
Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Volume Nine, 2001

• Vol. 9, No. 1 2001	1
• Vol. 9, No. 2 Inauguration!	6
• Vol. 9, No. 3 Mid–Winter	12
• Vol. 9, No. 4 Equinox 01	18
• Vol. 9, No. 5 Maytime	23
• Vol. 9, No. 6 And Into Summer...	28
• Vol. 9, No. 7 The Glorious Fourth	33
• Vol. 9, No. 8 The Rains Came	38
• Vol. 9, No. 9 High Summer	43
• Vol. 9, No. 10 D–Day MMI	48
• Special Edition, September 2001 Cry Havoc!	52
• Vol. 9, No. 11 Hunting Season	54
• Vol. 9, No. 12 Such Goings On!	59
• Vol. 9, No. 13 Thanksgiving	64
• Vol. 9, No. 14 Cocked and Locked	70

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 Not for publication.

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 1

January, 2001

2001

Well, we made it, though it was definitely too close for comfort. The dreadful thing is that the nation seems to be ideologically polarized right down the middle, and can such a nation – "divided against itself" – truly stand? The philosophical differences are not minor, but hinge at the base upon fundamental ideas about right and wrong, and such matters are hardly negotiable. Walter Williams suggests secession:

"So here is my question: Should we Americans continue to impose our wills and values upon one another forcibly, or should we part company and be friends?"

"Those people" do not want to live with us, and we do not want to live with them. Out here in the boonies where I live, we do not meet them, but we know they are there. It is when we look at the major television commentators that we realize that *they* do not think we are *here*. The German word *Schadenfreude* denotes pleasure taken in the misery of others. This is not a nice idea, but one cannot pretend that it does not exist. The pundits of the left writhe there in their intellectual furnaces. One should not take delight in this, but one should not be condemned if the sight does not distress him overmuch. Some of the Founding Fathers foresaw this sort of thing, and they did their best to avoid it by drafting a constitution that both sides would sign. The chasm remains, however, and it does not seem to narrow with the passage of the centuries. It seems to me that the burden of accommodation is upon *them*. We could agree to be friends if they will just get off our backs, but they have to start the ball rolling by agreeing to do just that. Not very likely.

Daughter Parry, who lives in Colorado, informs us that yet another town has mandated personal firearms for home defense. Thus Utah now joins Georgia. May their tribe increase!

Karl Bosselmann, who is a venerable stalwart of the lever-action rifle, points out to us the unpleasant production of the cross-bolt hammer-block "safety" for the traditional American lever-actions. This arrangement is not only useless, but positively dangerous, and yet it is advertised as a "safety device." It is dangerous because it is quite easy to operate inadvertently, leaving you with a rifle which will not fire when you need it. It is easily deactivated by a quick touch-weld, but the fact that you have to do this is irritating.

The earlier lever guns do not have this nuisance installed. If you own one of the newer ones, fix it or get it fixed immediately.

If the *polypragmatoi* (that is the busybodies) must insist upon rustling up causes, let them get the cellular telephone out of the cockpit. There are several ways of doing this, but they, one and all, will be "bad for business," so do not hold your breath.

The arts of weaponcraft are difficult to maintain. We realize there are a good many target shooters who truly know what they are about, but fewer hunter/riflemen all the time. We recently ran across a professional outfitter up in the Rockies who had never heard of the sitting position, nor how to use a shooting sling. And he is a man who takes people out hunting!

But where today does one learn about shooting? There are two good private schools, but Uncle Sugar has pretty much given up trying. The self-taught sometimes do very well – witness Stuart Edward White – but these people are exceptions to the rule. Increasingly we see African outfitters advocating the "slave rest" in which a henchman trots around out between you and the lion and offers his shoulder upon which to rest your rifle. Apparently he assumes that you are not strong enough to hold your rifle up by yourself.

Most of my adult life I have taught rifle and pistol marksmanship. I have succeeded beyond my wildest expectations in several dozen cases. This is spitting against a tide but it is, of course, better than doing nothing. I really do not know why it should trouble me because it is not my responsibility to educate the public. It does trouble me, however, to see how thinly the word is spread.

Correspondent Milo Swensen of Rolling Hills, California, points out to us that in classical Spanish the word "education" denotes that which is provided to a young person by his parents and family, while that which he gets in school is called "instruction." This is a good angle upon the question we raised recently about the definition of education. I cannot consider tradecraft to be education, but then who cares what words mean nowadays?

What is all this about a beret? The beret, of course, is a Basque headgear which serves no purpose whatever. It does not hold off the rain. It does not keep the sun out of the eyes or off the back of the neck. It blows off in a wind, and it offers no protection against bumps and knocks. I have nothing against the Basques, but the beret is a silly hat and should not be given consideration as part of the modern military uniform. The fact that it has assumed a certain badge-glamour is apparent, but not irrevocable. There are ways of making a man's uniform more distinguished looking without attempting to be "fashionable."

It has been pointed out to us that most people do not know about the receiver on the Steyr Scout rifle, which is non-ferrous and which does not bear upon the barrel. This means, of course, that when the barrel heats up it does not alter the position of the two telescope bands. Consequently the rifle does not crawl as you heat it. This is another of the dozen or so features which make a scout a scout. The finished weapon is an *aggregation of desiderata* (!!!), rather than just another gun, but the marketers are doing their best to keep that a secret.

We were recently interviewed on the subject of the Bren Ten. The writer involved seemed more interested in the weapon itself than in its cartridge, which idea seems to us somewhat out of sequence. The reason for the original Bren Ten cartridge was power, though in looking back on it, that seems to have been a needless attribute. The 45 ACP cartridge has *almost* enough power. No conceivable cartridge can have "enough" for all conceivable circumstances.

The Bren Ten pistol was an attractive artifact, and I am glad to have had a hand in it, but it did not invalidate all existing sidearms. Its main drawback was that it wore itself out too quickly. It utilized the Browning tilt lock, and the extra violence of the full-house 10mm cartridge wore off the interior sharp edges rather quickly. It was a nice looking gun and felt good in the hand, but any new development of this sort calls for a government contract in order to popularize it, and such was not forthcoming. If you have one, good for you, but shoot it sparingly, and do not confuse the full-house 10 cartridge with the various reduced 40 caliber pistol cartridges.

Nature note: Dogs should not attack pigs. Smart dogs do not attack pigs. There are, however, a lot of stupid dogs around.

Having jiggled the schedule for 2001, we are now off to Rome in February to participate in the Feast Day of San Gabriel Possenti, who is the patron saint of *pistoleros*. It is rumored that I am scheduled for some sort of an award on this occasion, and this makes me happy indeed. I have not been to Rome since I was a mere tad, it has been many years since Lindy visited, and the Countess has never been there, so we look forward to this

occasion with delight. I will make an attempt to run down the absolute straight word about the exploit which resulted in the canonization of San Gabriel. Nobody ever gets shooting stories straight, but I promise to make a vigorous attempt.

"Unlike its antonym, 'hoplophilia' does not describe an aberration: A man who loves weapons is no more abnormal than a woman who loves babies. Countless millennia of hunting and war fighting have programed man with the knowledge that a weapon means LIFE. This stark realization repels some – they are the hoplophobes. To us hoplophiles it is a delight."

Paul Kirchner

We hear that they had to abandon plans for a nativity pageant in DC, since they could not locate three wise men nor a virgin.

Having grown up with the idea that there should be at least a half-dozen guns in every well-organized household, it has come as something of a shock to us to discover that in frontier America general poverty dictated only one firearm per household. That was the flintlock hanging in honor above the fireplace. This meant that when a boy ran off to war he could not bring along a gun since his family needed that at the homestead. It is therefore possible to assume that while guns were the common experience of all young Americans (at least those who lived outside the city limits), there were never very many guns, and even if the young men could "spring to arms overnight," there could not be anything for them to spring to. Thus getting a force together, in either the Revolutionary War or the Civil War, posed a serious problem in logistics.

This pattern was repeated to a certain extent in the Boer War, wherein every Boer had his rifle but usually there was only one per household, and large numbers of 1896 Mausers had to be fed into Southern Africa before they could proceed with the war. The Boer, however, was used to rifle shooting from as early as he could heft a rifle. This gave him a decisive advantage over the English soldier who had never touched a rifle until he put on the uniform. The English won that one as, of course, they were destined to do, but they took a nasty pasting in the attempt. "God and the Mauser" was Kruger's war cry, and it established that, while armies may defeat farmers, they cannot in the long run overcome them. The armed citizen was and remains the only guarantor of political liberty.

We learn that the last Finnish sniper of the Russo-Finnish War has passed away at age 95. The point here is that his activity was all conducted with a straight-forward, bolt-action, iron-sighted military rifle. These elaborate devises we see in the magazines called "sniper rifles" are very elegant and we would not turn them down, but we remember that above all it is the man, not his weapon, that makes the difference.

Lance Thomas, the jeweler who set the record out there in Southern California in the matter of self-defense, has been characterized by some people as the idealized "gunfighter" of the late 20th century. Certainly he did well, but I cannot think of him as a gunfighter. His tactical skill was only mediocre – it was his attitude which makes him stand out. Above all he typifies the dignity of the individual. There are those who whine, "Why not give them the money. It's only loot, as against your life." Actually that is not entirely it. Your *dignity* is involved. Lance Thomas refused to surrender his dignity to a series of armed punks. That makes him a hero first and a gunfighter second, in my opinion.

We are reminded that when the Spanish Civil War broke out the position of prime minister (upon victory) was offered to the Duke of Alba. He refused it with asperity, declaiming, "Prime Minister! But that's a job for a clerk!" He was then asked what he intended to do after the war was over and won. He said, "Well, I suppose I will continue to go hunting with his majesty, as usual."

In viewing all the family festivities in retrospect, we conclude that every extended family should include a physician, an attorney, a tycoon, a brewer, and a jeweler. This year we have taken full advantage of the last two.

We are informed by our good friend Count Antonio Randaccio–Lodi that the motto of the Savoyard Cavalry goes something like this:

My soul to God,
My life to my King,
My heart to my Lady,
My honor to myself.

Good, hey?

If one is to acquire a dog by breed, rather than by personality, I suggest the Corgi. I have met several in the past couple of years and each was an outstanding hound – outstanding for both wisdom and a sense of humor.

The Guardian, which is a local newspaper in London, became totally flummoxed by the American election. A recent editorial refers to Bush's victory as "a calamity without precedent." If there indeed is a calamity, it does not lie in the election, but rather in the ideological polarization of the American nation. I do not think, however, that is what this editorialist had in mind.

Having received a good many cheerful Christmas messages from friends, and having sent one out ourselves, it appears to be time to produce a manual on the production of Christmas messages, to include such items as: Do not include measles, mumps, nor sprained ankles. And: Do not assume that your reader instinctively realizes that your pets are not your progeny, and so on.

Now that the White House staff will be directed to wear underwear and socks again, fumigation can proceed. George Bush may be no knight in shining armor, but at least one would not be ashamed to have him to dinner. Besides, Americans do not, or should not, need a *caudillo*. We make out better without one.

Curious how our worldly and articulate TV commentators come a-gley on the name of the great Mexican volcano. *Popo cah TAY petal* is just not all that hard to pronounce. Easier than Pascagoula or Possawatomy, e.g.

So now we sail on into the third millennium of the Christian era. The first took us from the first Christmas up till the year 1000. The second from 1000 to 2000. And now we are in the third. A thousand years includes a huge chunk of human experience. Consider that a thousand years ago we had no machinery to speak of, no paper, no books (apart from those handwritten), no firearms, no running water, no electricity, no money, and most shocking of all, no chili. That is a lot of stuff to do without, and yet people thought much the same way, felt much the same way, and acted in ways entirely explicable to us. If we went from Point One to Point Two in that second millennium, it staggers the imagination to consider what the world may look like at Point Three. A group of talented fiction writers has been exploring these matters since I was a child, and some of their work is superb, but all they can tell us is what *may happen*, with nothing more than a vivid imagination to back it up. To me this is a troublesome thought, since the state of the world right now in 2001 is certainly no better than it was in 1901, and in many ways much worse. We conquered the air. In return we wiped out the wilderness. We conquered syphilis and got AIDS in return. We devised the Internet without producing anything worth reading. (And perhaps worst of all, we devised the M1 Garand and we got the M16!)

And time marches on. We must look at the good side. Despite the cell phone, the laptop computer and the personalized water bottle, we have the Porsche, the Ferrari and the Steyr Scout. Hurray – I guess.

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 2

February, 2001

Inauguration!

By a startling piece of miscalculation, the SHOT Show and the Safari Club Show were held this year on the same weekend. It would seem that a great many people would be interested in both activities. We went to SHOT because it is our business to do so, but this forced us to miss seeing various good friends who were at Safari. We did discover, however, that the mutual interest here is not as strong as we might have supposed. The SHOT Show is a trade show and it is put on primarily by and for tradesmen. The Safari Club Show is for trophy hunters who often have little or no interest in firearms. For my part I go to the SHOT Show to look at guns, and the gun-looking was not particularly good this year. Those of us who shoot a good deal are well aware that the most important single attribute of either rifle or pistol is *trigger-action*. A good trigger release is what makes either rifle or pistol easy to hit with, and hitting is the purpose of the exercise. I examined four new handguns this year, and each had a worse trigger-action than the one before. Perhaps the idea is that since nobody can hit anything with a pistol anyway, what difference does "hitability" make? With rifles it is not much better. Steyr Mannlicher will not put a "Jeff Cooper trigger" on a Scout unless it is personally ordered. So that leaves us with the Blaser 93, whose marvelous and radical trigger-action is its strongest point, but a point which both advertisers and salesmen seem to miss.

All together the floor at SHOT was covered with thousands of salesmen, but hardly a shooter from one end of the hall to the other.

Some unpleasant commentator in the travel business is now pushing Botswana as the *in* place to go. Certainly the Okavango Delta is one of the wonders of the world, but what it does not need is a flock of non-hunting photographers in Hawaiian shirts. There are plenty of wonderful places to go in Africa to watch the game animals without shooting. Non-hunters should go there and stay out of the game country. Besides which it is a pretty good general rule that what is *in* is *out*, and what is *out* is *in*. Travelers take note.

We hear from a friend of John Gannaway's who just returned from the roof of the world that while the Marco Polo sheep is indeed the world's grandest trophy, his pursuit is not a good idea at this time. The operators, naturally, want your money, and they want you to get in and get out as quickly as possible. This is not a good idea when your base camp is located at 13,000 feet. As is common knowledge, high altitude takes a little time to which to adjust, and a two-week hunt simply does not offer enough time. This hunt was in Tadjikistan where the Tadjiks cannot speak Russian and the Russians cannot speak Tadjik. The object of the exercise, from the local standpoint, is money – your money. You must operate with a sheaf of one hundred dollar bills in each shirt pocket. The countryside is grand, but not beautiful, mainly high, gentle rock slopes with no visible vegetation in any direction. Our friend anticipated a great deal of long-range shooting, but, as one might suppose, when he got his shot he took it at 200 paces. Well, he got his ram, and it will look very grand on his wall, but he has no desire to try that episode again.

I have just now discovered the purpose of that full-length stock on the 1903 Mannlicher – often referred to as the "Mannlicher" stock. It is to facilitate use of the carbine as a walking stick. The emperor and his sons were great hunters of the high country, and they liked to hold the rifle by the barrel and use the butt as a support. Certainly that full-length stock does nothing for the accuracy factor of the weapon. If anything, it decreases it. But it does make a nice handle for a walking stick. Funny nobody ever mentioned that before.

We just now learn about the "Eye of Sakai." As you know, the great Japanese flyer, Saburo Sakai, was hit in the face by 30-caliber fire from an SBD. His right eye was given up for lost, and though he was permitted to fly again toward the end of the war, he was reconciled to being blind in one eye for more than 50 years. As it happened it was discovered quite recently that he had been living with a metal fragment in his eyeball all this time. They went in and took the piece out and completely restored the sight of his wounded eye – just before he died of natural causes. I find this astonishing. He apparently suffered no continuing pain, nor any infection. He just could not see out of that eye for a whole lifetime.

Everybody's productivity seems to have been severely retarded by EE2, but that is behind us now, and let us hope we will not be bothered with it again, ever. That election was such a squeaker that we can by no means be smug, but there is hope that those of us on our side will now realize how forcibly we must pursue the truth at all levels during the next four years and win the next one by a landslide.

On this last excursion to New Orleans, we were privileged to chat again with Joe Foss, who is one of the Mighty Warriors. It is an interesting experience to talk with a Mighty Warrior, and I have been able to do so before. I have talked with Joe Foss a good many times since we have both been involved with the National Rifle Association. I spent half a day with Rudel, who just may be the Mightiest Warrior of all. I spent a week in a hospital bed adjoining that of Lou Walt, and I have shared drinks at the bar with Herman Hanneken. Politicians are not impressive as a group, nor are entertainers, nor CEOs, but Mighty Warriors are something else again. They are the hot sparks from the grinding wheel of history, and their immediate presence is inspiring. I never met Lancelot, nor El Cid, nor Richard of the Lion Heart, but I did once communicate in spirit with David the King in his Basilica in Jerusalem. The rabbi wrote my name on a paper and wrapped it around a candle which he then placed center on the tomb.

Such goings on!

Our Danish friend, Jean Wenckens-Madsen, opines that our electoral system here in this country is "outdated." Perhaps so, but we would not have it any other way. Chastity, and courage, and truthfulness, and dignity are also outdated. Being "up to date," on the other hand, may be nothing to boast about. The men who drafted our constitution over two hundred years ago were much better educated and more politically sophisticated than any politicians we see hanging about today. We thank God that they left us the benefit of their wisdom!

We picked up a good sea story at SHOT. One of our old time students in San Salvador just last year was beset by no less than eight punks with SMG's bent upon assassination. Edwardo killed four and claims he only let the other four get away out of kindness. "They were so young," he said. Well, kids can kill you pretty well, too, though they usually do not do it expertly.

Amongst the new offerings in major caliber service pistols we notice a fascination with grip safeties. The grip safety was a poor idea when Browning first dreamed it up, and as you know he dropped it in 1935. It is not only useless, but somewhat dangerous, but it does satisfy a sort of nervous craving for mechanical safeties which seems to be the mood of the times. Consider the "safety" on the trigger, as in the Glock and the Vektor. This is called a safety, but if you press the trigger the gun fires. This suggests stamping the combination on the safe door. It is obvious to anyone who thinks about it that in handling a firearm, safety rides between the ears, rather than between the hands. *You cannot make a gun safe.* You can, however, make a shooter safe, but in *the Age of Technological Irresponsibility*, we seek to make up for human shortcomings by means of gadgetry, which, of course, is fallible.

The gun industry, like other industries, is distressingly enslaved to faddism. The lemming principle prevails.

Official Gunsite historian Barrett Tillman comments upon a Medal of Honor citation from Germany in World War II in which the hero fired 171 rounds of a 30-caliber carbine ammunition to achieve eight (8) disabling hits. This lad's activities were truly heroic, but one must assume that German tactical efficiency in this action was simply abysmal. He was under short-range direct fire from smallarms and machineguns throughout the episode and he sustained only one bullet wound.

I saw something vaguely like that up in the Aleutians in which our man just walked into the Japanese position, shooting as he came and being shot at and missed. It may be that when you get up and charge like that, the people on the other side get all flustered and forget about their trigger control.

We hope you all had a good New Year's eve. I have long held that the only two proper places in which to enjoy a New Year's eve celebration are a grand ball (with live orchestra) and a snug mountain cabin under three feet of snow. We were not able to arrange either of these this year, but let us know if you did.

Danie van Graan reports an episode of following up a wounded lion in dim light. His client had shot the lion with one of these ultra-high-tech, big-bottle 30s without immediate affect. Danie went in on hands and knees with his trusty "Co-pilot" in hand, the ideal tool for the task. No further action, however, since the lion was dead when they found him.

Velocity hysteria – the child of Roy Weatherby – is still with us despite all evidence to the contrary. If you need more killing power, you do not need more feet per second, you need more bullet weight and more impact area. I thought everybody knew that, but a great many people are not paying attention.

On the way home from New Orleans, daughter Lindy stopped in at Indianhead Ranch in Texas and slew a bison. She used the Dragoon, from prone with bipod, at a range of 250 yards – much longer than expected. The 270-grain Swift bullets slid clear through, with no evidence of expansion, and the bull ran some little distance before succumbing.

Family member Bethany Robinson came along and did herself another bull with Clint Smith's 45-70 Sharps. This fad for bison shooting is automatically limited by the expense involved, otherwise we might be charged with reducing the herds again. The meat is of the best, but at eight dollars a bite one is unlikely to overdo it.

We understand that school children are frequently punished today by being "suspended." I never ran into anything like that as a child, but it certainly seems to me that a day off from school would have been a reward, rather than a punishment. As I recall it, school was simply something that got in my way and interfered with a lot of more important things I felt I had to do. But no such luck. I went to school because I had to, not because I wanted to, and most of what I learned I learned at home. Of course, that was back in the 20th century.

We are informed by *family member* Keith Neal that M1 rifles, in reasonably good condition, are now available from DCM for \$500. If you are interested, you may telephone 888-267-0796.

We picked up a news headline to the effect that "Bear Attacks Continue To Mystify Biologists." Not being a biologist, I do not feel mystified about bears, which are large, strong, dangerous creatures. Generally they are inoffensive, but certainly not always. Apparently biologists do not understand that. We remember a while back that a biologist in the Northwest Territories took the trouble of sending a bear's head all the way down to Winnipeg for examination because this bear had chewed up an Indian. It had not occurred to this biologist that bears frequently chew up Indians. Remember Gunsite Bear Rule no. 2, which reads, "Bears are not cuddly."

Did you catch that exchange recently in which some dim-witted critic attacked a retired general who had occasion to run a summer camp, expressing astonishment that the young people were introduced to marksmanship training. She asked him if he did not think that teaching young people to shoot was somewhat

"irresponsible." He parried by saying that he did not think so, but he did not counterattack with the view that *not* teaching young people firearms technique is what is irresponsible.

I guess it was pretty obvious that the appropriate assignment for Al Gore is Ambassador to Chad. Several people have hit the press with that before we did.

A correspondent writes in to ask why I do not make a point of strip-loading a bolt-action rifle. As I see it, the stripper clip was a military device enabling the shooter to recharge a conventional box magazine with one stroke of the hand. This was usually coupled with a bolt stop which prevented closing the bolt on an empty chamber. Thus in a hot emergency, the soldier fired until he could not close the bolt, which told him that it was time for him to strip in another five rounds. This was doubtless a good idea in a Rorke's Drift situation in which a rifleman might be called upon to repel boarders armed with edged weapons. It is something of a nuisance under more normal situations in which it is desirable to top off a magazine which has one or more rounds left in it. The detachable box magazine is a more useful device under such circumstances.

I continue to object to the expansion of the color code to place "Black" beyond "Red." In Red you have made the decision to take the irrevocable step. You have no place further to go than that and there is no need to clutter up the scene.

The following from *family member* David Kahn from Morrison, Colorado.

"Never underestimate the power of stupid people in large groups."

Family member and master instructor Tom Russell points out to us that we have been teaching the wrong things here in the rifle program. It turns out that Kenney Jarrett, of Jarrett Rifles Incorporated, claims that his rifles are so good that they breed such confidence that the shooter does not have to know how to shoot – the rifle takes care of that for him. To quote: "They don't hesitate pulling the trigger because they know they're going to hit what they shoot at." Well, doggone! Forget about sights, forget about trigger control, forget about solid position, just buy a Jarrett rifle and you will hit whatever you shoot at, under any conditions. Contrary to what I have always felt and taught, it is the rifle, not the shooter that hits the target. (Now sure-as-shootin', somebody is going to believe that I said that seriously.)

"The only people I know who are trusted by their government are the Swiss."

Derek Heale

I have never been much interested in air guns, but I have run across an air pistol from Germany recently that really caught my fancy. On this piece the primary tube is the gas chamber, and around it, like a snake, is wrapped the barrel, starting top dead center aft and winding up top dead center forward, describing a 360 degree circle. Now why is this? It appears that if you start the projectile at the breech and rotate it one full turn by the time it reaches the muzzle you can employ a smooth-bore and spin the projectile without rifling. This is a truly exotic idea, and the pistol itself is a truly bizarre artifact. I am not sure what is gained by this system, since I cannot read the German that well, but I must certainly grant these people first prize for ingenuity.

Since we now have computers to do our thinking for us, here are few questions for your machine:

- Was American Negro chattel slavery an institution extensible into the American West?
- What should be the qualifications for the franchise?
- What was the effect of the institution of chivalry upon the Age of Exploration?
- Is there such a thing as natural law?

- Can a moral government exist without religion?

Go ahead and punch the keys!

