



20-YEAR PATRIOT SALUTE

POF-USA CELEBRATES TWO DECADES OF SUCCESS AND THE MAN BEHIND IT

BY FRED MASTISON



Twenty years ago, an aerospace industry process engineer decided that he wanted to build a rifle. But not just any rifle. As an avid shooter, he sought to design a gun that solved the biggest problems with traditional gas impingement guns—carbon fouling. With the help of his son and later nephew, he took to his garage and began working on a better mousetrap. At that moment, the garage became the first design and production lab for one of the most well-known rifle manufacturers in the world—Patriot Ordnance Factory. And the engineer behind the launch was none other than Frank DeSomma. While traditional procedure would be to refer to him as Mr. DeSomma, he was simply referred to as Frank in the firearms industry.

QUICK SUCCESS

Within two years, Frank introduced the industry's first commercially available short-stroke, gas-piston-operated AR-15. The rifle was the P416, and it quickly gained accolades and fans in the rifle world. It was accurate, reliable and clean running. The new design allowed for controllable cyclic rates, enhanced extraction and improved feeding. It also reduced the wear and fatigue on internal components, ensuring a longer service life.

While it may be a coincidence, the next year HK rolled out its similarly operating HKM4 Enhanced HK/416. In 2006, LWRCI began selling its M6. Frank was obviously pleased with the success and shared, "We are the first gas-piston-operated weapon system on the AR-style rifle platform to sell

to the market." By 2007, Frank had outgrown the garage and moved the operation into a small shop in Glendale, Arizona, with six employees. Then in 2011, they would move again to a bigger facility near the Deer Valley Airport. By 2013, POF-USA had 38 employees and moved to yet a bigger, 11,000-square-foot factory in northern Phoenix. Like so many other great business success stories in the U.S. that started in a garage, POF continued to grow. In 2013, the once garage-based business produced 4,200 guns in one month and had total sales of \$140 million. It was at this point that Frank realized that the best way to continue to scale his business was to build a custom space to house the company. In 2017, Frank broke ground on a new 27,000-square-foot facility in north Phoenix. The new

facility was complete with an extensive machine shop as well as a 75-yard indoor testing range.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENTS

The success of POF was far from just simple luck. Frank's 28 years in the aerospace industry allowed him to bring a focus on incredible tolerances and consistent production. Every part of a POF rifle is inspected and tested before it is sent to customers. In the years following the garage shop, it has grown into one of the most innovative firearms manufacturers in the country. Because of his ability to look at rifles from a different angle, Frank's name is on more than a dozen gun-component patents. His rifles have won countless industry awards including the *American Rifleman* 2018



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Manufacturing success doesn't come by dumb luck. Quality control has always been a defining characteristic of POF.



LEFT: POF founder Frank DeSomma was an icon in the firearms industry and a true patriot. His legacy lives on, with the company continuing to produce top-quality products.

Golden Bullseye Award, as well as the rifle of the year three years in a row at the Industry Choice Awards. This three-year streak with a different rifle each and every year was an unprecedented accomplishment.

In a 2014 interview with *Tactical Life*, when asked why he started the company, Frank shared, "I never planned on it. I was selling firearm parts. I was in the aerospace industry and started working on a belt-fed machine gun and tinkering with rebuilding parts kits for the FAL. I never really liked the AR...the gas impingement products. I didn't want to be a 'me too' company. They [manufacturers] really hadn't

changed the gun in a long time. They were just building the same gun with another widget on it. Doing that wasn't going to set me apart. In 2004 at an industry trade show, we just got laughed at when we introduced our piston guns. At the same show in 2012, companies were selling piston guns like hotcakes. Today, you've got all these European gun companies that are leaving their original designs to build and sell AR-platform rifles and 1911s."

POF is a complete innovator and gave us much more than guns over the last 20 years. In August of 2003, POF-USA released the Predator P-4 rail system for AR rifles. It featured their innovative oversized aluminum heat sink barrel nut. In June of 2009, we saw the release of the Roller Cam Pin. The Roller Cam Pin was developed to combat excessive wear and tear to the upper receiver's cam slot caused by the square head Mil-Spec cam pin in gas piston AR rifles. POF later received a patent on the design.

The company also brought us triggers. In March of 2010, they released their original LRT drop-in trigger system, and in 2013, we got the EFP (Enhanced Finger Placement) Trigger. This trigger also received a patent. In January of 2014, POF released the Rattler ambidextrous charging handle. This was the first ambidextrous charging handle POF ever made.

POF is also a pioneer in firearms parts treatments and coatings. "A lot of the heat treating and coatings—they





Frank's vision for Patriot Ordnance Factory lives on in the people committed to making the very best rifles on the market.

were used in the aerospace industry, but not in the gun industry. They use a process called CROS—Corrosion Resistant Operating System—to mitigate rust and corrosion," said Frank. "Many gun parts are phosphated, and they are going to rust. If you put a drop of water on a phosphated barrel and come back the next day, it will be rusted. As far as our guns go for hunting, they're made to withstand the elements." This list of milestones could go on for some time, but suffice it to say, POF produces across the board.

Frank was a big believer in the AR chambered in .308.

He and I had many discussions regarding the concept of ballistic overmatch in gun fights. His line of .308 rifles essentially reinvented the "AR-10" realm. One that I spent quite a bit of time with was the Rogue. This was a game changer in the .308 world. The Rogue is an ultra-light carbine weighing in at under 6 pounds. The Rogue is the same size as the AR-15 yet chambered in the .308 battle rifle cartridge. It comes either as a full-size carbine utilizing a 16.5-inch barrel or in pistol form with a 12.5-inch barrel. The carbine weighs just 5.9 pounds while

the pistol weighs a mere 5.7 pounds. These weights are almost a full pound lighter than the class-leading Revolution DI. While some people laughed, the rifle industry was soon chasing POF and trying to make their own version of a lightweight .308. The gun is perfect for everything from home defense and hunting to law enforcement and military applications.

FUTURE OF POF

While the technical and production side of POF is impressive, the company is much more than the sum of its parts.

This was especially true under Franks's leadership. Frank DeSomma was an unbridled American patriot. While others may use the term, Frank lived it. Rare was the host that could keep Frank purely on the topic of the product during interviews. He was passionate about the Republic and the Constitution it is based upon. He would regularly express his opinions on the tyranny that has become prevalent in our government, especially when it comes to our Second Amendment rights. His speech was colorful and pointed with no hesitation or filter. He simply said the things we are all thinking. Frank was bigger than life itself and would become an icon in the industry during his time at POF.

On June 18, 2020, Frank's life was tragically taken away in a fatal automobile accident. To say the industry was shaken would be an understatement. Frank was and is a legend—equally as a firearms innovator as well as a patriot. Every gun produced by POF is engraved with "God Bless America" next to the United States flag.

While Frank may not be at the helm any longer, POF continues to push forward and maintain its role as a premier innovator in the firearms industry, today and for generations to come. A recent visit to the POF headquarters allowed me to see an extremely busy operation producing rifles for civilian, LE and military customers. POF is positioned to continue to be an innovative and game-changing part of the firearms industry, today and beyond. For more information, visit pof-usa.com.