Reviewed by Peter Caroline

When I was seven years old, someone – my mother couldn’t remember who it was, but always said it must have been an enemy of the family – gave me my first gun. It was a Daisy Golden Eagle, a lever-action BB gun that made the later Red Ryder Carbine look plain. It had a gold-like polished brass finish, a black-lacquered stock with an American eagle and flag decal and a simulated scope sight (actually a tube with an aperture sight inside).

As I recall, I was allowed to keep the gun because my parents figured that (a) I didn’t have the strength necessary to cock the lever, and (b) the donor had not supplied me with any BBs. I soon discovered, however, that by sitting on the barrel and pulling the lever toward me with both hands, I could in fact cock the lever. The lack of BBs was remedied by trading some of my toys with older kids.

Since then, I’ve owned literally hundreds of other guns, but like with other experiences, you always remember your first. I’ve owned other BB guns and air guns – Daisy, Hy-Score, Crosman, Benjamin, Webley, Saxby-Palmer, etc. – and I’ve always associated them more with fun than with accuracy. In later years, I fired a friend's fancy German side-lever air rifle. It was beautifully crafted and impressively accurate, but a bit of a weighty elephant and the price was up into four figures.

At this year’s SHOT Show, I encountered an air rifle that gave me a whole new perspective on airgunning...a quantum leap beyond anything I’d seen before. The AirForce booth, tucked away in a far corner of the Convention Center, had an array of air rifles that looked like props for a science-fiction movie. AirForce Airguns is a Fort Worth, Texas, outfit that builds pre-charged pneumatic air rifles. The neat thing about this system is that there is absolutely zero recoil. Conventional spring-piston airgun mechanisms do generate recoil and require special scopes. With an AirForce airgun, you can use virtually any scope that can be focused down to shorter ranges, although AirForce does offer a choice of its own two variables, a 4-16x50 or 3-9x40.

The AirForce air rifle I chose for testing was the Talon SS, at an MSRP of $535.50, right in the mid-