The Horiuchi case is still open – to the public, if not to the courts. Horiuchi was defended by Solicitor General Seth Waxman who told the court that it did not matter whether Vicki Weaver's death was the result of excessive force. "These federal law enforcement officials are privileged to do what would otherwise be unlawful if done by a private citizen. It is a fundamental function of our government." It is not clear to me that the deliberate murder of an unarmed woman by a federal agent who was himself in no danger "is a fundamental function of our government." The proper adjective for this act is *atrocious*. One wonders why that is not clear to Waxman.

In cruising the great hall at the SHOT Show, we noticed that fully two out of three people on the floor had cellular phones permanently screwed into their ears. Modern medicine being what it is, it is possible that there will be a next step. Before long we should be able to have a cellular phone implanted into the mastoid bone and never have to think for ourselves again.

The relationship between the client and the guide remains as mystifying as ever. By choice, the guide should show the client the animal at a reasonable range and then drop the subject. This assumes that the hunter knows what he is doing, which is sometimes a dangerous assumption. The hunter, however, should by all means control the shot and not be told when or when not to shoot. The guide not infrequently finds that his hunter has become procedurally paralyzed and incapable of making the vital decision. If this is the case, urging him to shoot may not help matters since he may press trigger without proper concentration on his shooting. Cases are different, of course, but it is certainly a splendid experience for the guide to discover that his hunter knows exactly what he is doing, and is doing it right. This is usually the case when the hunter has been exposed to a proper course of instruction with the rifle, but there are not many of those available. Sometimes a sportsman will do well on this first trial without any trace of buck fever. This is to be hoped for, but not necessarily expected.

I have been taken to task by one correspondent for pushing the Steyr Scout too much – at the expense of other rifles now on the market. The Steyr Scout was conceived and designed to do everything, and it does. The other two interesting rifles on the market, as I have pointed out, are the Blaser 93 and Jim West's "Co-pilot." If you are going for elephants or buffalo, you should use a heavy. But elephant and buffalo are specialties. The general-purpose rifle is the Steyr Scout, though the factory is apparently trying to keep that a secret.

So here we go again in extolling the Steyr Scout. What follows is an extract from a letter from John Papanicolaou. I simply could not resist reprinting it.

"Thank you for helping me fall in love again. I am speaking, of course, of the Steyr Scout rifle. I took your pistol class in August and, although I had considered buying the rifle but dismissed the idea as too costly, I was swayed by your high praise for it. Then, when I got the opportunity to handle it at the reception at your house, I was sold. I was not prepared, however, for the joy that overcame me when I actually unpacked, handled and fired my own Scout. It was love at first sight, and I believe I walked around with a stupid grin on my face that day."

HOLLYWOOD GORE SUPPORTERS NEED YOUR HELP

George W. Bush is established as our next President. This will have catastrophic results in our vital – no, indispensable – entertainment industry. Barbra Streisand, Martin Sheen, Susan Sarandon, Whoopie Goldberg, Alec Baldwin – among many others – have sworn to leave the

country if George W. Bush was elected President. And this is where YOU can help. We need volunteers to help pack and to load moving vans. We also need airfare for these irreplaceable national treasures so they can relocate before they change their minds. For the cost of a small SUV, you can sponsor one of these celebrities and their unfortunate relocation. You will know that your efforts are helping when you receive postcards, letters and pictures from your chosen "refugees" as they learn to become useful citizens in the Third World country of their choosing. You will help, won't you? It costs so little but it means so much. Call 1-800-DEPART-A-CELEB now. Operators are standing by. Major credit cards are accepted.

Hawaii Rifle Association Newsletter, Dec. 2000

Many of the best things in life are unappreciated until you begin to lose them. Consider good health, good brakes – and political liberty.

This from Bruce Snyder, Amsterdam, The Netherlands:

"As further testimony to this [Bausch & Lomb] scope system, I need to share one final comment. I was in Victoria, Australia about to hunt for hogs. Because a group of us had flown down from Sydney we wanted to insure the airlines hadn't mistreated our rifles and were checking zero on a 44-gallon oil drum about 100 yards down range. A city slicker from Sydney asked if he could take a shot. We gave him the basic hold and squeeze instructions. On his first shot, he allowed the recoil and the scope to bite him above the right eye. This guy stood up, looked at the rifle a second and then threw it flat down in the dirt.* My heart sank and I just knew the scope was a gonner. While others attended this guy's eyebrow cut, I attended to the rifle. There was absolutely no harm done. An hour and a half later, this scope and rifle dropped a running boar at about 125 yards with one shot. The scope and its cross hairs had not moved!!!! Maybe this scope and rifle are some exception to some experience others have had. But, forty years of shooting to the same spot with no adjustment says something for a fixed-reticle design."

* And this was an Aussie!

"Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it."

"Avoidance of danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing."

Helen Keller, *The Open Door*, 1957

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 3

March, 2001

Mid-Winter

And by that we certainly do not mean "the winter of our discontent." The new regime in Washington may not be perfect in every respect, but when one is plucked out of the sea by a life boat he is not likely to complain that it leaks a little.

The mood at the NRA winter board meeting was notably cheerful. We started out by extending Charlton Heston's reign for one more year, and this is an occasion for great joy. There are those who claim that he was selected by somewhat irregular means, but he is such a tremendous asset to the Association that we are not likely to find fault with procedural technicalities. In his position as president, Mr. Heston supplies a persona of dignity and charisma unmatched by anyone in public life since Ronald Reagan.

We learn that NRA membership is now up to 4.3 million.

We learn that Dr. Ugo Beretta of Gardone has donated the sum of one million dollars (that is dollars, not lire) to the Association. He may not make the world's best service pistol, but he does run the world's best executive lunch room, as I can attest personally.

At the winter meeting I was elevated to the peerage, so to speak, by being elected to the Executive Council of the National Rifle Association. This is a life-time appointment during good behavior (I may be flung out if I would be discovered to have voted for a Democrat), which relieves me from the need to run for office again, unless I choose to do so. A council member does not have voting authority, but this is hardly a bother when we note that really close votes on policy matters are nearly unheard of. I intend to remain on the board until my present term runs out. At that time, circumstances will decide whether I should run again.

We all noted that the Attorney General of South Carolina has announced that the season is now open in that state on burglars. Now there is an example to follow!

After a preliminary but penetrating study, we have concluded that the best of the pocket 45s is the Kimber. *Family member* Clint Smith, however, deems that it is God's will that any pistol for the 45 ACP cartridge must have a 5-inch barrel. Customizers take note.

We learn that Saddam Hussein has announced (in Arabic) that he won the Gulf War. Well he did get away, a historical mistake for which we are inclined to hold George Bush, Sr., responsible. It would appear that that small, black cloud on the horizon is the specter of a general Moslem war against the West – something which should be put off as long as possible, but is probably going to be with us in due course.

Someone has observed that if you find yourself in San Francisco, be careful upon leaving not to look back, lest you be turned into a pillar of salt.

Let it be decreed that there may be no elections in the future during hunting season.

Apparently Hillary has suggested that we reform our electoral system by modifying or doing away with the Electoral College. If she is serious about this (or about anything), we suggest she consider restructuring the Electoral College on the basis of counties, rather than states. That should certainly take care of that argument.

Despite the factory's curious decision to discontinue production of the 376 Scout, which I like to call the Steyr Dragoon, the piece was a distinct sensation at the Safari Club meeting in Vegas. *Family member* and master instructor Rich Wyatt sold ten of them to people going to Africa. This piece is a great success in both Africa and Alaska, and why it should be taken off the market at a time when new products seem to be the rage is hard to explain. What it offers is solid, medium-class power in Scout configuration, and Scout configuration is the most significant forward step in the design of sporting rifles since World War II. There seems to be a mysterious sort of emotional block here, possibly do to lack of shooting experience on the part of gun salesmen as a class. There is also the "magnum myth," which has served to convince a couple of generations of hunters that excess power can make up for lack of marksmanship. One correspondent claimed, for example, that some people in his party opined that "the 308 simply would not suffice for open-country mule deer hunting." Those who are familiar with open-country mule deer hunting are well aware that the 308 will do everything that a 300 Ultra will, and with considerably less bother. When that mule deer gets so far away that you cannot deck him with your Scout, you are not going to be able to take him with your "super thunder-stick" either. Remember that a hunter's skill is measured not in how far away his target was, but how close he was able to get to it. Of course a good many hunters are not very skilled, but that does not excuse taking shots beyond one's useful range.

The trashing of the White House by the punk staff on departure is certainly an indication of the general character of "those other people." Is this a function of the failure of our schools, or simply evidence of lack of moral teaching in the home? Is this a matter of television, or of two working parents, or something else? Whatever it is, it is certainly novel and certainly unpleasant.

Being of the old school, I rather assumed that everybody knew the words to the old Steven Foster songs – such as "The Old Kentucky Home." The opening line runs:

"The sun shines bright on my Old Kentucky home
 'Tis summer, the darkies are gay"

Clearly we had to restructure this because we cannot longer use the term "darky," and "gay" has been rerouted, so we put our revision into a previous Commentary, and various people wrote in about it in puzzlement. Sorry about that.

We had a recent case here in Prescott which showed again the inadequacy of the Parabellum cartridge. The creep in this case was shot once dead center and once again in the arm, but was able to recover and drive off at high speed resulting in a lethal crash some miles away. We cannot prove that a major caliber hit similarly placed would have stopped the fight on the spot, but the odds are certainly in favor of it.

Those of you who are diet conscious will take note of one Miss Lucy Walker who, in 1864, was the first woman to surmount the Matterhorn. She was also the first woman to reach the top of the Eiger, though she did not go up the infamous north wall. During her adventures in the alps, she subsisted entirely on a diet of sponge cake and champagne. When I read of the champagne consumption of those old Victorians, I sometimes regret that I never acquired a taste for it.

In discussing whether a sidearm should be comfortable to carry, Clint Smith observes that a handgun should be *comforting*, rather than *comfortable*. Well put.

Our granddaughter Amy Heath in New York has now gone aboard the staff of the History Channel as an assistant producer. We sincerely hope that she acquires enough influence there to reach some sort of policy-making level, since the History Channel, while being unusually good television, is as a rule badly in need of editing in matters involving firearms. Among other things, they do not seem to be able to tell the difference between a bullet and a cartridge. It is possible that nobody in New York knows the difference between a bullet and a cartridge, so we stand ready to help.

We note that the Marlin people keep right on trying to upstage Jim West of Anchorage by promoting slightly inferior versions of his "Co-pilot" concept. The Co-pilot, as we have said, is one of the three really interesting rifles now available. It is essentially a pocket-sized, takedown 45-70 Marlin with an efficient muzzle brake and excellent ghost-ring sights. It also is available in stainless, which makes it particularly choice along the Alaska coastline. The Co-pilot is quite perfect for the lion guide. (Of course there are not many lion guides, and firearms are not easy to acquire in Africa, now that the revolutionary government has made it practically impossible for you to leave your rifle with your guide on departure.)

It was once explained to us by Elden Carl (The Great) that the proper procedure when attacked by a savage dog is to ram your pistol right down his throat. You haven't got a pistol? Well, shucks! I guess you will just have to call 911.

While we frequently comment upon the bad performance of the law enforcement establishment in matters of weaponcraft, we must hang a gold star on the Secret Service and the National Park Service people at the White House on the occasion of that recent shooting incident. Whichever officer was in charge, he did exactly the right thing by shooting the goonie in the leg with one neat round, in total defiance of the spray-and-pray principle. One shot, one hit, hospitalization. Very well done indeed!

As I understand it, slavery was abolished in this country in 1865. The issue is closed. Buying those people from their friends in Africa and bringing them over here was a great mistake and we have suffered for it for a long time. Perhaps we should let the matter drop.

For those of you who choose to write in, I plead that you put your complete name and address on your copy. A half page of electronically-activated gibberish does not suffice.

I am very grateful for the kind words you sometimes wish to supply, and I do enjoy engaging in argument, but I cannot respond unless you tell me how.

It has been suggested that the NRA's voice in the election (EE2) was enough to bring victory to our side. Certainly we had an influence there, and a strong one, but it might be just as soundly stated that Ralph Nader did the trick, just as Perot put Clinton in the White House for his second tour.

However it was, in an election this close every possible influence was involved, so let us all thank everybody and now make sure that we do not let our success produce complacency. Those other people are really mad, and they have already demonstrated that no sort of disreputable act is beyond them. History is full of examples of disasters which resulted from the dropping of the guard. Let it not happen to us!

Mugging is up 28 percent in England since the British have been deprived of the right to defend themselves. So who is surprised?

"Dogs have masters, cats have staff."

Curt Rich

These two new short, fat magnum cartridges from Winchester have a certain charm in that they can be packed into a shorter action, if that is important to you. On the other hand, their dimensions make it necessary for them to reduce the cartridge capacity of the magazine. This may or may not be significant. I knew of a PH once who ran out of ammunition when chasing a kudu, but that was long ago, and one more round in his magazine would not have changed that situation. Right now the Steyr Scout carries five rounds in the first mag and five more in the second. In the 376 version, the numbers are four and four. It would seem if you attack the problem right from the original design, you do not need secondary solutions.

The "*Gargantuan Gunsite Gossip, Vol. 2*" has now been sent to the print shop. I do not know when it will be on sale and I do not know how much it will cost, but I will keep you informed.

And now we have the 480 Ruger, which appears to be a very slick item, though I have not personally fired one. I do not see what you can do with a 480 Ruger that you cannot do with a 44 Magnum, but then I tend to be old fashioned about such things. The aim of the industry, of course, is to sell stuff, which is fine, but in general what we need is to offer better launchers rather than better cartridges. The cartridges we have, and have had for a long time, will do just fine.

The goal of marketing is to induce in the customer the idea that he needs something new, rather than something better. Of course to a certain kind of mind, "new" and "better" are the same word, and to such people anything old fashioned is inferior. Thinking about the matter, however, is out of style.

Hard as it is to believe, the animal crackers in England have now designated fish & chip shops as legitimate targets for lethal vandalism. People who eat fish should be killed, according to this view. We suppose salmon fishermen should now go about their sport in gunboats. Sometimes one wonders if people should be allowed to run around loose!

At the SHOT Show we noted that the ineffable Perazzi quadruplet is still for sale. This is a set of four over/under double shotguns in 12, 16, 20 and 410. The asking price for the set is \$316,000, and it has been around for several years without purchase. I find this a charming business, for here we have a manufacturer who is driven by a search for perfection, regardless of marketability. Some rich kid will eventually buy that set, and I will be sorry to see it go, because every time I go to the SHOT Show I am delighted to know that there are people who will make such things, and eventually people who will buy them. It is a wonderful life!

For those who came in late, a "ghost-ring" is that form of aperture sight which features a large aperture and a thin rim. The idea is that when the aperture is placed reasonably close to the eye and the shooter looks at the front sight, the rim disappears, as with a ghost. This does not impair aiming precision, but it vastly improves speed of acquisition. The older form of aperture sight, which featured a pinhole, presumably for increased precision, was terribly slow to use. The rear sight we had on the 03 Springfield was wrong in practically every respect, and while the A3 version of the rifle was proletarianized in some respects, its sight was much better.

The first man to extol the ghost-ring, as far as I can read, was Karamojo Bell of Africa, though Townsend Whelen acquired the idea about the same time. I certainly did not invent the idea, but I believe that I did invent the *term*, and I find it amazing that for 60 odd years no manufacturer sought to put a good metallic sight on his rifle, assuming evidently that no one would use iron sights anyway and telescopes would be the only thing of interest. It is true today that the optical or telescope sight is practically universal, but this is not entirely a good thing. In the first place, telescopic sights are not necessary for about 90 percent of sport shooting. I took Scout One with me to Central America in 1968 and used the ghost-ring exclusively on that occasion – with total success. The glass sight is inappropriate for use on rifles intended for dangerous game. One should not regard one incident as definitive, but I once got into a rather tricky situation on a lion, because all I had on that rifle at the time was a telescope and I could not pick out a proper aiming point at short range

in a hurry, due to a limited field of view. My experience on buffalo, while not extensive in the classic sense, is enough to convince me that a good ghost-ring is what is needed, and a telescope is out of place. Regardless of how well made they may be, telescope sights break. Also they are vulnerable to dust, mud and snow in a way that the ghost-ring is not.

The ghost-ring is not quicker than the telescopic sight, when the latter is properly used, but it is distinctly quicker than any open sight, even the Express Sight from Africa. It is a *Good Thing*, and should be more widely appreciated, but considering the general nature of firearms design progress over the last half century, I do not expect much in this regard. We have awfully good firearms, cartridges and sights today, but we do not do any better with them in the field than our grandfathers did. It is always the shooter, not the weapon that makes a difference.

In my opinion, neither money nor greed (*cupiditas*) is the root of all evil. *The root of all evil is envy*. The non-coper hates the coper, and thus the non-shooter hates the shooter. I see no other explanation for the pointless and irrational activism of the gun grabbers on the political scene. They know that their machinations can have no effect upon crime. Guns have no effect upon crime, but they do make all men equal, as the saying goes. This puts the coper on top, and infuriates the non-coper.

We note that the *polypragmatoi* are not backing off. Turns out that in Massachusetts, sushi is now illegal. The socialists hate to think that any one of their subjects might risk himself by taking a small bite of raw fish. Well, we do not spend much time in Massachusetts, and it is a small state anyway with easily accessible borders.

In view of all these gadgets we see for sale in ads and at the shows, may we suggest that "*invention is the mother of necessity?*"

Does recoil bother you much? This clearly is a personal matter, and some people are affected far more than others. When I was a lad we used to think the 03 was a jaw breaker – but it was not. Then we started going to larger and larger cartridges, which kicked more and more, and this bothered some people far more than others. It has a lot to do with how much you shoot. Those of us who shoot a good deal hardly notice recoil, and yet a lot of people complained about the recoil of the 350 Short Magnum when it first appeared. For a long time the 375 Holland cartridge was generally held to be a bruiser, but it certainly is not today – note that we now even have an "Ultra 375." When the 458 Winchester came out, it scared a lot of people until they discovered that recoil effect upon a shooter is about 85 percent mental. If you convince yourself that recoil is nothing to worry about, it will not be. I have a lot of experience along this line, having taught people rifle marksmanship for most of my adult life. It is not a matter of how big or strong you are, it is a matter of what you think you should think about rifle kick. I have had great success with adolescents of both sexes in this regard, and while I certainly do not assert that recoil effect does not exist, I do insist that it is highly overrated. Any boy who plays touch football seriously will be beaten around far more in a quarter than he ever will be by the butt of his rifle. What is more, he will enjoy it.

Let us hear it for the counterattack! In Vermont the legislature has introduced a bill proposing a \$500 annual tax on unarmed households. Way to go, Green Mountaineers!

It has been fashionable all my life to think highly of the principle of majority rule, and yet when this is analyzed, it becomes short of ideal. What are you going to do, for example, when a very large population is divided right down the middle on irreconcilable principles. *In our last EE2, the margin for error was greater than the margin for victory*. Democracy is all very well in its way, but it does not resolve today's political problems in the major powers. It works better in small populations wherein people are apt to know each other better and less likely to crystallize their political preferences. Plato pointed out, for example, that the largest political entity in which democracy is feasible should include no more than four thousand souls.

Certainly we have a massive political challenge today in the US, and given the viciousness of the left, it is hard to foresee a satisfactory solution. Surrender of moral principle will not suffice, but the country is more completely divided on moral principles than at anytime since its founding – not excepting the Civil War. This is a bad scene, and we pray that the new administration confronts it better than the old.

We are off now to Italy for festive doings in Rome. Thus there may be a hiatus in the issuance of this paper. I am grateful to San Gabriel Possenti for the medal, and I will endeavor to publish all relevant details upon return.

Meanwhile, stay cool. After all, it is February.

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 4

April, 2001

Equinox 01

Our venture to Rome proved to be very pleasant and we were able to enjoy the company of various old friends, senior shooters and members of the *Gunsite African Rifles*. We finally met our long-time correspondent and friend, Antonio Randaccio Lodi, who was our host in Rome.

The occasion was the feast day of Saint Gabriel Possenti, who is inscribed as "Patron Saint of Marksmen" on the handsome presentation medal I was awarded. There is some confusion about this, since marksmanship comes in various flavors and there are various other notables whose sainthood may be tied up at least indirectly with their shooting ability. The story has it that the young man achieved fame on an occasion when he ran a bunch of *banditi* off his town by demonstrating his unusual skill with a handgun. Just whose weapon it was, or what sort, are cloudy issues. The accepted date for the incident is 1865, which means he could have used a revolver, but there is no certainty about that. Here is an opportunity for a good fiction writer, since exact details of the event may probably never be discerned. The account has a nice ring to it, and can be offered as a good morality tale in which good triumphs over evil. There are many such stories in our heritage, and here is one that does deserve further attention. It was Hemingway's dictum that really good fiction was in a certain sense truer than fact. Young Saint Gabriel (he died at age 24) may also be considered as a patron of the triumph of youthful virtue over popular scruffiness.

However that may be, we met the people, we got the medal, and we thoroughly enjoyed the adventure. We went by Maranello (Ferrari), Modena (balsamic vinegar) and Parma (parmigiano). We checked out the wine legend at Montefiascone (Est! Est! Est!), and we marveled at Michelangelo's breathtaking imagery in the Sistine Chapel. There is far too much to see for a short week in Italy, but even so, we saw a lot and enjoyed it all.

For those contemplating an Italian holiday, we suggest that you order your Ferrari in advance and pick it up at Maranello. I understand that the management gives you a princely reception on such an occasion, and you may drive your new car around the test track to your heart's content.

We note with some amusement that various authors have been panned by various readers for confusing the accepted commands "lock and load" and "load and lock." The facts are these: the 03 rifle, which is a straight-forward Mauser with a wing safety on the cocking piece, cannot be loaded after it is locked since the safety blocks the action. For the 03, the command is "load and lock." The M1, however, could be effectively locked before inserting a clip, and this was the accepted procedure. So with the M1 the command was always "lock and load." Neither command is either right or wrong. It is simply a question of which weapon is being used.

Here at Gunsite, Spring has sprung, the forsythia is ablaze, and the new facilities are almost complete. I am a little out of practice, but I look forward to conducting the Masters' Series Rifle and Pistol Instruction, as well as the Safari Prep sessions, with much pleasure. I suggest you bring the weapons you intend to use in the field (and please do not bring a pistol that cannot be cocked).

From the *National Review* we learn that over half the undergraduates at Harvard University are given A's or A-'s on whatever work they choose to submit. So much for a Harvard degree. Just get aboard, put in your time, and you will be assured of a bright future down in DC. (But let us have no more talk about "education," which is another matter entirely.)

We learn from a *family member* down in Australia that the Aussie army has been effectively washed out by its unisex policies. When you start putting girls in the army, you have lost the war, and when you lose it, you can simply call "time out!" and all will be forgiven.

It has always seemed to me that this gender-equality foolishness has gone about the whole concept in reverse. When God created man in His image, He did so because that was the only image He had to work with, but when He sought to create a helpmate for man, He looked thoughtfully at Adam's rib and said, "I think I can do better this next time" – and created woman.

If we would just leave things in their proper slot, everybody would be a lot happier. The purpose of man is to cherish woman. The purpose of woman is to civilize man. Let us hold to that thought.

Of all the curious artifacts we have run across in the gun line over the last couple years, one of the most curious is an ornamental sub-caliber Gatling from Germany, complete with ring magazine and hand crank. A 22 Gatling can serve absolutely no purpose, but it is very expensive and very "cute," and I guess those two attributes may make it actually saleable in *the Age of Trivia*.

"Unfortunately, attacks on police stations in the 'New, Improved' South Africa are very common. There is one police station in Stellenbosch in the Western Cape province that was burgled so often that it employed a local security firm with armed response to protect them. We have also had a case locally where a husband and wife came across a break-in in progress. They phoned the police, who told them they did not have a vehicle to get to the crime scene. So her husband kept track of the thieves while she drove to the police station, picked up the police, and took them to the thieves, where the police arrested them."

T. J. Johnston

I call your attention to a new work by Lanford Kersten entitled "*The Walther Book*." It is a nifty coffee-table enterprise, and it is available from Ludo Wurfain at Safari Press.

Among life's little irritations is the proliferation of this annoying phrase "Nothing could be further from the truth." *Of course it could*. Show me any statement at all and I will come up with something which is further from the truth than that. The same rejection can be lodged against "I couldn't agree more." I guess that people who write like that must go for "spray-and-pray" in a gunfight – sloppy thinking and sloppy marksmanship.

Note that if you are planning to take a rifle course here, you should be fairly spry. You should be able to execute deep knee bends, sit ups and other simple exercises. Our shooting classes are not athletic endeavors, but if you cannot move easily you will probably be wasting your money. In my present crippled condition (which I hope may improve), I could by no means be qualified to come here as a student. I can, however, do the talking, and I have a good squad of master coaches to do the running and jumping, as necessary.

In connection with granddaughter Amy's work with the History channel, we discover that history is not politically correct. If you tell it like it is (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*), you will be deemed sexist, racist, elitist, insensitive, and, worst of all, *old-fashioned*. Perhaps Amy can work around this. We will hope for the best.

As *the Age of the Wimp* continues, we discover more dreadful evidence all the time. In a recent class, for example, one student failed to show up for a whole day on the grounds that *he needed to do his laundry*. I would like to think he was joking, but the staff did not seem to think so.

As many people continue to derive their image of life from Hollywood, one gets the impression that the story of man is a story of the uninteresting doings of inconsequential people. As an amateur historian, I find this to be a bad situation. Of course, all of us are not necessarily stuck with the tube and its mainly dreary offerings. We still have Homer and Xenophon and Julius Caesar, and so on up through Shakespeare to Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle and Edgar Rice Burroughs. Clearly, Hollywood screen-writers and producers know nothing about these other people, but it does seem a shame that they are in no hurry to introduce our young people to good storytelling.

A while back we mentioned that the foolish and somewhat dangerous cross-bolt "safety" gadget now being offered on the late production lever-action rifles can be corrected by a simple spotweld. A correspondent wrote in to point out that this can be done by installation of a washer without any welding and without inciting the hysteria of the safety police.

I have always been fond of the excellent M99 Savage, now in its one-hundred-and-second year. This piece has gone through a hatful of modifications since its inception, some of which were good and some were not. The earlier versions generally show better workmanship and fitting, but the newer models can be had in more versatile calibers. Since the Steyr people refuse to produce a left-handed version of the Steyr Scout, the M99, which is ambidextrous in utility, comes to our attention. You cannot make a true Scout out of an M99, but you can make an excellent rifle. Furthermore, the M99 should take the 376 Steyr cartridge handily, and there is a combination of great promise.

Family member Laurie Tuttle is just back from Africa with more rave reviews about her Steyr Scout. She did not do a lot of hunting, but the weapon itself was a great sensation – "the envy of all concerned." It is truly a shame that the Scouts may not be provided to South Africa at this time, due to currency devaluation, plus new regulations which make it almost impossible to leave one's rifle behind as a tip. There must be a way around this. We shall investigate.

I am somewhat bothered to read colleague Craig Boddington on the subject of long shots. It is clear that modern rifles and ammunition are capable of astonishing accuracy at unreasonable ranges, but it is the shooter who does the work, not the weapon, and shots in the "way over yonder" range are not only improbable, they are grossly unsporting. No one who has ever seen a buck mule deer with its lower jaw shot off dying in misery will ever run the risk of bringing that about himself. We say it again loud and clear: Do not brag about how far away your shot was. Brag about how close you were able to get to your target.

We learn in our wanderings that the Poles are very big on deer hunting, and that they conduct their deer hunts at night. This reminds us that if you wish to use your Steyr Scout in the dark, that slotted top rail on the receiver allows you to install any sort of "moonscope" which takes your fancy. A true scoutscope is better for general use, but in the dark you may appreciate that great big lens out front. Those of you who wish to bait leopards may also find this option useful.

If you do not know history, at least superficially, you will have no idea of where you came from, where you are now, or where you are going. I think a satisfactory word for this condition is "disconnected." To the extent that you do not know history, you are *disconnected*, perhaps not technically, but socially and philosophically and emotionally. This may be a harsh view, but it seems to me that a person who is disconnected has no real right to his opinions on any subject of importance. You gain your grasp of history through reading – recreational reading. You certainly cannot get it through class-work. When I was teaching history at the high school level, I remember actually lighting a few intellectual fires. I suppose I did not get through to the

majority of my students, but I remember several of them coming up after class and asking me where they could find out more about the subject we had just discussed. These occasions were small triumphs, and I recall them with great pleasure.

Legend has it that Dr. Einstein once asserted that he could think of only two things which were infinite: the universe and human stupidity – and that sometimes he had doubts about the first.

The Brute (Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, USMC) got heavily into computers on his retirement and derived much entertainment from investigating their abstruse capabilities. On one occasion he told me that according to his best predictions and prognostications, we were due to arrive at a point, somewhere in the Fall of the year 2016, at which nobody any longer would know *anything* about *anything*. Today we read the press and we watch some of the news broadcasts on television and it does appear that we as a race are well on the way to fulfilling the Brute's forecast. The people who founded this country and who gave us our constitution had no television, no radio and no public schools, but they were *serious* people, a far cry from the trivial people who seem to have the greatest influence over our affairs today. The US Constitution is a serious document, written by people who understood history, the classics and political philosophy. There may be such people around today, but they certainly do not stand out. Perhaps if we got the government out of the education business, we might do something to reverse this trend.

We entreat that all of you who plan to come to the *Reunion* in October (19 – 21), start making your plans now. Audience participation is extremely important on these occasions, and we have noticed a distressing tendency toward stage fright in the last couple of sessions. This is a time to show off, and even if you are not very good at histrionics, this is a time to put yourself to a test. Naturally we like original work and we like work committed to memory, but this is not necessary. A good recitation from a printed page is perfectly acceptable, if it is done well. Your own homemade verse may not be up to Rudyard Kipling, but you won't know if you don't try. And let us have some more music. Bring your own guitar, autoharp, or electric organ.

The theme, of course, is our hero Theodore Roosevelt – "The Great." Your work need not be by TR or about him directly, but it should be in step with the mood that he brought to the United States. He was a true hero, after whom, as the saying goes, "they broke the mold." He exemplifies Western civilization at its apex at the turn of the 20th century, and we should take this opportunity to encourage ourselves to follow his example in the 21st.

It has been suggested in *Jane's Infantry Weapons* that the general inadequacy of the "poodle shooter" is coming to be realized, but we must not expect any return to serious infantry cartridges anytime soon. We are faced with far too much "logistical inertia."

As times go on and "civilization" threatens to overwhelm us, it is increasingly difficult to find a proper place for a youngster to learn field marksmanship. In my experience, the ideal venue is the city dump, with its ample population of rats. City dumps are pretty hard to find nowadays, and if you can find one, you have to make arrangements with the city fathers to take after those rats with your 22. *Rattus rattus* is a nifty target, being small, agile and difficult to pinpoint amongst the debris. As first choice he should be taken with a single-shot 22 fitted with good aperture sights and a good trigger. Young people should grow up on iron sights and not go for the telescope until well into maturity. Ideally the adolescent should not fit his 22 with glass sights, but rather wait for his first center-fire piece, if then. In my teens I pioneered the telescopic sight and was properly viewed askance by my seniors in the hunting field. Before taking up the glass-sighted 30-06, however, I engaged with fair regularity in informal center-fire contests at the old Burbank Rifle and Revolver Club, using a long-barreled 30-30 Winchester 94 fitted with the Lyman tang aperture sight. These contests were always conducted from the offhand position, and that old muzzle-heavy 94 had an excellent trigger. My results were quite satisfying.

My first bull elk was taken with iron sights, since my partner was using my brand new scope–sighted 30–06. We both made out very well with the equipment we had in hand, though I have been using a telescope sight on game ever since – except for *dangerous* game, which is another story entirely.

Note that Woodleigh of Australia is now producing proper bullets for the 376 Steyr cartridge in both 250 and 300–grain weights. I have not tested these bullets myself, but they have a good reputation, and if you hand–load for the 376 Steyr cartridge, you will need a bullet that does not mash flat in the magazine on recoil.

One wonders how the traditional British umbrella is fairing in Britain in this period of personal disarmament. If an umbrella has a stout main shaft, a sound point and is skillfully used, it can be pretty discouraging to a punk on the street. You do not smite with it, you stab with it, and if you have a bit of fencing background, you can score on a bottle cap at maximum speed almost every time. Of course, if a British subject were to do such a thing in today's climate, he would be subject to serious penalties, since now in "the land of hope and glory" fighting back is unlawful.

On re–reading Sir Richard Burton on the military use of the sword, I note again that a man in motion should use the forward motion of his body to deliver the point, rather than trying to cut. It seems the natural tendency for anyone when picking up a sword to attempt the cut. The majority of early swords feature hilts which are almost useless for thrusting. This is true of both the Roman sword and the Viking sword. But I believe the ultimate in sword technology was the achievement of the Spaniards during the *Reconquista*. Those late Medieval and Renaissance *caballeros* used both the point and the edge, as circumstances demanded, and they did so very well.

In my endeavors to look into this subject in graduate school, I was able to find only one original source which described the actual technique of engagement using the Spanish sword. This was in the form of a personal letter written by a young man to his parents describing a contact he had during a skirmish on the Portugese border. It was written in Old Spanish, but with some help I was able to decipher it, and I discovered that in this one action our man delivered two thrusts and two cuts, from the saddle, neatly accounting for four of the enemy without injury to himself.

These things are hard to run down, because chroniclers are so seldom interested in technique. You can find out *what* and *when* and with what effect, but only rarely *how*. This is an exasperating problem for the military historian.

Here at the school we have learned to expect two telescope failures per rifle class. People find this surprising, but they forget that we fire about 400 rounds per class with the rifle, and that is a long, hard life for a sporting instrument. Back when Colonel Dick Culver had the sniper school at Quantico, he told us that the Marine Corps had not been able to find a telescope sight which was proof against the handling it got in the field in Vietnam. It was not so much normal field use that knocked the glasses out, it was the fact that they were subjected to continuous recoil shock over a large number of rounds. Most well–made commercial telescope sights will stand up to two or three hundred rounds of full–charge ammunition. Many will stand up to 500. Almost none will stand up to 2000. A sniper does not fire 2000 rounds for blood, but he may well fire that number or more in practice, and there is the problem.

I have long had a tendency to tie marksmanship to morality. The essence of good marksmanship is self–control, and self–control is the essence of good citizenship. It is too easy to say that a good shot is automatically a good man, but it would be equally incorrect to ignore the connection.

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 5

May, 2001

Maytime

Spring has sprung. And even the political situation, while far from perfect, is far better than it was last year at this time. We hoplophiles have acquired a sort of breathing space, and while we can never relax our guard, we can tighten our belt, straighten our tie and keep up our practice.

The situation here at Gunsite continues to improve, and our programs for the coming months seem to be very well on course. We just finished our first Safari Prep course and enjoyed it thoroughly. I expected more ladies in the group and I also expected more basic competence amongst the students. I had announced that one should not sign up for Safari Prep unless he was quite competent with the rifle, but evidently we do not all seem to have the same standards of competence. One should not enter a motor race unless he knows how to drive. One should not aspire to create a first-rate kitchen unless he knows how to cook. And one should certainly not take after big game unless he knows how to shoot. Apparently I did not make it clear that the Safari Prep course was not a shooting course, but rather a course in "adventure management." Well, we will square that away next time around.

I think it is about time we set up an essay contest on the nature of hoplophobia. Just what causes this aberration and how is it developed? I would be willing to contribute some prize money if we could get the matter publicized.

We are somewhat annoyed at the tendency of the media to refer to an observation aircraft as a "spy plane." Over the years the term "spy" has acquired a negative connotation. A spy is one who pretends he is something he is not. He wears the wrong uniform. He claims to be on your side when he is working for the enemy. This is not the same as observation. An observer seeks information, but does not pretend to be on the other side. If that aircraft in China had been displaying the red star, it might properly have been called a "spy plane." This does not make much difference perhaps, but words do influence people's attitudes, and spies are traditionally shot when discovered. If that P3 had been a "spy plane," it would have been quite in accordance with military tradition for the Chinese to have shot the crew. It would be nice if the news people would watch their language.

The new Ruger 480 is certainly an interesting artifact, but it does raise the question "what is it for?" (That, of course, is a rude question.)

Pundit Chilton Williamson observes that there is no more American way of spending a snowy Wyoming morning than listening to Rush Limbaugh while loading ammunition. Our friend Rush sometimes gets a little overblown in his presentations, but certainly his heart is in the right place.

Shooting Master John Pepper points out to us again that one does not look *through* a telescope sight, but rather *at it*. The image of the target is projected upon the reticle so that both image and reticle are in the same plane. This is the principle advantage of a telescope sight.

I suppose all the faithful by now have seen the sniper movie. "Enemy at the Gates" was a particularly clumsy title, but the film itself had some good points. One must never take a movie as an authoritative glimpse of history, but the thing that was quite apparent in this case was the shortness of the ranges involved in the shooting. The notion that sniping is conducted "way out there" is quite common, but perhaps not quite sound. In the ruined city of Stalingrad it is unlikely that anybody ever took a long shot. The action was mainly a matter of "across the street." Thus these fantastic machines that are turned out now as "sniper rifles" may be artifacts in search of the wrong goal. "Minute of moose," to use John Gannaway's phrase, is more to the point. As always and forever it is the man, not the machine that achieves the results. IT IS THE SHOOTER NOT THE RIFLE THAT GETS THE HITS.

People who study these matters tell us that we should change our pistol ammunition about every six months. I suppose there is justification in that, but I have had occasion to use World War I pistol ammunition with complete success, though I would not suggest this as a policy to be pursued.

A long-eye-relief telescope doth not a scout rifle make. There are about seven other essential attributes. Scout One enjoyed great success on its first outing. At that time it was equipped with iron sights only.

You may not believe this but we were informed by good authority that those PETA people (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) sent a task force down to Equatorial Africa to convince the locals that they should become vegetarians! From what I have seen of them, I think it would be easier to persuade the Bantu to give up sex than to give up meat. Sometimes in this connection it seems that the onrushing tidal wave of ignorance has reached a point where vast numbers of people are totally unaware of the nature of the world they live in. I do suppose that all sorts of things are being taught to young people in school, but a general course on "The Nature of Things" does not seem to be on the list.

Family member Bob Mihan of Idaho points out that the installation of a small lock-washer on that unfortunate cross bolt "safety" in recent issues of lever guns is cheaper, easier and more politically correct than a spot weld. Good point.

We caught a recent news item to the effect that 75 percent of the people of the District of Columbia may be categorized as "minority." Let us see now, if 75 percent make up a minority, I suppose 25 percent would make up a majority. Possibly we should reorganize our government on that principle.

Now that "those people" have moved out of the White House, one wonders if it is now going to be easier or more difficult to find out just how Vince Foster was murdered.

Piracy continues to be on the rise in various parts of the world, though not so much in the Caribbean as elsewhere. It is burgeoning in Indonesia and along the Guinea coasts and Somalia coasts of Africa. It seems to me that a well-tended 30 caliber Browning machinegun is the ideal answer to piracy on the high seas. I propose that answer is too "low tech" for today's times.

If the Chinese fighter pilot, Wang Wei, is an example of the breed, we take that as a good development. If Chinese fighter pilots are incapable of keeping distance in the air, it is nice to have them on the other side. Should we add the term "Chinese fighter pilot" to what we used to call "a Chinese fire drill"? We should not get our hopes up, however. The rest of that crew may be more skillful.

Rumor has it that George W. Bush's nightlight companion is a GSP. I cannot verify that, but it is a nice thought.

Herewith are a couple of good quotes from our patron and hero Theodore Roosevelt.

"There should be at least ten times the number of rifles in the country as there are now."

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

We hear of people who are now requiring the *tactical load* in competition. Here is a total misconception of the exercise. The so-called tac load is used when there is time. If one is to reload against the clock, he naturally will not use a tac load, but rather a speed load. One simply does not tac load when he is in a desperate hurry (as in a competitive exercise). But expecting people to think as we proceed into the 21st century is clearly a bit much.

SHOVELS by Art Hammer (of the *Gunsite African Rifles*)

A murderer serving life-without-parole for five separate gruesome murders escaped from his Oregon maximum-security prison this past week. He stole a car and made his first stop outside Pocatello, Idaho. He watched a residence and saw a family pack their suitcases into their car and leave. He immediately pulled his vehicle into their driveway, then broke into their house from the rear. Unfortunately for one, the traveling residents realized they had forgotten something for their trip and returned within a few minutes, finding their house broken into. The father confronted the intruder (not knowing the felon's history) and ordered him to leave. The felon said he just wanted some food and clothes. At this point, the father rattled the felon with a shovel across the head. One more smack with the shovel ended the conversation. When the police arrived, the father was in the backyard with the felon lying at his feet. The father was resting, leaning on the shovel. After the police picked up the felon the family continued on their trip.

Many important questions arise. Which shovel is best for self-defense? A dirt shovel? A snow shovel? A coal scoop? Is a lightweight model with a shortened grip better? Would this make it a "concealed shovel"? If the shovel had been purchased at a nationwide home-improvement retail chain, would they have to issue new policies and have a press release expressing regret? Could the father's shovel be construed as an assault shovel? The father used only two blows. If this shovel had been capable of more than ten blows, would that make it an evil shovel without any sporting use? (My son claims that no shovel has a sporting use.)

The police did not confiscate all the father's shovels. He may have more. He also did not keep a safety lock on the shovel. Rumor has it that his children had easy access to the shovel without parental guidance, though there is no evidence that they ever used it without constant parental supervision.

The father has not suffered any post traumatic syndrome. In fact, no member of the family has sought psychiatric counseling. Believe it or not, that very night they all attended the state high school basketball championships in Boise. The father didn't even care to be interviewed by the press and go on *Larry King Live*. How will a plaintiff's attorney in a wrongful recapture case present this to a sympathetic jury? (Wait. This is Idaho. There will be no sympathetic jury. Heck, there won't even be a lawyer to entertain such a case.)

The father happened to be an American Indian living on a reservation. The felon was white. Could this have been a hate crime caused by centuries of social injustice? Or since the father had a home and the felon had none, was this a case of economic class warfare?

So many questions!

More thought is required than I am capable of.

Now that the season for vacations is coming around, I would like to vote that we start using the term "adventure" in place of "vacation." Vacation simply implies vacating the premises, and that is not a very exciting aim. It is better to go do something than to just get out, or so it seems to me. So now it has come time for *adventures* for all.

Those weird people we sometimes refer to as "bunny huggers" have developed a branch which might be referred to as "fish kissers." It turns out that in Britain some of these characters have decided that catching salmon upsets the salmon, and that, therefore, salmon fishermen are evil people. The silliness coefficient continues to rise.

"I wish I'd never seen the Steyr Scout. It is easier to resist a concept than a fact."

Family Member Bill Brown

The legitiphobes (?) seem to have developed the idea that a light trigger is somehow an unsafe trigger. Any trigger at all in the hands of a fool is unsafe, and weight will not change that. The primary curse of *the Age of the Wimp* is timidity. I suppose we should feel sorry for the wimp because he leads a sorry life, but as far as I am concerned he is welcome to weep himself to death.

We have always heard that the directive at Bunker Hill was to hold fire until "you can see the whites of their eyes." Now how far is that? I suggest you try and measure that some day and see what range you come up with. You will note that it is not very far, close enough to make quite sure of a center hit on a human-size target at conversational distance. If you could make sure that your people would follow that rule you almost certainly could settle the matter with a bayonet.

By what measure should a man be considered a qualified rifleman? We suggested that no one apply for the Safari Prep course unless he was so qualified. But what standards do we use? It is possible that an M ticket on a Gunsite 270 might be a base qualification, but there may be others. Should a man who has consistently fired "expert" on a military course be considered qualified? I passed that question around and came up with a good deal of doubt. How about this? A qualified rifleman should be able to stand erect at 200 meters, drop to a stabilized position (other than prone) and sock it to a ten-inch disk, with his first shot, in 10 seconds—every time. That is certainly a very limited standard, but it might do for a starter where more elaborate procedures are impractical. We might go further and suggest that a qualified rifleman is one who can hit a standard clay bird going away three times out of ten tries with his hunting rifle. Naturally we could elaborate in various directions and make the test much more complex, but the idea is a quick test for somebody who claims he is "ready." We must look into this further.

Shooting Master John Pepper recently got into a head-on with some range-keeping bureaucrat in the east who informed him that civilians could not fire on a range together with military men, pretending to quote some obscure rule. John quite naturally went into a tizzy and looked the matter up. There is no such rule, but this sort of thing can be expected from bureaucrats, who assume that nobody else knows the rules either. John won that discussion, but I do not think he has simmered down yet.

I ran across a curious commentary on the part of some writer who was extolling the merits of the Luger and Mauser pistols at the turn of the previous century. He quoted the names of Borchardt and others, but he also claimed that he wanted to know more about the pistols developed by Herr Selbsttlander. Now, *selbsttlander* is, of course, a German word for "self-loader" and this author had a difficult time trying to find somebody by

that name who invented firearms. There are plenty of selbstlader pistols around, but they were not invented by this gentleman.

I repeat that I think it is a bad practice to put a telescope sight on a 45–70. The 45–70 is an elegant cartridge and it will do whatever is necessary out to as far away as you need to do it. You can put that big bullet exactly where you want with iron sights out to 150 yards or so, and on a big animal that is all you need.

Back when we were living in California, the introduction of the 264 Winchester cartridge created a stir. One prospective deer hunter told us with excitement that his 264 would do at 400 yards what the 270 would do at 300. I was impressed. If he could establish this he must be some fancy rifle shot. Later we went hunting together and I saw this gent miss a stationary buck by about four feet at a range of 100 yards. Here we go again! Good equipment is fine, but the man does the shooting.

In our Safari Prep course the troops had the opportunity to fire various African mediums and heavies, and it was interesting to observe their reactions to recoil. Most opined that the 450 Nitro double belted them harder than the bolt–action 460 G&A, though the latter hits the target a bit harder. This appears to be a matter of stock design.

It may be my misapprehension but it does seem to me that a characteristic of post modern man is a total lack of humor. Nobody seems to get the joke, and post modern man takes himself entirely too seriously. One thing I have always admired about the warrior personality was the capacity to see the funny side of even the most desperate situation. Possibly we do not have any warrior personalities anymore. At least the educationalists would try to make that so, but there is no reason for the rest of us to go along with that. So lighten up everybody!

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 6

June, 2001

And Into Summer...

The annual regular meeting of the National Rifle Association at Kansas City was guardedly cheerful. The association is stronger than ever, its membership and its treasury are up, it is considered by some to be the most formidable lobby in Washington, and it won the last election. Some may challenge that by saying that in a contest as close as this any noticeable effort such as that of Ralph Nader might be responsible for our victory. However that may be, the NRA influence on the election was demonstrated positively in at least three states and was influential in others. Perhaps we shooters did not exactly win the election, but we certainly made a difference.

Now that the Jeffords defection has cost us control of the Senate, and now that McCain is flitting about out there among the asteroids, the situation is not now as good as it was at Kansas City. We do not, however, despair on that account. Things can be done. For example, with luck we just may be able to bring a couple of marginal Democrats across the line. However it goes, we must not stop fighting. This is not now and never has been a struggle in which we could rest upon our laurels. Everyone of us who is interested in the Bill of Rights is duty bound to take some sort of positive action regularly in support thereof. I have been told by people in political office that a well written and clearly stated postcard is more apt to produce a result than a six-inch stack of form letters. Be calm, be cool, do not call names, and do not use coarse language. Simply state your opinion clearly and forcefully by any means possible.

But keep fighting! We have won a skirmish and lost a skirmish, but the war is not over. Perhaps it never will be. It is a war that we may not win, but if we keep on fighting it is a war that we cannot lose.

We have been criticized now and again by our readers for not "sticking to our guns." That is to say, we do not confine ourselves to firearms issues entirely, but also to the matter of political liberty in general. To that we must respond by saying that there can be no gun issues without political liberty. There are plenty of non-shooters who are very much concerned with political liberty and, oddly enough, there are plenty of shooters who do not seem to realize that without political liberty there will be no shooters. So we will continue to balance our Commentaries about half and half between firearms issues and philosophical commentary in general. We will try to maintain equilibrium between liberty and liberty's teeth.

It appears that Timothy McVeigh will presently be put to death, as he doubtless deserves. On the other hand, Lon Horiuchi is still wandering around loose. Curious!

We are just now in receipt of an action report from Danie van Graan in Africa in which he tells of a recent hunt conducted with the "Dragoon" (376 Steyr Scout) with total success. Clean, one-shot stops were achieved on such conspicuously tough beasts as zebra, blue wildebeeste and kudu, over and above a clean slate on smaller animals. Danie terms the 376 Steyr Scout "the perfect rifle for any client." I do not expect the merits of this argument to be acted upon by either the rifle maker or the ammunition maker. Industrialists are usually not much interested in excellence but rather in sales, and the relationship between excellence and sales is only occasionally clear. However if you have your own personal Dragoon, rejoice therein! You are the owner of a "great leap forward" in smallarms design.

We just finished studying an account of the Anson expedition to the far Pacific, in which, after quite astonishing hardships and difficulties, Captain Anson succeeded in his purpose of capturing the Manila galleon. This is history book stuff, but to us shooters it has interesting ballistic ramifications. The British, though in smaller vessels, were using 24-pounder cannon, while the Spanish attempted to defend themselves with 9-pounders. The impact effect of the heavier ball was decisive, and we note here certain parallels that exist today in the field of defensive sidearms. The late Roy Weatherby insisted that velocity was the key to killing power, but I do not think his theory holds up. The most effective element of killing power is *placement*. After that there are matters such as impact area, residual penetration and cutting configuration to be considered. Impact velocity is a good thing to have, but it is just one of several important considerations.

It is indeed a troublesome thing to observe the historical tomfoolery of many of our modern activists. I recently saw a statement to the effect that *six million* Negroes died in the slave trade between Africa and the New World. Considering that a slave trader only made money out of a live slave, this would seem very poor economics, but beyond that it is doubtful if there were six million Negroes available in Africa at any one time to be enslaved.

We recently took notice of what is said to be the world's record buffalo head, as measured by total spread. Not to our amazement it was taken from a cow. For a long time the record buffalo head on display at the Natural History Museum in New York was also taken from a cow. In both of these cases much of the spread derived from space between the horns, which was up over a foot in extent. A buffalo head without a "joined horn" (*Syncerus*) is an inferior head, in my opinion. A really good buffalo head must feature several characteristics, of which spread is just one. The solidity of the boss, the depth of the curl and the sweep-back of the points are all contributions. But essentially it is not the size of the buffalo's horns that matters, it is his capacity to do the job with them. The skull of a buffalo which turned over a jeep is a more interesting trophy than one with a 45-inch spread – or so it seems to me.

We were panned recently by a reader who claimed that of our four rules, *Rule 1* is not a rule but rather a statement. "All guns are always loaded" is, as our man said, not a guide to conduct, but rather a statement of condition. The criticism is correct, but we are not going to change our rules on that account. We think that "treat all guns as if they were loaded" implies with the "as if" qualification a dangerous choice of assumptions. The four basic rules of safety may not be structurally perfect, but we intend to leave them the way they are.

We have frequently expressed our admiration for the excellent Blaser R93 rifle, which is one of the three really interesting rifles of our time. It is, of course, not perfect, since perfection exists only in the mind of God. The trigger-action on the R93 is what places it above all competition, but its manual safety is a step backward. It is safe enough, as it actually releases the mainspring when put in action, but this requires so much effort on the part of the shooter as to render the mechanism impractical in the field. This does not trouble me as I rarely use the thumb safety, preferring simply to observe *Rule 3*. ("Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.") Thumb safeties, however, are almost an obsession with some people.

You may remember that before the election a number of Hollywood celebrities threatened to emigrate from the United States if Mr. Gore lost the election. I never understood just where they intended to go, but Costa Rica has been suggested as a rather pleasant place to resettle, if it comes to that. Colonel Bob Young is just back from Costa Rica and tells us that the whole idea collapsed when the Costariquenses refused to take these people aboard. I suppose we will just have to keep them around, despite their best intentions.

We note from the British press that first, firearms crime is skyrocketing in England, and second, breaking and entering has grown by leaps and bounds since the British people saw fit to disarm themselves. Cause and effect are quite apparent here, but I do not expect the loonies on the other side to take notice of it.

Cowboy shooting certainly seems to be a howling success, and this is all to the good, whether it makes any sense or not. Fads do not have to make sense, and in all of us there seems to be a strong urge to get up in fancy dress and go play acting. If fads contribute to the shooting sports, more power to them. Personally I think bowling pin shoots are somewhat more to the point, but they do not seem to be as emotionally satisfying as the cowboy shoot. But there is no reason why we cannot have both. The more shots fired, and the more people shooting, the better it is for our liberty.

"To be born free is an accident.
To live free is a responsibility.
To die free is an obligation."

Brigadier General Bill Halley

There has been some discussion about the optimal width of the cross wires in Leupold's excellent scoutscope. I have considered this matter for some time, both on the range and in the field, and I conclude that the fine cross wire is slightly superior for paper, whereas the coarser cross wire is superior for blood. Now, after three years and many scores of hunters, Danie van Graan has reached the same conclusion.

The question, of course, is whether you consider your rifles to be tools or toys. Most people shoot far more at paper targets than at live game. If your purpose is simply to play around on the shooting range, it may be that the fine cross wires are indeed superior. The difference is very slight in either direction, in any case.

Shooting Master Louis Awerbuck reports that in his wanderings he has discovered that public sector "snipers" seem much concerned about extremely fine increments in rifle sights to reach optimum efficiency for very long shots. If you study the matter you will find that most sniping, and practically all police sniping, is a short-range proposition. In the law enforcement arena, it takes place at night and across the street. You do not need a moonscope for that. I think the recent sniper movie "*Enemy at the Gates*" painted a pretty good picture of the sniping effort in a city. The primary requirement was patience, rather than "minute of moose."

I am sometimes asked why I do not write more about new products on the weapons market. I do spend a certain amount of time examining new products at the gun shows, but I only write about those new products which I think are worthy of attention. I try to confine myself to weapons that are good, rather than weapons which are just new. This does reduce my span to a certain extent. I have checked out the titanium Taurus. I have taken the Blaser R93 to Africa. I have put the Steyr Scout to the test very widely over a period of several years and I have just taken delivery of the "New Improved" version of Jim West's "Co-pilot" in caliber 457WW. Beyond those items, I have discovered little of which to excite the shooting public.

Our *family member* Ken Pantling from England contributes the following hypothetical comment from Taiwan respecting the recent incident off the Chinese coast.

"The Americans, utilizing the infrequently seen combat tactic of straight and level flying, often accomplished by relying solely on autopilot, engaged the unfortunate single-seat combat jet and knocked it out of the air using only one of its four formidable rotating air mass propellers."

During my shooting lifetime, Americans seemed to have lost complete sight of the utility of the shooting sling. This was taught to me in high school ROTC and I put it to use in the field with great satisfaction during all my early hunting adventures. Today the shooting sling is not featured in the accessory catalogs and never seen in the illustrations in gun magazines. In my opinion a properly utilized shooting sling increases your hit probability by about a third in mountain and plains hunting. It does not help in thick brush and it does you no

good if you are using a bipod or a rest. From the prone position it practically eliminates human error. It stabilizes the sitting position almost up to prone. But it will not help you if you do not have it or do not understand it. It is hard to believe but we recently had a student show up for the Safari Prep class packing a long, heavy, expensive, and powerful rifle, which had no provision whatsoever for a shooting sling. We had to start him from ground zero (that is not where you should start Safari Prep instruction).

But then we have noticed here at school and elsewhere that the "life awareness" quality of our students has slipped downward appreciably over the past couple of decades. We have reports from the military to corroborate this. We are told of young men signing up for the military service who have never:

- slept on the ground
- cleaned a fish
- climbed a mountain
- thrown a punch
- ridden a horse
- shot a rifle
- sailed a boat
- changed a wheel
- built a fire
- read the Bible.

I suppose many of these young men know all about sexual perversion, the use of the hypodermic needle, auditory abuse, political correctness, gender equality, and "global warming." It is hard to say what is to be done. As friend Danie has put it, "You can make a wild one tame, but you cannot make a tame one wild."

I am going ahead with the idea of an essay contest on the nature of the enemy. I believe I can get the matter publicized if I can jar loose the prize money, which must be great enough to attract attention. There will be a meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the NRA prior to the September meeting of the Board of Directors. If I can get the committee chairman to proposition the board, we can get started on this.

"When men differ in taste as to the kind of the world they want, the only thing to do is to go to work killing."

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Chief Justice of the United States

"But to that *USA Today* election map again: Blue America (nihilistic, abstracted, socialistic, urban, decadent and dependent, feminized and effeminized, helpless, clueless, soft, and defenseless) deeply fears Red America (religious, realistic, capitalist, rural and small town, decadent to some extent but conscious to some degree of that fact, independent, manly and womanly still, self-reliant, relatively aware, with some muscle left, and ARMED.)"

The Hundredth Meridian by Chilton Williamson, Jr in *Chronicles*, May 2001

Temujin (Ghengis Khan) at one point decided that he needed all of China north of the Yellow River as pasture for his horses. He therefore proposed the extermination of the Chinese. One of his two literate councillors, Ye Liu Chu Tsai, was Chinese and he persuaded the Khan that the people would be fully as useful as a tax base as the land would be as a pasture. He made his point and Temujin did not become the first historical example of true genocide. I guess history would have been very different if he had carried out his original intention, but perhaps not. That was long ago.

Our fellow board member of the NRA, Wayne Anthony Ross, informs us that there are no snakes in Alaska because the mosquitoes ate them. Interesting thought.

I find it annoying that the media in general seem to think that if you are young you are automatically an idiot. Some youngsters indeed are idiots, just like some adults. But just because a youth happens to be twelve does not mean he cannot think straight. If you treat children like fools, they will become fools. If you respect their intelligence and competence, they will develop it. This business of "protecting the children" is a bore. When I was a child there were a lot of other children around, and neither I nor they were fools. We could handle matches and knives and ropes and horses and *firearms* responsibly.

"You wound a buffalo and he turns into 1500lb of hate. He can run faster than you, smell what you had for supper two nights ago, turn on a tickey, hide behind a bunch of leaves – and when this big black brute boils out of the bush his little eyes are focused only on you. Nothing will turn him... As he charges, he chews up bullets and spits them out... Only death will stop him – his, or yours, or both."

ManMagnum Supplement, December 1998

Note that the reticles on "Lynx" scope sights are etched on the glass, which clearly obviates broken reticles. This is an idea whose time we wish would hurry up and come.

In Africa the situation continues to deteriorate. Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) seems about to explode, and in the RSA things are only somewhat better. "The new winds of bureaucracy, taxes, greed, and distrust between people are much more dangerous than crime and assault. Crime we can defend ourselves against, but the other we can't do much about." (Danie van Graan)

It has recently been suggested that to avoid further conflict and disharmony we give California back to Mexico. An interesting idea!

Many Americans do not realize that under Article VI of the Constitution, a treaty made with a sovereign power may supersede the Constitution in relevant particulars. As you know, the current head of the UN is vigorously advancing the notion that the personal ownership of firearms should be prohibited worldwide. The UN is, of course, a supranational organization and has no interest in national sovereignty. In fact, if the UN were effective, it would do away with national sovereignty. In this matter the United States stands alone in its support of personal firearms. We are surrounded by many score two-bit nations who have no interest in either our sovereignty or theirs. Those nations have no interest in the personal ownership of firearms and would swamp us if the matter were put to a vote. *Thus the United Nations should be considered a force hostile to the best interests of the United States* and treaties with it should be regarded with suspicion. We were quite right to reject the Kyoto Protocol, but that simply infuriates the great majority of the socialist nations which make up the UN. This is a point to bear in mind. The UN is not our friend. The United States has few friends in the world. Your taxes support these people in large measure and it is very hard to forgive someone who has done you a favor. The fact that we were thrown off the UN Commission on Civil Rights is a perfect example of this. The UN Commission on Civil Rights is composed of nations whose idea of civil rights approximates that of the weasel in the hen house. Our present administration is unlikely to be hoodwinked by these people, but until we regain control of the Senate we are by no means safe. God save the Republic!

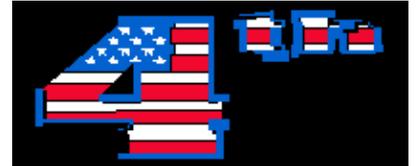
Please Note. These "Commentaries" are for personal use only. Not for publication.

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

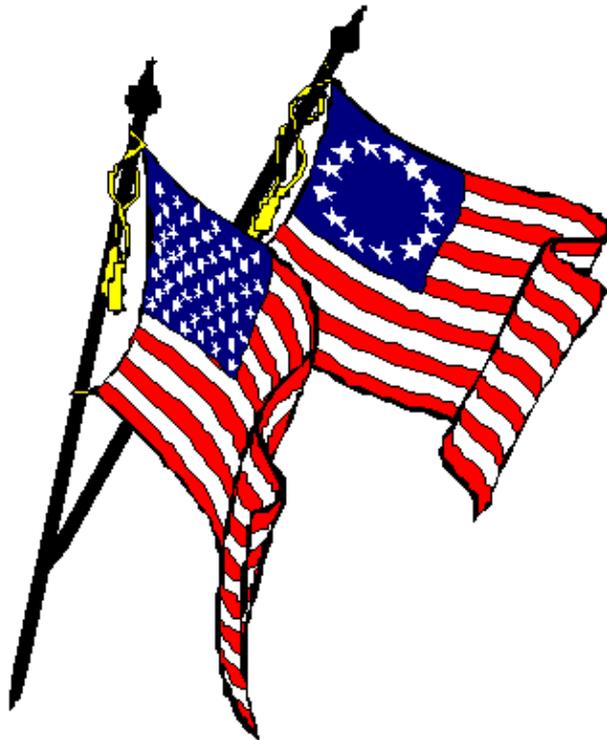
Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 7

July, 2001



The Glorious Fourth



Here comes Independence Day! As Americans we treasure our independence, or so we say. Originally the 4th of July celebrated our independence from Britain, but today we depend upon things which are perhaps more sinister. The United Nations Organization (UNO) comes to mind. We have mentioned it before and we say it again – these people are opposed to the idea of national sovereignty, especially US sovereignty, since Americans believe in political liberty and the rest of the world does not. Our right to keep and bear arms – personally – is the essential element of political liberty, without which we would stand as mere slaves of any current administration, as do most of the people in the world today. We treasure our right to be armed, not only as defense against tyrants, but also as defense against evil men acting alone. Our right to defend ourselves against felons by force of arms protects not only our liberty but also – and this is often overlooked – our dignity. Dignity is a word not often used in *the Age of the Wimp*, for by definition a wimp has no dignity. But dignity remains not only desirable but essential to persons of consequence. This concept is rejected by the

socialist, who feels that dignity resides solely in the state. But we Americans are not socialists (at least most of us are not) and we prize our unique status in world society. Thus on the glorious 4th, we may gather together to celebrate our true independence, the independence for which eight generations of Americans have risked and often lost their lives.

THREE CHEERS FOR THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE!

I note from the wings that the J Ladder is no longer being used in Gunsite shoot-offs. Apparently the nerve pressure involved is too great for these post-moderns who come to us now.

Various people inform me that they are unhappy with the "butter knife" bolt-handle on the Zedrosser action of the Steyr Scout. To each his own, of course, but I do not see that anyone needs a ping pong ball out there at the end of the bolt-handle in order to replace the round in the chamber. One can apparently become obsessed with the idea of the speed of his second shot, which is almost never important in the field. If it is important, the shape of a bolt-handle will hardly affect it. I like that bolt the way it is.

This cult of "Dial 911" seems to be lending support to the concept of the "Nanny State." We have two close *family members* who are in a position to notice this sort of thing that 911 promotes. We have a case where a woman called 911 because her dog was having pups! We had another where a man sought government assistance because he was drunk! We are waiting for one climactic case in which the subject calls upon the government because he, the subject, is just stupid. Any day now!

Increasingly we are flooded with "the Hapsburg Revenge," which is found on pistols which put the safety on the trigger. Putting the safety on the trigger, as we have sometimes remarked, is rather like stamping the combination on a safe door. You press the trigger and the gun goes Bang! You did not have to take the safety off because in effect *there was no safety*. But we see these pistols more and more all the time. It may be because they are cheaper than the competition, but probably more because they are marketed so well. It is well to remember that there are several items of personal use in which economy of acquisition is probably not a good idea. Prominent in this regard are parachutes, tires and personal weapons.

In the same general realm of endeavor, though on a different subject, we just now heard of a man who called upon his PH for help because he, the client, did not know how to load his rifle! Personally I cannot image such things, but they keep floating across my desk in a continuous flood. Such people could never have made it from the Appalachians to the Mississippi, nor from the Mississippi to the West Coast. Something must have happened to the gene pool.

We have been aware of the existence of laser range finders and we find them useful, but *after* the shot, not *before*. If you know how to shoot, you do not need to know the exact range. I have seen a very large number of riflemen at work and I have never seen one "drop his shot" into the target. Out where the drop of your projectile below the line of sight is significant, your group-size has opened to the point where dispersion, rather than drop, affects your shot.

After the shot, however, the situation is different. If your outfitter packs a good range finder, he can tell you exactly how far your shot was. And this is something you should always note for future reference. I have taken a couple of long shots in my time, but because I had no range finder available, I will never know just how long they were. Every guide and outfitter will do well to pack along a range finder. For the hunter himself, the item is less useful.

I get a certain amount of hate mail, which is not surprising, since anyone who sticks his head up above the water may expect to have a rock thrown at it. Most of it, however, is uninteresting and too much of it is directed at the magazine, rather than at me. I relish disputation, and if I am wrong, I want to be shown just

how.

I certainly do not claim to own the term "Scout Rifle." I believe I did apply it originally to a certain type of general-purpose weapon that I have found remarkably successful in the field. It is annoying, however, to have people subvert the terminology to the extent that we cannot know what we are talking about. A Scout, for example, is a general-purpose rifle and thus it must take a general-purpose cartridge, most particularly not a 223. Another point, the Scout must be comfortable to carry and easy to shoot. Thus it cannot be heavy and it must boast an excellent trigger. It need not mount a telescope sight, though usually it does, and if so that sight should be a scoutscope of long eye relief and low magnification. (Field of view does not matter since the piece is properly used with both eyes open.)

Now it is obvious that one can construct a Scout Rifle at home from spare parts. The process may be enjoyable, but it will be necessarily expensive and it probably will not meet all requirements. (Why not just buy a Steyr Scout as it is and avoid all the complexities?)

One correspondent, who is into psychology, notes that in his experience people who are hoplophobes are nearly always nutty in other ways, too. Hoplophobia, of course, is not simply an attitude but rather an aberration in which the sufferer clings to an idea which he himself knows to be unsound, such as the idea that inanimate instruments have a will of their own or that lawbreakers abide by the law.

I had never thought of this before and I am grateful for the suggestion. If the subject is loopy in one way, let us see how reasonable he is in others.

Have you noticed how these enviros have become alarmed by the proliferation of large carnivores in the boonies? I saw one remark to the effect that bears, for example, do not seem to know their place on the "food chain." Why should they? Only man comes up with ideas like a food chain, and with man the idea only makes sense because *man is armed*. Without his weapons, man is by no means at the top of any food chain. On the contrary, he is down in fourth or fifth spot, depending upon the environment in which he lives. Primitive man was under no illusions about this, nor are the backwoods folk in India today. To a tiger, man is a morsel, as these unarmed joggers seem to be to a cougar, upon occasion. Man is man because he is always armed. That is something they do not teach in kindergarten, nor for that matter in high school. A youth becomes a man when he is first presented with his own personal weapon. That is his right of passage, and those who do not understand that are questionable members of a free society.

We recently had an interesting after-action report from Senior Instructor Ed Stock. It seems that the subject in this case terminated the action neatly with two shots, causing both amazement and consternation among his colleagues. Apparently in this department agents are told to empty the magazine (and then, I suppose, dial 911). We knew, of course, about the spray-and-pray heresy, but we did not know that it was actually being taught as doctrine in some police agencies.

Among the various things I find hard to believe is the case of a student here at Gunsite who felt that he should have been driven to the nearest doctor by the staff to avoid symptoms of dehydration. It did not occur to him to drink some water. (Perhaps he should have dialed 911.)

I have just taken delivery on one of Jim West's "Plus P" Co-pilots. It will take the 45-70 cartridge, but it has a long chamber suitable for a lengthened cartridge of Jim West's design known as the "475 WW." He points out that this cartridge bears the same resemblance to the 45-70 that the 357 Magnum pistol cartridge does to the 38 Special, offering the option of two different cartridges working from the same chamber. I do not think I need any more power than is available in the 45-70, when properly loaded. A "Co-pilot" by definition is that anomaly, "a *defensive* rifle," to be used as protection against large, dangerous animals, specifically the big bears. I have killed only three grizzly bears and all of those with the 30-06, which worked just fine. I cannot

say from personal experience whether the 45–70 is just the ticket for big bears, but in theory at least, it should do fine. A "Co–pilot" is also an ideal instrument for the lion guide. Lions very rarely exceed 450lbs in weight and should prove easy meat for the 45–70 cartridge, which in "Co–pilot" configuration should be superbly suitable for the lion guide who, if he shoots at all, will need a lot of power quickly at short range. So for sportsmen who wish to go after African lion or the great bears, we extol Jim West's "Co–pilot." The example we have is beautifully made and finished, and should be just right for the job with either cartridge.

Daughter Christy was recently doing some "living history" instruction for school children in the Prescott area. While showing the youngsters how to split kindling, she was approached by a parent who said that he was "uncomfortable" with the idea of an 8–year–old using an ax (!). I suppose the proper response should have been, "Thank you for sharing your problems with me. There's a hammock over there in the shade."

What have we here! Splitting kindling is what 8–year–old boys are especially good for, then as now, but this sportsman has never taken our course in "Things As They Are 101."

The foundations of the modern technique of the pistol do not seem to be as pervasive as they should be. We recently saw a presumably authoritative "gun writer" claiming that one could never use the front sight in a pistol action because "there was not enough time." I heard that same argument several generations ago from a man who was at that time in charge of pistolcraft at the FBI Academy at Quantico. I was able to convince him of the error of that position on the range – or so he said – but perhaps his influence is no longer dogma. We should not, of course, class hobbyists with civil servants, but what the hobbyist can do, the civil servant can do also – if he is properly instructed. The really depressing viewpoint is "They're not going to do it right, so let's teach them to do it wrong." As was established long ago, speed comes from smoothness. Once a student learns to be smooth, he will be fast, and he will be plenty fast enough, assuming he has established the right mind–set.

To state that there is not enough time for the front sight is simply to betray one's total ignorance of modern pistolcraft.

In a previous issue we said that treaties entered into by the United States government might override provisions of the Constitution. We have been informed by a Constitutional scholar that this consideration has been brought up and disposed of in the federal courts. It is rather a tricky subject, and apparently "circumstances alter cases," but we seem to be safe for the moment.

It is amusing how an anecdotist so often feels that he need not pay much attention to the facts in the matter. I am sure you all have heard stories about marksmanship which cause you to "take refuge in incredulity." In my own case, I seem to be a figure about whom it is safe to fantasize. Years ago, when I returned from my first hunt in Rhodesia, a published account stated that I (Jeff Cooper) had killed a running gorilla with one shot from my pistol at a hundred yards. I was there at the time, so I know what happened. It was thus: It was not a gorilla, it was a baboon. He was not running, but rather sitting in a tree. The range was not a hundred yards, but closer to ten. And it was not I who shot, it was Raul Walters.

I suppose, if you told stories exactly as they happened, your listeners would not be sufficiently impressed – or something.

Our great good friends the Red Chinese have now decided the trouble with us Americans is our proclivity to "hegemonism." Now there is a good word! (It sounds better in Chinese.) Seems to me that the more hegemonistic the United States becomes, the better it will be for everybody, including the Chinese. I think our best course of action is to remain as hegemonistic as possible, at least until they learn how to fly their airplanes a little better.

I suppose you know that the proper rhythm for shooting the *Presidenta* is not one–two, pause, three–four, pause, five–six, but rather one, two, three, four, five, six. When I brought that drill home from Guatemala, I shot it in pairs until Ray Chapman showed me that I would get both better hits and better time if I shot it in one, smooth string. Nowadays I can sit up here in the *Sconce* and listen to the people down there on the range doing it wrong.

Guru say: "Getting shot is no achievement. Hitting your enemy is."

We are continually amazed by these disgusting shootings on the street in which the punk goes dry and reloads while spectators just watch him. Wouldn't you think the first response of a bystander in such instances would be to grab the punk when he is reloading? The basic question in teaching tactics is "What if?" You always keep asking the subject what he would do if such–and–such happened. What if this? What if that? Apparently these people on the street never get that far intellectually.

I enjoyed our first Safari Prep course very much, though the nature of the student body was somewhat surprising. The course is designed to show you how to get the most out of your good adventure and how to avoid the embarrassing mistakes to which the novice is prone, both as to his shooting and as to bush living in general. I would like to schedule another Safari Prep course, but I am not going to do it unless I discern a demand. So please let us know if you have an interest in this subject, especially if you have wives or daughters who may be coming along.

Do not skip the African hunt if there is any way you can make it. It is, or it can be, one of life's great experiences.



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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 8

August, 2001

The Rains Came

And right on time, too! Out here in the West, our towns and villages have parades and rodeos on the 4th of July. It is, therefore, necessary for the summer rains to hold off until after the 4th so as not to rain on our parades. So the rains came very neatly on the 5th and did not dampen either our parades or our traditional Independence Day celebration at Gunsite. This last was much fun, and a good time was had by all, including a couple of our local coyotes who dropped by to see what was going on.

We are told by the wise that we should always refer to our national holiday as "Independence Day," rather than the 4th of July, properly to draw attention to the occasion for celebration, which many of the disconnected seem to have forgotten.

