

Geoffroy Gournet, Engraver

More than 15 years ago I received a phone call from a young engraver who had seen my photography in various magazines and wanted to learn how to photograph his own work. Geoffroy Gournet (pronounced “Gor-nay,” although he’s known as Jeffery in this country) spoke with a heavy French accent, but his willingness to listen and learn came through quite clearly. He sent me some 35mm pictures that could best be described as “snapshots.” In a follow-up call I advised the use of a medium-format camera and spoke about lighting, black & white and color film, and what I knew about the use of photos in periodicals. Firearms photography is problematic, but capturing engraving is probably second only to jewelry for difficulty, because it requires close-up work of often shiny subjects.

The following Christmas I received a nice card with a very

professional-looking photograph of Gournet’s lovely engraving. In the years since I have accumulated an impressive collection of the engraver’s Christmas cards, each showing a beautiful photograph of a finely embellished shotgun. Cleaning my hellhole roll-top recently, I came across last year’s card and realized that Gournet is one of the few American engravers who has largely devoted his career to engraving double shotguns.

Gournet was born in



Geoffroy Gournet (holding a bulino in his right hand and a loupe in his left) has done some incredible work, such as that on this Ferlib (top right) and this gold-inlaid Krieghoff (left).

1959 in Northern France, in the Ardennes near the site of the Battle of the Bulge. He grew up around guns, as his physician father collected them and took him hunting and shooting—“everything from .22s to cannons.” Firearms were “part of life as a child.” His father practiced engraving as a hobby and, although Geoffrey was exposed to the craft early, he gently suggests, “My father’s engravings were not very refined.”

At the age of 19 Geoffrey began the pursuit of a life’s work at the prestigious Liège, Belgium, school of gunsmithing (Ecole d’Armurerie de Liège). Gournet spent three years in gunsmithing classes learning to build and repair all types of firearms, from break-open guns to bolt-actions; to fit claw mounts; to construct double barrels and do all that was offered. In the afternoons and evenings he worked for the Belgian firm Ernest Du-

AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPHS