PFAS over the Federal EPA limit. Those cities are Logansport, Columbus, Elkhart, Sellersburg (Watson Rural Water Co.) and North Manchester. The city of Fort Wayne has been testing for PFAS since 2014 and has never found these “Forever Chemicals” in our drinking water.

The nickname of “Forever Chemicals” comes from the nature of these chemicals not breaking down over time. They are also known for the ease with which they can be transported by the nations streams and rivers, so we can expect this to grow before it diminishes as a threat to our watersheds. The State of Michigan has found PFAS in a part of their deer population, and barred deer hunting in certain areas. not so coincidentally these locations were downstream from AirPort or Military Bases where foam retardant has been used as an effective flame retardant in aircraft accidents. Similar incidents have been reported by other states.

Besides fire extinguishing foam, other contributors have been found to be stain resistant carpeting, and the coating in never-stick frying cooking utensils.

PFAS has been found to be associated with prostate, kidney, and testicular cancer, among other risks. Since 1981, IDEM has reported toxic levels of PFAS in 24 water purification facilities serving cities in Indiana. The Indiana House has yet to hear a bill establishing PFAS levels in the State of Indiana, while our neighboring states of Michigan, Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio have either adopted or proposed legislation to set limits on allowable PFAS.

City utilities are all asking for Federal subsidies to address the risk and the Federal Government estimates a cost of upwards of \$1.2 billion dollars to address and mitigate PFAS nationally. The price is steep, but the danger from carcinogens in our drinking water is higher.

The Izaak Walton League of America passed a resolution on the dangers of PFAS at the 2023 National Convention held this past July in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Izaak Walton League of America, assembled in convention in Lincoln, Nebraska July 29, 2023 amends its Conservation Policies, Chapter II Environmental Health by adding the following new provision to G) Hazardous and Toxic Substances 1): 1) To prevent any immediate or cumulative damage to human health or the environment by any of the thousands of new chemical substances fabricated every year, state and federal agencies should: i) Identify and specifically categorize PFAS and PFOS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) as general classification of chemicals that contaminate the waters and land across our country and threaten the health of people, communities, and wildlife and educate the public to the concerns and impacts of PFAS and PFOS chemicals to them and their communities.

Jay L. Butler
Managing Editor – FW Chapter NEWS, IWLA
Regional VP – Indiana Division, IWLA

**SOUND
OFF!**



Tell us your thoughts about our
“FW Chapter NEWS” or any
other Chapter related topic.

Email: jaybutler1940@gmail.com

Jay Butler

Managing
Editor

Dear Jay,

Thank you for a very fine newsletter.

Karen Griggs—FW Chapter

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