

David Mamet

FOR CREATIVE FORCE BEHIND 'GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS' AND 'WAG THE DOG,' WEAPONS ARE MEANT TO BE FIRED – EVEN COLLECTIBLE ONES

Interview by Gary Dowell



Associated Press

A MAN OF MANY TALENTS, playwright, screenwriter, and stage and screen director David Mamet earned a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony nomination for his acclaimed drama *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and received Academy Award nominations for *The Verdict* and *Wag the Dog*. A marksman and lifelong collector of guns and knives, Mamet took time to discuss his collection – some of which he has consigned to Heritage's arms and armor auction scheduled for April 30, 2012, in Dallas.

You've done target shooting for quite some time. Does your collection stem from that?

The other way around. I've got a house way back in the middle of nowhere in Northern Vermont, a little cabin in the woods, and out back I had a couple of hundred yards. Beyond that was many thousands of acres of given-up farmland. So I built a little berm and put in a pistol range, and I would shoot silhouettes or shoot targets. ...

EVENT

► ARMS & ARMOR SIGNATURE® AUCTION #6076, featuring items from the collection of David Mamet, is scheduled for April 30, 2012, in Dallas. For information, visit HA.com/6076 or contact Michael Grassia at 415-777-4867 or MichaelG@HA.com.

Also, in those days, every little town in Vermont – still to some extent but less so – had a country store, and they all had guns and people would trade guns. So it was a good thing to do to get out of the house and stop writing and have a cup of coffee and see what was in the case or had come out of somebody's closet.

How long have you been building up your collection?

I don't know – off and on for maybe 40 years. But things come and go, you know, and one of the wonderful things I wrote about [in the Heritage auction catalog] was the things that one traded away. You'll think back and say "Why in the world did I do that?" or even worse "Whatever happened to that gun?" You know it's been gone for years, but did you give it to someone or did you trade it? What the hell?

Do you have anything in your collection that you'll never part with?

Oh, I've got a couple of them. One of them is this gorgeous Sheriff's Colt. It was reworked for me by Hamilton Bowen and then engraved by Jim Kelso, who's a great, great Vermont artist and gun engraver. He doesn't do guns anymore. I carried that for years. There's a .45 Long Colt I've carried for years and I've ruined back in the woods.

Do you have a "holy grail" item that you would just love to get your hands on?

I wouldn't mind having an Artillery Luger, or one of the American Eagle Lugers. You know, I like to own things I can shoot, and anytime I bought anything that was collectible I took it out and ruined the collectability of it. And it's a common failing.

What else do you collect?

I've built a pretty good knife collection over the years. I just started collecting them because I like using them. I had pneumonia about 30 or 40 years ago. I was in bed for awhile, and I found an article about custom knives, so I wrote away for one and started getting all these custom knife catalogs.

How do you go about acquiring your pieces? Do you have a buyer? Do you hit auctions?

I come from the other side of the equation. I got most of it out of the glass case at the checkout counter in the country store. And a lot of it came from World War II. I was born in 1947, so everybody in my dad's generation who was in the war and in the Army came back with interesting memorabilia, and that was the stuff that started coming out of the closets in the '60s and '70s. You'd see all this marvelous stuff like Nambus, Walther's, and Lugers and Hitler Youth daggers.

Do you still shoot in competition?

No. I live out in the Los Angeles area now, so if you even take the gun out of the safe you have to have two sheriffs standing next you. That was the great thing about living in Vermont. When I got tired of writing, I just opened up the safe, decided what I wanted to shoot, and went out on the back porch and shot a couple hundred rounds.

GARY DOWELL has written for *The Dallas Morning News*, *DarkHorizons.com* and *PopCitizen.com*.