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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

## Volume Twelve, 2004

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 1

January 2004

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## Turnover

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Reflecting upon the year '03, we are mightily impressed, not only by its diverse events, but by its historic significance. At the beginning of the century we just got off the ground, and a hundred years later our vehicles are puttering around on the surface of Mars. Certainly not all progress displayed in the 20th century was unqualified progress. Many things about life in the western world had degenerated over that hundred years past, at least in the moral or philosophical sense. Personal conduct which is disgustingly at odds with what had been achieved over the previous thousand years is now not only accepted, but actually advocated by a surprising number of people. This is due in large measure to the decline of the spiritual life and the loss of the influence of the church. This is probably the inevitable consequence of *The Age of the Common Man* (who appears to be unpleasantly common), but that does not make it in any sense uplifting. The fact that our lives have been made unimaginably more convenient does not mean that they are better for it. It may be comfortable to go hatless, but that does little for our appearance. Comfort and convenience are very nice things, but they hardly offer a fair trade for virtue or honorable conduct.

Reviewing further, we note that the previous '03 gave us the splendid '03 Springfield rifle and the Mannlicher–Schoenauer 1903 carbine, ancestor of the Scout. It also gave us the Harley–Davidson motorcycle, as well as several distinct forward steps in the production of four–wheel self–propelled vehicles. If the year 2003 showed us the flowering of the Holy War of Islam upon the West, it also established the United States of America as the world's sole super power, and thus charged us with the responsibility of setting forth on the 21st century with the capacity of altering the world for the better. The Moslems will do their best to frustrate this, and for that we must prepare, but it is a struggle well worth fighting. Christianity is not just one among several equivalent religious faiths, but rather the champion and exemplar of the western way of life. The Moslems would prefer to see us all dead, as far as can be made out from their rather obscure language. So be it. Let us buckle on the sword and prove worthy of the challenge. God's will be done!

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The commercial success of the Smith & Wesson "dino pistol" was predictable, I suppose. I can see no possible use for it, but it seems to be selling faster than it can be produced. While it was shown to me at the last SHOT Show, I did not say that everyone should have one – I ventured that everyone should have *two* – just in case. It is clear that the gun business is essentially a marketing business. Gunmakers do not seem to produce instruments to do anything very much, but simply to make the public unhappy with what is here – with or without cause. People who understand about rifles favor the Steyr Scout, for obvious reasons, but there are not very many people who know about rifles, so for them we make short case magnums and other esoterica which accomplish nothing in particular but make the purchaser happy.

There are some wonderful personal guns around for sale, and I hope the younger generation of shooters will choose wisely in buying their lifelong companions.

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We get the following charming anecdote from a long time shooting friend:

At a dinner party one guest reported that he was being pestered by a raccoon which was thriving upon his garden, but that he had not been able to shoot the beast because his available rifle had not been available on the right occasions. One of the guests, who was a lady law

student from Czechoslovakia, suggested that it would hardly be appropriate to have a rifle ready for such occasions, since that would pose a hazard to children of the household. Our friend objected to this line of thought and noted that he always had a proper firearm readily available in his home. The lady guest suggested that this might be dangerous to the resident children, and our friend responded by saying that it would not be in his case since in his household the children all had their own guns. There was a dead silence. Later he remarked that this was the best putdown he had ever been able to bring off without being rude.

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In considering the matter of firearms design, I have long given importance to the factor of handiness, portability and ease of use. It has always seemed to me that a rifle should be compact, comfortable to use, and as light as recoil effect permits. This is because I have always considered hunting to be an active pastime, not something one does riding around in a vehicle or sitting in a blind. Times change, and I discover, somewhat to my distress, that huge and unhandy sporting rifles seem to have great appeal to some sorts of hunters. People who complain about the selling price of sporting rifles show little dismay in spending money on what I have begun to call "moon guns." These are rifles with excessively long and heavy barrels, thick stocks and huge and complex optical sights. There is a curious notion abroad to the effect that such pieces are somehow "more accurate" than trimmer guns. To each his own, of course, but it does seem odd that efficiency of operation is not a major consideration in the market.

Over the last ten years we have seen the appearance of a couple of outstanding designs, which, if sheer usefulness mattered, would sweep the market. We may suppose that this is because the majority of gun buyers are not gun shooters. It would seem that these purchasers buy out of catalogs and out of articles in sporting magazines without much time spent on field evaluation. Most riflemen are self-taught, there being very little access to adequate instructional service in this subject. Being self-taught in rifle marksmanship is rather like being self-taught on the piano. It can be done, but it is certainly a long, hard route to success. If a beginning shooter does not know what he is trying to do, it is unlikely that he will find an easy way to do it. Because of this we find that a large part of the buying public is fundamentally ignorant about what it is buying. This is strikingly apparent in the reaction of most novice shooters to the Steyr Scout. I have a large file now from correspondents expressing astonishment on how easy it is to achieve hits with the Scout rifle. This is not because it is "more accurate," though it certainly is more accurate than the rifleman can readily appreciate. And it is not because it is "more powerful," though it is as powerful as need be. And it is not because it is more beautiful, though beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, and handsome is as handsome does. It is because it is essentially *friendly*, and you have to use it afield, not off the bench, in order to appreciate this.

So it is that Lindy, our hunting offspring, encountered hardly anything but moon guns in her Texan alimentary pursuits. She packs what may be considered the Porsche among rifles and, of course, it works. (Of course the shooter has something to do with this.)

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At the winter meeting of the National Rifle Association it was emphasized that while we may have won the most recent battle for the Bill of Rights (by the skin of our teeth), we certainly did not win the war. The people who would deprive us of our essential liberty are still there, and their amazing efforts to destroy the God-given rights of free men show no signs of diminishing. We know how hard and continuously these people keep up their fight to disarm us. The important question is *why* they fight us. Much as they may wish to use crime as their target, it is quite clear to them and as to us that crime is not the problem. Where the citizen is armed, crime goes down. All they have to do is look. Nor is safety an adequate argument for disarmament. Life is unsafe by nature, and mortal accidents occur regardless of the existence or absence of personal arms. I have thought about this at length, and I am puzzled to discover that the subject of the motivation of those who would confound our liberty is not broadly discussed. Personally I think the motive of those other people is simply envy. Envy, not money, is the root of all evil, and those who cannot cope envy those who can. Living in a free country – the last on Earth – I have been armed one way or another for most of my life. And though I have lived a fairly adventurous life, I have never yet had to shoot to save my life, or

that of a dear one, in a purely civil encounter. But the fact that I have been able to and ready to has forestalled conflict on several occasions. This has afforded me great satisfaction, but it seems to annoy certain people who envy me my peace of mind. This product, *peace of mind*, is what I have provided for so many years at Gunsite, and the fact that it can be so provided is apparently what arouses the envy of the non-coper. I do not believe that I am exactly "preaching to the choir" when I state this position, because I do not see that either our friends or our enemies are prepared to understand that envy is the issue.

"Fear no man, whatever his size,  
Just call on me, I'll equalize."

This idea was supposedly attributed to Sam Colt's illustrious contribution.

Thus it is that we in the United States of America still constitute the last best hope of Earth – whatever our faults. We must not seek corroboration from the rest of the world. There are millions of good people out there, as well as millions of bad, but neither the good nor the bad will aid us in the defense of our hard won liberty. But we must triumph at home, of course, before we can triumph abroad. We face a long and bitter election campaign in this forthcoming year, and we cannot overemphasize its importance.

We note the formulation of a lever-action society in these parts. I have no objection to this, but I think it is rather pointless. A good rifle is a good rifle, totally apart from its action type, and the Wild West "Co-pilot" shows off the lever-action to its best advantage. Do not confuse the "Co-pilot" with Marlin's "Guide Gun." They are similar, but they are not the same, and Jim West's brainchild offers significant advantages. As handy as a briefcase and stout enough to stop any charge, it is a perfect answer in the rural Northwest. In addition it is the ideal instrument for the lion PH, as well as for the animal control officer. (Just do not put a telescope on it. Any beast that can do you in is easy to see at tactile distance.)

It has long been maintained that a crocodile will not pluck a meal out of a boat, but one should not make flat statements about animal behavior. We now learn of a case up in Mugabestan in which a croc seized a young girl from the side in a boat. It is quite possible that she could have been saved, since she was not submerged in the croc's jaws, but nobody had a gun. (The PH had a pistol, but that was hardly up to the task.)

Perhaps you have heard of the great bear wars of New Jersey. It turns out that there are too many bears in New Jersey and they constitute a definite nuisance in various ways. The answer, it seems to us, is bear hunting, and such a thing was organized – a controlled bear hunt. The bambiists went through the roof. Bambiists are not interested in anything but emotion, and the idea that someone could set forth to bust a bear was just more than they could stand. The battle was fought with great journalistic bitterness. Nobody actually shot anybody else, but the anti-hunt people spoke as if they would support the idea. The hunt went through, and enough bears were taken to diminish the problem, or so it would seem. This did not pacify the Bambiists, of course, and we will hear more about this prior to the next organized bear hunt in New Jersey.

It appears there are still hunters who do not understand about the Bill of Rights. These people are hard to reach, since they do not participate in any of the shooting sports other than the annual fall deer hunt in the Northeastern woods. There are, however, a lot of them, and it is up to us to convince them that they are on our side in this struggle.

Those who are properly instructed in rifle technique understand that there are two proper systems of readiness for rifle handling in the field. The bolt-action rifle (except the Blaser 93) is properly carried in *Condition 3* (chamber empty, magazine full, safety off) when hunting in mountain or desert. In bush the bolt-action rifle is carried in *Condition 1* (chamber and magazine loaded, safety on). The Blaser 93 is an exception and should be handled more like a lever-action weapon. Its safety is very difficult to use and, because of this, the piece should be carried in *Condition 3* when brush hunting. You cannot check the rifle any faster than you can snap

that straight pull. We have established this on flying clay birds here at the school.

The lever gun is better handled like the Blaser, with no shell in the chamber and loaded as it is mounted. Again we have tested this on flying clays and find that it works well in practiced hands. You simply do not put a shell in the chamber until you start the butt to the shoulder.

These things are pretty obvious when you think about them, but few people think about them.

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The Mars landing was a wonderful achievement of the human mind. Sadly enough, however, Edgar Rice Burroughs got it better.

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We may safely assume that the Moors will hit us again when they can figure out a good way to do it. It is difficult to establish a target at which to hit back, but we would like to think that we have the right man at the sights.

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Having lived a very long time, I have been blessed with a number of peculiar honors, of which I may or may not prove worthy. But one recently startled me. I was invited to deliver a speech to a Boy Scout Honor Council and, naturally, I chose honor as my central topic. My speech was entirely extemporaneous, without text or notes, so I was pleased to be asked by two different people for a transcript of my presentation. But I do not write out speeches in advance. I speak them as they occur, so I could not provide a text, but I was nonetheless much gratified.

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This unisex thing can be pretty silly. At the winter meeting we learned of a case in which a girl insisted upon qualifying for the wrestling team. When a match came up, her prospective male opponent quite properly refused to compete. We may assume that any girl who chose to compete in interscholastic wrestling would not be much of a choice damsel, but this sort of thing may come up again, from time to time, as the feminists flaunt their foolish flag.

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This litigation bit continues to astound. Now some sportsman is suing Federal Ammunition because he, the sportsman, choose the wrong sort of ammunition with which to hunt lions. Naturally the courts can throw things like this out, but the fact that attorneys will bring them up is yet another example of forensic decadence.

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These Norinco people in China have taken up the production of replicas for sale in the Western world. This is not good news, but the market is there, and it will be satisfied. Norinco workmanship seems to be pretty good, and the weapons themselves do meet with sensible requirements.

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Now here we have some fellow who joined the Army "to get an education." That is the wrong reason. You join the Army to enforce the will of the people of the United States of America, by force, against their enemies. An Army exists for two reasons: first, to kill people, and second, to be so good at it that any threatening group will be intimidated to the point of inactivity. You do not join the Army to get anything. You join the Army to give of yourself, terminally if called for. I am not sure what this fellow means by "an education," but his meaning and mine obviously do not coincide.

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We continue to be amused by people who feel that shot group diameter on paper is an end in itself. As shooting master Louis Awerbuck put it, "I can always get a perfect shot group. All I have to do is fire just one shot."

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We are informed that under some circumstances bison are free for the taking in some parts of Alberta. We must look into this. The bison is not a particularly sporting proposition, but his meat is superb table fare, and his robe, taken at the prime, is just what is needed for these cold winter nights. And you do not need a "buffalo

gun." Old faithful, there on the rack, will do just fine.

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At long last "*C Stories*" is being printed up for proofing. The printer is Wasserman and the publisher is Wisdom. It promises to be a very nice presentation. Now it is up to us to make sure that people who might want it know how to find it.

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The left-liberals are ceaseless in their determination to disarm the decent people of the world. Sadly enough, a great many decent people seem to have no objection to being disarmed. America may well be the last best hope of Earth, but there are many Americans who have no understanding of why this is so. It is so because America is the remaining bastion of political liberty. The armed citizen is the essence of political freedom, and an armed citizenry may not be enslaved, as our Founding Fathers well knew. The way to ensure liberty is to ensure that every man be armed – according to the tenets of Mr. Jefferson. Times change, but that principle does not. You can only push people around if they submit to being pushed, and this is impossible if they are personally armed. Thus the Second Amendment of the US Constitution has nothing to do with hunting. It has rather to do with the security of a free state against all enemies *foreign and domestic*. Hunting, of course, should be encouraged, since it familiarizes the general public with the expert use of personal weapons, but it does not lie at the heart of the problem. A disarmed public is a conspicuous encouragement to crime, as the example of Britain will point out. I submit that we do not have a serious crime problem in the US. Such goblins that choose to prey upon other people will find means to do so regardless of technology. Just as a man who wishes to find cocaine will find it, a man who wishes to find a gun will find it, regardless of what the law says. It is far better for all the people to be able to protect themselves – by force and violence if necessary.

So we welcome the year 2004 with high hopes as with stern awareness of the problems we face. Liberty is what we stand for. Liberty is what we champion. Liberty will prevail.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

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## The Chill Factor

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Our cold weather is right on time this year, and we enjoy it appropriately. A change of seasons is always welcome, and people who live in the tropics – or subtropics – miss out on a very good thing. Naturally winter can go too far, and does so in many places – hence Arizona's snowbirds. Since we cannot do very much about the weather, however, we are fortunate that we can enjoy what is provided.

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We do not see much noteworthy innovation in personal arms at this time, but the military is experimenting with a middle-powered cartridge to replace that of the mouse gun. A caliber of 6.8mm is under discussion, though why that may be preferable to the old reliable 7 is not clear. We have unlimited reference material available on the 7mm bore size, and going to 6.8 would seem an unnecessary complication. In my youth I was told that a 7mm bullet could not properly dispose of enough mass to contain the various sorts of special core requirements such as armor-piercing, tracer and incendiary components. A short-case 7mm – say 7x40 – might be a good point of departure, but that may be too simple an idea for the computer age. As I understand it, the Garand rifle was originally designed for the 7x57 cartridge, but changed over to the 30 caliber cartridge, resulting in the 30 M2, which delivered the ballistics of what became the 308. Anyway here we are again, but we surely spent a long time messing about with that dismal 223 round.

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It is clear at the moment from this political hoopla that we who believe in the Bill of Rights are in for another full-house battle in the forthcoming presidential election. It is sad to see how we who treasure liberty must struggle to preserve our domestic position while fighting off the international left with our other hand. Certainly it is a fight worth fighting, and may God defend the right!

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The Chinese communists seem determined to join the human race. They are doing disquietingly well at it in various fields of endeavor, from the production of replica smallarms to space probing. *Shooting Master* Marc Heim passed through China on his way back to Europe and tells us of a bullet train now operating as airport shuttle at Peking. This device is pretty unbelievable, operating at speeds above those normally encountered at Indianapolis. This device goes so fast that it is either accelerating or decelerating in the accomplishment of its transit. How passengers contrive to keep their teeth in place is uncertain.

And the Chinese are scheduled to hold a Formula 1 race this summer. Motor racing hardly seems fitting behavior for a Marxist, but Marxism seems to have become almost thoroughly abandoned, except in United States academia.

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As we honor the forthcoming birthday of the father of our country we may well do to ponder upon his magisterial dictum: "Government, like fire, is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." One of my degrees is in "political science," the other is in history. Certainly they bear this out.

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Injury reports which drift back from Mesopotamia, serve to corroborate most of our well established combat theories. Much of the action in Iraq takes place at spitting distance in the dark, and there the purpose of the heavy-duty combat pistol, properly understood, is reestablished day by day – or more properly night by night.

The enemy's weapon of choice is the rocket propelled grenade (RPG). When I was doing spook work in Southeast Asia during the Korean War I was able to acquire a pretty good supply of 2.36 inch bazookas, which were being replaced worldwide by the 3½ inch version of the same weapon. I put these pieces to work as what might be called "squad-level artillery" and they worked pretty well. As time went on I acquired a supply of 3.5s, which worked better. I put in for a general-purpose warhead for the 3.5 without success, since the bazooka was conceived as an anti-tank weapon and we had no enemy tanks to contend with. The RPG and the bazooka are not the same, of course, but one may be considered to be a logical development of the other. Now our enemies in the Holy War seem to have an unlimited supply of these low-brow weapons, which they put to marginal use in the hands of troops who have no skills in weaponcraft. The RPG is essentially a weapon for *nogoodnicks*, but that is the kind of war we seem to be fighting. A war against the irregular is particularly unpleasant, as the French found out in the Peninsular Wars. The enemy is almost impossible to identify, and iron handed reprisal only renders the foreign-speaking occupier more obnoxious.

The politics of the Holy War must be left to the politicians, but the techniques thereof are matters for the professional soldier. It is a bad scene, but we did not start it. They showed their hand at 9-11 and they can hardly complain about the whirlwind they stand to reap.

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Do any of you marksmen think it possible for a man to place 20 shots in a 20-inch circle in 20 seconds at a 1,000 yards? I posed this question to the range masters down at Camp Pendleton many years ago and was told that such a thing was not possible. During much of my life a four-minute mile was deemed to be impossible, to say nothing of motoring around on the surface of the moon. Obviously this rifle challenge is very, very hard. I have tried it twice myself and conclude that while the task is not impossible, it is nearly so. Therefore, I am undertaking the proposal of a perpetual prize in the form of a grand gold cup or bowl to be awarded to anyone who can bring off this stunt – properly supervised, of course. Administration of the effort will be complicated, but that we can handle. I hope to avoid commercialization, but where there is a will there is a way – and money in sufficient quantities can provide the will.

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I am frequently confronted with requests on information about the preparation of a pseudo-scout rifle, based on the notion that such a piece may be put together for less money than a Steyr Scout. The notion is mistaken. By the time you have assembled something resembling a scout from miscellaneous available parts, you will have spent more money than you would on a retail SS, and the result, while possibly very good, will not include all the necessary component features of the finished Scout rifle. I hope it is clear that cost ought not to be a primary consideration in the choice of a personal rifle, which is too important an instrument on which to economize. Certainly we all have to consider price, but I think we should stint on clothing, vacation time, replacement cars, and steak dinners before we do so on that rifle. You only need the one, and you are best advised to get it right the first time, even if you have to wait and get by for the time being on what you currently have in the rack.

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Our recent presentation to a Boy Scout court of honor has reverberated to a greater extent than I would have anticipated. Various people, from various parts of the country, have asked me to provide them with a transcript of what I said. I could not do that because I had no such transcript, but the subject matter appears to have been surprising. The Boy Scouts are a nifty organization and deserve to be encouraged in every way, but they have certainly departed in concept from what they were set out to be. Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the founder, was a brilliant outdoorsman, a distinguished cavalry officer, and reportedly the finest pig sticker in India. To kill a sprinting wild boar with one lance thrust from the back of a galloping horse is a notable achievement. For quite a while Sir Robert had the high score of consecutive one-thrust kills throughout the Empire. But above all this man was a *warrior*, whose business it was to face the foe with both valor and good cheer. He was the definitive *scout*, and those young men of today who aspire to that title should realize that they are fighters first and social workers afterward. At the moment heroism is unfashionable, except perhaps in the notion of hero-as-victim. The press calls people heros because they got hurt, rather than because they accomplished anything. *Hurting is no sort of achievement.* You suffer primarily because you were at the



wrong place at the wrong time. People often get hurt in the course of combat service, but it is certainly not the object of the exercise, so the scout achieves heroic status by means of what he has done, not because of how hard he was hit upon. The primary American scout was Major Frederick Russell Burnham, DSO, Chief of Scouts under Lord Roberts. Any young man who aspires to the title of Scout should first read Burnham's "*Scouting on Two Continents*" in order to discover what the job entails.

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The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) continues to make itself ridiculous in public. Recently one Lucius Traveler, who claims to speak for the organization, was totally upset at a recent ceremony honoring the birthday of the Marine Corps in which all hands were portrayed at prayer. "These are federal employees on federal property and on federal time. For them to pray is clearly an establishment of religion and we must nip this in the bud immediately."

*That's what he said*, hard as it may be to believe. A Marine may technically be a "federal employee," but you may have to explain that to him with care. To claim that group worship by a military organization is "establishment of religion" displays a degree of semantic confusion which is quite beyond me, and to call for *us* to "nip this in the bud" suggests that the practice is somehow innovative, which point would be hard to explain to George Washington.

But the ACLU stumbles on. One can hope that it will never be taken seriously.

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After careful thought, the Countess has decided that the pursuit of excellence is *elitist*. The post-moderns hold that elitism is a mortal sin. Such folk must lead complicated lives. The fact is that some people are better than other people, on any point worth discussing, from shining shoes to making money. Equality is not only impossible, but also undesirable. We may suppose that it exists among jellyfish, but I am not even sure of that.

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It is gratifying to note the extent to which our instructional program here at Gunsite has benefitted the law enforcement people. One graduate recently reported back to the effect that three "suspects" are now alive, rather than dead on the scene, because of the confidences he acquired here at school. This is a rather unusual study, in which it was not the police officer whose life was saved, but that of the presumed criminal. Whether this is good or not is hard to say, but it is certainly interesting.

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"If I were king" I would give serious thought to the institution of exemplary punishment. This goblin who murdered the little girl in Florida should be disposed of publically in some horrifying manner. This would not bring back the child, but it just might give pause to certain kinds of social degenerates.

As for capital punishment, it has not been announced what we have done or will do to that Arab soldier who joined the American Army and then took it upon himself to murder his comrades in arms. Is it possible for a devout Moslem to take oath to serve in a non-Moslem army? As I understand it, his first duty must be to Allah, as revealed in some version of the Koran, but not to the United States.

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I am pleased with the way "*The Art of the Rifle*" has turned out. I repeat that it may not be the best work of its kind, but rather the *only* work of its kind. It is now required reading for special weapons teams in various public agencies.

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It is generally accepted that to do anything well one must enjoy doing it. This is true in almost every endeavor, including fighting. We hear far too much whining about the hardships of military service, which are certainly hard enough, but not about the exhilaration involved in fighting itself. War is hell, as the man said, and the sufferings involved – exhaustion, exposure, pain, and so forth – are hard to bear, but when contact is made there is a normal, universal surge of joy involved in the actual fight. I do not speak only from my own experience here, which is that of one man, but rather from the study of a great many men of various services and nationalities, and I am quite sure of my ground. In the piston-and-propellor days the air war was deadly

– but glorious. I have spoken intimately with at least a dozen fighter pilots, each of whom related that pressing his trigger and watching his tracers was a total joy.

This exhilaration decreases as rank grows. Beyond battalion command the sense of contact attenuates, and while a general may take satisfaction from control of a large scale operation, he is no longer able to experience the visceral joy of the company or platoon commander.

Riding around at night in a thin-skinned vehicle while characters plink at you with RPGs is not combat in the sense mentioned here, but shooting back and hitting when the enemy has commenced shooting at you is not a feeling you can duplicate on the playing field or in the stock market. These are unfashionable views, but that does not make them invalid. Too many people are inclined to say only what they think they should say, rather than the truth. It is unfashionable to say that you enjoy fighting, even if you do, but the facts are there for those who will study them carefully.

We recently read an account of a trip across rural America by a British newsman. It is always interesting to see ourselves as others see us, and this fellow certainly treated us to a Brit's eye view. He was horrified, of course, at the idea that most American households include at least one personal firearm. (He couldn't discern the difference between a rifle and a shotgun.) There were many other things of interest, including his dismay at the brutality of American football, but one particular point stands out. He went all the way up to Ruby Ridge in order to study that disaster. Would you believe it possible to report upon the atrocity at Ruby Ridge without once mentioning the name of Lon Horiuchi? This is rather like writing up the Battle of the OK Corral without mentioning Wyatt Earp. Hard to believe!

The number of tourists who opt to go hunting in Africa without any preparation at all continues to amaze. From one prominent PH we now learn of a client who explained on his first contact that he did not know how to shoot without a rest. Where do such people come from! Clearly this fellow had never read anything about the African experience. Perhaps reading has become so unfamiliar that it does not occur to a good many people to read into an activity before undertaking it. I remember distinctly that my father made it clear to me that one cannot appreciate an experience without understanding it beforehand. I always thought this was totally obvious, but times do change. Still it is sad to see people who are fortunate enough to undertake the great hunt, but totally unqualified to do so. The African hunt should be reserved for those who are capable of appreciating it, but that is pretty hard to arrange.

It appears that life insurance is an unpromising enterprise in Bantu Africa. When a friend of ours suggested to his employee that he might take out a policy to provide for his dependents upon his demise, the man pointed out that as soon as such an act had become known he would be poisoned at his next meal. This is called cultural diversification.

Generally speaking, white critics of the African scene have usually opined that the greatest evil imported into aboriginal Africa was the missionary, who taught the people that they should be discontented with what had always sufficed before. Recently a Swazi of consequence declared that the great evil the white man brought to Africa was *money*. He said that assets must be tangible. Unless you can see it or measure it or eat it, it does not really count, and pretending that it does brings nothing but disaster. I had never thought of that before, but this man understands the problem better than I do, and I must respect his opinion.

The situation continues to deteriorate in Mugabestan, to nobody's surprise. Something up there has got to give, and the sooner the better. Mugabe is considerably more obnoxious than Saddam Hussain, but with the support of both Mbeki and Kofi Anan it may be that only death will dislodge him.

We expect to explore a considerable list of innovative products at the forthcoming SHOT Show. Whether we need such things remains to be seen. Sometimes what is new is better, and sometimes it isn't. I have been

using personal firearms with great satisfaction for a very long time, and I must say that I have always felt very well equipped, even as a boy. It is not difficult to advise a newcomer about what sort of personal gun he should buy, but real improvements in smallarms are not strikingly apparent. Note how the press is so fond of speaking of a "9 mm semi-automatic pistol," as if it were something new, sinister and remarkable. The Luger, which fills exactly that description, was made government standard in the year 1908. You do not see many of them around today, but if you happen upon one, do not pass it up. It is not the best service pistol available, but it is certainly a good one. In rifles we now have available the Blaser 93, the "Co-pilot" and the Steyr Scout – three very superior artifacts. If you do not have one, however, you will probably make out reasonably well with Uncle Henry's Old Faithful – as long as you do your part.

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We hear (via Mike Ritter newspapers) that the US military is running out of smallarms ammunition. We have always insisted that a man cannot have too much ammunition, and now we see that this idea was fully justified. Do not discard your brass, and make every effort to keep ahead of the game.

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*Lizzie Borden took an ax,  
And gave her mother forty wacks.*

*When she saw what she had done,  
She gave her father forty-one.*

GURU SAY:

Now a problem does arise,  
Whom to blame for this demise.

We must not point to Lizzie for,  
The cash is what we must explore.

The seller of the ax might do,  
But better still the maker, too.

Whatever target we may state,  
Attorneys on both sides inflate.

No matter how inane we seem,  
Above all else the gold will gleam.

Let judges sift the right from wrong,  
Lizzie's ax won't matter long.

---

The first proof of "*C Stories*" is now back with the printer and should be set up before the snow melts. Sometimes I thought I would never see the day. It looks good to me, but then I am hardly the one to pass judgment upon it. The task now is to see about its distribution. Readers can hardly be expected to buy a book unless they know that it exists. We must pass the word as best we may.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 3

March 2004

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## False Winter

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At this time of year people always ask if there was anything outstanding to be seen at the SHOT Show. There is always something, of course, but what impresses some people is not the same as what impresses others. For our part, we always make a straight line for the Perazzi display. Looking at their top-of-the-line offering is delightful. It shows that people are still ready to do things like that, both to make them and to buy them. The four-piece special now on display at Perazzi goes for four hundred thousand dollars – four over/under shotguns in four different gauges. They are absolutely beautiful, and while one would hardly want to own them, they are indeed a joy to behold. Why one shotgun is better than another is not an easy question. A commonplace sort of Perazzi, at about \$20,000, is beautifully made and perfectly suited for its task – feathers or clay. What makes the magnificent Perazzis magnificent is the combination of unequaled engraving and unequaled wood. It is said that there are specialists in Anatolia who spend the year searching the forests for walnut trees suitable for this sort of production. Certainly the engraving and the walnut are wondrous to behold, and it gives us great pleasure to behold them.

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On a much more practical level, we noted a profusion of what may be called "1911 clones" manufactured by various sorts of gunmakers in response to the understanding that a properly designed, major caliber service pistol answers an ongoing need. Most of you who read this now own one or more serviceable pistols of this type, so reproduction has little appeal for you. However it is interesting to see how the handgun revolution of the 20th century evolved. In 1920 no one had any use for the "Yankee Fist." Today it is obvious that the need is there. I am often asked which manufacturer I favor, and I have no clear answer to this. Quality control changes from time to time, and I do not have sufficient statistical base for an opinion. We have long maintained that the only accessories that a 1911 needs are a trigger you can manage, sights that you can see, and a dehorning job. That still goes.

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Let us remind ourselves again that the Second Amendment of the US Constitution should be referred to as the *Statute of Liberty*. That practice has not caught on, as we wish it had, so let us keep up the fight.

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Preliminary response to the "Apollo Challenge" (20 shots in a 20-inch circle in 20 seconds at 1,000 yards) seems to me is that the exploit is achievable – barely.

As you might suppose, such commentators as we have heard concentrate on the mechanical aspect of the challenge. Naturally right equipment would be a help, but success will be attributed to the shooter rather than his rifle. If this project takes shape, its administration will be complicated, but I would like to be granted the right to appoint the committee. As with so many things, success will depend upon money. The permanent trophy must be magnificent – not cheap. The administrative work will involve considerable operational expense, and the suggested first prize of \$5,000 will be necessary to get the right people interested. If the project succeeds it will establish for all time the world's greatest marksmen – as a matter of record rather than legend. The task is barely possible, which is just as it should be. If it were out of reach, no one would try for it, and if it were easy, it would not mean anything. Marksmen are a dying breed at this time. It would be nice to recognize them before they become extinct.

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Jim West, of Anchorage, Alaska, tells us he is no longer going to buy his base parts from Marlin, but rather to make them himself. I think this is good news. Marlin has contributed greatly to shooting engineering over the past century, but it has been plagued by quality control problems in recent years. The Wild West "Co-pilot" is one of the few steps forward in recent rifle design, and it should be encouraged.

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We have recently had in attendance here at Gunsite a group of outdoorsmen from the Geological Survey Department. It appears they spend a lot of time out in the bush with bears, and they would like to be properly prepared in case of hostile contact. Bears are not normally a hazard, but they certainly can be, and people who encroach upon bears in their own country should be aware of that. One of our students recently had occasion to spend some survey time in the vicinity of Lake Baikal in Siberia, and he informs us that the situation there is somewhat fraught. There are plenty of bears and there are a good many people, but people under Russian control have no access to firearms. (Russia may no longer be a military hazard to the free world, but that certainly does not mean that it is a free country. No guns. Lots of bears. Check 6.)

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For bear defense the "Co-pilot" stands by itself, but though it is very handy, it is still a rifle and must be managed with two hands. Various outdoor jobs call for the use of both hands, and the big pistols – 44 Magnum and up – may be worn on the person with both hands free. A 12 gauge shotgun with proper slugs may deal with this job, if that is all you can lay your hands on, but you should not count on it.

Remember then the *Gunsite Bear Rules*:

1. Be alert.
  2. Remember that bears are not cuddly.
  3. Never enter bear country without a powerful firearm and the skill to use it well.
  4. Never camp on a bear thoroughfare.
  5. Be alert.
- 

Rich Lucibella has been picking away at the chance to organize a hunt for *Hydrurga* (the leopard seal) in Antarctica. While this beast should definitely be included in the category of dangerous game, the various authorities controlling the South Pole are violently opposed to any sort of sporting proposition. Various sorts of scientific societies may be enlisted in this project, but so far nothing much promises.

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Reports from the field, both here and in Africa, continue to emphasize distressing gunhandling, especially in Africa. The rich kids continue to take the field without any preparation at all. People show up to go hunting who have never handled a gun, amazing as that may seem. Just because you can afford it does not mean you can do it, but the professional hunters need all the business they can get. It is obvious that attendance at rifle school should be a prerequisite for the big hunt, but many of the people who undertake the adventure are not even aware that preparatory education is available. The life of a professional hunter is distinctly hazardous, not from dangerous game, but from dangerous clients. It must be a great relief for our good friends in the African hunting trade to discover that they have signed up people who know what they are doing.

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The continued use of shooting sticks by big game hunters is most annoying. They are encouraged in Africa because of the total lack of marksmanship skills displayed by clients. This is understandable, but it does not make sticks a good idea. For a hunter always to be accompanied by a henchman of some sort who can carry things for him is wimpish.

I understand that in the great days of bison hunting in the American West the professionals used sticks because they often found themselves in high grass. Because of this I whittled out a set for myself when I was an adolescent, but after taking them afield I discovered them to be a nuisance. Now we hear of a client in Africa who protested vigorously when he heard he was expected to shoot *without a rest*. Just what he was doing there remains obscure.

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We note that there are those who object to our referring to Japanese as Nips. However, the Nips have no reticence about referring to me as a *gaijin*. I do not know why we have all suddenly become almost hysterically touchy. The Krauts refer to us as *Amis*, and I do not mind. Nor do I object when Jews refer to me as a *goy*. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me."

---

We note that Gunsite has stopped serving up "Safari Prep." Certainly this is not because it is not needed, but rather because the people who need it never seem to realize that they do need it. Your African trip will be vastly more enjoyable if you understand a few things about how to make it so. It is continually reported from Africa that quick assumption of position is absolutely vital in the bush. We used to emphasize that here, but it is not taught anywhere else, as far as I know – certainly not in the military.

Thus it is that we are especially delighted with a recent action report in which the African PH particularly noticed this skill on the part of his customer – who had been exposed to it here.

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At the SHOT Show we did not see anything resembling a cell phone Derringer, for which it seems to me there is a particular need. Today everybody walks around with a cell phone at the ready. If that meant that he might be armed with a single-shot 41 rimfire, this might be a positive discouragement to street crime.

---

Quality control in personal firearms seems to be on the decline. Up to 50 percent of students here at Gunsite must be sent immediately to the gunsmith to tidy up their personal weapons, insofar as this is possible. First-rate fit and finish are qualities you must pay for, and too many customers do not understand this. They still go for pseudo-scouts and the "guide gun" because they cost less than the Steyr Scout and the "Co-pilot." This error is usually rectified in time, but it costs more money than acquiring the right piece in the first place.

---

We were pleased to be singled out by some members of the New York City Council as one of the sort of evil person who sits on the board of directors of the National Rifle Association. I did not know any of those other people were listening, but I certainly enjoy following the lead of Theodore Roosevelt in disdaining hyphenated Americans, and thus preferring assimilation to diversity. I do wish these people would stand up and fight, as I relish this sort of thing, but I cannot swing at a target if I cannot see it.

---

We are amused (to some extent) by the concern expressed by some commentators about the exposure of children to violence on the tube. All kids, but especially little boys, are much tougher-minded than their parents. (I was a little kid once and I know.) We did not go to the Saturday afternoon movie to watch what we called scornfully "love stuff." We went to see the fighting, and I do not think it hurt us. The Tolkien epic has been decried by one of these people because it frightened his little boy. This must have been a pretty faint-hearted little boy, and his father should have set about correcting that rather than complaining. This increasing emasculation of our youth may be due to television, not so much because of the content of the programs, but because it has been used to take the place of the father in the household. Of course, many of our modern young people have no fathers, but that cannot be the whole story, since a properly oriented mother can step in and take over the role if she realizes that she must. We cannot raise heroes if we let our children be scared by images. Fear was not allowed in my block when I was a little kid. The worst insult you could employ was to suggest that your playmate was a *coward*.

---

There is nothing especially heroic about suffering. It is not that you are hurt that matters, but rather what did you do about it. People frequently get hurt in war, but that is hardly the object of the exercise. The object is to inflict rather than to receive, and medals should be awarded on that basis. Purple Hearts are all very well, but Bronze Stars are better.

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"*C Stories*" is now at the printers and should be ready for distribution by the time of the NRA meeting at

Pittsburgh in mid-April. I really like the way it looks, enhanced as it is by the splendid artwork of Paul Kirchner. I had not thought of what might be called a prefabricated collector's item, but Lindy has put it together in the form of the special leather-bound edition, and to our considerable gratification half of those high-priced items have already been sold. Fancy that! If you are interested, order direct from,

Wisdom Publishing, Inc.,  
1840 East Warner Road,  
Box 238, Tempe,  
Arizona 85284,  
e-mail: lcwisdom@aol.com.

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*Shooting Master* John Pepper showed us an interesting report from the war zone suggesting that the ragheads are pretty inferior soldiers, being sloppy, lazy and disinclined to run risks. Fifteen hundred years ago the Arabs fought well, but times have changed.

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Reports from the war zone suggest that few of our people are engaging one-on-one with enemy troops. Those who have personally struck blows have done so mainly with crew-served weapons.

Back during World War II, it occurred to me that if each one of our soldiers could account personally for one enemy, the war would be over. I proposed a black-and-gold *fouragere* worn to denote this achievement. I dropped that in the suggestion box, but nothing came of it.

Clearly most casualties in today's wars are inflicted by crew-served weapons, but if the weapon accounts for more of the enemy than the number of its crew, the object would still be achieved. I served for 30 months on what may be considered a crew-served weapon, our crew numbering 2,200. We certainly accounted for more than 2,200 of the enemy, but nobody kept score. At the other end of the line, a young friend of mine flying a Corsair got in at the end of the line over Japan and shot down one Japanese aircraft, thus we both slew enough for the proposed but nonexistent recognition.

---

We are gratified at the response that has come into our Project. We prefer to call it "The Project," rather than to attach my name to it. We need sponsors to put up the money, so if any individual or group wishes to prime the pump (lavishly), we can use that name to define the test.

I think there is a need for this Project. Sporting literature is full of lore about remarkable accomplishments, from William Tell on down. I was recently reading about Billy Dixon at Adobe Walls again and discover that while some sort of long shot was indeed achieved on that occasion, details are impossible to verify. We do not really know who did it or what he did. If The Project takes form, we will then know who and how, and so will posterity.

I hold no command authority over this enterprise, of course, but I do have suggestions for the committee, such as:

- A weight ceiling. I suggest 15lbs, all up but unloaded. I would hold still for 20, but I do not think it necessary.
- Abstract accuracy will not win this test. We have barrels, actions and ammunition that will achieve 2 minute angle results at 1000 yards—in perfectly still air. The object of this exercise is to discover if there is a man who can do it.
- I think either 30-06 or 7x57 would be the appropriate caliber. Those work well in currently available 20-round magazines, and both are highly developed experimentally.
- A muzzle brake is probably desirable.

- A heel extension on the butt will serve to maintain the piece into the shoulder between shots, as will a left-hand hold facilitator.
- A system will be needed to control the possibility of doubles (two shots in the same hole).
- The 20-inch group need not be scored in the X-ring. If all shots are in 20 inches, that will suffice.
- Timing will start with the firing of the first shot, rather than in response to a signal, and end with the 20th.
- Neither the bipod feet nor the butt stock may be bolted to the base. (The weapon must be "portable".)
- I think three attempts per entry would be sound, entries to be separated by at least ten (10) days. Each entry to call for a new entry fee.
- Three witnesses should verify each attempt, one of which to be an officer in good standing of the sponsoring organization, preferably the National Rifle Association.
- Other considerations will occur to you and they will be considered when the committee is first convened.

The idea seems to have attracted interest, and I hope that more will come of it than Internet chitchat. With this effort we could establish beyond any doubt the identity of the World's Greatest Rifleman, or Riflemen, if successors can make the grade. The reward shall be permanent official recognition, inscription on the world cup, a reduced replica for personal ownership, and a fairly large money prize, amount to be determined.

For the moment, you may address any questions you have to me; thereafter, we will have a committee for you in Washington, I hope.

---

This is not the place to get personal, but I must admit to great pleasure at being singled out personally by some anonymous group of anti-gun activists as a bad guy. A man's worth is often determined by the stature of his enemies, and while these people do not seem to have much stature, they did go to a lot of trouble in fabricating a printed flier denouncing me and all my works. I am flattered. According to my old comrade Colonel Paul McNicol, USMC, "If you're not making anybody mad you're not getting anything done." If these people would come out from behind anonymity, I would be pleased to go to the mat with them. For the moment I must be content to reflect, though I have now "arrived" – according to my granddaughter.

---

Our outstanding ground attack aircraft, the A10, has been rendering excellent service in Mesopotamia. It has been nicknamed the "Warhog" because it is pretty ugly. I guess handsome is as handsome does, and that A10 is pretty handsome to people on the ground who need it in support.

---

I know something about swords, having studied them for most of my life and fenced in competition for a good many years. It is interesting that the depiction of swordsmanship on the screen poses almost insuperable obstacles to the cinema director. When one man faces another under controlled conditions, his problem and its solution are totally different from group actions in combat. The fencer or duelist drives his scoring stroke off his left leg, whereas the brawler fights with his right arm and, insofar as possible, helping with his left hand. Each attack is intended to land, and if it does so it stops the fight. Each attack is delivered with absolute maximum effort on the part of the swordsman and he cannot keep this up without rest for more than a few seconds, anymore than a tennis player can keep serving as fast as he can get the balls. The relative utility of the point versus the edge suggests that the point will kill but deliver no shock, whereas the edge may knock a man down or out without necessarily delivering a serious wound. Thus the celebrated duel in the terminal scenes of "Rob Roy" is emotionally satisfying but technically unrealistic. I congratulate the director, but I cannot use his demonstration as an example of how it was.

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Does anybody have any use for the three-shot burst? It seems to me that is simply a good way of wasting two shots, but somebody, or some committee got it attached to various handheld weapons. If anyone has a good use for this arrangement, I would like to hear about it.

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We emphasize again that freedom and liberty are not interchangeable ideas. Freedom basically denotes the elimination of restraint – the breaking of shackles. It was used as a conspicuously successful morale builder for galley slaves, among others. It was promised to the slaves on the Christian side at the critical battle of Lapanto, 1574. They were told they would be freed if their side won. Since the existence of a galley slave is about the closest approximation of hell that humanity can devise, freedom from it was an unequaled objective. Liberty, on the other hand, is a political idea denoting the right of an individual to do whatever does not interfere with the activities of his neighbor. Men also fight very well for liberty, but that objective is less well understood and may not even be prized by persons lacking the spirit for it. Most of today's governments are socialist in which liberty is mostly lacking, and the people in those states do not seem to mind. Thus it is somewhat annoying to hear exhortations which do not differentiate between those two words.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 4

April 2004

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## Rites of Spring

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The first greening, the *primavera*, is a worldwide cause for optimism and good cheer. Our winter here at Gunsite was unimpressive and ended early, so our Spring is also early, and we do not complain. It is a great pleasure to observe the Countess, the cats and the dog reveling in the outer garden. The world scene may be grim, but springtime here at Gunsite is always a delight.

---

We have mentioned the possibility of a cell phone pistol before, and now we see that such a device is being produced for sale in Europe. We suggested one round of 41 rimfire, but the actual gadget features four rounds of 22 long rifle. Its existence is viewed with horror by the grass eaters as an adjunct to violent crime. We do not see it like that, but rather as a means of reducing street crime by making the mugger unsure of the nature of his victim. I do not think the gadget will catch on, but it is interesting to see how the idea has flourished.

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It has been commonplace for the ill-informed to jeer at what they call military intelligence, but it is well to refrain from jeering if one does not know what one is talking about.

The Israelis have honed combat intelligence to near perfection, especially as it applies to the newly perfected tactic of aerial assassination. As an old *G2* man myself, I am astonished and impressed by the precise execution of that Hamas leader in Gaza. The target acquisition displayed in that action is evidence of a *G2* operation of marvelous efficiency. As with Hanneken's exploit so long ago, the principle problem is the identification of the target. Hitting the target is not too difficult, but knowing which target to hit and reaching a decision in seconds is a much more difficult problem. When those choppers appeared overhead of a teaming city, they had to "see – decide – select – fire" in a couple of heart beats. This was a truly outstanding feat of arms.

---

When we ask students about the nature of the curriculum here at Gunsite, one point suggested is the increase of emphasis on firing from a car. Much street crime occurs with the intended victim seated in his vehicle. The student should be prepared for this and shown how to employ his defensive weapon under those circumstances. This idea is worthy of consideration and may be included in forthcoming curricula.

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I have always been interested in words but I cannot remain on top of the situation. Take, for example, this adjective "digital." I have asked around at length and I have yet to find anyone who knows what it means. In common usage it signifies "better" or "best," but for reasons unknown to the user. I have yet to see advertised a *digital* burgundy, or a *digital* laxative, or a *digital* South Sea island cruise, but I await the day. Possibly if Steyr Mannlicher had advertised the Scout as a *digital* Scout, they might have pushed the sales of the weapon into economic success.

---

We are constantly reminded by our African friends of the value of quick position assumption. A good rifleman should be able to assume a looped sitting position, starting from standing erect and slung, in five seconds. This may be a little too demanding for the dilettante, but it pays off in the field. Almost every report we get from Africa reinforces this idea.

---

The response to The Project has been interesting. I am pleased to see that a good many people think that the goal is achievable. It may be, but any marksman who can put 20 hits into a 20 inch circle in 20 seconds at a 1000 yards must certainly be regarded as extraordinary. I propose that his name be engraved grandly on the permanent cup, and I think there will be plenty of space there for followers, if any. John Pepper feels that the weight ceiling should be reduced from 20lbs to 15, which is alright with me. One correspondent speculated about the use of a match-conditioned M16, assuming that little 22 bullet may retain enough energy at a 1000 yards to cut the paper (joke?). Another asked if the task might be attempted with a BAR. Evidently this man has never fired a BAR. Certainly there is no need to make the task harder. It is plenty hard enough as it is. We played with similar problems back at Big Bear Lake, but the greatest range we could use there was 650 yards, and that is way short of 1000. The best instrument I have available for the task is a G3, which is accurate enough to achieve the goal if we can find a man who can do it.

There is no official sponsor for The Project as yet, but I intend to pursue the problem at the annual NRA meeting at Pittsburgh. Meanwhile, any sort of help is gratefully accepted.

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"The trouble with democracy is that 50 percent of the voters are below average."

The Guru

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Now we hear from the battlefield that the Army has rediscovered the cannister load for artillery pieces – in this case for the 120mm, smooth-bore weapon of the Abrams tank. The cannister principle changes an artillery piece into a large shotgun and it is obviously useful in short-range, unforeseen action. This is by no means a new idea, having been around at least since the Spanish-American War. Now we are again putting it to good use.

---

If you want government to intervene domestically, you are a liberal.  
If you want government to intervene overseas, you are a conservative.  
If you want government to intervene everywhere, you are a moderate.  
If you do not want government to intervene anywhere, you are an extremist.

Joseph Sobran

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The issue of "weapons of mass destruction" is a phony one. If Saddam Hussein had not had poison gas at his disposal, he would not have been able to use it on the Kurds – which he did. Whether he used it all up or hid it is not important. He had it, but he is in no position to use it now.

---

We hear from Switzerland that the Sig Sauer service pistol, which they use as official, is alarmingly prone to broken slides. I never did care for that piece much when I first met it, but I had no means of assessing its durability, which appears to be its weak point. Governments do not spend much time or thought on pistol selection, as they simply do not think that the service pistol is an important factor in modern combat. I suppose that statistically it is not, but a sound service pistol of proven worth and dependability is a great comfort to any man up front where it is hot. We have heard it said now more than once that in Iraq there are two kinds of troopers – those who have a 45 and those who wish they had.

---

Colleague J.B. Wood has treated us to a quick overview of the remarkable Mateba pistol from Italy. This is, in truth, an "automatic revolver," an idea constantly used by an earlier generation of English adventure writers. An automatic revolver is a wheel gun which uses a recoiling action of the weapon to rotate the cylinder and cock the piece. The British had one in the Webley-Fosberry a hundred years ago, but now the concept has been renewed. The Mateba pistol, which seems to be hand-built to order, is available in all sorts of cartridges. It appears to be a classic example of a solution in search of a problem. This weapon has no discernible tactical purpose, but if its purpose is to sell, it has distinct advantages, the main one being that it is so wonderfully

"cute." It is a classic "fun gun" to own, handle and shoot. One of its curious characteristics is that it fires from the bottom chamber of its cylinder, thus lowering the recoil thrust and reducing muzzle whip. Why this should matter is unclear, but its curiosity appeal is undeniable.

J.B. confessed to being "taken away," and ordered his own copy from Kessler's Wholesale, 3300 Industrial Parkway, Jeffersonville, IN 47130. It is going for about a thousand dollars retail. Steel yourself!

---

"Coaxial" flashlights mounted on the handgun have a certain appeal, but they should not be considered as an essential advantage. Under certain conditions they serve a useful purpose, but our experiments at the Ranch have indicated that if the shooter spends his time looking for a designated target he may lose essential speed. Above all it should be remembered that the coaxial light is not an aiming device, but rather a way of illuminating the target area so that normal aiming procedures may be employed.

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A question now at issue is whether the 45–70 cartridge is satisfactory for buffalo. Reports from Africa indicate that when used at short range where buffalo are normally taken it will shoot cleanly through the vital zone of a buffalo without difficulty. And a 45–caliber 500–grain lead bullet delivered thus should certainly suffice. There are those who will decry this idea as a step backward ballistically, but though that may be true in a technical sense I am not sure that it affects the issue. The nice thing about the 45–70 is that it can be had in Jim West's excellent "Co–pilot" takedown carbine, the handiness of which is a distinct asset in this age of compressed vehicular transportation. Our good friend Danie van Graan has been using one now for several years at Engonyameni with continuous success. The fact that we have more modern cartridges, and cartridges with longer effective range, may not be significant. Buffalo are normally taken up close and a buffalo is unlikely to take a well–placed 45–70 round without distinct lose of efficiency. Of course, the African buffalo may not go down when hit with anything, as we so often learn, but that does not render the 45–70 cartridge unsatisfactory for the purpose.

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Further reading into the nature of lethal combat suggests that the principle element in survival "in the air, on land or sea" is *situational awareness*. A man who knows what is going on and knows it quickly, has the decisive edge in any sort of combat. It is doubtful if this is an attribute which may be taught. You see people on the street who are totally unaware of their surroundings and thus are practically asking for a mugging. Contrarily the man who is constantly aware of all of his surroundings in all directions constitutes a very difficult target. We can teach you to shoot quickly and well. You can carry a sound and powerful sidearm, but if you are not alert to your surroundings, this will do you no good. We can preach but we cannot necessarily impart. As the man said, "I can explain it to you, but I cannot make you understand."

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This is not a political paper, but it is a paper for shooters, and shooters should realize that the forthcoming election is critical to their future. As used to be said, "vote right, vote early and vote often."

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Our grandson, Captain Tyler Heath, USMCR, is taking off shortly for his second African adventure. I have recommended that he pack the Steyr Dragoon using 300 grain solids loaded by *Shooting Master* John Gannaway. This is not a heavy rifle, but Tyler is a fine shot, an experienced hunter and a cool hand, and I do not consider him undergunned. The 376 Dragoon is a practically ideal cartridge for the low veldt, using the 250–grain Swift bullet on non–dangerous game. The Scout configuration of the Dragoon permits a magazine full of solids ready in the spare magazine for quick employment, should the occasion arise. The rifle may be sighted for the 250s, since the short–range buffalo action will not be affected thereby. There are the other advantages of the Scout configuration. We hope to give you an after–action assessment of this situation later on in the summer.

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Those of you who are interested in anthropology know that the Neanderthals (the so–called Ancients) and the Cro–Magnon (the so–called Moderns) lived contemporaneously for many thousands of years in Europe, but the Ancients disappeared and the Moderns survived. Some scholars maintained this is because the Moderns

could converse in articular fashion, whereas the larynx of the Ancients did not permit this. This is possible, of course, but I submit that the Moderns developed missilery in the form of bows and arrows, where the Ancients did not. The ability to kill beyond arm's length ought certainly to be decisive.

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Striking evidence of changing of the times is the loss of viscera by the Spanish electorate. Throughout its history the Spanish *geist* has been one of valor. Now it seems to have been replaced by "Don't make them mad, Martha, or they may hurt us."

Surrendering to violence or the threat thereof inevitably provokes its repetition. Now that the bad guys have proved to themselves that they may harass Western powers into subjection, they may sensibly assume that they have hit upon the right means to their end – which is the conquest of the West. The Spanish episode has set us back more than anything else they have accomplished. They have in effect sacked our quarterback fifteen yards from the scrimmage line. We will recover, but not by kinder and gentler means. It is up to us now to attack. We have the power, but it remains to be seen whether or not we have the will.

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We have new assortment of reports from the battlefield, which are first-hand and most enlightening. Our people are doing very well, as are the token detachments from other members of the Coalition. Generally speaking the Iraqi people are not hostile to us, but neither are they hostile to the minority of Moslem jihadists. Understandably they would rather the whole thing went away, and we are doing our best to bring that about.

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Personal observations are always interesting. The subject of girl soldiers keeps coming up, and our observer just back tells us that the enlisted girls are doing very well, but the girl officers are a waste of time. He also comments upon the profusion of rank in the theater. A career officer can expect no advancement without some Iraqi time on his records, so the field grade and one-star people are shouldering their way in, whether or not there is any need for them. This does not help the command structure.

One girl machine-gunner caught the attention of our man because she was conspicuously attractive. She told him that she did not mind the duty, but she could not wait to get home and get *feminine* again. This is certainly understandable, but we wonder how she got into uniform in the first place. A female machine-gunner is something like a male nurse. The mechanics may be okay, but the attitude is all wrong.

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Reports from both the front and Africa emphasize ghastly gunhandling. One must wonder if this has always been the case. In my wars it was not noticeable, and if there were mishaps they were never brought to my attention. It may be that the emasculate younger generation has simply not been introduced to proper gunhandling by its fathers, since the age of television has to a certain extent eliminated the father figure in the home. Gunsite does its level best to inculcate good gunhandling, but that is certainly a mere drop in the bucket.

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We note that the buying public continues to push its rifles by the cartridge, rather than by the rifle. This seems backwards to us. All modern cartridges will do pretty well when used properly, but the rifles they are fired from vary quite considerably in their utility. The Steyr Scout and the "Co-pilot" are outstanding advances in private weaponry, but you cannot tell this by the efforts of the marketeers. The near perfect weapon is there for the asking, but far too few purchasers know what to ask for.

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 5

15 April 2004

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## The Greening of the Desert

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Arizona is a dry country – an "arid zone" – and prizes water above all else. ("All Hell needs is water.") We were fortunate enough to receive a good supply of gentle spring rains in early April, and the grateful countryside now reveals a green luxury that may not last very long, but gives us new hope for each succeeding year. The flowers are up and the fruit trees are in blossom. We do not begrudge the three mile road to the highway. Mud is better than dust, or so it seems throughout the dry months. This is a nice part of the world. It may not be the Swiss Alps, nor the garden island of Kauai, but it has a definite charm for those of us who live here.

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The proliferation of teaching facilities authorized to grant a concealed carry permit poses a problem of instructorship. Who shall teach the teachers? We recently got a report back from an Orange Gunsite graduate telling us that the official who granted his permit was not only mistaken as to facts but given to the use of gutter language. One woman in his class got up and walked out, preferring to lose her permit rather than be exposed to obscenity. We will touch upon this later.

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*"C Stories"* was available at Pittsburgh and on order. Distribution is now being arranged by the publisher.

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Any worthwhile experience should be studied before attempting it, if possible. Much of the great African hunt is lost upon people who decline to read into it before taking off. There exists a mountain of literary production on the African adventure, and some of it is very good indeed. However for a man to get off his airplane and state in effect, "Now then, tell me what I need to know," is getting less than half of his money's worth, no matter how successful his hunting may be. For those who do not know where to start, I suggest *"Hunter"* by James Hunter, *"Wild Beasts and Their Ways"* by Baker, *"Green Hills of Africa"* by Hemingway, and *"Denatured Africa"* by Streeter. None of these describes the current scene, but the atmosphere is well pictured. This is only a beginning. I read *"Afrikana"* for thirty years before I made my first trip, and it made the experience complete.

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It is curious to observe that much of the press seems particularly fascinated by the idea of automatic fire. Many reports seem to think that spray-and-pray is not only more efficient but more powerful than aimed fire. I suppose a person who never thought about the matter may not realize that the power of a piece is a function of its cartridge, rather than its action.

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We seem to be currently in *The Age of Celebrity*, but we do not know what to celebrate. Television has produced a culture in which getting one's face on the tube is the measure of his importance. Young people especially can put face to name respecting totally inconsequential individuals, but cannot name a true hero if called upon to do so. Private Jessica Lynch is evidently a very nice girl, but her only noteworthy act was being at the wrong place at the wrong time, and she did nothing whatever to win the war. At the same time there were hundreds and perhaps thousands of Americans who distinguished themselves in battle and were decorated therefore, and only their immediate families know anything about them. This is a catastrophe of values.

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Note that Black is not part of the color code. The code does not describe either the immanence or the degree of lethal action, but rather the capacity of the individual to cross the psychological barrier that inhibits his ability to take deadly action. In *Condition Red* he has already crossed that barrier. There is no farther he can go. Anybody can say anything he wishes (except, of course, what may be "politically incorrect"), but I invented the color code and I know how it works.

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Lest we be thought regressive in regards to innovation, we can think of several modernisms that await development. Consider the Savage 99. This was well-conceived and nicely executed. For a long time it was the only satisfactory answer for the left-hander. It could mount its sights low and was available in two excellent cartridges, the 250 Threethousand and the 300 Savage. The first was a very superior round for game of 300lbs or less. The second was in effect a precursor of the 308 cartridge, lacking only the long throat necessary for the violence of extended self-loading. I have set it up and used it at some length, and I find no fault with it, but somehow it just did not catch on. Its revival might be a good thing, but only if the piece featured some curious modern cartridge of promotable charm.

And then I would consider the Krag. This is the sweetest and most user-friendly bolt-action we have seen. It has been slighted because it includes only one locking lug, which resists recoil pressure asymmetrically. This could be corrected by skillful engineering, but it probably would not sell simply because it is "old," and we cannot have that. Again this might be changed by the introduction of some weird new cartridge, which need not do anything significant as long as it is a novelty.

The commercial problem is that we really do not need anything new. Weapons we have had for a hundred years do everything required of them, and they exceed the capacity of the user. I do not know any way around this, but "I got mine" and Semper Fi.

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It would help our understanding of the problem if people would cease confusing *liberty* and *freedom*. These words are not interchangeable. Freedom is a condition, whereas liberty is a political ideal. Our constitution was designed to secure the blessings of liberty upon ourselves and our posterity. It says nothing about freedom. Patrick Henry did not exclaim, "Give me freedom or give me death." That statue in the harbor is not the Statue of Freedom. It would be nice if we learned how to say exactly what we mean.

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Lord Clarke, an Englishman of some consequence, terms Islam "a Medieval basket case." That is well put.

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In Europe they are now producing several different kinds of Kalashnikov clones in 308. Kalashnikov's original effort, generally known as the AK47, was a good enough gun for the peasantry, but hardly worth producing in a legacy version. Still, it has a name, and people will buy it. It is interesting to observe that in Europe, where private firearms are held strictly to the standard of "legitimate sporting purpose," a 308 Kalashnikov hardly answers that description, whereas in our industrial society what is excellent is what will sell, and saleability is largely the result of promotion. Those who pursue excellence for its own sake think along different lines.

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We now discover that "tactical" has taken place along with "digital" as a synonym for "improved," "more efficient," or "better." I suppose this is because any suggestion that any article may have fighting as its purpose is unprintable, so we see tactical flashlights, tactical clothing, and, we can expect, tactical running shoes. Well, we keep up the struggle for clarity of expression. It is all uphill, but well worth it.

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By the time you see this, "*C Stories*" will be available for sale. Two years ago I suggested that the work might be ready by Easter, but did not say Easter of what year. Well, this Easter it is, and it looks good to me. I am not the one to evaluate my own work, but I can certainly extol that of Kirchner, the illustrator, Wasserman, the printer, and Lindy Wisdom, the publisher. Curiously enough, the limited leather-bound luxury edition, which will not be available until June, was nearly sold out before the regular edition was available for sale. This is

most gratifying. I hope the content is worthy of the package.

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METALLURGY (with apologies to Mr. Kipling)

Gold for the mistress,  
Silver for the maid,  
Copper for the artisan clever at his trade.

Stock, said the financier, tallying his sheet.  
Stock, said the cattleman, spurs upon his feet.

Fine, said the epicure, pondering his life.  
But the best of all the destiny to find the perfect wife.

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We learn of a cheerful incident in Bahrain prior to the running of the first Grand Prix motoring event in the Middle East. It appears that a group of Islamic nitwits resented the serving of booze to Westerners at a local restaurant. They burst in waving knives, whereupon one of the Westerners relieved one of the thugs and cut him down with it. The answer to aggression is, as always, counterattack.

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Perhaps we should give the Osama bin Laden problem over to the Israelis. They seem to handle that sort of thing expertly.

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Those of you who enjoy target shooting with a 9mm pistol will be interested in the appearance of a new version of the notable Czech 75, this time manufactured by SIG. It is a very pretty gun, beautifully fit and finished, but its special features are too refined for heavy-duty defensive use, and its cartridge is too small. I would think that target shooters would stick to 22s.

---

The Oath of Office, which those of us who have worn the uniform have taken, calls upon us to defend the Constitution of the US against all enemies, foreign and domestic. The Moslems are foreign, but we have a conspicuous example of the domestic variety in the figure of this George Soros. If you do not know about him, you should. He is a financier of enormous wealth, which he admittedly intends to use to achieve the destruction of American liberty. Money has great political power, as Alkibiades pointed out sometime ago, and this man is more of an enemy of the Constitution than anyone outside the borders of this country. We did not know about the *Jihad* until after they started it, but we now know about Soros, who is a greater threat. We adjure you to read up on the subject and act accordingly.

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We have been asked by several serious people to set forth the desired characteristics of a superior pistol coach. We know something about this, having wrestled with the problem for more than thirty years. Nobody knows all the answers, but a good many shooting schools are not even aware of the questions. We submit our opinions as follows:

The Master of Arms

When I founded Gunsite here in Arizona (1975), I sought to establish the fountainhead of information and doctrine on the serious use of the service pistol. To do this I tried to enlist those competitive shooters who had distinguished themselves over the previous fifteen years in California. Not all were agreeable to the proposition, and some who were agreeable were unable to handle it. I did discover, however, over the opening period, the qualities which make for a proper Master of Arms. In the classic sense a Master is not a practitioner, but rather a teacher. Being an expert at any practice does not necessarily mean making a good teacher. Various champions who have attempted to set up schools have met with no success because, while they could certainly do what was necessary, they could not properly explain to others why they could. So in



the course of time I have concluded that the essential characteristics of a pistol or rifle coach may be stated as follows.

To begin with, the instructor should know his subject thoroughly. That may seem obvious, but knowing how to shoot well is more important than being able to shoot well. Naturally the instructor must be able to demonstrate personally all elements of the techniques he teaches. He cannot expect his students to do what he cannot do. It is certainly not enough, however, to demonstrate an expert stroke and then simply tell his people "Now you do that." The physiology and geometry of the human body as it serves as a gun mount must not only be demonstrated, but clearly explained. The instructor must invite both question and criticism, and be able to answer articulately.

The qualified smallarms coach must possess, besides complete knowledge of his subject, a strong desire to impart. Not everyone who performs well with his weapon possesses this attribute. I have known people who were excellent shots who rather resisted teaching anyone else how to shoot, even professionally, because they evidently wanted to keep such skill to themselves. But a good instructor, above all, must seek his student's excellence. He must place more value on his ability to teach a man to shoot than on his own ability to shoot. His work gratifies his ego when his student becomes a good shot, and improvement is more satisfying than excellence. It is fine to raise a *B* shooter to the *A* category, but it is far better to raise a *D* to a *B*. Shooting excellence at all levels, however, is what makes his work worthwhile.

The shooting instructor must understand correct training procedures. He must know the order in which the essentials are presented and understand the need for time intervals in which to allow information imparted to sink in. He should know when students are more perceptive and why, and he must realize that matters which are quite obvious to him may be complete mysteries to a novice. This sort of knowledge is not inherent and must be acquired through experience. This is why a man should put in valuable time as coach before he may become qualified as Range Master.

A shooting coach must possess what may be called Command Presence, since he has no military authority over his class. Command Presence is demonstrated by carriage, voice, demeanor, and tact. Under no circumstances should the shooting coach conduct himself like a drill instructor with a recruit. I have had students from the law enforcement establishment regard me as a sort of military superior, and I had to explain clearly that I was there to help them improve, rather than to force them into a pattern. It is absolutely necessary for a shooting coach to avoid the use of gutter language. He may think that this makes him sound authoritative, when all it actually does is display boorishness and a limited vocabulary.

The successful instructor should be careful of his appearance. Slovenliness is proper cause for disrespect.

The staff instructors must not argue with each other in front of the class. If there are points of disagreement, they must be resolved privately, and preferably before they are discovered to be a problem.

The instructor should be friendly without being impertinent. You learn better from a friend than from a boss, but you do not learn well from a comedian.

It is particularly desirable that the pistol instructor "have seen the elephant." That is to say, he should have at one time engaged in a gunfight, been shot at and shot back. Only thus will he be able to explain to his students what it is like to engage in lethal combat.

Finally, the instructor must be articulate, able to convey his ideas clearly and concisely.

The search for properly qualified instructional staff in any shooting school is an unending task. When any training institution begins to hire its staff carelessly without quality in mind, it becomes a mere shooting gallery rather than an institute of higher learning.

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All this thrashing about in Washington seems to be pointlessly misdirected. It is not what we may or may not have done prior to 9/11, but rather what are we going to do about it now. We would like to turn the mess over to the Arabs, but that seems to be an invitation to chaos, possibly, however, chaos is what they deserve, but defeat is not an option.

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We have not fully realized until recently that personal firearms today are more toys than tools. People do not want to use them so much as play with them, and therein lies the essence of the firearms industry. Every periodical reveals pointless innovation for its own sake.

We came up with the 30–06 ninety–eight years ago, and we have not produced a better tool since. On my first time with it afield, it achieved four one–stop shots on caribou, sheep, goat and moose. Three of these animals did not move out of their tracks, and the caribou made less than ten paces. That load was Western Super X, starting a 180–grain spitzer hollow point boattail at 2700f/s. "Who could ask for anything more?"

But business demands turnover, and survives on its efforts to make people unhappy with what they already have. This puts the critic in an awkward position.

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### Equality

This preoccupation with equality is another symptom of the degeneracy of *The Age of the Common Man*. In the first place it is an illusion, since men are not created equal, except in the political sense. Everyone is better or worse than someone else in a particular example of his capacities, and pretending that this is not so is simply silly. Excellence, not mediocrity, should be everyone's goal, and it is hard to think of anything, from gardening to crossword puzzles, at which someone may not excel. In some cases, such as Benjamin Franklin or Theodore Roosevelt, excellence is quite obvious. But excellence need not be obvious in order to be worthy.

This dim–witted passion seems to be a product of the French Revolution, but it diminished in the 19th century, and did not reappear with full virulence until about the time of the Vietnamese War. It is the battle cry of the losers, who do not want anyone to appear good at anything, lest that make some other person feel bad. These people value "self–esteem" as anyone's individual prerogative, rather than "self–respect," which must be earned; and self–respect is by definition not something which may be granted by other people. Self–respect, like happiness, is a by–product of accomplishment, and accomplishment is available to all in some line of endeavor. But accomplishment does not come without effort, and the person who gives up because the struggle is hard deserves neither achievement nor happiness.

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There are a couple of developments in the firearms line for which I can see a distinct demand. One is the Steyr Dragoon – a Steyr Scout in caliber 376 Steyr – which offers proven medium ballistics in Scout configuration. This weapon was not promoted properly and has been discontinued. You are lucky if you got yours while you could. Another item is the JTC bullet for the 45 ACP cartridge. This also was offered at one time, but it is hard to get now. The most desirable true innovation that I can think of is a sight–mount combination of medium eye relief, featuring an etched fixed reticle and making all sight adjustments in the mount. This is a difficult development to achieve since it requires the collaboration of the optics people with the people who make the mounting system. This was attempted some time ago by Bausch and Lomb, but it did not succeed on the market. Unfortunately, too few people who buy guns know very much about shooting guns.

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We are informed by people returning from Iraq that while it is not overwhelmingly difficult to bring along your own personal weapon, it is intimidating to try to bring it back. I guess we can attack this out of pure generosity. Most of us have two 1911s, or we can arrange to have. Take one of them over and leave it there. This will delight the heart of the recipient and simultaneously help with the war effort.

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This promises to be a brutal summer, during which the conflict at home cannot fail to be anything but a distraction from the prosecution of the Holy War. We do not need to adjure you to vote right, but you can vote often if you can persuade vacillators. I do not know any such, but perhaps you do. Preach to those people and save the Republic.

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People keep asking about the proposed new 6.8 military cartridge. At this time I know nothing about it except its caliber, which is somewhat peculiar. We know a lot about the 7mm caliber, and we have amassed a great deal of information about it. I do not see how reducing it by one-fifth of a millimeter can improve it. We may assume that the new cartridge will not be full-length like the 7x57, but will rather be something like a 7x35 or 7x40. The information will be made available in due course, we presume.

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Progress on The Project moves slowly but surely. *Shooting Master* John Pepper is willing to help with administration on the east coast, and thousand-yard facilities are available at Gunsite, Whittington, Camp Perry, and in the vicinity of Denver. We need a sponsor, and I intend to look into that at Pittsburgh. I see it as a worthy endeavor, and probably tax deductible if the sponsor has anything to do with the gun business. Whether the goal may be achieved is problematical, but that is the way with goals. At this point we have one aspirant, a man of wide experience in long-range target shooting who is bold enough to stand up and be counted. I think the entry fee will be one hundred dollars, but that depends upon the administrative squad yet to be established. Suggested first prize is \$5,000. Let all those long-shooters we read about sign up.

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Reports back from Iraq continue to emphasize the value of properly aimed fire, despite the tendency of the untrained to spray-and-pray. One case we have is that of a 50 caliber machinegun across the street, but set on single fire. One round of 50 is more than plenty.

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Without struggle there is no success.

Without strife there is no victory.

The Guru

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"War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things; the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse.

"A man who has nothing for which he is willing to fight; nothing he cares about more than his own personal safety; is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

John Stuart Mill

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 6

6 May 2004

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## False Summer

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Spring is still with us, which is nice for those who live in Arizona, where summer is *hot*. The grass is up and the fruit trees look promising. We shared our 84th birthday with the Pope, at least if not the same day the same week. At this age we have both run the course, but while his future is perfectly arranged, there is some doubt about mine, as the padre told me down on the Rio Ixcan. However that may be, it has been a wonderful ride and I have no complaints. The state of the world may be distressful, but I will just have to let that take care of itself.

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We had a fine NRA meeting at Pittsburgh. The pep talks were extraordinarily inspiring, and daughter Lindy sold all copies of "*C Stories*" that she had brought with her. The book looks fine to me, but I am not the one to judge. Paul Kirchner's cover and illustrations set the stage in excellent fashion. The leather-bound collector's edition will not be available until late in June, but it has already 80 percent sold, which astonishes me. The idea for the production of this volume goes to Giles Stock, who clearly has a knack for marketing. The regular edition is available at Gunsite Pro-Shop, or you can order it directly from,

1840 East Warner Road,  
Box 238, Tempe,  
Arizona 85284,  
e-mail: lcwisdom@aol.com.

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When you get your copy of "*C Stories*" note that picture of Sergeant George Sparling, USMC, on page 38. When we were on duty at Quantico, the Countess was quite entranced with Marine sergeants. Paul Kirchner has showed us why. That picture could serve as a recruiting poster and should be featured at Marine Corps headquarters.

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On the national scene it is difficult to run for office when the media are racked up solidly against you. For example, our people in Iraq are doing a fine job, but you never hear about that from the news. Those people wring their hands over our casualty list which, however sad, is nothing compared to the damage we have done to the enemy. During the various wars in which I have fought, I cannot remember a "butcher's bill" such as is now thrown at us daily. The enemy has declared war upon us for no reason except envy, which is the root of all evil. We did not start this thing, they did, and those strident types who would have us cut and run evidently want to hand victory to the enemy. The people on the other side think we are too soft for this cultural conflict, and maybe they are right, but this is certainly not the case according to what we hear from our friends who are doing the fighting in Mesopotamia. We have plenty of true heroes, but the media will not give us their names since heroism is not politically correct. According to this curious view, it is better to lose than to win, because winning necessarily hurts the feelings of the loser. I think that the traditional American spirit of victory is not dead, it is only given a bad press – for reasons I cannot understand.

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Our friends in the field tell us that a good amount of careful shooting is going on. Our "designated riflemen" are getting about five scores apiece daily, and when regular forces are joined we take out about 250 of the faithful per contact.

When your country is at war you shoulder your pack and go fight it. You do your best, and the least you can expect is that the people at home will be told about it. The citations for high honors should be front page news, and those who earn them should be given parades in their hometowns when they return.

Let's not let this situation fester. Everyone of us who knows of a heroic act should shout it from the house tops. I do not yet have access to the citations awarded, but when I get them you will hear about it.

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Note that our colleague Craig Boddington has been selected for brigadier general of Marines, though not yet confirmed by the Senate as is required for a general officer commission. We had occasion to talk a bit with General Boddington at Pittsburgh, and he had several interesting observations about the effectiveness of mixed commands composed of the nationals from various countries of the coalition. Generally speaking, coalition forces fight well, though they are administratively handicapped by varying sets of national regulations.

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At the shows we notice the appearance of the Remington 375 "Ultra Magnum." This is probably a saleable development, if not a sensible one. The 375 Holland & Holland does very well as it is, but if you want more power you need more bullet weight and probably impact area rather than more bullet velocity.

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At Pittsburgh a gang of disorganized hoplophobes assembled outside the hotel to cast aspersions at the National Rifle Association. They thought they were aspersions, but I thought they were more like honors. I was particularly gratified by being singled out, personally and individually, by a five foot poster cataloging my evil thoughts as revealed in my writings. When I distress those people to that extent, I know that I am doing a good job.

One thing that seems to bother them excessively is my insistence that assimilation is better than diversification. I am in good company here, taking my clue from our icon, Roosevelt I. Theodore was very positive about his rejection of "hyphenated Americans." His point was that immigrants are welcome, only as long as they come here to become one hundred percent Americans and not cultural half-breeds. I find the diversified cultures of Europe to be interesting and worthy of study, but this country is not Europe and our ancestors came here specifically to establish that fact.

What this has to do with the ownership of personal weapons is not clear, but the hoplophobes are not fond of thinking clearly. As to that, hoplophobia is a mental aberration rather than a mere attitude, and as such it is not amenable to reasoned debate. Be that as it may, I am honored by their attention and am encouraged to keep on deserving it to the best of my ability.

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It appears that the weapon of choice for the international hunting community is the Blaser R93. It is not as good as the Steyr Scout in my opinion, but it does have the advantage of the left-handed option, which I urged upon the Steyr people, but which they ignored. The R93 is a nifty item with many significant points to its credit, including the world's best trigger-action. Against it are a difficult thumb safety and an awkward loading system, but these are not major drawbacks. The R93 is the work of Gerhard Blenk, who unusually combines outstanding engineering skill with innovative imagination. He has now gone on to combination guns for Africa, and I expect they will prove equal to his previous efforts.

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Reports that we get back from Africa continue to support our opinions of the Steyr Scout. The general reaction of the outfitter when the rifle comes out of the case is "What on earth is that," and then at the conclusion of the hunt his question is "Where can I get one?"

I conceived of the Scout as an all-purpose rifle, capable of taking ammunition readily available throughout the world. I have discovered no reason to change my view, but the market seems to insist upon variety. The

company produced a version in 223, which is foolishness, and then in 243, which is not quite so bad. A positive variation, about which I was dubious at first, was the 376 Steyr, which turns out to be more widely useful than I had anticipated, despite its non-regulation cartridge. *Shooting Master* John Gannaway has been conducting experiments with this so-called "Dragoon," and has discovered much of interest. The combination is gratifyingly accurate, repeatedly producing three-shot one-holers at 100. It also takes the 300-grain solid without difficulty, and shows 2,450 feet per second, or somewhat better, without pressure symptoms. This makes the weapon pretty much the twin of the 375 Holland & Holland, and in the compact and friendly configuration of the Scout. The piece has been discontinued by the factory, apparently because it "kicked too hard." (You would think we were trying to sell it to ragheads.) Recoil effect is 80 percent psychological, and we have introduced the Dragoon to a number of women and adolescents here at Gunsite who had no complaints. This is a powerful cartridge, and in a 7lb rifle it does kick, but that is a personal matter. If it bothers you take some other route, but wait until it does before you condemn the concept. The piece is practically perfect for Canada and Alaska, as it is for the African bushveldt. If you have your copy be happy with it, but if you have not got one you can probably discover it at one of the gun shows at a nicely reduced price. It has always seemed to me that if something is hard to get its price would go up, but this does not seem to be the case here. The livelihood of a retailer depends upon turnover, and when a piece is discontinued he wants to get rid of it as soon as possible.

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We have recently been asked about this matter of holding the pistol sideways – that is, rotating it to the left until the butt stock is horizontal. This does not help in shooting. Rather to the contrary, it is held by the Israelis to be an ease in presentation. Israelis shoot by the book, and their doctrine is to carry the pistol in *Condition 3*, with full magazine but with chamber empty. (The proper term for this is "half loaded," but precise usage is pretty much a thing of the past.) Since the Israelis intend their doctrines to be useful by all hands, they teach that the pistol should be presented with a fully extended arm and rotated to horizontal. This makes operation of the slide a bit easier for women, children and men with limp wrists. I feel that enthusiasts can get by without this system.

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Inside the Jefferson Memorial in the nation's capital there is inscribed around the rotunda in gold lettering Jefferson's resounding statement that he stands four square and eternally opposed to every form of tyranny over the mind of man. Today we are afflicted with what is miscalled political correctness. It should be called social censorship, and it certainly constitutes a form of tyranny over the mind of man. This country was established to insure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, but a good many people do not seem to understand about liberty. A free man must not be told how to think, either by the government or by social activists. He may certainly be shown the right way, but he must not accept being forced into it. The trouble is that people can get along very well without liberty, and have for most of history. As long as the nanny state provides bread and games a slave mentality is likely to support it. Is it possible that liberty is too good for the common people? Surely we hope not.

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People go right on talking about *shrapnel* as if they knew what they were talking about. Shrapnel is the name of an English officer who devised a particular form of an artillery shell, which was not high explosive but rather a flying canister which was timed to disrupt toward the end of its trajectory and pelt the landscape with a large number of round steel balls after the manner of a giant shotgun. It worked pretty well against troops in the open, but was largely expended by the commencement of World War II. I know because I fired a lot of it in an ROTC battery in California.

Shell fragments are something else entirely, and they are blasted outward in all directions from the burst of a high explosive shell. The rupture of the shrapnel shell is visible as white smoke, whereas the burst of a high explosive shell is black. I suppose this does not matter, except there was such a thing as a "shrapnel shell," and we ought to be able to use that term correctly.

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Would you believe a pistol taking the 50 BMG cartridge? Such a thing was on display at the recent gun show in Nürnberg. Its recoil control system must be one of the wonders of modern science. There is a picture of it on page 22 of the April edition of DWJ.

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It appears that many people seem to think that a court-martial is a kind of punishment. This is not the case. A court-martial is a means of investigating circumstances and establishing justice, insofar as possible. A court-martial may inflict a punishment, but just as often it may award a commendation. Of the three "not guilty" decisions of the court, an acquittal means "we think you probably did it, but we can't prove that." A full acquittal means, "we think you didn't do it." A full and honorable acquittal means, "what you did is not only not culpable but worthy of commendation." The accused may frequently appeal for the court-martial in order to clear his name, but to say that someone is "threatened with a court-martial" by no means implies that he is destined to be punished. We wish that the press would take note of that.

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This proliferation of various sorts of hot 9s is interesting. It seems to have its root in practical competition, which frequently, if dubiously, requires the largest possible number of shots without reloading. To the extent that practical competition is actually practical it should reward fight-stopping hits rather than a great many hits. Since we cannot accurately measure stopping power, we ought to pay as little attention as possible to rule-bending in cartridge selection. We attempted to address this problem in the earliest days of the handgun revolution, but without conspicuous success. We could not require major caliber sidearms if we needed to attract international competition, because the Europeans simply will not accept the idea. Since rule-bending is in the nature of any sort of competition, we have to accept it, but we certainly should not encourage it.

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Awhile back I asked for an explanation of the term "digital." A cooperative correspondent responded by telling me various reasons why digital was better than something else, but he never told me what digital was, and I still do not know. I have five digits on my hand. What is the connection?

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The matter of military awards and decorations is a complex one. A whole period was devoted to it at Command and Staff School at Quantico. On the one hand medals seek to reward achievement, but in another and larger sense, their purpose is to boost home front morale. These two objectives may coincide, but often they do not. Napoleon is said to have said that if he were given enough ribbon he could conquer the world, as he was profoundly concerned with the promotion of morale. But if this is the important reason for military decorations it has been less so in recent decades. Today we seem more concerned with suffering than with achievement, as demonstrated by the Purple Heart, our oldest decoration. If a man is wounded in action that should be acknowledged, but it cannot very well be encouraged. Achievement, on the other hand, regardless of the consequences to the achiever, is something we really should endeavor to promote. Achievement wins battles. Getting hurt does not. It seems to me that these two aspects of military recognition should be kept separate. If you get hurt you deserve a wound stripe, but you deserve a medal only if you hurt the enemy. In George Patton's renowned dictum: "I don't want you to die for your country, I want you to make that other guy die for *his* country."

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We were pleased to learn that the 45 caliber 230-grain jacketed-truncated-cone bullet (JTC) continues to be manufactured and sold by Steve Hornady.

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At Pittsburgh I got my foot in the door on The Project. Craig Sandler, Chief of General Operations for NRA, assured me that he will look into it, so I have some hope. All I really need is acknowledgment, and a bit of administrative support and/or money would be much appreciated. I sure would like to leave the scene responsible for the official recognition of the World's Greatest Marksman. The task is difficult, but not impossible.

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It is amusing in a way to see people promote cartridges which shoot so flat that range hardly matters, and then offer range finders which can tell a shooter exactly how long his shot may be. The most frequent miss on

longshots in the field is caused by the shooter's attempting to "help the cartridge" and thus boosting the impact over the target. Flattening the trajectory is no cure for this.

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Another project which I would like to see fulfilled would be the creation of a sighting system which moves the tube rather than the reticle. As we have noted in the past, Bausch & Lomb produced such a combination a good many years ago, but it did not succeed on the market. That does not mean that it is not a good idea. Reticles and reticle adjustments continue to break with use, not often but enough to be devastating in the field. It is difficult to attack this problem since the optical people refuse to admit that it exists. They are very good about replacing failed equipment, but that hardly helps when your sight has gone ugly way out there back of the beyond. The exasperating thing about reticle failure is that it usually cannot be detected until you miss something, which is obviously too late for it to be corrected. This will not cost you your life since dangerous game is taken at such range that a zero hardly matters, but it can cost you a prize trophy, especially above timberline where shots can be long.

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This is hardly the place to get personal, but I have now heard myself described as a "bon vivant and recreational killer." That's a pretty fancy job description, and I am much impressed. I would thank the author profusely if I knew who he was.

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In considering this matter of arming pilots on commercial aircraft, we run into the problem of individual capacity. Only those who shoot well should be encouraged to be armed. Only a man who likes to shoot can be expected to shoot well, and no one should be armed unless he wishes to be armed. Thus it seems to me that airline pilots should not be armed by direction, but should be permitted to be armed if they voluntarily qualify for the job. People are not interchangeable – thank God – and it is high time that we recognize that.

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Write to your Commander-in-Chief. These are tough times and he needs all the support that he can get. He probably will not read your letter, but notice will be taken of it, and your position will be appreciated.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 7

May 2004

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## Summertime

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Well, summer is now officially upon us, and summer in Arizona is hot. That rendered Arizona before air conditioning a pretty difficult place to live for most people, but now that we have the option of spending a lot of time indoors where it is cool, the scene can be quite pleasant. The water scarcity for the state is only now beginning to become apparent, but 50 years or so hence it may well become disastrous unless we can figure out a way to tow ice from Antarctica. That is a problem which I will not have to face, but we do have great grandchildren now and about all we can do for them is pray.

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The word from the war front is very interesting, especially since we get our primary material directly from Marine sources on the spot without depending upon the general media who are clearly on the other side in this world conflict.

At ground level, our people are doing very well indeed. It is curious to fight a war without a geographically or politically defined objective, but down at the man–against–man level, the Marines in particular are coping splendidly. Since the enemy has begun resorting to sniping, the Marine sniper teams have retaliated with much success. In ruined cities ranges are not always short, and when the other people set up a post in a damaged building way down in the next block, our people have been able to pinpoint them, in daylight or darkness, with precision. All Marines in that specialty are using the Remington bolt rifle and 308 Match ammunition of increasingly high quality. Using all modern conveniences and shooting mainly from a rest, they have been achieving a nearly perfect one–shot, one–kill record.

Another aspect of this sniper war is the appearance on the enemy side of some pretty good marksmen. These are Chechens from the Caucasus, where these Euro–Moslem mountaineers have established an old culture of hunter–marksmen. These people seem to be long–haired scruffy–looking white men and, unfortunately, they shoot well. One small group of them did well enough against a Marine position to provoke specialized retaliation, which cost them a dozen or so dead – men who will not be easy to replace.

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From Texas east it is now the standard practice to hunt from a stand in the dark. Whether you like this or not, it is the way it is done. It does work on both deer and pigs, and we have plenty of pigs so the pig rifle is now pretty standard. It is grandpappy's old 30–30 attached to a spectacularly high tech "moonscope" of 10 power or more. Shots are taken from a rest at around 50 yards, in any sort of light approaching full dark. The light–gathering power of the moonscope puts the shot in your pocket. To each his own. My problem is that I tend to go to sleep on watch, but still, thanks to daughter Lindy, we keep the freezer full of meat.

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Our colleague Andy Tillman has been doing some exemplary work in the area of bullet construction for heavy rifle calibers. His work is meticulous and its range is wide, but it is possible that he places more emphasis on bullet design than on bullet placement. A good bullet badly placed will not perform as well as almost any bullet put exactly in the right spot. This is certainly not to suggest that we ought to downplay bullet design, since we like to think that our equipment will do everything asked of it, but we should not forget that the man places the shot, and the badly placed shot is useless with any cartridge combination.

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We have said it before but it is worth repeating. "It may be necessary to kill a man, but to incarcerate him destroys both his dignity and yours." That is from Robert Heinlein, one of the unappreciated philosophers of the 20th century.

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With the proliferation of the trigger-cocking self-loading pistol – often called double-action – its correct technique should be examined and promulgated with care. There are several systems for obtaining quick hits with this system, but one procedure which I have taught for many years is not widely understood. Since I have never been fond of the DA auto anyway, I have not spread this word, but perhaps I ought to have. What I am talking about is the *shot cock system*, in which the first shot is used to cock the piece for the second. Most officialdom calls for the DA auto to be carried hammer-down on a live round with full magazine in place. If there is no hurry, the educated shooter will probably cock the piece with his left thumb and fire his first shot with proper care. If there is a rush, a simple answer is to throw that first shot trigger-cocked down range without thought for sights or trigger control. This prepares the shooter for the second shot which may be taken with proper attention to front sight and surprise. With this system the first shot is *not* "thrown away." It may hit, especially if the range is short, but proper care is only devoted to the second.

This procedure may be dismissed by the traditionalist as weird, but it works. I have seen it work on the range, and I know of two cases in which it succeeded beautifully on the street.

Note again that this system does not waste the first round. The first round may well land solidly, especially at across-the-table distances. The time between the first and second shots may be very short. I have seen that second shot delivered in contests here on the range before an adversary could deliver his first.

The principle drawback of the shot cock system is that it will only work for shooters who are prepared to think about what they are doing. Such people are the rule here at school, but they may not be in large public departments. When you are working with "the man in the street" who may not be interested in shooting anyway, it may be what might be called "intellectually challenging." We sometimes forget that at any private school we may be working with a mind-set quite different from that of a departmental student.

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#### The Man on the Ten Dollar Bill – and others

Ordinarily the term *bastard* is taken to be an insult, but circumstances alter cases, and an overview of the situation certainly alters the sense of this term. In the first place it is meaningless, since it is a rare child indeed who exerts much influence over his parentage. But apart from that, we should take note of various distinguished historical bastards.

