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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

## Volume Eleven, 2003

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*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 1

February 2003

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## 0 Three

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Certainly we enter upon a banner year, from any aspect. One hundred years ago the Wright Brothers got us off the ground (with no help from the Prophet, may peace be upon him). And now we have walked upon the moon. Among that year's special notabilities, we have the great Springfield 03 rifle, which served as the pattern model for all such weapons to come. The "Springfield Sporter" was the proud possession of the senior big game hunter for many decades, and it was usually backed up by the innovative Mannlicher carbine, also of the year 1903. One wonders what sort of weaponry, if any, shall distinguish the year 2003. Our personal weapons have reached a state in which any conceptual improvement is hard to imagine. We have produced gadgets which will do almost anything for us that we may desire – with a couple of obvious exceptions. So we may well ask, where do we go from here?

If we can hardly improve upon our gadgetry, there are certainly many ways in which we can improve upon our performance, but improving one's performance is difficult, and the temper of the age appears to emphasize ease rather than excellence in operation. Perhaps an automatic football is the next thing we may expect, with which one may just punch in a touchdown and await results.

Without speculation we face a challenging year in 2003. May God grant that we measure up!

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We were honored to attend the Scottsdale memorial services for Joe Foss, the last great man of the twentieth century. It was an inspiring occasion, and emphasized yet again that happiness is the by-product of accomplishment. Joe Foss was the definitive high achiever of his time. Everything he did, he did better than other people. All his life he was an enthusiastic marksman, and a marvelously good shot. I knew him only slightly, but I was able to verify this. I was able to furnish him with a superb sporting rifle, to his own specifications, and it was delightful to know that he used it delightfully well.

He was a great man, an obvious refutation of the proposal that all men are created equal, and all who knew him were enriched by the experience. May he rest in peace.

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"There is no safety for honest men, except by believing all possible evil of evil men."

Edwin Burke, via Thomas Sowell

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We have been running down this great 45 action story from Vietnam, and we discover the matter to be complicated. It seems that citation writers do not have to be especially competent in the details of the subject examined. The hero on the downed helicopter accordingly decks between one and 37 gooks, depending upon whose story you take. We will keep after this.

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We were amused to see a news caption from the San Francisco Chronicle referring to the Steyr Scout as "a rare and expensive rifle made in Austria." I suppose these people refer to a Porsche as a "rare and expensive automobile made in Germany."

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We all agree that every proper household must contain a 22. A rural household should properly have two such. What sort of 22 is a good subject for discussion. I tend to think first about a light, short, handy rifle, featuring a clean, light trigger pull and a good set of ghost-ring sights. If it is to be used principally as a trainer for the young, it should probably be a single-shot, though this is not a requirement. If a repeater is selected, my first choice would be for the classic Marlin 39 levergun, in a short-barrel version. Prewar production is preferable, both for quality of workmanship and absence of the questionable cross-bolt "safety". Any of the good bolt-action repeaters should do fully as well, but the levergun is a touch neater. A combination over/under 410/22 has much to recommend it, if you can find a good example.

Any of the good 22 handguns will give good service, but high quality is important. There are plenty of junk 22s around, but they do not suffice. Most of the self-loading 22s of good quality are too large and heavy for best service, but they will do well for range practice.

The classic house-22 was the Colt Woodsman. In my youth everybody had one, though there were more six-inch models in evidence than four-inch. The Woodsman was superseded by Bill Ruger's excellent version of the same weapon. It was every bit as good as the Woodsman, and it cost less. Ruger's aluminum Single-Six, in Peacemaker configuration, is an especially fine house gun, if you can find one with a good trigger, but maybe the best of the lot in theory is the Walther PPK and its clones. This is a self-loader, of course, and thus regarded askance by various sorts of regulators. It does not usually feature good sights, but that can be corrected. The new model Walther, called simply PP, is improved in many ways.

We must bear in mind that the 22 rimfire weapon must not be dry fired, lest its firing pin burr the mouth of the chamber. (A piece so abused may be easily de-burred, however, with a good quality penknife.)

I wish to point out firmly that I do not recommend the 22, either rifle or pistol, as a primary house defense gun. As a couple of readers have suggested, it will do for lack of anything better, in cool hands, but its primary purpose is not combat shooting. It is a recreational and utilitarian device to be used for the training of the young and the leaning down of the varmint population. Also it is a very satisfactory pot shooter in jurisdictions where small game may be legally taken for the table. For whatever purpose, you must have one. There over the kitchen door it is the evidence of a well run household.

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The surest evidence of celebrity is being misquoted in the public press. We must bear that in mind.

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According to George Mason, all mature American citizens are members of the militia. A well regulated militia should be composed of people qualified with the current individual arm of the United States services. This is the M16. Accordingly, everybody should be checked out with this weapon. The fact that it is capable of fully automatic fire may be a horrible idea to the hoplophobes, but I guess they will just have to face up to that.

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"Political correctness is the oppression of the majority by the minority." Who said that?

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Question: How many true believers does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer: None. Allah will take care of the matter.

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It has long been clear that when most shooters use the word "accuracy," they are more likely to mean "shootability," which is not the same thing. Absolute accuracy can only be determined by means beyond the reach of most casual gun owners, but some pieces are indeed easier to hit with than others. Most factory arms are more accurate, in the technical sense, than all but a few shooters can appreciate, but various good examples are indeed more shootable. I have had occasion to present rifles to two different celebrities, who upon practice reported back that their weapons were strikingly accurate. The feature I think they were appreciating was trigger-action. A really good trigger, which breaks lightly and cleanly without apparent

motion, is the greatest single element of shootability. Such a trigger comes native on the Blaser R93, because it has no sear. However, the same action can be achieved on conventional triggers by careful mechanical effort. The first series of Steyr Scouts came over the counter with triggers set up at the factory to my standards. Various legalists subsequently decided that any trigger under about four-pounds weight constitutes a liability hazard. A good man can do very well with a poor trigger-action, but not as well as he might. This is especially obvious from unsupported positions. On a bench-rest it hardly matters.

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"The love of violence is inherent in the human (male) spirit. The attempt to train it out of boys is both futile and immoral."

#### The Guru

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I believe that rifle stocks are more useful on the short side. The proliferation of rear-mounted telescope sights, which is the primary cause of Kaibab eye, has led gunmakers to the erroneous idea that a long rifle stock will keep the glass out of your eye. It won't. The rearward (ocular) lens of a telescope sight should ride no farther to the rear than the rear curve of the trigger-guard. With the Scoutscope, of course, that ocular lens rides forward of the magazine well and avoids the problem entirely. The Scoutscope is thus also quicker to acquire.

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A correspondent informs us that he can always print a cloverleaf with his pistol from 25 yards, off-hand. Such undiscovered mastery must be kept hidden lest this man be discovered by the enemy.

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What is all this excitement about vaccination? In my youth everybody was vaccinated – most of us twice – and nobody ever fell ill on this account. And we did eliminate smallpox, which is a very evil affliction, almost entirely. Not being vaccinated because you might show a bad result is rather like not wearing a seatbelt because you might want to get out of your car in a hurry, a dangerous solution to an almost non-existent problem.

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With all these "peacemaking" troops wandering around in blue helmets, we should point out that the classic American Peacemaker is the legendary Colt Single-Action Army revolver. The origin of that nickname is impossible to ascertain at this date, but it does indeed fit the subject. A fully armed society is a peaceful society, in largest measure. Scholarly investigations into the character of the "Wild West" discover that while individual animosity was occasionally settled in barroom brawls with sidearms, the streets of the towns were conspicuously peaceful, especially after dark, which is certainly more than you can say about what we have today.

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To surrender one's personal weapon is to invite disaster. This has been obvious for so long and so often that there is probably a Greek word for the practice. If called upon to give up your gun by a superior force, you are faced with an evil choice, but if you retain it you at least retain your dignity. One thinks of the Fancher train, wherein the emigrants were assured that if they dropped their guns they would not be harmed. One thinks of Piet Retief, who was told that he and his people could not enter the presence of the king in possession of their arms. One thinks of the German Jews under Hitler – and one thinks of British street crime today.

In contrast one thinks of Hartmann, the all time high scoring fighter-pilot who, when asked to leave his pistol outside when being awarded his medal by Hitler, declaimed that "If the Führer doesn't trust me, I do not want his medal."

"Those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it."

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Word from our man in Australia tells us that the current prime minister regards the American "gun culture" with horror. He is actively determined to disarm the Australian people, and dismally enough they seem inclined to accept his leadership. A hoplophobe is one who is neurotically obsessed with the idea that weapons

possess a will of their own, and thus if people do not have access to firearms they will not be bad people. There have been bad people around for a lot longer than there have been guns. Morals are not a matter of mechanics.

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It is hardly in line with the gun business, but we have been increasingly fascinated by this curious *Hydrurga* beast of the Antarctic rim. This is known as the "leopard seal," and as a voracious, one-thousand pound carnivore, he can be a pretty serious matter. A recent biological report maintains that the several attacks by *Hydrurga* upon people was motivated "more out of curiosity than aggressiveness." Just so. A carnivore is always curious about anything that may be good to eat – or maybe the beast simply wants to know your name, rank and serial number.

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It is amusing to learn of these translation machines which now propose to solve all the world's communication problems. Years ago we were told of one which, when called upon to translate "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" into Russian, came up with "The ghost is ready but the meat is raw." There are still things beyond the reach of technology.

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And now the Steyr Scout has been discovered to be an "assault rifle" in California. Before we moved thence we were under the impression that California was about to be washed into the sea. We made it just in time.

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One custom gunmaker of stature has commented to me that the Steyr Scout has practically put him out of business. Naturally I am sorry to hear this, but I sought in the SS to achieve a product which would be ready for almost any task out-of-the-box without modification or addition; and that, of course, injures the customizer to the extent that it succeeds. The SS is not perfect – nothing is – but it is up there above 90 percent, and the fact that it is not available in left-hand version does not distress five-sixths of a population. The SS stands at the top of the list, as I hoped it would, for those who need or desire a general-purpose rifle. Its acceptance is hindered by the fact that most gun buyers do not use their weapons afield enough to appreciate excellence when they see it. So be it. Time will tell.

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We hear that the Arabs missed a 757 on takeoff with two separate surface-to-air missiles. Thank God for the Koran!

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A good friend of ours included the following passage in his Christmas letter. "As a PEO we outsource human resource functions and risk management for other companies." If this sentence had been translated into Greek I think I would understand it better – and I never studied Greek. This man is a Gunsite graduate and a good shot, and when he resorts to newspeak he shows how far I have been left behind.

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We hear that Fred Wells, the distinguished rifle designer of Prescott, Arizona, is now producing a pilot version of the "700 BMG Improved," for those who have need of such a device. The line forms on the right.

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We were asked by a correspondent to compare the stopping power of the 45-70 to that of the 30-06. Stopping power is too abstruse a subject for technical analysis, despite the many attempts, but I would estimate the 45-70 to be slightly superior on dangerous game at very short range (40 paces and under). I believe, however, that any difference is too slight to matter, assuming proper bullets in both cartridges. The 06, of course, is a much more versatile cartridge. It will operate with practical efficiency at ranges beyond those of the 45. Since dangerous game is normally taken up close, the superior practical range of the 06 may not be significant here, but it is a general-purpose cartridge, whereas today the 45-70 is a specialist tool. In Jim West's "Co-pilot" the 45-70 is a jewel for the big game guide, but there are not many of those. In any case, if you put the bullet in the right place, either round will do the job.

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The bad news: Only 13 percent of American young men know where Iraq is.

The good news: Most of the them are US Marines.

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Rumor has it that Remington is re-introducing a version of their excellent 600 carbine series. What is even better news is that they are introducing it in the excellent 350 Remington Short Magnum cartridge, which was a direct ancestor of the 376 Steyr. I have used the 350 SM extensively, and I have taken not only deer, but moose, zebra and lion with it. It is a very fine medium cartridge, and if makers do not understand that, it is their loss.

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For people who are concerned about lead spray from steel targets, we point out that spray is distributed in a circular pattern perpendicular to the angle of impact. It goes up, down and sideways regardless of the aspect of the target. (You can test this by cardboard shrouding if you wish.) Thus nothing much is accomplished by slanting the target at minor angles. Eventually, of course, you will achieve ricochets, but target display will suffer.

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In a lifetime of experimentation, we have discovered a great deal that newcomers are discovering again. One has but to ask.

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Have you heard of the Denver Park fox? It seems that a bunch of polypragmatic theraphiles (now *there* is something to bite on!) discovered a red fox apparently marooned on floating ice in a park lake situated in downtown Denver. Wild alarm resulted. All sorts of government agencies were alerted and people charged around madly in all directions seeking community action for the rescue of the fox. After the uproar died down, it was discovered that this particular fox made a practice of sunning himself daily on floating ice in the park when it was available. He had the situation entirely in hand, which is more than you can say for the bambiists.

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Crocodiles continue to be a hazard to human life in Australia, as well as the South Pacific. Their preferred prey, as you might suppose, is the tourist. In today's world, indigent tourists wander hither and yon with their backpacks and their sleeping bag totally devoid of bush knowledge.

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During the holidays just past we were depressed by an occasional whiff of the anti-Christ, which we detected from time-to-time during the festivities. Christmas is a *Christian* holiday – see to the title – and the United States is a *Christian* nation, despite the efforts of the post-moderns to deny this. The Founding Fathers – those dead white males – were quite clear about this, and to the extent that we do not accept it we are unworthy of the nation they founded. Tolerance may be a virtue, but it is not unmitigated. Tolerance of sin is not a virtue. It may not be sinful to be un-Christian, but it is a start.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 2

3 February 2003

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## Mid-Winter

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We returned from the winter meeting of the Board of Directors of the National Rifle Association morally and emotionally reenforced. Liberty-loving Americans just squeaked by in the last election, and our victory was attributed by our adversaries to the activities of the NRA. The United States of America now constitutes the only free nation on earth, and it does so because of the US Constitution, and that is because of the Bill of Rights to that Constitution, which has meaning because of the Second Amendment thereto. Thus the National Rifle Association, of which you are a member, is the worldwide bastion of human liberty. Think that over and congratulate yourself!

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The Brits have succeeded in disarming themselves, resulting in the predictable explosion of street crime. In Britain today, a citizen who fights back to protect himself from assault by a goblin is in serious trouble, but the goblin is not. It is hard to believe, but the socialist solution to this situation is to increase the severity of the penalties for self-defense. It is proposed that what used to get you five years in the slammer should now get you ten. So much for the "land of hope and glory, mother of the free."

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We are now off to the SHOT Show, at which we may discover new items suitable for the personal delectation of a free people. I am hard pressed to predict anything new along this line, since we all have our guns already and they do just fine. However I hope to be surprised.

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I wonder if anyone can remember that an essential feature of fairgrounds and amusement parks in pre-war America was a shooting gallery. That was a place where young men could show off to their dates by popping metal reactive targets, stationary and in motion, with a 22 rifle, and thereby to win toy animals. I would not be surprised to learn that there are people today who simply cannot believe that such a thing ever existed, but we were better people then, in various ways. Much has happened to us since then.

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Inspired as we were by the ceremonies connected with the passing of Joe Foss, our mighty American hero, we had occasion to browse once again over his autobiography. In classic fashion, his adolescent rite of passage was the acquisition of his own personal 22, and to be able to pack it afield unsupervised. He did not pass the test. One of those ceramic power-line insulators proved too much of a temptation, and he splattered it. *As a penalty, he was grounded for one year.* That brand new 22, after cleaning and greasing, was to sit in Daddy's closet for 365 days. The concept of personal responsibility was driven permanently home. Can you remember how long a year was when you were fourteen? This punishment was vastly more severe than any sort of flogging, and its element in character formation cannot be overemphasized. Every aspect of this tale illustrates the essence of the American rural tradition. Joe Foss made the point with forceful clarity in his own words.

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Several people have written to me, in my capacity as a director of the National Rifle Association, to complain about the fact that the Board of Directors did not vote to name the new headquarters building in Virginia after Harlon Carter. This was misconstrued by some as disrespect for the great man, but it was nowise the case. As it happens, the Board of Directors is not empowered by its Articles of Incorporation to take this action, which must be done by a vote of the membership at large. This point should have been clarified in the minutes, but those who complain should take the trouble to inform themselves on matters about which they complain.

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Plans are afoot for the founding of a museum and library to include the collections of Jeff Cooper and John Gannaway – plus others. An operation of this sort calls for a foundation and a curator, as well as an appropriate architectural structure. If you have any ideas, send them in.

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We note that some East Coast English professor is promoting the notion that all hunting of any kind should be forbidden, not because it endangers wildlife, but because it is immoral. Naturally we do not agree with his position on morality – he is entitled to his opinion on that – *but we feel our morality is not his business*, as long as the practice to which he objects does not injure him. (This matter is well covered in "*The Federalist Papers*," as well as in de Tocqueville's "*Democracy in America*." But this again is a professor of English, rather than of History or Philosophy. From a different viewpoint, I might point out that I hold the practice of sodomy to be ridiculous, repulsive and blasphemous, but I do not feel that I have any right to rule against it.)

The whole problem of public morality in a free society is a deep one, not to be bandied about by political lightweights.

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Basic rules of gunhandling should be standardized as common knowledge throughout the world by now, but there are good many people who feel the need to complicate them or modify them in some way. This subject may be cleaned up if we can get the NRA "front office" to act upon it. Inertia interferes, however. We are working on it.

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The exploits of Seaman Thomas, in his downed helicopter in Vietnam, have given rise to a mountain of irresponsible tale telling. We have promised to go into this. As of now, we have wound up with only a mass of rumor. We would like to put ultimate faith in this man's Navy Cross citation, but that citation was written by a man who did not give the matter sufficient thought. Be that as it may, we congratulate Seaman Thomas for doing the right thing with his 1911 at the right time.

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If you approve of the way President Bush is handling his daunting tasks, write and tell him so. He sees the press, just as you do, and it must be depressing for him to be told only of the enemy viewpoint. If you support him, tell him so. Every little bit helps.

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People who write about the "comeback of the 1911" do not seem to be aware that it has never been away. The unsatisfactory nature of the M92 pistol and its ammunition have now become so evident that even the Pentagon has been forced to take note. New requirements are being set forth, and new criteria are being established for a pistol which will be essentially a slightly modified version of the 1911. This development has been due in some measure to Gunsite influence on Marine Corps training programs via Col. Bob Young. Every little bit helps

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Barry Miller, our man in Africa, tells us of a recent episode down in the Cape Region in which a girl jogger ran into problems with an ostrich. This bird, as you probably know, is distinctly territorial and can become very touchy if he feels he is being encroached upon. He cannot peck, because his beak is made of leather rather than horn, but he butts with his breast bone and follows up with his well-equipped feet. In this case, the object of his resentment "refused to be a victim" and counterattacked, strangling the bird with her bare hands. As is made clear from her name (Bezuidenhout, of Boer distinction), the young lady was of the old time Afrikaaner persuasion. Those Dutch girls may not have free access to firearms, but perhaps they do not need them.

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May we venture to say that it is the man, rather than his nail clippers, that hijacks the airplane. As we have sometimes mentioned, it is the criminal, not his gadgetry, which commits the crime. It may be, of course, that this idea is too complicated for a bureaucrat.



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We are given to understand that *family member* John Milius is thinking of going to work on a hagiography of the late, great Joe Foss. We hope that this is true, since we have been privileged to discuss air combat tactics with Joe Foss at some length and I may be able to expound upon the subject in proper fashion. Everybody knows that Joe Foss destroyed 26 enemy aircraft in the skies over Guadalcanal, but fewer realize that Joe's score tallied a third of the entire kill record of his squadron. Numerical scores are interesting, but they do not tell the whole story. Joe Foss' individual combat skill was remarkable. With luck we may be able to get part of that story on film for all to see.

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It seems that the Russians are pigging out the Jihadis in Chechnya. That is to say they are polluting the bodies of dead Moslems with swine blood, denying the deceaseds' place in paradise. Theoretically this may work. Time will tell.

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The nature of combat changes with technology. Today's infantry actions are mainly conducted at night, and this serves to emphasize the utility of the handgun. Thus we need a good handgun and men who can use it well, and the Marine Corps seems to be picking up on that. Slightly tidied-up 1911s are being issued to people who are designated for direct action, and these people are being exposed to fairly advanced training. Well, we have developed the answer, and we know how to impart it. All of us who have participated in the practical pistol revolution may take satisfaction in that.

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The NRA winter meeting was held at Corpus Christi, Texas, which is an interesting place – pretty far off to one side. Local historians tell us that this was one of the stop-offs of Cabeza de Vaca, who was put off from the Narvaez expedition in Florida and hiked all the way to Mexico City. This is a long hike, and in the early 16th century it was definitely fraught. It is one of the great adventure stories of all time, and should be more widely retold than it is.

We learned at Corpus that while male hunting in the US is somewhat declining, female hunting is on a definite upswing. I guess the decline is simply due to the steady urbanization of our society. The countryside is an unfamiliar venue for most of our young men; but as to the girls, I see this as a manifestation of inverted *machismo*. ("Anything you can do I can do better.") Which is sort of silly, but nonetheless pervasive.

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The best Christmas exhortation we heard about was delivered by a task force commander on ready status in the Near East, as follows: "Peace on earth, to men of good will. All others stand by!"

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All this wringing of hands about the prospect of war in Mesopotamia occupies too much of the attention of the media. War is a bad thing, but when it is thrust upon us, our proper course is to pursue it as best we may. On the tube we see pictures of young men shipping out, while their dependents sob rather than cheer. This is poor propaganda. You may get killed in a war, but you may also get killed on the highway, at a convenience store, or by falling into the Grand Canyon. The battle gives a man his only real chance to prove himself to himself. Without the battle experience, he may never discover whether he measures up to the standards of his forefathers.

I know something about this personally, having fought through two major wars from before the beginning until after the end. Never during those experiences was I aware of any feeling of sacrifice. On one occasion my detachment was assigned to a mission which, according to our skipper, was almost certain to get us all killed. I remember that I was dismayed, but not disheartened. As I recall, we felt neither fear nor idealistic patriotism. Nobody talked about either safety or democracy. We felt only a spirited determination to handle a job in such a way as to wreak maximum destruction upon the enemy as long as we could. I have only my own experience to go on, but I do not think that men fight for ideals. They fight in order to crystallize their self-respect by doing a lethal job more expertly than anyone else.

Fear is undignified. We cannot avoid it, but we certainly can conceal it – and avoid discussing it.

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There are those who maintain that the English language is "evolving." Perhaps, but I see it rather as *degenerating*. Any author who thinks he can improve upon the usage of Theodore Roosevelt or Winston Churchill has much to prove. As I see it, the essence of good English is clarity. This does not depend upon vocabulary, but rather upon perceptivity. The versatility of the English language permits a truly artistic flow of thought. If you use it right, you make your meaning absolutely clear. I sometimes run across a piece of prose that is so well put that I wish that I had said that first. The author gets a gold star.

The only way one can achieve full competence in English is by reading good English, and lots of it. In the age of television this becomes increasingly unlikely.

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If one is to hold a war, Mesopotamia is an ideal place to hold it. If you wreck the place very little will be lost. I can say this from personal experience, since I spent most of a summer in and around the Persian Gulf. Not only is it a poor place to live, it is not even a good place to visit, apart from the sport fishing, which is excellent. I recall that it is hot – unpleasantly hot. Having done one staff tour in the summer in the Persian Gulf, and another in the winter in the Aleutians, I can say that whichever choice one makes of these two venues, he will shortly come to prefer the other. Mid-winter is the best time for Iraq, as anyone who has ever been there can tell you.

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On the matter of going to war, we recall that at the beginning of World War II a bunch of about twenty Shoshones showed up at a recruiting station in Montana with their 30–30s. They had heard that there was a war on and they wanted to get into it as quickly as possible. That may not be the Spirit of '76, but it is indeed the spirit.

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We are informed that the retail markup on firearms is 400 percent. An item which costs one hundred dollars to produce will be listed at four hundred dollars over-the-counter. Of course, markup is the life of trade, but one's annoyance may be eased by the knowledge that a good gun is a lifetime purchase. You only have to buy it once. Thus a cheap gun is nearly always a mistake. Much better to save your money and buy a good one the first time.

Note the following paraphrase from John Ruskin:

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

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We are told, to our considerable amazement, that the Jihadi chief who was assassinated in Yemen from the air was electronically identified by way of a facial portrait. If this is true, it means that the picture of a human being may be fed into a machine which may then direct a missile to his destruction. I get this by way of "authentic rumor." Somehow I hope it is not true.

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Having been involved with marksmanship all my life, I am made uneasy by the idea that personal marksmanship may no longer be relevant to modern war. Today the rocket propelled grenade bids to replace the rifle, and with an RPG you do not have to hit an enemy, you just have to plant a bomb in his close vicinity. At present these gadgets are too cumbersome to replace the infantry rifle, but miniaturization may eventually alter that. This is very bad news from several directions, but because of this 21st century *Age of the Wimp*, it may be indeed the wave of the future.

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"The only reason that the Scout rifle is considered rare is because the factory doesn't want to sell it. If they did, they might advertise it in gun magazines. (A stunning concept.) I see ads

for their standard rifles all the time, which does not spark any interest on my part, but judging from their efforts they seem to be ashamed that the Scout even exists. This is a most puzzling turn of events, as the SS is the holy grail of rifles."

