
Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

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Vol. 10, No. 1

January 2002

Happy New Year!

The major gap in our education has been complete absence of the study of comparative religion. I have a couple of pretty respectable degrees, but I blush to admit that I am hard put to differentiate between a Suni and a Suffi – just as I cannot tell a Southern Methodist from a Northern Shrike. So I have been reading up on the matter in an effort to find out just what it is we are fighting about, but it is not easy to investigate the philosophical nature of Islam. To begin with, Moslem doctrine forbids the translation of what may be called its scripture into any language other than Arabic, a language which does not translate well. The matter is made further difficult by the fact that the Koran appears to be dauntingly disorganized. It is only in part a theological treatise, covering as it does all sorts of oddments about lifestyle, physical conditioning, sanitation, and what may be called "differential morality." There is certainly more to it than meets the eye, since its appeal to large numbers of people of different cultural backgrounds over several centuries is startlingly strong. I must admit that I do not find any doctrine here that is worth fighting about. Nonetheless, these people want to fight about it, and that makes them both dangerous and silly at the same time, a condition difficult for a rationalist to accept.

I must admit that any body of religious doctrine is difficult for a rationalist to accept, since faith, by definition, is "the evidence of things unseen." This by no means diminishes the importance of faith in the human adventure, but it does leave at least some of us with a strong resistance to "polypragmatocracy" (the rule of the busybody). Some people *want* to be told how they should think about matters of faith and morals. Others feel that these matters should be left up to the individual. We do not object to the moral doctrines held by other people (as long as they do not result in savagery), but we do believe that people of maturity should be left free to decide religious matters for themselves.

And thereby hangs the tale. The devout Moslem demands that other people share his faith or die. That is not a foolish fancy – it is right there in the book. The devout Moslem does not necessarily hate the Infidel, he simply cannot accept his existence, and there you have the Holy War. It may be that OBL's days are briefly numbered, but whether he lives or dies, Islam remains the core of the Holy War. I cannot handle the Arabic language, and therefore it is not possible for me to interpret the Koran. The fact remains that we do have a Holy War on our hands, and how we pursue it remains to be seen. I do not know what we have in mind for the next step, but we do have good feelings about Mr. Rumsfeld. His conduct of what must be regarded as the preliminary skirmishes appear to have been carried out with neatness and dispatch. Now let us remain ready for Phase Two of the *Jihad*.

We are informed that in Africa today, north of the "Mason–Dixon Line," a professional hunter is required to pack a rifle at all times. (He is not, however, required to pack any ammunition.) This is the "new Africa."

We were distressed to learn that Peter Blake of New Zealand, a yachtsman with two first places in the America Cup, was recently murdered by pirates on the Amazon. We have no details, but we understand that the governments of the world stand firm in their conviction that decent people should not attempt to fight back against pirates. Whatever the political situation may be, we insist that if you venture out on the blue water you had best be armed and ready. Boat–against–boat action is usually best handled by the 30 caliber machinegun, but even a pistol may well suffice, if it is handled properly by the right man.

Now that you have your copy of the second issue of the *Gargantuan Gunsite Gossip (G2)*, we advise that you get it hardbound as soon as convenient. That book is a *scanner*, to be browsed through at length. Best tidy it up so that you do not wear it out.

THE KING

Doubtless you have noted the recent tendency on the part of various gun writers to denigrate the 30–06 cartridge. The late Charley Askins demonstrated this attitude some years ago in a magazine article, and now we see that a currently active colleague has taken up the tattered banner of iconoclasm again.

The trouble with the 30–06 is that, like Julius Caesar, *it is too good*. It is not only too good, but it is too old – now only four years short of its centennial. People have been trying to improve upon it since before I was born (and that was a very long time ago), but without success. Its great virtue seems to be its unacceptable versatility, which is a drawback in the age of specialization. I acquired my personal 06 when I was in high school, and while I have obtained a number of other weapons since then, I have never felt a real need to improve upon the cartridge. The 30–06 is nobody's first choice for elephants, nor is it ideal for prairie dogs, but it will suffice for either of those if that is all that is available, and it will account comfortably for everything in between – including *Homo sapiens*.

The cartridge was deemed too large for optimum portability after the Korean War, and was replaced by the US government with the 7.62 NATO cartridge, or 308 as we call it now. The 308 is a tad smaller than the 06, but this is a minor point to the individual owner, and with the advent of the more modern propellants any power difference between the two cartridges is negligible.

The 30–06 retains a minor, but not inconsiderable, edge over the more modern 308 in its accommodation of the 220–grain bullet, which renders it a practically perfect cartridge for the African bushveldt today, where versatility in one loading can be very useful. The 30–06/220 is eminently suitable for kudu or lion, yet will not tear up an impala or a springbok (whereas the 30–06/150 might).

I grew up on the 30–06, and that makes me a dinosaur, but I am nowise ashamed of that. In my teens I took four–for–four (bighorn through moose) with four shots in Alberta, and I have since taken a fair list of quadrupeds, big and little, with the same round.

Today I might fancy the 308 over the 06 simply because I can get it in Scout configuration. The Scout, after all, comes over–the–counter in 308. The difference in "field effect" between the 308/150 and 30–06/150 is negligible, so the handiness of the Scout favors it in high mountains and tundra. If the hunter is going to ride around in vehicles, however, handiness hardly matters.

There need be no discussion of intrinsic accuracy, since that is a function of rifle execution rather than cartridge design. Given equally fine launchers, both cartridges will deliver one–holers at reasonable ranges, and will shoot flatter than the marksman can appreciate out to where he can no longer see his target clearly.

The 30–06 ("United States cartridge, caliber 30, model of 1906") was and remains king. If the 308 now encroaches upon it that is because of improvements in rifle design, rather than new cartridges. Let him who would denigrate the King place himself well beyond the castle walls lest he be overheard. The punishment for *lese majeste* can be both undignified and uncomfortable.

"But there ain't many troubles that a man caint fix
With seven hundred dollars and a thirty ought six."

Guru say: The purpose of *training* is to fit you for a trade. The purpose of *education* is to make you better company for yourself.

I do not suppose that I will have much effect when I call upon the faithful to knock off this "internet war." Those of us in the *family* should devote ourselves to confounding the hoplophobes, rather than insulting each other. It was not very long ago that we had no problem here, when all the good guys were wearing the same uniform and fighting the same battle, but unfortunately faction has a way of rearing its ugly head. We American shooters who constitute the foundation of liberty, are philosophically correct, but we are not strong enough to aid the enemy by fighting amongst ourselves. *Please do not throw rocks at people on your own side of the barricade.* Despite our temporary victory at the polls, there are still plenty of people who voted the wrong way – and will continue to do so. Schumer, I understand, is still alive and well.

Those of you who are involved in designing practical pistol matches should bear in mind that the "Tac-load" has no place in competition. The Tac-load is a step to be taken between actions, not during them. In a competition you are always fighting the clock, but not between engagements in a street fight.

We are awash with opinions about the nature of the Holy War. Opinions are cheap, and long may they wave, but it would indeed be nice if these opinionators would study up on this subject before they presume to pontificate. I have been reading up like mad over the past thirty days and have become impressed by how little I know. This intercultural conflict is not easy to understand, and it has been made more difficult by the linguistic problem. The theologians insist that it is forbidden to translate the Koran into any language other than Arabic. I assume that is the reason for the prophet's injunction. Be that as it may, whenever a commentator presumes to tell us in English about the nature of Islam, he rather gives himself away. It does seem difficult to deny, however, that to a Moslem an Infidel is basically nasty, who can only be redeemed by conversion to Islam. So here we go. It is not going to be an easy confrontation.

I guess you have noticed that OBL is (or was) left-handed. There may be a lesson in this, but I sure do not know what it is.

Over the years I have developed the notion that there is a definite connection between marksmanship and morality. A good shot is nearly always a good man, and conversely the bad guys usually cannot shoot for sour owl jowls. This proposition cannot be proven, of course, but I think it has to do with the fact that the essence of good marksmanship is *self-control*, and it seems pretty clear that self-control is the foundation of good morals. Hurray for our side!

A couple of years back, the NRA committee on hunter assistance quizzed itself on the subject of "the great hunts." As Ortega tells us, hunting is one of the four activities which men of all cultures and all regions have always enjoyed when temporarily freed from the lash of poverty. (The other three, for those who are interested, are racing, dancing and conversation.) Hunting is universal – it is the universal indulgence. Thus we may ask ourselves, if everybody hunts who can, what are the great hunts? This is a matter of individual choice, of course, but when we sift out the choices we find a certain agreement, and the list comes out something like this:

- The Rocky Mountain Bighorn. All of the mountain sheep afford splendid challenges – calling for skill, stamina, dedication, and the heart of a naturalist. Among them all the American bighorn offers the ultimate scenery and the finest ambience, in addition to a grand trophy and the very best venison.
- The *Auerhahn*. This is generally held to be the finest of the gallinaceous birds. It is almost impossible to hunt in Continental Europe today, though not so difficult in Scandinavia. In most jurisdictions the sportsman is allowed only one specimen per lifetime.
- The Plantation Quail. Down in the Deep South the traditional quail hunt combines sport and ceremony with great elegance. The shooting is just one aspect of this party, but the dogs, the mule

wagon, the red eye gravy and grits, and the choice bourbon in the evening all make up into a special case.

- The Nandi Lion. Rounding up a lion in a circle of spearmen in the traditional fashion is certainly one of the great hunting adventures. It is legally unacceptable today, but its day is not long past.
- The Howdah Tiger. The old-fashioned tiger hunt from the back of an elephant is another leisure that is probably extinct, but its memory should not be allowed to vanish.
- The "Wild Boar" (*Sus scrofa*). The big pig is taken properly only with cold steel, either afoot with a pike or mounted with a lance. Either system is difficult to arrange today but nonetheless very choice, calling for strength, stamina, skill, and physical courage. (These beasties can be distinctly dangerous. You may remember that Adonis was killed by a wild boar.)
- The Buffalo. The Cape African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) has nothing much to do with the Cape, but we seem to be stuck with the title. There is one school of hunters which maintains that old Nyati is the most dangerous of game animals currently pursued. Danger, of course, depends upon circumstances which are not always easy to arrange, but the buffalo does kill people, even in today's "politically correct" atmosphere. If the hunter is well armed, knows his bovine anatomy, is a reasonably good shot, and is in full control of his nerves, he is pretty safe from buffalo. But of course those conditions are not always present at the same time.
- *Ovis poli*. The poli is the grandest of the sheep in person, but his landscape is dreary. In a good specimen, he is the grandest of all trophies to hang on the wall, but it is now not very difficult, though expensive, to gather him up.
- Coue's Deer. This delicate little creature is the ultimate of the whitetail, and thus, probably the ultimate deer of any kind. His habitat is restricted to the Southwest of the US, and he is not plentiful, but under the right circumstances he makes up into one of the very best hunts.

"Think, therefore, on revenge and cease to weep."

Henry IV

I suggest that you do not come to pistol school with a pistol which may not be cocked ("double-action only"). You will hold yourself back and perplex the other members of the class.

This current rage for the "Pocket Ten" seems to be doing well across the counter. A Pocket Ten is a pretty good idea, but not one worth ringing bells about. The purpose of the pistol is completely defensive, and it is not clear that reducing its defensive capability is a particularly worthy notion. Certainly a compact handgun is easier to pack around, but ease of use would seem to be a secondary consideration. According to Combat Master Clint Smith, it is more important that a pistol be *comforting* than *comfortable*. Naturally the shooter wishes to optimize his circumstances, but he ought not to do this at risk of his life. The logogram **DVC** represents the equality of precision, power and quickness. It does not seem wise to emphasize one element over another.

In that regard we learn, to our mild disgust, that some outfit back in the East has decided that they own some sort of copyright on the logogram and that, therefore, we (the practitioners of the modern technique of defensive pistolcraft) must not go around putting **DVC** on anything. The trouble with this is that we have been putting those letters in various form on all sorts of artwork for about 40 years, and we are not inclined to start melting down our belt buckles, gunstocks and cap ornaments. It is unfortunate that people who have no style of their own wish to inflict their own low standards upon other people.

A correspondent recently mentioned that a relative of his had been "a member of the US Navy." Somehow I do not think you can be a "member" of the Navy. The old-fashioned term for a sailor was "sailor," with or without sails. Better a US Marine than a "member of the US Marine Corps," or so it seems to me.

So it appears that the home of the brave includes citizens who may be intimidated by the presence of a plastic knife! One may only be terrorized if he allows himself to be. *Terror* is a bad word and should be abandoned. Apparently we are living in an age when word usage may be dictated by the timid, the cowardly and the dishonorable. Let us turn that around and set up proper English usage to suit people who are worthy of it. Just as you cannot be enslaved against your will, you cannot be terrorized against your will. We inherit a noble tradition. Let us now resolve to live up to it!

People who presume to teach us about such things suggest that we change our ready ammunition every six months. I guess this is a good policy, but I do not regard it as a flat rule. The shelf-life of high quality smallarms ammunition is almost indefinite. On the other hand, shooting up your ready stock at least every six months will provide you with more time on the range; and that, of course, is a good thing in itself.

I suppose I should not keep repeating it, but the presence of an intermediate eye relief telescope sight does not make a rifle a Scout. There are about seven essential attributes to the scout concept, and taken together they make up into a "symbiosis" – a total which is greater than the sum of its parts.

Odd, but no one seems to have mentioned that the principal objurgators of the Jews in modern time are the Nazis and the Moslems.

In view of all this talk about military justice and "tribunals," we look back upon the time we spent in and around courts martial as a junior officer. In those days my bible was "Naval Courts and Boards", which was later followed by the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). All involved agreed that if you are innocent, you want a military court. If you are guilty, you want a civil court. The military court will attempt to find out what happened. A civil court, too often, is merely a procedural confrontation between two technicians.

I do not see how we can fight a war against *terrorism*, any more than we can fight a war against *gravity*. If we are going to fight, we are going to have to find a target, and that target will have to be human, rather than an attitude.

"You do not *survive* a gunfight. You *win* a gunfight."

Colonel Bob Brown

During the holidays just past, we were feted with the usual exhortations about "peace." Peace is a nice thing, but it is not overly impressive. *All you need to do to achieve peace is to give up*, and as to that, we will all have all the peace we need – all too soon. Perhaps we should consider the paraphrase "Peace on Earth – *To Men of Good Will*." Those people who want all infidels dead do not seem to fit into that category.

Several correspondents have informed us that according to the Koran, Moslems are forbidden to fight any but *defensive wars*. Since I do not read Arabic, I cannot be sure about this, but it seems that the Arabs had to defend themselves furiously all the way from Mecca (in Arabia) to Tours (in France), going backwards all the time. Those Christians must have been pretty clever in order to get around behind the ragheads, who then *defended themselves in reverse* for several thousand miles and several hundred years.

Our two favorite columnists are Thomas Sowell and Florence King. Miss King just threw us a real beauty in *National Review*. She asserts that her mother (an unreconstructed Southern Lady) disputed this "sensitivity" about busting the ragheads during Ramadan, as follows: "That's the best time to get 'em – when they've got their faces in the rug and their asses in the air."

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Vol. 10, No. 2

February 2002

Winter

Well, they certainly got our attention, and since that appears to have been their primary objective, they have won the first round of the Holy War. We now have to determine what it may take to win. In my distant youth, the main view in any conflict was, "Who started it?" Well, *they* started it. "All you gotta do is look," as the girl says in the song. Apparently in the eyes of the faithful, it is our fault for being evil-minded. I suppose a good many of us are, but that is hardly an occasion for the promulgation of mass homicide, though those of the opposite faith may hold otherwise. However that may be, this war does truly catch the attention, and when one starts to consider shooting matters, as in this paper, one's topic headings become difficult to sort out.

It seems to us that OBL has served his purpose and should be quietly dropped over the side, assuming that he is still alive. God knows a public trial is about the last thing the world should have to put up with at this time.

So now for the upcoming SHOT Show in Las Vegas, where we will be exposed to a vast trade fair at which to witness all sorts of novel items designed to entice the buyer. A special aspect of this is the fact that we already have our guns and they work just fine. Personal firearms should not be subject to the whims of fashion. If you have a good gun you hardly need another one. This, of course, is exasperating to the salesman, whose aim in life is to make you discontented with what you have. In my case – and I believe in that of most readers – I am *not* discontented with what I have. The weapons I own, and have owned for a very long time, do just fine, and while true perfection exists only in the mind of God, a really good gun approaches the ideal very closely. The grand hunting rifle I carried to take my first big game back before War II is practically flawless. Its only weakness is that it may be longer and heavier than necessary. By comparison with today's Steyr Scout, it may be a bit clumsy to pack around in the boondocks, but this is not a serious matter – except to a salesman.

Of course the overwhelming desire on the part of some people to collect gadgetry exists apart from considerations of excellence. The collector simply must collect new guns from time to time, not because they are necessarily better, but because he wants them. This is okay, but it makes the SHOT Show less exciting than a demonstration of high fashion.

"The world's most mutually incompatible religions – Christianity and Islam."

Edmund Morris in *Theodore Rex*

Let us bear in mind that a good trigger is not necessarily a light trigger. Crispness, which is the lack of apparent trigger motion on striker release, is the essential element of a good trigger. Personally I like them light, but crisp is more important than light. There are those who maintain that a light trigger is somehow unsafe, and so it is in the hands of a klutz, but any firearm is unsafe in the hands of a klutz. (I have heard it stated for insurance purposes that any of the upper-end Porsches is unsafe in the hands of a klutz. How true!)

Machinery is, of itself, neither safe nor unsafe. It is rather people who make the problem.

This matter of arming the pilots of commercial aircraft tends to miss the point, as is the case with many

considerations involving groups rather than individuals. Certainly nobody should be armed unless he is properly qualified, both mechanically and temperamentally, in the use of his instrument. You cannot arm a man by simply handing him a gun, and we would not want to see airlines handing out pistols to aircrews. On the other hand, if these people show the desire and the capacity to handle this problem, they should not only be allowed, but encouraged, to protect both themselves and their passengers. This is by no means an abstruse problem. There are all sorts of ways of checking people out in all sorts of skills, from skindiving to skydiving. It is, of course, necessary to remember that people are more significant as individuals than as members of groups.

Of course there are the young. As new generations come up on the scene, they naturally constitute a market for personal firearms acquisition. A youngster can do very well with dad's gun, but there is a charm about personal ownership that a borrowed weapon cannot provide. I am often asked about the age at which one should acquire his own first weapon. The answer must depend upon both social responsibility and also physical structure. The age at which a young person may be considered socially responsible cannot be fixed by a number. Some kids are sound citizens at age ten. Others never become so. In a properly organized family, the parents control these matters, but in an age of ephemeral relationships and dual wage earners, moral standards are too seldom taught at the dinner table.

As to physical development, young people do not mature at the same rate. Parents can determine by observation the point at which the child is strong enough and long enough of limb to manage the manual of the rifle or shotgun. This will change from case to case, but I tend to think of it about the subject age of fourteen. Many of my friends have insisted that shooting be taught much earlier, and start by introducing the offspring to the 22 pistol way down around age eight. This is okay as long as it refers to usage rather than ownership, but shooting is one of the basic rights of passage, and a proper parent will make sure that his offspring is a fully responsible citizen by the time he is old enough and strong enough to handle a firearm.

Recently an anecdote was passed around involving the teaching of marksmanship at a summer camp. A critic suggested to the operator of this activity that the teaching of marksmanship might be considered "irresponsible." The proper answer here, in my opinion, is that *not* teaching marksmanship to an adolescent would be irresponsible.

We have received some excellent action reports from Orange Gunsite graduate and Marine Lieutenant Colonel Chris Bourne. It appears that the age of marksmanship is not totally past, in that Colonel Bourne's people had done some excellent work, one-on-one, while helicopter-born in Afghanistan. This work was done in semi-automatic mode using the M14 rifle.

Daughter Lindy is organizing a moose hunt in Maine for this coming Autumn. She is a fine field shot and an experienced huntress, but her outfitter feels called upon to enjoin her use of a 30-caliber rifle for this task. Apparently he has had some unsatisfactory experiences with military-sized cartridges up in his moose country, but he is not well enough informed to realize that placement is far more important than caliber when hunting big game. A moose is a big, stolid animal and not readily susceptible to shock, but I have taken three, with one shot each, and I will maintain that if you cannot take a moose with a 308 (using proper bullets) that you cannot take him with a 375 either. Lindy will probably resolve this question by using the Steyr (Dragoon) in caliber 376 Steyr, but whatever she does, she could do it just as well with her own personal Scout. (Note that Gunsite staff member Ted Ajax did exactly that last season in Montana.)

I find it strange that our media seems so upset about the nature of human conflict. From reading the paper or watching the tube, one would get the impression that nobody has ever gone to war before, and that nobody now alive has ever seen anybody shot. We did a lot of shooting on all sides in the 20th Century, and that is not going to stop in the 21st. Lethal conflict is not a pretty sight. Neither, of course, is it unthinkable or unspeakable. When people fight, people get hurt. Sometimes the results are pretty shocking. We should avoid

fighting when we can, but there are many things worse than bloodshed, and cowardice is one of them.

It has been pointed out to me that I am in error in referring to all non-ragheads as "Christendom." A whole lot of people who profess Christianity are a long way from being Christians, but since we are going to have to choose up sides, I guess we better start buying the right uniforms.

We are mildly perplexed at the attention given to this Johnnie Walker kid, the Bay Region Taliban. Men have ratted on their own side now and again throughout history, and they have usually been dropped over the side without fanfare. It is not a big deal. If you are a rat, you are a rat. The thing is, it takes a king-sized rat to stand out, and a Bay Region hippy does not qualify. Usually it takes a general (Flavius Josefus, Benedict Arnold, Alkibiades). A friend of ours opined that at least this Johnnie Walker kid had "the courage of his convictions." *The courage of one's convictions does not constitute grounds for treason.* The parents of the principal in this case insist that he is not guilty as charged because he was not there at the time. That is a pretty good excuse, but it calls for proof. As our number one son-in-law, who was for 20 years a county prosecutor, puts it, "In the first place, I wasn't there. In the second place, if I was there, I didn't do it. In the third place, if I did it, I didn't mean to. And in the fourth place, I was insane at the time." These are the standard remarks made when a punk is seized by the scruff of the neck. He seldom makes his case.

We notice a tendency in the press, especially the British press, to regard "democratic" and "good" as equivalent words. This is not good thinking. A political institution may be good and not democratic, as with the Hapsburg Empire, or it can be democratic but not good, like the French Revolution. Democracy, which is simply majority rule, is a means to an end, but not an end in itself. Note that the word never appears in either the Declaration of Independence or the United States Constitution.

I guess that as a "gunners' guru" I should not mention it, but the wild pigs of the world are properly taken with cold steel. The weapon of choice is a lance from horseback or a pike from afoot. One of our most colorful hunters of recent times was Sir Samuel Baker, and he used a knife. I have not taken many pigs, and those with a rifle, which makes me a bad example. But pigs may be among our most outstanding "big game" of the 21st Century. So let us, by all means, sharpen our spears.

At this time of writing, the three most interesting rifles available remain the Wild West Co-Pilot, the Blaser R93 and the Steyr Scout. And amazingly enough the most interesting utility sidearm remains the 1911 Colt and its clones. Reports we get back from Afghanistan suggest that the two most useful smallarms in the Holy War remain the M14 and the 1911.

A sense of humor is what keeps the human psyche from total disaster, and if you cannot see the joke, your life is hardly worth living. It is true that in the large picture there is not a great deal to laugh about today, but that does not mean that one should spend his life under that rain cloud. A full-house war is a pretty grim thing, but my best memories of both World War II and Korea are examples of what might be called gallows humor. And there is no more cheerful sound than that of "boots and saddles" or "general quarters" played on a military bugle.

We have a considerable list now of applicants for the Osama bin Lottery. If your date has passed already, we will simply put you down for the same date next year.

The American pronghorn is, in our opinion, a nifty game animal, but he is frequently misunderstood. Living on the open plains and in country in which there is often very little cover, he often can be seen way out past Fort Mudge. That, however, is not an excuse for shooting beyond a reasonable distance. Charlie Putman, who is one of Gunsite's more distinguished graduates, proposes that a pronghorn hunter should limit himself to ranges of 100 yards and less. My own pronghorn was indeed a long shot, but that is not to my credit. If I had

taken him at 50 yards, that would have been a much more sporting achievement.

