

A Gun Owner's Best Friend

Lee Richeson says he works at a candy store—where cravings are satisfied with wood and steel, not sugar.



“You name it, we see it,” says Lee, the owner of Rich’s Gun Shop and a second-generation gunsmith. To illustrate his point, he points to a rack behind his bench. There are battle rifles from around the world: an SKS, SMLE and M1.

Lee is a full-service premier gunsmith—cleaning to full customization. He’s been doing it for half a century, since he began as a 16-year-old apprentice with his father. Today, Lee’s son, Chris, works with him at Rich’s, continuing the family tradition in the business.

Fifty years ago, shooters who wanted tricked-out 1911s started with mil-spec .45 ACPs. Then, they had to pay hundreds of dollars extra for upgraded triggers, sights and safeties, plus all the metal work and hand-fitting.

“I built a lot of ‘em,” Lee says. Now, with CNC machines, all the goodies are stock.

“They’re already put together,” he says, “for half the price.”

But there’s still plenty of work for him at Rich’s. On a recent Thursday morning, Lee reassembles a couple of 1911s that he had stripped completely to correct years of neglect. He applies Break Free when needed, just as he’s done for decades.

As much as he admires John Moses Browning’s 113-year-old creation, Lee goes back even further with Colt SAAs.

“I really enjoy tuning revolvers,” he says. “I love single actions, but I’ll slick up pretty much anything: Smith DAs, Ruger DAs.”

The pistol he carries is a Heckler & Koch P7M8. It’s a squeeze-cocker, an obscure design that Lee couldn’t forget.

“Remember the first *Die Hard* movie? The bad guy had one.”

Lee’s P7 now has hard chrome, fiber optics and a trigger job. Something about knowing a guy who could do the work...

“This is my baby,” he says. “It’s a shooting machine.”

The owner of Rich’s could have any other semi-auto, but he prefers Glocks. “I use them for training,” he says. “They’re pretty much indestructible. Glocks are in all my gear for that reason: They work and they work.”



Rich's Gun Shop moved from northwestern Oregon to St. George in August 2021. "It was going down the tubes fast in our area," Lee explains. "The politics, the gun laws. We could have been out of business by now with all the crap that's going on."

In addition to packing up his Western-themed store—including a custom-made bar / display case with a brass rail and spittoons—he brought a trailer loaded with targets. When he first started shooting in Southern Utah, he set up his own steel on the Arizona Strip.

"It was so much work," Lee says.

One day, a customer mentioned Red Cliffs Rifle & Pistol Range. "Oh, we better check this out," Lee remembers thinking. "Hugo (Galante) gave us a tour, and it was like, 'Oh, yeah, this is it.'"

Rich's Gun Shop became a sponsor at Red Cliffs and donates prizes for raffles.

Lee's membership at the range means he isn't hauling a heavy load back and forth on the 15 any more. The silhouettes and plates are already set up in the bays at Red Cliffs for running and gunning.

"We love it," he says.

Rich's Gun Shop
476 E. Riverside Dr. #1B
St. George, UT 84790
435.256.6555

By Kevin Foster Cox