

Rifle Design: American made, mass produced Hawken style, percussion patent breech.

Barrel Dimensions: .54 caliber, 1" octagon 28" long.

Steel: Maker said to have been using Gun Barrel Quality 1137Mod at this time. Chemical analysis not performed. Hardness Rockwell B 100 – 102

Location, Date: Indiana, March, 1986

Injuries: Left arm amputated below the elbow, lost the sight of his right eye.

Load: 110 – 115 grains FFg or FFFg GOEX with patched round ball. The ramrod was marked to show when the ball was seated on the powder. Rifle had been fired about 40 – 50 times. When the gun burst it had been loaded with black powder.

BUT

The shooter had previously fired a few rounds using Unique smokeless powder, with his measure set for about 50 grains by volume black.

Nature of Failure: Barrel, lockplate and stock destroyed. I believe those few shots with Unique so weakened the metal (started cracks), and that is why it finally burst with a black powder load.



This is the result of firing just a few rounds with smokeless powder

Background: The fouling and a few grains of FFG black stuck in the breech indicate that this rifle was indeed loaded with black powder when it burst.

Bearing that in mind, read this from an internet auction listing, Aug 2009:

*“This is a 50 caliber Hawken cap lock muzzle loader. I bought this rifle in 1973, did a few practice shots in my basement and then took it to a hunting preserve in Tennessee and nailed a big white ram and a Russian boar. I still have them on my wall. **I mixed some smokeless powder with the black powder and it sounded like my 30-06 when I fired it. . .** This is a very good looking rifle and I haven't used it much but I really enjoyed owning and hunting with it.”*

Someone may be in for a surprise.