According to Justice Clarence Thomas, the term "non-judgmental" is simply a matter of moral cowardice.

We are often asked about this "flat shooting" pistol technique employed by the Israelis, who teach that one should rotate the pistol 90 degrees counterclockwise when shooting. The reason for this is that the Israelis teach that the pistol should be carried in *Condition 3*, with no round in the chamber, and that the action should be racked when the piece is presented. The theory is that it is easier to rack the action when the pistol is turned flat on the side this way. This may be true for people with limp hands, but we have never noticed it here at the school. It certainly does not enable you to shoot better, for various geometrical reasons which will occur to you if you think about them. The Mossad people seem to do rather well in street fights, but this is far more due to attitude than to technique. As we have often pointed out, *man fights with his mind*; his weapons are incidental.

I have always felt that summer is best used as preparation for autumn. Now is a good time to get out to the range and check the rifle you intend to use come hunting season. Be sure to check all telescope mounts. Those screws can back off, and often do. We just now read of a renowned international hunter whose effort was ruined (in front of witnesses, no less) when he discovered that his rifle was "shooting elsewhere."

In that connection, we remind those who are coming to the *Reunion* that we earnestly invite your participation. We beseech your poetry, your songs and your skits – all in the spirit of Roosevelt the Great. If you intend duets, these call for a little practice. We have always been amazed and delighted at the histrionic ability of the Gunsite *family members*. We expect even more from you at this year's reunion, so pitch on in! (And bring music. Players, guitars and horns of all sorts improve the enterprise.)

I confess some disappointment at the relative lack of interest in our rifle program. We started Gunsite as a pistol school, and I suppose more people know about us because of that. But in a sense the general level of rifle skill, as presented in the shooting press, is worse than that of the pistol. We see pictures of people who do not know what to do with their left hand or arm, who do not know how to operate the action, and seem to have no idea about the value of the shooting sling. We can change that, but not unless you come to school. Possibly our prospective students feel that they have no need to learn riflecraft, but I think it is more probable that the general public has no idea how much fun practical rifle shooting is. The bench rest is not a good place to learn

this, and we offer the options. I enjoy teaching both pistol and rifle classes, but I guess the additional power of the rifle lends an extra zest to its use. (Certainly it makes more noise!)

The current rage for body building suggests the use of both your rifle and your pistol, rather than "dumbbells." All sorts of quick flourishes with your rifle may serve to improve your muscle tone and enjoy yourself more at the time.

I am sure you have noted how often even very experienced outdoorsmen are totally unaware of the effect of gravity on bullet trajectory when the piece is fired either uphill or downhill. It must be that somebody long ago decided that since you are working against gravity when you shoot uphill, you must compensate by holding high. This has a certain superficial merit, until you study it with proper care. When shooting either uphill or downhill, the effect of gravity on trajectory is the same and needs be allowed for only under the most extreme conditions. To check this you will have to find some remote western canyon where you can arrange to address a target at least 300 meters away and with an angle of departure of at least 45 degrees. This may not be easy to find, but it hardly matters, since before you notice any gravitational effect on your shot, you will find that your natural dispersion is greater than your bullet drop. Most shots in the field are taken within a few degrees of horizontal and, if you are using a cartridge of moderate velocity, your marksmanship skill is far more significant than any geometric precalculation.

Please note that these Commentaries are not a commercial venture. We do appreciate the help that you provide us sometimes in the form of stamps and such, but I do not wish to go into the periodical business. That sort of thing can get you unpleasantly involved with the government.

Shooting Master Clint Smith, who knows a lot about it, tells us that it is God's will that all 45 caliber pistols have five-inch barrels. Hear the word!

We regret to report that shooting master John Pepper has shut down his east coast marksmanship operations for reasons of family health. This is a great loss.

John Pepper, whom you know as the designer of the *Pepper Popper* target, has worked for many years to promote practical rifle shooting on the East Coast. He had a very satisfactory war in Korea and learned much about the use of the rifle under combat conditions, and he introduced his experiences into practical competition. We wish him and his family all the best, and sincerely hope that it will not be too long before he can get back into the shooting game.

As the decades pass and my studies pile up, I find that the old sin of PII (Preoccupation with Inconsequential Increments) is a besetting fault of most field marksmen. The hunter has a duty to himself to secure a clean, one-shot kill every time he fires. This will not always be possible, but it can certainly be his goal. If you are not sure of a clean hit, best pass up the shot. By practicing on a field range (not off a shooting bench), you will establish what your hitting capacity is – particularly under conditions of stress. Shooting for blood is always a stressful act, whether in hunting, self-defense or war. It is far more important for you to dominate your nerves than to carry the ultimate in mechanical perfection. This is why I have always sought to sell skill, rather than equipment. This is the more difficult task, but clearly the most rewarding.

I am sure you know by now that the Steyr Mannlicher company in Austria has changed hands. I hear from my friends at the factory that the new owner is a hunter, which has some promise. The important thing, however, is that the new management be primarily interested in excellence, rather than sales. This is probably too much to expect, but we hope for the best.

What we mean by the words we use is always a matter of debate. We are free to speak as we wish, and

precision in communication is not required by law. It does, however, make life easier for everyone. Take this matter of "instinctive" shooting. Instincts are what we are born with, and they cannot be taught, nor do they need to be. We do not need to be taught to drink when we are thirsty, nor to come in out of the cold. We can, of course, train our muscles and nerves into certain patterns which are generally referred to as "reflexive." Thus it is mildly annoying when an adventurer says that he snapped off an instinctive shot in the gloom. Unsighted fire – which is what is usually meant in this regard – may indeed be learned, and with enough time and effort it may become astonishingly precise. But it is not instinctive. Reflexive unsighted fire may be more rapid than sighted fire, but not necessarily so. I ran into these discussions solidly many years ago at the FBI Academy at Quantico. I had seen the efforts of the aspiring hotshots of the Southwest Pistol League in California and I knew that controlled fire, as delivered by a real expert, was every bit as fast as the proverbial hip shot, as well as being more precise. I could not convince the man in charge, of course, because he was committed to an idea that would have been painful for him to abandon. Reflexive shooting, miscalled instinctive, can be very effective indeed, but it calls for talent, determination and an enormous amount of practice. In matters of killing power, it is simply not worth the effort.

Kofi Annan of Ghana has been re-nominated for head man at the United Nations Organization. This is not good news, but we hardly expect that from the UN Annan is on record as being opposed to the private ownership of smallarms anywhere in the world. In this he has the emotional support of most of the member nations of the UN His views on this matter are far too extreme for Americans – well, most Americans – but he will push them to the best of his ability and make the most of your money to do away with your guns. The UN by its very nature does not approve of national sovereignty. The international sovereignty of the super state is the unavoidable goal of these people. We are gratified that Undersecretary of State Bolton has made our position clear to the UN on the matter of personal ownership of firearms. His presentation was not received happily. You can do much worse than to address a communication to Undersecretary Bolton, and to President Bush, stating your views on this matter. We are assured that a properly expressed political view will indeed be read, and possibly even noted, in Washington. (Undersecretary John R. Bolton, US Department of State, 2201 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20520.)

As if we did not have enough problems as it is, the American Medical Association has in effect declared war on us American shooters. According to their views, they see gadgets, rather than bad guys, as the main threat to our national security. They are against us. Okay, we know.

Family member Olga Graziano recently had a collision with a javelina near Benson, Arizona. She hit the pig hard enough to fire the air bag in her car, which caused more damage than I would have believed, blowing out the windshield, as well as part of the dash. I had the impression that it would take more of an impact than a pig can supply to fire off that gadget, but there was the pig, and there was the car, and no other parties were involved. In our opinion, air bags should be optional.

From correspondence it appears that a good many people do not know exactly what a "snapshot" is. A snapshot with the rifle is achieved by pointing the weapon at the target with both eyes open, achieving a reflexive alignment as the butt hits the shoulder. With both eyes open this alignment is verified and the shot follows instantly. The point is that with the snapshot, the sights are not used to align the rifle but rather to verify an alignment already achieved. It is not often necessary, but it does work.

Family member Jim Haas' son Michael has just returned from Africa, and on this trip four out of nine kills were obtained by means of a snapshot. I had not heard of that many even being attempted before, but we do have a beautiful example on tape. This was brought off by Joshua Robinson on a bushbuck at 35 yards. It clocks at 1½ seconds from *ready to bang*. Great stuff!

I am thinking of founding a society for The Proper Employment of Pronouns. "Each to their own selves be true" used to be a ridiculous barbarism, but it is becoming almost commonplace as time passes.

Note the rebirth of the 45–70 cartridge. It was introduced in the so-called "Trapdoor" Springfield not long after the Civil War. It was a good cartridge then and it remains so now. Winchester brought it out in their Model 1886 lever-action rifle, but while that was a good idea, it never seemed to catch on with the general public. Oddly enough by modern standards, it seemed to "kick too much." Well, it indeed comes back smartly, but we have the answer to that today in the ubiquitous muzzle brake. The cartridge does very well right over the counter, as long as you keep your shots under 150 meters. But technical developments in the ammunition line, as well as in the rifle to take it, give us new opportunities. Jim West of Anchorage some years ago introduced the "Co-pilot," a takedown little gem used as protection against huge bears for the pilots of float planes. And then Randy Garrett of Washington began improving the ammunition with his extremely hard-cast, flat-point ammunition.

The "Co-pilot" is based upon the Marlin action, and the Marlin people tried to get into the act by down-staging Jim West's nifty product. Following this, Jim West pioneered a new cartridge, which is a long-case version of the 45–70. He calls this cartridge the 457, saying that it bears the same relation to the 45–70 as the 357 does to the 38 Special.

Loaded with the Randy Garrett "Plus P" ammunition, the Co-pilot should probably now be renamed "Little David" – an extremely effective and marvelously handy weapon for use against heavy, dangerous game at moderate ranges. The piece may be had in full stainless steel with ghost-ring sights and a composition stock, which has much to recommend it in soggy climates like that of Alaska. This is the perfect combination for moose and the giant bears. It is also perfect for the African lion guide. Of course, if you are only going to shoot deer or pigs, it will do that job well, too. And in its neat little padded case, it is no more obtrusive than an overnight kit. This, I think, is progress.

Jim West
 Wild West Guns
 7521 Old Seward Hwy, Unit A
 Anchorage, Alaska 99518
 (907) 344-4500

Randy Garrett
 Garrett Cartridges, Inc.
 PO Box 178
 Chehalis, Washington 98532
 garrettcartridges.com

As the years pass we note an unmistakable softening of what might be called the national character. This is not only apparent in the press, but even in our clients here at school. Perhaps – horrible thought – we need a full sized war to stiffen our collective spine. Hardness of spirit, hardness of muscle, hardness of heart are essential elements of cultural survival, and they don't seem to be what they were – even twenty years ago. Our athletes do wonderful things, but they are encouraged to cry "Time out!" when pressed. I am told by "new soldiers," even Marines, that what once was considered normal disciplinary procedure is today held to be legally reprehensible. During my own tour as company commander I never once sent a man before a court. I didn't need to. I had sergeants. How today's captains proceed without sergeants is beyond me. But how to proceed with perverts and girl warriors is also beyond me. However I am told that there exists a "warrior underground," surreptitious but pervasive, that may save us, despite the advertised spirit of the times. It may be swimming against the tide, but it is said that you can't keep a good man down. It is to hope!

Firearm related crime in England has grown 40 percent in the two years since the imposition of Prohibition. This surprises nobody, of course, except the British Home Office. ("An armed society is a polite society," as everybody should be aware.)

'Tis said that one can prove anything by statistics, but some statistics are more interesting than others. Consider the following, contributed by *family member* Shep Kelly:

Counties won by Gore: 677
Counties won by Bush: 2,434

Population of counties won by Gore: 127 million
Population of counties won by Bush: 143 million

Square miles of country won by Gore: 580,000
Square miles of country won by Bush: 2,427,000

States won by Gore: 19
States won by Bush: 29

Average Murder per 100,000 residents in counties won by Gore: 13.2
Average Murder per 100,000 residents in counties won by Bush: 2.1

It does seem evident that hunters make better combat troops than others. I think that this is simply because hunters are accustomed to shooting for blood. This is not a matter of homicide, but of concentration. The hunter must absolutely concentrate on his marksmanship, to the exclusion of other considerations – under intense time pressure. The non–hunter tends to rely on volume of fire.

Classical note: Do you know about Procrustes? That was the legendary Greek bandit who fit his guests to his bed by stretching them out or chopping them off, as circumstances demanded. Thus "Procrustean research" is that sort which starts with a conclusion and then does its best to find material to justify it, ignoring that which does not. We are weary of reading the work of a couple of military historians whose conclusions are definitely Procrustean. These people insist that soldiers do not want to fight and are repelled by the necessity of doing so. These people do a lot of statistical analysis, but somehow I find it hard to believe. I know something about war, and I have associated for years with a great many people who know more than I do, and I simply do not identify this "reluctant warrior" character. Personal combat is not exactly fun, but its successful conclusion is exhilarating. Victorious combat is an enormous psychological lift for all those with whom I have come in contact. I only know of two cases which might be called remorse, and they are both involved in aerial combat. On the ground (and usually in the air) you rejoice when you win.

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 9

September, 2001

High Summer

So the heat is on, "temperature-wise." This is not our favorite time of year, but it does have its points, and we pay our annual tribute to garden – fresh tomatoes and corn minutes off the stalk. These may be commonplace luxuries, but such luxuries they are! Those of us who shoot, summer is always a good time to pop caps, partly because school is out, and this is a good time to take our young people out to the range. Despite the curious ravings of our adversaries, young people must be introduced to shooting as soon as they have enough muscle and bone to manage a firearm. Properly educated young folk do not have these disgusting accidents we read about in the press, and they grow up to be good citizens who value their liberties and stand ready to defend them. So hooray for summer!

As the after-action reports keep coming in, we notice that most defensive shooting situations take place under circumstances which do not call for expert marksmanship. Of course the shooter must know the fundamentals of hitting a target, and he must know correct gunhandling, but in a street fight he is almost never called upon to shoot with match-winning precision. What he needs in a gunfight is control of his nerves, or what we call the "combat mind-set." It seems clear that when faced by deadly threat the primary requirement is self-control. It is, however, important to note that such self-control is much more available to a combatant who knows that he can always hit what he aims at. Thus we teach elemental basic marksmanship for a couple of days before we introduce the student to combat simulation. When that red flag flies, all you really need to concern yourself with is a clear picture of your front sight and a compressed surprise break. That's all. It does not come naturally. It is never "instinctive." It is a programmed combat reflex, and that we can teach.

When I endeavored to put together the general-purpose rifle in scout configuration, I did not realize that a good many shooters have no interest in a general-purpose rifle. They take their shooting pleasure from the ownership of lots of rifles, and to the extent that they now can acquire one rifle that does almost anything, they tend to be disgruntled. Sorry about that!

We recently received by round about way a curious press release from Afghanistan. It reports that seven Taliban "authorities" attempted to arrest a lone woman. When she resisted they began pounding on her. She thereupon shot and killed all seven. The report says that "she reloaded the pistol and left the area before reinforcements arrived." It did not say what sort of reinforcements were involved, or whom they wished to reinforce. The local police chief was much upset by this and claimed that he expected that this girl would soon be "located." We have a language problem here, but apparently those seven "authorities" are all dead. We would welcome this *pistolera* here at Gunsite to teach combat mind-set.

Note that the 45 ACP cartridge is now okay in Guatemala. Of course you have to get proper papers for any firearms you wish to bring in, but the 45 ACP is no longer forbidden.

Much recent correspondence concerns the question of why we shoot. As a nerve exercise, shooting is no more complex than billiards or golf, but it does provide a satisfaction which the other activities cannot offer. Now why is that?

It has been suggested that recreational shooting affords a sensation of *control* over one's environment and that control grants a sense of power not otherwise obtainable. The lust for power may or may not be a good thing, but it exists in most men. It is better for us to understand it than to condemn it.

I began shooting at age eleven and thus I have enjoyed it for 70 years, which is long time in which to enjoy anything. I think this enjoyment has been a good thing and it has served to overcome the customary feelings of inadequacy and insecurity encountered while growing up. In the one case I know of (my own), competence in firearms served totally to eliminate nightmares. Even as a kid I was never concerned about "the thing under the bed" because I felt I could cope with it. I have no idea how widespread this psychic phenomenon may be, but I do know that it works. The shooting master copes, and he is thus heavily armored against those anxieties that come from membership in the human race.

The subject is well worth discussion, but the dominance of fear is only one aspect thereof. The other element is *fun*. Shooting is fun. To most of us it is more fun than tiddlywinks, hopscotch or frisbee. *We shoot because we like to shoot*. In one incident in Household's excellent novel "*The Dance of the Dwarfs*," the communist thugs of the Colombian cordillera have braced the operators of the agricultural lab for questioning. The chief interrogator asks the girl, Chucha, "What is your job here?" Answer: "I am servant." Question: "Do you sleep with the boss?" Answer: "*Claro* (of course)." Question: "Why *claro*?" Answer: "Because I like to."

That pretty well takes care of that. Why do we shoot? Because we like to.

Summertime appears to be bear season in the Great West. The increasing profusion of both bears and tourists in the boondocks has brought about the closing of at least one campground in Colorado. Bears are not stupid and they quite naturally understand a correlation between campers and food. They are omnivorous; they will eat anything from peanut butter sandwiches to environmentalists. (I understand they will even eat gringo tortillas.)

The long established *Gunsite Bear Rules* will take care of your bear problem. If you do not have a copy of those rules, the Gunsite Pro-Shop will furnish them to you on demand.

I guess this talk of global warming has been pretty much debunked by *family member* Dr. Art Robinson, among others, but there are plenty of people who feel that they must have something to worry about. In this case I suggest the odious proliferation of the gringo tortilla in the American Southwest. This unfortunate item is now being offered as (would you believe it!) first choice in some purely Mexican restaurants out this-a-way. There now, worry about that!

There are some people around who do not know what a J-ladder is. The J-ladder is a competition system devised back at Big Bear by the Countess and daughter Parry. It enables contestants to match each other as in a tennis tournament, but assures them of at least two bouts whether they win or lose the first round. It works accurately with groups of eight, sixteen, or thirty-two contestants. It can be used less efficiently with different numbers of contestants, but it has to be jiggled, and jiggling is not always mathematically correct.

On a J-ladder, if you win every bout you will win the match. If you lose your first bout you are still in the contest, and though you may not win it, you may come in second, provided you never lose again.

For groups of seven or less, a satisfactory shoot-off may be conducted by means of a "round robin" in which every contestant meets every other contestant. The number of bouts involved in a round robin may be calculated by the formula $b=c(c-1)/2$.

Thus, a round robin for six contestants will have fifteen bouts.

As the English language continues to "evolve," we note a curious tendency to use the term "professional," when what is meant is "expert." One is a professional when he is paid for what he does. That does not mean that he is particularly good at it. It is probably safe to say that people who do things really well do so because they love doing them. This makes them *amateurs* in the precise sense of the term, though "amateur" has come to mean clumsy in much common usage.

I guess the reason that cowboy action shooting is more popular than pinball is that it is essentially a fancy dress affair. People love to dress up and make believe, which is certainly okay if that is what gives you pleasure.

Randy Garrett of Washington state is now producing some very efficient ammunition for the 45–70 cartridge. He feels that there is little point in expanding a 500–grain 45 caliber bullet, since expansion automatically reduces penetration. Garrett bullets feature the broadest possible "meplate," which is the flat point forward of the ogive. This is combined with a very tough, but not brittle, lead body. In his "hammerhead" configuration the 45 caliber bullet weighs 540 grains. This combination, used in one of Jim West's "Co–pilot" rifles, should prove to be about perfect for the heaviest and most dangerous game. Randy maintains that it will shoot through a buffalo endwise and cause a more destructive wound channel than a 500–grain solid from a conventional heavy rifle. You may shoot this in a 7–pound, short–barrel, lever gun properly fitted with ghost–ring sights. This would seem to be the answer.

For those who decry the 45–70 as a short–range gun, I must point out that no wild creature can hurt you unless he can touch you (except possibly the ringhals). Range is not an important consideration in this matter.

From Johnny Shoemaker we hear of a 1911 pistol which had resided in *Condition 1* since its owner's death in 1929 – all springs compressed. It functions perfectly today, together with all of its ammunition.

This does not surprise me since I had a similar experience with my old Super 38, though not over so long a time period.

Much as we try, we do not seem to be able to spread the word to the extent that we might wish. Consider the proper use of the telescope sight, which remains obscure, if we believe what we read in the sporting magazines. It is a common belief that the telescope sight is essentially slower than iron sights. The reverse is true, but this is not properly understood because rifle shooting as practiced today is essentially slow–fire, and unless one is properly educated in the matter he will have no way of finding out about quick shooting. Certainly the need to shoot quickly with a rifle is rare, but it does exist. I think one reason why we do not see more snapshooting in the woods is that most people do not know how to do it and therefore do not try.

We have been teaching the binocular snapshot here at Gunsite for many years, and the results in the field, demonstrated by Gunsite graduates, are incontrovertible. I treat this subject in some detail in "*The Art of the Rifle*," but astonishing as it may seem, there are riflemen who have not read that book. I was addressed by such a one just recently who offered to show me how to mount open sights on top of the telescope tube, thus permitting a quick shot under circumstances where the telescope was "too slow." By interesting coincidence, I was shown a similar setup about 35 years ago by a correspondent from Sweden. At that time I had not worked out the binocular snapshot technique on my own, so I investigated the Swedish suggestion and discovered its flaws, which result from the impossibility of focusing in and out at the same time. As all Gunsite grads know, you track with your left and shoot with your right. This does not come naturally, but it can be learned rather quickly once its principles are understood.

The scoutscope is now available. It is particularly well suited for the snapshot, yet it loses nothing that I can detect in slow–fire. I guess this answer is too easy.

We learn from Europe that the German police are acquiring Steyr Scouts, but fitting them with moonscopes. It has never been clear to me that a policeman needs a rifle. If he does need it, I suppose we can assume he will need it at night and there will be no particular hurry. Under these conditions a moonscope may be a good answer, and of course it may be easily fitted to the slotted top of the Steyr Scout.

Elmar further tells me that the German cops want their Scout rifles in black. There may be a reason for this, but I suspect that it is more emotional than realistic.

Family member Clifford Douglas has now taken off for Alaska with his 376 Dragoon. Before he left he asked me, "Now what do I do with my other rifles?" Good question.

Do you not find it odd that pistol makers still refuse to dehorn their products? I guess the people who make them do not shoot them.

There exists an old solecism to the effect that if a tree falls in the forest and there is nobody there to hear it, it will not make any noise. By this token, when people stop talking about an atrocity it ceases to have any existence. Somebody killed O.J. Simpson's wife, and according to O.J. this character is still wandering around out there free as a bird. Somebody killed Vince Foster, wrapped the body in a blanket and stashed it out there in the park. There are people who know who did that, but nobody suggests we try to find them. We know what Horiuchi did, but those concerned are tired of talking about it. If you let the matter drop, eventually it will have no existence, or so it seems. You know about Inspector Javert? Perhaps it is time we dug him up and put him on the case.

Now that machinery has taken over our literary efforts, we are comforted with what may be called "electric punctuation." I can dope it out, but I do not have to like it.

A Pearl Harbor Story Worth Telling

Someone at the table asked a Japanese admiral why, with the Pacific Fleet devastated at Pearl Harbor and the mainland US forces in what Japan had to know was a pathetic state of unreadiness, Japan had not simply invaded the West Coast. "You are right," he told the Americans. "We did indeed know much about your preparedness. We knew that probably every second home in your country contained firearms. We knew that your country actually had state championships for private citizens shooting military rifles. We were not fools to set foot in such quicksand."

Do you know what the term "point blank" means? At one time it meant target shooting. (See *Tiro al Blanco*.) What it means today is anybody's guess, and it is a good term to avoid.

Guru say: Only Outdoorsmen Should Walk the Wild.

Did you know that our cult hero Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. summited the Matterhorn? I learned that only recently and it points out still another feather in the cap of the Great Man. TR was one of those few presidents who would have been a great man even if he had never been a politician. Surely we do not see many of those.

Quote of the Week from *Human Events*, Vol. 57, No. 29. Rep. Bob Schaffer (R.-Colo.) explaining what he would do with his \$600 tax rebate check, July 27, 2001.

"More gas for my SUV, renew my membership in the NRA. Oh, and I won't forget 10% for the church,"

Perhaps it is time to go over this again. There are four general methods of firing the double-action pistol (the *crunchenticker*).

