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Cimarron Firearms Honors the Legendary Phil Spangenberg

Noted Frontier firearms expert and modern-day "Buffalo Bill," Phil Spangenberg had close ties to the family and founding of Cimarron Firearms.



Phil Spangenberg, Mary Lou Harvey, Mike Harvey at SHOT Show in the 1980s.

On Sept. 26, 2024, the passing of Phillip Howard Spangenberg was quietly announced on several online platforms. For those who knew the man, it was a blow to the cowboy action shooting and cowboy mounted shooting community, the firearms media family, and the Harvey family that founded and operates Cimarron Firearms still today.

Phil was born in Miami, Florida, but the call of the West brought him to California at a young age. His fascination with Old West Lore grew into an encyclopedic knowledge of firearms from the 19th and 20th centuries. In the early 1970s, Phil combined his love of Frontier firearms with his skill as a horseman and took his Wild West show on the road across America and abroad. Phil is credited with the development

of the Cowboy Mounted Shooting events and competitions, in which mounted riders were judged on their ability to draw a firearm, aim, and accurately hit targets while the horse galloped through a course.



End of Trail 1993 with Allen Wah, founder of Wahmaker clothing, Mike Harvey, President of Cimarron Firearms, and Phil Spangenberg, Firearms Expert.

In keeping his Wild West shows authentic to the period, Phil realized that the clothing available was a far cry from what people wore in the Old West. He was the first to offer period clothing and authentically reproduced gun holsters from the period. His companies, Red River Western Wear and Old West Gun Holsters, also supplied guns, gear, and apparel to Hollywood prop companies for the movies and television series westerns. His skill with firearms as a quick-draw and shot artist, to his vast storehouse of gun knowledge, made him invaluable as a consultant on Hollywood sets. Phil trained actors in the use of firearms, consulted on period-correct firearms, saddlery, and more on a variety of films, TV shows, and documentaries. He personally trained such well-known actors as Charles Heston, Mel Gibson, Heath Ledger, Rob Lowe, Catherine O'Hara, Paul 'Crocodile Dundee' Hogan, and Patrick Swayze. Phil brought all his experience and knowledge together in his years as a popular writer, first as Blackpowder Editor for *Guns & Ammo* Magazine, then as Firearms Editor at *True West* Magazine. He made the Old West come alive again on the pages of the magazines. Fans would mention they could feel the heat of a desert sun, taste the dust, and smell the leather in his articles. He made heroes and villains come alive again.

Through all his endeavors as a reenactor, businessman, historian, and storyteller, Phil was also an avid collector of Frontier firearms. Through his connections, he met another collector and entrepreneur, Mike Harvey, and his wife, Mary Lou. Mike operated a Houston-based retail store "Bigfoot," named after

one of Mike's childhood heroes, "Bigfoot" Wallace, a legend in Texas. Originally, the store specialized in the buying and selling of Old West revolvers and rifles and eventually became a distributor for Western Arms, importers of Uberti "cowboy" style firearms. When Mike bought out Western Arms and wanted to start a new company dedicated to bringing truly authentic-style replicas to the American public, he reached out to long-time friend and confidant, Phil Spangenberg. If anyone encompassed the spirit of the Old West through and through, it was Phil. After some thought, Phil suggested that there was really only one word that described what the West was to him, and that word was Cimarron. Henceforth, Mike and Mary Lou Harvey named their new venture Cimarron Firearms, the first company to offer original finishes on modern-produced replicas.

Phil had developed a close relationship with the Harvey's and continued to provide support. As the Blackpowder Editor for *Guns & Ammo* magazine, Phil often reviewed Cimarron Firearms. Bryce Wayt, VP of Operations and Media for Cimarron, recalled when as a young Western movie enthusiast and rock musician, he had asked Jamie Harvey, daughter of Mike and Mary Lou, then a rock and metal blogger, on a first date. An alternative get-together was suggested by Jamie to visit the Autry Museum of the American West; a choice Bryce found odd, but Jamie insisted was for "work." It was at the L.A. Museum dedicated to preserving the stories of the American West that Bryce met Phil Spangenberg. Phil provided the backdrop to the many artifacts at the museum, providing the couple with anecdotes and stories from long ago on the frontier. "That man" who Bryce first assumed must be a museum guide, turned out to be a close family friend, providing the informal education on a culture still needing to be preserved and carried forward. Fast forward, Bryce and Jamie married, and while working for Cimarron Firearms, Phil, alongside Bryce, worked on many Cimarron catalogs, using his weapons expertise to provide accurate specifications and the stories behind so many of Cimarron's fine reproductions.



"COOL WATER"
Bryce Wayt, VP of Operations for Cimarron Firearms, and Phil Spangenberg in Phil's Spangenberg Slick Fork Saloon from [Cimarron's Big Guns Video: Interview with Phil Spangenberg](#).

In the following years, the friendship between the Cimarron family and Phil Spangenberg continued. Phil appeared on [The Story of Cimarron Firearms YouTube series](#) providing context to the history of the Old West firearms and the Cimarron story. Phil and Mike often hunted together and supported the growing sports of Cowboy Action Shooting and Cowboy Mounted Shooting. The last hunt they had planned, unfortunately, had been postponed due to Phil's health.

"Phil was the real deal, he loved and lived a life that is no longer present in our current society," Mike Harvey, CEO of Cimarron Firearms, reflected. "He preserved the past and shared his enthusiasm and wealth of knowledge with a generous heart. So many people have been touched by his special ability to reconjure the past and bring the stories of the American West alive, through his work in Hollywood films, reenactments, writing, and his action-packed Wild West Shows. He will be greatly missed and we wish him peace in his final ride into the sunset."



Mike Harvey, CEO of Cimarron Firearms, and Phil Spangenberg, the Legend, in Mike's Fredericksburg, Texas office, 2018.

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