


THE AMAZING AR-10

EUGENE STONER developed a 7.62 mm battle rifle while at ArmaLite, then a division of Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corp. Less than 10,000 of his gas-operated AR-10 rifles were to be made, but this rifle—in rescaled format—was the basis for semi-automatic AR-15 sporting rifles and M16 selective-fire military pattern arms that have been manufactured in the millions.

The two hand-built samples that ArmaLite fielded in the American military competition to replace the M1 Garand were straight-line stocked rifles fitted with odd aluminum flash suppressors and composite aluminum-steel barrels. Hurried production resulted in testing failures when the U.S. military and Nicaragua examined these early guns, but in 1957 ArmaLite was able to sell a five-year manufacturing license to Artillerie-Inrichtingen in the Netherlands. Over the next decade, these arms floated from South America to Africa to Asia, never finding a long-term home in military circles before finally being disassembled into parts to be sold on the commercial market.

Represented in a military technology timeline at NRA National Firearms Museum in Fairfax, Va., this rare, first-year-of-manufacture rifle was donated by the Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corp. 



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LIVES

Both the NRA National Firearms Museum at NRA Headquarters in Fairfax, Va., and the NRA National Sporting Arms Museum at Bass Pro Shops in Springfield, Mo. have a fine selection of historically significant arms on display. Admission is free, and donations are gratefully accepted. For information, visit www.nramuseum.com, call (703) 267-1600 or email nfmstaff@nrahq.org.