*Family Member* Randy Umbs

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Our *family member* and combat counselor Pat Rogers is in a position to keep us informed on the subject of infantry combat, as now in operation. He informs us that people in Marine Corps Special Operations should be issued two pistols, one to train with and the other to take to war. So far this policy has not actually been implemented, but highly recommended.

Pat has been running down the matter of the effectiveness of the 223 cartridge in combat, and has unearthed some fascinating tactical examples. He concludes that the poodle shooter is a pretty good stopper, if used at arm's length and with the proper ammunition. All sorts of ammunition is now available for issue to the troops, and some is much better than others. (I gather that people are paying very little attention to the Hague Convention at this time.) Far too much rumor, or perhaps embellishment, is involved in this sort of study, but fortunately Pat Rogers is a careful scholar.

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At this time of general consternation, we recall the statement of our late friend and neighbor Colonel Bud Reynolds, USMC: "Sure it's a lousy war, but it's the only war we've got."

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 3

March 2003

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## The Ides Of March

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Of all sorts of personal possessions, the personal firearm is the most nearly unique. This is because of its permanence. When you have acquired a good gun, there is no real need ever to acquire another – except possibly for replacement in case of loss. This makes the marketing of firearms a frustrating enterprise. Except when dealing with adolescents, the marketer must aim at making a prospective purchaser unhappy with what he already has. You wear out clothes and automobiles, you drink up wines, you shoot up ammunition, but your gun is still there, just as desirable and efficient as it ever was, assuming that you chose it wisely in the first place.

So the annual SHOT Show is pretty hard to take seriously. It is presumed to display what is new and superior in the way of guns. But trying to promote something new just because it is new is poor doin's, as we mountain men used to say. I saw a good many new guns at the SHOT Show, but none of them made me unhappy with what I've got. Some, of course, made for interesting discussion.

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The Winchester Short Magnums are being enthusiastically pushed, though I cannot see why. A shortened bolt throw is indeed a minor advantage, but not sufficient to complicate production.

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We were treated to a great display of 45 autos, most of which were very nice. Since the commencement of the Practical Shooting Revolution, we have opined that all the 1911 really needs are a trigger that you can manage, sights that you can see and a dehorning job. In addition, one might propose a deactivated grip safety (!), a lanyard loop, a bobbed hammer, and press-fitted stock screw sockets. One thing the original pistol does *not* need is a recoil spring guide, which is now a popular feature of new construction. (It is curious to see a certain amount of trouble undertaken to achieve a slight step backward.) Most of the new 45s feature an extrusion on the lower end of the grip safety, which does not work for me, though it may for you. (Fortunately the grip safety is easily pinned shut.)

As if to emphasize that pistols are for *having*, rather than for *shooting*, the Colt people are presenting a World War I replica, an exact duplication of the original 1911.

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Leading candidate for the *2003 Waffepösselhaft Award* is the 45 Short cartridge, introduced by Glock. We need a short 45 the way we need a three-wheel Ferrari. But I have no doubt that people will buy this item, if for no other reason than that it is new.

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I examined the Walther P22, which is indeed a nice little item. In some respects it is not quite as good as its ancestor the PPK, but for the rural household which needs a 22 at the ready and does not already have one, this is an attractive piece. (Let it not be said that I advocate the 22 LR cartridge for house defense. It is certainly not our first choice, but it will do when managed by a cool hand. I maintain that the best weapon for household defense is a self-loading 12-gauge shotgun, but such is obviously clumsy to pack around.)

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Of all the weapons displayed at the SHOT Show, the only one featuring a perfect trigger out-of-the-box was, as usual, the Blaser 93. It seems to me that most shooters, buyers or sellers, are not much interested in

triggers. I can only assume that most shooters do not shoot very much, at least not today. The trigger on the M1 Garand that I was issued at Basic School had a cleaner release than anything I saw at SHOT, excepting the Blaser and the 22 Match rifles. Jim West puts a pretty good trigger on his "Co-pilot," and the Steyr Scout trigger can be tuned to perfection by a skillful smith. Some of the Scouts came from the factory with superb triggers, but more recent examples did not.

The Remington people have seen fit to reintroduce their excellent 350 Remington Short Magnum cartridge in a new rifle called the 673. I fancied the 600/660 series carbines for my own use, but a surprising number of people seem to think that they "looked funny" – as if that matters. The action on the 600s was compressed to the rear, calling for a swept forward bolt handle which was ergonomically sound, if distressing to the esthete. The new gun is redesigned, making it slightly longer overall. If you have one of the old ones, keep it. The Model 673 retains the odd "Halloween" open-sight system with its pumpkin foresight, but this arrangement is readily scraped off.

All rifles of this series fit a squared-off thumb safety, which may be a bother unless it is rounded off. The proper place for the thumb is on the starboard side of the rifle, as anyone who has shot the short-stocked Garand can tell you. And the light-weight 350s do kick briskly.

I have fancied the Remington 350 Short Magnum since its inception, having now taken a deer, nilgai, wildebeeste, zebra, and my one and only lion with it. It is a superb cartridge for Alaska and for the African bushveldt, and now you can buy factory ammunition for it again. (It may not be quite up to the 376 Steyr, but the difference is slight, and the ammunition is easier to come by.)

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Standing out amongst new handguns is the "Dino Pistol" of Smith & Wesson. This is a gigantic 5-shot wheel gun taking the 500 Smith & Wesson cartridge. It is so big and heavy that it reintroduces the job description of "gun bearer." It is to pistols what the 700 Nitro cartridge is to rifles – an exercise in the possible without any consideration of what might be desirable, needful or necessary. I bet it will sell like Big Macs.

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We noticed no less than three manufacturers featuring replicas of the 1851 Colt Navy pistol. This, of course, was one of the arms that "won the West," but I think it did so largely because it was war surplus at a time when the need for a reliable, defensive handgun was particularly felt. So you can buy a new one now, as a training aid for a history class.

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The Moors seem to be ahead in the Holy War at this time, at least they have succeeded in making domestic air travel inconvenient and ridiculous. It might make some sense to regard all Moors at airports with suspicion. At least it would avoid subjecting obviously upperclass ladies to random body search. It is clear that you can't make a fool of anyone unless he submits to it. And we, as a nation, are certainly submitting to it.

Not Ted Nugent, however. Whether you like his stagecraft or not, you must respect his spirit. When confronted with this foolishness at the airport, he just threw back his ticket and left the scene.

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Sitting around at the SHOT Show, we were impressed again with the psychotic requirement to lie. Perhaps the name for this should be called "Munchausenism." Victims will come up to you and relate experiences which are not only impossible, but *obviously* impossible, and then expect you to accept what they say as truth. What would you say of a man who told you with a straight face that he was attacked by a rattlesnake which swallowed the monkey wrench with which he defended himself? That sort of thing. And, of course, the shooters get into marksmanship. I think I know a good deal about marksmanship, at least enough to understand long-range trajectory. But people afflicted with *Munchausenism* apparently do not care whether they are believed or not, as long as they make the outrageous statement. I once had a correspondent tell me about how he had dropped a moose located on the other side of a lake. The lake could be measured, and this positively established the range. I asked this gent how far he held over the moose to achieve the hit, since at

that range with his cartridge we could anticipate between 18 and 20 feet of bullet drop. Thus it would seem that if he held at dead on, as he claimed, he missed by about 18 feet. This made my correspondent mad. "I know what I know!" he said.

I have lived a long and an adventurous life, as I sometimes point out, and I find that the unvarnished truth is amazing enough for anybody.

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Riding around in a wheelchair at airports, as I often do now, I overhear some pretty amazing comments. One of the best from an oblivious cell phone user: "I can't talk now, I'm on the phone."

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At the Beretta display we were shown an item which might be termed a "pseudo thumper," designed and demonstrated by our good friend Ulrich Zedrosser, late of Steyr Mannlicher. It was a very neat, two-handed pistol, which could be developed into a general-purpose infantry arm if it were made to take a powerful cartridge such as the 44 Auto-Mag. As it is, the weapon will take only pistol cartridges, which severely limits its usefulness, in my opinion. Herr Zedrosser pointed out that the action would need to be reworked in order to take the pressure of a big cartridge, since now it is a pure blowback. That could be done. And if I were the boss, it would be done. Reports from Afghanistan reemphasize the desirability of the thumper concept.

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As of this point, I know of no stopping failures on the part of a major-caliber rifle cartridge. I suppose there have been some, but if they exist, they are certainly rare. A 30-06, or a 308, or a 7.92x57 in the torso stops the fight. The fact that it kicks too hard for comfortable use by the Moor-in-the-street is good news for us.

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The Steyr Scout, though it is clearly the best thing of its kind, is not selling well because it is not being promoted well; and also possibly because not enough shooters shoot enough to appreciate its excellence. The Blaser R93, on the other hand, is selling splendidly worldwide. This is probably because of a number of features which, while not critically attractive, are noteworthy to a non-shooter. The multi-caliber option is apparently saleable. If one goes far afield he is much more likely to need a spare telescope than a different cartridge. The left-hand option is attractive, though a proper scenario to appreciate this seems unlikely. The straight-pull feature is most attractive over-the-counter, though the need for it in the field is not easy to anticipate. The nifty takedown box is a very fine feature, but the important thing about the Blaser is its superb trigger action, which, as we have said, does not seem to interest many people.

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As a specialty gun, Jim West's "Co-pilot" stands out. It has now done superior work three times in Africa on buffalo, and *Shooting Master* Rich Wyatt plans to take his to Alaska this summer for *Grossbär*. Of course the 45-70 cartridge of the "Co-pilot" is what does the killing. You can get more power if you ask for it, but the extraordinary handiness of the carbine is what makes it a gem.

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At the SHOT Show, our friend Ashley Emerson reported that he had done a hog neatly with his *kukri* (pronounced cookery). There is something quite charming about that knife pattern. I guess it is ergonomics, though I really do not know what that word means.

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I am bemused by the continuous attempt on the part of various commentators to establish "a link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda." Somehow I do not see a problem there. When I was in school, there was no difficulty in establishing a link between the Stanford football team, the Stanford band, and the Stanford faculty. They were all "sons of the Stanford red." All these Moors are card-carrying Moors.

So the wise and the powerful are still looking for a connection between various sorts of Moors. When I was a lad I assumed there was a connection between Admiral Nagumo and General Yamashita. They did not wear the same uniform, but they fought for the same divine emperor. There was a link.

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As we have mentioned before, the "accuracy" of a rifle combination is a synthesis of its maximum radial dispersion, its "shootability," its ammunition quality, its sighting system, and its trigger action. When I was working for a Philippine tycoon, he complained to me that his newly acquired Steyr SSG was "inaccurate." This amazed me because those rifles are all made one way and I did not see how one example could be radically different from another. But my boss complained that his rifle would not stay on a copy of *Time* magazine at 50 meters. I was taken flat aback. When I asked what ammunition he had been using, he said that it was Filipino GI 7.62, so we sent up to Manila for a couple of boxes of Hirtenberger 308 Match. The longest range we could reach at the hacienda was 279 long steps. At that range the rifle put its first five shots into a ring the size of a big hen's egg.

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Reports from the field tell us that wildlife is gaining upon the eco-tourist in both Africa and America. The nitwits are increasingly wandering the wild. In my youth it was generally true that only people who could saddle a horse and load a rifle were likely to be found in the boondocks. Today too many people who should properly stay at home and watch television feel that they can wander around in the wild, much as they would at Disneyland. We ran across this as far back as our first trip to Okavango, where a family of European tourists pitched their camp right out where they should not. This country was well stocked with lions and leopards, to say nothing of a wounded buffalo that was being tracked after a mishap on the morning hunt. And here we had a man and his wife and three youngsters of ten years and younger romping around chasing butterflies. This drove our host and outfitter right up the wall, but these tourists were perfectly legal, and there was no way he could run them off.

So far this year there have been a couple of dozen gruesome mishaps in the southern African bush. They were not "accidents," since they were quite intentional on the part of the beasties. The bambiists multiply, and they are the natural prey of "the beasts beyond the fire." I guess this is simply an aspect of *the Age of the Wimp*. I am sorry about the victims, but I simply cannot view with much alarm.

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I cannot accept the idea that the girls really want to be placed in harm's way. I think they want to have it both ways, which has always been difficult. Placing a woman deliberately in harm's way is gross, and cannot be countenanced by ladies or gentlemen. Ladies and gentlemen, however, are endangered species.

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I have heard it rumored that the Color Code now being fostered by the security department originated here at Gunsite. Perhaps. But what we teach at Gunsite does not have to do with danger, but rather with readiness to take decisive, remedial action. These are not the same.

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To the best of my knowledge and belief, the slowfire rifle record was established some ten years ago in Sweden. This was a 10-shot, 300-meter possible on the standard 100mm X-ring, fired from unsupported prone. This may have been equaled since in practice, but not in a recognized match.

With the handgun I once saw Elden Carl print a four-inch, five-shot group at 100 yards, with a 44 Magnum. This was duly witnessed and the target has been preserved.

The top quick-fire Magnum pistol effort was the only recorded possible on the Running Hog Course. Ten-inch bull, accelerated 15 to 30 yards, three strings of four shots each, starting holstered. This course is not often run, and it may have been equaled since, though as a possible it cannot have been surpassed.

The highest quick-fire rifle score was achieved by Marc Heim at Whittington – four out of five flying clay birds going straight away. Now *there* is something to shoot for!

I cannot set myself up as the official world scorekeeper in these matters, but we have to start somewhere. Let the ball begin!

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Reports from the front say that our big logistical problem is battery compatibility. All our fancy gadgetry operates on batteries, and all the gadgets take different sizes. What works your gunsight does not fit your gasmask, and so on. Probably we need the new military rank of "Battery Specialist."

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"Almost any plan at all, carried out today, beats the best plan in the world, carried out tomorrow."

Patton

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 4

April 2003

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## Springtime In The Boonies

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Spring is trying to come on a little early this year, which is pleasant enough, but we hope it does not inhibit further necessary rainfall. The Southwest has been drying up now for several years, and it will take more than one wet winter to repair the damage. We hope for the best.

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We have referred to the new giant 50 caliber revolver by Smith & Wesson as the "Dino pistol." The word dino in Greek means approximately "terrible," as with dinosaur (terrible lizard), dinopithecus (terrible ape), dinichthys (terrible fish), and so on. It appears that the 500 Smith & Wesson is quite terrible to a certain political journalist from Chicago who rushed to press with the idea that the new Smith should be just the weapon for street gangs. Just how this fellow got a job as a journalist is not clear, but he obviously does not know much about either pistols or street gangs. Whatever a street punk may have in mind for his "nefarious little plans," this Smith 500 is pretty close to the worst possible answer.

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Well it was tiresome to stand there endlessly holding our sword over our head. Now I suppose we can use it, and that in itself is quite a relief. If it should come to pass that we erase both Saddam and Iraq in short order, I do not see that will conclude the Holy War. The actors of September 11 were Saudis, not Iraqis, and so far we have heard no evidence of remorse from the faithful.

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It seems to me that a pistol should hit hard, or it should hit very precisely. Of course it can do both, but compromise is seldom the proper answer. Thus I have always favored a major caliber cartridge for a defensive handgun, and simultaneously suggested that if one is to go to reduced power, he should go right down to a 22, which will encourage precise placement.

The 9mm/38 family of pistol cartridges has never been really satisfactory in serious conflict. Of course any sidearm is more apt to be used as a threat than a weapon, but that is not always the case. Today we have a whole regiment of new 9mm Parabellum pistols being offered on the market, but the US Department of Defense has concluded, to no one's surprise, that if a new pistol is adopted for US service, it should be of major caliber. If I were stuck with a 9, I would be happy with a Luger, which is a lovely mechanical artifact and, incidentally, much prettier than anything available today. The Luger has its faults, but as a toy or collector's item, it stands well ahead of the competition.

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The President tells us that we are going into Iraq not to occupy, but to liberate. This, of course, is very soothing. We recall from the Philippine affair, "Underneath the starry flag, civilize `em with a Krag, and let's get underway for home sweet home." I am sure it must be much nicer to be liberated by an M1A tank than occupied by it.

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The whole subject of firearms seems a bit too arcane for the common man. In Ireland, for example, a politician recently rushed into the breach to forbid private ownership of all firearms except shotguns and 22s. This caused great enthusiasm for the 22-250 as a deer gun. One of the notable aspects of the democratic process is that one need not know anything about a subject in order to pass laws about it.

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I have maintained from the beginning that gutter language reveals a paltry vocabulary. This continuous use of simple-minded, four-letter obscenities reduces the strength of the statement. This is obvious if you delete it.

Some have suggested that this idea is contradicted by the notoriously coarse language sometimes used by George Patton. I do not have specific evidence of the general's expressions, but I will take it as accepted that he did resort to vulgarity upon occasion. I do believe, however, that since General Patton was a very cultivated man, he thought that if he spoke in his customary fashion he might be considered to be insufficiently fierce for his position, and simply wanted to sound like "one of the boys."

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The doomsdate predicted by Brute Krulak, at which point no one will know anything about anything, approaches. We now hear of a case in which a man, having misspelled a word, claimed that this is okay because his spell checker gave him the answer. In his mind his own responsibility can be released by pressing the right button. If the machine spelled it wrong, that makes it right.

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We have had several queries from correspondents about the characteristics most attractive in a household 22, and I am preparing a magazine article on that very subject. No proper household should be without a 22 of some sort, but what sort encourages attractive cogitation. Of course some places may even have two 22s, and that does simplify the matter of selection.

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A certain faction amongst the anti-gun people has now targeted the 50 caliber BMG cartridge as a menace to society. You just cannot get it across to some people that it is the man, not the instrument, that is the force for either good or ill. The 50 caliber Browning machinegun, either in its original form or as a repeating rifle is a most interesting artifact, but it is tremendously inconvenient to use, except under certain specific military or paramilitary situations. But the hoplophobes just see guns as bad in themselves, not in their capacity to achieve any particular objective. They do not hate *crime*, they hate *guns*, and there is no reasoning with them, because a phobia is just that, a mental aberration not subject to reasoned argument.

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Whence all this whimpering? Having been involved in a couple of first class wars personally, I do not remember all this emphasis on suffering, rather than achievement. Suffering is easy. You learn it the first time, but achievement calls for talent, determination and courage. When the boys march off to war we used to cheer. Why do we whine now?

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We hear of another hunting casualty from Africa due, as usual, to leaving the rifle elsewhere. In this case the hunter, having left his rifle in the car, ran across an irascible wildebeeste cow, who roughed him up considerably and failed to kill him only by chance, the *cornada* missing the femoral artery by a centimeter. You would think that people would not wander around the African bush unarmed – you would think. But then we are required to wander our city streets unarmed, which would seem the more dangerous course.

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I made no mention of shooting sticks in "*The Art of the Rifle*." Perhaps this was a mistake, since it seems that shooting sticks are now practically universal in Africa. I fabricated a set when I was a schoolboy, and I found that they were a nuisance to carry around. They still are, but this matters only when one hunts alone, and in Africa today there is always at least one henchman within whistling distance. If you are making an approach through high grass carrying a rifle in one hand and shooting sticks in another, it is awkward. But if the sticks are there for the asking, the high grass is no longer a problem. Our daughter Lindy pulled off an outstanding longshot on a tsessebe in Okavango using the sticks. One cannot fault an instantaneous one-shot kill. So I guess there is a place for shooting sticks, at least for the younger generation. Somehow I cannot envision Bell or Selous or Stigand carrying shooting sticks, but then times have certainly changed.

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Our British periodical, from which we try to keep track of things British, tells us that "huge numbers" of English recruits are quitting in training because they do not like being yelled at. Well fancy that! Being yelled at is a dreadful thing, I suppose, but somehow it never bothered me. Of course one must speak softly to a

wimp lest you hurt his feelings – and that we could not have.

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It is a long time now since Lon Horiuchi shot Vicky Weaver in the face while she was holding her child in her arms, but that is something most people would like to forget. Horiuchi still walks free with that on his conscience. The law cannot reach him, but there are many who do not forget.

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I am informed by a couple of senior instructors that the quality of the student body here at Gunsite has conspicuously declined over the last couple of years. The people who are coming to school now, with exceptions, of course, do not seem to be up to the task, though both the doctrines and the instructing staff have remained constant. I do not know what to make of this, except possibly as evidence of the overwhelming encroachment of the television culture, which seems to produce a race of watchers rather than doers. I should have thought this would take longer than a matter of ten or fifteen years, but the evidence is there.

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The dim-witted cross-bolt safety which is now being featured on current lever action rifles is not only unnecessary but actually slightly dangerous. It can be deactivated with a little work, but a better choice is to acquire an older rifle secondhand at a gun show. The fit and finish of the older gun may be superior as well.

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The Safari Club International continues its praiseworthy efforts to encourage big game hunting and conserve wildlife throughout the world. I think that perhaps the club is overlooking a bet in the matter of *Hydrurga*, the leopard seal. Here is a large, fierce, active carnivore, twice as big as a lion, which is quite prolific and has no fear of man. His organized pursuit would call for a great deal of political organization and would entail great expense, but these things are not insupportable obstacles to "the rich, the well-born and the able" who make up the membership of SCI. There is no tradition here of hunting the *Hydrurga*, but times change, and perhaps we should develop one.

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In this war of ideas we seem to have got into, our strongest weapon is ridicule. These fanatics cannot bear to be laughed at, and if their actions are often deadly, they are still ridiculous. I continue to read carefully into Islam, and if what I discover is not ridiculous, that must be because Arabic does not translate well into English. Neither, for that matter, does Hebrew. That is a powerful reason why we still have such a varying interpretation of our own scripture. These Wahabis are pretty silly. That is why they hate to have it pointed out to them.

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We hear from the Balkans that the trade in contraband weapons flourishes apace. All sorts of rifles and machine pistols are used as trade goods, and also hand grenades. It is not clear how one defends himself with a hand grenade, but the various Balkan factions seem to enjoy blowing each other up simply on principle. The factionists hang out in designated bars, and the activists can always take pleasure in pitching a bomb through an opposition door.

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It may be that as a professional marksman all my life I am overly concerned with trigger action. I know many shooters who do not seem to care much about this, and they make out pretty well – or so they say. But I need a good trigger in order to shoot well, and so do my students, who have all achieved outstanding records in the game fields.

What then is a good trigger? A good trigger is a mechanical paradox. It must release the hammer or the striker with no apparent motion. It must move in order to accomplish this purpose, but its motion should be imperceptible. You test this by sight, not by touch. You place your finger on the trigger and take up the slack, if any. At this point you press gently, watching your finger. If you can see it move before discharge, your trigger has "creep." This is not a matter of weight, although reasonably light weight in the 3 to 4 pound range is a help. What is called for is apparently motionless release – after take up. Such trigger action is achievable by a good gunsmith with a conventional trigger. With the radical Blaser trigger, gunsmithing is unnecessary. This trigger action is imperceptible as the weapon comes over-the-counter.

As I say, I may make too much of this, but it is important to me, and more in time shooting than on the bench. Over the decades I have seen a lot of hits and a couple of misses. Good trigger action has always been the key.

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It is rumored abroad that the excellent 25mm machinegun round may be adopted as a sort of successor to the 50 caliber BMG in shoulder-mounted repeating rifles. That should be fun to shoot, but obviously not for the faint of heart.

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This airport security business is unnecessarily obnoxious. All you have to do is profile your passenger, and this does not take a philosopher. These Jihadis *look* like Jihadis. I put in a good deal of air travel and I see a great deal of utter foolishness on the part of these security people – who only have to look. Up till now no innocent patriot has jumped an aircrew. Nor anyone who looks like one. Profiling may be regarded with horror by some who are preoccupied with political correctness, but this matter is too serious to be toyed with. The bad guys simply look like bad guys, and they cannot change that by shaving off their beards. That is one positive advantage we have in the Holy War.

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Clausewitz is always worth considering. He classifies officers as follows:

- The brilliant and energetic man makes the best staff officer. He handles routine work with accuracy and completeness.
  - The brilliant and lazy man makes the best commanding officer. He tends to see the big picture accurately and avoids preoccupation with detail work which might distract him.
  - The stupid and lazy man makes the best subordinate. He will do what he is told properly, no more no less.
  - The stupid and energetic man, however, is to be avoided at all costs. He is quite capable of ruining the best laid plans.
- 

We were recently treated to a non-attributable photograph of a man who had been killed and partially eaten by a bear in Alaska. In this present age of irresponsible communication, it is very difficult to run things like this down. We would much like to know what these circumstances were – whereabouts, what sort of bear, how come? So far I have had no luck with this. If you find out any details, I would appreciate the information.

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I continue to be bothered by misunderstandings of the Scout concept. The world is full of pseudo-scouts and, as you might suppose, they do not measure up. To people who complain about the price of the Steyr Scout, I suggest that they simply make do with the rifle they have until they can scrape up a little extra cash. Going half-way is unsatisfactory to begin with, and more expensive in the long run.

It remains true, however, that a great many shooters are simply not as interested in quality as in quantity. They just prefer several second-rate items to one really good one. This keeps the market open, however, and for that we can be grateful.

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It has been suggested by one vociferous *polypragmaton* that all hunting should be forbidden as immoral. This man has a right to his opinion, of course, but not to enforce it upon me. It is the nature of the *polypragmatoi*, of course, to police the behavior of other people, regardless if that behavior has any destructive social effect. We have always had such people, and we should respect their views, but we should not let such views achieve the force of either law or custom.

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We hoped by this time that the standard rules of safe gunhandling would have become universal throughout the world. They have been arrived at by careful consideration over the years, and they do not need modification or addition. We trust that all the *family* have them by heart in all languages, but for those who came in late here they are again:

1. All guns are always loaded. Even if they are not, treat them as if they are.
2. Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy. (For those who insist that this particular gun is unloaded, see *Rule 1.*)
3. Keep your finger off the trigger till your sights are on the target. This is the *Golden Rule*. Its violation is directly responsible for about 60 percent of inadvertent discharges.
4. Identify your target, and what is behind it. Never shoot at anything that you have not positively identified.

Those will do. We need all four and we do not need five. It should not be necessary to belabor this issue, but life is not perfect.

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It has been suggested that marksmanship is no longer a military attribute. Is it possible that no individual shoots at any other individual anymore? While this may be usually true, I think it would be a terrible mistake to regard it as a military axiom. Our men in Afghanistan tell us there has been some good shooting up there, and that it has made a difference. We certainly hope so.

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This Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco has now decided that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional. As I understand it they hold that the phrase "establishment of a religion" is the same as "establishment of religion." This is obviously fallacious, but the court has so ruled. The case is being appealed and the verdict will be overturned almost certainly. But I think it is high time we ruled the Ninth Circuit Court as unconstitutional in its own right.

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Up till now the greatest hardship we hear from the battlefield involves overcooked Brussels sprouts. That will change, of course. I suppose there are plenty of troops who dislike Brussels sprouts even when they are properly cooked.

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When our over-civilized European friends complain about capital punishment, we are reminded of the classic case of Big Harpe, the notorious goblin of the Natchez Trace. The Harpe brothers, big and little, were really atrocious sociopaths, preying mainly upon farm wives and children in the absence of the man of the house. Little Harpe was caught and duly hanged. But Big Harpe, his brother, met a more colorful end. He was tied in a chair and decapitated with a hunting knife in the hands of a bereaved father and husband. This tale appears pretty old fashioned now, but it does have a nice tone to it.

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*Family member* Tom Russell, in observing some of the recent activity in Kuwait, points out that "it is against the rules to surrender before the war is started."

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

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## April Showers

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Well, we won Round Two, except for a few pockets of resistance in Paris, Manhattan and San Francisco. Now we may accept the enemy's center of command to shift from Baghdad to Damascus, with financial and logistic assistance coming as before from Riyadh. Our primary difficulty continues to be affixing a target. We can no more make war on "terrorism" than we can on jealousy or narrow mindedness, since terrorism is an attitude, rather than a political force. The devout Moslem continues to regard us as infidels worthy of perdition, and this is irrespective of his nationality. It is said that only some Moslems feel that way, but we do not see any public apologies on any part of Islam for atrocities committed in its name. The Two Towers were shot up mainly by Saudis, but the occasion was celebrated by Iraqis. So the Wahabis are still with us, and one wonders where they will open Round Three of the *Jihad*.

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Whatever action those people choose to take, we can take enormous satisfaction from the outstanding performance of our military establishment. The news media made every effort to denigrate our conduct in the field, even to inventing failures which never took place. When some journalists reported that our eastern arm on our approach to Baghdad was running short of supplies, one battalion commander suggested that the only thing he was running short of was opposition. Now there is a statement in the Chesty Puller tradition!

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Sometime ago, when it became advisable for us to make war upon the person of an enemy chief-of-state, we attacked the job with one man. Fred Wise, commanding in Haiti, sent in Sergeant Herman Hanneken, USMC, who handled the task neatly with his 1911 pistol. It was neither as pretty nor as expensive as that B1 bomber, but it got the job done – in the hands of the right man.

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"In the long run, the greatest weapon of mass destruction is stupidity."

Thomas Sowell

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And now Smith & Wesson is offering us its own spruced-up version of the great 45. (Would it be discourteous to refer to this piece as the "Smith & Wesson Colt"? ) You may remember the delightful line in the movie *Dr. No*, "That's a Smith & Wesson, you've had your six" – no longer appropriate.

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We discover that sea patrols seeking to inhibit speed boat druggists have found a superior instrument in the 50 caliber BMG rifle, used from a helicopter. This does the job of inducing surrender more neatly and with less fuss than the machinegun. It annoys the gadgeteer to be asked, "What is it for?" Here is a use for the 50 BMG rifle that we had not anticipated.

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Somewhat to my amazement, three students showed up in the recent rifle class expecting to use rifles which they had never seen before, but which they had ordered sent to the school, unexamined and unfired. We can hardly expect an accomplished rifleman to show up for training at the school. After all, he came to learn how to use his instruments. Nevertheless, I would have thought that anyone would take some pains to familiarize himself with his equipment before arriving to use it.

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Considering the whole subject of trophy hunting, let me advance the Shinano as the world's greatest trophy. In the 1930s, when Japan was setting forth to become Queen of the Seas, the three mightiest warships of all time were designed and laid into production. Originally they were three great battleships, bigger, stronger, faster and more powerful than anything seen before. They were named the Yamato, Musashi and Shinano, and they were intended to be able to overcome any sort of naval task force under consideration by anyone. But times changed and the air war loomed. It became evident that the Queen of the Seas would no longer be a battleship, but rather an aircraft carrier. So they went ahead with the Yamato and Musashi, which, when complete, were pecked to death by American naval aircraft, rather as a cow may be devoured by piranhas. But they changed the Shinano into a carrier and got it ready to take to the sea carrying 150 aircraft. It had been commenced in Tokyo Bay, but it was decided to move it out of those dangerous waters around the southern end of the Japanese Islands into the more secure reaches of the Yellow Sea. But we knew about this and we assigned to a US submarine the mighty vessel as a target, "Archer Fish," and the Archer Fish scored. Apparently the watertight integrity of the Shinano was not completely satisfactory in its unfinished condition, and Archer Fish socked it solidly with sufficient torpedo power to sink the monster.

And Archer Fish, having completed this spectacular achievement, made it safely home, having bagged the greatest trophy of all time.

This tale is one of many related in "*Submarine!*" by Commander Edward L. Beach, USN.

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As with Mark Twain, reports of my death have been slightly exaggerated. Possibly a certain amount of wishful thinking has taken over the rumor mill known as the Internet. This instrument of non-attributable opinion has made it increasingly hard to find anything out. Attempts by our naval attache in Moscow to run down the details of the Kursk explosion were totally befogged by the profusion of Internet gossip surrounding the disaster. I suppose Al Gore is duly proud of his invention.

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When a marksman brings off something special, he must always ask himself how much was skill and how much was luck. In my own case I can think of many examples on both sides, but according to Thell Reed's dictum, if you didn't do everything right you couldn't very well have been lucky. In most examples I have seen over the past decades, there has been a mixture of the two elements, but only the shooter himself knows the balance, and sometimes even he does not. I have known several cases where a shooter brought off something spectacular and left the scene actually believing that he had won by means of his own superlative skill. I have known some others in which the shooter modestly attributed his success entirely to luck, when actually it was his manifest skill which made luck possible. It is an interesting subject, and I have plastered my armory with contributory evidence.

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It is interesting to hear various political types seeking means to establish what they call democracy in the Middle East. Frankie Lou, our man in Nebraska, defines democracy as "two wolves and a sheep debating about what to have for dinner." In my personal view, the aim of politics is to establish the optimum balance of liberty and order. Democracy is one means to this end, but Plato suggested that it does not work for groups of more than about four thousand people.

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*Family member* John Schaefer contributes the following dismal tale from darkest Carolina: It turns out that a stray bull got loose and wandered onto a private pasture, causing alarm to the local citizens. The report does not say which sort of bull, but beef bulls are usually more placid and unbelligerent than milk bulls. This bull, however, refused efforts to shoo him home, so the cops decided to shoot him. Whether this was a good idea or not is not reported, but the problem was that the people concerned did not know how to do it, so one of these ineptizoids shot the beast three times with a *Glock*. Naturally nothing happened, so authorities decided to deploy the enormous power of the 223 cartridge and proceeded to torment the poor beast to death. The owner was much upset and insisted that this animal was particularly gentle and would have wandered home if he had been simply left alone. The annoying thing about this is that nobody around seemed to have any notion of

how to dispatch an ox, should the occasion arise. One would think that the county sheriff involved might have turned up with his trusty 30–06, but that is clearly asking too much.

Police weaponry is sometimes very good, but obviously it is not something you can count on. I take the curmudgeonly view that this whole matter would have been handled with much more neatness and dispatch one hundred years ago.

In observing the recent rifle class, I note again that the use of the "Hawkins Fist" is insufficiently emphasized. This is probably because it does not fit itself well to the firing line, but better to a single shooter wandering the woods, or a man firing out of a hole or over a berm. To use the Hawkins Fist you grab the forward loop of the sling tight up against the forend and use the side of your hand as a rest on anything convenient. It is a good system, but I never heard about it until Vietnam. There is always something more to learn.

Some pretty good sea stories are trickling back from the front, though not with any help from the press. Our news people do not seem to want to tell about anything plus, being only interested in people getting hurt. Getting hurt is part of war, of course, but there are also elements of valor, skill, and even humor, that should be told. Perhaps you caught the one incident of the Arab who emerged from a doorway to pick up a rocket propelled grenade, only to be potted by a Marine with an M16 across the street. Thereupon a second Moor popped out to make the same objective, only to be knocked over in his turn. And this happened yet a third time. Clearly the little 223 will do the job under some circumstances.

To quote from a piece in the *New York Times*, "American forces have also improved their training, tactics and equipment for urban warfare in recent years. For example, carrying tougher body armor, more accurate rifles and better radios." Funny nobody heard about these "more accurate rifles." If US forces are now shooting more accurate rifles, we are even better off in this war than we thought.

"The surest way to make an enemy is to do someone a really big favor."

#### The Guru

A point that has turned up in recent classes is the importance of maintaining clean lock–work in all three weapons. This is not as much of a problem with pistols as it is with rifles and shotguns. Most students do not see the need to strip and clean the bolt as frequently as they clean the barrel. A good many students do not even know how to dismantle a bolt. This was one of the great advantages of the distinguished 03 Springfield. Its bolt assembly was quickly and easily accessible, and facilitated maintenance even under severe field conditions.

For those of you who may find yourselves involved in competition, avoid the J–ladder unless you know how it operates. This system works properly for 8, 16 or 32 contestants. If your contest is to be taken seriously, as for money or trophies, clean out the list by eliminating those who do not make it into your 8, 16 or 32 qualifiers. If you have fewer than 8 contestants, use a "round robin" in which every contestant meets every other. The formula for this is  $M=(C \times (C-1)) \div 2$ . Thus if you have 7 shooters, your bout list will be  $(7 \times 6) \div 2$  or 21 bouts. If you have more than 32 entries in your shoot off, the event will take too long for public appreciation, so lean it down by some form of elimination.

Being of the old school, I detect a certain degree of flab in our public mood at this time. It is unreasonable to expect a man to lay his life on the line kindly. When someone is trying to kill you, it is too much to ask for you to feel all warm and friendly about him. It would seem that too many of our commentators do not know what it is like to be shot at and to see men mangled around them. This is not a pleasant experience, and the only way I know of to meet it is with anger. When you go to war you do so with wrath. Without wrath you will not fight well. Flabby expostulations about what a real sweetheart your enemy is do not produce a mood



necessary to kill him. To fight well you have to enjoy doing it. This may offend some people, but I speak from some experience. Rommel once wrote a book called "*War Without Hatred*" (*Krieg ohne Hasse*), but I never got hold of a copy and I do not read German easily. I do know that hatred was our driving motive in the Pacific in World War II. I also heard from people in a position to know that this hatred was not sufficiently evident in Vietnam. That may be one of the reasons why we lost. Be that as it may, I find it easy to be cross with those who express their religious beliefs by murdering thousands of people whom they do not know and who never harmed them. A good soldier is fierce, and a man who is not fierce may well find battle to be an intolerable experience.

We did not start this war, they did. I see no need to be tender with them.

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In the last rifle class we had a couple of Jim West's "Co-pilots," and they turned out to be most attractive arms. The Co-pilot is excessively specialized, but it is pretty near perfect for its task, which is neat and handy defense against animals which may kill you. It is interesting to see the affection it seems to inspire in men who handle it. Weird as it may sound, these actually seem sort of *cuddly* – a compact, handy, dependable, friend-in-need. You do not need one and I do not need one, hardly anybody does, but what a cutie it is to have around!

So the three "rifles of the age" right now remain the Steyr Scout, the Blaser and the Co-pilot. None is cheap, but then neither is a Porsche.

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I do not expect you to believe it but a gent showed up last month for a rifle class contemplating the use of a pistol. You heard about the man who was so dumb he brought a knife to a gunfight? Well I guess such things can happen.

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We rarely see movies, and good movies are not commonly produced these days, but I certainly can recommend "*Gods and Generals*." This is certainly an irrelevant title, and the miscasting of a short Hollywood type as Robert E. Lee is hard to believe, but the overall effect is just great. For those of us who are Civil War buffs, it is delightful to be able to recite many of the lines before they are spoken. The piece is basically about Stonewall Jackson, and there is a subject worthy of cinema's best effort.

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We notice on the catalog that now Gunsite is offering a "precision rifle course." I take it that this is to distinguish it from a "dispersion rifle course." But then again I never did understand marketing.

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We are amused to see the prevalence of the "California Twitch" on the range. This manoeuver, executed by the shooter after firing and before making safe, involves pointing to the right and the left of the target while wearing a fearsome scowl. It serves no purpose except to show that the shooter has been to a school which picked up his mannerism in the confusion. Once acquired, the "California Twitch" is almost impossible to eradicate, something like a tattoo.

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We sure hope that when our warriors return they will be ready and willing to tell us about all the odd and interesting things that happened to them in the action. They may have to be coaxed, but I hope not. You will remember the case of the English earl who won the Victoria Cross at Dunkirk. Back home at a dinner party he was asked by his hostess to tell the guests about his marvelous experience, but he declined. She suggested sympathetically that the whole experience might have been just too horrible to recount. "Indeed," he said, "you have simply no idea! The *noise!*, my dear, and the *people!*"

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I think this sudden lurch of Francophobia is sort of silly. Hating people in groups is basically childish, and it is just as silly for us to hate them as it is for them to hate us. This Chirac is a conspicuous jerk, but look what we had for the previous two terms! We don't use French fries, but I do relish Roquefort.

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I was recently amused to note in a letter to "*Guns & Ammo*" that I am to be distinguished as a collector of "funny hats." What is a funny hat? For that matter, what is *funny*? Looking at the soft head gear displayed by our troops on the tube, I think that maybe this correspondent has me confused with the US military establishment. If so, this is high praise indeed.

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Among other silly things, this airport security business stands out. Certainly we should keep suicidal fanatics off our airplanes, but the procedures employed at this time are tiresome and infantile. I take some satisfaction in chalking this inconvenience up to the Prophet whenever I fly.

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Please remember that there is no use whatever for a shooting sling in an unsupported position, either off-hand or standing. I see people in the periodicals wrapping their left arm up in leather to no purpose at all. In any form of dexterous operation technique must be understood if it is to be appreciated. There is a reason for a shooting sling, and a very good one, but not unless your left elbow is resting on something solid.

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Please remember that the President is bearing a greater burden at this time than any man should be expected to carry. Truly he has the weight the world on his shoulders and his enemies are even noisier than his friends. Generally speaking, his friends are not the sort of people who shout slogans and march in demonstrations. Respectable people do not do that, so President Bush may feel that his position is not supported by the people of this country. We do not expect him to read our letters individually, but he does have a staff to evaluate such things. It is up to patriotic Americans to make sure he gets the message. So write him! If you have written him before, write him again! Every little bit helps.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 6

May 2003

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## Sumer Is Icumen In

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The annual meeting of the NRA gave us much to think about. We bid goodbye to our outstanding president, Charlton Heston, who served the association splendidly during his three terms, and welcomed new president Police Chief Kayne Robinson, who is well on top of the situation. That situation is never easy. The foes of liberty never sleep, and the less sense they make the louder they howl. They do not accept the fact that THE ARMED CITIZEN IS IN ITSELF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL SECURITY. No government can tyrannize an armed citizenry, as has been proven throughout history. The armed citizen can be ruled only by his own consent, and this is obvious to both sides of the political spectrum. I think we may assume that the good people will always outnumber the bad people, and thus if all people are equipped and ready to protect their liberties, those liberties can never be destroyed. This has always seemed simple to those of us in our camp. Why it is not so to people on the other side remains a puzzlement. So we take continued pride and comfort in our Association, the oldest and most distinguished civil rights gathering in the world.

The NRA is not perfect. Nothing is. But the remedy for that is to get into it and make it so. There is always room for argument, and the truth, reached by argument, shall make you free.

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As of yet we have not found the remains of *Mesopotamian Misfit*, and perhaps we will not. Those were *big* bombs. He may, of course, still be alive, along with Osama bin Laden, but the Holy War calls for leadership, so we will wait for the next prophet to step right up. The line forms on the left.

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At the exhibits at Orlando, we were struck again by the imagination displayed by the Taurus people. They have come up with a number of outstanding revolvers, making wide use of titanium, and have produced a couple of items which actually fill an apparent niche. Their little bright blue-and-gold lady's revolver is quite charming. I certainly do not call it a service pistol, but as a social jewel it is delightful. It seems to me that the place of the revolver is not in combat service, but rather in the hands of those who are not going to be recreational shooters and cannot be expected to spend much time or effort on their marksmanship or gunhandling. The revolver has fewer buttons to push and switches to press, and calls for less familiarity with its mechanics than the auto-pistol. One might ask why anyone who is not going to be a recreational marksman should have access to a handgun, but that is a rather awkward point. If one is not prepared to learn to manage a mechanism, perhaps he should stand clear of the mechanism, but life sometimes is not as simple as that. We might say that if one is not prepared to learn to drive well, he should not drive a car. The theory has some merit, but it does not stand up to reality. In any case, these Taurus revolvers, from the "Titanium Sledgehammer" to the lady's jewelry, is interesting. Somebody at Taurus has been thinking about things, which is unusual in the industry.

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The poodle shooter seems to put the ragheads down in fairly satisfactory fashion, especially since the range in today's wars is short.

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Hanneken pulled off his exploit before I was born, and he pulled it off with a 1911. Also he produced the body, slung over his shoulder, which is more than we were able to do with the B1. If this makes me guilty of codgerism, I am not prepared to deny it. Codgers have been known to do very well, from Moses down through

MacArthur. If the results are there, we need not apologize.

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Field reports from Iraq reveal such miserable gunhandling that we must ask ourselves about what amounts to social degeneration. Throughout the 20th century we Americans have had occasion to handle literally millions of smallarms, and we did so largely without mishaps. The only case I ran across in my entire service was judged by a court of inquiry to be a self-inflicted wound, rather than a negligent discharge. Now we find ourselves confronted with huge numbers of young men who do not seem to be able to keep finger off trigger, or to keep firearms properly pointed. Can television be the cause of this, or is it the deliberate, intentional gelding of the young American male? A boy should be taught proper gunhandling by his father. If he has no father, this is difficult. Possibly in a two-income family there is no time for fathers properly to educate sons. Education is what you get at home – what you get, or should get, at school is training. What seems to have developed is a culture in which the fathers have no fathers, and this is a tough one to remedy – tougher in the face of urbanized hoplophobia.

This is no cause for despair. Annoyance possibly, but not despair. The soul of the American outdoorsman has not been lost, and it should be consciously cherished. Consider the example of our icon, TR the Great. When he rode through the night to assume the mantle of the presidency, as his predecessor slowly died, his most memorable remark was his opinion that if it had been he who had been shot, rather than McKinley, he, Roosevelt, would have killed his assailant before losing combat capability. That was some time ago, but we should not accept the idea that there are no more Americans like that. They are there – it is just that they get a bad press.

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On the side of what is new, the A10 Warthog turned in a very fine performance in Mesopotamia. A ground attack aircraft depends upon air superiority. Rudel told me that he thought the A10 ought to have a backseat, since you cannot hunt targets and watch your six at the same time. He did not count on the luxury of a safe six, but the A10 is not likely to be plunked from behind by an enemy fighter plane in this day and age.

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Mr. Rumsfeld has been conducting himself with distinction during this time of manifest media hostility. We were delighted by his Churchillian phrase, "Never have so many been so wrong about so much."

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In the field, the 376 Steyr cartridge has done as well as expected. My one case study involved a bison taken at 82 yards, target angle about 320°. He was hit a little high and ran 20 paces after the hit. We lost the bullet (Hornady 270 soft-point) in the rumen, but penetration was quite sufficient even without exit. A bison is a big animal, and the 376 Steyr is perfect for the task.

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Abu ibn Warraq in *"Why I Am Not a Muslim"*

"Islam has the resources to come into the 21st century, the problem is that it won't.

"It is extraordinary the amount of people who have written about 9/11 without mentioning Islam. It is the divinely ordained duty of every Muslim to fight until man-made law is replaced by God's law, which has conquered the entire world."

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It seems obvious to me that the public buys firearms by the cartridge, rather than by the weapon. We have a surfeit of good cartridges, but the quality of the launchers is more open to discussion. All of the early 20th century military rifle cartridges perform flawlessly in the field. I cannot think of a case in which either a soldier or a big game hunter was betrayed by the inferior performance of his cartridge. (I will except the dismal little 30-caliber US carbine cartridge, but that was a conspicuous and unique exception.) The cartridges do fine, but the rifles themselves come in debatable variety. You cannot beat a 30-06 for general duty in the field, whether your target is a deer, a Marxist, a mountain goat, or a Jihadi. The weapons themselves, on the other hand, have displayed quite a bit of innovative ingenuity between 1900 and 1990.

This matter is even more obvious with handguns. The pistol has come back into its own these last two desert wars. In these the fighting was done mostly at night and the soldier often found himself laden with gadgetry at short range in the dark. That is pistol country, and our field reports emphasize this. When you are burdened with cell phone, GPI, gas mask, night goggles, or even RPGs, a two-handed firearm can be an encumbrance, especially when much contact takes place at rock-throwing distance. We had a superb pistol throughout the 20th century, until those in authority, having decided that a pistol is not an important military item, saddled us with a service sidearm which simply does not measure up. The 9mm M92 is, to begin with, underpowered. What do we want with the 9mm Parabellum cartridge when we have the proven 45 ACP? But beyond that, the M92 just does not function well in conditions of sand, mud or grit. Naturally any firearm functions better if it is kept clean, but keeping it clean can be a problem, especially in the desert. It is possible that I am unreasonably biased in favor of the grand old 1911 pistol, but I do not like it because it is pretty, I like it because it works. This is hardly news to anyone.

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I think the gesture made by President Bush in landing on the carrier was excellent. *George Bush is the most powerful man who ever lived on the face of the Earth*, and for him to use our fantastically potent air arm as a vehicle to demonstrate this gives me great pleasure. Also it annoys the "hate America" people excessively, and this is always a good thing. (I would have preferred the troops to have kept their hats on during the address, but I guess that is too formal for *The Age of the Common Man*.)

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This business of sneering at the French because of Chirac may be compared to cursing Americans because of Clinton. It seems odd that two positions were coincident. To waste perfectly good wine on an irrelevant political position makes us look as childish as the French would like to see us – not that it matters.

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We recently had occasion to run a short publicity session with the Dragoon rifle. This is the up-power version of the Scout. According to my definition it is not a Scout, because one of the elements of that instrument is the general availability of ammunition, and ammunition for the 376 Steyr is not easy to come by. The 308 cartridge of the true Scout is available worldwide in quantity, and that is one of the advantages of the concept. You can do most of what needs to be done with a 308. I would not recommend it for elephant, but very few people hunt elephant anymore. I would not press it for buffalo, though a great many buffalo have been killed with the 303 British cartridge, which is ballistically the same as the 308. So I attempted to call the 376 version of the Scout "the Dragoon," though the factory disliked the idea, apparently because there are too many things in Europe referred to as Dragoons. So we have the 376 Steyr cartridge, which is based upon the 9.3x62 cartridge. It comes on only a click or two below the distinguished 375 Holland & Holland in power, starting a 270-grain bullet at 2600f/s from a 19-inch barrel. This is stout stuff, and if one needs a prediction of its performance in the field, he can use either the 9.3 or the Holland cartridge, since any target struck by any of these will be hard put to tell the difference. The Dragoon, at 7½ pounds, all up but unloaded, tends to kick. Whether this matters or not, it is a very subjective point, and the only way to find out whether the Dragoon kicks too much for you is to shoot it. Now hardly anybody is going to admit that any rifle kicks too much for him. We have a problem of *machismo* here, but most people we have tried the Dragoon on at the school do not seem to regard the piece as abusive. Time will tell us whether this rifle breaks telescopes. I have not shot mine enough to know, but all seems well at this point. Personally I like the way it kicks. It delivers a sort of solid feeling to the shoulder which builds confidence, at least to an experienced marksman. The people at Steyr have seen fit to introduce this cartridge in a conventional (non-Scout) configuration. Why I cannot say. They could give you that piece in 375 Holland, providing very slightly better ballistics and much more readily available ammunition. The ways of marketers are strange indeed.

But I think the Dragoon is a doll. It hits just like the Holland cartridge, but with the additional conveniences of the Scout. It is about perfect for lions or bears, and certainly will do for buffalo – using the right bullet. If it is excessively powerful for most bushveldt shooting, I do not see that has cause for serious complaint.

People complain about the price of both the Scout and the Dragoon, but I see this as simple whining. Anything good costs money, and if the price of the Scout series bothers you, I think you should just stick with that little Springfield sporter and be happy. The elk will not know the difference.

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In regard to this continued whining about the price of the Steyr Scout, we are gratified to learn of a "four Scout family" – one each for papa, mama, and two sons. Just wait till Schumer and Feinstein hear about this! (Not that the SS is an "assault rifle," but how would they know about that?)

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It is interesting to speculate upon what kind of a contract Hugh Hefner may have offered to Private Jessie. She has said to have joined the Army in order to save up money for her education. Hefner's contract should take care of that many times over, and somehow I hope it does. From what we can tell, Private Jessie is quite a pretty girl – "A credit to the regiment."

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As we roll through these modern wars, I reflect that while most things about war are bad, this is not always the case. In my wars, the great, good thing was the abundance of ammunition. We had plenty of it, and we were not charged for it. As somebody said, "See your tax dollars at work!"

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We insist again that when you go to Africa you need not take two rifles, but you should take two telescopes!

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We have come to the point where this celebrity thing has become just silly. We find that people are now buying guns and having them falsely engraved to enhance their value as souvenirs. This is not exactly a new thing – Churchill's broom handle is offered, sold and resold annually, for any price a sucker will pay – but now the idea has crossed the Atlantic. I suggest that you do not buy a gun because it has somebody's name cut on it, particularly mine. I have been happy to autograph Scouts with felt pen now for some years, but I do not particularly fancy the idea. Putting one's name on artifacts tends to depreciate the item, in my view.

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There is rumor afoot that somebody is going back into the murder of Vince Foster. Well there must be some people still alive who know who killed Vice Foster, and how. Possibly, however, the people who did the job did it really well and there are indeed no surviving witnesses.

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You have heard about this fellow who is suing Federal Cartridge because he got chewed up by a lion. This example of complete shamelessness is dreary evidence of *The Age of Litigation*. The claim that the choice of bullet offered by the manufacturer is the cause of the shooter's failure to stop the lion is quite ridiculous, and cannot possibly be sustained in court. But the attorney has convinced the plaintiff that it would be cheaper for the company to pay off than to go to court. This sort of thing gives all of us hunters a bad name.

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As we observe with increasing dismay the general level of journalism, we have discovered that in the view of many, "good English smacks of elitism." Well now isn't that just too bloody bad! I guess the same thing could be said about shining one's shoes or pressing one's pants. You do not have to go very far with this egalitarianism in order to go too far.

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Those who had access to it report great satisfaction with the combat shotgun, noting its special usefulness in house-clearance. It blows open locked doors in fine style.

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Grandson Tyler had a big time crossing the Tigris, but as yet I have no up-close-and-personal sea stories. The "Tale of Tyler Transiting the Tigris," however, should make up into a fine family legend. (Family Legends are great stuff.)

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A pistol's place in war varies from war to war, but McBride's chapter on the matter remains a sound study of the subject. The handgun does not provide organizational firepower, but is an item of personal comfort and

peace of mind. Few soldiers ever shoot anybody with a pistol, but most soldiers like to carry it. I have packed both rifle and pistol in close action, but in my case the rifle served mainly to keep me from being singled out as an officer. In theory an officer should not shoot people, since it is his job to direct others in that task. When I asked son-in-law Bruce if he shot anyone at the time when he won his medal, he pointed out that he had been much too busy to shoot. In the course of two full-sized wars I never shot anybody with a rifle. I love rifles, but the pistol is my backstop.

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According to Gunsite's official air historian Barrett Tillman, since 1973 we have lost *one* aircraft in air-to-air combat, as against sixty from ground fire. Too bad! Dogfighting is much more glamorous.

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Several people have now placed orders for our forthcoming effort "*C Stories*," but we must point out that we cannot act on them. Publishers operate on formats, and "*C Stories*" doesn't have one. It is not about guns, nor hunting, nor fighting, nor natural history, but about all those things, so it doesn't fit into a marketer's pigeonhole. If we publish it personally we will lack proper distribution.

I like the book, and I especially like the superb illustrations done by *family member* Paul Kirchner. It is a neat package, and we hope you can be patient.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

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## Summer Time

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Now the sea stories from Mesopotamia come sliding in. Almost all of our contacts come from Marines, so it is possible that what we hear does not represent the opinion of the entire military establishment. That was a pretty good little war, it seems, and there was much to be learned by all those who participated.

At the close-contact level we find that since most modern fighting is done at night, combat ranges are short. The enemy shoots at us with rocket propelled grenades (RPG) and we shoot back with squirt guns (223). Marksmanship is not much of an issue. Neither side has much need for skill-at-arms as electrical gadgetry takes over the battlefield. The cell phone and the global positioning indicator are the primary tactical instruments of both sides, and personalized shooting seems to be rare, though it does exist. The poodle shooter seems to do quite well at short ranges, as most targets offered are in the upper torso and head. We have heard of some sniping incidents, however, and the snipers appear to have done very well when the occasion offered, though this is not very often.

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The Marines are hunting around for a new service pistol, and one pilot model we have seen differs from the piece I am carrying on my belt primarily in the presence of a frame rail forward on which to mount a night light. John Browning's wonderful design has lasted almost a full century without serious competition. The great 1911 45 was a very nearly perfect artifact from the day of its birth, and this may be unique in the entire history of technology.

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I have been preaching the Color Code now for a very long time with remarkable lack of success. Simón Bolívar, the "Liberator" of Latin America, declaimed in his age, "I have plowed the sea!" Neither of us achieved what he set out to do, but both of us achieved something, and that is about all anyone can ask of history.

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On another line of conviction it seems impossible to make it known on this side of the barricades that what we have here is indeed a Holy War. Islam constitutes a faith, rather than a nation. Endeavoring to analyze national confrontations in this struggle is futile. The Chechens and the Pakistanis and the Palestinians who streamed down to Iraq to fight "The Great Satan" were Moslems, not nationals. We wiped out a minor nation-state in Iraq with relatively little difficulty, but that does not serve to impress the faithful. We can hardly set forth to subdue Islam in a military or geographical sense, but what we can do is to identify Islam as the enemy and to convince them that the East can no more defeat the West than the West can defeat the East. We have here the greatest standoff in history. It is up to us to convince the raghead on the camel that simply killing *kafirs*, as the prophet (may peace be upon him) exhorts him to do, will not raise his standard of living, even if it may assure his passport to paradise.

We wish President Bush all success in his delineation of a "road map to peace," but it must be clear that until the enemy understands the problem, he is unlikely to stop fighting. The outcome of the struggle in Mesopotamia ought to serve as a convincing object lesson. I guess it is pretty hard to put that point across in Arabic.

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Offering democracy to an Arab is like bringing a horse to a steakhouse.

The Guru

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As to "plowing the sea," I was recently dismayed to observe a current Grey Gunsite coach in total disregard of *Rule 2*. I have tried to point out that the Four Basic Safety Rules apply at all times, not just on the range, but the more I talk, the less people listen. I hope that is just some people.

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As we continue to play around with the Dragoon – which the factory prefers to call the 376 Steyr – we become more impressed with it. This is partly due to its superb stock design. A feather-weight 375 Magnum should, theoretically, kick your teeth out, but the Dragoon just does not do this. We have tried it with all sorts of students here at the school, especially to find out if the piece kicks hard enough to upset the average shooter. Reports we get back suggest that the basically friendly nature of the Scout configuration is sufficient to minimize apparent recoil affect. You really should not take the Dragoon out after deer or impala or pigs, but if you have it, you will find that it works just fine. For many years we enjoyed the killing efficiency of the excellent, but unappreciated, 350 Remington Short Magnum, on both moose and lion, and while we were told by various observers that this piece kicked too hard, we just declined to notice it. Recoil effect is pretty subjective, of course, and what bothers A may not bother B, but to denigrate a cartridge because it supposedly kicks too hard is poor doings. Now Remington has reintroduced the excellent 350 in a new carbine, which is also offered in 300 WSM. It seems to me that if a piece kicks too hard in 350, it will kick even harder in 300 Magnum, but perhaps it does not really kick too hard in either cartridge. The whole thing is pretty mysterious.

The 376 Steyr, while a click short of the 375 Holland, is distinctly upscale in killing power over the 350 or the 300 WSM. I have not much field experience with it, but I have recorded two nice one-shot kills on bison and zebra, and the zebra is a particularly bullet-resistant beastie. Our friend Ron Anger from South Africa has described a 376 Steyr as simply a 375 Holland in a smaller case. We know what the 375 will do, and we can expect the same behavior from the 376. We should, however, be careful not to use the light bullet available in some factory loadings. The proper bullet for the Dragoon is 270 or 275. With these it works just fine. If you need more power than the 308 – and few of us do – the 376 is an excellent choice. If its recoil bothers you (and so far this has not been a problem) bear in mind Harry Truman's dictum. "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

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Various publicity photographs indicate that today's Marines are carefully observing *Rule 3* – at least when a camera is pointed at them. Perhaps all has not been lost after all.

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Any of the faithful who are fortunate enough to be party to the design of a new shooting range should remember that it is extremely important to keep the classroom as close as possible to the firing points. When you have to saddle up to move the class to the range you cannot help but lose continuity. We make do with what we have, of course, but those who have freedom to do things right should take advantage of it.

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We hear of an interesting case from Africa in which the entire safari camp packed up and moved because a mamba had been observed in the immediate vicinity. That is the first strategic victory of a snake of which I have heard.

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I have long been amused at the official policy of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) ducking out from behind the bureau. They refer to themselves as ATF rather than BATF. I began calling these people the "*BATmen*" in various writings, and this seems to have hurt their feelings. I am giving myself too much importance if I feel that my writings are responsible for the change, but it does seem sort of quaint to change the title on that account. Now that we have the whole structure lumped together as a Department of Homeland Security the issue is simplified. I never liked the idea of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms being lumped together as with, for example, apples, oranges and gasoline. The concerns involved are not similar

enough to be grouped under one heading.

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Progress on "*C Stories*" is not rapid. The format does not appear to be marketable, but this is okay. We will put the book to bed before year end and we like the way it looks. The excellent line illustrations by Paul Kirchner should serve to make up into a truly attractive package.

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"If you have fully made up your mind to shoot if you have to, the chances are that you will not have to."

Julian Hatcher, 1935

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Action reports tell us that the combat shotgun and the 50 BMG achieved very high marks in Mesopotamia. The shotgun seems particularly suitable for breaking down doors in urban warfare, and the great 50 delivers splendidly, both from the machinegun and in sniper configuration. These devices seem to have been "right the first time" and continue to do great work. Of course no firearm works by itself – there is always a shooter involved.

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The new "Smith & Wesson Colts" have been getting good reviews, although I have not yet actually handled one. The 1911 truly rates extended life, and Smith & Wesson deserve full praise for keeping the tradition of excellence alive.

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In a time when the shooting industry continues to toy around with unnecessary cartridge innovation, we note that the 6.5 Remington Magnum was a good idea which did not catch on with the public. This cartridge was a sort of pocket 270, ideal for mountain hunters left over from a time when sheep hunters did their own climbing with no help from jeeps or helicopters. The 600 carbine in caliber 6.5 Remington would be the ideal alpine companion, but in the age of specialization hardly anybody is both an alpinist and a hunter at the same time.

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"There is no thrill to compare with battle, even when sudden death is momentarily expected."

Commander Paul Talbot, USN Commander Destroyer Division 59

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Despite the painful wishes of the suffering Left, there really is such a thing as sheer motiveless malice – Father Flanagan to the contrary notwithstanding. There *are* bad people in the world, and their evil propensities stem as much from inheritance as from environment. You have only to look around to realize that you cannot make a scoundrel decent by patting him on the head. What you can do about him is a deep subject, but pretending that he is basically a nice guy does not properly address the problem.

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I suppose that all of us in the *Family* are well aware of the proper conditions of readiness to be used with the service pistol. We have not, however, described the proper conditions of readiness for the rifle. The rifle is essentially an offensive instrument which is made ready for action when action is expected. In mountain and desert hunting there is no need to carry a rifle with a shell in the chamber, and there is never any need to carry a rifle in Condition One when one is riding in a car. The action can be operated in a split second when necessary, and speed of the first shot is rarely an issue in any form of hunting. There are exceptions, of course, and the deer hunter in thick brush, or the man crowding a buffalo in the low veldt may need a loaded chamber. In that case when the rifle is carried with a round up the spout and the safety on, it is properly carried in a field-ready condition with finger straight, safety on and muzzle anticipating target appearance. (An exception may be made here with the lever-action rifle or the Blaser straight-pull, in which the weapon should be carried in Condition Three and the round chambered as the butt is shouldered. It is almost impossible to work the Blaser safety in a hurry, though much can be achieved through intensive practice.)

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As we have often stated, marksmanship could be improved if we could simply persuade shooters to get away from the bench rest. The bench rest is a useful device for identifying and isolating mechanical shortcomings, but it helps a marksman no more than a dynamometer helps a race driver. The sooner a marksman can get away from the bench rest, the better shot he will become.

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We have recently run into a curious discourse with a firearms collector who is more interested in serial numbers than he is in shooting. I happen to own a distinguished Smith & Wesson 44 Magnum revolver, which has achieved several outstanding results in the field and on the range. My correspondent is not interested in that, however, but only in the number of screws in the frame. It never occurred to me to count the number of screws, but apparently this is a matter of grave importance to a collector. How nice it is that people's tastes are so varied! If this were not true all men would be doomed to pursue the same woman.

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As we face off in cultural conflict (by their choice, not ours), we may point out that we have walked on the moon, we have motored on Mars, we have landed before we took off, we have conquered small pox, and we wield the B2. *They* offer only institutionalized malice. Certainly the West is imperfect, and there are many ways in which we can improve, but the Holy War they offer is a poor answer.

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Note that *liberty* and *freedom* are not the same. Liberty is a political philosophy, whereas freedom is a physical condition. Governor Henry shouted, "Give me liberty or give me death!" He said nothing about freedom. The Preamble seeks to ensure the blessings of liberty upon American posterity, but can say nothing about freedom, since Americans were already free. I suppose one should not be picky about these things, but imprecise communication has been responsible for much disaster throughout history.

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In these weeks succeeding Memorial Day, we have been impressed by reports from the various outstanding war memorials of the 20th century. There is an Arc de Triomphe in Paris, which reminds us that the French as a nation can win as well as lose. There is Stone Mountain in Georgia, which emphasizes that victory is not essential to glory. There is the Voortrekker Monument between Johannesburg and Pretoria, which still stands in grandeur despite racism to the contrary. There is the Santa Cruz del Valle de Los Caidos in Castile which is arguably the grandest piece of architecture of modern times. And there is the battle monument to Operation Overlord in Bedford, Virginia, which though quite recent deserves a place up near the top. Even in *The Age of the Common Man* we continue to honor our great men, though great men are never common. We should think about that on Memorial Day.

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There will be a break now while we wander off to the Dolomites to visit the Ice Man of Bolzano. He lived at the crossing point between the Stone and Bronze Ages and he packed a copper chopper that I would like to investigate. Pure copper does not take nor hold a good cutting edge, so we may discover that his weapon's point was fabricated of some sort of accidentally impure copper, such as the Aztecs seemed to have used thousands of years later in Mexico. This makes our journey a business trip of sorts, since I qualify myself as a hoplologist. We will report back in due course. Meanwhile be of stout heart and good cheer!

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 8

July 2003

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## Independence 2003

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**"We hold these Truths to be self evident, that all Men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it ..."**

Very rough talk, wouldn't you say? The founders of this republic insisted that the rights of man are not granted, nor may they be abridged, by the state. Neither the US Constitution, nor any other, can grant you a right which comes from God – nor can it abrogate such right. If either the people or its representatives were to abolish the right of the people to keep and bear arms, such action would be both invalid and immoral. Let us bear in mind when we celebrate our national holiday that we acknowledge and invoke the presence of God in our social structure. Americans who do not believe that are welcome to stick around, but not to have their arguments taken seriously. We face desperate times ahead, and we need all the help we can get, both below and above.

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The foregoing item is a little late, but we were off station overseas for much of the month, and we thought any patriotic expression is better late than never.

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On our trip abroad we discovered the new Sphinx 3000 pistol, designed and produced in Switzerland. It is a fairly standard service sidearm available at present only in minor calibers, but shortly to be had in 45 ACP. It displays a number of desirable features, clearly derived from practitioners of the modern technique, but one which stands out is the coaxial light rail in the frame below the slide. The idea of a flash light in unit with your sidearm seems to me a good one, too long overlooked. The bedside house defense pistol really ought to incorporate a light, and this seems to me more apparent in the private than the public sector, though the military is at this time seeking this feature in a replacement sidearm. I did not shoot the Sphinx, but I look forward to testing it as soon as it becomes available in major caliber.

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Our grandson Captain Tyler Heath, USMC, has returned from combat, and he is writing it down. This is most gratifying, for what is not written down might well not ever have happened. The second Iraqi war was of just the right size, violently enough to be serious, but not long enough to be tiresome.

Captain is the best military rank, low enough to be immediately involved, yet not high enough to be removed from the nitty gritty. A captain is important enough to influence matters, but not yet so high as to be irrelevant. Joe Foss did his thing as a captain, and I did my little bit in the same rank. Tyler can tell us all about it now.

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The coaxial illuminator is, of course, a feature of the Steyr Scout, which I have called the "leopard light," since leopards are normally taken at night on a bait, but this feature improves the utility of the Scout in certain forms of law enforcement activity. The following item I quote from Ed Head, late of the US Border Patrol.

"I took my SS out on patrol along the border the other night and was astounded at how well it works as a patrol rifle. I had attached the flash light mount to the rifle and found the light to be very effective for looking into dark areas. The scope allowed me to see clearly into areas of varying levels of light provided by the border lighting and ambient light sources. Our current patrol rifle, the M4, has proved itself to be woefully inadequate for medium to long range shooting in night conditions and it is best limited to pistol engagements. However I won't hold my breath waiting for the Border Patrol to allow me to carry a Scout on duty."

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Frankie Lou, "our man in Nebraska," passes us the following illuminating anecdote. It seemed that an Army wife at Fort Bliss was so upset by the forthcoming assignment of her husband to combat contact that she had difficulty in sleeping, so along about midnight she drove to the convenience store to acquire some unaccustomed sleeping pills. The parking lot of a convenience store at midnight is a war zone, as everybody knows. As she was locking her car, a voice behind her said, "Give me the purse, bitch, or I'll kill you." She gave it to him all right, squarely in the face, smashing his nose and knocking out most of his front teeth. As it is not unheard of in our current social comedy, the goblin is now bringing suit against the girl for some obscure reason dreamed up by his attorney. Regardless of any legal angle, this further emphasizes the importance of attitude in combat. Mind-set is what wins.

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This pointless proliferation of commercial rifle cartridges verifies certain axioms of American marketing. What is *good* is what is *new*, regardless of utility, artistry or function; and logically, therefore, what is *old* is *not* good. We have had the 30-06 since 1906, and we have not been able to create a better cartridge, but it is *old*. Pfui!

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It is related that when the ship was in deep but not obvious distress the captain could not persuade the passengers to man the life boats, so he resorted to cultural remedy. To the Germans he said, "It is an order." To the English he said, "It is a game." To the French he said, "It is sinful." To the Italians he said, "It is forbidden." And to the Americans he said, "It is new."

It is true enough that some of what is new is excellent, notably automobiles, metals and fabrics, but a lot of what is new is lousy – notably clothing, "pop noise," and journalism.

We have had the cartridges we need since World War I. It is the guns we can improve.

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In our continued study of the art of war in the 21st century, we note the photograph of a female British corporal in Iraq going to battle with some sort of 22-caliber squirt gun in one hand and an umbrella in the other. As I remember, Wellington had this same problem in the Peninsular War, and he did not even have any girls in the ranks.

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While we did enjoy our recent trip to Europe to the utmost, we reflect that we still live here in the best of all worlds. From Colorado our daughter Parry was recently sponging off her boots on the porch when a nearly full-grown cow moose ambled leisurely around the corner, nodded politely, stamped through the flower bed, and disappeared through the trees. Parry and Bruce have deer, elk and cougar in Morrison, and moose and bear at Lake City. Christy and Chick, in Prescott, must be content with javelina.

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We note with some annoyance that current usage describes any sort of unexpected infantry attack as "an ambush." This is a bad habit, because the essence of ambush is surprise, and being surprised is the unforgivable sin of the junior officer. My esteemed Colonel Clifton Cates (later commandant) hammered into us that we might be forgiven for being defeated, but never for being surprised. Semantics decay with the times.

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Here in the middle of 2003 it is evident that what we used to call "the modern technique" is not so modern anymore. People who were not born when I coined the term are doing very well at this time using techniques originated long ago.

What then may be called the "elder technique" was essentially bullseye shooting, a demanding art still practiced widely today. A good bullseye shooter is much to be admired, since he can demonstrate superior eye/hand coordination and excellent nerve control. He is not, however, properly acquainted with the firearm as either a combat or a game harvesting device. Since the inception of the new system in the 1960s, organized competition has raised an irrelevant head. Competition designed to replicate field conditions was a good idea when it was started, but in my opinion it has today served its purpose. The competition game is just that – a game, and attempts to relate it to reality are dismissed as either dangerous or irrelevant. So be it. The knowledge is there and the craft is there and it is nice to have had a hand in it.

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This preoccupation with safety in gunhandling has assumed truly ridiculous proportions. I have been associated with personal firearms, both in and out of the service, for all my life, and so-called negligent discharges have never been any sort of a problem. (There is no such thing as an "accidental discharge." If a weapon is fired inadvertently, somebody has violated at least one of the four basic rules – and usually more than one.) Safety is an illusion, since life itself is not safe. We avoid hurting ourselves, or each other, insofar as this is practicable, but when we redouble our efforts after having lost sight of our goal, we become ridiculous. I have worked with thousands of fighting men, all of whom were armed with deadly weapons, and I never saw a reason to place safety above efficiency. In the first place, it cannot be done. And in the second place, it should not be attempted. The following from a lieutenant colonel of Marines now on active duty:

"When traveling between these kabals (most only a few kilometers apart), one is permitted to have a magazine inserted in his weapon (but no round chambered, of course, as that would be far too dangerous), but, upon entering a kabal, one is required to make Condition Four. As you might imagine, traveling from kabal to kabal (as I must do daily) the constant loading and clearing is absurdly frustrating and time consuming. We are supposed to stop and exit our vehicle in order to clear our weapon(s) at each kabal. The time wasted with this idiocy is substantial. To add insult to injury, there is no place for us to 'load' (insert magazines) on the way out. That is apparently unimportant.

"All of this because our 'leaders' unconditionally distrust warriors with loaded weapons. They are afraid of guns, and apparently are afraid of us having them. Knowing the poor training that most military personnel receive, I understand their fear, but instead of providing proper training, they order everyone to carry an unloaded weapon or no weapon at all. The 'cannon fodder mentality' is alive and well over here.

"Tired of this nonsense I started carrying concealed under my cammie blouse in a Blade-Tech kydex holster. Most gate guards just assume I don't have a pistol and thus give me puzzled looks, but wave me through anyway. Kydex is proving to be a great product for this environment.

"I met our main body yesterday. They all arrived from the aerial port of delivery (APOD) in (of course) Condition Three. The first thing our unit S-4 (a VMI graduate no less) asked me, 'Sir, where is the armory? These Marines have loaded weapons, and we need to turn them in before they have a negligent discharge.'

"I looked at him indignantly and replied, 'I'm sorry, Major. I've obviously been misinformed. I thought you were a man of honor, integrity, a fearless warrior, ready and eager to defend our country. I see instead that you are pitiable and afraid of our own guns! No. The Marines will

keep their weapons in Condition Three.' Not a word was said in reply, but they all slept with their weapons last night, and there were no NDs. Imagine that!

"Anyway, I wish officers who were afraid of Marines carrying loaded weapons would find another line of work, preferably in the UK. I, for one, wear my (Condition One) pistol constantly. After only one day of being screwed with, my Captains all do likewise. We're slowly spreading the sunshine here!"

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Since the founding of Gunsite so many years ago, we have established our totem as the raven, which is the bird of Odin. To the Norsemen the raven was the bird of wisdom, and wisdom is what we have sought to impart here at the school as long as we were able. Now it appears that a good many people are interested in how the term should be applied to our students. It does get complicated, but it may be summarized thus:

People who have been to Gunsite and have been personally instructed by me are properly referred to as Orange Gunsite graduates. Those who have been here after I left the podium are referred to as Grey Gunsite graduates. They may be highly competent, but I did not certify them so. Next are the people who have been instructed by me at other locations, both here and abroad and who may properly call themselves Gunsite graduates. Then there are people who have been taught abroad by a select group of masters, whom I have endorsed as such. These are also certainly members of the brotherhood. And lastly there are people who think they know what they are talking about and like to use the title. All of the foregoing groups, except the last, comprise the "*Ravenfolk*" and they are now found throughout most of the world. Those in the first category bear my signature – the others my good wishes.

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"Islam is a religion in which Allah (God) requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sent His Son to die for you."

