

acles" occurred after his three years in vaudeville. On a tour of Mexico with a circus, he was requested by the Chief of Police of a small town to shoot some souvenirs. He complied by shooting out the centers of three pesos in mid air at the town's bull ring. The coins flew over the wall. When Ad and the Mexicans trooped out to pick them up they came upon a threadbare old woman, hands clasped in prayer. Between her clenched fingers was one of the plugged pesos. She had prayed for money and the coins had almost immediately tinkled down at her feet.

Ad was also responsible for the "miracle of the bell." While on a hunting trip near the border, Ad and his friends noticed a tumbled down wreck of a mission. The mud walls were caved in but the bell still hung at a crazy angle. Challenged to hit the bell, Ad took aim and hit it several times from several hundred yards distance. It was an easy shot, but soon they heard a clamor of voices drifting toward them from the mission. A group of awe-struck Mexicans were staring incredulously at the bell. "A miracle," they shouted. "Our bell has been ringing and it has had no clapper for twenty years."

Vaudeville began to pall on Topperwein shortly after the turn of the century, and he looked around for more stable employment. He found it with the Winchester Repeating Arms Company. He had been using their rifles and ammunition. They hired him to demonstrate their products. Thirty years later when the New Haven company was acquired by Western Cartridge Company, later to become Olin Industries, he had become famous and as one of the company's assets, he was included in the transaction. The big letter "W" on his uniform now served two great companies, Western as well as Winchester.

About the same time, he acquired his lifetime companion, and life became very wonderful for Ad and also for Plinky. He married Elizabeth Servaty, a pretty red head just eighteen years old, who worked at one of the ammunition loading machines in the big Winchester plant in New Haven, Conn. She saw him walking through the plant one day and told one of her girl friends, "I'm going to marry that man." They met one day "accidentally" in New Haven's Common. They fell in love at once, were soon married and Mrs. Topperwein's career as a marksman began under the tutorage of her husband.

Unbelievable as it sounds, within three weeks after Mrs. Topperwein's first lesson, she was shooting pieces of chalk from between her husband's fingers with a 22 rifle, a stunt they abandoned when they found youngsters attempting to imitate them. She got her name "Plinky" from her habit of saying "Plink" every time she hit a target.

It was not always the skillful stunt which the crowds found the most enjoyable. For example, they loved to see Plinky toss an egg in the air with Ad splashing it to a yellow streak with a well aimed shot. Undoubtedly Ad's most popular performance was drawing pictures with bullets which was what you would expect an ex-cartoonist to do.

Exhibition shooting was not the Topperweins' only chief claim to fame. Plinky was rated the greatest woman trapshooter of her time. She was the first woman to break 100 consecutive targets, a feat she repeated 200 times.

On November 11, 1916, at Montgomery, Alabama, with a 12-gauge Winchester 97 repeating shotgun, she broke 1,952 out of 2,000 16-yard clay targets in 3 hours and 15 minutes actual shooting time, an average of 97.6%. This was the greatest shooting achievement of its kind ever accomplished by a woman or man. In another amazing performance she broke 1,460 2¼ inches square wooden blocks without a miss.

It was a quarter of a century after Ad had first seen Doc Carver's exhibition in the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show that he attempted to outdo the old master. Carver's record in the past years had increased from 5,500 consecutive hits to a tremendous 60,000 out of 60,650. He had accomplished his record shooting at glass balls, but broken glass was dangerous so Ad used wooden blocks.

It was a cold rainy day in San Antonio when Ad assembled 50,000 of these blocks and a group of stalwart fellows to toss them, three automatic 22 Winchesters, and what he thought to be enough ammunition. His plan was to shoot 5,000 blocks each day, but he changed that to 6,500 the first day. On the second day his first miss occurred when the 8,000th block was thrown. That was the end of Carver's record No. 1.

When Ad had shot 50,000 of these targets, he had established a mark of 14,651 without a miss, and even more amazing, he had failed to hit only four of the entire 50,000.

Everyone was exhausted, block throwers and referees. He was out of blocks, but Ad was still ready for more. He obtained additional ammunition by buying up all the 22 cartridges in the nearby hardware stores. Since no more wood blocks were available, 22,500 of the largest scraps left from the original 50,000 were selected, and a new crew of throwers and referees resumed.

After 12 epic-making days of shooting, Ad had hit a record which probably never will be assailed. He had hit 72,491 out of 72,500. No one has ever attempted to try for the record.

The greatest aerial marksman America has ever produced retired from Western-Winchester after 50 years of service on January 29, 1951. Wherever marksmen gather there will always be good conversation about this fabulous, colorful Texan whose achievements had to be seen to be believed.