Consider William the Conqueror, usually regarded as a man who established the English nation. He was the acknowledged son of Robert the Devil, Duke of Normandy, and the daughter of the tanner of Falaise. The young man grew up into an adventurous disposition, and on maturity he gathered up like-minded adventurers and set forth across the channel to defeat the Saxons at Senlac. In 1066 he parceled out the land to selected followers and became recognized as the first legitimate King of England, though his legitimacy was not that of birth. Various people who disliked him referred to him as William the Bastard, but the term did not appear to distress him much.

In 1574 the Battle of Lepanto was won by Don John of Austria, the illegitimate but acknowledged son of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Don John should not be confused with Don Juan Tenorio, the renowned lecher of fiction. At age 24 he was a broth of a lad, handsome, vigorous, intelligent, and courageous, and he commanded the forces of the Holy League in the battle which was held to be the decisive victory of Christendom over the Turkish threat from the East. This may be disputed by those who think that the Turks were turned back long before, but people evidently did not think so at the time. This was a monumental battle in the Gulf of Patras, the inlet which separates Greece proper from the Peloponnesus. The statistics are

staggering, but the victory was indisputable. When Don John's flagship put into Naples after his sensational triumph, it is said that unattached ladies of high birth practically lined up outside his door waiting their turn. He was glad to oblige. Pretty rough duty for a bastard!

Coming across the ocean sometime later, we encounter the figure of Alexander Hamilton, the Founding Father principally responsible for the financial solvency of the nascent United States of America. Hamilton's ancestry is pretty confused, but he took his name from his stepfather and did not suffer by his illegitimate status.

Then we have John Paul (Jones) who apparently did not have any last name until he reached maturity, and in modern times we have Lawrence of Arabia to sport the title.

When I was on duty in Washington, DC, a popular desk sign bore the phrase "*Nul Bastardi Carborundum*," supposedly translated as "Don't let the bastards grind you down." In this case the term was no compliment, but that does not establish it very much as an obijuration. If you wish to insult somebody, there are better terms.

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Just how "innocent" is a civilian? If a citizen is innocent until found guilty, is a soldier guilty until found innocent? I suggest that the proper term is "non-combatant."

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In my wars we studied the bayonet and trained with it, but I never saw it put into action and I only heard of its being used once. But it should not be forgotten. Our friends the British seem to be its principle exponents today, having used it on one occasion in the Falklands with great success. Now we learn of a recent case in Iraq by the Argyle and Southerland Highlanders, a Scottish regiment of renown. It seems these people were attacked while on the move in three vehicles, but they decided to dismount and go after their assailants with cold steel. The timing here is difficult to assess, but the results are not. It is not clear how many ragheads were involved, but the Scots killed 45 of them and captured nine. Morale is clearly the answer here. These Arabs could not have had their hearts in the fight if they allowed their assailants to run into them with bayonets. They apparently did not expect any sort of resistance to their ambush. When their proposed victims simply ran at them with rifles, they must have chickened out completely. Let's hope they all do that. To quote from our source: "An instant explosive and violent counterattack is the very last thing most predators expect or plan for. Predators mostly dither and ultimately deal with it poorly as the Iraqis did. Fearless men with cold steel still frighten the low life of this world. God bless the British."

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We deem it necessary once in a while to remind people that O.J. Simpson and Lon Horiuchi are still wandering around loose and that we do not know now who killed Vince Foster, nor will we ever.

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That full-length stock on the renowned 1903 6.5 Mannlicher carbine is often referred to as a "Mannlicher stock." It is distinctive in appearance, but one wonders about its purpose. I believe it can be traced back to the Austrian/Bavarian custom of hiking with a walking stick. If a man chooses to hike with a rifle, as one must if he chases the *Gams* in the Alps, he may well choose to utilize his rifle as a walking stick. A full-length stock tends to facilitate this, and this may have been the contribution of the last Hapsburgs, all of whom were enthusiastic mountain hunters.

I did quite bit of mountain hunting as a youth, but it never occurred to me to use my rifle as a stick. I thought the rifle was too noble an instrument to be put to so pedestrian a purpose.

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This matter of waiting your turn to be drawn for a hunting permit can get pretty far out. *Shooting Master* John Gannaway, who may be correctly called Gannaway the Great, waited 38 years for an Arizona desert sheep permit. *That's right, 38 years!* This beats the patience of a cat at a mouse hole. But John lives in Arizona, he loves Arizona, and he did not ever expect be gone when his name was called. Well he wasn't, and he went down to the rather unpleasant country around Quartzite and scored (after 38 years!) on a truly excellent

specimen, larger in both horn and in body than we can reasonably expect of the desert sheep. I guess this must teach us a lesson, but I am not sure how to interpret it. In any case, we offer our heartiest congratulations, after a long time waiting to write up this story in greater length.

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Following Memorial Day, we got to thinking about the Jefferson Memorial in Washington. It is of ionic Greek design and circular in plan. Inside the rotunda, inscribed in prominent gold letters, you may read the following inscription:

"I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

So much for political correctness (and so much for Islam).

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We have never been very much impressed by the inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty. "Wretched refuse" does not seem exactly what the Founding Fathers had in mind. Herewith we suggest an improvement:

*Send me your brightest and your best*  
 Those who choose to stand out from the rest;  
*Those for whom security holds no charm*  
 If liberty thereby may suffer harm.  
*Send those who thrust achievement to the fore*  
 For them my lamp  
 reveals the golden door.

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Some years ago the Brute – that is Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, USMC – organized his computers and concluded that by sometime in the autumn of 2016 we will have reached the point where nobody knows anything about anything. According to a recent contact in Phoenix, we are pretty much on the way. This young man accidentally fell upon a copy of "*C Stories*" and was quite fascinated. He claimed that he had never thought about anything discussed on any page of the book. I certainly make no claim to omniscience, but I think the content of "*C Stories*" is diversified enough to touch base at some point with almost anyone who has had his head above water for the past 50 years. This young man was amazed and delighted, and I am wondering what he has been thinking about all this time. "The world is so full of such wonderful things, I swear we should all be as happy as kings." But it seems to be possible for some people to be almost willfully unaware of those wonderful things. Not much can be done about that, but we try.

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I have nothing further to report about The Project, but I do not intend to let the matter drop. If I can get those long shooters to come forth and reveal themselves, we may eventually be able to determine who indeed is the world's greatest rifle shot.

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Cougars seem to have developed into a problem here in the Southwest. For much of my life I have sought contact whenever possible with this attractive beast. Now, according to the press, some of our city slickers seem to be afraid of him. The cougar (*Felis concolor*) is an attractive addition to the scene. The press insists upon calling him a mountain lion, but anyone who has ever looked at a lion (*Panthera leo*) knows that this is the wrong term. The cougar is not a fearsome beast, though there have been a couple of unfortunate contacts over the last couple of years. He will run after anything that runs away, including joggers, but he should not be considered a danger in the woods. On horseback I ran after him with hounds on several occasions in my youth, with indifferent success, and I can attest that this is a stimulating sport. Its principle hazard is to the knee caps when moving at a canter through stands of aspen. But our cougar should be considered a distinct environmental asset, and cultivated rather than feared.

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I thank all you good people who elected to inform me about this *digital* business. I now know all about the derivation of the term, but I am still unclear about how it equates with superiority. My hearing-aid people assured me that a replacement would be much better because it would be *digital*, but it did not turn out that way. My previous *analog* device was no way inferior to the digital gadget. My hearing is aided with one fully as well as with the other. This perplexed the hearing-aid people, so I began asking around. When I finally saw Swarovski *binoculars* extolled as *digital*, I assumed that they would enable me to see better, but they do not. This whole thing turns out to be a matter of "stored information," which is significant in production engineering, but of no concern to the consumer. In an age where people pay little attention to what they say, this hardly matters, so I am prepared to let the matter drop. If you wish to pursue it, however, you may spray your tomatoes with digitalis and see if that improves the crop.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 8

June 2004

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## Summer Storm

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We all had a nifty 4th of July celebration at Gunsite, and were anxious to pay all due respect to the heroic tradition upon which our national holiday is founded. We broadcast a tidy selection of the wisdom of our Founding Fathers and found them particularly appropriate to this critical period in our history. Having taken permanent leave of Ronald Reagan, we now seek new leadership suited to the times. This is not easy, as our political situation does not tend to produce inspiring leadership. In theory, Americans should not need leaders, but still it is comforting to see them show up, as Mount Rushmore attests.

As noted, there is a wide difference in attitude separating those Americans who praise and deserve liberty from those who do not much care about liberty as long as the machinery works. This seems to split the electorate between free minds and slave minds. Unfortunately the division seems to be pretty close to 50–50. Our Founding Fathers deserve better of their posterity.

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The *Theodore Roosevelt Reunion* this year is set to go at Whittington on 15, 16, 17 October. We have much to discuss and much to celebrate, along with a good deal at which to take alarm. We look forward to your contributions, and expect the full standard of excellence which we have enjoyed in the past.

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Our reports from the front continue to emphasize the value of personally controlled fire, even in this age of electronics, despite the fact that we try to give the enemy every possible advantage in this conflict. The box score is pretty much what we should expect. The press tells us only about the casualties we suffer, which are painful, of course, but should always be balanced against some notion of what we deliver in return. We did not start this *jihad*, they did, and it is interesting to see how ready they are to sacrifice their foot soldiers with no risk to those who give the orders. You do not see any of these *Mullahs* blowing themselves up. If indiscriminate self-immolation truly insures paradise one would think that some of the people doing the preaching would try the stunt themselves. It would seem that these *jihadis* in power are basically unconvinced of their own announced position, or else they are just thugs, which according to the historical record is quite possible.

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We are much pleased at the way daughter Lindy's book "*C Stories*" has turned out. I hope that the content is as good as the package, which was dreamed up by Paul Kirchner, Jim Wasserman and Lindy. The deluxe edition was sold out before it could be delivered. I guess that is a good sign.

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Further research has discovered four distinct human blood types on the Ice Man's copper chopper. It seems obvious that the artifact was basically an anti-personnel device.

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We now see a flashlight advertised as "digital." Various thoughtful people have written in to tell us what exactly is meant by "digital," but somehow they are hard put to tell us why this matters. In following Formula 1 motor racing, we must conclude that the superb Ferrari pit crew must be thoroughly digital at this time.

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It seems that the 458 Winchester Magnum was never a thoroughly satisfactory cartridge. It has been in large measure superseded by the 458 Lott, of the same ballistics as the 460 G&A Special, which I have used with

total satisfaction for many years. If Jack Lott's cartridge has a weakness, it is that it is too long, which encourages short-stroking with those who do not practice enough bolt work. The G&A cartridge is shorter, which may be an advantage, but since it has no belt it head-spaces on the shoulder, which is not pronounced enough to afford total reliability. With the heavy rifle cartridges it is important to cycle all rounds through the action of the individual weapon before taking the combination to the field. I have heard of no cartridge failures from Africa for some time, so I guess they all work pretty well in the hands of people who know what they are doing. Too many hunters, however, are not, properly speaking, riflemen, and they seem to think that the outfitter will take care of all problems involving firearms. In the great hunting age of the early 20th century, hunters usually gave the matter of weaponcraft adequate thought, even if it was not always properly organized. Reading *Afrikan* today suggests that this is the case. Competence with any craft is something which must be earned and cannot be bought.

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The 1911 pistol continues to hold up better in the sand box than any other sidearm in use. Of course it must be kept clean, which is not always easy. The old 1911 continues along its way to replacing the dog as man's best friend.

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If you had only one personal firearm, what would it be? Now there is a subject worth discussion far too complicated for a simple answer. If you allow yourself two or three or even four individual instruments, the problem becomes much simpler, but it depends finally upon your lifestyle and your political position. Unfortunately, such matters are usually left up to the whims of unqualified bureaucrats, usually of the socialist persuasion, who regard the individual as a possession of the state, rather than the other way around.

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Heckler & Koch announce a new sporting bolt-action rifle, which is probably a very nice piece, though it appears to offer no startling innovation, thus lagging far behind the Blaser R93 and the Steyr Scout.

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We seem to be developing two species of infantryman as the war progresses, the *Fusilier* and the *Grenadier*. The diversification of their task is great enough to warrant almost a different uniform or branch of service such as used to exist between infantry and cavalry. Today the enemy fights principally with the RPG, the rocket propelled grenade, which is basically a slob's weapon and serves very well in the slob armies. Back during the Korean War, I was working with irregular forces in East Asia and I saw possibilities for the RPG at that time which have only come to light recently. It appears to get back eventually to the nature of the combatant, involving his mechanical background and his political motivation. The fact that Islam fields inept armies needs not alter our attitude, but we should take note of the problem.

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We note a nifty new production from Springfield Armory, which is essentially a modernized version of the redoubtable M14. If you have a private army, you should probably consider this. It fires a 308 cartridge and can be fitted with something resembling a scoutscope. At just under ten pounds it is quite heavy for its power, but it features a very efficient muzzle brake and an indestructible plastic stock. What we need is a designator for it, so I guess the term we will have to use will be "Socom 16." That is not really satisfactory, but that is what we will have to call it.

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I see no possible need for the proposed 6.8 military cartridge. We have the 308 in stock. Clearly I need education in this matter.

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It is interesting to learn that "McClusky's Turn" has now become a recognized figure of speech for war buffs. If you do not know about McClusky's Turn, you should. When Lieutenant Commander Wade McClusky, leading 32 SBD's, turned left instead of right on his approach to the Japanese fleet at Midway, his decision determined the outcome of the battle, and thus the outcome of the war in the Pacific. If you ever make a chance decision which results in overwhelming triumph, you have made a McClusky Turn. I do not know whether the people of McClusky's hometown have decided to change the name of Lackawanna, New York, to McClusky, New York.

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## A View From The Eye Of The Storm

Extracts from a talk delivered by Haim Harari, a notable Israeli theoretical scientist, at a meeting of the International Advisory Board of a large multinational corporation, *April 2004*.

"... The root of the trouble is that this entire Moslem region is totally dysfunctional, by any standard of the word, and would have been so even if Israel would have joined the Arab league and an independent Palestine would have existed for 100 years. The 22 member countries of the Arab league, from Mauritania to the Gulf States, have a total population of 300 millions, larger than the US and almost as large as the EU before its expansion. They have a land area larger than either the US or all of Europe. These 22 countries, with all their oil and natural resources, have a combined GDP smaller than that of Netherlands plus Belgium and equal to half of the GDP of California alone. Within this meager GDP, the gaps between rich and poor are beyond belief and too many of the rich made their money not by succeeding in business, but by being corrupt rulers. The social status of women is far below what it was in the Western World 150 years ago. Human rights are below any reasonable standard, in spite of the grotesque fact that Libya was elected Chair of the UN Human Rights commission. According to a report prepared by a committee of Arab intellectuals and published under the auspices of the UN, the number of books translated by the entire Arab world is much smaller than what little Greece alone translates. The total number of scientific publications of 300 million Arabs is less than that of 6 million Israelis. Birth rates in the region are very high, increasing the poverty, the social gaps and the cultural decline. And all of this is happening in a region, which only 30 years ago, was believed to be the next wealthy part of the world, and in a Moslem area, which developed, at some point in history, one of the most advanced cultures in the world.