John Ashcroft

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Our travels remind us again of the linguistic advice that one should do business in English, diplomacy in French, command troops in German, make love in Spanish, and sing in Italian. In amplification one should do his cursing in Arabic, though this is complicated by the diversity of that tongue. Iraqi Arabic is not Egyptian. Syrian is not Saudi. And Jordanian is not Pakistani. Presumably the Koran is written in authentic Arabic, but only a high level scholar can say so. This may account for the curious doctrinary inconsistencies and contradictions that clutter up current political discourse. The teachings of the Prophet (may peace be upon him) seem oddly childish to Western ears, but they may be due mainly to linguistics. As I understand it, the Prophet banned translation of his book – evidently with good reason.

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Despite the venerable injunction, you *can* get away with murder. Consider O.J. Simpson. Consider Lon Horiuchi. And consider those experts who did away with Vince Foster. Of course it may be that those last did not get away with it, having been taken care of Mafia style by those in charge. But in that case those in charge are presumably walking free – and probably in pretty high places in both Arkansas and Washington.

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Where's the body? Without any *corpus delicti* we don't really know if we won.

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Reflecting upon the recent unpleasantness in Mesopotamia, not yet quite concluded, we are reminded of the 200-year-old refrain of the US Marines:

"Sure it's a lousy war, but it's the only war we've got!"

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The practical use of the pistol is a study equally applicable to male and female, since it is conceptually defensive. In these days of aggressive feminism, women are often expected to be unprotected by men, and

thus should be able to protect themselves. Consequently it is not difficult to motivate most women to educate themselves in practical pistolcraft. With the rifle the matter is somewhat difficult since the rifle is an offensive weapon. If you stop fights with a pistol, you start fights with a rifle – or that is the theory. Thus it is not always easy to encourage a woman to study the rifle. Killing things is not exactly ladylike, and while ladies are out of fashion in today's culture, they still exist, and thank God for that. A woman may enjoy shooting a rifle, not because it is a killing instrument but because it is fun, and rifle shooting is fun. It is important, however, to be sure that a woman should not be introduced to the rifle unless she clearly and distinctly wishes to be. If she does not have a natural drive in that direction, forget it.

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*The Reunion* at Whittington is set for 17,18,19 October. We have planned several innovative events, including a couple for juniors, and we hope for even better dramatic presentations than before. `Tis always an occasion for emotional refreshment.

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 9

August 2003

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## High Summer

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Summer has never been our favorite season, except during childhood when school was out, but it does have its points. Among other things, summer provides a good time in which to check zeros and loads, and also to keep in some sort of practice. The competition shooter, of course, needs to practice all the time, but for those of us who wish only to maintain a respectable level of practical competence, practice is still necessary. Most people, unfortunately, have to make a measured effort at marksmanship practice. A good place to shoot is hard to find, even in the "red counties," and public shooting ranges are usually depressingly restricted in method permitted. Still we practice, and for a good shot the problem is eased by dry firing at home. You do not have to fire a live round to practice quick acquisition of position, nor to smooth up your reloading speed.

We tend to lose pistol proficiency quicker than rifle skill. I discovered that I did not lose much during World War II, though I fired very little with the rifle. But for whatever reason, marksmanship is not a talent to be neglected, and summertime may present us with practice time. Besides which, it is fun.

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The fifth of August is our own personal holiday for it is the anniversary of the head-on with our one and only lion, down on the Crocodile River below Engonyameni. We used the Lion Scout, the immediate parent of the 376 Steyr "Dragoon," and established it as the (almost) perfect tool for the task. So now 5 August is *Lion Day*, as inscribed upon the calendar.

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We are informed that Gunsite is now offering freebies to returning warriors. Now there is an example to be observed by the good guys!

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In the military sense, the 21st century does not look to be a promising era for the marksman. If these first years are indicative, infantry action seems to take place mainly at night and at very close range, circumstances which do not reward the expert marksman. The squirt gun and the handheld artillery are the current weapons of the foot soldier, and it appears that supporting fires do almost all of the damage on the battlefield. The venerable Marine Corps tradition that a Marine of any rank must first of all be a *rifleman* is at this time endangered. In law enforcement, the situation is less clear, but the pernicious philosophy of "spray-and-pray" continues to dominate police ranges. In the private sector, the need to hit the target precisely, hard and quickly (**DVC**) is less imperiled, though in formal competition the need for adequate power is still not fully understood.

Personal marksmanship still remains an essential attribute of any well organized man, as well as a *desideratum* for such ladies as are so inclined. (Besides, it is fun!)

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We were annoyed to learn that the factory has discontinued production of the 376 Steyr rifles. We have never been much excited by the appearance of new cartridges, but the 376 Steyr *in Scout configuration* definitely filled a vacant niche. Both guns and ammunition are still available, of course, and we have a loaner here at Gunsite for the deserving poor.

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Marketing remains a pretty arcane study in the firearms industry. The object of the marketer is to make the

prospective customer dissatisfied with what he already has. With guns this is pretty hard to do, since we have had access to very superior products for most of a century. A good rifle will give good service for at least three generations, and unless it is abused it will not wear out. Even the youth may not constitute a valid market, since junior can do very well with dad's rifle – or granddad's. It is also true with pistols, since the great feats of pistolcraft date back to the Spanish–American War, and the greatest handgun of them all has been with us since 1911.

So the advertiser has a problem, and it is certainly more political than technical. We see, for example, that there is now a movement in the UN (where else?) to strip smallarms from all non–governmental individuals, because the possession of such weapons allows people to oppose the UN itself. Certainly we cannot have that sort of thing – now can we?

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"*C Stories*," our new book, is now pretty well packaged up, and scouting for a publisher. It is decisively augmented by a splendid series of full–page illustrations from *family member* Paul Kirchner, with whose work you are all doubtless familiar. We cannot predict a release date, but the book should make a very nice Christmas present.

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In Europe we noticed that major pistol contests are now starting in *Condition 4*, with the unloaded weapon lying on a table in front of the shooter, hands free. I am sure there is a good reason for this, but it does show that practical pistol competition need not be too specifically practical.

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So what are we going to do with this ragheaded US trooper who took it upon himself to murder his brothers–at–arms? The act of killing the man who fights alongside you is so atrocious as to merit special attention. If our Constitution did not forbid "cruel and unusual punishment," we would resurrect the exemplary British act of "hanging in irons," in which the subject is hoisted aloft in a snug–fitting network of iron straps and permitted to perish of thirst or exposure, whatever comes first. Clearly we are not going to do that, but whatever we *are* going to do will be too good for this fellow.

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As these unpleasant people in Iraq keep on potting American soldiers at the rate of about one a day, we have a suggestion for the local command. Let anyone caught in the possession of a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) be pigged on the spot. Not shot, just pigged. That is not even against any stipulation of the Geneva Conference, but I bet it would work. (Being "pigged" is being doused in pig viscera.)

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Despite the squeaking of those who would have it otherwise, the United States of America remains the last free nation on earth. God made it so. The Bill of Rights keeps it so. And the National Rifle Association keeps *that* so.

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When in England at a fairly large conference, Colin Powell was asked by the Archbishop of Canterbury if our plans for Iraq were just an example of empire–building by George Bush. He answered by saying the following:

"Over the years, the United States has sent many of its fine men and women into great peril to fight for freedom beyond our borders. The only amount of land we have *ever* asked for in return is enough to bury those who did not return."

It became very quiet in the room.

via Dr. Leon Flancher

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This foolish talk about reparations for slavery would be funny if it were not evidence of disastrous historical ignorance. Slavery is a natural course of human events from as far back as we have any record. If you are not

going to kill all the losers on the spot, you put them to work. Somebody has got to chop the wood and draw the water, and that is generally what losers do. If we suggest that somebody today should pay somebody else for something that other people did in times long past, we might suggest that the Romans pay the Algerians, the Aztec pay the Maya, the Arabs pay the Berbers, the English pay the Irish, the Norwegians pay the Russians, the Russians pay the Cossacks, the Mohawks pay the Pequots, and so on and on and on. American Negro chattel slavery, which was just one form of the "peculiar institution," was abolished a century and a half ago, in case Al Sharpton has not heard. It would not be surprising to learn that some of Al Sharpton's ancestors did a bit of buying and selling on their own. Unfortunately there is no law against being ridiculous.

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The new crop of pocket 45 pistols does seem to be a useful innovation. These little guns may kick pretty hard, as some suggest, but since they are intended primarily for arm's-length situations, this is not significant. In practicing with them, it is a good idea to keep the standard magazine fully extended to get some purchase for the little finger of the shooting hand. You *can* have it both ways.

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"For men of understanding do not say that the sword is to blame for murder, nor wine for drunkenness, nor strength for outrage, nor courage for foolhardiness, but they lay the blame on those who make an improper use of the gifts which have been bestowed upon them by God, and punish them accordingly."

St. John Chrysostom (circa 341–410 AD), from "*Treatise on the Priesthood*,"  
via B.T. Carlin, MD

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Practical shooting in training and practice should always involve a certain amount of work from automobiles, both stationary and moving. A lot of pistol action (including one of my own) is of this sort, and it should not be overlooked in training. I have always taught it in Latin America, and I used to teach it here at Gunsite. It should not be ignored simply because it is difficult to conduct.

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It may be that there is such a thing as racial memory, and it is supported by the undeniable observation that the goblins *will* get you if you don't watch out. It is just that today goblins may not look the part, no matter how they act. Neanderthals (for lack of a better term) existed contemporaneously with the Cro-Magnons (for lack of a better term) for a very long time, and they did not vanish all at once. If brain size is an indication, they were the intellectual equals of their successors, but while the remaining groups hung out in deep woods and occasionally grabbed off a Cro-Magnon child for supper, they never mastered missileery. They never discovered the bow and arrow, and they never found out how to kill beyond arm's length. Thus they disappeared – but not all at once. You better watch out!

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"Wrath is better than sorrow."

#### The Guru

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*Hydrurga*, the leopard seal, is a large, active, carnivorous predator, inhabiting the oceans of Antarctica. There has been no case of *Hydrurga's* scarfing up anybody – until now. Last month Kirsty Brown, a British marine scientist working for British Antarctic Survey, was attacked and killed while snorkeling in the ice water off the Weddell Sea. Snorkeling in these waters strikes us as a questionable occupation, but there has never been a case up till now of *Hydrurga's* claiming a human victim, probably because people just do not go where he is. Some time ago we suggested that a *Hydrurga* hunt might be a spirited enterprise, and not without some scientific research value. Such a project does not seem likely, however, in today's climate of opinion. Maybe we should agitate the Safari Club in this direction. At 11 feet in length and weighing about a thousand pounds, he would make into a handsome centerpiece for the trophy room of "The man who has everything."

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If there is a war on, and there often is, it behooves a young, unattached man to go get in it. Until he has been in a battle a man always wonders about whether he would measure up to really serious stress. A man who has never been in a major battle can never be really sure of himself.

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We have always assumed that every household must contain a 22 – at least every rural household. What sort of 22 depends on circumstances, of course, but the rifle may be generally more useful than the pistol. The pistol is handier, but the rifle makes a better trainer for the young since it is easier to manage. If the piece is primarily a trainer, it should probably be a single-shot, but if it is to be taken afield, a large capacity magazine is a convenience. I do not think the piece should be semi-automatic, though this is not a critical consideration. The bolt-action is popular, for obvious reasons, but I have always thought that the best general-purpose 22 is the Marlin Model 39. Its lever-action is equally convenient for either hand. Its half-cock safety is convenient and reliable, and its trigger-action can be honed to complete satisfaction. In the 20-inch barrel, take-down version, it may be the best general-purpose 22. It should probably not be fitted with a telescope sight, since a good ghost-ring adapts well to the hard-top Marlin action and provides all the precision necessary to all but the optically handicapped.

We need not be exclusive, however. Good 22s of all types are widely available, and easily modified for shooters of small stature. High quality, compact 22 auto-pistols are not as common as they should be, but they fill a specific niche as a convenient household item. Naturally any household item should be available only to persons of responsibility – of any age. Children can be taught responsibility at an earlier age than widely supposed, and prior to achieving that responsibility they should be kept physically separated from both firearms and ammunition. Reasonably alert children may be taught to be responsible citizens at least by the age of ten, but usually they do not have enough length of bone to manage a rifle until about fourteen. This varies from case to case, but it depends basically upon the social responsibility of their parents. This is not a matter of numerical age, but rather of character.

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Remember how Kipling put it?

"When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains, and the women come out to cut up your remains, just roll to your rifle and blow out your brains, and go to your god like a soldier."

*Plus ça change, plus la même chose.*

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I suppose it is a losing battle, but I continue to insist that those who undertake to design courses of fire for smallarms competition should guide themselves by the principle of relevance. Any challenge posed in a contest should attempt to replicate a live action taking place in the field or on the street. If the challenge can not realistically be encountered in live action, there is no need to test it in a contest. Thus it is that many standard training courses used in the public sector are unsuitable for competition.

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I repeat that I am dubious about shooting sticks. They seem to have appeared originally with the buffalo hunters of the Great Plains, who often had to engage in high grass, but today they are practically standard equipment in Africa. This is partly because a large number of African clients take to the field without any training or experience in marksmanship. It seems to me obvious that no one should take after big game until he is thoroughly grounded on small game. In the American West the ideal practice target is the jackrabbit. Until such time as the novice hunter is fifty percent effective on jackrabbits, he should not take after trophy game. Besides, contrary to widespread opinion, a jackrabbit is quite good provender when properly prepared. (This preparation must be long and slow, if one is to avoid meat the texture of truck tires.)

In any case, the use of shooting sticks as a crutch for the incompetent marksman is a dreary development. Among other things, they must be lugged about by a servitor, and dependence upon such is undignified.

License registration for last year disclosed that as of this time more girls than boys are putting in for hunting licenses.

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Well I guess we did not get him with that big bomb. I have never been impressed with "assassination by bomb." Bombs are indiscriminate, clumsy and unreliable. What is needed is a Hanneken, as we may have mentioned before. Sergeant Hanneken got his man with his 1911 45 pistol, and then he lugged the body back over his shoulder to show off without photographs. I have always been powerfully impressed by having had the honor of shaking dice for drinks with Colonel Hanneken. What a distinction it is to play "buddies at the bar" with the truly great!

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The consensus seems to be that he is still alive. If so, he is now in a position to strike a really shattering blow for The Faith. *He can give himself up.* There is nothing that could flummox the infidel as much as physical custody of the evil image. Fortunately he is not very bright, so we need not fear this development.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 10

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## Hot Spell

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This has been the hottest summer on record, and when we remember that even an average summer in Arizona is hot, we can thank God that this one is nearly over. Here at Gunsite it is not bad, but the people down on the desert are frying their eggs on the kitchen sink, or so they say. The British Colonials have always suffered much from colonial heat, but I have never been much impressed by it in Africa. I can attest that it does get hot in Mesopotamia, but when I was there it was not necessary to wear a spacesuit on duty. Today's warriors are bothered more by protective clothing than by enemy gunfire, and we have at least one complaint back from Baghdad to the effect that the water in Saddam's swimming pools is too hot to be refreshing. Indeed, war is hell!

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"Times may change, but standards must be maintained."

Victoria R.I.

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Being of the old school – the very old school – I wish to warn youthful readers against putting their faith in "gun writers." These people have a right to their opinions, but these opinions should not be taken as incontrovertible. As a youth I was led astray on a number of subjects and had to learn of my errors by personal field experience. The fact that a man "has been there and done that" does not necessarily mean that he knows what he is talking about. Read as much as you wish, but read critically, and then submit your conclusions to the test. This is not always possible, so read carefully, read critically, and then reserve judgment.

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You probably have as many 45 automatics as you need. However, if you are thinking of getting a new one, bear in mind that Kimber offers one with a light rail, and a light rail is a good idea.

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Street crime appears to be rising steadily in England. It is hard to say why. An Englishman is not permitted to resist physical indignity on the streets of his cities, of course, but one wonders if he would fight back if he were allowed to by his "nanny government." It has long been claimed that the English lost their emotional viscera in Flanders in 1914. This is possibly true, but just how that relates to the man-in-the-street in the 21st century is difficult to establish. No one seems to care.

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We are somewhat saddened by this anti-French propaganda which seems popular at the time. It is certainly possible to dislike a head-of-state without letting that influence our social judgments. This Chirac is nobody's favorite person, but let us not forget that the United States has had presidents over preceding decades of whom we have no cause to be proud. My father was something of a Francophile, and spoke the language to a useful extent. He insisted on one occasion that the French must be a truly great people when you consider they can cook a carp and make it taste good.

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"Tolerance, like moderation, is a virtue best observed in moderation." (In essence, tolerance means that you don't really give a damn.)

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And we now have a correspondent who maintains that some sort of physical handicap must have led Jack Weaver to devise the Weaver Stance. The reasoning here is obscure, but seems to be based upon the observation that much modern competition is won by other techniques. We must note that today's so-called practical pistol competition has almost completely lost track of the element of practicality. Modern contests do not attempt to replicate street encounters. Besides we should point out that in many endeavors it is quite possible for some experts to succeed by doing it the hard way. For three years I tried to catch Jack in diversified competition, but it was not until I adopted his system that I was able to catch him. Both Jack and I might be considered exceptions, but I think not. Jack had the better mouse trap, and John Plähn showed us how to use it.

I have a feature piece on this very subject forthcoming shortly in *G&A*

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It would appear that at this time the revolver is largely obsolete for military and law enforcement duty, having been replaced almost universally by the minor caliber, semi-automatic pistol. The caliber issue, however, is still open, and we understand that the US military establishment has been convinced by its Middle Eastern operations that a service pistol should not only be reliable, but *powerful*. It is not news that pistol action occurs largely in nearly full dark and at a little over arm's length. The pistol bullet must hit reliably *and hit hard*. (And also it must hit before the enemy does.) As I recall, that point was made quite some time ago.

But that refers to the public sector. There are several circumstances in the private sector wherein the revolver is still very much with us. For personal defense the wheel-gun retains an advantage of simplicity of operation which may be significant in the hands of a private citizen. The auto-pistol should be checked out and tested every month or so, but the wheel-gun may be put away and left untended for long periods. As a house-gun the revolver may be placed under the control of persons who are not recreational shooters, nor particularly interested in firearms, without elaborate education or notable motivation. A recreational shottist will prize and treasure his personal weapon, and he will learn to love it as a friend. The otherwise preoccupied housewife may be shown how to use a wheel-gun in a couple of easy lessons, which need not be renewed with annoying frequency.

I know a couple of cultivated ladies who are definitely not warrior types, but who are quite secure living cozily with compact, powerful, light-weight revolvers, quite suitable for travel in purse, fanny-pack or glove box – and in regular storage within the night table. One such is carried loaded with Plus P ammunition featuring jeweled implants in the hollow point. Any goblin shot with that sort of thing should consider himself distinguished – and be welcome to keep the jewel.

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There are places where wildlife may be considered a hazard to life and limb, despite what the bambiists may say. Bears of all sorts have been known to open hostilities without provocation, and wild swine constitute excellent pistol targets throughout most of the temperate zones of the world.

It may be claimed that a light rifle or carbine in major caliber constitutes a better defensive device against wildlife than any sort of pistol, but there are many circumstances which take technicians afield, and these people frequently need both hands free in order to do their jobs.

By curious historical happenstance *Hydrurga*, the leopard seal, has recently attracted attention in Antarctica. This is an active, one-thousand pound carnivore with no fear of anything except the killer whale. Anyone who has any plans to toy around in the Antarctic shelf ice should realize that to *Hydrurga* he is just another item on the menu. He attacks openly, without cover, in broad daylight, and a heavy-caliber hunting revolver – 44 Mag and up – would seem a useful accessory for such people. (I am not sure that I would include the new 500 Smith & Wesson here. It is so huge and heavy that a Wild West "Co-pilot" would be easier to pack around.)

Having been an auto-pistol enthusiast for most of my life, I still take pleasure in the management of a rather curious and attractive offering from Taurus. This is their titanium snubby in caliber 45 Colt. I have latched onto the only example they made in this combination, featuring its pleasant "off-gold" finish. It is not a recreational firearm, since as anyone might suppose it *kicks* – hard. One box of full-house 45 Colt will probably last you a lifetime, but the piece feels snug and comfortable in the hand, and it needs no attention year after year. It does not pretend to proclaim the return of the revolver, but I am glad it is there.

Before leaving the subject, I must point out an aspect of the revolver culture which I had not suspected. It seems that there are people who study modern handguns of various types with no interest in their usefulness, but only in their manufacturing history. I have two old Smith & Wesson Magnum revolvers made before the company issued model numbers. I have been told by an expert that one of these guns, the 44, simply does not exist. A piece of that exact configuration was never manufactured, according to company records. This makes the pistol a delicious conversation piece – with certain people. It has a great competitive record, having performed some remarkable feats of practical marksmanship, but the collector cares nothing about that. What he is concerned about in order to attract attention is its ghostly existence. I can hold it in my hand, but it is not there according to the books.

This matter of selective aerial assassination is pretty fascinating, and it is historically unprecedented. To identify a selected enemy by his publicity, and then to identify him from the air and kill him with a perfectly placed shot which hazards no innocent bystanders, is a neat trick. Regrettably it can only be carried out by a modern military power, which employs modern military technology. This does take something of the glamor off it, but we suppose that is just as well.

The 19th century Boers of South Africa were, as close as may be asserted, a "nation of riflemen." They shot for food, they shot to fight, and they shot for competition. They did not, however, shoot very much, ammunition being too expensive to expend frivolously. Livestock was their wealth, and they were reluctant to slaughter beef for sustenance. As soon as he was big enough to handle a task, the young man was dispatched by his father to harvest game for the family. He was allowed one round, and he was cautioned not to wander far. He sought a one-shot kill close to the house, and if he did not achieve it, he wished he had. *Oupa*, the head of the household, was a formidable *pater familias*, and he made his wishes clear by the means of a stout leather strap. Sights were open and primitive, and trajectories were curved. A young man brought up this way may not have been a medal winner on the target range, but he was a good shot – in the sense that he achieved what he set out to do with outstanding consistency.

On Sundays, Boer families went to church wherever possible. When no church was within reach, *Oupa* conducted the service himself – for four hours or more. That used up the morning. In the afternoons they played in various ways. A regular event was the rifle shoot, using a hen's egg as a target, on an anthill at 100 paces – firing from standing position. This year at Whittington we intend to set up this contest, though I do not know how to score it. We will figure something out.

Reports from the front indicate that the Arabs cut down all their power lines in order to steal the copper, and then complain bitterly that power is out. Nation building, indeed, has its problems.

A correspondent informs me that one reason for the sudden promotion of short-case magnum rifle cartridges is the belief that this sort of thing produces a measurable increase in accuracy. "Wal ah be dogged," as we used to say in the Wild West. I never missed what I did not have. My venerable Remington 30-06 has always shot better than I can shoot it, and my prized Model 70 375 shot a three-shot one-holer at 100 yards the first time I tried it. So if we shorten the case, permitting the charge to burn more quickly, we can have a more accurate cartridge? In the first place accuracy is not solely a function of cartridge design. Propellant type and amount, breach locking system, bullet design, barrel consistency, stock bedding, and, for all I know, sunspots are also involved – and to what end? All my rifles, stock and custom, have always placed their bullets exactly



where I told them to, out to a distance where I could not really see what I was shooting at, and that is with "old-fashioned" long-case cartridges. Townsend Whelen, of revered memory, declaimed, "Only accurate rifles are interesting," and for the better part of a century American shooters have quoted this dictum as scripture. God bless Townsend Whelen! But let us be sensible about this and start by defining our terms. A good shot may shoot up to the limits of his rifle, but a poor shot will not get hits by giving him a "more accurate" rifle. I realize what we are talking about here is *marketing*, and that is okay, but do not ask for a 300-mile-an-hour car when the rubber will fly off the rims at 250. I have not yet met anyone who was able to shoot better than a good rifle, using good ammunition.

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We hear curious accounts from the front concerning the disarming of our own troops. Some people in authority seem to have got the idea that we must not let our people appear hostile to the local Arabs. This has caught on more with the Army than with the Marines. We hear from a couple of sources that the locals have discovered that while they may shoot safely at American soldiers, it is very dangerous to shoot at American Marines, who are inclined to shoot back, and they cannot tell the uniforms apart.

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It appears that we may have to start culling elephants in Africa's Kruger Park, to the utter horror of the bambiists. Elephants are wonderful creatures, but they must be managed with care lest they eat themselves out of house and home. Game management usually involves killing in controlled fashion, and the very idea horrifies certain kinds of people. This was vividly impressed upon me as a youth on Catalina Island. When we acquired a summer home there the place was lavishly populated with mule deer. Mrs. Wrigley, who owned the island, would not think of allowing hunting. So the beasts did themselves in. I remember distinctly that one year there were so many deer back in those hills that you almost had to shoo them out of the way on a hike – and next year there were none.

Game management is best understood in Africa today, where controlled hunting has kept things in balance for all to see. Once the wrong people get into the legislative act, however, disaster follows. Most of the anti-hunting people are uninterested in wildlife, but they are terribly concerned lest somebody enjoys shooting it. These are the *polypragmatoi*, the busybodies, one of the curses of popular government. It has been said that war is too important a subject to be left up to soldiers. To follow that point we may say that legislation is too important a matter to be left up to legislators.

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There may be valid reasons for taking running shots on game, but they always must be carefully considered. There is just too much chance of wounding, and about the only real excuse to try a running shot is to secure a beast which already has been hit and is likely to get away wounded. You can dream up other examples, but remember that you are doing a bad thing and must justify it to yourself.

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If you have not yet got your copy of Ann Coulter's new book "*Treason*," step right up! Every household should have two copies, one for the bookshelf and the other as a loaner. I have long felt that the English language, properly employed, is the most powerful weapon in the world, and here is an author who employs it properly. Ann Coulter uses English the way Scaramouche used his rapier, and for the right cause. "Razor wit" is the proper term. We just cannot have too much of it!

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Will handheld artillery supplant marksmanship?

When I was adventuring around in Southeast Asia during the Korean War, I became acquainted with the 2.36 Bazooka, and then later with the 3.5. Irregular or paramilitary forces seldom boast artillery, but it seemed to me that they might well find rocket-propelled high explosive projectiles very useful. Both Bazookas launched anti-armor bombs, patterned after the German *Panzerfaust*, which did not prove especially useful in the anti-personnel role. So I put in for a supply of fragmentation warheads for the 3.5. To no avail. My operations were too low-key to warrant the attention of the ordnance people.

But times have changed. While "modern" armies disdain it, the "primitives" are now going in enthusiastically for the ubiquitous Rocket Propelled Grenade, familiarly featured in the press as the RPG. This is only reasonable. The RPG is eminently suitable for low-level armies. It is cheap, easily distributed, effective against vehicular troops, and it calls for almost no skill on the part of the user. Its short range limitation is no handicap at night and in street fighting.

I'm sorry I mentioned it.

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On the other side of the world, it has just been made possible in Alaska for the private citizen to go armed without a license. Alaska and the state of Vermont are today sparkling bastions of liberty remaining in the world. God Bless America – regardless of what they say in Alabama!

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 11

September 3, 2003

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## Summer's End

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It certainly has been a long, hot summer, and it may not be over yet. However, as with all summers, it gave us some free time in which to practice our marksmanship and check our loads and zeros. We must remember to avoid the tendency to spend too much time on the bench. The bench rest may be likened to a fever thermometer; it serves as a technical test, but it has little to do with marksmanship. The proper selection of the firing position and the quick assumption thereof are the aspects to be polished. We note with interest that the various qualification systems currently in use in Africa pay little or no attention to time. The field marksman may have unlimited time upon rare occasions, but he certainly should not count on this. The field rifleman should be able to hold his piece out at arm's length, one-handed, for sixty seconds, without misery, and he should be able to get off a precisely aimed shot, from a field carry, in five seconds from a supported position – two and a half seconds from offhand. These are things to work on.

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Recently I got to thinking about professional terminology in regard to shooting, and I am now making up a list of those men who truly qualify as "shooting masters." I will not print the list, since to do so would be unnecessarily to hurt the feelings of those not listed. Besides which, such an endeavor must be entirely subjective. Still, it is interesting to consider the factors involved.

The shooting master must be an extraordinarily good shot, by whatever measure you choose to employ, but that is by no means enough. The master must understand more than just how to be a good shot. He must know why. The master is more than a practitioner, he is fundamentally a dispenser of doctrine, and he must understand fully the basis of his doctrine. The theory of shooting doctrine is not readily available, and must be studied with more care than is usually given to it. Certain elements of shooting skill are inherent, such as eye-to-finger coordination, but even a clumsy man may improve his skill if he knows how to go about it, and the shooting master must be able to explain this clearly. At one time all masters were self-taught, there being nothing but field experience on which to understand the art. This is no longer true, but still the physiological basis for the study of marksmanship is known to comparatively few people. Too many instructors feel that simple repetition will teach what is necessary, and gauge the worth of any training system by the number of rounds fired. It would seem obvious that error repeated does not make for proficiency, and yet it is amazing how many people who profess to teach marksmanship watch the target rather than the shooter.

It may be that marksmanship is going out of style, as fewer people all the time take to the woods and mass armies engage mainly in the dark. Be that as it may, the list of shooting masters has always been short and will continue to be so. I suppose that no one really needs to be a good shot, anymore than he needs to be a pianist or a philosopher. The study is interesting, however, and I continue to pursue it at some length – with a little help from my friends.

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I ran across one pretty bizarre specialty down in the Carolina piney woods. The boys down there shoot hogs from tree stands, usually in conditions verging upon full dark, and at ranges of 40 yards or less. The specialty rifle in those parts is a modest and often aged lever-action 30-30, fitted with a moonscope – the sight being worth three times as much as the rifle. The combination is perfect for the task, and if it does not gratify the lusts of the pride-of-ownership people, it sure puts down the pig. If it looks pretty funny with that big bore telescope riding atop that proletarian rifle, nobody minds.

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We note with pleasure that Ruger is now promoting what they call a "John Wayne Coach Gun," which is a short-barreled, exposed hammer, double-twelve shotgun. (I have in the past referred to this sort of piece as a *lupara*, a term of Sicilian extraction, but by whatever name it is a highly utilitarian object.) The shotgun is probably the ideal instrument for home defense, and it should be neither complex nor clumsy. Eighteen- or twenty-inch barrels contribute to handy manipulation indoors, and exposed hammers permit the weapon to be maintained fully loaded indefinitely without mainspring fatigue. It may be true that the large bore-size of a shotgun invites small beasties to take up residence in your *lupara*, but that can be avoided by inserting a small cotton ball in each muzzle. We must accept the fact that the "John Wayne Coach Gun" will be promoted more as an accessory to "cowboy action shooting" than as an instrument of home defense. No matter. Whether you play cowboy or not, home-defense remains a serious matter.

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Certainly it would be nice if those who venture into print would watch their language. The Greek term *hero* has a definite meaning, but today it seems to be easily applied to anybody who brushes his teeth and buttons his fly. Consider the following:

"I am Pallas Athene, and I know the thoughts of all men's hearts and discern their manhood or their baseness. From the souls of clay I turn away, and they are blessed but not by me. They fatten at ease like sheep in the pasture and eat what they did not sow like oxen in the stall. They grow and spread like the gourd along the ground, but like the gourd they give no shade to the traveler. When they are ripe death gathers them and they go down unloved into Hell and their name vanishes out of the land.

"But to the souls of fire I give more fire, and to those who are manful I give a might more than man. These are the heros, the sons of the immortals who are blessed, but not like the souls of clay, for I drive them forth by strange paths that they may fight the titans and the monsters and the enemies of Gods and men.

"Through doubt and need and danger in battle I drive them; and some of them are slain in the flower of youth, no man knows when or where; and some of them when noble named and live to a fair and green old age; but what will be their end I know not. Tell me now, Perseus, which of these two sorts of men seem to you more blessed?"

Charles Kingsley, Canon of Westminster and Chaplain to Queen Victoria

We have some heros – in fact we have a good many, but their stature is grossly eroded by the misuse of the term.

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There is no rule in journalism which demands that a writer must know anything about what he writes, but still we wish that editors would make some sort of effort to tidy up what their contributors set down. For example, consider this, "With a good .30 caliber Weatherby magnum, even a mediocre shot can pick a small bird off a limb at 1200 yards." Now that is really something! This is the work of a syndicated columnist whose name I will not reveal for fear of embarrassment. But really, this sort of thing is ridiculous. The author writes, ".30 caliber Weatherby magnum," is an artifact which does not exist, yet he assumes that his readers will take him seriously. This guy pretends to be a knowledgeable shooter – which gives all of us a bad name.

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We note that Norinco in Red China is now producing replicas of the Broomhandle Mauser. Also they are announcing production of Bill Ruger's splendid 22 auto pistol, for which there should be a market. Before World War II this niche was filled by the distinguished Colt Woodsman, which was pretty standard equipment in any country home or pack train in my school days. Colt ceased production with the war, and at its conclusion Bill Ruger leaped neatly into the breach, and his nifty offering became the standard of the day. The

"plinking pistol" was as essentially part of the sporting scene as the tennis racket or the fly rod for many decades, and while plinking is not as commonplace a picnic sport as it once was, it should still be encouraged. As our culture changes (degenerates?) certain artifacts come and go, as any marketer can tell you, but I would like to think that our manpower reserve still contains a large portion of young men who are accustomed to plink for pleasure.

Note that plinking should not be confused with target shooting, which is a much more stylized and restricted pastime. Only target shooters enjoy target shooting, but everybody enjoys plinking. It makes us uneasy to learn that the Communists may understand that better than we do.

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We rather wish that the press would get rid of this term "innocent civilians." What is evidently meant is "non-combatant civilians," since innocence is at best problematical. The implication, of course, is that anybody wearing a uniform is somehow *guilty*. That is not an assumption we wish to convey in this time of troubles.

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Anyone who has read the Constitution of the United States knows that it makes no mention of any separation of church and state. That fanciful wall was the affectation of Mr. Thomas Jefferson, and it has no force of law, nor any particular force of custom. The Founding Fathers sought to forbid the establishment of a state church, but they were positively not advocates of irreligion. It seems odd that today's noisier elements on the Left seem to fear the establishment of a state church, which has not been a threat for a couple of hundred years. Some people can lead moral lives without any sort of church, but they are the minority. Most people need sanction in order to lead moral lives. The state describes what is a crime. The church describes what is a sin, and a given act may be either or both, with or without fear of punishment, here or hereafter. See what happens to the post-moderns who attempt to set up a society without rules, either civic or religious! A man's behavior is more effectively controlled by his conscience than by the law, because while he may be able to avoid legal punishment he can never escape his conscience. Of course, he must *have* a conscience, as the current counter-culture creeps apparently do not.

So let us remember that while there is no legal wall of separation between church and state, that does not mean that the moral authority of the church is to be disregarded.

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The three rifles on the cover of my current work, "*The Art of the Rifle*," remain the three rifles of maximum interest at this time. You would never suspect this from perusal of the specialty press, but the manufacturers of those three weapons – the "Co-pilot," the Blaser 93, and the Steyr Scout – are not noticeably interested in promotion.

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One correspondent writes to the effect that the shooting periodicals should devote primary attention to cheap guns. I have had occasion to confront this attitude for a long time, and while I do not condemn it as sinful, I do disagree with it. Cheap guns are okay, and we must make due with what we can afford, but I do not think that being broke is a circumstance to be sought. Here in the opening years of the 21st century, Americans can buy serviceable personal firearms over-the-counter, and for that we are immensely grateful. But it is a fact of life that nobody *needs* a rifle. He wants a rifle, and he is happier wanting a good example than a poor one. And certainly nobody needs an armory full of rifles. With a good 22 and a Steyr Scout, a serious rifleman may handle almost any circumstance which may call for a rifle. Specialities, of course, have an appeal. The elephant hunter needs an elephant gun, and the competition rifleman needs a competition rifle. If we disregard these specialized demands, however, we are better advised to save our money and wait for the best possible instrument.

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Norinco is also now offering a replica of the excellent M39 22 lever-gun, which I have always thought was the best thing of its kind. Somebody connected with Norinco is gifted with a degree of imagination not common in the marketplace.

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The century-old 45-70 cartridge is attracting much attention at this time, as well it should. Within its limitations it is an excellent round, and its limitations are not as narrow as some would have you believe. It is not a long-range cartridge (unless you look at some of the target scores achieved in ancient times by the trapdoor Springfield), but the need for a long-range cartridge is specialized, today confined mainly to those who shoot whitetail deer from trucks across cultivated fields in the East. I do not think people who hunt from trucks are doing justice to Artemis, but age catches up with us all eventually, and I guess we should not give up the joys of the hunt completely simply because we can no longer hike as we would like.

The 45-70 does just fine on almost anything up to 150 yards, and well enough at 200 if the target is large. Its impact effect is about perfect for moose and the big bears, and it is a superb lion-stopper for those lucky enough to face a charge.

It does trouble me to see people treating the 45-70 today as if it were a general-purpose round, choosing light bullets for increased velocity and fitting telescopic sights. I see no reason for a scope on a 45-70, nor bullets of 400-grains or less. That 500-grain soft lead slug is just right at emergency ranges, and picking up a couple of hundred feet per second by going to a short bullet will not give you a 30-06.

Back in the old days it was thought that any sporting rifle taking the 45-70 cartridge would need to be huge and heavy to soften the presumably disturbing recoil. The Winchester lever-gun, Model 86, proved cumbersome for the pedestrian, and hardly more efficient than a 30-30 for a deer hunter. So the 45-70, retired for over a century, now enjoys a rebirth in "The Age of the Magnum." It is perfectly married to Jim West's "Co-pilot," which is now available in caliber 457 West, a sort of a "Plus P" version of the original cartridge. Personally I think the plain 45-70 will do all that is necessary as a bear stopper. Remember he cannot hurt you if he cannot reach you.

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*The Age of Communication* has evidently convinced people that punctuation is meaningless. We get these marvelous missives over the air, and then we must sit down in council and attempt to render them into intelligible English. This can be done, of course, and it is up to us to match the bad with the good.

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Does it not seem to you that the principal emotional drive of the liberal establishment is *fear*? These people seem terribly afraid that somebody might get hurt. Well, somebody might, but that is true totally apart from political considerations and need not be given prominence in our discussions. Fear is not a dignified emotion, and while we must admit that it exists, we must not dignify it as a prime causative agent. Everybody knows fear – what is important is not to let that bother you. This continued journalistic wringing of hands is beneath our dignity. Nothing significant has ever been achieved by men who let apprehension corrode their principles.

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Some of our pundits choose to make a political virtue of diversity. The point is not necessarily well taken. The goal of good government is the optimum balance of liberty and order. Social diversity does not pull in that direction. Liberty is what we seek over the centuries, but if we grant it to too diverse a population, order disappears. It is said that in Switzerland nobody knows the name of the sitting president, and Switzerland seems to offer a nice balance. Social discipline is not best enforced by regulation, but rather by custom. The Swiss are diverse linguistically, but not socially, and they seem to make out pretty well without recourse to the police state. Regarding the United States, which is an entirely different political organism, it would seem that we ought to choose assimilation over diversity. We have unsegregated schools in which the children segregate themselves by choice. Our military establishment does surprisingly well in this regard, but of course, the military is and must be a tightly disciplined organization. It seems to me that diversity, rather than being a goal to be sought, should be an obstacle to be circumvented.

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We know of a family in which the gentleman, proud owner of a Steyr Scout, saved up and bought a pseudo-scout to give to his lady. Quite properly she took the piece to school, and after learning a few things

about weapons in the process, she snapped up his Steyr Scout with which to finish the course. Everything changed, and the difficulties she had been having disappeared. Now I have a solution. This couple should swap guns. That would solve everything happily.

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In this time of more or less institutionalized timidity, I am reminded of a slogan attributed to the Marine Corps during the inter-war period, to wit:

"If you want to learn a trade, join the Army.  
If you want a clean bunk every night, join the Navy.  
If you want to fly, join the Air Force.  
If you want to fight, join the Marines."

And Marines' feelings about the Corps do not automatically include disdain for all other corps. We know that other people fight well, and we admire them for it, but the Marine Corps still constitutes the emotional home of the traditionalized warrior. This annoys a lot of people, but that does not distress us. There is a place for the warrior, even in the 21st century, and it is fortunate for the cause of liberty that this is so.

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Walter Nowotny was a distinguished fighter pilot of World War II, killed in action just before its close. Born and raised in Vienna, Major Nowotny's remains were buried at Vienna's Central Cemetery. Now it appears that there is a movement afoot to disinter Nowotny's remains and toss them on the municipal ash heap – because he fought for the wrong side. This sort of thing is hard to grasp without evidence of a specific racial historical outlook. The perpetrator of this proposition is one David Ellensohn, currently a city councillor. You might recall that the original David (at whose tomb I paid respects some years ago in Jerusalem) was definitely not a nice guy. I do not think that we can castigate Nowotny for fighting for the Germans when we recall that David was, according to Scripture, a thoroughgoing scoundrel. You do not have to be a nice guy to be a hero – it is not even much of a help – but you cannot dishonor a hero by spurning his mortal remains. Herr Ellensohn's effrontery does no damage to the memory of Walter Nowotny. It gives rise to certain better-forgotten doubts about racial stereotypes. To quote *family member* Paul Kirchner: "One cannot dishonor a hero – one can only disgrace himself by the attempt."

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Herewith yet another reminder of the *2003 Reunion*, which promises to be the best ever. We look forward with much pleasure to socializing, shooting, and speechifying in honor of our special patron Theodore Roosevelt, one of the two greatest American presidents – who would have been great quite apart from the presidency. Reserve now at Whittington Center and sharpen up the edges of your wit.

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After all these years we have been thinking about going commercial with this paper. It costs both effort and money to put it out, somewhat more than we are currently recompensed therefore. But as of now we resist the temptation. The restrictions, regulations and obligations surrounding the distribution of a periodical are intimidating. We get the impression that the paper itself is enjoyable, though, of course, we only hear that from people who like it – and we do enjoy writing it. But a business is a business and exists to make money, and I have no assurance that the publication of these commentaries could be turned into a financially rewarding exercise.

So we will let the situation ride as is and hope you like it. I do think it helps the magazine and that may justify the effort.

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 12

October, 2003

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## Hunting Season

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Here we are in the best time of the year, when the campfire twinkles, the rifle cracks and Kaibab breakfast sizzles in the pan. Hunting season rewards us for putting up with the rest of the year, even though Spring, Winter and even Summer have their good aspects. A year without hunting is like a dinner without wine. You can put up with it, but you should not have to. Now your equipment is all in proper shape, and your expectations are high. It is only needful, however, to remember that it is the hunt, rather than the trophy, which is your proper objective. (Please take time to tell me how it came out when you get the opportunity – and *Waidmanns Heil* to all.)

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The hunting is pretty fair these days in the Middle East, but only as long as we permit our troops to go armed. Details we hear from the war zone about unarmed soldiers are beyond belief. It is only to be hoped that most of these accounts are exaggerations. But it remains true that when only the bad guys have guns, the good guys are at their mercy.

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We continue to be pleased with how friendly the Scout rifle is in the field. Much of this should be attributed to stock design, which was the work of Elmar Bilgeri and Ulrich Zedrosser at Steyr. Certainly that feature of the Scout rifle is outstanding, but there are other matters that make up the package. A good trigger–action is the single most critical requirement of a good field rifle, and it is possible to get a very elegant trigger–action on the Scout as it comes out of the box. Weight is not vital, but crispness is. Three pounds, with an imperceptible release, provide the shooter with his most friendly asset. These things, combined with proper stock design, combine to authenticate that clean first round X.

The Steyr Scout comes over the counter with a stock which is adjustable for length by means of detachable spacers. I suggest that those spacers be removed before taking the rifle afield, since it is easy for a long–armed man to shoot a rifle with a short stock, while the reverse is difficult. The only advantage I can think of for a long stock is obviation of "Kaibab eye," a problem which does not exist with the forward mounted telescope. There is also the possibility of a thumb in the nose if one carries his thumb on the wrong side of the weapon. Originally introduced to the 03 rifle and later to the M1, I have always simply carried my thumb over on the starboard side of the action, where it is also handier to most thumb safeties, for those who use such things. Personally I do not have much use for a thumb safety since I normally carry the weapon in *Condition 3* until I am within rock–throwing distance, at which time I just keep my index finger outside the trigger–guard.

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We have been quoted as saying that a man cannot have too many books, too many wines, or too much ammunition. This is okay, but when people do not pay proper attention it comes out wrong. *A man can certainly have too much wine*, as is obvious, but that is not the same thing as having too many wines. It is flattering to be quoted, but it is nice to be quoted correctly.

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In a recent tale from Africa our correspondent achieved four clean one–shot stops in a row with his Scout. Whereupon his tracker noted pointedly that "That is a very *dangerous* rifle." Indeed it is! Let us not let Chuck Schumer find out about that.

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In practicing the off-hand position, remember to spend some time on the "eyes-off" drill. In this you start from a standard ready and on signal you mount the piece as quickly as possible *with your eyes shut*. Let the striker fall, and only then open your eyes to see where your shot would have gone. When your eyes-off technique is good, center hits will come naturally.

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You must have noticed the recent murder of the Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh. She was stabbed to death in a department store while the crowd looked on in quiet detachment. Sweden has been a nanny state for a long time now – the socialist ideal. When a bystander complained that the minister should have had a bodyguard on station, one might ask what a bodyguard would have done under the circumstances, since fighting is presumably as distasteful to one Swede as another. It is not to jeer at this disaster, of course, only to view with alarm the nature of the non-combat mind-set.

We recall a very illustrative episode from the other side of the world in the Phillippines, when a goblin hitting a bank threatened to burn up a pregnant young woman in a cash line if he were not given all the available money. The customers in that bank not only killed him, but they dismembered him and scattered the parts around the lobby.

The state cannot protect you, regardless of what the grass-eaters say. Your personal defense, and that of your near and dear, is your own business.

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As our society urbanizes we encounter more often the full-grown young man who has never touched a firearm in his life. In our view, gun training should begin at home, not later than about age 14. By the time the young man puts on that uniform, he should already know how to hit his target. This is his father's business, but then a lot of modern young men do not seem to have fathers, regardless of their legal documentation.

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We are still troubled by people who presume to mess around with the Color Code. I do not own it, though I did stipulate it in the first instance, but I have failed to make clear that it does not involve the presumed degree of hazard facing the shooter, but rather his readiness to surmount a difficult psychological barrier. You do not shift upscale because you are suddenly aware of hostilities. You make that shift in order to be able to press trigger on a live target. Most people quite properly find this a difficult step, but the difficulty may be eased if it is anticipated. Thus you cannot shift any farther upscale than Red, because in Red in have already surmounted the barrier. Adding categories merely complicates the problem without achieving any useful objective.

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Reports keep coming back from the front to the effect that our people in greater Arabia may be classified into those who have a 1911 and those who wish they had – or have we already said that?

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Under the new executive structure, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) has been removed from Treasury and placed under Justice. The effect here has been to reduce the assignment load for the *BATmen* and to free up people to invent new missions by which to harass the shooter. Work must be found for these people in order to justify the budget, so they devote themselves to making up work. This means that law abiding gun owners may expect more, rather than less, harassment from the Feds under the new system.

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The world situation does not improve. A report from the British publication "*The Week*" tells us that British rookies to the military service are quitting because they do not like being yelled at. Well fancy that! Somehow that never bothered me much, but then I have never been British.

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Those of you who are fortunate enough to have obtained a 376 Scout ("Dragoon") before it was discontinued should remember that the 225-grain loading was not offered for ballistic efficiency, but rather to reduce recoil. I think this was a bad move. The 270-grain load has not broken anymore telescopes than the 30-06 180, as far as I know, and no experienced marksman will discover that the Dragoon belts him anymore than

any other serious rifle. With either load, the shooter must remember to mount his piece with the heel set solidly into the shoulder. If recoil is taken only with the toe of the stock it may flex the magazine well in the butt and drop the spare magazine out. With either loading take care to seat the butt solidly into the shoulder with the right elbow high. This is what practice is for.

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Accounts from Africa continue to reveal a curious obsession with the mechanical safety on hunting rifles. I find this unsound. It must be emphasized that no mechanical safety lever or device should be trusted on any weapon. In proper hands any firearm is probably safer without any sort of safety catch, since it will be treated with due respect. The hunter – or more likely the guide – who feels that a weapon is made safe by actuating the safety catch is riding for disaster. In mountain or plains hunting there is no need to put a shell in the chamber until you have selected a target. From horse, motor vehicle, canoe, or aircraft there is always plenty of time to snap the action as you address the target. One advantage of the lever-action rifle over the bolt is the ease with which one may carry it with an unloaded chamber and load it as the butt hits the shoulder. In thick cover, when the rifle is carried at standard ready – "eyes, muzzle, target" – the shooter may then load the chamber and put the safety on if he chooses. (Except with the Blaser R93 on which the thumb safety is particularly difficult to actuate.)

Be that as it may, many African professional hunters are obsessed about thumb safeties. A negligent discharge on an African hunt may lose the hunter his license, but the thumb safety will not help this. Guru say: "Forget the safety and use your head."

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Since we have been asked, those of you who are contemplating laying out a shooting range should attempt to keep the classroom as close as possible to the firing line. If this distance can be kept down to a hundred yards or less, you will save 20 minutes on the hour in the daily exercises.

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We have recently been queried about proper ammunition for the 45 ACP cartridge. In our opinion standard military hardball does quite well, its main weakness being a propensity to ricochet off a hard surface, such as auto window glass. If it gets into the torso it generally stops the fight. However, the round nose may be improved by going to the various forms of truncated cone projectiles – frangible or otherwise. The squared-off point avoids ricochets to a certain extent and increases penetration in wet pack – for reasons which are unclear to me.

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Could it be that the essence of liberalism is *fear*? It occurs to us that those who are considered "conservative" tend to be people who can cope with circumstances, while those who cannot cope tend to be of the "liberal" persuasion. The pious man properly fears God, but on the political scene the winner fears only the state. It may be that the loser looks to the state for protection against the winner, and only eventually discovers that he has identified the wrong enemy.

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It does seem to me that coming home is no proper sort of objective for a warrior. Clearly coming home is always something to be enjoyed when possible, but only after the job is done. We remember the refrain from the Phillippines:

"Underneath the starry flag  
Civilize him with a Krag  
And then get underway for home sweet home."

But you have to civilize him first, and how you do that with the ragheads is the problem.

And therein lies the difficulty with this "war on terrorism." Terrorism is an idea or an attitude, not a physical target. We can no way make war on terrorism than we can make war on extravagance or bad taste. A political condition such as democracy is far too vague an objective on which to risk one's life. Democracy is a means to

an end, not an end in itself, which should be the optimum balance of liberty and order. In a proper government the citizen should be free to do whatever does not trample upon the well-being of his neighbor, and this condition can be obtained in various ways. Democracy is a good way, when it works, but it does not work just because it is there. Unfortunately good government must depend upon good manners, and the inculcation of good manners throughout large groups has always been a thorny problem.

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Since we have not recovered the body of Osama bin Laden, we have no winner in the Osama bin Lottery. Chances are still open.

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Target pistol shooters have long felt that a right-eyed shooter should shoot with his right hand and a left-eyed shooter with his left. This may be true on bullseyes, but it is not true in practical shooting. The difference in head and hand position in the Weaver Stance is negligible, and I shot right-handed and left-eyed all the way through my competitive career. I shifted over to right-eye shooting when I became a professional teacher for ease of instruction, and it made no difference in my performance.

As to eyes, we may remember that Phillip of Macedon, Horatius, Hannibal, Nelson, Moshe Dayan, Saburo Sakai, and Millan Astray all did their good things with only one eye (though I am not sure which).

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This nasty form of social censorship which has come to be called "political correctness" tramples firmly upon the doctrines of the Founding Fathers. Inside the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, his injunction in gold letters swears eternal hostility over every form of *tyranny over the mind of man*. Political correctness is exactly that. You may be told how to *act* by the state, but never how to *think*. *Die Gedanken sind frei!*

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I am gratified with the commercial success of "*The Art of the Rifle*," not because I wrote it, but because it needed to be written. As far as I know it is the only book of its kind. For those who wish to learn how to shoot a rifle the theory is here. One cannot learn any form of dexterity without knowledge. Practice, of course, is essential. However, practice without theory may be unproductive, and in some cases even counter-productive. "*The Art of the Rifle*" has the information. It is good to know that there are a lot of people who seem to want it.

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At a time when most people feel that only a telescope sight is useful on a rifle, not much attention is paid to metallic sights, but in reality almost all of what you need to do with a rifle can be done with metallic sights. This is particularly true of the pursuit of dangerous game, where the target is huge and the range is short.

The open iron sight is the least efficient, requiring as it does almost simultaneous focus on three different objects – rear-sight, front-sight and target. But this does not mean that it will not work on a charging elephant, or a broadside buffalo at 25 paces. The aperture sight is a much better device, but only if it is properly fabricated and fully understood. Many decades ago such notables as E.C. Crossman and Townsend Whelen taught us that a rear aperture sight of a large diameter and thin rim was the best form since it eliminated the need to see the rear-sight at all, as long as the shooter was looking *through* it rather than *at* it. When this is done properly the rear-sight fades out of focus and disappears, letting the shooter focus solely on the front-sight and placing it wherever upon the target he wishes his projectile to strike. Since it disappears in action, I began calling it "the ghost-ring" way back then, and I find that at last the term has become broadly accepted – mostly notably in Africa. African publications and correspondents now refer to a ghost-ring, assuming any reader will know what they mean. When placed properly close to the eye, the ghost-ring is the quickest form of rifle sight in use (with the possible exception of a properly designed Scout scope) and it is as precise a sighting system as the shooter's eyes will permit.

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I find this preoccupation with the cheap on the part of shooters to be somewhat odd. This is the case more with riflemen and *pistoleros* than with shotgunners. Shotgunners seem to have all the money, where riflemen are conspicuously broke. But this notion that the product does not matter as long as the deal is good is pretty

funny when applied to shooters. ("No, I don't know what it's for, but I got it at 50% off!") In a recent periodical one commentator eventually dismissed the products of Steyr Mannlicher simply because they were expensive. Naturally we all must consider price, but we are wiser to stint on steaks than on weapons. In this time of inflation everything is too expensive, but a good gun will last a lifetime, which cannot be said of either a pick-up truck or a Caribbean cruise.

If you have need for a rifle and cannot afford a new one, just borrow your father's – or your grandfather's. It is probably just as good and may even be better than what you can get over the counter today.

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An academic committee was recently convened with members from Stanford, Berkeley and Maryland to explore the matter of what is wrong with conservatives. The committee decided that we bad guys are basically nuts and characterized by, of all things, resistance to change and disinclination to press for equality – in all matters and at all costs. This was financed by a government grant. If they had asked me I could have given them the same answer for a lot less money.

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During the great wars the rifle butt stroke was frequently put to decisive effect. We worked on it extensively as cadets and as junior officers, and I once saw it delivered very impressively, practically in my lap. It worked nicely for the O3 and M1 rifles, but I have serious doubts about its utility with the squirt gun we issue today.

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We still run across people who do not seem to realize that there is no legal separation between church and state in this country. Mr. Jefferson once wrote that we should not tax a Methodist in order to pay the salary of a Baptist. Where there is an established religion, that might be the practice. It has absolutely nothing to do with displaying the Decalog in a public building. All this may seem to be belaboring the obvious, if it were not for the fact that a good many of our legislators do not appear to have read the rules which govern this country. When I was in high school an excellent course in what was called Civics was required of 11th graders, and if they failed to pass it in the 11th grade they were required to take it again, for no credit, in the 12th grade. This meant that a high school graduate in those far off days had to prove that he knew how America was governed. Apparently today such knowledge is not required of an elected legislator. We cannot very well control this dismal situation, but we can keep on preaching and hoping for the best.

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A recent student here at school happens to be a member of the US Olympic Archery Team, and he informed us that the shoot-off in the next Olympics may be conducted on a J-ladder, invented by the Countess many years ago at Big Bear Lake. This, of course, is gratifying news.

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So now we come upon the great *TR Memorial Reunion*. We look forward to much good conversation, fine reminiscence, and, of course, a bit of shooting. We have several exotic events on the list, for any sort of weapon, and if you bring something we are not prepared for we will invent something for it. The junior event for small-caliber heroes will be a new thing, and if you are not equipped for it we will provide both weapon and ammunition.

And we emphasize the histrionic element of the affair. Bring your own original creations, recite from the book, or memorize your Shakespeare. Do not be intimidated by the proven artistry of some of our members. You do not have to be Charlton Heston or Meryl Streep. Gary Cooper could not act either, but that never held him back. The dates are 17,18,19 October. We hope to see you there.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 11, No. 13

November, 2003

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## Thanksgiving

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These are certainly troubled times in which we live, but times have always been troubled and we must above all be thankful for the good that outweighs the bad. Even such a thing as the Iraqi war has aspects which make for satisfaction, despite what the news media have to say about it. As to that, the media have in recent months (or even years) manifested a hostility to our country and our culture which is every bit as treasonable as the behavior of Tokyo Rose and Axis Sally in World War II. Evidently these people are so anxious to see us lose that they report only our mishaps and ignore those things in which we can take pride – and those are many. At the *Theodore Roosevelt Reunion* at Whittington, I was able to converse at some length with *family member* Clint Ancker, who is just back from the Holy War in which he served as a civilian analyst of doctrine for the Army and understood much which I find to be completely fascinating. Despite what the media would have it, we are doing just fine in the Holy War. Clint is a scholar of consequence in these matters, and he assured me that our armed forces in the Middle East constitute the finest military effort ever seen throughout history. Our people are the best organized, best equipped, best trained, and best led ever to take up arms. If our smallarms are less efficient than they might be, that is balanced by the outstanding efficiency of our support weapons.

Prior to this action it was generally assumed that tanks could not be used in urban warfare because they are too vulnerable to handheld anti-tank weapons. We have discovered that this is not the case. Our splendid main battle tank is almost impervious to the rocket propelled grenade, which is the weapon of choice of the enemy. One of our machines was hit no less than thirteen times by RPGs without loss of serviceability. The RPG is indeed a nuisance, but it is essentially a slob weapon, suitable for slob armies. It will take out a truck, but only exceptionally a tank. This does not mean that our people are safe. Tank commanders preferably fight unbuttoned with a squirt gun at the ready. When they turn a street corner and detect a Moor threatening with an RPG, they simply hose him down. In this case, the limitations of the 223 cartridge do not render it ineffective.

And we have perfected the wonderful technique of sniping with heavy artillery. The ragheads have access to a number of fairly effective anti-aircraft guns which they try to use as anti-tank weapons, and they place them in close proximity to a mosque, or some such presumably untouchable target. (We must be nice to the enemy, of course.) When this is done, we have found it possible to take the gun out with an inert shell from our marvelously accurate 8-inch howitzer. This piece can place its first round in a target no larger than a jacuzzi at the ranges encountered in urban warfare. The gunners simply replace the fuse with an inactive plug, and where that iron fist lands it takes out the gun and the crew without damage to the mosque. Amazing! The Air Force also is using this technique with its fantastic "smart bombs."

There is more and better besides. I did not have time to go into the matter thoroughly with Clint, but the tales are inspiring. Our people are just great, at all levels from regimental command down to squad, and we should be enormously proud of them, despite what our subversive propagandists would have us believe. It is true that the Moors shoot back. When you go to war (as Islam did) people get killed. When a whole lot of people are doing their best to kill us, some will occasionally succeed, but that is not what is newsworthy. What *is* newsworthy is our success, not the casualties we may suffer. In my active days it was assumed that if a training program does not kill about one man per thousand it should be reexamined and beefed up. If our people were going about their business stateside, our casualty rate would probably be somewhat higher than it

is on active duty in Iraq.

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We understand that some military outfits, evidently manned by people who have not been sufficiently educated, are trying to eliminate *Rule 3*. This is as big a step backward as we can call to mind. One correspondent tells us that his young son, just now being introduced to shooting, announced perceptively that all firearms mishaps that he ever heard of could have been avoided by observation of *Rule 3*. ("Keep your finger off the trigger till your sights are on the target.")

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Street crime in Britain has been increasing steadily over the past decade, and much of it has been committed with firearms. Therefore the British seem to think that they have a "gun problem." Actually these homicides are almost all committed by immigrant gangsters whom Kipling would term "lesser breeds without the law." Thus it appears that the British do not have a *gun problem*, but they do have a *race problem*. Obviously you cannot talk about that.

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*The Eleventh Reunion* was fully as much fun as expected, and we were treated to perfect weather throughout. It turns out that a hen's egg at a hundred paces is pretty safe from rifle offhand – to no one's surprise. Those old Afrikaaners were very thrifty with their eggs. A good man can stay in a 4- or 5-inch ring from offhand at a hundred paces, but to hit that egg calls for luck. However we did hit it, if not often. The flying clays are a continuing pleasure, though no one is likely to catch Marc Heim's record of four out of five – not even Marc. The "Chase Away," in which you harass a pop can along the ground, revealed the purpose of the new 500 Smith & Wesson megawheelly. It does tear up the ground more forcefully than the competition. We remember a moment from the old days when Jack Weaver, having achieved a highly fortuitous liftoff with his first shot, was able to hit the tin can in the air with his second. The helium-filled balloons, which are available only at Whittington, are always popular, as was John Gannaway's shotgun program. This year we instituted a children's familiarization program so that every youngster in attendance could say that he had actually fired a real gun. Obviously there should be more of this throughout the country. The hatfull of Steyr Scouts in attendance further enhanced the reputation of that sweet rifle. Apparently it fills a small niche, since most recreational shooters would like to have a lot of specialized rifles rather than one which will do all the jobs. If you have a Steyr Scout, you do not need any other rifle, unless you specialize in elephants, hippos or buffalo. But then, I suppose, everyone really should have his personal elephant gun.

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We note that the Ruger people now offer a single-shot heavy called The Tropic, for the man who has everything. I guess it makes sense to the marketers, but I will be happy to let somebody else have mine.

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We see that the foolish cross-bolt safety offered for a while on the lever-guns has been discontinued. This is a good idea. That gadget was a mistake to begin with. It is annoying to see this preoccupation with mechanical safeties, which really serve no purpose other than to give the duffer a feeling of false confidence. Safety, of course, lies between the ears, not between the hands.

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We sometimes wonder whether really top grade marksmanship is necessary to the efficient rifleman. We know of cases where bad shooting proved disastrous, but we find it hard to discover a case in which gilt-edged target performance made a difference in the field. If you are a good shot and have the right mind-set you will succeed in the field, but the proper mind-set remains the primary essential. Keeping your head and knowing what you are trying to do make for success. It is nice if you are a record-breaking marksman, but you will make out fine as long as you are just a pretty-good marksman, provided you are thinking straight.

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We see a good deal of ill-considered advice in a recently released book on 22 pistols. The author suggests a safety rule to the effect that one should never load a weapon until he is ready to shoot. It does not seem to have occurred to this man that it is impossible make an appointment for an emergency. I have never heard of a case in which a man had the luxury of loading his piece after the fight had started.

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Word from the front suggests that a lanyard loop on a pistol is a very desirable item. It has always seemed so to us, but the marketers do not understand this.

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Back when I was teaching high school, we spent some time on the differentiation between sin and crime. A given act may be both, of course, but another may be only one. I used to ask students in the senior problems class to think over the weekend and bring in on Monday three examples of acts which were sins but not crimes, and crimes which were not sins. (It is very annoying to a high school student to ask him to think.) The difference is critical. You may evade the law, but you cannot evade your conscience. Essentially you get your conscience from your parents. If you have no parents, and you have no conscience, you are in for a bad time.

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*Shooting Master* John Gannaway tells us that excessive shotgun practice does not harm one's rifle skills, but that excessive rifle practice tends to ruin the shotgunner. Not being a shotgunner myself, that thought never occurred to me.

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It is very difficult to understand how we can have Moslem chaplains in the US Army. Islam has effectively declared war upon all unbelievers. Even if all Moslems do not commit these religious murders, they do not seem to condemn those who do. Those of us who cannot read Arabic can never be quite sure of the words of the Prophet (may peace be upon him). But as far as the idea comes across in English, the physical destruction of the infidel must be the aim of every devout Moslem. For us to employ a clergyman (?) in our forces to look after the spiritual welfare of people who want us to lose the Holy War is totally paradoxical. On the tube just now we saw a Palestinian who, speaking flawless English, announced that the aim of every Palestinian should be the death of every Jew in the world. These people must certainly find philosophical agreement with Adolph Hitler.

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And now Smith & Wesson is offering a titanium light-weight M29. This is another thing that puzzles me. The regular steel M29 bounces pretty hard, and making it lighter is not going to help that. In no configuration is a 44 Magnum a really portable sidearm. If you need a megawheely, I do not think you need a fly-weight.

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There are people in positions of importance today who know how Vince Foster was murdered, and who did it, but apparently we have decided to drop that subject. And then, of course, there is Lon Horiuchi. I suppose he has squared the matter with his conscience, but I am darned if I know how.

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Back in my early rifle shooting days when I was being carefully coached in the ROTC, our best shots regularly scored a possible from sitting. I have always been personally fond of a properly acquired, open-legged sitting position, properly looped up. It has always been able to achieve whatever is necessary in the field. It is better for the hunter than for the soldier, since the soldier will always go prone if he has the chance. But if the shooter has learned to loop up and hit sitting in a couple of seconds he has acquired a most useful skill – something he will never achieve by use of a bench rest.

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Our wanderings suggest that about half of our citizenry walks around in public with cell phone glued to the ear. This suggests that if each cell phone mounted a single, smooth-bore 380 tube, nobody would know who was armed and who was not. This might serve to take muggers right off the street.

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This matter of political correctness has got totally out of hand. I think we should regard PC as signifying "Peer Censorship." "*Peer pressure*," which seems to be accepted as inevitable by our current crop of elementary educators, is one of the things which should be trained out of a well-brought-up child. It seems to us that a child should never do anything just because others do it, or to refrain from doing something because others do not, according to the lemming principle. On the contrary he should be taught to think for himself and to do what he knows is right, regardless of this peer business.

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In our continued readings into the history of metallurgy, we get the impression that the *gladius hispaniensis*, which Caesar brought back from Spain to Rome, was distinguished not so much by its configuration as by its composition. Apparently the metalworkers of Spain had discovered things about steel working that had not been understood by the Greeks, Romans or Gauls. Illustrations from several centuries before Julius Caesar portray swords shaped very much like the weapons illustrated in Roman frescos. The shape was pretty much the same, so it must have been the steel itself that made the *gladius* the triumphant weapon of the age. Livy tells us that the Gauls were continuously trying to bend their swords back into shape by stamping on them. Whatever these weapons were made of was pretty unsatisfactory. Any modern citizen who works with steel can tell you all about the steel he uses, but he is not usually able to tell you how it got that way and who learned about it in the first place. The steel in the Spanish sword which I have on the wall is superb, but somehow I do not think the smith in Toledo who made it knows why. In any case if I asked him he would not tell me.

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"The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities."

Theodore Roosevelt

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Has it ever occurred to you that half the people you run into are below average?

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At Whittington we set up the OK Corral Drill, as we used to put it on at Big Bear Lake. It turns out that this takes about three seconds for four Earps to take out five Clantons. Eyewitnesses of the actual event talk about a duration of about half a minute. Of course, on the range you know you are going to have to shoot. Prior to the shoot combatants at Tombstone probably did not have their minds set. However it is interesting to see that well qualified *pistoleros* are so startlingly lethal.

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The many entertainments that we enjoyed at the *Reunion* are too numerous to catalog in a short paper, but we were impressed, as usual, by the variety of talent displayed by the Gunsite *family*. We now have songs for all occasions and powerful declamations as well.

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It is worth noting, in view of all the hand-wringing broadcast about the horrors of war, that the two greatest men of the 20th century, Roosevelt I and Winston Churchill, notably and specifically *enjoyed* fighting. We do not have to assume this. They wrote their impressions down. A certain enfeeblement of morale is displayed in the age of television, and possibly television itself is responsible for the emasculation of the race. Regardless of what we may be told, we are not yet a bunch of wimps. Our warriors are conducting themselves with conspicuous credit, despite the opinions of those who would have it otherwise.

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You may have noticed an odd vehicle in the pictures coming back from Baghdad. It resembles a curiously squat tank mounting a short, fat cannon. This is the Engineered Demolition Vehicle (EDV) designed for wrecking buildings in urban combat. It mounts a 6-inch direct-fire gun of astonishing destructive effect, and it is used for blowing buildings out of the way. The Germans had something like this in the first stages of World War II, but it vanished when tank battles became the norm. It works well, but its users must be careful to stay well buttoned up in action to avoid the enormous blast effect of its projectile.

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The people we select as our chief executives should be men of unimpeachable character. This was obvious at one time, and it still is to some people, but clearly not to everyone. The following paragraph is from a paper directed to the people of Massachusetts in the year 1840. (It was selected and presented to the Theodore Roosevelt *Reunion* by Pete Chinburg of New Hampshire.) It may be a touch overwritten, but its meaning is clear.



"Thus is closed the examination of the rights, powers, and duties of the Executive department. ... All, that seems desirable in order to gratify the hopes, secure the reverence, and sustain the dignity the nation, is, that it should always be occupied by a man of elevated talents, of ripe virtues, of incorruptible integrity, and of tried patriotism; one, who shall forget his own interests, and remember, that he represents not a party, but the whole nation; one, whose fame may be rested with posterity, not upon the false eulogies of favorites, but upon the solid merit of having preserved the glory, and enhanced the prosperity of the country."

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It is a continuing annoyance to see people messing around with the safety rules. The four that have been developed over the years suffice entirely as now stated. There is no need for more, and we really cannot get by with fewer. However, some half-educated enthusiasts keep trying to make up a new set, or to add or subtract, which does nothing but serve to confuse matters. A major point of issue is *Rule 1*, "All guns are always loaded." There are people who insist that we cannot use this because it is not precisely true. Some guns are sometimes unloaded. These folks maintain that the rule should read that one should always treat all guns *as if* they were loaded. The trouble here is the "as if," which leads to the notion that the instrument at hand may actually not be loaded. This leads to disaster, yet we hear it all the time. Sometimes it appears we become so obsessed with the ephemeral goal of safety that we lose sight of the purpose of the exercise. Safety is not first. Safety is second. Victory (or success) is first.

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Ideas which are set to verse are more easily remembered. With this in mind daughter Lindy composed the following lyric to be sung to the tune of "The Ruler of the Queen's Navy" from the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta "HMS Pinafore."

When I was a child my Dad taught me  
That a shotist was a satisfying thing to be.

He showed me a pistol and a rifle true  
A variety of armament a time or two.

CHORUS: A variety of armament a time or two.

I was taught to handle weapons so carefully  
That the safety rules are truly now a part of me.

CHORUS: I was taught to handle weapons so carefully  
That the safety rules are really just a part of me.

All guns are always loaded as they ought to be.  
Always check a gun yourself and always look to see.

And you never let the muzzle of a gun (even a toy)  
Cover anything that you're not willing to destroy.

CHORUS: Cover anything that you're not willing to destroy.

All guns are always loaded as they ought to be  
If they're not they're really hardly any use to me.

CHORUS: All guns are always loaded as they ought to be.  
Always check a gun yourself and always look to see.

Be certain of the target that you wish to hit  
What's behind, beneath, beside, on top and under it.

Keep your finger off the trigger only just until  
Your sights are on the target and you're set to kill.

CHORUS: Your sights are on the target and you're set to kill.

All guns are always loaded as they ought to be  
If they're not they're really hardly any use to me.

CHORUS: All guns are always loaded as they ought to be  
Always check a gun yourself and always look to see.

Now these are the rules in songlike form  
They'll be easy to remember if you're like the norm.

Just take these safety rules to heart you'll see  
You'll be safe as any human on this earth can be.

CHORUS: You'll be safe as any human on this earth can be.

These rules are so important – as they ought to be.  
To be safe as any human on this earth can be.

CHORUS: Just take these safety rules to heart you'll see  
You'll be safe as any human on this earth can be.

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

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## Algid November

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Winter is upon us again, and we cannot say that we are sorry. Cool weather has much to recommend it following the long, hot summer just past. We are getting good reports back from the hunting members, and our people in Mesopotamia can enjoy a welcome relief from that Mid-Eastern sun. I once spent a summer in the Persian Gulf and a winter in the Aleutians, and I remember that in both places we seemed to have arrived at the wrong time of year. Weather aside, there is a certain gratification to be found in fighting in desolate places. Smashing up civilization's treasures in war makes a bad scene worse, thus I am relieved to have fought my major wars in the depths of the Pacific – wrecking Tarawa and Iwo gave us no feeling of wastefulness.

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The pistol seems to have come into its own in this Arab war wherein much action takes place at very short range in the dark. The Beretta 92 is not a good choice, but there are still plenty of 1911s floating around, and those fortunate enough to acquire them report continued excellent service rendered by this fine artifact after almost a century. It is interesting that the 1911 seems to work better in an unfriendly, sandy atmosphere than its GI successors.

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Herewith the wisdom of the aged:

When you can't do anything about it – take a nap.

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We have a greater selection of sporting rifle cartridges than we need, and it is interesting to see how some succeed commercially where others fail. A correspondent recently wrote in extolling the merits of the 300 Savage cartridge, the merits of which are well deserved, but oddly unappreciated. The 300 Savage cartridge, which is practically identical with the 308, was introduced with the Model 99 Savage lever-gun and seemed to be too good for its market. The Model 99 offered the advantages of lever-action, which include both certain safe-carry conditions along with suitability for both right- and left-hand use. In college a fraternity brother approached me for advice about the acquisition of a deer rifle, which his father wished to present him for Christmas. Since my friend was left-handed, we opted immediately for the Model 99 in caliber 300. Since this piece did not usually come over the counter with a good trigger or sights, we sent it immediately to Bob Chow in San Francisco for a trigger job and to be fitted with a four-power Weaver telescope. In those long gone days there was no difficulty in checking out the piece right there on the Stanford campus, and it shot up a storm. The war came along and knocked everything sideways, so I lost track of that rifle and any field success it might have enjoyed, but it was one of the better items I have been able to play with. The 300 Savage cartridge, like the 308, may be considered a bit much for deer, but I packed a Model 99 in caliber 250-3000 on the Rio Balsas expedition many years later and it gave perfect service.

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We regret to report the passing of F. Bob Chow of San Francisco, one of the preeminent gunsmiths of the 20th century. He did the trigger work on the award pistol I took to war and he lasted longer at his trade than almost anyone we can think of. Bob lived to the ripe old age of 96. Nobody lives forever, but he sure did try hard.

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And the great 50 caliber Browning machinegun carries on splendidly, affording a nice balance of power and portability. I was introduced to the 50 at Basic School, but I hardly dared believe that it would be still

acquitting itself nobly here at the other end of the story. We know a Seabee officer who worked with a quad 50 mounted on a half-track up in I CORPS in Vietnam and his action reports were hugely satisfactory. Additionally, its service in the air placed us well ahead of both the Germans and the Japanese in the dog fighting days now past.

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We have always insisted the most significant element in the "hitability" of the rifle is its trigger action, which should not only be light but crisp and displaying no creep. It seems that few people know how to evaluate a good trigger in a rifle. When asked to test the piece, they seek a target on the far wall, mount the butt into the shoulder and simulate a shot. This is not the best way. A trigger should be tested by sight, rather than by touch. It is not aimed-in, but rather held where the trigger finger and the trigger are clearly visible. With the two-stage trigger (which I prefer), the slack is taken up and then the trigger finger is watched as the striker is released. If you can see your finger move on let-off, your trigger has creep. Obviously the trigger must move in order to release the striker, but this movement should not be visible. All this is pretty obvious, but apparently it is not as obvious as it should be.

