

ASK DERRICK CLEANING YOUR SERVICE RIFLE

PART I: THE M-1 GARAND

Written by: Derrick Martin

Printed in Precision Shooting Magazine

Whether 'tis nobler in spirit to clean thine firelock after each discharge, or to suffer the gunk and crud of outrageous fouling until yon rifle doth vapor lock, verily, THAT is the question... (With apologies to Bill Shakespeare, who would have read Precision Shooting if he'd thought of it.) Between episodes of "Pinky and the Brain," we at Accuracy Speaks, Inc., often are asked the proper method of cleaning service rifles. Basically, there are two schools of thought: (A) Hoppe's is cheaper than barrels, and (B) shoot 'em til they quit. We lean toward Option Alfa.

I recommend cleaning any service rifle after each range session, almost regardless of the number of rounds fired. While it's perfectly OK to put the weapon away after firing only 10 or 20 rounds, eventually you'll lose track of just when you cleaned the thing, and someday it'll bite you. The Corollary to Murphy's Law legislates that the unhappy occasion will be during the rapid-fire stage of the most important match of the year.

First things first: before cleaning your rifle, make certain that it is unloaded. Visually ensure that the chamber is empty. For normal cleaning, use a good bore solvent such as Hoppe's or Marksman's Choice with a bronze bristle brush. (Throw away any stainless steel brushes you may have accidentally purchased or received as a gift from unknowing amateurs or evil-minded competitors.) Use of a bore guide is highly recommended, preferably with a coated Dewey rod or a one-piece stainless rod. The military-type screw-them-together rods that fit in the nifty recesses in the stock eventually will fold, spindle, or mutilate.

Run the wet brush through the barrel an appropriate number of times--basically whatever's your favorite numeral between 10 and 20. Then stand the M-1 on its muzzle for five minutes or so, allowing the solvent to soak. Again using the bore guide, run dry patches through the barrel until one of 'em turns up clean.

Cleaning the gas cylinder is not very necessary. Whenever you're so moved, remove the plug end but not the cylinder itself. Scrub the cylinder with your bore solvent, brush it out, then patch it until clean and leave it dry. It is self cleaning; I have not seen one foul to the extent that it's unworkable. Save your piston cleaning for the annual treatment. When replacing the plug, do not overtighten it or you'll strip the threads and incur a whole bunch of unwanted expense and aggravation.

Now pay attention 'cause we're gonna ask questions later. Take notes if you wish. Don't even think

about lubricating the gas cylinder. Any solvent therein immediately turns to carbon with the first round. All right? Good; 'nuff said.

Avoid making yourself crazy with concern over super-duper bore cleaners like JB's, Sweet's, etc. Copper fouling is not accumulative enough to matter in service rifles. Benchrest guns yes; service rifles no. Benchresters can measure accuracy differences due to such fouling, but any additional shots down your SR barrel after the first ten just return the barrel to a coppery condition. After all, your most critical accuracy concern comes at the 600-yd line toward the end of the match, and there's just not enough difference to measure even way out there. After your Garand service rifle is built, it should not, repeat not, be removed from the stock more than once a year, unless repair is warranted. Otherwise, the bedding takes a beating and accuracy drops off rapidly.

For your once a year or annual cleaning (whichever comes first) you may remove the gas cylinder plug, but not the cylinder itself! Remove the operating rod and scrub the carbon from the piston. Use no abrasives! Hoppe's with a patch or a stainless brush is adequate. Normal paint thinner will remove old grease and paint, which tends to accumulate in the nooks and crannies that John Garand designed 60 or 70 years ago. Next, dry the action, grease the contact (i.e., moving) surfaces lightly, and reassemble. Ordinary Q-tips or a suitable rag can be used to wipe off exposed or excess grease before you relube your action. It really doesn't matter what sort of lube you employ: military "Grease, Rifle" works as good as any, but moly or teflon type stuff are both hunky and dory.

Presumably you can allow your Garand to go hundreds of rounds without cleaning, and some distinguished marksmen literally shoot 'em til they quit. Hoppe's rids the bore of powder fouling, but as for copper: when it's full, it's full for the rest of the barrel's life.

Just remember--you can't wear out a service rifle barrel by cleaning. You can only do it by shooting a whole lot. Which is exactly what's necessary to do if you want to get your picture on the cover of The American Rifleman one day.

Derrick Martin

For further queries out there in computerland, visit Accuracy Speaks via our E mail address: ask-derrick@accuracyspeaks.com We can't respond to every query, but we'll select pertinent subjects for use in further columns.