The afternoon was more of the same: shooting guns, admiring guns and talking about guns. The weather was superb, in the mid-eighties with a nice breeze. In the late afternoon, thunderheads appeared over the mountains and, as the first drops hit, we packed everything into my Honda Ridgeline and headed back to our motel. In the short ride back, we got pelted with heavy rain and hail, but the storm passed quickly, and we were soon able to sit in lawn chairs on the grassy area outside our rooms and share a few drinks, enjoy a good cigar and tell outrageous lies.

We convened for dinner at a local restaurant that shall remain nameless, and sampled some odd green chile stew, rather like a spicy pea soup. The sopapilla bread that came with it, however, was excellent. After dinner we went back to our Melody Lane lawn party, and sampled each other’s corn whiskey, rye, bourbon, rum, scotch, etc., and listened to several members of our group playing guitars and singing.

I was amazed and quite frankly envious of the quantity and quality of the guns displayed by the Shootists and their guests. One young gentleman from Texas displayed, as I recall, 131 handguns spread out on his motel room bed and on various surfaces. Virtually every one was worthy of a museum.

There is an excellent selection of restaurants in Raton. K-Bob’s Steakhouse serves some delectable beef, and they know what “rare” means. The China Garden has a many-splendored buffet, and the biggest surprise of all was Alfonso’s Mexican restaurant, right next to the Conoco gas station on Clayton Road. It looked like a dive, but I enjoyed a to-die-for lengua taco and an enormous chicharron burrito, half of which I had for lunch the next day.

The days went all too quickly, and the farewell banquet and raffle came all too soon. As usual, I won nothing, but Lynn Thompson, the genial proprietor of Cold Steel Knives, generously donated Pendleton Lite Hunters to those of us who had no winning tickets.

All in all, it was a most memorable week of great companions, great guns and great shooting. I expended innumerable rounds of ammunition, made many new friends and, amazingly, dropped a couple of pounds. Lord willin’ and the crick don’t rise, I’ll be back next year.

NRA Whittington Center • P.O. Box 700 • Raton, NM 87740 • 800-494-4853 • www.nrawc.org

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