Competition with smallarms should be above all else *relevant*. That is, it should relate to the purpose for which the instrument was designed. As a youth I studied the fencing foil seriously. Also the saber and epee, but I was frustrated by the fact that these efforts, while vigorous and artistic, were never really designed to accomplish anything. A touch with the point of a foil does not settle anybody's hash nor solve any argument. Likewise when we pose a shooting problem which does not represent the basic utility of the firearm, it loses its attraction for both competitor and spectator. Naturally we cannot make shooting contests truly realistic, since we cannot make them lethal, but that does not mean that we should not try to make each contest as close to reality as possible. The rules should be "If that could not happen on the street or in the field, it has no place in the contest."

We learn that the Mullah Omar has now called upon the faithful to gird up for "the extinction of America." The trouble is he does not know where it is.

We rather wish that our egg-headed social commentators would quit trying to prevent our annoying the ragheads. They are already annoyed as much as necessary, and there is no way that we as infidels can turn that around. Why they are sore at us hardly matters, since they are and for reasons which lie in the past. We as the warriors of the West will accomplish nothing by trying to analyze the causes of hostility. Our business now is to win the Holy War and clean up our act as necessary as we go along.

Any of the faithful who are interested in attending one of the "Masters Series" classes should note that these sessions are not designed to make the students into Masters – only the student himself can make himself a Master – but rather that they will be taught by Masters – faculty members who are not only master performers with the weapon of choice, but also master teachers of that weapon. In the classic sense, a *Master of Weaponry* is not necessarily a master practitioner with his weapon, though it is a good thing if he is, but that he be above all a superlative educator, who can understand and solve the problems of each student, rather than winning a maximum number of contests. A good coach should, of course, be a very fine shot, but above and beyond that, he should be a very fine teacher.

Unfortunately we cannot arrange for gunfights, but we do earnestly request any of the faithful to fill us in on the details of any shooting incidents in which they may participate, both on the street and in the field. Only by analyzing the past can we improve upon the future.

For those who wish to fiddle around with their sidearm, we suggest that one of your first operations should be that of "dehorning," which is the process of rounding all external sharp edges from the instrument. Those prismatic edges so long prized by reputable machinists wear out hands, clothing, holsters, and furniture. Every outward edge of your pistol should be smooth and round. Appropriate examples will occur to you.

Now that most reputable US citizens may become "permit holders" if they so choose, we must now become publicized as "the good guys." This may not be possible in the megalopolis, but the process is already underway in the rest of the country.

It has long been our dogma that stopping power is an essential element of the defensive triad, and this remains true as ever. However, the purpose of defensive combat is to stop one's adversary, and a 22 rimfire hit in the tear duct will stop any fight of which we have knowledge. Thus we do not push the 22 pistol as a defensive sidearm, but we do insist that perfect placement with the 22 is decisive. There is a place for the miniature 22 pistol, as long as it is well crafted and easy to use. It appears that most defensive confrontations are terminated solely by the *display* of a firearm. This cannot be proven, but the mass of street experience suggests that it is true. Nobody wants to get shot with any sort of pistol, which brings us around to the first principle of gun

fighting, which is "Have a gun!"

We call your attention to a proposed special course tentatively called "Dangerous Game" to be held at Gunsite this year in March. It is intended for the edification of forest service people serving in the northern part of North America, specifically as it relates to the matter of "problem bears." A game animal, of course, is something one pursues on purpose, whereas people who wander the wild, either professionally or otherwise, are more concerned about running onto something which may prove dangerous, even if not purposefully sought. We intend to go into this matter in some detail and to feature instructors who have had personal encounters of the appropriate kind. When one thinks of dangerous game the first quarry to come to mind is the buffalo, but this course will not go into buffalo hunting unless the student body specifically asks about that. To most of the old-timers, the only really dangerous game animal was the elephant.

"If we are afraid to get hurt and they are not, they win."

Pat Buchanan

"Timidity is the curse of the age."

The Guru

I suppose everyone has now heard of the disgusting episode at the Phoenix airport where Governor General Joe Foss was shook down by the ineptizoids at the security check. Joe Foss may be the most distinguished American now living, but this means nothing to some yahoo at the bottom of the employment scale who never heard of Joe Foss, nor of the world war, nor of the Pacific Ocean, nor of the Congressional Medal of Honor. There are those who complain that we do not teach our young people enough "math" (though what they doubtless mean to indicate is arithmetic). That is certainly true, but we have other things that our young people are lacking in besides math, perhaps the most important of which is history. There must be some qualifications required of anyone who signs on to teach elementary school, but I do not know what they are. Joe Foss is an authentic American hero – but what is a hero? The way the world is going now even the professional ignoramus may have reason to learn about heroism in the immediate future.

From what we can tell from the tube, as it is shown to us out here in the sticks, the "bottom-feeders" in our society certainly look, act and dress the part. This is "profiling." It is not only acceptable, it is pretty much automatic.

A correspondent just asked us if we would devote a little attention to the problem of the left-handed rifleman, who is not being accommodated by Steyr Mannlicher. There is not much of a problem here, since almost all practical rifle shooting is slow-fire. A man who fires from the left shoulder has little difficulty in operating the bolt from the offside, since with a little practice he can work that bolt with either hand in the time it takes him to recover from the recoil of his first shot. It is nonetheless annoying that the manufacturers are unwilling to address this matter. Of course, not all of them are. Several current bolt-action weapons (conspicuously not including the Steyr Scout) are available in mirror-image, left-hand configuration. The best of these is the Blaser R93, which is longitudinally symmetrical and may be converted from right-to left-hand operation by simply installing a left-handed bolt. The R93 is a superb weapon, incorporating several conspicuous advantages, but it is not a Scout and it cannot be converted into one without expensive rebuilding.

So I must counsel my friend either to cultivate "cross-over" bolt work, or go to the Blaser. Left-handedness is a slight advantage to a swordsman and it need not discommode a rifleman enough to matter.

Our old friend Ted Taft killed his man on Guadalcanal with a knife, rather than a sword, and the technique involved did not inconvenience him at all.

When recently a noted British philosopher was asked if he would be prepared to die for his beliefs, he replied, "Certainly not! Who knows, I could be wrong."

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 3

March 2002

Never The Twain Shall Meet

Well, they finally got Jonas Savimbi. *There* was possibly the greatest unsung hero of the Cold War. Savimbi fought the Communists to a standstill in Angola for decades, with no help from us. He was not "African-American" (unsatisfactory term). He was, on the contrary, a first-string African, and he will go down historically with Chaka as one of the great heroes of his people. I never had the honor of meeting him, but I got pretty close on two occasions, and I regret the loss.

The upgraded version of "*The Art of the Rifle*" is now available for sale. The illustrations are properly in color, but there is still some trouble with the captioning. The book may be, some critics have said, "The best thing of its kind," but that is not wonderful when we remember that it is the *only* thing of its kind. There may be another or two works on general rifle marksmanship, but we have not seen them.

We admired Jim Cirillo's new "general-purpose revolver" built to his specifications by Dan Wesson, Inc. It features interchangeable barrel lengths and calibers from 44 Mag on down.

On the subject of wheel guns, I tend to fancy the feather-weight 22 introduced last year by Smith & Wesson. At risk of sounding loony, I maintain that the 22 long rifle is a considerably more practical cartridge than the 38 Special, or for that matter almost any other handgun cartridge. The advantage of the 22 is that you will shoot it a lot, and thus learn to hit what you are shooting at. While stopping power is certainly an essential of a sidearm intended primarily for defensive use, we must remember that a 22 in a tear duct tends to stop more decisively than a 9 in the wish-bone. Of course to use a 22 in a combat mode, the shooter must be well trained and in total charge of his nerves, and that may be too much to expect. However, as we have often taught, more than half of handgun confrontations are successfully concluded by the appearance of a handgun, rather than the shooting of one. Nobody wants to get shot with anything, and most people cannot tell one handgun from another. The 1911 still constitutes the defensive handgun of choice, and the more sea stories we get back from the wars, the more this point is proven. But in the big picture it is *attitude* that wins fights. Naturally we want the right equipment, but what we *need* is the right attitude.

The gold-finished presentation piece from Investment Arms was demonstrated at the SHOT Show. This is a fairly regulation 1911 clone, heavily loaded with gold ornament, plus my monogram and other illustrations. I do not believe that anyone will want to shoot a piece like this, but it is nice to have, if only to hang on the wall. It will shoot, of course, if circumstances call for it. \$2,500 a copy. Phone Jesse Herron at 877-994-4867.

We have an incident to report from Montana logging three clean, one-shot kills on prime bull elk with 30-caliber rifles. There was one with a 300 WM, one with a 30-06, and one with (what else?), a 308 Steyr Scout. As Karamojo Bell pointed out so well, it is not what you hit them with, it is where you hit them.

Still, the merchandisers keep trying to make us discontented with the cartridges we now have. This is rather like making us discontented with sex. I mean, what is there to improve! On my very first elk hunt, so very long ago, I took my beast with four shots from the 375, whereas my partner took his with one shot from the

30–06. Then as now, it is skill, rather than gadgetry, which wins the game.

This is not to say that gadgetry properly understood and employed may not be a big help. Jim West's outstanding "Co–Pilot" may be considered gadgetry, but actually its merit lies in its convenience rather than in technology.

This talk about bringing our traitor Johnnie Walker to trial is tiresome. It seems to us that there is no need to bring a traitor to trial. All a trial does is bring attention to a circumstance better left unpublicized. There is really no reason for ceremony. All that is necessary is to discover exactly what he did, after which he may be dispatched without ceremony.

As to the righteousness of this procedure, it was impressed upon us as junior officers that if a man is innocent he should seek a military court. Only if he is guilty should he demand a civil court. The purpose of a military court is to find out what happened. The purpose of a civil court is to get the accused off, if possible.

The movie "*Black Hawk Down*" has become required viewing for those of the military outlook. It has been so long since I have heard a shot fired in anger that I am in no position to criticize the actions displayed in this movie, so I won't. The overall effect, however, is most gratifying to the people we may term "hairy–chested nut–scratchers." Without intending a put–down, it does show to a certain extent how wars have changed in the 20th Century. You have probably heard the story about the British exchange officer on duty at one of the United States senior service schools who was asked to define the mission of the cavalry. His response: "The mission of the cavalry, my dear sir, is to lend a touch of class to what would otherwise be merely a vulgar brawl." Quite so. However well that scuffle in Mogadishu turned out, it was notably deficient in class. Not theirs.

We are now looking into Bill Ruger's new double shotgun, and we expect great things. New products in firearms are not often designed to fill a productive niche, but perhaps this one is. Bill insists that a really superior double gun hitherto priced beyond reach of the peasantry can be achieved by means of modern technology. We have asked shotgun master John Gannaway to examine this for us and tell us about it. A really good double shotgun at a "reasonable" price is something the world really needs even more than a good five–cent cigar.

We continue to be bombarded with marksmanship tales which seem to be impossible. This is no new thing, as these stories have been around since the very inception of missilery – witness little David and the three smooth stones. It is odd, however, to hear people relate as truth episodes which, while intended to impress the ignorant, simply provoke scorn. We have long taught that inherent accuracy that one cannot appreciate is useless. Robinhood, as you know, was supposed to be able to split an arrow lengthwise with a second shot after placing the first one in the target. (On demand yet!) I am now told of people doing things on the range with M16s which cause the listener simply to change the subject. *Parlons d'autre chose*, as the French put it.

Why people do this sort of thing is a matter for the psychiatrist, rather than the journalist. There is no harm done, but it discourages the gentleman marksman in discussing skills. I think the next time I hear an example of this sort of thing I will tell the storyteller about the time I was able to accelerate from zero to 60 miles–an–hour in minus 2 seconds, thereby arriving before I started out.

(Well, they did that, as you may recall, with the Blackbird some years ago when they landed in England before they took off in California. The thing is, of course, that due to our time conventions that really happened.)

Family member and hunting master Charlie Putman tells us that one should always shoot his pronghorn at 100 yards or less, thereby establishing his hunting skill. A point to heed.

In perusing the sporting press, I see that the shooting sling on rifles has been abandoned, at least by the general public. Before I made my first big game hunt on elk in Wyoming in 1937 I had shot a number of feral goats on Catalina Island, plus a few jackrabbits in various parts of the Southwest. I had been shown the shooting sling on the rifle by our esteemed Sergeant Lawson, mentor of the LA High School ROTC battalion, and I used that shooting sling in the field whenever possible. It worked, and it still does. It does nothing for you if your shooting position affords no support for your left elbow, but it increases your hitability factor by a value of about one-third in other circumstances. I found this out for myself in the field after being shown the technique on the range, but if I can believe what I see in print, it is now a lost art. But then these heroes today who bring down running mountain sheep at 450 yards were never introduced to the art. Here at Gunsite we do have the privilege of introducing newcomers to these things, and this is a source of great satisfaction, though we certainly have not reached reported perfection.

The new activity program being fostered by the National Rifle Association is a TV series emphasizing victors as opposed to victims. This program will reenact actual occasions on the street where the proposed victim of street crime turned the tables upon his attacker and won the day. This is the best idea to come forth in a long time. Whether internationally, publically or personally, grief is an unproductive emotion. As Shakespeare tells us, we should replace grief with wrath. The enemy cannot be taught to like us or respect us. What he must be taught now is to *fear* us.

Those of you of the old school will remember that we threw the Moors out of Spain in 1492. Trouble is that we did not throw them far enough. In searching through the records for ragheads of consequence, I discover Haroun-al-Rashid and Saladin, and then my sources begin to dry up. Our current crop of *Extollers of The Faithful* would have us believe that what we may refer to as the Arab Culture was way ahead of the West up until something mysterious happened along about 1450 or so. These people had shown us such things as numerology, algebra, cotton fabric, and coffee, but suddenly something went wrong. Maybe they lost their push and civilization left them behind. The cultural structure of Islam must have a strong appeal, otherwise it would not be proselytizing throughout the world as it is. How is it that the West copes and the East does not? Allah has fallen short somewhere along the line.

We have long thought that people should pay more attention to what they say, but we are not getting very far. What, for example, is meant by "innocent"? What is an *innocent civilian*? Apparently the journalist feels that a man wearing a uniform is guilty, but if he is not he is innocent. I do not think this distinction will hold up in court.

It appears that the Mannlicher organization of Austria has not only changed hands, but severed its connection with Gun South in Alabama. Mannlicher has an elegant tradition and deserves more appreciation than it now enjoys. I hope that its new arrangement for exporting to the United States works out to everyone's advantage. (If you have not got your copy of the Scout in 308, or the "Dragoon" in 376, better grab it quickly while the prices are good. If you need a rifle, you need one of those – quick before it is too late.)

To fight with the sword may be brutal, but honorable. To fight with a germ is merely disgusting.

I suppose any kind of hunting is better than no hunting at all, but I fear I can take no pleasure out of hunting from a blind. I have done this on several occasions and I cannot recommend it. It certainly may be productive, but it does not provide the hunting experience that I prize. I love the woods and the prowl, and while I certainly do not insist that other people share my feelings in this (especially since my crippled condition cuts me back now), I do not see that sitting solidly in a blind waiting for something to walk by provides any thrill. It seems to be that really to hunt one must do just that, get out in the wilderness and wander about seeking tracks or contact. Ortega maintains that the best form of hunting is with hounds, spirited and emotional contact with the dogs themselves. If we accept that, hunting with hounds should be given first place. After

that, prowl and stalk. After that I would put ride-and-spot (which is what is done mostly in the Western US). Only then I would place sit-and-wait. (Not always, of course. Corbett had occasion to ambush a couple of man-eaters in a way that was sporting enough for any six people.)

As everyone should know by now, one cannot translate Arabic into English with accuracy. Also there are various forms of Arabic which do not translate very well even into each other. So we would like those who keep talking about what the Koran says to stop talking about it. I do not know what the Koran says, and I do not think these journalists do either.

Among the other signs of times we discover that *coping is unfashionable*. As far as I can tell, today's young people are taught not to handle problems but rather to call for help. This is very bad race conditioning. As a boy I led a privileged life, but I nonetheless often got into jams beyond reach of assistance. I never called for help, and my father would have sneered at me if I had done so. At age seventeen while driving alone I blew a tire. I had never seen a wheel changed but I figured the matter out by myself. This is not to boast but only to point out that young men should be expected to *cope*.

We are pleased to report that Craig Boddington, possibly the most notable "gun writer" of recent years, has been promoted from Colonel to Brigadier General USMC. Not only that, we hear that he has been given a command somewhere in the embattled Near East. Confusion to our enemies and hurrah for our side! Go get 'em, General!

If you have a 22 and a good 30-06/308, you really do not need anything else – but do not tell the merchandisers that!

Technology will not win the Holy War, though it may certainly grant us some satisfying temporary victories. Spiritual strength is what we need – and it is available. There are a lot of people who think God is on their side. Well, let's see about that.

A friend of ours who is troubled with a nagging form of recurrent carcinoma makes a practice of visiting a Mayo Clinic regularly to keep ahead of the game. He reports that over the last couple of years the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, has been so completely patronized by Arabs that treatment therein begins to resemble some sort of cult practice. The waiting rooms are solidly populated with people wearing bed sheets. Treatment at the Mayos is not cheap, but this does not trouble the ragheads.

On our new electronic communication systems, we notice a profusion of what may be called "electronic punctuation." Correct punctuation serves a real purpose, and when you short-circuit it you usually lose meaning.

The new self-loading 22 pistol from Walther seems to be a good idea. We will report.

It would be nice to think that the niche concept guides our technical and industrial progress. This is the idea that the producer should find a need and then build a product to fill it. This is sometimes the case, but not always. Contrarily, there is a certain kind of maker who builds a product and then figures out a job for it to fill. In the gun world which is our specialty we see both examples. For instance, the Glock is enormously popular, but it fills no niche. We were better off with what we had before. On the other hand, the Steyr Scout does more things in more ways than in any other current rifle design and thus fills that niche. Both systems seem to depend more upon marketing skill than upon excellence.

These people on the other side turned out to be a bad lot, but they are not as annoying as those on our side who keep trying to apologize for them. Our enemy in the Holy War turns out to be simultaneously deadly and

silly. They can kill us, of course, dead, but it is hard to take anyone seriously who announces continuously five times a day that God is Great. Is it that "milady doth protest too much"?

As the British philosopher once put it, there is hardly any product in the world that someone cannot make a little worse and sell for a little less, and the man who makes price his only concern is the natural prey of this man.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 4

April 2002

Winterset

When I recently expressed some puzzlement about the semantic confusion in the differences between *iron* and *steel*, I did not realize that I would get such an enthusiastic response. A whole sock-full of correspondents has responded by telling me at some length the various terminological differences now in use in the steel industry. I am duly grateful. I must remark, however, that these people do not agree amongst themselves, even in the matter of text books. Apparently a metal is steel if you call it steel, and iron if you call it iron. The amount of carbon in the product, though relevant, may not be conclusive. Of the various courses which I did not take when I was in college (to my regret) one was *the history of metallurgy*. Metal is what defines mankind. The Greeks even had a god of the forge, expressing how important the working of metals was to them. In passing I have discovered that much of what we have called bronze is actually copper, and I found that some of the edged weapons of the Nahuatl was actually a form of bronze, though the Spaniards referred to it as copper (*cobre*). These things are very interesting, but not so much so to a scientist as to a historian. The matter of maintaining an edge on a sword was of the most vital importance for more than 2000 years. It is quite obvious that one cannot "break" a sword over his knee or by striking a hard blow if it is made of what we would call steel today. The "Spanish sword" of the Romans (*gladius hispaniensis*) seems to have been made of fairly primitive iron, but would be called steel today by some people. The sword of the Renaissance Spaniard, however, was made of excellent steel, in the utilitarian sense, which can be determined by its observed performance in action.

Thanks very much, friends. Clearly I need to go back to school. Perhaps you will join me.

Note that Hans Hambrusch, who was head of Steyr Mannlicher when we made the original plans for the Scout, has gone into business for himself and announced the creation of a bolt-action 700 Nitro Magnum rifle. Now there is something really to show your friends! You can be sure you will be the only kid on the block with one of those.

I notice a number of public departments advocating the use of what might be called a "shoulder-ready" position. In this, when a shooter with a long gun is ready to fire or thinks that something may come up, he places the butt into the shoulder, but drops the muzzle until it is pointing perhaps 45 degrees downward, still holding the weapon in both hands. When ready he simply raises the muzzle to cover the target and keeps the butt in the shoulder. I do not actually object to this system, but I do not push it. The Standard Ready position, with the butt on the belt, muzzle at eye level, is considerably more comfortable and less tiring. It is in no sense slower. That is why we use it in engaging the flying clay birds. The trouble with the butt shoulder-ready position is that it is tiresome over a long period. Our friend and *family member* Dalton Carr, who has had more experience with troublesome bears than almost anyone, mentions in his writings that a man can wear himself out or freeze himself stiff by holding a shoulder-ready position for any considerable length of time. Any system which works would seem to be okay, but my choice is for the Standard Ready position in most circumstances.

Semantic note: Violent criminals in New Guinea now referred to as "raskols." Guess where that word came from.

Family member Dick Weinig from Alaska informs us that there still exists a land where you can shoot a moose from your bunk, deck a ram with a pistol, and hike all day without seeing any work of man. Better go before it's too late.

I dare say that all shooters are familiar with Ruark's Dictum: "Use enough gun." If one has a choice, he certainly should select a piece with sufficient power to do the job he carries it for. However, it is a great mistake to assume that one can compensate for poor placement with increased power. *Proper placement* and *adequate penetration* are the essentials. Power is nice to have, but it is not the primary consideration, except that the weapon must dispose of sufficient power to secure adequate penetration. Karamojo Bell accounted for his hundreds of elephants with the 7x57 and the 6.5. Dalton Carr's favorite rifle cartridge is the 270, with which weapon Ian McFarlane fed his family for 28 years. The essence of this matter, however, is that these people were excellent marksmen who not only could shoot well but could control their nerves under conditions of extreme excitement. If a man cannot shoot well enough for the task at hand, and cannot control his nerves, selecting a more powerful weapon will not help – in fact it may hurt by giving him an unwarranted sense of confidence. As far as I am able to discern it, the consensus of African PHs is that the two greatest weaknesses of their inexperienced hunters are packing a rifle which scares them by its excessive blast and recoil, and the lack of the ability to assume a proper firing position quickly. By all means use enough gun, but do not assume that a bigger gun will get bigger results without a direct measure of assistance from the marksman.

We hear reports back from Turkestan to the effect that the 9mm Parabellum cartridge is simply not a satisfactory man–stopper. Surprise?

There are so many new major–caliber self–loaders being offered today that I have not been able to evaluate them properly, nor will I, considering the amount of time it will take to run a thorough test on each example. I can pick out specific flaws in specific designs, but that is only negative criticism and not the whole story. I will continue to insist, however, that for personal self–defense against two–legged varmints, a major–caliber pistol cartridge is the primary consideration. By "major–caliber" we can use the following rough formula: Multiply bore area (*not caliber*), times bullet weight in grains, times 1000. If your cartridge can deliver a 44 caliber bullet of 200 grains at 1000 feet per second, you have a passing cartridge, at least in theory. Here again, placement comes before power.

Before leaving the subject, we must remember that a 22 rimfire in the eye socket will stop the fight. The thing is to be able to insure that.

In the bear–defense class, we ran the group through on the Co–pilot for the purpose of determining whether, as some have reported, it kicks too much. The answer is that it does not. We had fifteen people, including, one petite guide girl, and nobody suggested that the weapon pushed as much as a 12–gauge shotgun.

It would seem that most people characterize rifles by cartridge nomenclature. They call a rifle a 30–30 or a 375 or such. This designation is a starter, but it does not go the whole way. If a man has two 30–06s, for example, it would not tell him which one to choose. I have long preached that a student coming to school here at Gunsite who has a choice of several rifles should pick the one with the best trigger action. People are not the same (thank God!), so I will not use my own experience as a guide for yours, except to say that I have always been able to hit better with a weapon with a good trigger action. By "trigger action" I stipulate a crisp, motionless release (after take up, if any) at 3½ lbs or less. If a trigger is made too light it may allow the striker to fall when the bolt is closed, resulting in either a failure to fire or an inadvertent discharge. It takes a good gunsmith to install and tune a really good trigger. Some gunsmiths are better than others.

