

# F E R G U S

## FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)



Mike and Amy Manzella stand next to a rifle Mike custom-made for her. She's had good luck with it already, as she got a bull elk with it last year. "She doesn't miss with this one," he said. | **PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON**

## CUSTOM MADE

Mike Manzella of Roundup builds top-of-the-line firearms

Story and photos by **CHARLIE DENISON** | contributing writer

**T**EN miles out of Roundup, hidden in the pines, there lies a haven for any and all gun lovers, a man cave with the finest machinery.

The site belongs to Mike Manzella, co-founder and operator of Manzella Precision, a business that specializes in machining solutions and custom bolt-action rifles.

When Mike started machining school in May 2013, he knew right away he wanted to make rifles, a career choice directly influenced by

his own experience buying a custom-made .30-06.

"It was everything I wanted and more," Mike said. "I was so happy with it I thought, 'what would be better than to be in this industry and build these rifles for others?'"

Originally from Buffalo, New York, Mike is excited to start a new life in the Treasure State, and share his trade with the gun enthusiasts of the area. He has a lot to offer, be it Glock work (slides, RMR), Remington Recoil

Logs, Cerakote services, chambering, thread work, reloading blocks, custom pillar bedding, and the list goes on.

The fact Mike can work on guns for a living continues to amaze him, especially when he thinks back to the skepticism early on.

"My manual machining class teacher at Erie Community College was a mold maker for Fisher-Price," Mike said. "Anybody that grew up

**See MANZELLA, page 7**



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

I'd like to start with a heartfelt thank you to all those members who helped fight and/or prevent the propagation of the Taylor fire northeast of Denton. Fergus Electric crews spent several days replacing 22 power poles and worked to restore power to those impacted by the devastating fire. Our crews witnessed members in the area helping every way they could, and the teamwork was amazing. Bonds developed from neighbors helping neighbors aren't easily broken. I hope we are blessed with rain, so the constant threat of fire soon becomes a distant memory.

### *Representing our members at state, regional meetings*

In the electric cooperative world, the fall calendar is packed with state and regional meetings. In August we attended a Members 1<sup>st</sup> Power Cooperative meeting in Gillette, WY, where we discussed issues pertaining to wholesale power purchases. In September, we will be attending the Northwest Public Power Association annual conference and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Region 9 meeting. In October, we will participate in the Montana Electric



Cooperatives' Association annual meeting, held in Great Falls, MT. November brings a three-day meeting held in Bismarck, ND, by our wholesale power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

In each of these meetings, Fergus Electric staff and trustees are repre-

## Heartfelt thank you to members who worked to fight the Taylor Fire

senting our members and progressing the role electric cooperatives' play in leading our energy future. Your board members are busy advocating on your behalf, asking tough questions to those who represent our industry. Each year in Great Falls, we hear from and speak with the elected officials representing our great state of Montana back in Washington, DC. We have an excellent cooperative story to tell, and we don't miss a single opportunity to promote the benefits.

### *Working together for the betterment of each member*

I share all this with you to let you know we are working for you at both a state and federal level. We are members of multiple organizations that are doing the same. We are committed to maintaining reliable electricity at a fair and stable price. We are engaged in new technology discussions and actively planning multi-year base infrastructure replacements. Fergus Electric was established 83 years ago by those committed to working together for the betterment of each member. We look forward to continuing this legacy for another 83-plus years. RM



Hilger Substation 50 kiloVolt breaker and control house relay training.

## Fergus Electric Co-op posts list of unclaimed capital credits

In November 2020, Fergus Electric Co-op mailed 2,259 Capital Credit checks to members who received electric service for the year's 1992-1994. Fergus Electric has posted the list of returned unclaimed capital credits on our website at [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ferguselectric](https://www.facebook.com/ferguselectric).





Mike recently put together matching Browning Buck Marks (.22 long rifle) with matching green dot Holosun optics, Allchin optic mounts, dead air masks and Truglo front sights. Guns with suppressors are popular right now, Mike said. The wait is currently about six to seven months.



Pictured is a 6.5 PRC rifle Mike recently custom-made in his shop. The rifle has a titanium receiver and a carbon-fiber wrapped barrel. It's a lighter rifle (about 10 pounds), which is convenient for hunting. Mike said the customer he made it for said it was "everything he wanted."



This Glock 20 10mm Automatic Mike recently made has been cut for a Trijicon RMR sight. The grip was stippled by Integral Defense. Suppressor sights have been added and custom cerakote was used for the slide. The factory barrel was recrowned to help improve accuracy.

## MANZELLA PRECISION, LLC

Manzella Precision, LLC offers custom bolt-action rifles, custom machining solutions, contract machine work, 07 FFL, upgraded Forster Co-Ax jaw holder, reloading blocks, chambering, thread work, Glock work (slides, RMR, etc.), Tubbs Lugs, Remington Recoil Lugs, Cerakote services and more.

For more information find the business on Facebook, go to [www.manzellaprecision.com](http://www.manzellaprecision.com), call Mike at (605) 824-8206 or email him at [manzellaprecision@gmail.com](mailto:manzellaprecision@gmail.com).

## MANZELLA

*Continued from page 5*

with Fisher-Price farm toys knows his work. I mean...he's a guy who has made molds that have touched all of America. Anyway, he asked me what it was I wanted to do when I got out of machining school, and I told him I wanted to build rifles. He told me he'd had 10,000 students go through here and he hadn't seen anybody good enough to build rifles."

