By Molly Smith

The MGM Junior Shooting Camp is scheduled for this summer, July 21-23. Last year’s camp was absolutely fantastic! In the few days I was there I learned so much, had a great time, and made friends from all over the country. In case you’re interested, here are some of the highlights and some secret tips I learned!

We had amazing instructors – professional and accomplished shooters. All the junior shooters were fortunate enough to cycle through and learn from them.

Phil Strader’s stage was action packed! We learned about how to move to a target while keeping our guns up. That way you have your sights mostly acquired and you’re on target! It was tricky at first, but with the drills Phil used, we were pros by the end of the session! Phil had some pretty interesting techniques to get his students to be so successful in their shooting; for example a large stick from a target stand! (He was just kidding, of course!)

Cowboy quick draw? Or B.J. Norris quick draw? My squad definitely got a work out with the B.J. Norris quick draw. From what I heard, my squad lucked out; B.J. had some of the junior shooters on a full army march! “One-two-three-four-DRAW-two-three-four” and sprinting. My squad luckily caught him after lunch, so he was in a good mood and didn’t have us marching! B.J. recorded our average draw speed at the beginning of the class and then again at the end. We all improved! By a LOT! It’s outstanding to see what just a few hours of practicing with a pro can do! I still smile about it because his drills were tough, but it was entirely worth it.

Manny Bragg (AKA Squad Leader Extraordinaire) started with my squad on the first day. He was teaching us how to shoot something many shooters aren’t particularly fond of, (and not those squirrels in your yard), yes the dreaded swinging targets! He taught us so many great tips and let us practice the swinging targets over and over! That’s really what we needed! He gave us time and opportunities to see how the swinging target moves and where our hits were going. I learned to follow it while it was on the move and I acquired a valuable skill.

On our final day, Manny was our Squad Leader once again and he shot the match with us. It was a blast to have such a great shooter demonstrate stages then show us the different options on each. He walked us through the field courses and gave us great strategies. Imagine, having a coach with you every step of the way in a match! It was a definite treat. And most of all, he stuck around in the hot sun with eight juniors all day and we all had the best time!

I’ve shot a shotgun, a revolver, .22 pistols and rifles. I’ve even fired a 9mm a few times. But you know what I haven’t done before that weekend? Hit a target at 100 yards with an AR-15. Matt Burkett showed us the basics of the AR-15 for those of us (myself) who hadn’t learned anything, from where the safety was to how to pull back the slide. Yes, I was that new to the rifle. It was really inter-