Note that the foregoing is not true of the Blaser, in which the trigger action is more or less independent of the

gunsmith's skill. When you press the trigger on a Blaser, it simply removes the piston which holds the striker back without any rubbing, scraping or creeping.

Therefore the features which distinguish one rifle from another are more numerous than simple cartridge selection. Stock fit, weight, sighting system, magazine capacity, barrel length, overall length – all these are factors to be considered. When your friend says that he will bring his "30-06," he has told you something but not very much.

That beret is a crummy headgear. A proper headpiece for a soldier is a helmet – steel for duty, plastic for liberty. Seems to me we had one like that.

Have you noticed that relatively few shooters are interested in what we may call *utilitarian* shooting – that is, shooting for a purpose? Most people I talk to do not think seriously about shooting to kill. Now I have nothing against shooting at targets, I have shot at more targets than most people, but target shooting is irrelevant to the purpose of the firearm, rifle, pistol or shotgun. I continually run across people who are very proud of a possession they want to show me. When I ask them, "What is it for?" they are nonplused. I suppose in the back of their minds is "What it is for is to show people." Well, that is all right. It does keep the shooting industry alive, and we do need the shooting industry, but we should not lose track of the objective. You may regard a firearm as a toy, but the next time you look at it consider it more seriously. Learn to use it well. You may never have to use it for any serious purpose, but you certainly should be able to.

We notice that Taurus has now introduced a 45-caliber service pistol. I will look into this and get back to you.

We asked about the reputed plague of AIDS in southern Africa. Accurate statistics are hard to get, but our best-educated guess places the rate of the disease at 1½ to 2 percent of *white* South Africans. As reported in the press, the rate is very high amongst the Bantu.

For those who are concerned about rifle power, *family member* Ted Ajax reports a clean, one-shot stop on moose with his Scout, using the 180-grain Barnes bullet.

In my continuing, but not successful, effort to preserve semantic purity, I suggest that the Arab attack on the World Trade Center was an *atrocious*, rather than a *tragedy*. Rhodesia is a tragedy.

We just finished a specialized course here at Gunsite intended for people who work (or play) in country where they run the chance of inadvertent contact with four-legged beasts which may prove hazardous to their health. A number of very interesting points were raised.

First, does this person require the use of both hands in his normal activities? The rifle and the shotgun are both more efficient than the pistol in a deadly confrontation, but if the weapon concerned is too cumbersome to be at hand when the flag flies, you have lost the discussion. Thus while we all admit that a rifle is your principal life-saver in any confrontation with a dangerous beast, it may be necessary under some circumstances for you to depend upon a handgun. Since animals strong enough to pose a threat to life and limb are big and strong, the handgun intended for defense against such beasts should be as powerful as can be comfortably managed, but range is not an important consideration. If you have to defend yourself against a bear or a lion that you just happened upon, the chances are that the beast will be within arm's length or less before you can fire. Of the several cases I know in which disaster was avoided with a pistol in an encounter with a dangerous beast, the muzzle was either touching the target or very nearly so.

If you carry a pistol for defense against dangerous animals, you want it to be *handy* in order to be sure that it is there when you need it. Drawing speed is of little consequence, but security is important. A man who is working under particularly sloppy conditions of rain, snow, mud, etc., will need a carrying system which

protects his piece completely from unwarranted intrusion of foreign matter. In cool climates an open shoulder holster may suffice since the piece will be worn underneath outer clothing. In warmer climates, a covered holster may be the best choice.

In animal defense situations you are not likely to need a lot of ammunition. If you fail to brain your animal at spitting distance, reloading is probably going to be irrelevant.

We get a report from *family member* Eric Ching of 2300f/s in 19 inches with the 270–grain Swift bullet. Seems high. I will check that further.

We are amused to note an ad in a slick magazine saying, "Slim is *in*." Wal ah be dogged! What you should get is a firearm that is "*in*." If your pistol is not *in*, you will just have to go to the rear of the class. The man who wrote that ad, of course, is an ad man, only vaguely interested in the truth. The point that he is making is that the double–column magazine, introduced by the venerable P35, makes for a pretty broad butt if it is to be wrapped around a major caliber. A great many rounds in a service pistol is not really very important. The highest score I know of, and I have been studying this matter for a very long time, tallied five stops without reloading. It was executed with a 1911 pistol with eight rounds aboard. Four goblins were dead on the scene and the fifth was carted away on a stretcher. (I am pleased to say that in this case the shooter was a student of mine.)

But the point is that whether slim is *in* or *out* is not a consideration of consequence. A pistol is a close–range, antipersonnel device. The P35 was a notable weapon, but it did start us off on a false trail.

It is annoying to hear that they have us fighting amongst ourselves. IPSC people are fighting IDPA people, and so on. If you want to fight somebody, I can point out some people in Congress who are worthy of your attention, but fighting against ourselves is nothing but destructive.

It appears that we are now contemplating a "Ladies Only" class for November. The front office has not yet told me how they are going to decide who is and who isn't.

A short–barreled, 12–gauge shotgun with rugged metallic sights is doubtless a good bear choice, and is recommended by many people who work in Alaskan bear country. However, I would choose a rifle. If this rifle is to be used for defense against dangerous animals, it is necessary that it be handy. A weapon that is so clumsy that it is out of reach when you need it is no weapon at all. If a rifle is to be used at any distance, we are probably avoiding the defensive connotation, but if so, it should be equipped with a shooting sling, either a conventional loop or a speed sling. Many people argue against the use or presence of any kind of sling at all, since ranges in dangerous situations will be very short and straps can be hampered by thick brush. (Modern slings are instantly detachable and should be demounted and left aside in conditions of short–range hazard.)

Any beast which poses a serious danger to people is a big, strong beast and should not be pestered with minor–caliber rifles. It is true that you can brain almost any beast with a 223, under certain circumstances, but this certainly should not be your first choice. If that squirt gun is all you have, shoot for the brain and hope for the best, but remember to pray a lot.

Is our standard 308 (7.62 NATO) adequate for dangerous game defense? Certainly it is, provided proper bullets are used and the shooter is a cool hand. The proper bullet is one of ample weight and thick jacket. Long range exterior ballistics hardly matter. I remember when I was living in California that a friend of mine had a huge brown bear mounted in his place of business, practically rubbing its head on the ceiling. He loved to talk about how exciting that bear hunt was, but he was hard put to decide whether it was a matter of stark peril at arm's length or a case of masterful marksmanship way across the canyon. He could never decide which, so he alternated one story against the other.

Defense against bears, lions, tigers, and such is a short-range proposition. No matter how fierce he is, no wild animal can hurt you unless he can touch you. Clearly you will make do with what you have, and in many cases the defensive situation is improvised, but still you should not select a weapon suitable for long-range shooting if its principle purpose is self-defense.

Telescopic sights are so common today that it is practically impossible to sell a rifle without one, but a scope is not the right choice when you are trying to stop a beast from biting you. The glass sight is plenty fast enough – faster than metallic sights when thoroughly understood – but it is no help in stopping a charge, and regardless of what any salesman will tell you, it is fragile over the long haul. Besides which its lenses may easily become obscured by foreign matter under conditions of rough duty. (On the occasion of my one and only lion, taken head-on at eleven paces, the telescope was an encumbrance. All I could see through the tube was yellow fur, which offered no aiming point.) Experiences differ and we have room here for endless fireside conversations, but I do not recommend a telescope sight on a rifle intended for man-killing beasts.

In counting your blessings aren't you glad you were born on the right side of this Holy War?

At risk of sounding too much of a self promoter, I strongly urge prospective students for rifle classes to read *"The Art of the Rifle"* before signing up. And anybody contemplating either Safari Prep or Quadruped Defense Class should complete a 270 before showing up for those.

For another plug, I now suggest that it is time for us to re-issue the hardcover version of *"Another Country."* Paperbacks wear out on the shelf.

You might not believe this, but our man Dan Dennehy reports that our troops in Bosnia had to scrounge their beer off of peacekeepers from other nationalities. It is hard to think of people in positions of authority who do not understand about the conduct of war in its relationship to beer. We could give them several examples. We even had beer on some of those South Pacific atolls, during breaks.

Looking at the distressing world scene today, I must but conclude that possibly a war is good for the spirit. Not a trivial war with no effect upon the social or economic scene, but a real war in which everybody is a player. In such a war, young men get their priorities straight. They find out quickly what is important and what is not. They understand values, and they quite literally prepare to meet their maker. On D-Day morning the word goes out, "We're all going into this today and a lot of us are not coming out. Make sure you people understand that and act accordingly."

A war is a great thing for a marriage, as I can testify personally. When you realize that each parting may be the very last one, you prize what is truly valuable and you forget about what is not.

In a real war you undertake a real moral task and you understand about morality. Just recently a young man – an American, he claims – announced publically that if the United States instituted the draft he would pack up and slip for Canada. Well, shucks, that really upsets us. Without that bird, we're in bad trouble, or so it seems to him. He said that his plans did not include any fighting. It might be well to pick that kid up before it is too late and put him in the Plans Division, there he could make all sorts of plans involving scrubbing latrines and picking up cigarette butts.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 5

Springtime 2002

Springtime

Well, Spring is upon us without doubt. But this is a tough year for the human race, and "The flowers that bloom in the Spring, tra la" are rather hard put to cheer us up. It is vital, of course, to keep one's sense of humor, but at this time there does not seem much to be humorous about – racially, culturally, nationally, nor geographically. Be that as it may, we must not let the deterioration of advancing years nor the foolishness of the ragheads dismay us.

And it is *foolishness*. It is hard to accept the fact that something may be laughable and deadly at the same time, but that is the way things are.

Reports we get from Afghanistan and surroundings suggest that our lads are shooting pretty well. But field reports must always be taken with a certain amount of suspicion. We are told that current marksmanship training in the services makes no use of the shooting sling and is necessarily confined to the M16 rifle. We must offer our bemused congratulations.

We did not discover much at the Safari Club meeting which was of general interest to the shooter. But there was at least one item which fairly well took us aback. This is a *double-barreled, bolt-action rifle*, made in Austria at great trouble and expense. You can get it in any standard caliber if you have sufficient money and lots of time. What do you do with it? I guess you astonish your friends with it. How does it work? Well, you load both barrels and when you work the action you extract the cartridges in both barrels, whether or not they have been fired, and when you close the bolt you feed a new round into a fired barrel, if any. There are two triggers, one behind the other as with a conventional double-shotgun. When you press the first trigger, you fire the right barrel. When you press the rear trigger, you fire the left barrel. When you work the bolt, you have two empties on the ground and two fresh rounds in the chambers. (There are two or three rounds in each side of the double magazine, depending upon the cartridge chosen.)

This is truly an astonishing development. It goes to the head of the list for the *Waffenpösselhaft* award for the first decade of the 21st century. I can get you the brochure on this piece if you want to order one. I guess all orders will be placed by Arabian oil sheiks who have most of the money in the world and not much to do with their time.

Let us remember that the term "double-action" implies *double action* – that is to say, two different means of causing ignition. A double-action piece may be fired either by cocking it first or by pressing the trigger through without cocking. If the weapon cannot be cocked without employing the trigger-cocking system, that is a *single-action* piece, rather than a "double-action only" example. Not that it matters very much.

Somehow it has always seemed difficult for us to take a bearded man seriously unless he is riding a horse.

It is necessary to recall when the new era began back following World War II, we sought to devise new and superior means of obtaining hits with a handgun under diversified pressure. Prior to that time, marksmanship was evaluated primarily by slow-fire efforts on ring targets. This taught people to shoot in a certain way, but

it did not teach them much about fighting which, after all, is the mission of the sidearm. In trying to remedy this situation, we devised a new set of criteria as an attempt to make marksmanship realistic. We did this as *amateurs* – for love of the sport, and sport it was. Techniques became standardized and challenging, but what we developed were systems suitable for enthusiasts rather than for "the masses."

So competition, first national then international, produced a very high level of skill for those who enjoyed this sort thing. But the skill so developed became increasingly unrealistic as we lost sight of the fact that the "service pistol," the "duty pistol," the "combat pistol" is an instrument intended to stop unexpected fights at distances rarely greater than across the table.

It was thereby discovered that to stay alive in a lethal encounter, the shooter did not need to be a virtuoso, but rather a coarse, short-range practitioner. Thus we have developed a new series of sidearms, plus a technique for their use which solved a mass problem in a practical way.

We are unlikely to make marksmen out of employees, drafted or conscripted, since a good marksman must be essentially a hobbyist. We can, however, turn a peasant into a pretty rough customer in a fairly short time, if only we get him to think straight. This sets forth the question of "mind-set," which in lethal combat is more important than marksmanship.

Thus we have come the full circle. I have been fortunate enough to ride it through from its inception in Southern California to its present condition. At this date a trainee on the public payroll is not likely to impress an old-fashioned target shooter, nor a 1960s combat master. He does not need to. What he needs is to stay alive, and reports back from "the rock pile" suggest that he is doing pretty well at that.

Due to cancellations there are still spaces in the Masters Series Rifle Classes. Perhaps you do not need such practice. On the other hand...

In an age when we produce more and more college degrees and less and less education it is not surprising to learn that there are many folks out there who think that the US Constitution includes some sort of guaranteed "wall of separation" between church and state. That phrase came from Thomas Jefferson and nowhere appears in the Constitution. The Constitution insures that the United States may not "establish a religion" such as the Church of England or Islam. It certainly does not rule any form of religion out of public life.

"A vote is like a rifle: its usefulness depends upon the character of the user."

Theodore Roosevelt

The Founding Fathers set forth to establish a government of laws, not men, and they did a fine job. There is a problem here, however. Laws only have force as long as men obey them, and if you read the US Constitution carefully you will find that in its Bill of Rights there are several laws which are conspicuously violated today *by the government*. Right now both the President and the Congress seem intent upon ignoring the First Amendment, and hardly anybody in Washington has paid any attention to the Tenth since the reign of Roosevelt II. So what then? Apparently we can indeed get by by heeding some of the constitution but not all of it. We recently saw a sign in a restaurant which declaimed, "Public apathy is an increasing problem, but who cares?"

We adopted the 223 cartridge, I am told, because a soldier can carry a lot more 223 ammunition than he could 308. Somebody pointed out that if you are stuck with a 223 cartridge, you *need* a lot more ammunition.

Reports from "up front" tell us that there is a large demand for a 45-caliber pistol for use in what amounts to guerilla warfare. It appears, however, that there is no stock of 45 caliber pistol ammunition available for issue.

I think this situation might be remedied if we could just bring ourselves to let the boys buy their own.

And let us bear in mind that they are not boys. If they are not men, God help us!

The home is the fount of both morality and ethics.
It is thus the essential element of civilization.
Romantic love is the basis of the home.
"The date" is the foundation stone of romantic love.

Possibly I am wrong here, but it seems the present degenerative state of civilization may be attributed at least in part to the demise of the date.

We saw in the press that recently a suicide bomber was blown up by an Israeli rifleman who shot him in his bursting charge. Perhaps. But perhaps not. I do not know what explosive these ragheads are using, but I do know that it is very difficult to fire C4 by hitting it with gunfire. I had occasion to mess with this matter back in my irregular warfare days, and I eventually abandoned the idea of firing TNT, dynamite or C4 with a rifle bullet. In the case reported, I assume that the bomber discovered himself to be detected, and when the troops aimed in on him, he touched himself off.

It is said that not even God can change the past. Apparently this idea has not been fully accepted in the cinema business.

I have been happy with the Safari Prep course, but it simply does not draw with the shooting public. The safari customers assume either that they know enough already or that their professional hunter will arrange for things. Both of these assumptions are dubious. From Africa we are deluged with accounts of idiocy committed by customers in the field. I guess such people are simply unaware that they could profit by learning something about what they are going to do before they do it.

Films from the Land of Canaan suggest that the spray-and-pray technique is commonplace on both sides of the Holy War. Well, that is one way of taking advantage of the 223 cartridge.

The Scout situation is not everything I would desire. The Scout rifle is a very good idea, but like most ideas, its worth depends upon its execution. "Sweetheart," which rides on the wall in my armory, was once entitled by a knowledgeable visitor as "the best rifle in the world." Sweetheart is a prototype scout, and a very fine instrument indeed. It may be regarded as a progenitor of the Steyr Scout, as finally manufactured some five years ago. "Galatea," which is one of the early factory Scout rifles from Steyr, rides within reach as I write, but you cannot buy its exact duplicate at this time. You cannot get that trigger over the counter. What they may sell you as a Steyr Scout may come in the wrong finish, with the wrong bolt-handle, in the wrong caliber and featuring a strictly pedestrian trigger. However, in view of the problems of the importer at this time, you may not be able to get anything at all. The last I heard the pipeline for 308s was empty. You may be able to find a "376 Scout," which is what the factory calls the Dragoon, and this is a nifty instrument, but it is not Galatea. Domestic Scouts will not feature such nice little items as the double detente, the trigger adapter, or even the scoutscope. Well I got mine. "Pull up the ladder, Charlie, I'm aboard."

I used to think that a good shot was automatically a good man, because the essence of good marksmanship is self-control, and self-control is the keystone of good character. It is difficult to prove a proposition like this, but I am going to hold onto it until convinced otherwise.

When I used to teach irregular warfare at Quantico, I borrowed a doctrine from Lord Dunsany in his book "Guerilla." The guerrillero does not fight – he kills.

Guerilla warfare is usually conducted with what we might call "spare parts," over- and underage types, wounded, and disabled. Such people cannot be organized into combat units with which to confront regular forces. If a guerilla actually gets into a fight he will almost certainly be wiped out, so he by choice takes the initiative, strikes and vanishes. This sort of thing enrages regular armies, as it did those of the French in the Peninsular War. It usually results in savagery on both sides. It is an ugly thing, but it will not go away just because it's ugly.

Our British source tells us that people using cellular phones at the wheel are 30 percent more dangerous than drunk drivers. It is curious the way people throw statistics around when they have no method of verification.

The kneeling position, both illustrated and taught over the years, is a pretty poor show with either rifle or pistol. There is almost no field circumstance in which the shooter gains anything by "dropping to one knee," as our great patron TR was want to do. I have killed only once from kneeling and that was because I was clinging to a 45 degree slope and shooting around the contour. In almost every other case, we have the sitting position, which is almost as fast and considerably more precise, and now from Vietnam we have the "Rice-Paddy-Prone" or Military Squat, which is both faster and more precise than any form of kneeling.

Yet I have now met a firing line in which more than half the students were shooting with one knee on the ground, and no support to the left arm. This achieves exactly nothing except to lower the sight line, which is rarely important. But we see it in the magazines. We see it in the films, and now, by God, I have seen on the range! Let's call that a 21st Century development and change the subject.

"If I were King," we would now hang Robert Hanssen, with all due ceremony, on the monument grounds. But we would simply drop Johnnie Walker over the side without further conversation.

We have seen with sadness that the nifty Remington 600s and 660s were simply too far ahead of their time. It has been suggested that people *didn't like the way they looked*. Now what difference does it make how a rifle *looks*? The fact that something looks funny does not mean you will not become accustomed to it if it works better. Witness the Porsche. Those 600s did feature a really poor sighting system involving a pointless plastic rib. That was the basis of Scout 1, and the sights came off almost at once. The 600/660s introduced two excellent new cartridges, the 6.5 Remington Magnum and the 350 Remington Magnum, both of which were real advances. A 660 in caliber 6.5 gave you a Pocket 270, ideal for mountaineers, and the 350 Remington Magnum proved out to be a nearly perfect cartridge for Alaska. Of course Alaska is pretty remote and the word does not get back from there to the hardware stores of the US.

Well you *can* get ahead of yourself! The Porsche might have but did not, for which we give thanks. I sincerely hope that the Steyr Scout holds up on the market. It certainly will hold up with shooters. We have a good lot of cases of astonished delight from Africa, but whether it holds up in the hardware stores remains to be seen.

One *family member* has suggested that these Israelis have acquired their use of the 22 rimfire in riot control from my writings. This is possible. I never intended to keep my teachings secret, but I hardly take credit for inventing the idea for a 22 in such work. Its advantages are self-evident and quite apparent to anyone who thinks about it.

It is essentially illegal to fight back in Britain, so street crime seems to be over the top – mostly committed by half-grown children.

Just how does one go about fighting a nuclear war? If you haul off and erase City A, your adversary will most likely retaliate by erasing City B on your side, and then what? Who wins? Who loses? Who decides? I have yet to see any serious work on the strategic use of weapons of mass destruction. I have asked a couple of

experts about this, so far without any satisfying response.

One correspondent has raised the question of Raven terminology in connection with the establishment here at Gunsite. I have spoken to *family members* in the past, meaning those people who had come here to school when I was in charge of it, and who were philosophically my children in matters of marksmanship. In those days the school colors were orange and chocolate brown, but that color scheme was abandoned by the first purchaser and replaced with gray, giving rise to the terms "Orange Gunsite" and "Gray Gunsite." My friend suggests that since it has become so complicated we use the term Raven to include all those who have been educated here at Gunsite or who have been deeply influenced by others who have had their teaching here at Gunsite at any period – in other words, people who have derived their attitudes about marksmanship from the fountainhead here in Arizona. He proposes that we call all these people "*Ravenfolk*." Good idea?

What drives our adversaries? I do not think it is race, though race certainly is an element in some cases. I do not think it is religion, though religion is obviously a part of the story. I think it is more simply the root of all evil, which is *envy*. Envy is indeed the root of all evil. It should be trained out of people of good character, but good character is not overwhelming us, at least not at this time.

Should airline pilots be armed? Group-thinking leads to trouble here. Certainly no one should be armed against his will, but with equal certainty no one should be forbidden to arm himself if he so desires. Personally I would be much happier in a commercial airliner in which both the pilot and the attendants were qualified *pistoleros*. That situation cannot be achieved by legislation, but neither should it be forbidden – by legislation.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 6

15 May 2002

School's Out!

The annual meeting of the NRA at Reno this year was as inspirational as usual. The presentations by the senior officers left hardly a dry eye in the house, and the 45,000 faithful who gathered for the occasion were shown that the cause of liberty for which we fight remains in good hands. For indeed liberty is what we shooters preserve in this country. Often we talk about the Second Amendment of the US Constitution, which *grants* us no liberty, though it does indeed ratify liberty granted to us by God. Often we talk about "Liberty" and "Freedom" as if the two ideas were interchangeable. This is not quite true. Try it on yourself. Freedom is a physical condition. Liberty is a political condition. Your freedom can be denied you by chains and bars, but your liberty exists or does not exist apart from such considerations. When Governor Henry declaimed, "Give me liberty or give me death," he was speaking of something other than freedom – or so it seems to me.

We were privileged again to chat with Joe Foss, US Marine, fighter pilot, brigadier general, state governor, football commissioner, and so on. It has been my signal good fortune to meet personally and chat with three genuine heroes – Foss, Hanneken and Rudel. These are true heroes, rather than temporary journalistic conceits, and personal contact with such is an elevating experience for which we are duly thankful.

One can go on and on about the exploits of Joe Foss, but one that I learned about at Reno was new to me. On one occasion he brought his aircraft back to base *bearing over 220 bullet holes*. Any one of those hits might well have killed him, but he was aloft again the following day – in another airplane, of course. Try *that* on your computer sometime!

Reports back from Afghanistan inform us that while the mountaineers there truly love their guns, they rarely have any idea of how to use them. Kipling to the contrary, these birds cannot as a rule "shoot for sour owl jowls," which is pretty good news for us unbelievers.

Does a soldier need to shoot well? Good question. I know of three cases in which excellent field marksmanship decided the action. These were the Boers at Majuba Hill, the US Marines at Chateau Thierry, and the Volksturm reservists at the Arnhem bridgehead. There may be other such cases, but if so they are not widely documented. Chroniclers are rarely interested in battle techniques, so the fact that something is not reported certainly does not mean that it did not occur. Nonetheless, good field marksmanship is a rarity – in or out of uniform.

