dle of their price range. Although .177 and .20 calibers were available, I chose .22, because I already had a quantity of pellets in that caliber. In any case, it is easily convertible to the other calibers. The Talon SS, like every AirForce air rifle, features a premium Lothar Walther barrel. Unlike other rifles in the line, it incorporates an "innovative muzzle cap that strips away air turbulence and reduces discharge sound levels," allowing backyard shooting without alarming the whole neighborhood. Power is adjustable with a little wheel and an easily readable scale on the side of the barrel/receiver unit. You can dial it in from 400-1000 feet per second, for any use from indoor target shooting to outdoor hunting.

The Talon SS air tank serves as the buttstock, and has a capacity of 490cc pressurized to 3,000 psi when full. The good folks at AirForce informed me that the tank can be filled with compressed air from a scuba tank. Here in the desert Southwest, dive shops are few and far between, and a goodly distance from my home. In the primarily retirement community where I live, the only commonly available compressed gas is medical oxygen, which is definitely NOT recommended for airgun use. So, I opted for AirForce's hand pump, a seven-pound brute that recommended pressure, you will be when you've finished…great aerobic exercise! Once filled, the tank will give you hundreds of shots, the exact number depending on what power level you choose.

Shooting the Talon SS is a blast – a reasonably quiet blast, I might add. The rifle is machined from aircraft aluminum and weighs only about five pounds without accessories. To load the rifle, you simply push forward on the cocking knob until you hear a click. You insert a pellet in the back of the barrel, then pull the bolt all the way back and rotate the cocking knob into the notch. The safety goes on automatically, and you can release it by pushing forward on the red safety lever in front of the trigger. The image in the 4-16x variable scope is quite bright and sharp, and the rifle's integral scope rail makes it very easy to position the scope for optimum viewing. The trigger breaks nicely at a bit over two pounds. Using the Beeman Kodiak .22-grain hunting pellets that AirForce supplied, I was able to get 1/2-inch or better groups at ranges from 30-50 yards.

I cannot say enough good things about the Talon SS. In addition to the owner's manual, you get separate instruction manuals for the scope and mounts and for the hand pump, all very clearly written. In addition, there is a very comprehensive and enjoyable one-hour Basic Operations DVD that covers every aspect of the air rifle and its operation and maintenance. All in all, the AirForce Talon SS is a versatile, high-quality air rifle that's American-made and in a league all its own!

The Talon SS is NOT Ralphie’s Red Ryder Carbine!

By Mark Pixler

In the film “A Christmas Story,” which has become an annual holiday tradition, Ralphie’s desire for the ultimate Christmas present peaks as he gazes with awe and wonder at the Red Ryder Carbine in the window at Higbees department store. Unlike Ralphie, my sense of awe and wonder began AFTER I shot the AirForce Talon SS.

On a trip to Glenwood, Iowa, in September to visit my family, my cousin Stan brought two AirForce airguns to shoot on my uncle Ken’s backyard airgun range – no, it ain’t Ben Avery Shooting Facility, Camp Perry or Gunsite, but it IS fun! Stan owns a .22 caliber Condor, AirForce’s top-of-the-line hunting airgun, and a .177 caliber Talon SS.

I was impressed with the accuracy of both guns, but amazed at how loud the Condor was to me, it sounded every bit as loud as a .22 LR! On the other hand, the Talon SS, because of its integral noise reducer, is going to find a home in my gunsafe. Soon!

I don’t have the space in my Phoenix backyard to create an airgun range like my uncle’s, but I’m pretty sure I can come up with a bullet stop that’ll safely withstand hits from 177 pellets.

Since the power level of the Talon SS is adjustable, it will be easy to find a level that will have enough oomph to punch holes in a paper target at about 20 feet. The noise won’t bother (i.e. alert) the neighbors, and I can practice (i.e. play) to my heart’s content.

Ralphie had to concoct an elaborate scheme to try to get a Red Ryder Carbine for Christmas, and while I’m not willing to climb on Santa’s lap and tell him what a good boy I’ve been (my ears glow bright red when I lie), I did call the folks at AirForce Airguns to ask them for a sample to evaluate. Maybe then I’ll write an essay about what a great Christmas gift the Talon SS is for a 54-year-old boy who never wants to grow all the way up.

Meanwhile, you can visit the AirForce website at airforceairguns.com.