- a. The Weaver system. In this the finger finds the trigger as the hands come together, and pressure commences as the pistol rises. The hammer starts backward on the way up, reaching full cock just as the sights line up, and it drops exactly at that instant. This is very fast and very precise, but it calls for talent, understanding, and much practice.
- b. The point-press system. This is most widely used by the police. The piece is pointed in, the sights are aligned, and the piece is "crunched off." This is somewhat slow and not very precise, but it will suffice for coarse shooting.
- c. The thumb-cock system. In this the weak-side thumb finds the hammer as the hands come together, and cocks the piece as it lines up. This is fastest and most precise.
- d. The shot-cock system. In this the first shot is flung down-range without reference to the sights, and the second shot follows with precision. Though this may waste a round (but not necessarily), it works—both on the range and in the street. I don't teach it, but it exists.

The drawback of the *crunchenticker* is that if the trigger finger is correctly placed for the crunch it is wrong for the tick, and vice versa. System *C* avoids this problem.

After a long lifetime of hunting, we conclude that the mountain sheep is the finest quarry. His pursuit demands stalking skill, physical stamina, keen eyesight, and superior marksmanship. He inhabits the grandest scenery, he provides a spectacular trophy, and his meat is the very best on the table.

As a youth I was privileged to hunt him in North America, but I dreamed of one day seeking him in Central Asia on the roof of the world. There dwells *Ovis poli*, with his sixty-inch curl, and *Ovis ammon*, the ram god. I planned that hunt, but I never made it, and now that the helicopter has made it a more reasonable enterprise I discover that even if I were in shape to undertake it I would not do so.

Having read into the problem more deeply, I find that the roof of the world is no fun. It is barren, cold, dry, and unpleasing to the eye. There is no vegetation and no oxygen. The beasts are there, and at best they are magnificent, but their pursuit is commercialized to an unpleasant degree and there is not enough time to adjust to a 15,000 foot base camp.

Sour grapes? Perhaps, but I will still champion the bighorn of the Canadian Rockies as a better deal.

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 10

September 11, 2001

D-Day MMI

Obviously nothing to report as we post this notice, except the same words we used on Pearl Harbor Day – "You little bastards will be sorry you did this!" George W. Bush has now been handed a major role in history. God grant him the ability to handle it!

They have roused a sleeping giant. This has happened before.

Other matters seem trivial in view of last Tuesday's attack, but since the following notes had already been prepared, we send them along anyway.

Various people are attempting to set up an M16, or something similar, to take what amounts to a giant pistol cartridge – and to call the result "Thumper." We intended this term to apply to a more efficient order of infantry sidearm, but the concept calls for more than just a major caliber M16. While it is true that a very powerful, large bore, short-range, pistol-type cartridge might be just what the modern infantryman needs, he also needs less weight and less bulk. The configuration of the unlamented US 30 caliber carbine seems pretty good, and today Ruger makes that piece up in 44 Magnum. That appears to be about as close to "Thumper" as we are likely to get, since to make the weapon a success it needs to be ordered in large quantities by governments, and governments are not pulling in that direction at this time. This sort of weapon has certain utility in the sporting field, but in no sense matches the Steyr Scout. Remember that "Thumper" is a government gun, whereas the Scout is an all-purpose item.

By *family member* and master marksman Mark Heim of Switzerland we are reminded of the following:

"To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child."

Cicero

You may not believe this but we recently observed a Blaser R93 *without a sling*. Well, where is a beginner going to learn riflecraft in today's world? The theory is all there in the book (mine), but who reads? We do teach the subject here at the school, but only to a few hundred people a year. Obviously that is not enough.

How far away can you see "the whites of their eyes?" Check it out some time. That is effective musket range.

We recently acquired a copy of "*East of the Sun and West of the Moon*," which is the account of the expedition of the two Roosevelt brothers (Kermit and Theodore III) to Turkestan in 1925 in pursuit of the great sheep. This is fascinating. Among other things, you pretty well can not get to Turkestan. If you approach from the west, you will have to go through Soviet country, which was in large turmoil at the time of the journey. If you approach from the east, the distances are just too great. It took five months to get a letter from Tashkent to Peking. If you approach from the south, you have to go over the mountains, which puts you at the mercy of the weather. The Himalaya, the Karakoram and the Hindukush are only traversable for about six months in the middle of the year. You have to be in position to attempt the passes at the earliest date upon

which you may expect them to be open. And at the other end, you must get out before they close again. The Roosevelt boys got all sorts of expert advice and assistance from all sorts of important people, so they had a lot going on their side. Still, it was a pretty wild excursion. The primary object of the exercise was the *Ovis poli* of the Pamir, but they collected various other animals for museum purposes. For rifles they packed a couple of 375 Hoffmans, which come across a little short of a 376 Steyr. Also they brought along Springfield sporters as reserve guns. All weapons were iron-sighted—this was 1925, and marksmanship was clearly not a primary consideration. The tactical move was to spook a bunch of sheep on some far off slope and open fire from off-hand, hoping for the best. They seem to have wounded more animals than they secured, but they did fulfill their museum quotas.

The northern part of their exploration was the Tien Shan, the Mountains of Heaven, about which we have special affection, since only last year *family member* David Bowden on a survey expedition in Kirghizstan named a prominent peak there after us. We have good pictures, but we are not thinking about summiting that mountain just now. It lies, as the book title goes, east of the sun and west of the moon, which is just too far away even for the helicopter.

It was altogether a nifty operation, despite the shortcomings of its musketry. The boys packed a little less than three thousand rounds of ammunition, and considering their tactical principles, this was just about enough.

Guru say: Good shooting will make up for poor gear, but superior gear will not make up for poor shooting.

As we have insisted for years, the most important single feature contributing to the "hitability" of a rifle is its trigger action. In the last rifle class only the Steyr Scouts showed up with triggers ready to go.

We have a marvelous story back from Spain, via *family member* and senior coach Ed Stock. It seems that a flock of bunny huggers descended on the peninsula from somewhere up north, intent upon suppressing the institution of the bull fight. A large swarm of them bought tickets, took their seats and then just before the trumpet blew, they swarmed into the ring and seated themselves on the sand, expecting to disrupt the entire affair. Well, they did in a sense, since *autoridad* simply ordered the red gate to open and released the bull into the screaming protestors. As far as we can tell, no one was killed or even hospitalized, but the action was hugely enjoyed by all – well, almost all.

Probably the most depressing man in public life at this time is Chuck Schumer of New York. This fellow has come out publically to say that the Constitution of the United States is valid only for people who believe the earth is flat. Schumer has sworn to support and defend that constitution! Even the electorate of New York should be able to detect some sort of contradiction here.

We had an interesting case in the last rifle class in which a student showed up with a very expensive weapon which was totally unsuited for anything but the testing of ammunition. It was an immensely long, heavy target rifle fitted with a moonscope. This client had been advised in Southern California that this was just the rifle he needed to take to the rifle class. Obviously rifle shooting has degenerated in the minds of many to *bench-rifle shooting*, and no one seems to think of it as weaponry. There is, of course, a contingent among sportsmen who feel that we should never refer to our weapons as *weapons*, but rather as sporting instruments. To such people a general-purpose rifle such as the Steyr Scout must be completely perplexing. The client in this case was a member of the Los Angeles Police Department, but clearly in his conversation, both professional and recreational, serious riflery was a subject never brought up. We do not know how to arrange it, but apparently the student should take a rifle class before he signs up for a rifle class.

As the mess continues in the Land of Canaan, we observe that a lot of that trouble could be avoided by simple observance of Hastings' fourth law, which reads: "Never throw rocks at people with guns."

There is no question but what the Romans were a pretty brutal bunch, but in some ways they seem less so than some other people. Consider that while they conducted a good deal of crucifixion, they never crucified a woman – nor a Roman citizen. Additionally, they would not shackle a Roman citizen. Kill him if necessary, but no handcuffs. Remember Heinlein's dictum, "It may be necessary to kill a man, but to incarcerate him destroys both his dignity and yours."

We hear from the FBI that the longest police sniper shot they have recorded was attempted at a range of 97 yards. It would seem pretty obvious that urban sniping is necessarily a short-range proposition. Note that this does not invalidate the 200-meter zero, which will do very well from zero to 250 meters.

Note that *family member* and colleague Paul Kirchner has just released a new adventure compendium called "*The Deadliest Men*." This is essentially a large number of biographical essays dealing with the lives of notable killers, from Alexander on down. Paul did not start, as I suggested, with David the King ("Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands."), because he could not dig up appropriate anecdotes from the Old Testament. It is amazing how diversified these sketches are, and Paul's readership is going to be all over him complaining about people he put in and people he left out. Bedford Forrest is properly considered a killer, but Stonewall Jackson was probably more such. Pizzaro is included, but oddly enough, not Cortez. And Audie Murphy, but not Hanneken. This is a book to be read with scratch pad at hand wherewith to note a limitless multitude of sea stories.

No matter what you may have read or heard, Steyr Mannlicher has not gone under. We remain in touch with Elmar Bilgeri at the factory, and while things are indeed a bit confused at this time, the supply of Steyr Scouts continues as before.

You may have heard that the second edition of the "*Gargantuan Gunsite Gossip*" is now available for sale – called G2 for short. It runs to 1,142 pages, which is a bit much for air travel, but it comes on pretty well. In our reasonably authoritative opinion, it is plagued by some pretty sorry proofreading in spots, but we never saw the galleys personally, so we must point the finger at somebody else. It is now available from the Gunsite Pro Shop and you should be able to find it in several other catalog selections fairly soon.

Rumor has it that George W. Bush's bed table security is a GSP. I have no way to verify that, but it does make a good story.

We recommend to the faithful that they look forward to a piece by *family member* Mark White, "Things To Come" in the *Accurate Rifle* magazine. Mark goes into admirable detail about developments in personal infantry arms, and he has studied the matter at great length. Catch it if you can!

From some correspondents just back from Turkestan we learn that an enjoyable pastime in those parts is long-range plinking at ice blocks. For those of you who must enjoy 1000-yard shooting, this seems to be a good place to go.

Family member Ed Detrixhe points out that when you overload the circuits on your computer the screen goes blank. Likewise, when you confront a hoplphobe with reasoned argument, his mind goes blank. We have so little contact with those other people that it is sometimes hard for us to understand that they exist – but they do. The media, the megalopolis and academia are lousy with them. Reasoned argument is entirely on our side, but sometimes it is hard to find anyone to reason with. That blank screen is hardly an interesting antagonist.

We are glad to report that the Korth operation in Germany has been revived. These people set about years ago to produce the highest quality possible revolver, made of the best possible materials and taking no short cuts. Such a piece is necessarily expensive, but it is there for people who prize such things.

It appears that in the southern Philippines the police authorities are having so much trouble teaching their boys to shoot a pistol that they have established that those who cannot qualify with a handgun be issued a bolo instead, which is probably a better solution in many locations throughout the world.

The extravagant excellence of modern weaponry continues to amaze us. Consider that the Israelis were able to snap a couple of rockets through the breakfast room window of one of the principle Arab terrorists, with terminal effect. Now, that is *real* precision. Of course the issue there was the determination of the target presence at the right place and time. This is more a triumph for combat intelligence than for combat weaponry. If we keep improving our weapons, we may reach the point where shooting them is not any fun anymore.

We read of what may be called "practical bench–rest shooting" at the siege of Potchefstroom in the Transvaal in 1880. The Boers were besieging the British and set up fixed rifle positions in daylight, to be used after dark. When sounds indicated movement at the target area the piece was fired – usually without hitting anything but keeping the defenders nervous.

We do not see or read much about anything exciting in the way of pistol innovation. About the only fault we can find with the ancient 1911 is that the stock screws and the stock screw sockets both turn in the same direction. Yes, the piece can be dehorned, its sights may be customized, and its trigger often needs professional attention, but these are not major consideration. You can get one of our JC presentation pieces ready to go at this time from the Gunsite gunsmithy.

The 1911 pistol remains the service pistol of choice in the eyes of those who understand the problem. Back when we audited the FBI academy in 1947, I was told that I ought not to use my pistol in their training program because it was "not fair." Maybe the first thing one should demand of his sidearm is that it be *unfair*.

These PETA people, who have long been well on the way, have now gone completely round the bend, maintaining that the sharks are attacking people *out of revenge*. That's what they said! We might ask them what the sharks revenged themselves upon before there were any people, but that would grant them unwarranted respect. As Bill Buckley put it, "I'd like to take you seriously, but that would be to insult your intelligence."

Our victory in the last election seems to have caused some people to think that the war is won. There is evidence for this in the loss of some numbers in NRA membership. We are still more than 4 million strong, but we must make sure that we do not let our guard drop. History is full of horrifying examples of what happens when you let your guard drop. This struggle for political liberty in America will never be won. The fight must and will continue. It is essentially a conflict between those who prize human dignity above all other political consideration and those to whom the subject is unimportant. We continue to preach and we exhort others to preach. Liberty, like air, is something that you do not really appreciate until you do not have it. It is our duty to make sure that it is not to be taken for granted. Keep the faith and fight the fight!

Everything is going to be different now.

God Save the Republic!

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Special Edition

September, 2001

Cry Havoc!

Well, they certainly got our attention!

It does not seem that at any time in history a declaration of deadly intent has been so fearfully expressed. In condemning the world to a replay of the Dark Ages, these weird barbarians have achieved an unprecedented barbarism. One searches in vain for an objective. Killing large numbers of unprepared non-combatants is an act which must be difficult to explain, even to people on one's own side. I suppose killing an infidel is always an act of virtue for a devout Muslim, but the notion that "the only good Christian is a dead Christian" is a bit much, even for those who must admit that some sort of retribution may not be avoided.

It is clearly difficult to fight a war without an objective, and in this case that goes for both sides. President Bush has correctly stated that this is a full-house war, but it remains to be seen just what we are to attack and how we may achieve victory. We can, and we should, kill this oddball mass murderer, but that, of course, holds no terror for him because a devout Muslim is assured of his place in paradise when he has died in a holy cause – such as the killing of infidels. We can and we should uncover, confound and destroy the hatchetmen of the enemy, but this has little to do with *justice*. (Justice is difficult to define, and a lot of powerful thinkers have tried over the centuries – without conspicuous success.) We cannot bring this man, Osama bin Laden, to justice since he has already achieved justice in his own eyes. What we must achieve, therefore, is *retribution*. We cannot change the past – not even God can do that – but we can indeed give vent to our feelings. This may not be "cool" in the Christian sense, but it may indeed satisfy a philosophical sense of order.

Let us first dispense with the notion of any sort of war against Afghanistan. The Afghans are a pretty miserable people, and while some of them doubtless deserve punishment, we may take no satisfaction in reducing ourselves to the moral stature of the bad guys. In this inter-cultural war which has just been commenced, the bad Afghans will always be difficult to differentiate from the good Afghans. But the bad Afghans are there, along with the bad Iraqis, Iranians, Syrians, Palestinians, Libyans, Sudanese, Algerians, and such like. This war appears to be an inter-cultural struggle without geographical, political nor linguistic boundaries. As the goofies on the US campuses chanted in the 1960s, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western Civ has got to go." While "Western Civ" has indeed seen better days, it is not about to GO in the sense that Osama bin Laden would like to see it go. The curious thing about the conflict is that the fanatics who would like to see the destruction of Western Civ are using its very strengths to attack it. This is both tactically and strategically unsound, and it cannot succeed. Obviously they can hurt us, but they cannot destroy us, especially since now the Western World is united in purpose as never before. That does not mean that they will not try. They have hurt us cruelly, and they will continue to do so, since they have identified the United States of America as "the Great Satan." It is up to the United States to lead in what has now become, in truth, a *holy war*. We have both the *muscle* and the *mass*. Now we need the *objective* and the *will*. This is going to be a long and bitter war, with unforeseen suffering on both sides. We will win, but at great cost to our social institutions and our way of life. Perhaps, in view of our ongoing social decadence, we have brought this upon ourselves. However that may be, here is the holy war in our laps. On the tube we have seen a good deal of maudlin lyrics extolling "America the Beautiful," whereas what we need to see here in the future is an increasing degree of cheer for "The glory of the coming of the Lord," as "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." Now we hope to see President Bush show us "The fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword." Glory

Hallelujah!

It is clearly an error to refer to these religious fanatics as "cowardly." No man who willingly gives his life for his cause may be called a coward. Mass murderers may serve to give cowardice a bad name.

We had Hanneken in 1918, though our need was less. If you don't know about Hanneken, look him up – in "*And A Few Marines,*" or in "*Another Country.*" Problems are never exactly the same, but these are very similar. Let us hope that we can cope!

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 11

October, 2001

Hunting Season

Go! Stalk the red deer o'er the heather.
Ride! Follow the fox if you can.
But for pleasure and profit together
Allow me the hunting of man.

Kipling

So now we have the great hunt of the 21st century. Possibly the great hunt of all time. We know this man's name and we know what he looks like (which is more than Hanneken had going for him). We know approximately where he is, but we are not really sure of that. What is clear is that you cannot hunt down a man by dropping things on him from above. You have to confront him in person and cut him down. We cannot but wonder who will take the prize.

And prize it is – because this fellow, whom we shall refer to henceforth as OBL, is said to stand 6' 5" and could properly be referred to as a "trophy rag-head." Any Arab this long should certainly go in the record book. It would make a better story if he were taken by a civilian, rather than a soldier, but we will accept whatever we can get. Let us now propose an "Osama bin Lottery" with the grand prize going to the one who predicts the exact date of the man's demise – secondary prizes going to prediction of the month and the week.

The pundits insist that we should not allow this major piece of history to lead us into a holy war, but somehow I do not think we can prevent that. The WTC atrocity had a purpose, and that purpose was religious, whether we like it or not. We did not start it. They did. And we cannot sensibly propose that they did not know what they were doing. OBL proclaims that the United States of America must be destroyed. I do not see how we can go along with that, so let slip the dogs of war! We did not choose this, but now we have no other choice.

It has always seemed obvious to us that the pilots of commercial airlines should not only be armed, but skilled. As we have often insisted, a man is not armed because he carries a weapon, but only if he has the skill to use it. This means that if we suddenly need several thousand moderately-skilled defensive *pistoleros* to man our airplanes, we must come up with some way of assuring them of the skill to use their sidearms. This is not something one can do by simply pushing a button. Weaponcraft is a medium-level art, of about the same difficulty as, say, playing the guitar. A guitarist must learn how to play his instrument, and he can achieve that either by being taught or on his own. Self-training, either with the guitar or with the handgun, is possible, but unnecessarily difficult. If we are going to produce several thousand, reasonably well-trained pilots in a hurry, we face a large administrative problem. To begin with, "Who will teach the teachers?" If the administration is serious about this, it is high time to address the problem and to address it seriously.

I must apologize profoundly for the delay in the offering of this communication, but the war caught me somewhat aslant, and the worldwide conflagration preempts our concerns with mechanics, dexterity, product development, and "business as usual." This war that has been forced upon us will probably not be heavily influenced by smallarms or smallarms techniques; however, every little bit helps, and the more we know

about fighting the better off we will be.

We are off now to the annual *TR Memorial and Gunsite Reunion*. In preparation for this, we should all be reading and re-reading the published works of Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., whose gifts for communication possibly exceed the other outstanding facets of his personality. He was not only a communicator, but an appreciator, and such people, rare as they are, are assets to civilization. TR did everything, noticed everything, and then wrote it down so skillfully that he makes us partners in his splendidly adventurous life. He was alive when Hanneken got Peralte. I doubt if they ever met, but they certainly would have enjoyed each other's personalities. Sadly enough, we have no one today skillful enough to go in and fetch out OBL, but the story is not yet over. We breathlessly anticipate its conclusion.

At school here we notice certain minor functioning problems in the "miniature 45s." The Commander action works very well as a rule, but when you cut the piece down to cell phone size the various reciprocal operations do not always complement themselves satisfactorily.

We note that the distinguished Dave Tubb has released a book entitled "*The One Mile Shot*." If anyone knows about shooting at distances like that, Dave should be the man, but what we need to know about a one mile shot is somewhat problematical. The 30-06, and others cartridges of its class, will certainly kill at a range of one mile, but it is difficult to hypothesize a scenario in which that sort of thing might be an objective. Remember the rule of the rifleman, "If you can get closer, get closer. If you can get steadier, get steadier." Of course if all you are trying to do is prove that you can do something, you are involved in a different game.

"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."

Kipling

We are amused by the continuous use of the adjective "innocent" when applied to "civilians." It is not clear to me that civilians are necessarily innocent. The term innocent signifies "not guilty," and by extension it might be proposed that putting on a uniform automatically makes the wearer guilty of something or other, such as fighting for his country. It seems that the term "non-combatant" is preferable to "innocent civilian."

It has been suggested that you can really upset a Moslem if you undertake to sew up his dead body in a skin of a pig. If we are going to play this game, we should explore all possibilities.

It may be just as well that this new war will probably not be affected much by the individual use of smallarms, since the mountaineers of Turkestan inherit a cultural tradition of marksmanship. These mountaineers tend to be shooters, and it is wise to avoid fighting against shooters, as the British discovered a hundred years ago in Africa. It would be an exaggeration to say that Afghans are shooters just because they are Afghans, but an Afghan is more likely to be a good shot than most people.

I find it pretty curious to reflect that it is a common belief in Washington that if we have a regulation forbidding clandestine assassination, we will thereby obviate clandestine assassination. I have a modest degree of acquaintance with the spook business and I can say that if an operation is clandestine, it is secret. You cannot very well forbid something that is secret from happening, since its very happening is secret. If our Chief Executive Officer wants somebody dead, and that person dies, there is obviously no place for anyone to establish responsibility. If we claim that it is forbidden for us to do such things, what effect does that have upon the fact that such things are already done? It might be said that in principle there can be no

accountability for a secret act. One is put in mind of the Shakespearean conflict between Henry II and Thomas a'Beckett. In a rage the King cries out, "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest!" Then when Beckett is killed the King can whimper, "Oh, but I didn't mean that!" When you get to working with *omerta* you can sometimes lose track of events. It is difficult to kill somebody important on the quiet because his death acquires too much attention. On the other hand, pedestrian spooks, if we may call them that, drop out of sight quite frequently and not much is made of it. At this time, of course, while OBL is very important, his death will not give rise to any sort of hand-wringing.

But, of course, we should drop any talk of "bringing him to justice." He has already been brought to justice, in his own eyes, and if he is as good a Muslim as he claims to be, death has no terrors for him. As I see it, we do not seek "justice," partly because we cannot define it, but we do seek retribution, and that we shall achieve.

So let us be *judgmental*, for Heaven's sake! That equipment up between your ears, which was provided you by God, is there to make judgments. There are such things as good and evil. Think about them. There are such things as right and wrong. Think about them. If you do not make judgments about such matters, you are a moral blob, fit only for jobs which are better handled by robots.

During the confusion of the past few weeks, we caught one sequence on the tube of a Gurkha outfit exercising with *kukris*. This struck a spark. Perhaps we should organize a special Gurkha brigade with the mission of doing in OBL. The Gurkhas love to fight and they prize cold steel. They are mountaineers and not only inured to high altitude hardship, but superbly disciplined. I think we would all feel better if we knew that this pest control brigade had been set up and was now operational. Let us set up an ornamental presentation *kukri* to be handed to the man who does the job.

It is rather amusing in a way to note comments in the media to the effect that the purchase of personal firearms has gone up sharply since the day of *The Attack*. Out here in the American West we do not rush out and buy a gun when we perceive a threat. We do not need to – we've *got* our guns.

At this stage in the development of smallarms, we have almost abandoned the idea of metallic sights for rifles. That is to say, the gun trade has gone that route, but I personally do not follow it. I have long pointed out that I do not think a telescopic sight is the proper arrangement for dangerous game. No matter how dangerous a wild beast may be, he cannot hurt you unless he can touch you, which means that if you have to shoot to save your life, you will be working at very short range. A big, dangerous animal at short range does not present much of a sighting problem, but if you are going to set your rifle up for this situation, you should try to do it right. Specifically I think the proper iron sight for dangerous game is a ghost-ring, which is an aperture sight with a large diameter aperture and a thin rim.

Most people who think about this have arrived at the same conclusions, but just what sort of *front* sight is best is not so obvious. Personally I do not fancy a round bead, despite the verdict of years. A bead is quick enough, but its curved top surface is imprecise by comparison with a square post. It may be claimed that precision is not very important when shooting defensively at short range, but I do not think that means we should ignore the subject.

Traditionally, that exposed front sight out at the end of the rifle is fragile. If the shooter is not careful, he can bang it on things. Thus it is commonly protected by either ears or a hood. Those ears were originally vertical on the great M1 rifle, but some organizations reported that it was easy for a recruit to become excited and use one of the ears rather than the front sight when shooting. Thus those ears were bent outward, and this is one reasonably successful solution to the problem. Ears of any kind, however, are mud grabbers, and while one should certainly keep his rifle's muzzle out of the mud, circumstances sometimes get out of hand. Thus many military front sights are hooded by a metal shroud which passes clear over the top. This works fairly well, but it is still subject to bending and the acquisition of trash.