What then is a good field marksman? In my opinion, a man who can hit a tea cup at 100 meters with his first shot, from a field position, in a 5 second interval is a good shot. Try this test on yourself, but do not call for witnesses. People who talk about good shots are usually terrible liars.

This proliferation of reduced size 45 autos is an interesting development. There are those who insist that increased recoil, which must be an aspect of miniaturization, is a step backwards. I used to think so at one time, but no longer. The essential element of a defensive handgun (apart from reliability) is convenient portability. This is more evident in the case of the private citizen than with the soldier. Of course there are plenty of people in the eastern megalopolis, and in Europe, who feel that a private citizen has no business with any sort of handgun, but we need not talk to them.

Reduced weight increases recoil, and there are plenty of people who feel that the standard 1911, at 39 ounces, kicks too much as it is. Much of this idea is the result of "sea stories" brought back from World War I, and it is largely *basura*. The miniature 45s do kick more than the GI version, but I hardly think that matters. A defensive pistol situation is normally experienced at arm's length, or a little more. You do not have to shoot target groups if your adversary threatens you across the room, but you do have to hit him *hard* – hard enough to stop the fight immediately. We cannot expect 100 percent perfection in this regard, but with the 45 ACP cartridge in its military version, we will achieve what we want about nine times out of ten. By messing around with improved loads and better bullet shape, we can increase our probability to about nineteen stops out of twenty tries – provided we place our bullet on the right spot. A man who works at this can achieve what he wants with one of these "pocket punchers" about as well as he can with the full-sized gun. Thus the reduced bulk and weight of the "snubby" may be a definitely good thing, for certain lifestyles. These little pieces do not need sharp sights nor target triggers. They are not "fun guns," but rather strictly business, and should not be put down because we do not win matches with them.

John Gannaway, the *Lion Man*, tells us that he has now located a personally autographed copy of Theodore Roosevelt's "African Game Trails," *first edition*. As with certain cars, if you have to ask the price, you cannot afford it.

Correspondents sometimes take me to task for not confining my Commentaries to gun matters exclusively. In this age of specialization any commentator who strays from the narrow path may confuse his observers. I have a friend in Flanders whose interest in life embraces handguns and fast cars – and *nothing else*. He knows a good deal about both of those subjects, but he is totally uninterested in food, architecture, politics, sports – or anything else that I have been able to discover. To each his own, of course, but I think the world is fascinating in all of its aspects (except, possibly, baseball). I cannot confine myself to firearms when there is so much else to talk about. My suggestion is simply to turn the page; there is much to discuss coming up.

Who needs OBL now when he has got a hundred thousand United States citizens treated like inmates? He has made his point.

Our friend and colleague, Glenn Jacobs, of Eagar, Arizona, informs us that the Burris people have now for sale a completely adjustable mounting system for your rifle sight. This may not be the answer we have been searching for, however, since it is a beast to adjust, and moreover we do not know of a fixed glass to go with it. It is a step in the right direction.

We continue to complain wistfully about the depressing lack of precision in our communications. We talk about "terrorism" at tiresome length, but nobody can tell us what terrorism actually is. I can define it for you if you wish, but that is just one opinion, and a minority opinion at that. According to current journalistic practice, terrorism is anything dangerous that you do not like. It is pretty hard to fight it when we do not even know what it is. I am against the bad guys, and so are you, and so is President Bush, and so, of course, is Yasser Arafat. We are all against the bad guys, but who are they?

Similarly, we dispute angrily about "the Occupied West Bank." This refers, presumably, to the bank of the Jordan River, which is "occupied" or "unoccupied" according to the mood at the time. If you stand in the middle of the Jordan River, which is quite possible since the Jordan is a paltry river, and throw a rock westward, it will land on the west bank. That is an unsatisfactory geographic definition. What we need are some good maps, but I am sure you have noticed that the media are unwilling to show us any. The current state of Israel does have linear boundaries, which are satisfactory to neither the Israelis nor the Philistines. I understand some of our Chicano friends out here like to call California the "Occupied West Coast." I am not a Jew, but I do believe the Jews were there first, and that Israel should be bordered by the Jordan River on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west, and from Lebanon on the north to Egypt on the south. This view is

not likely to be popular, but it does have the virtue of simplicity.

"It is better to have lived one day as a lion, than one thousand days as a sheep."

Charles G. Clinger, Arlington National Cemetery
via J.B. Wood, Corydon, Kentucky

One of my very favorite words is *Stoff*. This is the German counterpart of the English *stuff*, but it covers more ground. It not only means luggage or equipment, but also material of specific meaning or potential. For example, a warehouse loading platform in Germany is labeled *Stoffladen*. Hydrogen is *Wasserstoff*. Fuel is *Kraftstoff* (kraft signifying strength). And explosive is *Sprengstoff*. See how well this simplifies the Decalog: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's *stoff*."

A *lady* is a rare specimen these days. We mourn the passing of the Queen Mother, who really was one. She may not have picked the right parents, but she definitely did do the right things. One of her favorite quotes: "Duty is the rent you pay for life."

We keep using the word "innocent" when that is not what we mean. Let us substitute the term "uninvolved" in place of "not guilty," or "not in uniform."

If you have not yet got your Steyr Scout (or its big brother the 376 Dragoon), do not give up the search. There are a good many of them around in gun shop inventories and we do not know when the pipeline will be reopened. The Steyr Scout will do everything your other rifles will do, with a few exceptions such as elephant or hippo, and do it better. If you have already got your Steyr Scout, I suggest you get a second. The pieces can be lost or injured in transit. Do not try to improvise – that will only waste your money.

I suppose there is nothing to be done about this long-range malarkey you encounter at gun shows. Daughter Lindy at Reno ran across some "hairy chested nut scratcher," who insisted that in his family all shots at game were taken at 400 to 500 yards. It is not seemly to spit right in a man's eye, but the temptation was strong.

A "bear defense" course was recently run at Gunsite and turned up a couple of interesting points. One is that sheer power will not do for a bear. If you are in real danger from a bear, he will be on top of you, and what you need is penetration. Once a bear has got you down, or a lion for that matter, you have to brain him, and you must do that at contact distance. A 357 snubby, using a very hard, sharp-pointed bullet, would seem to be the answer. I have a friend who went this route while attempting to photograph a lion. He used a Super 38 auto, and while he survived, he will never again have full use of his left hand.

We were confronted with one reader who said that while he liked my comments about hunting, he just could not enthuse about what he called "safari stuff." I am sorry about that, of course, but I should mention that I have never been on a safari. The term *safari* is a Swahili derivative from Arabic. It means simply "journey." On a true safari, such as was enjoyed in the great hunting days, one hiked from camp to camp with all of his gear carried on the heads and shoulders of bearers. He could not use trucks because there were no roads and no fuel supplies. He could not use horses because of the tsetse fly. But the important thing was that a safari was fed by the rifle. You had to have a lot of bearers, and while you paid them a daily wage, they only came along with you at the prospect of unlimited fresh meat. What a life! How I wish I could have enjoyed it! But it vanished before my time, so I may reassure my correspondent that I will not clutter up my pages with accounts of safaris, much as I would like to.

What my correspondent referred to, of course, was simply foreign hunting. He apparently feels that if you cannot hunt on an overnight from your house, the experience holds no charm. I think this is too bad, since

hunting, the great classic pastime of the uncommitted, may be enjoyed in its various aspects on all continents except Antarctica. It is one of the four prime pastimes of man which may be indulged in all cultures and in all ages by those whom circumstances have freed from the lash of poverty. (The other three are racing, dancing and conversation.) A couple of years ago, in a semi-professional bull session, the Hunting Assistance Committee of the NRA made up a list of the world's greatest hunts, and while the catalog is certainly open to argument, it shows the astonishing span of the activity. Consider the list:

- A. The Deep South Quail Hunt, complete with mule wagon, hounds, bearers, grits and gravy, and premium bourbon.
- B. The Rocky Mountain Bighorn. This combines an unequaled quarry, a splendid trophy, sublime venison, and the most beautiful scenery on earth. (The great sheep of Central Asia are bigger, but their surroundings are bleak and uncomfortable.)
- C. The Royal Tiger Hunt from elephant-back in Colonial India. That is gone now, but we can dream about it.
- D. Pig Sticking. Taking *Sus scrofa*, the big boar, from horseback with a lance.
- E. The classic African safari, feeding the troops with your rifle.
- F. The *Auerhahn*. This is the great partridge of Europe, said to be the most challenging target in the world. Today the sportsman is limited to one per customer's lifetime. I do not fully understand the charm of this effort, but connoisseurs seem to agree.

There are others which are worthy of consideration. These include the "Infantry Boar" taken frontally at the charge with a heavy spear. The African buffalo can upon occasion provide a supreme adventure, but this must be because of some error or incompetence on the part of the hunter. The Marco Polo sheep provides the grandest trophy of them all, but its habitat at 16,000 feet in the Pamirs does not make for an attractive adventure. The Coues whitetail of the American Southwest is a charming quarry, challenging, beautiful, and tasty.

But hunting ought not to be competitive, because you cannot *flaunt* an experience.

I anticipate cries of protest here, calling my attention to all sorts of things which deserve pride of place. I look forward to them. Hunting is a grand pastime, which offers its grand rewards with no need for social competition. *Waidmanns Heil!*

We were delighted when Joe Foss, our national treasure, instructed a board member in conference to clean up his language. There are those who feel that gutter language is evidence of *machismo*. Not so. The Congressional Medal of Honor is irrefutable evidence of *machismo*.

At the gun shows it is interesting to note that few people seem interested in good trigger action. I have always felt that a good trigger release (2 to 2½ pounds *crisp*) is essential to really good bullet placement in the field, but we do not seem to find those on over-the-counter rifles or pistols. However it is not necessarily a good idea to tinker at home with your own gun. We ran across one of the old masters of the technique at the NRA show, who is now in the business of doing masterful custom work on all sorts of guns. This is Gene Shuey, onetime stalwart of the Bear Valley Gunslingers. He can put a real trigger in your 45. Address is 21 Cygnet Drive, #200, Carson City, NV 89706. Phone (775) 246-7662.

We write books now and again, and sometimes wonder why, in an age when no one reads. I submit the following reasons:

- A. As the means of making money (but not much).
- B. As the way of putting out the word. The word needs putting out, even if few people notice.
- C. As a collector's item. A surprising number of people buy and sell books without ever opening them.

- D. As a doorstep.
- E. As an art form. Some books are lovely to look at.
- F. As a cultural milestone to record traditions ere they be lost.
- G. As a training aid.

In the past books were written to constitute a conversation piece, a Christmas present, or a courtship gift, but that was in the past.

Among the many inspiring statements presented to the NRA membership at the national meeting at Reno, we note the following: "You cannot give up a right granted to you by God!" The rights originally enumerated in the Declaration of Independence were: *life, liberty* and *property*. There are others. (Clearly happiness may not be pursued as an end in itself, because happiness is the byproduct of accomplishment.)

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 7

June 2002

Hot Spell

It is with deep sorrow that we must report the death of Oliver Coltman, the man described in *The Pounding* in "Another Country" and also *Fisherman's Luck*. Ollie was piloting his own helicopter on a game management operation near Cullinan in South Africa. I have no details, except that the aircraft crashed and burned. Ollie lived through the impact, but was too badly damaged to survive. He died in action before he had a chance to grow old, which is some consolation, if not much.

Ollie Coltman was a real man, and there are not many of those standing around. He was an active outdoorsman, largely involved in wildlife management, an enterprise at which he excelled. He was as totally fearless as a man can be, allowing for that indefinite line between courage and foolhardiness. Susan, his wife, told us all that he was certain to be killed by one of his wild beasts, but as it turned out it was a helicopter which did him in. He was a fine companion, a learned naturalist, an excellent shot, and several ladies of discernment have opined that he was the handsomest man they ever saw. Obviously such a man is indispensable, but the world goes on. It has been a bad year.

Do you remember what it was like before air conditioning? I guess we really do not realize how well off we are. I have vivid memories of our existence in the tidewater region back in those sweaty times. There must be a couple of generations nowadays who cannot imagine such goings on.

We hear from our spies at the front that most of our federal combat personnel are trying hard to re-arm themselves with serious smallarms – specifically the 1911 and the M14. This seems a good idea, of course, but difficult of execution because of ammunition supply, among other things. Still there is a prominent faction in high places which maintains that shooting has no real place in modern war, which is all conducted by gadgetry. This may be so, but somehow I doubt it. A good many *family members* are floating around the world in hazardous duty conditions and they seem to think that shooting does indeed have a place. The enemy, of course, has gone largely to the rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). Oddly enough the US ordnance people have never shown any interest in that device, despite its obvious advantages to an army of klutzes. The RPG is cheap, effective, universally obtainable, and you do not have to be any good to use it. It may be considered to be the ideal proletarian weapon. It would be nice to think that we have not come to that just yet.

Are people really less moral after only twenty years? The current scene would suggest that, but we hope that it is not true. Both television and the loss of the nuclear family would seem to be affecting us here. How do we change that?

The qualifying phrase of the Second Amendment refers to a *well regulated* militia. A well regulated militia calls for men who can "shoot and salute," in Pershing's phrase. Since the militia, in the terms of George Mason, is made up of the "whole people," it would seem that the whole people should be well qualified in the use of the national personal arm, which at this point is the M16. Thus if we are to follow that line of thought, everybody should be qualified on the M16, which is in the eyes of some people a machinegun. What a shocking thought!

Our current crop of military historians gets sloppier all the time. As a group they do not seem to know what shrapnel is, and now they insist upon calling a rifleman a sniper. These errors are not minor.

We do not think it is a good idea to "arm pilots," but we insist that pilots should be encouraged to arm themselves if they so desire and so qualify. This "group thinking" is one of the curses of the age.

Congressman Bob Barr of Georgia, who is one of our stalwarts in the United States Congress, was unable to put through a bill allowing pilots to protect themselves with firearms, if necessary. But he tells us that he has not given up, and that the matter will be brought up again. As we have insisted in the past, aircraft pilots should not be armed by law, but should not be prevented by law from arming themselves. This is a personal matter rather than an organizational one.

Since a certain kind of social commentator feels that the answer to anything is a new law, we suggest that what Palestine needs is a new law against the irresponsible use of high explosives.

We call upon all the faithful to remember our annual celebration of Theodore Roosevelt's birthday and *Gunsite Reunion* on 18 – 20 October. We have interesting ideas for your presentations at the reunion this year, and we will be announcing them from time to time. When you decide what sort of declamation you fancy, please let us know so we will not have too much duplication. We want music this time, so please bring autoharps, keyboards and such so we can accompany ourselves.

At a time when people like Bill Clinton and Al Gore make it embarrassing to be an American, it is refreshing to read the writings of TR and to remember what a fine thing it is to be an American.

Not only does the world keep changing, but even the Marine Corps, sad to say. We remember encountering our first girl marine up at a navy yard where my ship had put in for repairs. Here I was innocently hiking down the street, when this trim chick in a green suit, appropriately badged and flashed with scarlet, popped me a very neat salute, along with the adjoining "Good afternoon, Sir." Naturally I returned the salute as properly as I could, but I staggered down the street wondering just what had happened here. Marines are *killing machines*, and that chick back there behind me, while jaunty enough, did not appear properly attuned to the job of throat cutting. I discovered later that she had signed up "to free a man to fight," which I was told was a good idea. Okay, good enough, and I served later with several clerk/stenographer types in Quantico who were a distinct asset to the organization. But in the new age a couple of years ago I crashed head on into the end of the world. On the ground floor of the Key Bridge Marriot Hotel in Arlington, I spotted this lass in front of me, who when she turned revealed *three stars on her collar*. This was a lieutenant general? A Chesty Puller? A Brute Krulak? A Lou Walt? If this is the case, water must flow uphill. I am clearly too old for modern times.

We have announced it before, but I say it again here that we expect better results in our classes from people who have no previous experience with firearms. We have good success in programming new reflexes, but breaking bad habits is sometimes impossible.

We note that there has been a supply of modified Steyr Scouts introduced into the US market last year. These guns are painted black and feature a ping-pong ball bolt handle, and they are not fitted at the factory with a proper Scout trigger. If you have one of these, you can fix it. The stock can be painted any color you want, a new bolt knob is easy, and a conventional trigger of the Zedrosser action is subject to modification and improvement by a good gunsmith.

I suppose it is impolite to mention it, but it was George Bush the First who let Saddam Hussein get away. That is water under the bridge and recriminations are useless, but this lack of decisiveness seems likely to haunt us for a very long time.

Since we cannot seem to find out whether OBL is alive or dead, our lottery as to his time of death must be placed on hold. If the date you have chosen is now past, we will just put it on the calendar for next time around. Of course the character must die sometime, but obviously they will try to keep it a secret. Since it may be very difficult to award the prize, we must dream up some very elaborate prizes in order to hold your interest.

Gun South, which organization used to be the importer of Steyr Mannlicher in the states, seems trying to unload the inventory that it had. This indicates that if you can find a Steyr Scout, or a "Blac Tac," or a Dragoon anywhere at any price, buy it right now. Or buy two. Those pieces can do nothing but increase in value. Besides which, they are more useful and practical instruments than anything available elsewhere. Guns are for shooting, not for trading, but there are a lot of tradesmen who do not seem to understand this.

I suggest you get your copy of "*Gargantuan Gunsite*," first or second edition, hard bound. In their paperback form they wear out pretty quickly, especially since they are reference works and are often consulted.

Shooting Master John Gannaway points out that all you really need is a 22 and a 30–06. While I go along with that, I cannot avoid making a couple of perhaps unnecessary additions. First of all, the 308 is the ballistic twin of the 30–06 now with modern loadings, and even without the modern loadings the differences are too slight to matter. So your Steyr Scout in 308 will do what you need, unless you are a specialist. Certainly you need a 22 rifle, and there are scores of good ones around, but also you can probably establish need for a 22 pistol. This is most obvious if you live in the country. And then there is the matter of the shotgun. Some people really need a shotgun, both for home defense and for recreation. So I guess I would expand my minimum list to include a Steyr Scout, a Marlin 39 22 (particularly an older model without the cross-bolt safety), a compact 22 self-loading pistol, and a good grade self-loading 12-gauge shotgun. That is four guns, hardly enough to satisfy an *aficionado*, but certainly enough for others. Living as I have all my life amongst shooters, I cannot think of anyone who owns only four guns. On the other hand I think that when you get up into the hundreds you are overstating the case.

Unfortunately the color edition of "*The Art of the Rifle*" got some of its captions crossed up in the second half of the book. You will discover which ones by study, and make the necessary corrections.

Is it possible for something to be deadly and silly at the same time? Islam comes to mind.

The new Walther 22 compact pistol shows great promise. Everybody needs a 22 pistol, but which one is a matter for discussion. Most 22s intended for target shooting are too big and cumbersome for convenient use around the farm. Of course you are most likely to keep the one you already have.

It does seem that at this point *coping* is unfashionable. A man who can cope is an *elitist*, which is a very dreadful thing to be. If you can cope, you are better than other people, and those other people tend to hate you for it. Consider the use of the English language. If you use it well you will be held up to scorn and ridiculed by a majority – especially in England, of all places. The English language is a marvelous instrument, and no one ever really masters it, but it is nonetheless great fun to try. If people hiss at you for trying, let them hiss. They are the losers.

We threw the Moors out of Spain in 1492, but evidently we did not throw them far enough.

Reports from Afghanistan indicate that our boys are shooting pretty well – primarily, as it happens, with the M14. The bad guys are doing a lot of missing, though they have managed to kill one of our sergeants in what appears to be a straight out firefight. Both the M14 and the 1911 seem to be in great demand, though in short

supply. You have to hit a man too many times with a 223 to get his attention. (If they had asked us we could have told them that.)

Apparently "the industry" thinks that we need a whole lot of new and different cartridges. Such are only significant to people who do not shoot. We do *not* need a lot of different cartridges. What we need is a lot of people who can shoot well. You can buy guns, but you cannot buy marksmanship.

Winchester announces a *270 Short*, which we need like a V7 automobile engine. The 270 as it stands is a superb rifle round with a worldwide record of perfect service, but then so is the 30-06, of course.

Gunsite has had to give up on the Safari Prep course which I instigated a while back. There seems to be no demand for it. Apparently people who can afford the African adventure feel that their outfitter can tell them all they need to know. This may be true, but I have reason to doubt it. Besides, I enjoyed teaching that course very much, especially when we had a number of open-minded ladies in the class. It is widely believed that women make better students than men, and while I cannot verify that positively, I can certainly say that *some* women make better students *than* some men.

Family Member and Gunsite staff instructor Mitch Röthlisberger recently had a tour down in South Africa, working with the police combat reaction squads. These people use both the R1 in 308 and the R5 in 223, but they leave the R5s at home when there is serious trouble in the wind. Here again they report that with the varmint cartridge you have to shoot a man too many times before he stops shooting at you.

The Swiss, who have a good tradition of riflery, have gone somewhat agley in their recent smallarms program. They have decided that for their sniper units the answer is a 338 Lapua. This is an overly violent cartridge on which it will be difficult to produce marksmen of traditionally Swiss quality. It also will wear out barrels while you wait. The Lapua Magnum is measurably more powerful than the venerable 7.5 Swiss, but it will not do anything that a good man with a 7.5 cannot do just as well.

The Swiss have been doing a good job in resisting "progress" for most of the 20th century, but in many ways they seem to be succumbing in the 21st.

A man and his son showed up for rifle instruction and dropped out on the morning of the second day. They claimed that the course was not what they expected, and it was entirely too "stressful" for them. I sure do not know what is stressful about the first day of rifle instruction or, for that matter, what these two people expected to learn in a rifle class. But here we have an example of flabbiness of spirit which may be a sign of the times. Let us hope not.

"War is God's way of teaching Americans geography."

G.B. Shaw

The new uniform of the underclass seems to be baggy shorts, a cell phone in the ear, and a huge water bottle. One wonders how the West Was Won without this sort of thing.

From Frankie Lou Nicholson, "our man in Nebraska," we get this fine case study. A man is awakened by his wife who says she hears something. He gets up and looks around and sure enough sees thugs carrying stuff out of the shed behind his house and putting it in a vehicle. He dials 9-1-1. He is told that no sheriff's deputies are available at the moment – that it will be about 30 minutes before they can get to him. He hangs up, counts to 30 and dials 9-1-1 again. He says, "There's no hurry, I've shot them." Within three minutes he has three patrol cars in his yard. The sheriff says, "I thought you said you shot them." The man looks at the

sheriff and says, "I thought you said it would be 30 minutes." That may even be a true story. Certainly we hope so.

I can find no fault at all in this matter of "profiling." If these creeps look like creeps, that is their problem, not ours.

As the Holy War proceeds it is obvious that the principle problem is target identification. Since the ragheads do not have nations, they can smack the Pentagon, but what do *we* smack? It is going to be a long haul.

A prominent Gunsite *Family Member*, who for obvious reasons will remain nameless, has discovered that airguns constitute a highly satisfactory solution to the problem of urban pigeons, an increasingly troublesome plague in some of our big cities. They require head shots, and that requires a high degree of precision, which of course should be encouraged. The sport is likely to be viewed askance by the City Fathers – but who's gonna know?

It turns out that now John Gannaway the Great has acquired an autographed first edition of "*African Game Trails*," which was TR's first-hand account of his classic safari. Perhaps we can persuade John to bring it along to the *Reunion* to show us.

It seems to me that the killer instinct is a normal attribute of the young male. It is there for all to see and it should not be suppressed, but rather directed. The "barefoot boy with cheeks of tan" out after ground squirrels with his 22 may be a rarity in today's urban society, but he still makes the best soldier when he grows up, and we do need soldiers. I have been around both hunters and soldiers all my life, and I find that this normal blood-thirst continues on into middle life and begins to subside only with the approach of old age. I think it is connected to the gonads, since it is not apparent in females, and dies out in males along with the sex drive. Young men experience it both in the hunting field and in battle, and do not let anyone tell you that he did not derive that visceral thrill when he was able to wreak havoc upon an enemy who was trying his best to kill him. The trepid may not agree with this, but I do not know many, and their opinions do not affect me much. The honest-to-God man likes to fight, as the late, great Finn Aagaard pointed out to us at a recent reunion. He may not enjoy heat, cold, thirst, starvation, pain, and fear, but when the trumpets blow and the flags fly (figuratively, of course, now) his heart sings. This is neither good nor bad, it is simply a truth.