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Gunhandling seems to be rather an obscure art at this time, if we can believe what we see illustrated in the shooting periodicals, but the lever-gun does offer certain advantages over the bolt in matters of safe handling. Specifically, the lever-gun may be carried ready for action in *Condition 3* with a full magazine but no shell in the chamber. In skilled hands it may be loaded as the butt hits the shoulder with no time loss at all. We tried this on flying clays at Gunsite, to the considerable amazement of the half educated.

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I am a firm supporter of President Bush, but on this religious matter General Boykin is right and Bush is wrong.

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Dr. Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, maintained that if a lie is repeated long enough it will eventually become accepted as the truth. This would pertain to the repeated reference to the "Constitutional separation of church and state." Nothing in the US Constitution establishes any such separation. The Constitution states that Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion. That is certainly clear enough. The US Constitution is widely available in booklet form and should be carried around readily available for every occasion. It is an admirably simple and direct preparation. It is not obscure. It would be nice if more politicians would read it.

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There seems to be a surge of interest in the heavy sporting rifle at this time, which is a bit odd when you reflect that nobody needs one. In the great hunting days between the wars people who could afford it undertook classic safaris which occupied several months and bagged enough animals to complete a natural history museum. There was also the matter of expense, since elephant ivory was a semi-precious commodity which could be sold for enough cash to pay for the enterprise. In this case big ivory was sought for more than trophy value. The same license would entitle you to a hundred-pound elephant, as well as a fifty-pounder. So the hunter would shoot as much ivory as his license would permit, and the purpose of the entire exercise was elephant. So what was needed was an "elephant gun," a piece which was capable of downing a bull elephant consistently with one shot at short range. The elephant hunter took his beast at distances varying from arm's length to perhaps 30 paces, and this led to the popularity of the large bore double rifle.

In the elephant contact the range is short and the target is enormous, though the exact location of a fatal hit is hard to find, especially when the scene is so nervously critical. It is obvious that placement is more critical than power, though it is nice to have both. Bell's legendary score on elephants with the 7x57 certainly establishes this, but it does not establish the 7mm as an "elephant gun." The heavy sporting double fired a large caliber bullet of good weight at moderate velocity, and it worked. The 470 Nitro (and its cousins) was the weapon of choice, the differences between the various offerings in this class being more a matter of proprietary bullet design than of impact energy.

But the great hunting days are long past. Elephant hunting can be arranged – for a price – but it is by no means a popular activity any longer. Besides the elephant, big game was rhinoceros (now, also, pretty much a thing of the past), hippo (huge and dangerous on dry land but hardly considered a game animal) and buffalo. Whether the buffalo calls for a heavy rifle or not is a subject always good for debate. A well-placed bullet from a medium rifle (375/300) is certainly adequate, but given a choice I should still vote for a heavy for *Syncerus*.

So where does that establish a need for a heavy sporting rifle at this late date? I cannot see such need, but I can appreciate the desire. A good many sportsmen yearn to own a heavy sporting rifle simply because they do so yearn, and the market bears this out. When the 458 Winchester Magnum first appeared a surprising number of people rushed to buy it, not because they *needed* it but because they *wanted* it. I was astonished to discover at a gun store in Copenhagen, of all places, that the 458 WM and its ammunition were hot sales items in Denmark. When I asked the counterman why this might be he said that his customers liked to shoot sharks. Sharks? In the North Sea? I must have lost something in translation, but people still like to buy heavies.

But the 458 WM was never a really sound item. In the first place, its case capacity was so slight that an unwieldy long barrel was necessary to achieve advertised velocity, which was not high. A 26-inch barrel is awkward in any sort of cover where pachyderms are usually found. One solution to this situation was the 460 Guns & Ammo Special, which used a shorter, fatter case to get that 500-grain bullet comfortably over 2000f/s. I have used the 460 G&A quite a bit with uniform success. I like the cartridge but it was never offered commercially. Instead what appeared was the 458 Lott, a design of our late friend Jack Lott, which achieved satisfactory muzzle performance by means of a long case without a shoulder, head-spacing on a belt. The long case of Jack's cartridge does encourage "short stroking" in unpracticed hands, but the belted case avoids the rather annoying head-spacing problems of the G&A cartridge.

All these latter day heavies will do when properly used and, of course, they are normally available in bolt-action rifles, which are both more familiar to most sportsmen and less expensive than a double.

And now we see the rebirth of the old reliable 45–70, which while not truly a heavy, in the classic sense, may well be classified as "light-heavy," and the 45–70 is now available in the compact, takedown "Co-pilot" of Jim West. I am much taken with this ingenious piece, and I have promoted its use in Africa to the evident delight of all concerned. Where I cannot see any real need for a true, modern, heavy sporter, I can certainly see situations in which the "Co-pilot" is an ideal solution to an unusual problem. It is one of the really good offerings on the modern list.

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It is famously told that at Bunker Hill the colonists were ordered to hold fire until they could see "the whites of their eyes." Have you ever checked that out? How far away can you see the whites of an antagonist's eyes? You can run that test among friends without leaving the pad. It does make you appreciate the bayonet, does it not?

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The 223 cartridge (556 NATO) has now been with us for quite some time. I did not think it was a good idea in the first place, and time has not changed my opinion. If you ask just what is a 223 for, a good answer does not pop right up. The 223 is essentially a varmint cartridge, though I suppose it could be considered proper for the smallest of four-footed game animals such as chamois, reedbuck, or those half-size Texas whitetails. It also might do well for coyotes or baboons and, of course, we shoot people with it with moderate success. I note that Steyr Mannlicher has offered a couple of presumably sporting firearms in this caliber, but about all I can see in a purpose here is a means of employing the profusion of ammunition which is available throughout the world. It makes a pretty good ranch-patrol item, if you have a rifle to take it, but I certainly would not run out and buy a rifle on that account.

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"If you have a right to be respected that means that other people don't have a right to their opinions."

Thomas Sowell

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One of the current locutions which I would like see dropped is the assertion that something "couldn't be further from the truth." This is not a statement which is going to be made by anyone who thinks about what he is saying. Another such statement refers to "innocent civilians." The implication here is that there are innocent civilians and guilty civilians, and who is to decide?

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We are glad to see that *"The Art of the Rifle"* is enjoying a modest commercial success. I do not claim that it is the best book of its kind, but rather that it is the *only* book of its kind. Marksmanship is an imperiled art in *The Age of the Wimp*, but we do understand it, and we have made the theory available to those who desire it. Anyone who studies the matter, practices it on the range and in the field, and sets his mind correctly on the task at hand pretty well commands the action. We know of a recent case in which an African hunter, after observing four clean, one-shot stops in the bushveldt, opined that the Steyr Dragoon in action was "a very dangerous rifle." Well, yes, the Dragoon is a truly excellent rifle for the bushveldt – probably the best – but the rifle did not do the job, it is the *shooter* who was dangerous.

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Those ingenious Chinese keep coming up with new versions of the old, for export to collectors. We understand now that Norinco is offering a Broomhandle Mauser for sale. This is one of the most delightful artifacts of the machine age. It was never a particularly efficient combat tool, nor was it adopted as official by any major government, but for those of us who are fascinated by guns, it is especially attractive. I just may break down and buy one as a Christmas present to myself.

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The Declaration of Independence – not the Constitution of the United States – declaims that it is a self-evident truth that all men are created equal. The more one thinks about that the more it is obvious that that statement may not stand as factual, but rather as theological. All men may indeed be equal in the sight of God, but they are by no means equal between the goal posts, nor at the wheel of the racing car.

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Bear in mind that it is more blessed to give than to receive. I know a certain amount about naval gunfire, and I am certainly impressed with the truth of that proposition.

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When we played with the Chase-Away drill at Whittington I discovered a proper niche for the new Smith & Wesson 500 Megawheely. If you choose to drive pop cans hither and yon across the landscape with a pistol, this may be your weapon of choice. I do not think, however, that it will necessarily facilitate repetition of Jack Weaver's nifty demonstration on this drill, at which, having hit the ground just enough to toss a tin can high in the air, he managed to hit it again as it flew with his second shot. I saw him do that, but I did not ask him to do it again.

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Media people seem to throw around the term "mainstream" as if it were an object to be sought. In our opinion it is a poor figure of speech. The Rio Balsas expedition sometime ago proved to me that the mainstream is by no means necessarily the right course to be followed.

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It appears that we may have discovered a new psychosis, which we may call *arctophilia*, signifying a psychopathic affection for bears. This lad who went up to Alaska and managed to get himself and his concubine eaten by a bear is a case in point. He certainly seems to have achieved perfect union with the object of his affection – internally. This may be called a clear case of terminal *arctophilia*. Bears are okay, and we are glad that nature has provided them, but that does not mean we should get silly about it. (See *Bear Rule 2*, to wit, "Bears are not cuddlesome.")

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The news people seem to think that the object of a military enterprise is to get home. They keep talking as if the only thing a soldier wants to do is to get back to base. If that is indeed true, he had best stay there in the first place. The objective of any military enterprise must be *victory*, at no matter what cost. When you put on that uniform you lay your life on the line – for reasons which must seem good to you. To maintain the ideals for which this country was founded, we must fare forth at least once a generation to wreak our will upon the enemies of liberty. This is the worthiest political effort, and it must be extolled rather than deplored. Men get killed in war, and often enough they die unworthy deaths lying in a hospital bed stuck full of needles. "Death comes at a crawl or comes with a pounce, but whether he's slow or spry, it's not the fact that you're dead that counts, but only how did you die." That may be an old-fashioned attitude, but that does not make it wrong.

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We recently had occasion to discuss the history of the Bren Ten with a correspondent who was obviously more of a collector than a shooter. The Bren Ten was a concept of mine, and while I am not ashamed of it, I admit that this concept was not entirely sound. What the Bren Ten pistol achieved over, for example, the 1911, was range. The full-house, 10mm cartridge – definitely *not* the attenuated 10s which are popular now – pushed the effective range of the combat sidearm out beyond that which is usually expected. But extending the manageable range of a combat pistol out beyond the ability of the shooter to utilize it does not accomplish much. The full-house Bren Ten should be able to achieve reliable one-shot stops out to at least 50 meters, but pistol actions do not take place at 50 meters. The combat pistol is best employed at distances hardly more than across the room, and the Bren Ten will not do this any better than the venerable 45 ACP, or so it would seem.

In the commercial world, what is good is what sells, but whether excellence sells is debatable. The variable-power telescope is a poor concept, but it certainly sells. On the other hand, the Steyr Scout and the Wild West "Co-pilot" are very superior concepts, but do not seem to sell. Commerce by its very nature seeks to make the customer unhappy with what he has and in search of something new and better. But this makes the gun business a bad commercial proposition because it is nearly impossible to improve upon the personal firearms we have had for much of the 20th century. It is possible to attack this problem by the idea of variety, and truly a great many shooters would rather own a large variety of specialized weapons than better examples of instruments that do several or all jobs better in one package. If you have genuine need of a rifle you can get by perfectly with a 22 and a Steyr Scout. If you wish to specialize in elephants or grizzly bears you may add a couple of specialty rifles, but this postulates a somewhat unlikely lifestyle.

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There are five essential attributes of the soldier. The first two are skill at arms and discipline. Next come valor, hardihood, and pride. Above all else a soldier must be *proud* of his occupation. This will cause him not only to do his job perfectly, but to look and act the part. It is possible for a slob to fight well, but he will fight better if he is proud of his station in life. Unfortunately we have lost sight of this in this present rather scruffy age. The clothes we give to our soldiers in which to fight are in large measure more suitable for field hands on a second-rate rice paddy than for the champions of liberty. Clearly combat is an untidy activity, but that does not mean that we should make it appear any worse than necessary. I have seen many warriors fight, in many parts of the world, and I am convinced that pride in personal appearance is a vital aspect of morale, from the Guardsman to the Gurkha. Thus it is that I wish whoever it was who came up with that unseemly "booney-hat" now in evidence in Mesopotamia should go out and come in again. A soldier's aspect is dignified by some sort of helmet, and we wish that those in charge would give some thought to this matter. Our fighting man should look sharp, not just when he is on liberty, but also when he is in contact. This is not an unreasonable proposition (see George Patton).

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

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## Winter

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In enjoying our traditional Thanksgiving holiday just past, we are reminded of an occasion some years back when Ray Chapman and I engaged in the pursuit and preparation of the holiday bird. We were hunting deer up in that northwest corner of Arizona known as the Strip, and we had not met with much success. On returning to camp on our second day out, empty handed, we were told that a fair bunch of turkeys had been seen crossing the road just a couple of hundred yards below our campfire. We were not set up for turkeys, but we decided that given the time of year, we should take after them. The bunch had crossed the road at right angles and headed along the shallow ridge leading to the south. We found the prints easily enough, and set forth on opposite sides of the ridge, Ray on the right and I on the left. We had not proceeded half a mile when I was rewarded by the sound of a rifle shot to my right front on the opposite side of the ridge. Now Ray Chapman is a truly outstanding field marksman. When he shoots he does not miss. I assumed, therefore, that he had found the birds and scored, so I set forth to return to the road. On the way I got to thinking up ways of preparing the bird once we had it. Wild birds, and turkeys especially, call for long, slow cooking, the means for which is seldom available in a hunting camp. However ingenuity may be employed. It seemed to me that we should dig a fire pit about two feet deep and line it with rocks as soon as the heat was well established. At camp we had apples and cornmeal, also a plentiful supply of bacon. I thought we might improvise a stuffing with these ingredients, and then to lard the bird lavishly with raw bacon. We could wrap it snugly in wet newspaper to avoid scorching and bury it in the rock pit, covering it well and waiting it out. I had thought of several spice additions to the stuffing and other flavor enhancers by the time I looked up and saw Ray approaching me from along the far side of the ridge.

"Where is the bird?" I shouted, thinking perhaps he had stashed it in a tree to be retrieved by the two of us. "What bird?" he shouted back. "The one you just shot." "I didn't shoot any bird."

It turns out there was a hunting party on the north side of the road and one of their shots sounded to me exactly diametric to Ray's location. I was furious. I almost commenced to read Ray off with a massive declamation until I realized how silly that was. I had that bird fully prepared, almost well-done and ready for the table before I realized that there was no bird at all.

There is an old saying about a bird in hand.

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The new book "*Human Accomplishment*" by Charles Murray is required reading for the faithful. In this work the author categorizes the great things achieved by the human race throughout its history and locates them both in time and in geography. This Holy War, now declared upon us by Islam, seems based primarily on cultural envy, and a careful study of just what the human race has accomplished is a good way of looking at the situation. Among other things, the book is highly praised by Thomas Sowell, who does more thinking than most of our current crop of pundits. To read something totally free of political correctness is refreshing.

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Unlike the Army, the Marine Corps in Mesopotamia fancied shooting to hit, and eschews the three-shot burst. "One – Two – Three" is better than "Brpp."

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Daughter Lindy's Texas hunt was a gastronomic success, and she has no less than four prime whitetails processing for the freezer. It turns out that down Texas way one does not exactly hunt for those junior-sized whitetails, but rather he sits in a tree stand and waits for them to come by. Thus the weapon of choice is a great, long, wooden rifle attached to a moonscope. That is not my idea of a deer gun, but it does serve the purpose well. I have never taken any pleasure from hunting from a blind, although I have done so on several occasions. The all-day tramp in the woods, rifle in hand, is what makes the hunt. Sitting on one's posterior, rifle at rest, may be a good way to put meat on the table, but somehow it does not seem to be *hunting*. However, any hunting is better than no hunting, and since I am no longer on full duty status, I must be content with the vicarious adventures of other people and the meat they put on the table.

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Note that the low mounted leg holster is most popular in Mesopotamia. The new standard rig for Special Forces seems particularly well designed and, of course, you can carry a 1911 in it, instead of an M92.

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Our grandson, Captain Tyler Heath, USMC, is now back from the wars with many interesting things to tell us. His job was close air support coordinator with the Third Marines, so he did not exercise infantry command, but his weapon of choice was the combat shotgun, using double-0 buck. He reports that pistolcraft is more significant in Gulf War II than it has been previously.

Our people are unfortunately handicapped by generally inferior smallarms. Our support weapons have been performing splendidly, but the M92 pistol, besides being a small-caliber instrument, seems very reluctant to work in a sandy climate, and the M16 rifle, plus its clones, remains a pretty dismal effort. The Army seems to think that spray-and-pray is the answer to infantry action, and current doctrine recommends using a three-shot burst – for which there is no tactical excuse. The three-shot burst simply wastes two rounds, unless the action is at arm's length, and if you have achieved one solid hit you should not need two more. (Of course, with a 22 maybe you should.) Besides the M16 is a poor instrument with which to deliver a butt stroke. The butt stroke, with the 03 or the M1 rifle, was a very satisfactory blow, as I can attest from personal observation, and to diminish its ease of use is a mistake.

Those who can lay hands on a 1911 consider themselves very fortunate, but there is a great variety of 1911 clones floating about now, so that no one is sure of its quality. New production 1911s are plagued by conspicuously inferior quality, and our advice here at school at this time is to locate a good World War II example if you can and adjust it if necessary.

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A senior Orange Gunsite staff instructor, now on special duty in Mesopotamia, seems to be doing more instruction in pistolcraft than in the job he was sent to do in the first place. There are people in combat today who are unaware of the existence of the Modern Technique, and once they see it in action they naturally crave to learn more about it. We can help this only in a limited sense, since there is none so blind as those who will not see.

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We have become so accustomed to the idea that a mountain rifle should be bolt-action that we lose sight of the fact that it is possible that a mountain rifle should be a single-shot. A second shot at ram or buck way above timberline is most unlikely, and even if the case comes up, a single-loader can be recharged about as fast as the inexpert hunter can operate a bolt. Gerhard Blenk, the creator of the Blaser 93 rifle, introduced us to that point some time back, and the more I think about it the more sense it makes. The mountain hunter does a lot of hiking and rifle packing above timberline, and a feather-weight rifle has much to recommend it for that purpose. Of course, light weight increases recoil effect – but now we have muzzle-brakes.

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<p>We regret to report the passing of Walt Comstock, of Placerville, California, one of the old-time pioneers of practical pistol competition and the inventor of the "Comstock Count," by which we sought to balance speed against accuracy. Despite our best efforts, the clock continues to tick. God's will be done.</p>
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We hear too much complaint about the inconveniences of military services. True, donning that uniform may be hazardous to one's health, but, on the other hand, the warrior need not worry about what clothes to put on in the morning, and he has access to unlimited free ammunition. (Free ammunition for the rifle team in high school ROTC is what got me signed up in the first place.)

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You probably will not believe this but I got it from a usually unimpeachable source. It seems that when a customer complained to Kimber about an unsatisfactory pistol, some chick on the phone explained to him that the design was a hundred years old and therefore could not be expected to give reliable service more than 45 percent of the time! Honest to God! This girl was not the doorman or an assistant packer. She was a front-office type, presumably in charge of customer relations. We have been told that it is extremely hard to get good help nowadays, but we could not believe it was that hard!

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It appears that nobody cares, but the word *guerra* is Spanish for war. *Guerrilla* then means "little war," and one who engages in it is a *guerrillero*. A "gorilla" is something else entirely.

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We find this hand wringing about capital punishment puzzling. If a criminal deserves death, the method of inflicting it hardly seems important, although such horrors as hanging in irons are both extravagant and degrading. We ran across a recent book concerning the involvement of Thomas Alva Edison in the history of electrocution. A hundred years ago there were some people who were much concerned about whether electrocution might be less unpleasant for the subject than hanging – though hanging is normally pretty painless.

I did a certain amount of research work on vigilantism in graduate school, and that sort of informal activism did not produce any obvious distress in either a criminal or the executioner. There are many things we can learn from the Greeks. The Athenians employed what may be called a "mercy death" by hemlock for those people they wished out of the way but whom they did not wish to torment. We have a clear cut description of the execution of Socrates as written by Plato. Apparently these 19th century hand wringers were short on history.

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"To say that being non-judgmental is better than being judgmental is itself a judgment, and therefore a violation of principle."

Thomas Sowell

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This preoccupation with "accuracy" is developing into a major bore. There is hardly a rifled firearm that can be purchased over the counter today that is not more accurate than the shooter can appreciate, except from bench rest, and the bench rest is no measure of anything except what it measures, and that is not useful accuracy. We have been barking up that tree ever since the revered Townsend Whelen held forth on the subject, and I conclude that perhaps the squirrel is in another tree. I have always shot very accurate rifles and I enjoy this, but never once did the rifle itself achieve anything in the field. When I qualified for a hunting license in Norway I was required to fire a five-shot group at 100 meters from any position that did not employ a rest. I shot from prone using a loop sling, and the sergeant-in-charge did not seem to think that the sling was a rest in the sense forbidden. The group elicited admiration, which leads me to believe that the general level of marksmanship in Norway is no better than elsewhere. I have not heard that the standing world's record of a ten-shot possible on a 100-millimeter bullseye at 300 meters has been surpassed. That, of course, was not fired from a bench rest. Any man who can place ten shots into a 4 inch circle at 300 yards from a field position is an outstanding shot. Whether he needs an *accurate rifle* to do that is questionable, if we use bench rest competition as an index.

It has always seemed to me that the measure of a rifleman is what he can do with one shot, first try, against

the clock, on demand. We have always held that the master rifleman is one who can shoot up to his rifle. We do not meet him very often.

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The family feast is the bastion of social order. The state and the church exert exterior discipline, but the family creates its own from within. Good people do right not for fear of punishment, but because they would feel degraded in their own eyes if they did not. The family is therefore the special fount of morality, and proper behavior is the understood product of the family feast.

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"It is well to recall that the Moors  
were stopped and sent backward at Tours.  
Their hate for the West, is now put to the test  
as their cause kills much more than it cures."

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It is rumored that both H&K and SIG are ready to announce new major caliber service pistols at the forthcoming SHOT Show. We look forward to these items with eagerness, though one may wonder just how much better the pistols may be than the original 1911. We suspect that they may display more "safety" than improved utility. As the Russian translator once exclaimed, "Eez gon! Eez not *safe!*"

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We have been pondering recently about the concept of the 22 rimfire pistol, since catalog items do not seem to offer the assets desirable in any but specialized instruments. We do have superb target 22s, and there is no objection to that, but few people are dedicated target shooters, and many of the very highly developed pieces made available present highly complex attributes hardly appreciable to any but the specialized customer. It seems to me that the primary purpose of the 22 pistol is plinking – that is informal, open-range shooting at miscellaneous improvised targets. Therefore a plinking pistol should be well made and offer excellent trigger-action and good sights. It should, of course, be reliable and accurate enough for the purpose. Preferably it should be rather small, suiting it for easy packing on hikes and camping trips.

There are still places where the hiker and camper is permitted to shoot for the pot at rodents and birds. This may seem an exotic pastime in *The Age of the Wimp*, but it should not be disregarded.

Apart from the target pistol and plinking pistol, a 22 may serve well as a trainer, and it may be quite useful for personal and home defense. When a handgun is used for defense, it is not usually shot, since its presentation suffices to turn off the argument. Nobody wants to get shot with anything, and both muggers and rapists are not anxious to pursue matters when faced by any sort of pistol.

A good plinking 22, either revolver or self-loader, really should be presented as an end in itself, not as a specialized competition instrument. First of all it should be well-made, with superior fit and finish, and as reliable as mechanics will permit. We do not see such pieces advertised for sale.

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There is talk now in South Africa about changing the name of Pretoria, the capitol, to something more Bantuesque. Hardly a surprise. Andries Pretorius was a mighty hero, and the father of his country – comparable to George Washington. This proposed name change could be something like changing the name of the capitol of the US to "Nat Turner." We might go further and rename Rome "Nerotown" and Paris "Guillotine City."

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As the Holy War proceeds we are somewhat surprised that no one has brought up the parallel afforded by "the Old Man of the Mountain," one Hassan ben Saba, who during the Crusades created a Muslim paradise into which he introduced recruits in order to prove to them that if they died carrying out his orders eternal paradise would be theirs. He made liberal use of the drug hashish and thus gave his name to the term "assassin." The suicidal assassin does indeed pose a special problem, but problems are made to be solved.

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Florence King, who is a very sharp observer indeed, points out that what our current military effort lacks is *dash*. Dash may be said to be that element of personality that allows one to swagger, hence the "swagger stick." When I was a boy Marine sergeants and Marine officers of field grade and above were authorized to carry a swagger stick. Some did and some did not. When I made major I jumped at the chance, and I do think it contributed to dash, but that sort of thing began to decline as the Pacific War progressed. General Shoup, the hero of Tarawa, pushed it aside when he became Commandant, but I know that did not apply to Hanneken, who was not only one of the supreme heroes of the Marine Corps tradition, but was about as dashing a figure as I ever saw. He was tall, straight and deeply tanned. The combination of his white toothbrush mustache, his Medal of Honor and his swagger stick were quite overwhelming. One came to attention just thinking about him, and the fact that I rolled dice for drinks with him at the Officer's Club bar at Pendleton is one of the great memories that I cherish.

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