After many long years of study I have come up with what I think is the best solution to this matter. I like a broad, heavy, black ramp with a narrow median strip which projects about an 1/8" above the ramp and is by choice filled with flash orange pigment. The shoulders of the base ramp offer quite good protection against bumps and jars. The square inner post offers good vertical precision and the center "flash strip" offers practically instantaneous pick up. There are no ears and no hood to pick up trash. When combined with a proper rear ghost-ring, this is the best answer for "up close and personal" situations. Unfortunately it is not available for sale over-the-counter. If you want it you will have to do it yourself.

I do not own any of these terms that I have injected into shooting jargon, but sometimes I wish that I did. Take this matter of "scout." The term is meaningful to me, but not to enough people. Marketers tend to slap terms onto things, for obvious reasons, but there is nobody in authority to assure that they will use terms as originally intended. Today the only true Scout rifles are customized instruments built up here at Gunsite or the Steyr Scouts made at the factory in Austria. I have various times defined the Scout, including all of its necessary attributes, but nobody is legally bound to take my word for this. So I see a good deal of junk floating around under false pretenses. I suppose there is no harm in that, but in truth I wish it would go away.

I have been reading further into the history of the great safari days of British East Africa between the wars, and I am further astonished at the shattering ineptitude in rifle marksmanship displayed, not only by the clients, but equally by the guides and outfitters. At one time I was much impressed by the demonstrated marksmanship of people like John Hunter and W.D.M. Bell, but I have come to the conclusion at long last that while these people were very good, they were measured against very low standards. To begin with, really high quality marksmanship was never required in the African bush. Ranges were short and targets were large, but even so the amount of missing reported was quite shocking. I am not as surprised now as I once was. Shooting is a practical art, and as such, it is facilitated by systematic and purposeful educations and training. Now, who is going to provide that? The military establishments of the world have tried, but usually without much success. The private citizen can train himself, but this calls for dedication and enthusiasm that is not common. Why should the African sport hunter be any good with his rifle? How and where would he learn the art? Those individuals who acquired reputations as superior rifle shots did not have to do awfully well to impress people who were, in the main, very poor rifle shots. The man who can hit a tea cup *without fail* at 40 yards is a one-shot thunderbolt on dangerous game, providing he can hang onto his nerves.

Thus today I have trained a double handful of field riflemen who have gone to Africa and aced the show – to the intense satisfaction of the professionals who took them into the bush and showed them the game. This is gratifying but, upon reflection, it should not be surprising. Here at the school we have evolved several standard evaluation drills such as *Rifle 10*, the *Rifle Bounce* and the *Golden Eye*. A shooter who does well on any of those, or even better, on all three of them, is an absolutely deadly field shot. He may not win at Camp Perry (though he probably may do pretty well), but as either a hunter or a sniper he will astonish the unenlightened.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the curse of our age is cowardice. If you are afraid, you have already lost. There are those in position of authority who seem to think that a whole bus-load of aircraft passengers can be overawed into submission by the mere appearance of a plastic table knife. I find this hard to believe, but the very people who sing about "The Home of the Brave" seem to think that bravery is no longer an attribute of an American citizen. *This is not the case*, and we have any number of incidents to prove it. But there are those who feel that the fact that "somebody might get hurt" is enough to destroy the human spirit. This is not true. When offered violence, *fight back!* If some goon threatens you with force, smack him – *hard*. It is the very last thing he expects, and you will win.

This talk about "reparations" for slavery is pretty quaint when you think about it, unless you are disconnected from history. Slavery has always been a normal aspect of civilization. Since the beginning of recorded history,

and probably before, human beings have enslaved one another and nobody thought much about that until quite recent times.

What do you do with the losers? You can either kill them on the spot or put them to work. Without the institution of slavery, civilization would never have been achieved, for no one could ever have done anything intellectual if he had to spend all his time hewing and digging and fighting. The Egyptians could not have developed geometry without slaves. The Phoenicians could not have conquered the waters without slaves. The Greeks could not have explored philosophy without slaves. The Romans could not have invented law without slaves. This is not, of course, to say that slavery is a good thing, but only that it is not unusual nor a particular sin of a particular people at a particular time. Those who speak of "reparations" for slavery betray a state of mind which might have been universal if it had not been for slavery. I find it odd that nobody has brought that up in these dim-witted discussions we hear about.

I guess we will never know what happened in the cabin of United Flight 93 before it went down southeast of Pittsburgh, but we do know that real men are not an extinct species. Let us honor four true heroes – Jeremy Glick, Todd Beamer, Tom Burnett and Mark Bingham – who showed us how to face up to peril. They died, and in doing so they saved the lives of hundreds of others.

"Death comes with a crawl
Or comes with a pounce,
And whether he's slow or spry,
It's not the fact that you're dead that counts,
But only – *How did you die?*"

Edmund Vance Cooke

As Payton Miller, Executive Editor of *Guns & Ammo*, put it, "There were too many cell phones on that airplane and not enough pistols."

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 12

November, 2001

Such Goings On!

The 9th Annual Theodore Roosevelt Memorial and Gunsite Reunion just held at Whittington was a very pleasant occasion. The weather was good (which is not guaranteed at this time of year), the deer and the turkeys were plentiful, the shooting was amusing, and the company was predictably congenial. As we approach the 10th event next year, we must plan for suitable recognition of the regulars who have seen fit to attend all ten of these inspiring occasions. The recitations this time around were up to standard, which is very high, but we need a couple more Shakespearean regulars next time and an increase in part singing, which is always essential to *gemütlichkeit*.

The high point of the event was the display of *Shooting Master* John Gannaway's presentation shotgun, just arrived from Italy after a 26-month waiting period. This piece was made by Piotti of Gardone, and serves as a definition of "the fine Italian hand." It is a side-by-side double-12 with straight stock and exposed hammers. Its fit and finish are all you might expect of an Italian masterpiece, and one does not ask its price. As with the Victorian yachtsmen, "If you have to know what it costs you can't afford it." It is nice to know that such things exist in our largely drab culture. John actually shoots it, but I find this a bit disrespectful. He announces that he has now become a patron of the arts. Congratulations to all concerned!

The intercontinental culture war continues, with or without our permission. Much as I would like to get my hand in this one, I am at this point "over age in grade," as I was for Vietnam. It is not easy to time one's wars with appropriate finesse.

Family member Roy Berkeley notes that he cannot in conscience regard OBL as a proper trophy, since it is his policy always to eat whatever he shoots, and he is disinclined to dress out the game in this case.

Just what to do with this specimen when we lay hands on him is indeed a difficult question. Killing him out of hand is what most of the troops favor, but there are complications in that. Certainly we do not want to bring him to any sort of criminal trial, which could produce nothing but endless legalisms and end in no form of satisfying retribution. If he just gets found dead in the wreckage that might simplify matters, but fails to clean up the cultural mess. It appears likely that he will live out 2001, but it certainly would be nice if we could put him away in 2002. When I say "we," I must mean the United States, since the other "pillars of Western civilization" are disinclined to take appropriate action. He chooses to regard this as a war between Islam and the United States, as far as I can judge. We prefer it to be a war between Western civilization – specifically Christendom – and an extremist cult rooted in the Middle Ages. Neither estimate is likely to prove definitive, but there it is, and let us get on with it. As we said in World War II, "We're in it, let's win it!"

In shooting matters we have nothing striking to report. Hunting season progresses and most members of the *family* are out gathering venison. We did startlingly well at Whittington, when some of the group discovered a juvenile bull elk that had been clobbered by a car after dark. One must respect the rules under those circumstances, but when a lawman was flagged down and introduced to the case, it turned out that he had no firearm available. (That's right. This was a New Mexico cop wandering around after dark without a gun.) Naturally the *family members* concerned were able to terminate the wounded beast as mercifully as possible on the spot, and it turned out to be remarkably toothsome. I will not say that this was the best venison I ever

tasted, but it was certainly right up there near the top of the list. *Roadkill Royale* is something I never expected to enjoy, but this was certainly a high point of the *Reunion*.

It has long been presented in the schools and other places that the United States of America is a "middle class nation". We are not sure what that means, but we are pretty sure that it does not involve wealth. Most people in this country have all they *need*. They can invent wants to suit any occasion; therefore, in order to live the good life, simply pretend that you are not middle class.

The faithful continue to ask us about the design and construction of the *Apitir*, which was originated here at Gunsite but turned down by the interim management. This is a good device and should be more generally appreciated. It consists of a double running steel target, which is actuated by the shooter and releases two 10-inch steel disks running in opposite directions from the centerline, powered by gravity. The shooter releases the two disks simultaneously with his shooting hand and tries to knock each off its runner before the end of the passage, which is a matter of 10 meters each way. He starts the exercise at the 5 meter line, and each time he cleans the exercise he replaces the steels at the centerline and starts over again at a greater distance. This is a nifty exercise but, of course, it involves only one shooter at a time and is limited in operations involving a great many shooters. It is easy to build, however, and should be set up on a semi-permanent basis at any major shooting facility.

As we read the ads, we notice a proliferation of newly variable cartridge types. *We do not need new cartridge types*. We have had excellent cartridge types for practically all of the 20th century, and there is nothing that the brand new "4.27 Super Hydra Short" will do that a 30-06 (dated 1906) or a 270 (dated 1924) will not do every bit as well. We do not need new cartridges, but we have needed new weapons in which to shoot them, and that need has only been fitfully met. A striking example of this situation is the venerable 45-70 cartridge, which was an excellent innovation back in the 1880s and is well worth revival today, as we see within the excellent Wild West Co-Pilot.

The other striking example is, of course, the Steyr Scout, which has turned out to be such a good idea that it is commercially too far ahead of its time. Delivered in caliber 308 (7.62 NATO), it will do anything the shooter can do, which fact dismays the marketer who would like the customer to be dissatisfied with whatever cartridge his current rifle shoots. But the production of toys is a function of sales rather than excellence, so the aim of the salesman is to offer something which is different, rather than better. Of course, salescraft suggests that the new product *must be* better, and it is up to the customer to solve this issue on his own.

At Whittington I raised a discussion of the Steyr Scout in order to find out what sort of faults the piece has, if any. We came up with quite a list.

- A. It is not available in left-hand form. Everybody knows this, but the factory is not going to do anything about it.
- B. While its current sighting system is satisfactory, it is not ideal. The idea of a fixed-power glass with no moving parts, in which the tube is moved rather than the reticle, is just not something that the manufacturers are going to address. This is okay because the SS is fine just as it is, but it is a way in which the weapon could be better.
- C. The piece is too expensive. Well, you get what you pay for.
- D. There has been some breakage of the bipod axle. I believe this has been remedied in new construction, but I cannot be sure of that. This flaw is very rarely encountered, but it should not be there at all. New production uses metal in place of plastic.
- E. There has been some firing-pin breakage reported. I am told that there has been some metallurgical improvement at the factory.
- F. The ejection port should be relieved forward to allow the little finger to check the chamber for any loaded round.

- G. Now that various new calibers are offered, they should be presented in different colored stocks so that the weapons can be identified in the rack. This is a cinch on any composition stock, and one wonders why it is not a universal offering.
- H. The trigger should be factory-tuned. This is quite obvious, but it is also obvious that distributors, salesmen and shooters are frequently simply uninterested in trigger action. The pieces in my possession all have practically perfect triggers, breaking clean without motion at 26 to 28 ounces. This matters to me, but clearly not to everyone.
- I. There have been reports of inadequate striker impulse, resulting in unreliable ignition with some marks of military surplus ammunition. Since I do not have this problem myself, I do not quite know what to do about it, but I state it because it does exist.
- J. In some weapons, with some brands of ammunition, the butt magazine may be ejected on recoil. This results usually when the piece is badly mounted into the shoulder so that the recoil thrust is taken with the toe of the butt rather than the center or the heel. Proper mounting of the weapon will obviate this problem, but the manufacturer or designer is in no position to educate the shooter. I am told at the factory that the butt magazine well has been strengthened to avoid this problem. I hope so.

There are other matters to consider. Several people have told me that they dislike the coarse reticle option and would like something finer. It does not seem to occur to them that all they have to do is order the fine wire if that is what they want. Personally, after using the weapon for five years, I find that the coarse wire option is superior for field work, while the fine option is somewhat better for paper shooting. Any difference is very slight.

Some people have told me that the traditional "butter-knife" bolt handle is harder to operate than the ping-pong ball option. I cannot sympathize. (Strengthen your finger muscles and kill with the first shot.)

It is amazing how picky some customers can get. Naturally they are spending money and they want to be satisfied, but many of these points are too trivial to be taken seriously. The SS is pretty close to perfect as it is. It could be better, but so could a Ferrari – I think. The weapon is selling as fast as it can be produced, and I do not know if there are any plans to speed up production. If you do not already have your Scout, grit your teeth and stand by – Santa Claus is coming to town.

We do not know how many of you noticed it, but Paragraph One of our work *"To Ride, Shoot Straight and Speak the Truth,"* called "Hold! Enough!," precisely predicts the disastrous evolution of air piracy so viciously demonstrated on 11 September. I read this piece over and was struck with an eerie sense of prophesy. I have been called many things throughout my career as guru, but up til now I have not been called a prophet. Go ahead and read that piece again and tell me what you think. I stand by to be amazed.

"The best remedy for the disposition of a scoundrel is hanging."

Andrew Jackson

Every time we leave the ranch for any period of time, we come back to face a stack of unopened mail, which we would choose to refer to our "Executive Secretary," if we had one. On this last occasion, daughter Lindy went quickly through the list and said those people could use a form letter stating, in only slightly different wordings, "We love you and we want your money." I guess we will now make up a form answer which states approximately "We love you, too, and we don't have any money."

It was the people at Steyr who suggested producing the piece in a stout, medium cartridge specifically for Africa. I was not enthusiastic about this idea, since I consider the African market to be pretty limited, but I find now that the new cartridge – the 376 Steyr – is doing a sensational job on the African game trails. I suggested that the piece should be called the "Draagoon," which is the traditional name for a heavy Scout, but

the factory did not buy this idea. My own version has "Steyr Dragoon" stamped artistically on the receiver, but all others are engraved "376 Steyr." Additionally my own weapon, the Dragoon, has a "forest floor" stock finish, as opposed to the standard grey, all of which is to my liking – but apart from details I have discovered now that whatever you call it this new gun has been an enormous success on African game. Our great good friend Danie van Graan of Engonyameni completed one very satisfactory hunt with the piece and maintains that it is THE WEAPON for the bushveldt. I guess we should not be surprised at this, since the 376 cartridge, with the heavier bullet, is just a click or two down from the renowned 375 Holland, and now available in Scout configuration, with all the attendant advantages that implies. Hurray for our side! Incidentally, the Dragoon is the perfect combination for moose and bear, in case you live in Alaska.

The difficulty is one of availability. The weapon is hard to get, and when you get it it is hard to feed. On the other hand, the African hunt is not usually a spur-of-the-moment proposition. You make your plans a year in advance, during which time you can probably gather up your own piece, together with a satisfactory supply of ammunition. Incidentally, the boys at Engonyameni are using the Barnes X bullet of solid bronze and it works just fine on everything. Clearly the standard loading is putting out enough velocity in the 19-inch barrel to open up that point on all animals at all ranges. This is doubtless too good to be true, but that is the way the action report reads.

Our man in Lebanon tells us that everyone is waiting anxiously for the decisive stroke promised by our Commander in Chief. It may take a long time to locate, and then to fix, our target. We quoted to our friend, "Hear, brave comrades – it will come!"

Shooting Master John Gannaway brought an assortment of giant pistols to the reunion, running from 44 Magnum on up, just to see how shooters who had not tried these weapons would find their "shootability." Nobody reported anything unusual. They all shoot well. They all hit hard. And they all kick. If you have need for a big pistol, just trot down to your local, friendly gun store and order one.

John also brought his 50-caliber *laudenboomer* for the edification of those who had not shot this type of weapon. These guns are great fun, "as long as somebody else is buying the ammunition."

Our great good friend and European *Shooting Master* Marc Heim attended the reunion and informed us that in his opinion Berlusconi, the new Italian prime minister, is the best thing that has happened to Italy in a long time. I rather suspected this, since Signor Berlusconi is universally excoriated by the European press, which is a good thing in anybody's favor. Incidentally, Marc's four hits on four clays was duplicated, but not exceeded, at the shooting. Anyone who can break five clays out of ten tries with his duty rifle can go to the head of the class.

On the approach of the TR Memorial, one of our shooting *compadres* asked us if we did not think that TR was the greatest American president. We thought about that for a time and considered it an excellent subject for discussion, as long as we admit that comparisons are invidious. In our opinion, George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt stand out on the list, so we set apart an evening period at Whittington devoted to the relative greatness of TR and Washington.

As Socrates put it, the first thing to do is to define our terms. So what do we mean by "great"? That point alone will hold you for quite a while. When I was teaching US history, I used to suggest that one index of greatness is the stature of the man apart from his service as president. Politics do not, generally speaking, bring out the best in people. What makes a good politician does not necessarily make a good man, but with both Washington and Roosevelt I, we have men who would have been outstanding if they had never held public office. By that standard few American presidents measure up – certainly not more than a dozen. After considerable discussion our consensus was that George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. cannot properly be compared, except possibly idiosyncratically. Washington was tall. Roosevelt was short. TR was

an intellectual. Washington was not. Each was an athlete and each was a competent, if not distinguished soldier. Each in his own fashion was a scientist and each was a recreational marksman. Each was honest to the point of fanaticism and each was quite incorruptible. And each was absolutely fearless in the face of death.

Not much can be made of all this. However the talk was good and we all enjoyed it. These were two great men. It is futile to be comparative.

Note that 22 states now have provisions for concealed carry. This does not include New Jersey, where one of our *family members* was sternly told by a cop that he had better not display his CC license in that state.

We are informed from South Africa that the crime situation there continues to deteriorate. This is not something you will hear in what is normally called "the Western media," since it indicates what happens when you give the country back to the Indians. We knew South Africa reasonably well back in the old days, which we think of as the *good* old days, despite current political rectitude. Naturally, new rules are being promulgated all the time, each further restricting the rights of the citizen to keep and bear arms. Anyone who has thought about these matters can sound off with our venerable cry, "Well, what did you expect?" There is not much point in arguing with the organized Left of the world. These people do not even want to make sense.

In proper hands, the Glock serves just as well as the 1911 – at conversational distances. And such distances are the rule in defensive combat.

Back when I was at Command and Staff School at Quantico, we had a whole week devoted to the subject of biological warfare. The matter was highly classified so no publicity was allowed out, but one thing that sticks in my mind was the fact that anthrax was denigrated as a successful instrument of biological warfare. It was considered too hard to distribute and insufficiently lethal. What we did not realize was that large numbers of deaths are not necessary to upset or intimidate a timid population. From the media it appears that the attempt by the bad guys to cow the American people by the threat of a biological epidemic is moderately successful. We have now all heard stories verging from the pitiful to the ridiculous about our so-called airport security. The biological assassins have killed only three people – yet – but that does not mean that we are not all shook up. So now we can expect them to hit with something else. What we did not learn at school was that biological warfare may or may not be deadly, but it is definitely intimidating. The bad guys claim that they are brave while we are cowards. I do not think that is true, but we cannot deny that we are off to a shaky start.

"I have lived, sir, a long time. And the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men."

Benjamin Franklin, 1787

So today, as Linda Bowles puts it in her column, "Our children sit captive in government school classrooms where prayer is forbidden, God is ostracized, and religion is held in open contempt." When Jefferson spoke of the separation of church and state, I do not think he meant separation from God.

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 13

Thanksgiving, 2001

Thanksgiving

Now involved in what may turn out to be a very long, holy war, we should all be very thankful that we were born on the right side of this conflict. We had nothing to do with this individually, but that does not prevent our being truly thankful for the circumstances. We did not choose this war, but we must now proceed to fight it with determination and will – and naturally to ultimate victory. That may take longer than we prefer to think, but we have no choice now. As President Bush put it, the alternative to victory is a world killing–zone in which every population center is a target for mass murder. This is a daunting prospect – the most daunting that this nation has ever faced, and probably the most daunting that Christendom has faced since its inception.

All hands, man your battle stations!

Our *family* stalwart, Chuck Lyford, just ran into a serious dog problem. It seems that his neighbor was set upon by two mastiffs outdoors on her property. Our friend (who is a Gunsite graduate) had left his pistol indoors and had to repel boarders with nothing but a knife. Mastiffs are big, strong dogs and hospitalization was required. You do not have to go to war in order to see the elephant. As someone once pointed out, you cannot make an appointment for an emergency.

A great time was had by all at the recent Gunsite Alumni Shoot. One is supposed to be a Gunsite graduate in order to be eligible to enter this event, but we saw a good many people on the line who evidently did not retain what they learned when they were students here. These were in the minority, however, and we must say that Gunsite alumni are, generally speaking, pretty good gun hands.

The special attraction was a demonstration of Japanese swordsmanship put on by *family member* Dan Bekins. One wonders if Nip swordcraft was at one time the standard of the world, as its advocates claim. As with the Japanese culture, it seems to be stylized to the point of unserviceability, but the outsider is in no position to criticize it until he has seen it in live combat. Our friend did not cut anybody up, but he sliced various sorts of inanimate targets nicely into bite–sized chunks.

It is good to see the Gunsite alumni pursuing their disciplines after graduation.

Colonel Clint Ancker has put in his name for the Osama bin Lottery and claimed the date of 24 October 2002. (I have claimed the 10 May.) Speak right up if you want to get into this. The entry fee is very low at this time, since we have not decided whether to charge one or not. As of now you win if you guess the right month for OBL's demise. As entries increase, we will slide that down to the choice of the correct week – and so on.

In a previous issue of this paper, we pointed out that nobody on the right side of the war had offered to help beyond verbiage. Various apostles point out that our British friends have contributed to the airborne operation. Herewith our profound apology. We will have to wait and see how soon the true believers will start hitting infidel targets apart from the United States. When that happens, the recipients may choose to take up arms in their own defense. For now, OBL has declared the United States of America to be the Great Satan. Perhaps as things develop he may discover just how satanic we can be.

Afghanistan is a pretty miserable target for the world's greatest power, but it is all we have got for the moment. One cannot but wonder how that situation will look next year at this time.

Much talk has been circulated recently about the motivation of the people who fought World War II. We hear these people praised because of the fighting they undertook "to make the world safe for democracy," or something of the sort. I sure do not remember fighting to *defend* anybody or anything. One man's experience is certainly not enough on which to generalize, but I do know that in my case I fought because: a) I liked the trade, and b) I was wrathfully annoyed with the Japanese. My life was certainly in danger, but never my country nor its political philosophy. We who fought those wars knew very well that we could be killed in them, but it never occurred to us that our country might be defeated, or our civilization destroyed.

In the long historic view men seldom fight for causes, but our historical publicists would like to have us think so. This conflagration in which we are now involved may be an exception to that, and certainly OBL and his boys would like us to think so. But I do not think it is going to make a lot of difference. When men go to war, they fight as hard as they can, mainly in order to survive the immediate action. Afterwards they may spend considerable effort dreaming up causes.

We have not seen much new in the way of pistolcraft, but we do discover that the attempt to reduce the mass and bulk of a 45 caliber self-loader sometimes introduces functioning problems. This is especially true of shooters who do not put enough strength into their wrists and thus do not provide a stout enough base for reliable cycling. The self-loader must have sufficiently rigid stability to insure that its cycle has enough to kick against. I have never had trouble with the conventional Commander configuration, but a couple of new offerings are quite a bit smaller and lighter than the Commander. Best check that out before you buy.

Our man in London informs us that the Steyr Scout is available in the UK at radically reduced cost. I have no idea why this is so, but if it is, it might be worth a quick trip across the Atlantic to acquire a reserve piece or two.

Caution please. If you wish to fight for the principles of the Second Amendment, *for heaven's sake do not use a firearm*. Screw drivers, fire pokers, baseball bats will all do. You do not need a gun, and especially, you do not need a *handgun*. Our adversaries in this debate, as you have doubtless noted, will even try to make the misuse of an airplane grounds for the abolishment of personal weapons.

As an evident result of the September attack, we see people rushing out to buy personal defense weapons, which may or may not be a good idea, since the possession of a weapon is of no value without the skill to use it well. Still such is the case and we would like to point out that a pistol is not the best instrument for house defense. This is the shotgun. If you are going to stay home and defend yourself, a shotgun, located where you can get at it easily, is more useful than a pistol. It is easier to use, it hits harder and it is more intimidating in a face-to-face confrontation.

As the second edition of the *Gargantuan Gunsite Gossip (G2)* becomes more widely circulated, we have received a number of comments noting how so much of the material included therein seems new. Obviously people forget what they read very easily, besides which a surprising number of people acquire books to *have*, rather than to *read*.