If the country boy makes a better warrior than the city slicker, as has been suggested by several experienced senior soldiers, it may be because small-game hunting – squirrels, rabbits and such – accustoms the gunner to shooting for blood rather than paper. The Boers were not noted target marksmen, but they were *practical* marksmen, used to feeding themselves with their rifles. This may not be a new idea, but it has never been much publicized.

Rumor has it (Internet) that one Judge Patterson, of Denver, Colorado, has ruled that the Constitution of the United States of America has no legal force in the City of Denver because Denver is a "home rule" city. The usual website outpourings are difficult to authenticate, but we are looking into this.

"Youth may be an explanation for stupidity, but not an excuse."

Anonymous

Doubtless you now have heard about Oxana Fedorova of St. Petersburg (Petrograd), the new Miss Universe, who announces herself as a shottist. Pictures depict her as a *pistolera*. Now isn't that great! Perhaps we should arrange to ship her over from Russia to Gunsite, to pretty up our image amongst the hoplophobes.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 8

July 2002

Independence 2002

It has been a bad year so far for the *Ravenfolk*. The slings and arrows have been more outrageous than usual, and our head is, figuratively, both bloodied and bowed. First we sustained the loss of the gallant and irreplaceable Ollie Coltman of Africa in a helicopter crash, as reported. Then our Italian *family member* Alesandro Cirila fell to his death in the Alps; and now we must report the death of George Olmsted, distinguished *family member* and outstanding aviator. I owe to George one of my memorable high points when he allowed me to execute a split S in his Cap Ten. George died untimely at 46 of heart failure, rather than at the controls of an acrobatic airplane, as he might have wished.

And on top of these personal mishaps, we face the unsolvable problem of the Holy War, plus a really fearful fire-laden drought in the American Southwest. (On a further pathetic note, our household treasure, Charles the Cat, was scarfed up by a bobcat.)

But ours is not to complain. Life is essentially tragic, and while we suffer at God's dispensation, we are appropriately grateful for His continued blessings. And just remember that the Left almost won the last election – but didn't. For this we may praise the Lord!

Applications for our pistol classes show an increasing lack of combat spirit in our prospective students. We need more tigers and fewer sheep – of all ages and both sexes. Man does not do battle with his gun alone; he fights basically with his soul. Marksmanship and gun handling are in themselves not enough – mind-set is what wins. And while we can help with that, the client must in essence supply his own pizzaz.

Our friend and colleague Wiley Clapp recently did a number on the Beretta pistol, now general issue in our armed services. His piece was both accurate and honest, and he told it like he saw it. The truth, however, is only coincidentally prized in the marketplace, where sales figures are equated with virtue. The Beretta people were much annoyed by Wiley's piece and threatened commercial malice to the publication which was releasing the article. This is unfortunate, but unavoidable. Manufacturers regard periodicals as advertising vehicles, pure and simple. Most of them do not realize that the public sometimes catches on, and that there are a few journalists to whom the truth is still important. I understand that truth is "relative" in academia, and it is clear that truth is irrelevant at the marketplace – and it matters hardly at all to a politician. "To ride, shoot straight and speak the truth" were the classical personal attributes of a man. To ride is no longer a measure. To shoot straight ought to be, but seldom is. However, those who care can still make a maximum effort both to speak, and seek, the truth. Hardly anything else really matters.

We notice an increasing number of revolvers with our students. This is no bad thing, for while a self-loader is easier to hit with, the wheel gun can do all that is necessary, in the right hands. We honor the great Jack Weaver for his invention of the modern technique, and he was a revolver man first and last.

We notice that the extrusion at the bottom of the grip safety on the 1911 (the "tang tumor"?) is practically standard with today's custom pistolsmiths. It may work for some people, but it never has worked for me. Apparently my hand is not constructed correctly, so I simply pin the device shut. It is not a safety

consideration, as John Browning made clear in his design of the excellent P35 pistol. Safety does not ride between the hands, but rather between the ears.

"The main weapon that terrorists use against the West is not bombs or guns, but moral obfuscation."

Netanyahu

Remember when Vince Foster killed himself, wrapped himself up in a blanket and then stashed himself comfortably out of sight in Rock Creek Park? Maybe the people who carried that out are still alive and still know the whole story, but it is also possible that the Arkansas hatchetmen have turned them off permanently. And according to O.J. Simpson, the guy who cut Nicole Simpson's throat is still wandering around loose in the Brentwood area. And we know what Lon Horiuchi did because he said so. Our system of jurisprudence is strange indeed.

We certainly hand out a lot of argument and confusion on the subject of "education," but nobody seems to know just what it is. Is education the answer to $2+2=?$ Is it knowing the difference between a mammal and a reptile? Is it knowing how to run for office? Or is it owning some kind of certificate or diploma to tack your name onto? Certainly it seems that today a college degree is no more than a job ticket, and not a too reliable one at that. Looking back over all those years it does seem to me that a high school diploma in 1935 signified a good deal more in the way of "education" than a Ph.D. does today. Time passes, of course, and times change, but if we are called upon to spend money on education it would be nice to know what it is we mean to spend money on. Personally I do not think that education can be quantified. Some people are just brighter than others, all the way through the game. Taxpayers' money may be of some help, but it does not seem to improve dumb kids much. According to recent widely publicized tests, American kids are conspicuously dumber than those in other First World countries. (What is called the Third World does not seem to count.)

It used to be said that one was "educated" at a given institution. My father was sent a letter from Mrs. Stanford explaining that he was the young man Mrs. Stanford desired to be "educated at the Stanford University." Apparently what happened before or after his attendance at Stanford was not pertinent.

Well, we now have a United States Department of Education. I imagine those people know what they mean by the word, but if so they are not making themselves clear about it.

The Mannlicher operation seems to be in decline. Dynamit Nobel, with a branch in New Jersey, is the current importer, but we talked with a rep on the phone and she did not seem to understand what the company is selling. Neither, for that matter, does anyone at the factory, as far as I can tell. This means that everybody now should have not one but two Steyr Scouts. The SS is demonstrably much the best general-purpose rifle. It will become increasingly hard to get. Carry on!

I think it should be established as a principle that you should never try to sell what you prize, whether that be books, wines or people. Our colleague and *family member* Curt Rich leads an unhappy life selling cars – by his own account. He loves cars and is a rally driver of some consequence, but he should not try to sell cars, as his customers just do not get the picture. As to that, I have long held it an unhappy practice to sell one's firearms. I want my treasured weapons to find good homes, but that is not a matter of a price tag. Clearly no humanitarian can ever be a slave trader. The slave trade was established in both the Eastern and the Western worlds long before philosophy, religion or architecture. It is still with us, I understand, in parts of Africa, but it is hardly a job for anyone who loves people. This last virtue has to be reserved for clergymen.

Cougars are proliferating in the rural Southwest, along with bears. The cougar is an attractive animal, but some sort of accommodation is necessary here. I do not consider this beast to be fearsome, but some do. A

full-grown male will be as big as a man, but evidently he only runs after things which run away from him – like joggers. Even a small but noisy pet dog can run a full-grown cougar up a tree. At least one has moved in on us here at Gunsite, and this certainly adds to our rural ambience, even if it scares the city slickers. I did a certain amount of boondocking in the Southwest as a youth, but I saw only two unmolested cougars in all that time, and I just cannot consider them to be scary. Thell Reed's father kept one as a pet for some years, and he used to romp with it, which I do not consider to be a sound idea, but nobody ever got cut up. Bobcats are another matter – much smaller, but much scratchier. The frontier expression used to suggest that a particularly tough human being could "lick his weight in wildcats," but "panthers" were never mentioned. It is now fashionable out West to call the cougar a "mountain lion," which I think overly dramatizes the beast. A *lion* is something else entirely and must not ever be confused with painter, panther, puma, catamount – or cougar. We have a good photograph of one taken within the city limits of Prescott, and we put it on our 2002 calendar.

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

Greek Proverb

The Swiss contingent of the *Ravenfolk* reports that the Swiss political tradition continues in decline, edging away from confederation and toward true federation. The Swiss refer to themselves officially as "the Swiss Confederation" (*Confederatio helvetii*), but the encroachments of the European Union, with its emphasis on administrative efficiency, tends to play down the traditional autonomy of the Swiss cantons in favor of a centralized government. From what we hear, the Swiss people at large do not fancy this, but their elected politicians do. One of the great weaknesses of either the democratic or the republican form of government is the probability that the legislature truly speaks not for the people, but rather for itself. This trend is obvious in Britain where, despite the fact that the great majority of the British favor the death penalty, their masters in Parliament refuse to consider it. The Swiss government still runs a pretty good show, but our Swiss friends individually report doubts concerning the future. This is doubly troublesome to us shooters in view of the long-established Swiss tradition of private marksmanship. The people like that, but apparently the politicians do not.

Have you run across the new term for literary affliction know as *PPP*? That stands for Pernicious Pronoun Perversion, and it is confused by the inability of an author to decide about either the number or the gender of a subject when referring to it with a pronoun. We used to think it was a great joke to quote Polonius with "Each to their own selves be true," which sounds ridiculous – or used to, but not so much anymore. When calling upon "everyone to take their seat," we are assuming that "one" is more than a singular. Apparently it is just too agonizing to call upon everyone to take his seat, that being sexist, elitist and racist, and also illegal, immoral and fattening. But I see *PPP* growing all the time as one indication which lets us differentiate good English from bad. Of course, good English is frowned upon in egalitarian circles, but only egalitarians need worry about that.

I am happy to say that I got the story of Ollie Coltman's adventure with the buffalo down pretty much as desired. Both Ollie and his wife Susan told me that my account of the exploit was the only one they had read that got it right. When we consider that history is not what actually happened, but rather what people *said* happened, it is a great pleasure to know that what I said happened was as close to the fact as first-hand memory can make it.

Among other depressing signs of the times, we note the decline of reading for pleasure. Not many people today read at all, since they would rather look at the tube and allow some hired hand to edit their thoughts. And those who do read, do so mostly for self-improvement or general information. They read works on how to manage their money, or plant their garden, or raise their pets. Only a minority it seems read for the mental pleasure to be derived from the appreciation of words. It is characteristic of these latter folk to re-read – that

is to read a book again after having put it aside in a previous year. When you ask a friend if he has read, say, Mark Twain, he may respond that yes he had read such many years before, usually when he was in school, but only once. I have discovered in my very long life that a really good book does different things for you at different stages in your life. What I got out of Walter Scott in high school was expanded enormously when I read the same work again twenty years later. One's ability to appreciate literature changes and expands with maturity, and possibly with age.

That being the case, I recently ran across a short reading list requested of me by a client, and discovered that a measure of my enjoyment could be found in those books which I had read not once, but several times. Thus I have come up with a "re-reading" list dedicated to both my pleasure and yours. Tastes are not the same, thank God, but many pleasures may be enjoyed similarly, if not equally, by people of different backgrounds and different tastes. So what follows now is a brief list of those works which I think are worth reading a second time, and possibly a third or fourth time, depending, of course, on where you start. If you pay attention to this list it will interfere with your television time, and this may be very much to your advantage. I suggest you put your television in the garage or in the guest bedroom and plug it in only on those special occasions, such as moon landings, military victories and inaugurations, which may merit your special attention. Thus:

"She," "King Solomon's Mines," and *"Allan Quatermain"* by Sir Henry Rider Haggard. The first is the greatest and stands as an all-time classic.

"The White Company" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This, by the author of the Sherlock Holmes canon, defines the essence of Medieval romance.

"For Whom the Bell Tolls" by Ernest Hemingway. This is not highly regarded by the admirers of the master, but I think it is the best war story of modern times. It includes the best accounting of gun fighting that I know of.

"The Dance of the Dwarfs" by Geoffrey Household. This is a fantasy involving the possibility of a curious evolutionary development of natural chemical warfare.

"Beat to Quarters," "Ship of the Line," and *"Flying Colors"* by C.S. Forrester. These three adventures relate the career of Captain Horatio Hornblower in his time as shipmaster. If you want to know what life at sea was like during the Napoleonic Wars, you will discover it better from Forrester's work than from any historical account.

"The Fellowship of the Ring," "The Two Towers" and *"The Return of the King"* by J.R.R. Tolkien. These constitute the ultimate in epic fantasy and are generally lumped together as *"The Lord of the Rings."* Tolkien is so great that he constitutes a world by himself, and a world well worth exploring. The despairing struggle of good versus evil is better portrayed here than anywhere else in literature, and Tolkien's lapidary prose is worth reading by itself as a lesson in the use of the English language.

"The Brave Bulls" by Tom Lea. The *fiesta brava* is not for everyone, but I find it entrancing, explaining as it does the elegance of grace under pressure and man's triumph over fear.

"Aphrodite" by Pierre Louÿs. This may be called *elegant Victorian pornography*, though that may seem a contradiction in terms. Eroticism entertains most people, and French translates surprisingly well into English.

"The Long Rifle" by Stewart Edward White. This is the definitive adventure novel of the westward movement, following one man's saga through adolescence to maturity, as father of the "Boone Gun" which opened the frontier.

"The Big Sky" by A.B. Guthrie. This is something of a companion to Stewart White, done with a bit more narrative artistry but covering the same subject with main concentration upon the mountain men between Lewis and Clark and the Mexican War.

"And A Few Marines" by John W. Thomason. This may be considered something of a specialty for those who understand and appreciate the tradition of the US Marine Corps. It is marvelously well written and, as an added treat, it is personally illustrated by an author who knew whereof he spoke.

"Fancies and Goodnights" by John Collier. This is a collection of fanciful anecdotes. I have often thought that if I had ambitions as an author I would like to be as good a storyteller as Ernest Hemingway, but use English as well as John Collier. Collier's stories are great fun, as well as being jewels of technique.

The King James version of the Old Testament. This is pretty much necessary if one is to understand how we got to where we are and what we should do about it.

The complete verse collection of Rudyard Kipling. In my opinion, Kipling's verse is better than his prose, but it is all good, and all very enlightening.

"Reminiscences of a Ranger" by Horace Bell. This is Bell's account of life in Southern California in the period between the Gold Rush and statehood. It is especially enjoyable to people who were raised in Southern California and know what the place was like before it was ruined following World War II.

"Meditations on Hunting" by José Ortega y Gasset. This is the Old Testament of the hunter, and it explains completely just where hunting exists as a core of western civilization. Ortega wrote this in Spanish, but it translates very well into English, and I find that it deserves more interlineation than almost any volume in my library.

Family member T.J. Johnston suggests that the airlines, not the government, should establish that their aircraft are safer *because their air crews are armed*. The customers could then decide which lines to fly. Good thought!

"In the beginning you ride in the back seat and somebody else takes care of everything. But one day, all of a sudden *wham*, you are grownup, you can't ride in the back seat anymore. Duty means giving up the back seat and taking the wheel."

Daniel Young, Graduate Speaker at Hillsdale College, Class of 2002

Doing one's duty should be a practice acquired in adolescence. One should understand about it before he is authorized to drive, drink or vote. It is certainly what should be imparted in high school, but such thinking is unfashionable. It is even – perish the thought – politically incorrect, but we had better get it across to our young people if we have any hope of winning the Holy War.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 9

August 2002

Fire and Water

We have been getting a bit more than our share of both hereabouts recently. And while the fire is truly distressing, we can always use all the water that is available. I guess we live in a pretty vigorous climate.

With the passing of Bill Ruger, we have taken yet another hit in what has been so far a very rough year. Bill Ruger is worthy of all the eulogies that he has so far worthily received. There is little point in listing the accomplishments of this impressive man. They have already been spread widely across both the general and the sporting press. Ruger is a name to stand with Colt, Browning and Garand in the annals of American weaponcraft, and his contributions and example will last long after his death. He made a difference, and that is the greatest thing that any man can ask of life.

Ruger's great asset was his understanding of the *niche*. More than almost any other, he devised the real need for a new product, rather than coming alongside existing examples. The star of his line, in my view, was his little 22 semi-automatic pistol, brought out just after World War II to fill the place of the classic Colt Woodsman. In my youth the Woodsman was everybody's friend, both in its six- and four-inch versions, and there was hardly a house of any outdoorsman that did not hold at least one example. But this excellent instrument vanished with World War II, and as soon as possible thereafter Bill Ruger came up with its successor – a neat, handy, reliable utility 22 pistol. Bill's version was also simpler, and thus less expensive to manufacture, than the renowned Woodsman, and it was an immediate success, both on the market and in the field. It was a great start for a distinguished career, and while true excellence is only occasionally successful at the marketplace, it certainly was in this case. It was a triumph, and Bill took the banner forward from there.

We did not know Bill Ruger intimately, but we have been each other's house guests on a couple of occasions, and we shared interests in automobiles and dining, as well as in firearms.

He lived to a ripe old age and his death was not unexpected. It is good to know that it came peacefully in his sleep. Truly a good man is hard to find. May he rest in peace.

"Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

Theodore Roosevelt, via John Schaefer

We claim no skill in money matters but we have always understood the first rule of commerce to be "Buy low! Sell high!" This is often attributed to Heinlein but it is so obvious that it is not likely that he invented it. The stock market people seem not to hold with it, however, but those are very mysterious people.

Pistolcraft has been attracting a great deal of attention over there in the Afghan War. We have much information in these matters from people on the ground, and it seems that most of the material that we have assembled and analyzed during the twentieth century still holds true. Specifically a puny cartridge is a second rate choice, and our combat people up front are scrambling for the old faithful 1911 as best they can.

According to Peckworth, who should know, the M9 pistol is not only underpowered but unreliable in heavy service, especially vulnerable to sand in the action. One special forces sergeant reports that it always takes two or more hits from the Parabellum cartridge to incapacitate a man. His report states, "Hitting with a 9 is like firing paint balls. I had to hit one al Qaeda who was coming at me four times before he dropped."

Nor is the M16 doing well, either in stopping power or in functional reliability – to no one's surprise. We fought World War I with the 03, and we fought World War II with the Garand – whether that was wisdom and forethought, or simply chance, is a matter for history to decide – but the M16 is a step backward.

Considering the generally sloppy use of English and its attendant sloppy terminology, it must be pretty obvious, even to news commentators and politicians, that you cannot make war on "terrorism," since terrorism does not provide a target. Frankie Lou Nicholson (our man in Nebraska) sends us this:

"The war on terror is not a war on terror at all. Terror isn't an enemy, it's a feeling. Your terror is what the enemy wants you to feel. Describing our efforts in terms of an emotional abstraction not only obscures the face of our adversary, but the nature of our mission. The enemy in this is the radical *Islamist* who argues that all non-believers in their faith must be killed."

Religious wars have been with us for a very long time, and they certainly are more complex than the wars of nations or dynasties. I do not see that we as a nation are properly instructed in the nature of this one. The aim of the Palestinians is to erase Israel, as they have often said in both Arabic and English. That aspect of the current conflict is clear enough, but once a bunch of crazy Saudis blows up major office buildings on the other side of the world from their specific interests, killing thousands of people who did not even know that they were at risk, it becomes our principle and immediate problem to locate and identify the physical enemy. Those people we can kill. Their notion – that we are "kaffirs" and thus worthy of death under all circumstances – is, of course, a psychological problem rather than a military one.

Those people on the other side seem to do a great deal of praying. Let us pray that their god will show them the error of their ways so that, pending that time, we can get them out in the open where they may serve as proper targets.

This profusion of pocket pistols is very interesting. At one time it was held that a full-size 1911, at 39 ounces, kicked the shooter so hard that it was unmanageable. That was a myth, but it has taken a long time for it to be dismissed. However it is true that as you reduce the size and overall bulk of a handgun, its felt recoil will increase if its power is maintained. If you reduce bulk *and* reduce power, you end up with a 25 auto, or something similar. But if you reduce bulk and do not reduce power, the pistol is probably going to bounce pretty hard.

At present I rather fancy the Baby Kimber (Ultra Carry II). We have one here at Gunsite, and it seems to work well, but of course we are talking about how it works in practiced hands. It may be a bit much for the novice. Fortunately this little gun accepts a full-size magazine if desired, and this extends the butt to provide more accommodation for the little finger of the shooting hand. We like the pistol at this stage of testing. We will report back.

We hear via the "*Garand Stand Report*" that when Michael Kalashnikov was told that he had invented far more individual weapon types than John Garand, he is said to have responded as follows: "When you get it right the first time you don't spend your time designing weapons for a museum."

We look forward with pleasure to the appearance of the new book by *family member* and colleague Barrett Tillman, entitled "*Above and Beyond*." This is a study of recipients of the American Congressional Medal of

Honor who are formally accredited with the performance of hazardous duty "above and beyond the call of duty." It is not to deprecate this distinguished honor by pointing out that it is difficult to describe any sort of act which is above and beyond the call of duty. If you can do it, it is your duty to do it, or so it seems to me. It has been the custom over the past century to award the Medal of Honor primarily in recognition for the degree of danger involved in an act, or a series of acts, and also the degree of suffering or discomfort incurred by the recipient. I once served for a distinguished Marine general who pointed out that you do not have to be taught how to be uncomfortable – you learn the first time. Personally I have never felt that how much it hurts is any measure of heroism. More significant is the degree of accomplishment – how much damage was inflicted upon the enemy. Probably the best answer is a combination of both considerations, but I think it is unfortunate to have arrived at a point where throwing oneself upon a grenade and accepting the blast, which is nearly always fatal, rates an automatic Medal of Honor. A man who was once involved in such a situation (indirectly) pointed out that if you have time to throw yourself on a grenade, you have time to kick it away. This may or may not be true, but what is involved here is the principle of sacrifice. The man who throws himself on a grenade deliberately gives his life for his comrades. This is without doubt an act of great courage and should be so recognized, but it does not accomplish much. When you put on that uniform you agree to sacrifice your life for your country if that becomes necessary. If sacrifice is the issue, then every man who signs up may be considered a hero.

The matter of awards and decorations for military service is a complex one, and it changes from age to age, but I still think the question should not be how much did you *hurt*, but rather, how much did you *do*. In a sense Wade McClusky, who led the attack at Midway which broke the back of Japanese air power, should have been recognized by the highest military decoration available, but he was not considered for the Medal of Honor. Tom Jeffords, who rode single and unarmed right into the camp of Cochise and talked him into scaling back his ravages against the pioneers, pulled off the scariest feat that I know of. If he had not made his point convincingly to the chief, it would have taken him about three days to die. But Jeffords was not a soldier and he was not on duty. He just did his job as he saw it, and by the grace of God he escaped with his life.

Be that as it may, Barrett's book will be available to us in September, and I look forward to reading it with great pleasure. Heroism is a word we cast around too lightly today. We should give it more serious thought.

When we recently opined that a man could get by quite well with no more than a 30–06/308, a 22 and a 12–gauge shotgun, we were correctly called to task by *family member* Larry Berry for our neglect of the defensive pistol. We are duly chastened. Though a 12–gauge shotgun is probably the best weapon for house defense, a proper defensive pistol is a lot handier. Of course anything defensive in nature, including a screwdriver, is forbidden in England, but fortunately we need not live in such a place.

Our granddaughter Amy, who lives in New York, recently organized a familiarization session for fifty ladies who responded to an invitation to shoot 22 rifles on an indoor range in that city. As expected, these people greeted the occasion with unexpected pleasure and called for repeat exercises as possible.

The 22 rifle is considered to be socially acceptable in New York City where, for example, a 22 pistol is not. This is presumably because it is difficult to consider a 22 rifle as a defensive weapon with any sort of combat potential. Legislators are not called upon to think things through, generally speaking, but I know of one case personally in which an innocent and "socially acceptable" 22 rifle brought about desirable defensive results – in the long run. It so happened that when I was boy of about thirteen I ran across an incident in the "*American Rifleman*" in which a young woman alone in her apartment in New York City used her husband's 22 single–shot rifle to good effect. It can get hot in New York and this was before the age of air conditioning, and this girl found that a goblin could easily make it through her bedroom window by way of the fire escape. With admirable presence of mind, she gathered up her husband's plinker and held the intruder at bay until the police could be summoned. When in due course they arrived, both parties were arrested and taken down to the station, where the goblin was released before his intended victim. This report filled me with indignation, and I

immediately rushed out and joined the National Rifle Association (which turns out to be a pretty round-about way of increasing membership).