Self-motivated, disciplined and determined, Mike would not be deterred.

"The man said he'd never buy a rifle from me. I said, 'OK, well, I'm still going to do it.'"

Two years later Mike sold his first rifle...to the teacher who doubted him.

For Mike, there was never any doubt. After his first year at machining school, he took a job with Accuracy International — a high-end sniper rifle production company — which propelled him to where he is now.

"I worked for Accuracy International for three years," Mike said. "In that time, I developed their CNC chambering programs and even chambered the barrels their sponsored U.S. shooting team used. They won several matches over those years. I also did whatever military contract work they had at

the time."

Mike was still in school while working at AI. He'd bring barrel work into the shop sometimes, and his Fisher-Price teacher took notice.

"He kind of couldn't believe it," said Mike. "Then one day he came up to me and said, 'why don't you build me a rifle?' And I said, 'I thought you didn't want one.' He still shoots it to this day."

That was all the encouragement Mike needed to pursue his dream.

Manzella Precision, LLC officially started as a part-time endeavor in 2017. Mike has been operating it full-time since the summer of 2019. The shop is complete, and he is taking on new business regularly.

Mike said those who come see his shop are almost always surprised.

"There's no one in Montana I know of that runs their operation off a CNC machine like I do," Mike said. "People leave here saying, 'I've never seen custom machine settings like this before. I've never seen CNC machines.' And they can't believe it's in Roundup."

When a person walks into Manzella Precision, the first things they see are his CNC mill turn apparatus and his 12,000-pound slant-bed lathe, a machine Mike considers one of the best out there

*See MANZELLA, next page*

## IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER\*

### WIN A \$32.50 CREDIT

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number and you will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 388832, Account 344650  
Account 376825, Account 387019  
Account 319749, Account 320528**

### CONGRATULATIONS!

**Keith Hill** of Harlowton and **Carol Jennings** of Moore were last month's winners.

\*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

### FOR OUTAGES

**First:** Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

**Second:** Check the breaker below the meter.

**Third:** If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

**Fourth:** Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Dale Rikala .....	406-366-3374
Bret Ophus .....	406-366-7523
Bret Nellermoe (Roundup).....	406-939-0636
Carson Sweeney .....	406-366-0971
Melanie Foran.....	406-462-5650
Scott Olson .....	406-366-5822
Dan Balster.....	406-366-0975

### FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

84423 US Hwy. 87, Lewistown, MT  
59457-2058

Tel: 406-538-3465

Office Hours: 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. M-Th.

Website: [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)

E-mail: [ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop](mailto:ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ferguselectric](https://www.facebook.com/ferguselectric)

**Carson Sweeney.....General Manager**  
**Dale Rikala.....Line Superintendent**  
**Sally Horacek .....**Office Manager  
**Janine Rife Didier.....Editor**

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1:	Paul Descheemaeker, President, Lewistown, 428-2417
District 2:	Brett Maxwell, Lewistown, 538-9002
District 3:	Brad Arntzen, Hilger, 462-5555
District 4:	Cathy Kombol, Roundup, 428-2202
District 5:	Terry Frost, Vice President, Roundup, 323-3415
District 6:	Jason Swanz, Sec./Treas., Judith Gap, 473-2462
District 7:	Bob Evans, Jr., Geyser, 735-4476

*Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.*



Mike Manzella is pictured with the CNC mill he uses for stock work and pistol slide work. He also uses it for engraving caliber on the barrels, and much more.

## MANZELLA

*Continued from previous page*

for small-batch manufacturing.

"With a machine like this everything is programmed to do exactly what you want it to," he said. "Manual versus CNC is night and day. The CNC is just so incredibly precise. It never has a bad day."

### Making a Life Out West

After a few years at Accuracy International an opportunity came up in South Dakota to do barrel work for TS Customs.

"Taking the job at TS Customs worked out great," Mike said. "Not long after starting I met my wife, Amy, on *farmersonly.com*."

Amy, who was home from a deployment in Afghanistan, said she joined *farmersonly.com* to find a "better quality" man.

"It paid off," she said.

Mike proposed after a month and a half.

"It was a whirlwind romance," he said. "I had money earmarked for the match rifle I was building for myself, and took that money and bought her a ring."

Not long after they got married Amy brought Mike out to Montana. She already owned the home outside

Roundup, where they currently reside.

Mike fell in love with the area immediately.

"I've never appreciated a place more," he said. "Montana — with its scenery, wildlife and its openness — is like a gift that keeps on giving."

Amy and their children (Skylar and Mike, Jr.) are grateful to have found a home in central Montana.

"We like being out here...away from everything," Mike said.

### Now accepting new clients

With Manzella Precision, Mike hopes to bring the same satisfaction he had from the custom .30-06 to all his customers, and he plans on doing so by listening to their needs and expectations.

"If someone wants me to build a rifle, I will build exactly what they want," he said. "I won't push anything on them they don't want. It's a truly custom experience."

Mike said — if he has all the parts — he can have a gun ready in two to two and a half months.

"I can usually get a barrel in a month to a month and a half. The stock is usually the holdup," he said. "I try to get things to my customers as soon as possible. It's been great having more and more local customers from the area, including law enforcement." RM