A pistol really does not need a mechanical safety in order to render it safe, because safe gunhandling resides between the ears rather than between the hands. However, those pistols we see nowadays with what is called a safety on the trigger do call for a higher order of intellect on the part of the user. It seems odd to me that I rode all the way through two full-sized wars and a number of "incidents" without encountering a safety problem

on the venerable 1911. I knew of two "negligent discharges," but they both involved rifles.

My reading on the subject reveals that there has been a great deal of excellent mountain hunting in Afghanistan for a long time. This has given rise to a whole population of guides and outfitters who know all about the problems of getting around with a rifle up there among the crags, and – when the moment arrives – hitting one's target. This is not good news for people contemplating infantry action up there. I have no sea stories on the subject, but those people probably make into pretty good soldiers, and probably pretty good riflemen. The rifleman may have lost his place in the lineup for contemporary war, but I do recall that we were quite glad of the fact that, generally speaking, the Japanese could not shoot "for sour owl jowls," as Pogo used to say. These Afghans may be of a different sort.

This matter of the duration of the holy war keeps coming up for discussion. We should remember that it took the Goths 800 years to throw the True Believers out of Spain. This time, I suppose, we should be satisfied with pushing the Moors back east of Suez, but that is no sort of overnight job.

We have been getting marvelous feedback from overseas in connection with our training program here at Gunsite and the Steyr Scout, both of which seem to be sweeping the world in a quiet way. African professional hunters note the level of gunhandling and marksmanship displayed by clients who have been through school here. They ask with enthusiasm, "Where did you learn that?" And the answer, of course, is "At Gunsite, Arizona. Where else?" This indicates a strong need for increased programming of our Safari Prep course here at school. It is astonishing to discover that there are many people in the world who have both the money and the desire to do a big game hunt without any concept of any need to find out how to conduct themselves in the field. It seems apparent that the public at large does not realize that 1) gunhandling is an art which needs to be learned, and 2) there are places where gunhandling is being taught.

Further, the belief seems widespread that because a man is on the public payroll he is properly trained and motivated to use firearms well. Consider that high school students are exposed to driver education and then tested before receiving a driver's license. And then consider that to drive a car really well is not something that these young people demonstrate. Clearly there is more to this whole business than meets the eye. We stand ready to correct the matter here at Gunsite, but we first have to educate people to the fact that they need to be educated.

It is interesting to note that according to the Justice Department the rate of violent crime in the United States plunged 15 percent last year, the largest one-year drop in the history of the survey. I do not know where that leaves the hoplophobes, but I hope that makes them uneasy. They have never been amenable to reason, but every little bit helps.

We are endorsing an effort to circulate petitions addressed to Attorney General John Ashcroft, asking him to enforce the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. While the petition document specifically lists the grievances noted by the citizens of California, all Americans are encouraged to sign the petitions to take action against all infringements of Second Amendment rights. California gun owners have been increasingly oppressed by the executive and judicial authorities in their state, and the situation seems unsolvable by the usual procedures. Therefore a group of peaceable Californians has turned to the federal government – and Attorney General John Ashcroft in particular – for help. Contact David Codrea, PO Box 4152, Redondo Beach, CA 90277 (e-mail AshcroftPetition@KeepAndBearArms.com) for more information.

It seems rather awkward that the press has taken to referring to the attack upon the United States as 9/11. This combination of digits sounds too much like the designation of our favorite pistol. We will continue to call the pistol "1911" and call the attack on the World Trade Center as "*The Attack*."

Do you know what "shrapnel" is? What it is *not* is a steel shard resulting from the explosion of a high explosive shell. Journalists and technical authors today do not seem to realize this. It is not important, I suppose, but there is a definite mechanical difference between a shrapnel shell and a high explosive shell. The former was the invention of a British artillery captain by the name of Shrapnel. It might be described as a sort of giant shotgun cartridge fired out of a cannon in such fashion that when it approaches target it ruptures and discharges a multitude of round, metal balls ranging in size from a bean to a ping pong ball. Its flight is timed by a fuse in the nose which is armed on discharge and which ignites a small charge of black powder in the base of the projectile. What then proceeds down into the target is a case full of round metal balls plus the fuse itself, the base cap and case. This arrangement was quite successful against troops in the open and was used extensively throughout World War I. Since the ballistic effect of these round balls was simply that of the velocity of the case at the moment of rupture, it did not serve to penetrate cover, nor could it fire backwards. If you could find a garden wall to get behind, or a stout tree, you were relatively safe from shrapnel.

The high explosive shell, on the other hand, carries a core which bursts the projectile with great violence, firing nasty hot splinters in all directions. These splinters vary in size from that of a fountain pen up to that of a hunting knife. I met a good many of these things "up close and personal" and I can report that they are unpleasant neighbors – being much too hot to touch. They are not, however, "shrapnel" – they are "shell splinters."

It is curious how journalists will grab onto a descriptive term simply because of its sound. Anthrax, for instance, is not a particularly deadly germ, but it sounds mean. Likewise, "shrapnel," sounds meaner than "splinter."

In attendance in the last class was Steve Moore – Orange Expert, Combat Helicopter Pilot and recently retired Lieutenant Commander in the Navy. Steve has put in many years on active duty in the hornets' nest of the Middle East, and he has some definite ideas about how things are going there – including a magnificent fund of sea stories. He tells us, among other things, that there is no way that Christendom can cozy up to Islam. There is no way we can pat those people on the head and expect them to accept us unbelievers as moral equals. No matter what they say, the Arabs are on the other side of this holy war, and when we see them wearing t-shirts celebrating the mass murder of 6,000 Americans, we must realize that to a devout Muslim a Christian is fouler than a pig (which in their eyes is pretty foul).

Shooting Master John Pepper was much taken with the last recorded voice of the counter attack on Flight 93, which was, of course, "Let's roll!" John says we should set that up as our battle cry for the duration of the current world war and use it as inspiration whenever we have a chance to carry the sword to the enemy. Okay, John, the word now is "Let's roll!"

I suppose one ought not to make too much of terminology when speaking of deadly weapons, but this is hard to avoid. To strike down with the sword, for example, may be brutal, but it also may be honorable. To strike down with the germ is simply disgusting.

Probably many of you know of Fred Wells, Master Gunsmith of Prescott, Arizona. Fred has been involved in the production of fancy and exotic rifles for a couple of lifetimes. He fancies very powerful rifles, and is thus more aware of recoil effect and recoil control than most people. He discovered the tiny stock split on Baby just abaft the tang and it did not surprise him, since Baby shoots a very powerful cartridge and shoots it from a wooden stock. In Fred's opinion, recoil effect, while it can be measured, is largely mental. He says it is 85 percent mental, though I am unable to figure out how he came up with that exact figure. I do know, after teaching these matters for many years, that recoil bothers some people and not others, and this apart from age, sex or experience. I do not know that 85 percent is the correct mathematical figure, but I do know that I have taught a great many people, including women and children, to rise above recoil effect and solve the problem in the mind.

Today I think of recoil effect in rifles principally as a source of broken telescopes. All powerful rifles kick, and some more than others, but the effect of that kick is physiologically negligible. Any boy who has played football – even touch football – has been socked a great deal harder than any rifle will kick him, and many times more often. Personally I rather enjoy that punch into the shoulder when I fire a stout gun. It brings on a nice sense of controlled power, which any head shrink can easily explain.

We found recently that if you shoot at steel targets with steel or partially steel projectiles, the fragments which bounce back may be hot enough to start fires. We discovered this by using a supply of Portugese ammunition which was otherwise very well made.

OBL now claims that he has nuclear explosives at his disposal, so I guess we must await his first shot. His mission is to destroy the infidel, and that's us. As we used to say in *the Middle Ages*, "May God defend the right!"

We recently got a great hunting yarn back from *family member* Art Hammer, who has been here to school and who has hunted with us in Africa. It seems his son is now of an age to take up the sport, and just this season gathered up his first elk. The first shot did not drop the bull in his tracks, so the young man shot again instantly, and then a third time, as the bull collapsed. The guide was astonished at the fact that the young man had not taken the butt out of his shoulder as he worked the bolt. Question: "Where did you learn that?" "Well at Gunsite, naturally. Where else?" (Clearly you cannot learn that from an M16.)

We still hear our share of long-shot mendacity, even on the part of people who not only should know better, but know that they should know better. There is something curiously neurotic about this long shooting horseradish. Possibly we inherit it from the mountain men. The thing is that those old boys were ostentatiously bragging for the effect, and did not expect the audience to take their stories as fact. You know, of course, about Jim Bridger's rifle that would shoot so far that he had to use salt bullets to keep the meat from spoiling before he got to it. That sort of thing.

Today, however, these silly tales are put forth as fact, which would be understandable if the author knew that his audience knew nothing about shooting. But I know something about shooting, and I am perplexed when a shooter will tell me a tale of marksmanship which he knows is not only beyond his capacity, but beyond the capacity of the instrument he is using.

"Oh, but I'm a *sniper*." Yeah, right! We know about snipers. We also know about rifles and we know about shooting. The Decalog does not include an injunction forbidding lies about marksmanship. Evidently there is something about marksmanship which places it beyond the rules of ordinary communication.

I would not mind if my friends would lie to me about their golf scores or their surfing or "the one that got away," but I am surprised when they lie to me about their *shooting*, especially when I have seen them shoot.

We were recently shown an issue of the *New Yorker* magazine and we were totally flummoxed thereby. We used to read that magazine regularly when we lived on the West Coast, but we have not been aware of how far the two species of Americans have diversified in the years that we have been living in Arizona. The inhabitants of the megalopolis are clearly of a different species, which I should have realized before the last election. Innocent as I was, I thought that last one would be a pushover for our side; whereas in actuality it was so close as to be politically indecisive. We did not see that until we saw the famous red-versus-blue map of US counties, which demonstrated clearly how decisively polarized the nation is. Other than the taste for automobiles (both the reds and the blues fancy cars built by BMW and Mercedes Benz), there seems to be nothing on which we can agree. I come to conclude that these people are truly a different species. If they were to crossbreed, the offspring would be infertile. I suppose that is just one reason why this political liberty

argument continues. There is no question whatever, for example, about what the Second Amendment of the Constitution says. The English usage of the founding fathers was of the highest order, but apparently not to a modern "liberal."

Among other things, these people seem to possess no discernable sense of humor, which is a tragic thing indeed.

Now that telescope sights are practically universal on sporting rifles, the proper design of iron sights has become an abandoned topic. The "ghost-ring" (which I did not invent but which I did name) may be had in several forms, but it is a *rear* sight, and not much has been thought about the front. The front sight blade is vulnerable. Hanging out there on the front end as it does, it is subject to various sorts of abuse. For this reason, the military services of the world have long issued protective devices, either additional blades or hoods over the top of the front sight. Some of these are better than others. In pioneer America, the rear sight was usually a simple, semi-circular notch, well forward on the barrel for ease of focus, and the front sight was a round bead (customarily of contrasting color), usually white, gold or silver. This arrangement will do, of course, but it calls for sharp eyes, and the old timers often ran out of eyesight before they ran out of gun.

This can be changed, however. There are two sorts of rifle which I think are better off without telescope sights. One is the inner city police rifle and the other is the dangerous game rifle. Over the past couple of years we have devised what I think is a pretty good answer for these. It consists of a broad ramp with shoulder wide enough to afford protection, but providing additional precision by means of a narrow front blade centered on the ramp and projecting about an eighth of an inch above it. This blade may be kept black, but at this stage in life I prefer to fill it with flash red or orange. This form of front sight is quite strong, reducing the need for a hood, and it is reasonably precise both because of its sharp edges and quick pick-up. It is not available commercially, unfortunately. If you want to build your own, I can furnish you with photos.

We erroneously said that the 50 caliber BMG rifle which showed up at the reunion was contributed by John Gannaway. Actually that piece belongs to Rich Wyatt. No matter who owns those things, they certainly are fun to shoot.

"Terrorism" is an awkward word. Its meaning seems to shift while you watch it. For example, it was always my belief that terrorism implied violence, or the threat of violence, to an uninvolved party with the object of coercing a third party. "I will do this horrible thing to this uninvolved party unless you change your ways." Thus terrorism may be properly defined as *coercive homicide*, which is hardly the same thing as spite murder.

I have great respect for President Bush, but I do not see how we can make war on *terrorism*, any more than we can make war on dishonesty. OBL evidently perceives himself as a spokesman for Islam. There are Muslims who may dispute that, but they are stuck with him. Whether they agree with him or not, somebody – probably OBL, but perhaps not – has decided to murder the infidel in the greatest possible numbers. The situation is only going to get worse before it gets better. What are we going to do if those people hit Times Square on New Year's Eve? Weep? It would be neat if we could feed OBL to the pigs before this happens, but if we cannot do exactly that, some sort of decisive retribution must be undertaken. Mr. President, Let's Roll!

OMNES MORITATEM. DEUS SUOS COGNOSCET.

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

Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

Previously Gunsite Gossip

Vol. 9, No. 14

December 2001

Cocked and Locked

As we enter upon the first winter of the Holy War, we must ask ourselves if we are up to the challenge that it represents. Already we see evidence of half-heartedness, and this is something we, as a nation, must overcome if we are to survive. This massive conflict which has been forced upon us must be won by strength of will, rather than by technological sophistication. The bad guys are not the Afghans, but rather those who are committed to the destruction of the infidel. Afghanistan is in the large picture a trivial antagonist. Islam, on the other hand, is not. We have by now read reams explaining why Moslems hate Christians, but this rhetoric does not change the fact of *Jihad*. Those people evidently condemn us because we are better off than they are. Envy is the root of all evil.

The wrong course of action is *not doing things*, as the President has pointed out. Western culture, if we can define it, has plenty of faults, most of which can be readily corrected, as long as we understand them. We have enemies in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran and Iraq, plus a dozen other geographical political expressions, but in essence Islam is a culture without political boundaries, and thus our conflict is unlike any other in modern times. This is not news, but it must describe our conduct from this historical point forward.

A particularly sinister aspect of this conflict is the nature of our enemy within. Our ex-president, for example, has just recently decided that this Holy War is primarily *our fault*. He has followers in our media, but worse on our campuses. In reading some of this propaganda I have discovered things about American history which I never would have suspected. It would appear from this garbage that America invented slavery, and that our pioneers burned people at the stake. Those of us who have a fair grounding in history are pretty well armored against this sort of intellectual poison, but there are plenty who are not so fortunate. To fight this Holy War we must know what side we are on, and the material is all there for those who read. With our universities as curiously misled as they are, it is up to us to spread the word at home. The powerful aphorism is that *education is what we get at home – what we get at school is training*.

"If I were King" I would require that anyone putting in for a hunting license be tested on "*The Art of the Rifle*." There are too many people out in the woods who simply do not know what to do with that item they are carrying in their hands. (Incidentally, I understand that this recent deer season has produced an unusual number of hunter fatalities in the bush. It seems the batteries in their GPI's went dead.)

Some people have suggested that I should stick to firearms and stay clear of matters political and philosophical. I am grateful for the advice, but I am not going to take it. My literary contribution, for good or ill, will remain diversified, though naturally the shooting business will always remain prominent. With the world in its present state of turmoil, it is difficult for us to theorize about matters which may not bear directly upon the crisis, and of course smallarms are not a vital part of the discussion. As to that, they seem to be decreasingly so in *the Age of Technology*. There are those who hold, with some reason, to the idea that hand-held firearms simply do not matter much anymore. It may be admitted that they do not matter as much as they used to, but we should not over-control and drop the subject. "The barefoot boy with cheeks of tan" has been the essential power base of our nation over the past 200 years. Battles are still fought by men, and the warrior mind is what makes some men better in combat than others. Progressive urbanization makes the warrior mind difficult to achieve. The kid who has never been off the pavement has difficulty in moving from

Condition White to Condition Yellow. Regardless of the nature of his target, the youngster who has put a squirrel or a rabbit or a duck on his mother's table is not distracted by the need to shoot for blood. Thus the more shottists we have on our side, the better we will be able to fight the Holy War. The more ammunition going across the counters of our hardware stores and the more range fees our people will be expending, the better off our nation and our culture will be. Already at this date, we discover that the notion of firearms in the hands of private citizens is viewed askance in most of Europe. Maybe America is indeed "the Great Satan," not because we are unbelievers, but because we are shooters. Let us encourage that view.

People keep referring to the initiation of this war by the date, usually phrased as "911." I prefer to call it "*The Attack.*" The digits 911 signify too many other things, such as emergency phone calls and service pistols.

Just now we encounter a character on the tube who identifies himself as a "Jihadi." As such he is dedicated to the killing of unbelievers, young or old, male or female, in or out of uniform, and in any quantity. He is a self-declared mass murderer, and I cannot see that we should waste any sort of judicial procedure upon him. It would, however, be interesting to hear from his own mouth why he should not be shot out-of-hand. It should be noted that this one is a born US citizen. He is entitled to his own views on this matter – just as we are to ours. Nothing further need be said.

I find it curious to observe the sudden outbreak of patriotism which seems to have been brought about by *The Attack.* I do not see what the Taliban has to do with my reverence for the Stars and Strips. Times change, of course. When I was in high school, every morning at eight the colors were raised on the front approach to the main office. They were hoisted by a color guard provided by the ROTC battalion, to the tune of "*To the Colors*" rendered by a bugler from the band and supervised by the cadet battalion staff. When the first notes rang out, everyone within hearing or eyesight of the flag pole ceased walking, stood at something resembling attention, and held that pose until the ceremony was completed. I guess that was patriotism, but it did not seem odd at the time, and we students did not feel any more or less patriotic than any of us felt after the attack on the World Trade Center.

The national flag is good. Bugle calls are good. Patriotism is good. Must we explain that?

The most essential element of the "shootability" of rifle or pistol is its trigger action. The ideal trigger breaks clean without telling the shooter that it is about to do so. This quality is generally referred to as "crispness" and does not refer to trigger weight. A two-stage trigger, which is what I prefer, moves slightly and smoothly before it reaches ignition pressure. With a single-stage action, the trigger does not move perceptibly without ignition pressure. In either case, there appears to be a consensus that 3½ to 4 pounds pressure is the correct weight. Actually weight is a good deal less important than crispness. A trigger may be quite light, but still "mushy" in the sense that it moves perceptibly when activated. Such movement is called creep, but it is not "take-up," which occurs before the trigger has reached the point of ignition pressure.

Excellent trigger action may be achieved with either single-or two-stage action, but since the trigger must move in order to cause anything to happen, rendering its movement imperceptible to the shooter is a major problem for the gunsmith.

I have been told "rumorwise" that a 26-ounce trigger is "unsafe," but I am not sure whether such criticism is directed at trigger weight or trigger crispness. I have immediate access to two Steyr Scouts, the triggers of which break imperceptibly at 26 and 28 ounces, respectively. I also have a Blaser R93 on which the trigger breaks precisely at 26 ounces without any perceptible motion. (The Blaser trigger works on a radical principle in which there is no sear as such and no perceptible motion. With the Blaser you do not cause the piece to fire, rather you "tell it to fire." This is the best feature of the weapon, but its advertisers do not seem to understand this.)

Personally I favor a light trigger, but I do not really need it. I got along pretty well in competition with the M1 Garand – two–stage at 4½ pounds – but the trigger action of the Garand is not its best feature.

Superior trigger action is more of a help to the shooter in snaphooting than in slow–fire, but a really good trigger is the first thing to look for in the selection of any rifle. When people ask what rifle they should bring to class here at school, my answer has always been, "bring the one with the best trigger."

Family members have been having a good season. Ted Ajax took his moose cleanly with one shot from the Scout, using the 180–grain Nosler bullet. Bob Crovatto took his whitetail from dead astern (TA 180E) without trouble. Cousin Bongo took his Coue's whitetail, quartering at 65 yards with one clean shot. Everybody should eat venison whenever possible. Try it as "Fondue Bourguignonne."

I note in passing that a certain faction among US shottists seems to think that there is something uncouth about calling a man an "ex–Marine." They hold that the term "former Marine" is a more correct term. I have never understood this, as service in the United States Marine Corps tends to stamp a man's personality permanently, whether or not he is on active duty. This is not true in every case, and I have known some pretty good men upon whom a hitch in the Marine Corps has had no apparent effect, but I do not see this as either good or bad, just as I do not see anything wrong with being considered an ex–Marine. Once you have been branded with the Globe–Eagle–and–Anchor, the mark remains plain for everyone to see. A certain controlled ferocity enhances a man's personality – in my opinion. I do not see anything to argue about.

Since its inception, we have always regarded the 223 cartridge (5.56 NATO) as a varmint load. Well now we have our hands full of varmints, so perhaps we have the perfect tool for the task.

Many people seem to have forgotten that a philosophical heart of the Nazi philosophy was hatred of the Jews. Now it turns out that an emotional essence of Islam seems to be hatred of Jews. This ugly historical phenomenon cannot accurately be called "anti–Semitism," for the ragheads are every bit as Semitic as the Jews. It is *group thinking*, of course, that seems to be the curse of mankind. If we could just bring ourselves to regard human beings as individuals, rather than members of groups, the age old tragedy of human savagery could be avoided.

Karl Marx had it wrong. It is not class warfare, but race hatred, that holds us in the dark

Family member Bob Crovatto is in the process of building his own personal Apitir in Virginia, so we sent him a sketch of our suggestions. This gadget should be a feature of any well–organized pistol range. Ours was torn down during the Grey Regime, but its reconstruction would be a nice addition to the present establishment.

When Whit Collins dreamed up the Bren Ten cartridge back in the dark ages, the idea was to obtain equal or superior stopping power to that of the 45 ACP in a weapon of less bulk. The 9mm P cartridge has never been quite up to serious combat potential since its inception back in 1908, but fitting a truly big–bore cartridge into pistols designed for the Parabellum round did not at once become accepted. The Browning P35 service pistol had much to recommend it over much of the 20th century, but it is not possible to stuff a 45 ACP round into that action. Whit Collins went back through the stacks and discovered that one might get fairly good impact effect out of a 10mm (40 caliber) cartridge, and this proved to be a practical idea. Experimentally in California we were able to get a 40 caliber pistol bullet of 200 grains up to about 1000f/s without blowing anything up, and this gave birth to the idea of the "Bren Ten." This was a very promising concept, offering slightly greater power in slightly less bulk. There were, however, problems. The Bren Ten cartridge, loaded up to its full capacity, tended to be very hard on machinery, and it wore out available locking systems pretty quickly. It also kicked pretty hard. One answer to this situation was to load the Bren Ten cartridge down enough to avoid excessive violence. This resulted in the succeeding rounds known as the "40 caliber Smith & Wesson" and its cousins. A downloaded Ten is probably a better fight–stopper than any version of the 9mm, but it should not

be mistaken for a full-house Bren Ten. Many people do not understand this and extol the 10mm Smith & Wesson as a satisfactory successor to the 45 ACP. Things do not exactly work out here, and while the Bren Ten as fully loaded is a pretty decisive service round, the "Attenuated Ten" comes on somewhere halfway between the Parabellum and the 45. This is not a disaster, though it does confuse things somewhat. It is unnecessary to bear in mind that the "Attenuated Ten," while a pretty good round, is not a way to achieve something for nothing.

"Young man," said Abdul,
"Is existence so dull
That you're anxious to end your career?
For, Infidel, know
That you've trod on the toe
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir."

It is somewhat surprising that our champions in this Holy War do not make proper use of the pig in our propaganda. You cannot daunt a devoted Muslim by fear of death, but you can get to him through fear of pollution. There are all sorts of ways of putting this psychological weapon to use. Just use your imagination.

We did not realize how far the Clinton crusade against civilization had been allowed to proceed on our campuses, but our ex-president's recent public output in this matter is quite unbelievable. *According to Bill, the Jihad is our fault.* Many thousands of Americans have already died in this war. That should serve to relieve our conscience at such time as we are forced to get really tough about the matter.

"Now – standing as the United States does between the opening salvo and the final volley in a war that is both necessary to win and entirely a matter of conjecture as to its course, duration, dimensions, and lethality – most everything we thought before September 10 has been superannuated."

Tod Lindberg
Policy Review, October & November 2001

It has been a fine year for varmints, and not only in the Near East. Cougars are flourishing all over the Mountain West, together with our bonny little javelina, and the bears are becoming positively urban. Just last month the New Mexico Fish & Game people were considering making Ratón (the Whittington Ratón) a sort of "bear-cozy" to keep the bears and the joggers comfortably separate. My sympathies lie with the critters (at least in this country). Let the city slickers mind their manners.

As Islam has declared war on Christendom, our sacred annual festival assumes an unfamiliar place in our hearts. We must not let those other people reduce our joy in the occasion of the Holy Birth. If we become disheartened we will have granted them the first victory of the War. God forbid that this may come to pass! The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of Joy – especially so at this critical time. Our foes seek to deny us this, but they will not succeed. We will fight them by all means God has granted us – with the fist, with the sword, and with the Spirit.

Joy to the World!

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