At last count, the distributor CDNN in Abilene, Texas, had in stock a pretty good supply of Scouts in both 308 and 376. In view of the dim market response to these weapons in the United States, I suggest you get yours as soon as possible (CDNN phone: 1-800-588-9500).

It appears that marketing has little to do with excellence, per se, since to a marketer the measure of excellence is simply sales. People who buy guns are only occasionally qualified to pass upon the quality of their arms. Consider the market behavior of the splendid Remington carbines 600 and 660 of 30 years ago. These pieces were true steps forward, offering important advantages immediately apparent to all experienced field shooters.

But they looked funny.

The generally uninformed shooter is distressed by anything that looks funny. The Remington carbines were so designed as to shove the action rearward in the interest of reducing overall length, which is a *Good Thing*. In doing so, however, the bolt had to be so constructed as to ride rearward over the trigger for ease of operation, and the bolt handle was bent forward in a way unfamiliar to people used to Springfield's and Model 70s. The carbine was a very sensible and practical instrument, *but it looked funny*. Why anybody should care about that is beyond me, but apparently it queered the sales of the 660 – 660 series and these excellent arms were commercial failures. Certainly the Porsche was and is a funny-looking automobile, but eventually its manifest excellence on the road triumphed. I should hope that this would be true of the Steyr Scout, but this may be a faint hope.

One wonders if the 223 cartridge will detonate a suicide bomber. I think it probably will not unless it hits the detonating mechanism directly, but time will tell.

You better get your copy of the *"Gargantuan Gunsite Gossip"* (either first or second edition) properly hardbound. Those plastic wrappers wear out quickly as both volumes are frequently scanned for reference.

"Happiness is the company of well-mannered children."

The Guru

This item is a couple of years old but it is so good that we cannot let it rest. It appears that in the northern Indian state of Haryana, a leopard dropped in on an unattended household, but became so bored watching the television which had been left on that it went to sleep. The police when notified did not have a regulation policy for this situation and had to wait some four hours for a game ranger with a tranquilizer.

"Skill without imagination is craftsmanship. Imagination without skill is modern art."

Anonymous

It is clear that neither gunnery nor aerobatics are masculine enclaves, but motoring apparently is. It is true that some ladies (in the biological sense) have attempted motor racing on a couple of occasions, but so far as I know the only conspicuous success was Michelle Mouton, who has now retired. Regardless of a good many opinions to the contrary, the girls just do not seem to want to drive fast.

This year we are more than usually beset by bears. Not here at Gunsite exactly, but from sea to shining sea – even in places like New Jersey and Phoenix. Bears are good fun, of course, but it is possible to have too many

bears, and there are even people who dislike bears (who should confine themselves to Atlantic City and San Francisco). But here is our most recent bear encounter relayed to us from our Colorado *family*. It seems that right there in downtown Lake City a gentleman had gone only a few blocks on foot for groceries. During his absence his mother, hearing a disturbance on the back porch from inside the house, called out to see if her son had brought back all the necessary items. Hearing no answer, she repaired to the kitchen where she found a half-grown black bear lying flat on his back with his face totally engulfed by a half-gallon carton of ice cream. This was for the bear truly the good life, even though he could not see out. He had not exactly been invited, but bears are extremely strong and screen doors and refrigerators do not slow them down.

We recently encountered an amazing war story about an aviator who surrendered his parachute to a wounded comrade after his B17 had been *decimated* by antiaircraft fire. Decimating a B17 is really tricky. I must take the next opportunity to ask some of my aviation friends how you set about reducing an airplane by one-tenth.

It turns out that the late, great Jack O'Connor was an advocate of the variable telescope – not because it did anything useful, but because people wanted it. I have always admired Jack's written contributions, but I am depressed to discover that he gave so little thought to "the object of the enterprise." Yet again I beseech somebody to tell me just what good a variable power telescope may be – apart from its saleability, of course.

We have read and continue to read a good deal of Africana, and we conclude that marksmanship was never a major element in the activities of the great hunting days. Targets were profuse, ranges were short, and, for the most part, hunters had no training, no theory and not very much practice. Consequently one must be careful about drawing conclusions concerning that time and place – now so sadly lost in the past. I have taught many people to shoot, and those whom I have taught well have succeeded totally beyond narrative accounts from the past. You really do not need a lot of ammunition if you know how to make that rifle behave.

In Hamlet, Polonius counsels Laertes "Neither a borrower nor a lender be!" If more people heeded this advice, much of our current financial chaos might be avoided.

I do not know how you feel about it but this first-name business gravels me considerably when used by people I do not know. It has got to where various sorts of attendants and servitors, upon whom I have never set eyes before, ask me for my first name. My preferred response is to address such people as Wally or Mabel, but somehow this seems to hurt their feelings. Still I cannot even imagine what would happen if I presumed to respond to Colonel Cates, my first CO, as "Cliff." I suppose my high school teachers and my father's friends had first names, but I certainly never learned what they were. Bill Buckley's classic response is, "Do I know you?"

The news is not good, in either the large or small picture. I would like to think that it can only get better, but we can hardly be certain of that. Our principle peril at this time is neither the Holy War nor the stock market, but rather a general loss of character evident in public life at all levels. "A nation without God does not have a prayer." That may be our problem.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 10

September 2002

High Summer

Well, we are in it, not because we chose it, but because they did. Now it is our business, as Clausewitz said, to know our enemy. Just who are these people and what is their motive? Historically wars have been fought for political purposes with the object of forcing defined courses of action upon hostile groups. What then is their objective? I cannot believe that even they feel that the enforced conversion of the Western world to Islam is a practical objective. What then *is* their objective? It seems to be dead infidels. The true believer apparently achieves personal satisfaction and religious merit when he kills an infidel – man, woman or child. This killing achieves no political purpose, but it makes the killer *feel good*.

To fight this kind of an enemy calls for powerful philosophical leadership. We cannot just pick at them. (Remember Machiavelli's dictum that one must never do his enemy a *minor* injury.) But rather we must bring about a change of thought on their part. That is not easy. We must hope that it is not impossible, but we must reconcile ourselves to its difficulty. I must suppose that the underlying motive in this Holy War is simply envy – the root of all evil. We can punish it, but that will not eradicate it. Here is the consuming problem of the 21st century.

Our present service rifle is either the M16, or the M4, which is a shortened version of the same piece. Both are referred to as "rifles," but to my mind the M16 is to a rifle as a banjo is to a guitar.

The issue of unsighted fire in defensive combat keeps cropping up. Its advocates suggest that since people are going to use it anyway, we might as well encourage it. I think this is wrong. What people are "going to do anyway" is hardly a proper reason for teaching it. It may be that most people will fire without sights when confronting lethal hostility, but that is a reason for the atrocious missing that we read about in the newspapers. Here at school we do not care about how things are done wrong. We do care about how to teach people to do things *right*. The modern technique gets the hits. If only a few people understand the modern technique that is regrettable, but that should not lead us astray. In the large view it is always only a few people who do *anything* right. We can increase that number, and that is why we teach marksmanship.

It is time to make plans now for the *Tenth Reunion* (18, 19, 20 October) where you can do your lofty recitations and get your name on the painting.

Note that riflery is not an exclusively masculine province. The ladies can shoot right along with the gentlemen, if they wish to. Driving, on the other hand, does seem to be a man's job. I know some women who drive very well, but as of now I know of only one who was able to defeat the best men in her endeavor. That was Michelle Mouton, and she has now retired.

We have noted an increasing number of so-called express sights on pistols here at school. This is the large, round dot front site and a broad, shallow v-rear. This sighting system works quite well for coarse shooting, and it does help those of us whose eyesight is not what it once was. But we notice on the range that students using it tend to print high groups. This is not a serious objection. Group placement is not a decisive factor across the room.

Note that the traditional firemen's pole used to drop quickly to the lower deck has been deemed "too dangerous" by some committee of the European Union. The European Union appears to be pretty silly in all sorts of aspects, and they seem to be stuck with it. *But not over here.* We are not about to surrender our sovereignty to a European criminal court. This annoys some Europeans, who believe that we, the United States, should properly submit to world majority rule. I very much doubt if they would not accept our position if our positions were reversed.

Those of you who fancy dangerous game might consider the Antarctic leopard seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*). He is twice as big as a lion, very fierce and quite fearless. I am now at work on a feature piece on this beast.

It does seem that we are acquiring a group of cartridge fetishists in this country. Every time you look at a periodical you note the appearance of some new cartridge, which serves no specific purpose other than ostentatious redundancy. It seems clear that our rifles of today are more toys than tools, the only purpose of which is to display something that one's neighbor does not own. It is hard to discover a purpose for which the 30-06/308 is not a clearly adequate answer, but I guess it is fun to play around.

We recently saw a news item in which a flier had been honored for saving his crew after his B-17 had been "decimated." It is to wonder how one divides a B-17 into ten equal portions.

It has always seemed to us that every household, and especially every household which harbors an extended family, should include a defensive pistol. Some have suggested that a short and handy shotgun may be superior to a pistol. Out West, where there is more open space around the house, it may be that a good grade of 22 self-loading pistol would be even better. In every case, of course, it is necessary for all inhabitants of the household to know where the weapon is, how it works and how to use it.

It is our sad duty to remind ourselves that it was George Bush, Senior, who let Saddam Hussein get away when we had him. Where was Theodore Roosevelt when we needed him? (And where is he now?)

We notice a tendency on the part of the young uneducated to refer to this matter of "seeing the elephant" without fully understanding its meaning. We have spoken of this before, but herewith the traditional and authorized version: When rural America was truly rural, farm boys were expected to stay home at the farm to grow up and become farmers of the same land. They did not get around much. Entertainment visited the countryside in the form of traveling circuses, which featured all sorts of wonders from acrobats to exotic animals. Any respectable circus always included an elephant, which is, you must admit, a pretty remarkable creature. It also included a number of diversions of other sorts for the edification of the yokels. Legend has it that when a farm boy reached mid-adolescence his father called him aside, told him to go visit the county seat, go to the circus and see the elephant. Traditionally he gave the lad two dollars for expenses. Among the other things the boy undertook was getting somewhat drunk and renting himself a girl for his first erotic experience. When he returned home it was assumed that he had "seen the elephant."

In recent times the situation has altered radically, and today it is more customary for the elephant term to apply to lethal combat. By this standard a man who has been in a fight, been shot at, shot back and hit has "seen the elephant." Such a man has a certain "leg up" in today's embattled society.

In regard to our recent and continuing war-like preparations, I am put in mind of a scene up in Idaho at the beginning of World War II. A band of about two dozen Shoshone, having been informed that the country was at war, trooped down to the county seat carrying their 30-30s and asked where the war might be. "If there's a war, let's go fight it." This reminds us of the behavior of a recently retired and little known president of the United States. Red brother gottum right attitude!

I learn from the late Jack O'Connor that the markup on guns is on the order of 400 percent. That is to say, the list price of a firearm is about four times the cost of production.

A good friend of ours, who shall remain nameless, lives in a big city, which will also remain nameless, where he is pestered by pestiferous urban pigeons. Being a master marksman, he has turned to pneumatics. In order to dodge the *polypragmatoi*, our friend has resorted to subsonic instruments. These, of course, have curved trajectories, and since the pigeon must be taken with head shots only, various interesting ballistic problems arise. Most of the shots are taken post–rest at ranges of 20 yards and under. To increase success range markers, such as McBride employed in World War I, are placed in the backyard,. Our friend knows the exact drop for all those places where a pigeon may choose to alight, and his success rate is high. Unfortunately the urban pigeon is not good to eat. Its flavor may be acceptable, but its texture is that of an old rubber tire. There are, however, satisfactory ways of disposing of pigeon carcasses without waste, and a good time is had by all (except the pigeons).

"There is hardly a product of our culture that someone cannot make a little worse and sell for a little less, and the one who puts price above all other considerations is the natural prey of this man." (pp)

John Ruskin

We hear from Namibia that a German tourist's holiday down there came to an end when he was mistaken for a baboon and shot by a local farmer. If this poor fellow looked enough like a baboon to be mistaken for one, he may be better off dead.

We note without gratification that the demand for rifle training is not great. It appears that many citizens feel that the need for a defensive pistol is obvious and the need to know how to use it is also obvious. But those people who buy rifles do not seem to think that they need to know how to use them. Unfortunately, however, the need is there. There is such a thing as a self–taught rifleman, and he is about as common as a self–taught pastry cook. One only has to look at the illustrations in the magazines to note that the correct technique of the rifle is not only not common to the public at large, but neither with those who read and write about it. I even note with some dismay that various people who set themselves up as *instructors* in rifle marksmanship are apparently unconcerned about the procedures involved.

Well, the material is there for those who want it. I am sorry about those others.

We are pleased to report that the pipeline for Steyr Scouts is once again full. You can now get true scouts ready to go in 308, as well as Dragoons in 376. Of course I recommend the 308, since it is so much easier to feed, but I must confess to a sneaking affection for the Dragoon cartridge – for residents of Alaska. In either case you can get them over–the–counter in well–established gun stores.

Must we keep reminding the faithful that it was Thomas Jefferson, not the Constitution, who proposed a "wall of separation" between church and state? All clients at the Gunsite Academy are issued pocket copies of the US Constitution. Would that this could be said of all members of the United States Congress!

This talk of "friendly fire" is interesting. Having some personal experience in these matters, I can attest that in a major battle it is next to impossible to determine whence gunfire is coming. The single most colorful instance that comes to mind in my own case involved the destruction of an LCI (landing craft, infantry) that I had been unable to board in time for the shooting. That boat was blown up while I watched from close alongside, and it was almost certainly hit by a 5 inch shell from one of our destroyers. It is faintly possible that

it was hit by a Nip mortar, but if so that was by accident, for the Nips had few of that type in place at that time. I can relate a good many other examples of this sort of thing. I think that if you are hit in a modern major battle your chances are that you will be hit by one of our own weapons about one-fourth of the time. This is nobody's fault, it is just the way things are. Under conditions of terminal violence, surgical precision is just not possible.

Does it not seem that one of the first important casualties of the Holy War is the loss of our sense of humor? If you think that you cannot joke about matters of life and death, I am sorry. (Because as the war drags on you are going to need to.)

I am amused to hear of miscreants in the Holy War being "brought to justice." We can certainly attempt to punish a man for his misdeeds, but we cannot bring him to justice unless we know what justice is, and that is a tough thing to define. Plato started out by saying that justice is "giving to each man that which he deserves," and that is a reflexive definition without meaning. It may be vulgar, but the tried-and-true battle cry "Let's get the bastards" seems much more to the point.

A 357 snubby may not be an especially high-class firearm, but it will certainly do for unsighted fire across the bar. High grade firearms can only be appreciated by those who understand them.

This talk about reparations for slavery is so silly that one could expect it to fade of its own embarrassment, but people keep after it. In the first place, it is unreasonable to ask anyone to make reparations for something he did not do, nor cause others to do. In the second place, if you study this subject you will realize that slavery may be considered a natural condition of civilized man. As our favorite columnist, Thomas Sowell, has pointed out, there is hardly anybody on earth whose ancestors have not enslaved or been enslaved at sometime in the past. It is a lot more sensible, as well as more humane, to put the losers to work than to kill them. I have been amused by the tale of Richard Burton, the famed explorer of Arabia, who was a crusader against slavery but went to considerable trouble to acquire the necessary slaves of his own when setting forth for Mecca. As even Al Sharpton should note, the Negro slaves who were brought to America by the colonists had one and all been enslaved by their black brothers in Africa. Perhaps these activists should put in to Nigeria or the Congo for their reparations.

But, of course, to understand this problem calls for a certain elementary knowledge of history, and in the well-known dictum of Mason Williams, "History is a thing of the past."

The people who murdered Vince Foster and Nicole Simpson are still out there running around loose, and no one has even suggested that we "bring them to justice."

Those of you who read Afrikana are aware that the local people down there are fond of hanging personal names from their own language on visitors from abroad, especially hunters. When I checked into this last time I discovered that my own sobriquet, derived from the occasion on which I slew my one and only lion, is "The old man who fell in the ditch." Quite true. I did slip and fall in the ditch on our approach. (It was a slippery ditch.) And I duly thanked Danie's chief hunter for hauling me out.

After that event, I endeavored to find out what each of us remembered most about it. Unsurprisingly, each of the three of us remembered something entirely different. Eyewitnesses are like that.

I guess we will have to drop our notion of the Osama bin Lottery. He is probably dead, but they are not about to tell us how he died or when. We will not throw away our applications yet, however. I guess you will just have to stay tuned.

Perhaps you will not believe it, but I recently picked up from a British publication that some movie producer is now contemplating making a movie about the man who crossed the Alps with the elephants – *casting Denzel Washington as the man!* So much for public education!

"If you can't join `em, lick `em!"

L.C., 1965

In perusing our periodicals, as well as our recent more permanent publications, we cannot avoid the conclusion that good English is not only unfashionable, but even in many cases *unintelligible*. The rules of punctuation and syntax are there for a reason, and if the reader must come to a crashing halt and cry "Now what in earth did he mean by that!" it is time that the author took his schooling more seriously. And certainly the "electronic punctuation" that we see at the top of much of our electronic communication is no help.

It may be that the 21st century will go down in history as *The Age of Illiteracy*.

"To be well informed one must read quickly a great number of merely instructive books. To be cultivated one must read slowly and with a lingering appreciation the comparatively few books that have been written by men who lived, fought and felt with style."

Aldous Huxley

Have you noticed that adulation is not dependant upon the adulated? People need to worship heroes regardless of whether they can find heroes or not. Just place anybody up on a pedestal where he can be seen and you will find thousands of people who will scream and yell and beg for his autograph. Thus we have "mass movements."

"A nation of cowards can neither prosper nor survive."

Family Member Art Robinson

Please Note. These "Commentaries" are for personal use only. Not for publication.

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 11

October 2002

Hunting Season!

And high time, too! The news has been so generally bad, both worldwide and domestic, and we are definitely in need of something cheerful. The opening of hunting season is always that. I hope that you have your plans all made and that I will get word back from you on your adventures.

Oddly enough a correspondent recently asked me to explain why I thought that "modern man needs to hunt." Ancient or modern, man hunts because he is a carnivorous predator. You have only to examine his teeth, which are designed for shearing and masticating meat. Most grass eaters have grazing and grinding teeth located only in the lower jaw. Man does not hunt in order to eat – not in the past and not now. Personally I always choose to eat what I kill, but I know a good many hunters who do not feel that way. The hunting instinct is a drive to place man in charge of his environment, and it is so deeply ingrained that it stays there even if he must live in a large, stone city. Not everyone feels this way, of course, but to all I recommend the magnificent classic "*Meditations on Hunting*" by José Ortega y Gasset. Even in translation, this is a masterfully clear exposition of the hunting spirit. If you do not know why we hunt, get your own personal copy of this book (it is still available in print) and study it. Almost every third or fourth line is worthy of quotation and a study by itself. It will not change the mind of a grass-eater, but I do not suppose anything will.

How many of you noticed the celebration of the events of 9–11 in Riyadh? Wasn't given much publicity, was it?

So now we are engaged in a great Holy War, testing whether our culture, or any culture conceived and dedicated to the proposition of social sensibility, can endure. That sort of paraphrase does poor justice to Mr. Lincoln, but I think there are points that need to be made. Specifically, a Holy War cannot be waged like a political war. In a political war you have a national objective. The nation which has declared itself your enemy must be subdued by force of arms and forced to submit to your way of thinking. In a Holy War, however, there is no national objective. The Moslem objective seems to be simply to destroy the infidel. I cannot believe that any Moslem feels that by killing Christians or Jews or agnostics at random he will win any sort of tangible objective. These people may be awfully ignorant, but I still cannot believe that they believe that killing non-combatant Jews will eventually result in the displacement of Israel back to Brooklyn. In the matter of Iraq, for example, if that nation and its nasty dictator were to vanish overnight, the Holy War would still be in full cry. I think we all agree (even the British) that Saddam Hussein has got to go. But the ragheads still insist that we infidels are the accursed of God, and they seek to flaunt this without any prospect for amelioration. We see these people complaining when they are "profiled" while making every effort to make such profiling obvious. If a raghead does not wish to be identified as a raghead, there would seem to be no reason for him to speak like a raghead, act like a raghead, and dress like a raghead. The best way for him to avoid being identified as a raghead would be to stay back where he came from. It seems to me that our advice should be assimilate or quit complaining.

There is no good solution to this unpleasant conflict, but kissing the feet of the aggressor is not any sort of answer. Tolerance is all very well but, like moderation, it can be taken to extremes.

We hear in professional papers that the Marine Corps has just now rediscovered the 1911 pistol. It has been around for some time, and its unchallenged supremacy has been thoroughly documented. Now we have a tuned-up version being offered by the armorers at Quantico which should do very well indeed in the hands of those who understand close combat. Gunsite graduates do not need to be told this, anymore than they need to be told about the modern technique, but there are few of us. Isn't it annoying to be talked down to by people who seek to explain to us what we knew long before they took up the subject!

If you were king, what would you do with this Johnnie Walker, the Taliban traitor? Twenty years in the slammer will not cure his mind, nor achieve any sort of restitution. He is a political/social nitwit, and sad evidence of totally undirected innocence. We cannot correct that now, but perhaps permanent exile to some rat's nest in Islam might serve as an example. But you are not king, so speculation is unprofitable.

The resurgence of the 45-70 cartridge is very interesting. It was an excellent round when it was introduced back in the 19th century, and it still is. It was eclipsed by the superb 30-06, and fell almost completely out of sight for almost a hundred years, but that does not diminish its merit.

In my early youth it was scorned as kicking too hard, excessively curving in trajectory, and perhaps lacking in residual penetration when used on very heavy game. I do not know what to think about recoil in this case. Recoil effect can be accentuated by bad stock design, and many pieces designed to take the cartridge were conspicuous in this way. But we have passed it on to students here at school during past months, and we just do not find many people who think it kicks too hard. Muzzle brakes can help this, of course.

It does shoot a curve, and thus is unsuitable for military area fire at long range. But this hardly matters to a sportsman or, for that matter, to a scout operating alone who shoots only when he can't avoid it. The vast majority of game shots are taken at under 150 yards, and the 45-70 does just fine all the way out to 200. Beyond that range we encounter a problem in marksmanship, rather than ballistics. Only a very good shot can hit much beyond 200 meters, and very good shots are not common. Besides that, even a good shot avoids long shots when he can.

One of the prime advantages of the 45-70 is its adaptability to compact lever-action rifles, making it particularly suitable for African professional hunters who shoot only in emergencies, and then at short range. Mike Garrett, making the ammunition, and Jim West, making the rifles, have brought the so-called "Co-pilot" into recent prominence, and it could not happen to a nicer item.

If we can cast Denzel Washington as Hannibal, I think we might try to cast Brad Pitt as Booker T. Washington.

About the only apparent reason for the British disarmament of the people is fear of generalized armed insurrection. Public disarmament in Britain has resulted in a predictable increase in street crime. The Brits do not seem to be especially insurrective at this time, but one never knows. Besides, the disarmament laws have not completely removed shotguns from the hands of the peasantry. That is an oversight which should be brought up in Parliament.

The attempt by the education establishment to castrate American youth has produced some very peculiar attitudes. One is an announced "hatred of violence." It seems to me that people who hate violence as an abstraction are living in the wrong country. This nation we live in, still the last best hope of Earth, was born in violence, and if there is any such thing as a typical American man, he is certainly a violent man. Note American football, a game which is popular nowhere but here. American football is a perfect study in "orchestrated violence," and most of us find it to be a marvelous spectacle. *Uncontrolled* violence was the French Revolution, one of civilization's black marks, but *controlled* violence is what made this nation great.

The term "blood sport" seems to have two current meanings, enough to confuse most people. I regard a blood sport as an activity undertaken for pleasure in which a mistake can cause serious injury or death to the participant. Examples are rock climbing, skin diving and motor racing, among others. To the bunny huggers, however, a blood sport is the pursuit of a game animal resulting in its death, such as quail hunting or fox hunting. Precise communication seems to be a bit much to ask of the peasantry.

We call the following new books to your personal attention:

"The Soul and the Spirit" (second edition) by Lindy Wisdom. This has some new material added to it and is somewhat more compact.

And there is Barrett Tillman's *"Above and Beyond,"* a compendium of naval medal of honor cases.

And in case you have not got the second edition of *"Gargantuan Gunsite Gossip,"* we have that for sale, too. The two books now are called GI and GII, respectively.

And one is not ready yet. I am putting together another anthology of my own work, to be called *"C-Stories."* I hope to have that available for sale by next Spring.

It appears that the Pentagon is at this time seeking a couple of new small-arms cartridges to replace both the 223 and the 9mmP. Funny nobody thought of that fifty years ago.

Do not neglect to fire up your wit for the occasion of the *Tenth Annual Reunion* at Whittington. We can use appropriate anecdote, original verse (if beyond the sixth grade level), music, and any sort of recitation by or about our great patron Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.

There will be shooting with rifle, pistol and sporting clay. We hope to show you some innovative exercises, and we welcome ingenious contributions along this line.

A correspondent from South Africa contends that the modern technique of the pistol is a poor measure of combat skill, since pistol fights take place at such short range that sighting systems and precision shooting are not pertinent. In my opinion, our friend is technically correct in that one has to hunt long and hard to find a case study in which true shooting skill was a factor. But we should go beyond this. A shooter who understands the modern technique commands a degree of self-confidence which enables him to think straight when the flag flies. If he knows exactly what he can do and under what time limitations, he need not think about technique. (The old-time fighter pilot did not think about flying in a dog fight, but only about *fighting*.) A practiced *pistolero* is totally confident in what he can do, and is thus freed from any complex legal, moral or technical considerations. If he decides that he has to shoot, the stroke takes care of itself – but only if he is master of that stroke. The modern technique solves the problem. Unsighted fire is all very well and can produce startling results with talented people who are willing to devote the necessary time to the enterprise. We are not against it. We only feel that it is an unnecessary affectation.

Family member Terry Allison has again pointed out to us the irrelevance of group-size as a measure of rifle equipment and technique. In its place we suggest an exercise we may call the IRD, for "Initial Radial Dispersion." One starts three paces back from the firing line, rifle slung and in Condition One. Range is 100 yards or 100 meters. On signal, the shooter advances to the firing position of his choice and fires one shot – in no hurry. His score is the linear distance between his exact point of aim and the strike of his shot. This distance is the index of his efficiency. This is hardly a playtime exercise, since when people show up to shoot they naturally want to shoot as much as they can afford. However, it is a very satisfactory measure of rifle, ammunition, sighting system, and shooter.

Have you noted that the people who produce these wildlife television programs do not seem to be outdoorsmen? They do not appear to be the sort of people who actually enjoy the life of the wild, but rather people who are happier on pavement in low-cut shoes. I do not wish to be unjust here, but I do believe that just as only an experienced soldier should write about war, only a woodsman (and preferably a hunter) should write about the wilderness.

Does it not seem that we are overdoing this handcuff business? To shackle a man deprives him of his dignity, and this should not be done without sufficient cause. It amounts to public humiliation, and should only be inflicted in defense of life and limb, or as a result of conviction by due process. The Romans, who were not conspicuously sensitive people, conspicuously refused to shackle a Roman citizen. Kill him possibly, cuff him no. But we live in an undignified age, and most people do not seem to care.

The Moors (according to their own pronouncements as far as we can translate them) feel that the only good infidel is a dead infidel. Only by such reasoning can they justify the random murder of non-combatants. They killed a whole lot of people who were not at war at the World Trade Center. This seems to have earned them Brownie points. By examination we may conclude that a good Moslem earns one point for killing another Moslem of a different sect, two points for killing a European Christian, three points for killing an American, and four points for killing a Jew. I may have this wrong, but then I cannot speak Arabic.

At the behest of *family member* Clifford Douglas, we are collectively at work on the "*Ode to the Rifle*." We expect some good things in this line at the *Reunion*.

In Louisville, which is in Kentucky, they have a police department. This organization recruits, equips and trains a police force intended to protect and serve the citizenry. We now read a news item about a suspect who was shot neatly in the back with a service pistol. The officer doing the shooting has announced that he thought that he was shooting a "stun gun." A man who cannot tell a stun gun from a service pistol should obviously not be allowed to handle either. (It is also difficult to hypothesize a circumstance in which a man should be shot in the back with a stun gun.) It is quite possible, of course, that the man who was shot deserved whatever he got, but a majority opinion maintains that this is not a matter for the cop to decide on the spot. If this officer is telling the truth, the police department should be recycled, but it seems quite obvious that he is not telling the truth, rather attempting in pathetic fashion to fortify his posterior. Perhaps all three parties involved here – the department, the shooter and the shootee – should be recycled.

As we have reported, one Miss Oxana Fedorova was selected to bear the crown of Miss Universe in a recent contest. What makes this noteworthy to us is the fact that this *copchick* is a recreational *pistolera*. We suggested to management here at Gunsite that she be brought aboard for some shooting practice, building publicity for all concerned. It now turns out that she did not like all the travel necessary to the position and quit. Too bad. A pretty girl always brightens up the atmosphere.

In the interest of precise communication, let us call the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers an *atrocitiy*, not a *tragedy*. The proper response to a tragedy is sorrow. The proper response to an atrocitiy is rage.

We have been criticized for referring to what we are engaged in as a Holy War. But we did not call it that, *they* did. When they refer to us as the Great Satan, that is what we have got. But perhaps they did not call us that. Maybe they called it something else and it did not translate well. But there has still got to be some sort of justification for the atrocities that they have committed. Those people died intentionally in the act of killing infidels. If that is not a Holy War, we will just dream up some other term which means the same thing.

This airport security hysteria is certainly a major victory for Osama bin Laden, living or dead. It does not make any particular sense, but "something must be done," even if it does not make any sense. And what has

been done has practically ruined American commercial air travel. It does not seem to occur to the bureaucracy that a good man does not need a hand weapon in order to constitute a lethal antagonist. A properly trained man can do more with his bare hands than most people can do with whatever they may be able to smuggle aboard an airplane in their travel kit. (Let us not pursue this line of thought lest the security people require all passengers to be shackled in their seats upon boarding.)

All hail to Kennesaw, Georgia! You remember that is the town where all householders are required to be armed. Crime rate remains at zero, unlike that of London.

"There is no way to make war safe; so the thing to do is to make it unsafe for the other side."

Joe Foss

This political correctness foolishness is so silly that it is hard to take seriously, but there it is. It is even miscalled, for it is neither political nor correct. It is social censorship, the rule of the *polypragmatoi* (read "busybodies"). Mr. Jefferson is quoted around the inside of his monument at Washington as standing foursquare and forever against every form of tyranny over the mind of man. As he declaimed, and as I hope we all agree, the State may justifiably control our actions – but never our *thoughts*. Sorry, Mr. Jefferson, but all men are *not* created equal. ("All ya gotta do is look.")

What are the first four articles of the Bill of Rights? If you do not know, you should.

So far it appears that the three thousand victims at the World Trade Center did indeed die in vain, despite the President's pronouncement. That was Round One. Let us see who dies in Round Two, and in what cause.

We have been dunned recently for various worthy causes, including one which calls upon us to "feed the hungry." This is doubtless a worthy cause, and I can offer a suggestion from central Virginia where we recently were the guests of *family member* Bob Crovatto. Bob is an enthusiastic varminter, and he lays out those Eastern woodchucks by the hundred. That is a lot of protein. I have never eaten a groundhog, but I have eaten several rockchucks up in the Rockies, and I can testify that they are quite salubrious. Bob did not seem anxious to harvest these beasties for nutritional purposes. Maybe we need a committee.

At this time Bob Crovatto has the only fully operational Apitir pistol–shooting device in use. There should be one of these at every major pistol school in the world, but the one that we had here at Gunsite was torn down during the *malum interregnum* and has not been rebuilt. We have good things here, but as yet we do not have them all.

We are told that there is a problem with seagulls at the yacht harbors of Monaco, where the rich and the famous tie up their beautiful vessels. It seems that the birds defecate all over the mahogany and brightwork. My suggestion is the BB gun. I have often repelled seagulls on the wing in San Francisco Bay with a BB gun. It works fine and it does not seem to hurt the birds much; they just squawk and sheer off when hit.

"The best revenge is not to be like *that*."

Marcus Aurelius

I like to think that most of us in America value political liberty above all other considerations, but the media suggest that at least half of world citizenry prefers security to liberty – if it comes to a choice. Of course it does not come to that. As Mr. Franklin put it so well, those who value security over liberty wind up with neither.

As we watch the English language degenerate, we may contend that adjectives are like alcohol, while adverbs are like opium. Both alcohol and opium are necessary, but they must be used sparingly and with great care.

This foolishness about reparations for slavery has got to take some sort of prize for inanity. Human slavery has been with us since the beginning of time. It is the natural course of social order. Without it we would probably still be living in the Bronze Age, and such trivia as mathematics, philosophy, religion, and art would never have been invented. As Aristotle pointed out, most people have slave minds, and prefer to be told what to do and where to line up for chow. Of course many people are not like that, and they are the ones who have given us civilization as we know it.

"Americans did not invent courage, but they did invent aviation, and the melding of the two produced a heritage of aerial valor that spanned most of the twentieth century."

Barrett Tillman, in *"Above and Beyond"*

The rains have come!

And high time, too. This has been the worst drought in memory, and never has the land suffered so much. The Countess observes that you can hear the ground sucking up the moisture as all nature hymns its thanks. Let it presage a long, *damp* Winter, and several normal years to build back our water table! Isn't it odd that neither the Greeks nor the Romans personified a rain god the way the Meso-Americans did? Now let us rejoice and be glad. Most news is bad, but the weatherman is at last on our side.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 12

November 2002

All Hallows

As our civilization continues along its degenerate way, we note that the acceptance of specialization in life is achieving new lows. It appears that post-modern man is content to manifest no interest in anything beyond the confines of his own little cubicle. In my youth it was assumed that a grown man should know a good bit about a whole number of things, besides any specialty that might take his fancy. I do not remember visiting a household which was totally without personal firearms – always a 22, and usually a shotgun. Today the press assumes a curious obligation to inform us (not necessarily correctly) about matters relating to firearms. Generally speaking, journalists and commentators do not choose to educate us about cooking, or motoring, or swimming, or equitation, or flying an airplane, but they seem to be anxious to tell us all about firearms, and furthermore they assume that no one will know anything about firearms unless he has been instructed in the military. Actually military instruction in firearms is pretty rudimentary. Any well educated youth should know more about marksmanship and gunhandling when he enters the service than he is likely to learn after he does so. The notion that our finally apprehended Muhammad (may peace be upon him) had to have been trained in the military before he could use a rifle is an example of this. This mass murderer displayed no particular knowledge or skill in his disgusting rampage, yet a number of journalistic types seems to think that he is some kind of an expert.

It is sad evidence that we shooters are a distinct minority in our urban culture. At our recent *Reunion* at Whittington Center, we were much gratified by the presence of seventeen young people who participated with both eagerness and distinction. One little girl of eight applied for permission to recite the *General Rules of Gunhandling* before the audience. The skies may be grey, but there is still some hope. May God defend the right!

We were amused to hear that on his fiftieth birthday President Putin of Russia had a mountain in Kyrgyzstan named after him. The President of Kyrgyzstan who sought to honor Putin is named Askar Askayev. Apparently the Kyrgyzi have so many mountains that they can afford to be profligate in their nomenclature. "Rudel, Cooper and Putin" make a truly exotic combination.

We do not see much of interest in the way of new models in firearms. The ones we have do just fine, and this is a cause for concern amongst the marketeers. It is necessary to advance all sorts of specious claims in order to make us unhappy with what we already have, but people who know very little about a subject, from motorcycles to flyswatters, are easy marks for those who wish to make them discontented with what they have. This is commercial progress.

Reports back from the war in Afghanistan tell us that nearly all individual weaponry is nocturnal, and that optical sights are the way to go. The trouble with telescope sights has always been fragility, but apparently new production has been able to withstand the rigors of hard field service without excessive breakage.

We also hear from recent battle reports that the 223 cartridge is not a successful combat round. It will kill, certainly, as our recent urban atrocities have proven, but it is not a stopper. It is a pretty good murder weapon for use across the street against an unsuspecting non-combatant, but it is hardly a good thing to take into battle. The Pentagon is looking around for something to replace it. Why we need something superior to the

308 is unclear, but there are people in positions of authority who join the popular notion that anything developed before they were born is useless. This idea carries over into certain military offices which are concerned with long range sniping. Certainly a 300 Magnum may be technically superior to a 30-06, and a 338 may be superior to a 300 Magnum, but it is hard to postulate a situation in which an individual rifleman is better than a 30-06. As always, it is the man, not the instrument, which wins the day.

"People never lie so much as:
 After a hunt,
 during a war,
 or before an election."

Bismarck

Is it not curious how fashions and language change? One can hardly read a news item without running across "terror" used as an adjective, or "terrorism" as a movement. We do not bother to define these terms, but that is probably just as well. Forced to the wall, I would opine that "terrorism," in its modern sense, is indiscriminate war conducted for political reasons against non-combatants. It differs from war in that it has no objective, and it differs from crime in that money is not involved. By whatever definition, it is entirely unconscionable, and if I were king, I would reintroduce exemplary capital punishment as its reward. The old-fashioned British custom of hanging in irons comes to mind.

Family member and Shooting Master John Pepper points out his annoyance with the journalistic term "gunned down." A man is not gunned down when he is shot, rather he is gunned down appropriately by a butt stroke. I am familiar with the butt stroke, both in training and in practice, and I do agree with John. The butt stroke, properly delivered with a full-size rifle, is every bit as decisive as a rifle shot. Its utility, however, is restricted by its very short range

We certainly miss the days of Margaret Thatcher's leadership in England. When Argentina seized the Falklands, she simply called upon the British military establishment to retake them. It is said that the War Minister mentioned to the Prime Minister that such an action would result in fairly heavy British casualties. Her response was, "General, you just take back the Falklands. Let *me* worry about the casualties." Now there is the sort of political leadership that shows us the way!

This matter of arming the pilots of commercial aircraft is not as simple as it appears. A man is not armed because he has custody of a weapon. He is armed only if he has the skill to use it well. And getting that skill across to tens of thousands of airline pilots in a short time is too much to expect. Gun fighting is one part technique and three parts attitude. Teaching technique is fairly simple, provided the student is properly motivated, but teaching attitude is more complex. The right man with the right attitude is a more efficient combatant in the close confines of an airplane cockpit than the wrong man armed with a machine pistol. Once again it is the man, rather than the gun, that matters.

Piracy continues apace in the disputed waters of the world. Indonesia, India, the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa, and the Gulf of Guinea are hot spots. The fanatical *modi operandi* are conspicuously low tech, conducted principally with edged weapons. This means they could be stopped cold by properly organized crews. However, recruiting, training, paying, and arming miscellaneous coast-wise civil sailors is probably an impossible undertaking.

People still raise the question of why we hunt. Fortunately tastes differ, but in my opinion we hunt:

1. Because we want to;
2. For meat;

3. For memories of adventure.

Trophies, of course, should constitute our most elegant souvenirs, but I do not see their size as being of primary importance. Naturally one admires a prime specimen more than a juvenile, but the record book is hardly an end in itself. Hunting should be an individual delight, not a competitive exercise. Hemingway made himself look quaint in his preoccupation with inches, or so it seems to me.

We learn that Norinco in China is now producing an elegant replica of the "Broomhandle" Mauser, famed in song and story. This piece serves no practical purpose that I can see, but it is a delight to play with. A friend of ours used one extensively at Catalina Island when I was a boy, and as a boat gun with butt-stock attached it was great fun. I do not feel like acquiring one just now, but if anyone of the *family* wishes to bring one by we would be most happy to spend an afternoon playing with it.

Further reports from the various fronts in the Holy War suggest that THEY are not clued in. It is heartening to observe that people who believe that by memorizing the Koran and praying five times a day they will achieve all that is necessary in their war against the West. If one is instructed from infancy that one is holy, nothing else is necessary. He is unlikely to fight skilfully with modern weapons. Most of the atrocities so far committed have been carried out by people who welcome death in a holy cause. Such people are certainly deadly, but they are not efficient in the fight against the *Kaffir*.

We believe that this *initial radial deviation test*, which we dreamed up to establish the precision capacity of a rifle/sight/rifleman combination, is worth widespread distribution. It serves to establish the hitting capacity of the combination in a meaningful fashion. It should be conducted at 200 yards (or 200 meters) and by means of a series of single shots. In the field, of course, only the first shot counts, not group size. The exercise should be conducted three times to avoid the influence of luck. One shot is fired from a cold, clean barrel, and its index is the distance between the exact point of aim and the point of impact. The smaller the deviation, the higher the score.

This is not an entertainment exercise, since too little shooting is involved, but it does serve as a precise evaluation of the combination being examined.

I repeat that I think we are missing a bet in not using pigs and pig products as weapons in the Holy War. If you happen to have any hollow point ammunition you might think of filling the point with pig fat in order to increase your psychological advantage.

I do not pretend to own the English language, and I do not claim to own the term "scout," but the scout rifle concept is mine, and I know what I mean by it, even if others do not. The essential element of the Scout Rifle, as I see it, is "friendliness," combined with all-purpose utility. The piece should be short, light and handy, and still dispose of sufficient power and range to accomplish any reasonable task in the hands of a skilful rifleman.

The Scout Rifle need not be fitted with a telescope sight (!!!). I took "Scout I" to Central America on a series of extensive bush prowls. I subsequently mounted an intermediate-eye-relief, low power telescope on this piece, but I do not think this improved its overall desirability.

The Scout Rifle is an instrument for a man operating alone, and this does not involve volume of fire. The bolt-action, in various guises, is probably the most suitable, though there is much to be said for a single-shot action which permits shorter overall length of the assembled weapon. The self-loaders, in general, are too bulky and too complex for maximum friendliness.

I could go on, but I have written this up elsewhere. I wish to point out, however, that when somebody extols his 375 Scout, or his 223 Scout, or his Garand Scout, he is missing the target – at least my target.

In reflecting sadly upon the Wichita Horror of December 2000, we ponder again upon the disgusting unwillingness of victims to fight back. In this atrocity, two men armed with pistols assaulted, brutalized, abused, and killed four out of five victims, one of whom was left for dead. These actions took place at arm's length! The victims apparently just gave up simply because two goblins happened to have possession of a pistol apiece – *and they died*. We thought by now that everyone realized that the only acceptable response to the threat of lethal violence is immediate and savage counterattack. If you resist, you just may get killed. If you don't resist, you almost certainly *will get killed*. It is a tough choice, but there is only one right answer.

Our British friends are quick to point out the horrible state of public conduct in the United States. They must feel justified in doing so because the streets are so safe in England, where the effective disarmament of the citizenry has resulted in the highest rate of violent street crime in the world.

A *family member* recently wrote in and asked how he could pin the grip safety shut on his 1911, claiming that no available gunsmith would perform this task for fear of litigation. Personally I think the smiths declined this task because it is so easy that they cannot charge much for it. You simply pin opposing holes in the bottom of the grip safety and the top of the mainspring housing. These holes are about the diameter of piano wire. Then, with the grip safety pressed shut, you insert the piano wire pin and slide the mainspring housing up into position to take the other end of the pin. Once this arrangement is installed, it can be removed in seconds, for those who are terrified of regulators.

I suppose it is flattering to receive the amount of political bitching that we get here at Gunsite, but I fear that there is not much I can do about the vagaries of the current situation in Washington, Brussels or Riyadh. In a representative republic such as ours, the government is supposed to be responsible to the people. If you do not like what the government is doing, get into it yourself and bring about the necessary changes.

"Weapons protect the weak from the strong, not the other way around." The passengers of Flight 93 showed us the way to defend ourselves – they fought back. If every passenger fought back immediately, no terrorist could succeed. If every victim fought back immediately, no criminal could succeed. No one lives forever.

OLYMPEION
(An Ode to the Rifle)

You hold in your hands the bow of Diana,
 The spear of Achilles, the hammer of Thor.
 Now you command both precision and distance.
 To dominant power you've opened the door.

Your rifle embodies the gift of Hephaistos,
 The grant of Olympus to hapless mankind.
 Your rifle's a thing of both power and beauty,
 Its proper employment ennobles the mind.

Bare-handed you live at the mercy of numbers,
 But numbers can never match rifleman's skill.
 Your rifle essentially makes you the master.
 It creates and maintains humanity's will.

Vulcan has given you means to establish
 Divine domination o'er man, beast and foe.
 Your rifle's the sorcerous scepter of power.

Direct it with wisdom and judgement bestow.

Collective

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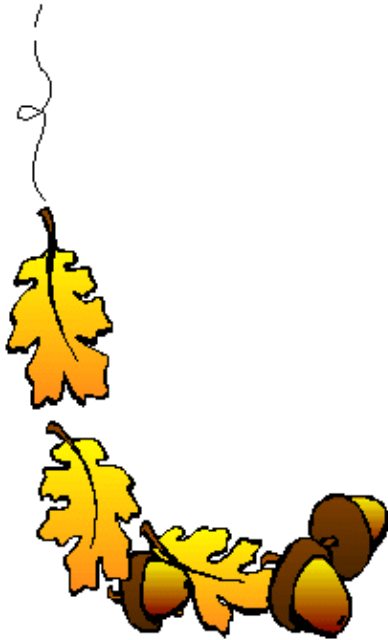
Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 13

December 2002

Thanksgiving



The world scene may be pretty bleak, but we certainly have a lot to be thankful for at home. With a serious president in the White House and a majority in both houses of Congress, our ship of state rejoices in a sound hand at the helm and fair winds aloft. Despite the general moral decline in our society, we still have great things to appreciate – the first of which is having been born on the right side of the Holy War. We have been reading up on Islam and discover that while Western Civilization is far from perfect, it is infinitely better in all respects than that which looms "East of Suez." We may need to clean up our act, but at least we are in the right theater.

Our new book, to be entitled "*C Stories*," is now in complete narrative form and awaits the essential contribution of Paul Kirchner's excellent illustrations. Paul has undertaken the creation of twenty-four, full-page line drawings, ranging in subject matter from a head-on with a mamba to the Lebanese War. A picture is worth a thousand words, and we expect great things.

Field report:

"The Steyr Scout was like cheating. It was all you said it is and more. I really enjoyed putting it to use."

William Usilton, Champagne, Illinois.

Suddenly we discover that the operation of the slide on the 1911 pistol is too difficult a task for the common people. This was not true until recently, but it seems that while our organized athletics have produced new

records in achievement, the generality of mankind has slid into us a race of watchers rather than doers. We have never before encountered man, woman or child here at the Ranch who could not work the slide on a 1911, but now we hear about this difficulty from a couple of sources. Any homemaker who operates a satisfactory household must be plenty strong enough to handle all of her kitchen appliances and, therefore, certainly strong enough to manage a pistol. Perhaps the postmodern housewife does not operate a successful kitchen, but buys everything prefabricated in the supermarket. People certainly do come in different levels of potential. It has been our privilege to have had very little to do with the conspicuously incompetent.

As to that, we hear back from the war area that our ragheaded adversaries are displaying gratifying incompetence in their war-making capacity. Evidently many of them cannot work the slide. Additionally they have no interest in maintenance, and machinery of any sort does need to be maintained. The prevailing attitude amongst their leadership class is that knowledge, being power, must not be disseminated. If you know how to do something, keep it to yourself lest the peasantry discover it. And beside this, the class system seems irresistibly entrenched. The A class people do not work physically. Officers, for example, will not pick up brass nor set targets. In one incident, an officer trainee declined to walk upon the grass for fear of contamination and required his troops to carry him from one point to another. It may be wishful thinking, but amongst those people the slave mentality seems to be rife. This is certainly good news for us, if true.

This journalistic attempt to condemn "sniping" as a criminal act must be shouted down. A sniper is a highly qualified technician, and only the very best individuals may qualify. A dim-witted murderer who happens to use a rifle should not be dignified by referring to him as a sniper. A creep is a creep, but a sniper is an expert.

Since most government departments have now abandoned the revolver in favor of the self-loading pistol, revolver technique is not as widely understood as it used to be. The ignorant may denigrate the revolver out of some sort of lemming principle, but the wheelgun still fills a niche that the auto cannot. This is especially true in the game fields, and on jobs where the operator must work with both hands free. The "heavy wheel gun stroke" for the Magnum revolver, in which the piece is cocked on recoil with the left thumb, permitting instantaneous, precise second shots, is not widely understood. Yet it is exactly the right technique for the serious use of the heavy revolver – 44 and up.

I repeat that the bench rest is a distinct obstacle to the understanding of the art of the rifle. The bench rest is a device intended to eliminate human error, and relates to the rifle the way the dynamometer does to the motor car. It is properly used to evaluate output of machinery – not of man. A shooter's expertise is always measured from a field position, and usually under time limitation. Unfortunately, most public ranges are confined to the bench rest for reasons of administrative safety. Sometimes I think that if safety is all that important one should give up shooting and take up the frisbee.

This from Jeff Jacoby in the *Boston Globe*.

"Time and again we have been instructed that Islam is a `religion of peace.' Over and over we have been assured that most Moslems are non-violent and tolerant. Yet when Islamic fanatics commit acts of horrifying atrocity, and do so *as Moslems*, the peaceable Islamic majority has nothing to say. Why not?"

It is interesting to note that the people who put on television programs about matters of wildlife are not outdoorsmen. I get the impression that TV producers are not the sort of people who sleep on the ground, clean their own fish, build their own fires, or really enjoy getting off the pavement. Outdoorsmen are an increasingly rare breed. They have much to teach, but it seems that few people want to listen to what they have to say.

Father Flanagan, the renowned founder of Boys Town, opined that he had never met a *bad boy*. Perhaps the good father did not get around much, for horrible examples of sheer unmotivated malice are more often committed by adolescents than by adults – or so it would appear. To declare that we should withhold capital punishment because the goblin is too young seems unreasonable to me. A creep is a creep is a creep, regardless if whether he is old enough to buy a package of cigarettes.

This talk of peace is wrong. Peace is the absence of struggle, and Moslems, if they are sincere, are dedicated to struggle. Tacitus said of the Romans, "They make a desert and they call it peace." (*Solitudinum faceunt. Pacem apelant.*) The Moslems' idea of peace is the extinction of Christianity. Let us not dodge that!

When the revolution in pistolcraft began back in the 1950s, the original purpose of the exercise was to learn how to shoot better, in the sense of better using the handgun as a combat instrument. Marksmanship standards up till that time had been measured on bullseye courses, which are certainly better than nothing, but hardly relevant. In those days we all shot one-handed, standing erect at 25 and 50 meters. This is an interesting and challenging exercise, but it has almost nothing to do with fighting. A man who earned his Pistol Expert badge in those days could establish that he knew how to work the pistol and handle it safely with precision, but that was about all. Any relationship between marksmanship and weaponcraft was coincidental.

Then the light dawned, commencing in primitive fashion with the FBI and rapidly advancing with the introduction of practical pistol competition in Southern California. This activity was enjoyed, naturally, by enthusiasts, and I did not realize that sporting enthusiasm is not necessarily an attribute either of the uniformed public servant or of the private citizen. We did indeed develop the modern technique of the pistol, and we evolved it by means of a competition program which rewarded dexterity to a possibly unrealistic degree. A great many people who own or carry pistols do not pursue technical excellence, and it is possible that what evolved over the years has become unrelated to the fighting skill which is the purpose of the handgun.

I have just now noticed a commentary in a South African periodical pointing out that the sighted fire, which is an element of the modern technique, is irrelevant to the real world in which lethal gunfights take place at distances so short as to make any sort of accuracy unimportant. The author goes on to maintain that sighted fire is simply too slow to matter in a pistol fight. I have heard this argument before, specifically at the FBI Academy in Quantico. This is theory, and I oppose it with practice. The fastest controlled shot I have witnessed in competition was a point thirty-nine, executed by Leonard Knight at Big Bear. It may be possible to do better than this, but clearly it does not matter. In a face-off, a point thirty-nine is not going to beat a point sixty-five or, for that matter, a one point two.

The essentials of a successful gunfight remain precision, power and quickness (**DVC**). These elements are equal, but they are surpassed by one other thing, and that is *attitude*. It is great to be quick, accurate and powerful, but it is more important to be *ready*. The readiness to take the irrevocable step is what will save your life. The Weaver firing stroke will do the job, but only if you are emotionally ready to employ it.

Captain Tyler Heath, USMC (our grandson), is looking forward to a forthcoming assignment eastward. We cannot, of course, predict what sort of close encounter, if any, he may come to enjoy, but though he is a very fine shot, he is going to be handicapped by somewhat less than satisfactory personal armament. Of course a captain is not supposed to shoot people, rather he is supposed to direct operations, but fights do not always turn out as planned. We know that Captain Heath will hit what he shoots at, if that sort of thing comes to pass, but if he sticks to issue equipment, he will hit it with a second-rate round. Most people I have heard from the forward areas have been able to wangle themselves a 1911 pistol. But if that cannot be arranged, the skillful *pistolero* can always fall back on the head shot.

This precision assassination from on high is certainly a dramatic development of our technology. Potting a specific bad guy from aloft is a pretty spectacular trick, as now practiced by both ourselves and the Israelis. Hitting the target, while an excellent technical exercise, seems to be far less exciting than specific target acquisition. How do you know who is in what car down there below you, or in what office building? This G2 technique is way ahead of my time in the spook business, and I marvel at it. I can think of several systems which might be used, but clearly they are not advertised. How do we arrange to slip a sensor into our target's wallet? Intelligence operations often fail, and we hear about those. But, sad to say, our praise must be withheld from our successes, if we want to be able to repeat them.

The tidal wave of firearms ignorance sweeps along. When I was young every family knew at least something about guns. Today a lot of people are not even embarrassed about how little they know. This is especially exasperating in journalism. Note this: "All the victims who were apparently chosen at random were hit with the single .233 rifle bullet, a caliber favored by expert marksmen due to its accuracy at long range." This is from the British periodical "*The Week*." How dismal it is that people who know nothing at all about the subject at hand assume that nobody else knows anything about it either!

Henry the VIII, quite reasonably, sought to encourage skill-at-arms among his subjects. At one point he decreed that both bows and arrows must be sold to young men between 14 and 18 at half price. Now there is an aspect of gun control that had not occurred to me. Let's tell Schumer about it.

Note that defense can never win. Defense gives the initiative to the aggressor, and leaves the field to the foe. Thus "Department of Defense" is an unfortunate concept. Doctor Rice is supposed to advise the president on the proper methods available for both him and the country, but note that the enemy in the current Holy War has already won the first three or four rounds. He has killed *kaffirs* in quantity, without let or hindrance. He strikes without the prospect of being struck. He attacks where we can only defend. By the middle of the first quarter he already has a ten point lead. We hope that Mr. Rumsfeld and Dr. Rice have an answer to this. We hope.

Our sociology questionnaire has produced almost no result. We asked a selection of ladies to list those things about husbands which they found to be memorably irritating, and we have come up with very little in response. One wonders if men who are shooters are just nicer guys than others. Charming thought!

Doctor Robert Hannan, a *Gunsite family member* and cardiovascular surgeon, has digested and condensed our *Principles of Personal Defense* into a satisfactory foursome: "ALERT, DECISIVE, AGGRESSIVE, COLD." That is easier to memorize than our entire pamphlet on principles, but it covers the subject pretty well. The PPD pamphlet (*Principles of Personal Defense*) treats the subject more thoroughly, but the Hannan quatrain is a neat package to keep in mind.

It is somewhat off the subject of guns and ammunition, but the question frequently comes up as to why people write books. Let us consider this:

- A. As a means of making money. This is not a good reason, since only rarely do books make money. You may make money writing a book, the way you may feed yourself hunting deer. It is a cheerful thought, but seldom productive.
- B. As a way of putting out the word. Some people feel the need to preach. This is presumptuous, of course, but not entirely unreasonable. Children are taught in schools to respect the printed word. "If it's there in print it must be true." One who seeks to improve the general scene feels that a published book is more forceful than a verbal argument. A statement committed to a bound volume truly relieves the author's feelings.
- C. To create a collector's item. A surprising number of people feel that a book is not so much to *read* as to *have*. To have a book sitting there on your desk which is clearly attributable to a personal friend

satisfies many people as evidence of their participation in the public scene. Additionally, some books, under some conditions, become surprising financial assets. One is unlikely to become rich swapping books around, but every little bit helps.

D. For use as a doorstop. (Enough said.)

E. As an art form. Some books can become surprising works of art in their production and composition. Properly illustrated and illuminated, such books become very pleasant possessions. This is most apparent when the author becomes his own illustrator, as with Tom Lee, John Thomason and Frederick Remington.

F. As a cultural milestone. This is true of most scripture, but it also extends to philosophy and health – as with Decartes, Thomas Jefferson and Sigmund Freud.

G. As a training aid. Teachers normally employ books as training aids, not always wisely.

In the early 20th century, books served several other purposes. The current popular novel was a conversation piece, more entertaining to discuss than a television series or a movie. In those days, books made ideal Christmas presents, not only as expressions of affection, but as useful tools for self-improvement. And lastly, books were often aspects of courtship. Presenting one's object of affection with a really good book was often evidence of honorable intentions.

So books do have their uses, even in *the age of illiteracy*. We use them to fight a rearguard action and hope for the best.

The front office of the NRA has come up with some gratifying analyses of the election just past. We did not win them all, but we won a lot. The overall picture deserves thorough and detailed evaluation, but a couple of points are well worth considering by those of us who insist that the United States of America remain the last best hope of earth.

- After the election we now have 37 pro-gun governors against thirteen anti-gun governors.
- For attorney general we have thirteen wins against six losses.
- Of the 24 candidates for the US Senate endorsed by the National Rifle Association, we won 21.
- We posted a net gain of two pro-gun seats in the senate.
- Of the 246 candidates endorsed by the NRA for the House of Representatives, the NRA candidate won in 232 cases.
- We posted a net gain of thirteen pro-gun seats in the House.

The 108th Congress begins with the following NRA ratings: 230 *A*, twenty-one *B*, thirteen *C*, twenty-two *D*, and a 141 *F*.

The front office analysis is quite complete, and shows a generally liberty-oriented electorate.

Our political position is far from perfect, but it could be much worse. The cause of personal liberty in the United States may not be completely safe, but it is strongly in the lead, for which we may be honestly thankful on this occasion of Thanksgiving.

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Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 10, No. 14

January 2003

Joy To The World!!

'Tis the season to be jolly – so let's! The most important element of anyone's life is a sense of humor. No matter how rough the road may be, if you cannot see the joke, your life has been a waste of everybody's time. As we close out the year 2002, we have plenty to gripe about, but gallows humor is the prime virtue of the soldier, and there seems to be plenty of it hanging around. It is said by one of the church fathers (I forget who) that one of the ecstasies of the blessed is leaning over the ramparts of Heaven and enjoying the torments of the damned in Hell below. That may not be a very inspiring thought, but we cannot help likening it to our appreciation of the political discomforture of the Left. Those other people – not mentioning any names – make very miserable sounds at this time. May they indeed continue to do so!

We continue to be asked whether we prefer the straight or the arched mainspring housing on the 1911 pistol. In my early days, a good many of my mentors gave this matter a great deal of thought, but I was never convinced one way or another. I rather liked the appearance of the arched housing, but both fittings worked well for me in formal competition.

We hear of a new triumph for the old reliable in Vietnam. It appears that a sailor in a downed helicopter was able to repel boarders with splendid success, using his own personal 1911. He was almost the only man to survive the crash, but he left no less than 37 gooks flat on the field. The Internet has it that he was recommended for the Medal of Honor, but downgraded to Navy Cross. Internal copy is impossible to check out, but we can look up the awards of Navy Crosses and get the story straight. This tale, if true, is the best single episode on my list of 45-caliber triumphs. Even if it is not true, something pretty fancy must have occurred. We will get back to you.

At this season you may remember the response of the little boy who was asked to name the Four Seasons by his school teacher. His list was: Duck Season, Trout Season, Deer Season, and Christmas. Now there was a little boy being brought up right!

As we continue to deplore egregious semantics, we note thus the term "sniper" applied to the miserable jihadis of Maryland. As we have said before, a sniper is a highly trained technician. A loathly murderer should not be dignified by the term. A man who kills noncombatants at random is simply a murderer, and should be so called. It takes no particular skill to hit a man-sized target with a rifle, slow-fire, across a football field. These people should be spat upon, not dignified.

Terror is an emotion. *Terrorism* is a policy. Neither is a target nor an enemy. Let us then nominate something we can shoot at.

Reports from the field continue to point out that the shotgun is not a preferred instrument on dangerous game. A properly designed slug, such as the Brennecke, in 12 gauge and confined to ranges of 25 yards or less, can do good things on lions and bears, but a good rifle will do the job better in every case. The service shotgun is best using heavy shot, outdoors, after dark, but it is also good using bird shot indoors as house defense. It is not, however, first choice for big game.

You may recall a recent movie about the siege of Stalingrad which was entitled "*Enemy at the Gates*." In our present situation we find that the enemy is not at the gates, but rather well within them. These goblins who blew up the skyscrapers were well inside. It is time we went looking for them at their point of origin.

The modern technique of the pistol, evolved between the wars, is now fairly well understood in the right circles. Unfortunately, however, not everyone has the word, and a good deal of doctrine is being formulated without basis in practice. To say, for instance, that sighted fire is too slow, simply reveals that the speaker has not put the matter to a proper test. To say that people cannot be taught to do things correctly when under severe stress simply denies the experience of history. Theorizers can claim anything they wish, but they need not be taken as authoritative.

"In a free country you have the right to be offended anytime and any place by anything, but you do not have the right to be taken seriously."

Angus MacDonald

It has been said that if you are not a socialist by twenty, you have no heart; and if you are still a socialist at thirty, you have no head. Guru say: If you are not a curmudgeon by eighty, you have not been paying attention.

This talk of biological warfare reminds me that in Command and Staff School at Quantico we were treated to a session on the subject by a group of senior medical men from Washington. The program was kept as secret as possible, even to the elimination of texts or notes. What sticks in my mind, however, is the fact that the use of any known disease appeared inefficient to the practitioners. It was claimed that any sort of symptoms could be created by almost any sort of distribution system, but that no existing disease would be used. To be efficient, an entirely new microbe or virus would be created in a laboratory which could not be combated because it could not be identified. Nothing as simpleminded as anthrax or smallpox would be used, but rather something called "Q-27," or the like, to which all of our people would be immunized in advance. The message was pretty frightening at the time, but it seems to have been dropped by subsequent generations of lab men.

In this troubled age in which we live, we should note that a cell phone has several times been mistaken for a hand grenade, with lethal consequences. If you must use one of those things, keep it in your pocket until you are in a serene setting!

We have been reading extensively into Islam since the atrocities of September 11th. The more we read, the more difficult the problem is to understand. This Moslem doctrine has enormous appeal to a great many people, but we are defeated by the question of *why* this is so. The Koran is the Word of God, as revealed by his prophet. (In Arabic the word prophet does not signify one who foretells the future, as in English, but rather the messenger of God, in this case.) After he became convinced that he was indeed the messenger of God, Mohammad had only to consult the most high in order to get the straight word on anything, from how many times to pray to how to beat your wife (carefully so as not to break any bones). The appeal here, it seems to me, is to the universal human failing of intellectual laziness. A Moslem does not have to think about things, but only to consult the Koran. There are certain problems in this where contradictions occur, but they are usually laid to inaccurate translation from that form of Arabic which is being consulted. Since Arabic is not a precise language, the mullahs can discuss these matters at length without arriving at definite conclusions.

This is a tough faith to combat, since it simply does not admit to any valid contradiction. We strongly recommend Serge Trifkovic's new book "*The Sword of the Prophet*," to those who wish to go into the matter.

The 376 Steyr seems to be doing very well, both in Alaska and in the African bush. We also have two nice action reports on moose in Canada. There is no reason why it should not, since it is only one click below a 375 Holland. The virtue of the 376, of course, is that it can be had in Scout configuration, with attendant advantages. Its ammunition is not easy to come by, but if you load your own that is not an important matter.

We have been receiving a lot of queries recently about whether the 45–70 cartridge will suffice for buffalo. (That is *buffalo* not bison.) I have always maintained that one should opt for a heavy rifle for buffalo, if possible – something on the order of the 458 Lott or the 470 Nitro – but various case studies have come back from the field reporting that the 45–70, properly loaded, will shoot clear through a buffalo from side to side at buffalo distances, which are 30 paces or less. If the penetration is there, the damage will be done, assuming correct placement. Thus a "Co-pilot," in the hands of a good man, should be good and plenty. My own experience has not been broad enough to justify a positive opinion, but I think a 45–70 will do. I do not recommend it as first choice as a buffalo gun, but I think it will do. I look forward to further case studies from the bush.

Now that Denzel has been proposed for Hannibal, we are awaiting to see him take the role of George.

Too much is made, I believe, of the availability of the second shot. In the long lifetime of hunting, I have needed a second shot only rarely, and on those occasions I did not really need it because the beast was terminated on the first shot, though neither he nor I knew it at the time. Almost all practical rifle shooting is technically slow–fire, at least in the sporting sense. A military situation may sometimes call for a lot of shots, but this matters only in group actions. The semi–automatic Garand showed up better in the Pacific than the 03, but that was because of its superior sighting system, rather than its rapidity of fire. Fire teams are best equipped with self–loading weapons, but I do not think that an individual rifleman profits much thereby.

There are a lot of American riflemen in action now, and some have been Gunsite trained. I would appreciate any analytical reports on this subject.

Much discussion and reading suggests that surprisingly few of the people who buy and own guns do much shooting. And such shooting as they do do is confined to fixed ranges and the bench rest. This means that the practical advantages of a firearm are largely lost on the buying public. There is also the matter of price. While shotgunners often have money, riflemen, as a group, are broke. As a group, riflemen will rather buy several cheap guns than one good one, disregarding the principle that you get what you pay for. This is quite evident in the matter of the Steyr Scout. People tell me that they can get an imitation scout for less. They do not really *need* any sort of rifle, beyond that one behind the door in the kitchen, but wants and needs are not always coincident. If you have a Steyr Scout, you do not really need any other rifle, unless you specialize in elephants or prairie dogs. It would ruin the retail business, of course, if people found this out.

As of this time, *family member* Marc Heim's flying–target record of four out of five stands untouched. I think it may last a good long time.

What about the 22 for self–defense? We do not recommend it, but we certainly do not disregard it. In the first place, most defensive situations are solved by the *presence* of a gun, rather than by shooting. Nobody wants to get shot with anything, and a goblin confronted with a 22 is just as much affected as if he were looking into a larger muzzle. Secondly, defensive situations are short–range situations – arm's length, across the kitchen table, across the bedroom. At these distances, a cool hand can hit a ping pong ball with his first shot every time. If the defender confines his targets to the eye sockets, his 22 should certainly suffice to stop the fight. A good 22 is small and handy, and its ammunition is cheap, affording more practice than a center–fire. A good grade of pocket 22, fitted with a good trigger, has much to recommend it for house defense – especially when the man of the house is not at home.

Note again that the Color Code is not an alert system. It is not an index of your personal hazard, but rather a psychological crutch which enables you to overcome your natural reluctance to take possibly lethal action. I have tried to make this point regularly ever since I devised the system, but a great many people still do not get it.

Metallic rifle sights have practically gone out of existence during my lifetime, which is not a good thing. The telescope is easier to use, but it must be understood in order to achieve its full value, and it is both fragile and expensive. Since a scope is almost universal now, properly designed metallic sights are almost unobtainable. I do not know of a rifle which comes over the counter today with good iron sights. If you want them you must make them up.

Traditionally the front sight has been a bead, in civil circles. A round bead is an inexact index of precision. The top of the curve is just not a definitive measure of elevation, at any distance. Its color may be white or silver or gold or red, but though color may ease acquisition, it does not help in precision. In my mind, a proper front sight is a square post, and at my advanced age I prefer red or orange. White or silver disappears against snow, or a grey sky, or a white shirt. Gold or yellow vanishes against dry grass, tawny hide, or a khaki shirt. Red is not found in nature, and I prefer it.

The front sight on a rifle hangs out in the air where it is very vulnerable to hard knocks, and it is often shielded by a hood or by vertical flanges on either side, both of which systems can be distracting. Thus I like a broad, black ramp, as much as 3/8-inch, carrying on its centerline a 1/16 vertical red post, which is shielded by the shoulders of the ramp. This sort of front sight is protected from knocks and jars, it is quickly acquired, and quite precise. It is also unavailable, except on special order.

The proper rear iron sight is the ghost-ring, first brought to my attention almost simultaneously by Townsend Whelen and Karamojo Bell, though they did not use that term. The ghost-ring is so called because it vanishes when you look through it. It features a large ring with a thin rim, and should be mounted as close to the eye as the action type will permit. It was long held by many that the large aperture, 3/16 to a quarter of an inch, did not afford sufficient precision, but results on paper refute this. It appears that even if the shooter makes no effort to center his front sight in the ring, he will do so more or less instinctively. Whether you believe this or not, the fact remains that group sizes on paper targets are not affected by the size of the rear aperture – within limits, of course.

The rear sight should not obtrude anymore than necessary above the weapon itself. You do not want to knock it around if you can avoid it.

A ghost-ring is both quick and precise. For the ranges in which most big game is taken – 150 meters or less – it provides all the precision necessary, and it will not fog up, crack or frazzle its reticle. I strongly recommend against glass sights for dangerous game. A well arranged ghost-ring is better in all respects.

Jim West's excellent "Co-pilot" may be fitted with a proper ghost-ring, if you tell him to do so. (He may ask you what sort of telescope you want, but ignore this. The "Co-pilot" is not that sort of gun.)

It is a characteristic of this Holy War that we must surrender the initiative to the enemy, so here at the turn of the year we await his next strike. One man who pretends to be well up on the command list of the *Jihad* claims that the plans are all set and simply awaiting the signal to go. Nuclear bombs are in place in the seven major cities of the United States, and biological effluvia are prepared for release in the aftermath of the explosive disasters. This will not only kill some millions of people, but it will wreck the economy of the West and lay it bare to occupation by the Faithful. This man's paper is printed in English, so maybe it loses something in translation, but he does not tell us why the switch has not already been thrown. Everything will take place in order prescribed by Allah.

Perhaps we should take this proposition as the raving of a fanatic, but perhaps we should not dismiss it entirely. These people may not be very clever, but they are serious, and their group hatred, fueled by overwhelming cultural jealousy, does exist. *Islam* translates approximately as *submission*, and means absolute submission of the individual intellect to the transcribed pronouncements of the prophet. Thus we face this curiously amorphous enemy, which is more like malaria than an army. We can handle an army, but this ant-like tide of unreason poses a more difficult problem.

The use of murder as a political weapon is not new to the Middle East. You will remember that during the Crusades one Hassan-ben-Sabah set up the cult of the "Assassins" in a mountain hideaway from which he sent forth individual murderers on demand. He contrived an earthly paradise for his young men, complete with all those (temporary) virgins, and fueled by hashish. Thus he proved that he did control entrance to paradise and could grant it to those who obeyed him.

Certainly there are similarities.

How to proceed at this point is not clear. Saddam Hussein is a nasty tyrant, but he is not a fanatic, and his elimination will not terminate fanaticism. Osama bin Laden apparently *is* a fanatic, but his death will not stop the war either. This matter of cultural jealousy is the essence of the evil, and it must be confronted with moral and spiritual inspiration. *They* are convinced that they are better than we are, which would not be troublesome if it did not follow, from their viewpoint, that we should all be killed because of this. Several thousand American citizens, who would have enjoyed this Christmas holiday and who never heard much or thought much about any Holy War, are not here to enjoy it because of the aimless hostility of these weirdos. I see too much sorrow here, when the proper response should be rage. Admitting that two wrongs do not make a right, it will not do simply to sit here and wring our hands. We have high hopes for President Bush, but so far we see no action. So let us saddle up and get about it. Our friends have wished us a Happy and Prosperous New Year. It will be neither unless it is *victorious*, so now we wish upon all of our friends and relations a Happy and Victorious New Year.

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