"I should also say a word about the millions of decent, honest, good people who are either devout Moslems or are not very religious but grew up in Moslem families. They are double victims of an outside world, which now develops Islamophobia and of their own environment, which breaks their heart by being totally dysfunctional. The problem is that the vast silent majority of these Moslems are not part of the terror and of the incitement but they also do not stand up against it. They become accomplices, by omission, and this applies to political leaders, intellectuals, business people and many others. Many of them can certainly tell right from wrong, but are afraid to express their views. ...

"What is behind the suicide murders? Money, power and cold-blooded murderous incitement, nothing else. It has nothing to do with true fanatic religious beliefs. No Moslem preacher has ever blown himself up. No son of an Arab politician or religious leader has ever blown himself up. No relative of anyone influential has done it. Wouldn't you expect some of the religious leaders to do it themselves, or to talk their sons into doing it, if this is truly a supreme act of religious fervor? Aren't they interested in the benefits of going to Heaven? Instead, they send outcast women, naive children, retarded people and young incited hotheads. They promise them the delights, mostly sexual, of the next world, and pay their families handsomely after the supreme act is performed and enough innocent people are dead.  
...

"... A suicide murder is simply a horrible, vicious weapon of cruel, inhuman, cynical, well-funded terrorists, with no regard to human life, including the life of their fellow countrymen, but with very high regard to their own affluent well-being and their hunger for power. ...



"... The Spanish trains and the Istanbul bombings are only the beginning. The unity of the Civilized World in fighting this horror is absolutely indispensable. Until Europe wakes up, this unity will not be achieved. ...

"Above all, never surrender to terror. No one will ever know whether the recent elections in Spain would have yielded a different result, if not for the train bombings a few days earlier. But it really does not matter. What matters is that the terrorists believe that they caused the result and that they won by driving Spain out of Iraq. The Spanish story will surely end up being extremely costly to other European countries, including France, who is now expelling inciting preachers and forbidding veils and including others who sent troops to Iraq. In the long run, Spain itself will pay even more. ...

"I have no doubt that the civilized world will prevail. But the longer it takes us to understand the new landscape of this war, the more costly and painful the victory will be. Europe, more than any other region, is the key. Its understandable recoil from wars, following the horrors of World War II, may cost thousands of additional innocent lives, before the tide will turn."

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We are embarrassed to discover a flagrant error in "*C Stories*" It occurs toward the bottom of page 59. What is referred to there as an "Osprey" is actually a "Kingfisher." I cannot imagine how that got by, but it is entirely my fault. Please make the correction in your own copy.

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A good many years ago we had the chance to run what was then called the Advanced Military Combat Course down at Camp Pendleton. It was set up as an exercise for Marines who had finished their basic training with the rifle and were ready for something resembling combat simulation. Reaction courses can use all sorts of fancy embellishments such as simulated enemy fire, bombs bursting in air and scrambling targets. The troops used the M16, of course, but I shot what may be called the ancestor of the modern Scout concept, a nifty little M600 in 308, mounted with a 2½ power Bushnell intermediate eye relief telescope. The results were impressive. The M16's tactical reaction times and tactical maneuvers were satisfactory, but the Scout got hits. There were 20 targets on the course, and while they did show a number of random 22 hits, each displayed a single 30-caliber impact pretty close to dead center – in about half the time necessary for the "poodle shooters." This does not establish a Scout rifle as the ideal weapon for close combat, but it does get one to thinking. Now that the Steyr Scout is available as a production item, I regard it as the current ideal of the general-purpose rifle. There may be better choices for special tasks, but if you do not know what the exact task is going to be, the SS is your first choice every time.

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We do wish that the press would quit belaboring the unthinkable – which is a leftist victory in November. With the Holy War in full cry, we can certainly do without enemies here at home. God save the Republic!

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"In 1981, when John Brook was coordinator at Gunsite, he proposed that we put out a newsletter, since everybody else was doing so. I regarded the idea somewhat askance, since I would have to write it, and I am no fonder of extra chores than the next man. But John's view prevailed, and *Gunsite Gossip* was launched. Later John opined that this was the worst idea he ever had, but I reversed my own view. I think it turned out to be a good idea. A lot of people seem to enjoy reading it, and I enjoy writing it, and a good time is had by all.

"Originally the paper was intended solely for graduates of our academy. ...

"... Tom Siatos, of Petersen Publications, suggested that he put *Gunsite Gossip* into *Guns & Ammo* magazine as a regular column. Here again I was dubious, maintaining that the uninhibited and socially oriented commentary of the paper made it unsuitable for publication in a national magazine. He said, 'Let me worry about that.' So I did. What currently appears in *Guns & Ammo* as 'Cooper's Corner' is extracted from *Gunsite*

*Gossip*, as I write a good deal more each month than there is room for in the magazine. It apparently delights some people and infuriates others, which I find most gratifying. Unfortunately those who praise it tend to write to me, while those who curse it write to the magazine. I certainly do not object to praise, but I always love a fight and relish the chance to cross swords personally with those who complain about me to the editors.

"*Gunsite Gossip* is obviously not all my own work, as I quote freely from other commentators whose thoughts I admire. I do not apologize for this, since in an era when few read broadly, such hits of eclectic wisdom are herein made more readily available.

"From the beginning I have affected the `editorial we,' which annoys some people very much. Obviously I rather like it, and since I have no boss I can write to please myself. One cannot write to please any group, since groups are made up of individuals. One can write to please the king, or his wife, or a publisher, or a client, but he cannot write to please the `average reader,' because there is no such person. So I write for my own amusement and let the chips fall where they may.

"In our currently polarized society one might expect that only those who love liberty more than equality would fancy personal weapons and skill-at-arms, but this is not universally true. The men of the left, `who don't care what anyone does as long as it is compulsory,' find my views obnoxious. So be it. I do not care for theirs, either. The objective of *Gunsite Gossip* is to edify the shooter and to irritate the liberal.

"See what you think."

Jeff Cooper, *Gunsite*, 1990

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 9

July 2004

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## High Summer

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The rains were a bit late this year, so they did not dampen our parade, but they have greened up the countryside very nicely. People who live in wet climates can never appreciate how delightful a rainy day can be. The weatherman from Phoenix – where summer noons run about 110 – stays indoors all the time and brags about nice sunny days. These days, of course, help with the tomatoes and the corn, for which we are duly grateful, but in the great Western desert it sometimes seems that a "nice sunny day" is too much of a good thing. But not to complain. Compared to the perils of living on a coast exposed to hurricanes, our weather extremes are thankfully benign, and we are happy about that.

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We get a pretty good running comment here at Gunsite concerning the shooting in the sandbox, though the men on the spot sometimes contradict one another. Our sources are mainly Marine Corps, and thus may be not representative of the entire effort, but I think it is safe to say that the shooting in this current phase of operations is primarily short-range and in dim light. The boys seem to enjoy the scenario, to the extent that one can do so in that climate. I once did a stint in the Persian Gulf in the month of August, and my journal indicates that there are more pleasant places to spend one's time. One gratifying element about fighting in Mesopotamia is that messing up that landscape is no esthetic or cultural disaster.

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Various *family members* and Gunsite graduates are afoot in Africa at this time. The political scene degenerates as expected, but life in the bush is apparently as delightful as ever. Some rather unusual actions are anticipated, though we will reserve reporting about them until our full accounts are in. We anticipate narrative involving buffalo, lion, and elephant, in addition to the splendid antelopes.

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At the *Sconce* we see a weekly periodical which keeps us abreast of developments in Britain. In it we discover many interesting things. For example, it turns out that young Britons are much put out by being yelled at during their training exercises. *So they quit*. Can you imagine how unpleasant it must be for these street bums to be yelled at? We listen only briefly to what currently passes for pop music, but when we do we conclude that the roars of an enraged drill sergeant sound better to the ear. If these limp-wristed grass eaters object to the rigors of the military regimen, it is good to know that they will not be required to face up to the realities of life in any military campaign.

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We have yet another case involving boondocking unarmed in the wrong place – not from a Gunsite graduate I am happy to say. There is so much wonderful storytelling available about the African hunt that one cannot expect to read all of it, but I wish anyone contemplating the African hunt would read at least one good account of the scene before he attempts it for himself. I can recommend at least 20 excellent selections to be read before hoisting the flag. If the prospective adventurer reads just one of Peter Capstick's efforts, he may come to understand that the African bush is a lively place and not to be entered by the unenlightened.

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People continue to ask us about which one of the various major-caliber handguns is the best. And we keep responding that we cannot say for sure. Quality control varies from season to season and from design to design, and one must be careful about jumping to conclusions. A correspondent just this week wrote in to complain about the whole breed of 1911 clones. It seems that he has had some bad luck and feels that I should

warn the public about the flagrant defects of the "*US pistol, caliber 45, model of 1911.*" I am sorry about this man's distress, but I decline to abandon ship because *his* vessel ran aground. I thought that this discussion had gone dry many years ago, but there are plenty of people who have come into the act rather late. My own experience with the "Yankee Fist" is extensive, and I do not wish to launch into further debate. No device nor instrument is perfect, but our 1911 comes close. I enjoy indulging in this discussion case by case, but there is neither room nor time to cover the whole subject in one session. Let us say that the 1911 service pistol suffices for its task about 96 percent of the time. That is more than I can say about a machete.

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As we approach election time it is difficult to maintain our composure. We do not present this paper for a political audience, but as it happens we cannot avoid it. We do not wish to preach to the choir at this point, but we submit the following:

"Voting is a civic sacrament which should not be exercised carelessly."

Bill Buckley

That is putting it as softly as possible, but that does not blunt the point.

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What did we do with that Arab who signed up for the US military and then proceeded to murder his comrades-in-arms in Iraq? There seems to be no question about whether he did it or not, but I have yet to learn what we did with him. Volunteering to fight for the cause of your choice, and then murdering the comrade who fights alongside you, is a sickening act of depravity. Perhaps this case may not be discussed publicly, but if it is true that this man pitched a hand grenade into his tent and killed at least one of his sleeping comrades, there seems to be nothing to discuss. There are various ways of disposing of a sociopath, but in this case whatever action is taken should be both quick and exemplary. In situations like this it might be nice to have a king in charge.

---

Photo coverage from the sand box shows that the Marine Corps has adopted *Rule 3* – at least whenever a camera is pointed.

This paper is intended for Gunsite graduates, all of whom know about the four rules of safe gunhandling. If you do not know what *Rule 3* is, ask the man on your right or the man on your left. The matter should be spread around.

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We shooters have got to win this fight against the extension of the Clinton gun ban, which is due to "sunset" on September 13th. When Congress goes back into session after Labor Day there will be a frantic effort on the part of the anti-gunners to pass S.2498 and H.R.3831, legislation which would reenact and expand the 1994 so-called "assault weapons" ban. So get after your representative and your senators at once. Log on to NRA-ILA's website [www.ClintonGunBan.com](http://www.ClintonGunBan.com) for up-to-date information.

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Perhaps you caught that online decapitation of an ambusher by a 5-shot burst of 308. It turns out that I was wrong about that. The caliber involved was the 223. It seems to do the job at short range where that sort of action takes place.

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Considering the principles of personal defense, we have long since come up with the Color Code. This has met with surprising success in debriefings throughout the world. The Color Code, as we preach it, runs white, yellow, orange, and red, and is a means of setting one's mind into the proper condition when exercising lethal violence, and is not as easy as I had thought at first. There is a problem in that some students insist upon confusing the appropriate color with the amount of danger evident in the situation. As I have long taught, you are not in any color state because of the specific amount of danger you may be in, but rather in a mental state which enables you to take a difficult psychological step.

Now, however, the government has gone into this and is handing out color codes nationwide based upon the apparent nature of a peril. It has always been difficult to teach the Gunsite Color Code, and now it is more so. We cannot say that the government's ideas about colors are wrong, but that they are different from what we have long taught here.

The problem is this: your combat mind-set is not dictated by the amount of danger to which you are exposed at the time. Your combat mind-set is properly dictated by the state of mind you think appropriate to the situation. You may be in deadly danger at all times, regardless of what the Defense Department tells you. The color code which influences you does depend upon the willingness you have to jump a psychological barrier against taking irrevocable action. That decision is less hard to make since the *jihadis* have already made it.

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I am not a collector, but I would like to latch onto a good example of the "Broomhandle" Mauser. If you have one on the shelf in your closet, maybe we can trade.

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In noting the difficulty experienced by Joe Foss with his 50-caliber machineguns, we reflect that this is due to the fact that its recoil action has to have sufficient energy to haul that heavy belt up into battery, and this can be affected by side loading when the firing airplane is traveling in manoeuver. Joe told us that he employed a lot of deflection shooting at Guadalcanal, possibly because the tail stinger of the Japanese "Betty" made a dead astern approach dangerous, and Joe's record speaks for itself. He may have done a lot of shooting when his airplane was generating heavy side loads.

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The pursuit of excellence has long been our guiding principle, both professionally and personally. Since happiness is the byproduct of accomplishment, the search for excellence in both major and minor things is the key to happiness.

And this presents a social problem. If you do things well in the classroom, on the playing field or on the battlefield, you will be doing things better than some of those around you. This tends to frost the majority. You know this and the majority knows this. This makes you unpopular – "stuck up" is the term we used to use in school. This may or may not make you an "elitist," depending upon whether you flaunt it or attempt to discredit it. Modesty is a pleasant social attribute, but when overdone it can be rather silly. When a soldier is awarded his medal of honor or when a prima donna minimizes her extra bow, it is fatuous for him or her to pretend that what was accomplished was trivial. *Excellence is not trivial*. Excellence may be "elitist," as the Countess suggests. It may not be achieved by everyone, but it may be striven for by everyone, successfully or otherwise. In teaching so-called "*Senior Problems*" in high school, I used to present Kipling's great poetic exhortation "If." I remember a student approaching me after class one day complaining that the standards set forth in the verse were just too high for reasonable aspiration. My response was that while in truth the standards set forth might be unachievable, they were not unapproachable. All of us may not meet that standard, but every one of us can *try* to meet that standard, and ought to do so.

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It is amusing to read the distaste with which many of our European correspondents speak of "the Wild West." An interesting study some years ago was conducted concerning the frequency and nature of homicide during the American westward movement. It turns out that if you stayed away from barroom brawls after dark on pay day you were quite a bit safer on the streets of Dodge City or Tombstone than you are today on the streets of London or Moscow. It is Heinlein's dictum that an armed society is a polite society. It also tends to be a safe society.

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There has been much talk recently about the military records of candidates for office, as shown by such awards and decorations as have been handed out. This is a more complex subject than most people would believe. In Command and Staff School at Quantico a whole block of instruction was devoted to this as part of the G One (Personnel) curriculum.

The first point here is to decide just what the purpose of the military medal should be. The purpose of the exercise should be *the winning of the war*, but not all medals are awarded with this in mind. In a major war everybody is called upon to do his best, but we wear those feathers in our bonnets only around the council fire between actions.

Heroism is totally subjective, and any attempt to graduate it is going to fall short of any sort of careful analysis. But we try to do this, and everyone involved realizes that some decorations rate higher than others. Up until modern times battle decorations were the prerogative of the commander on the spot, and it was not until the middle of the 19th century that such matters were handed to a committee. Military decorations are national in character and their importance varies with the circumstances involved. It is possible to say that a nation's highest award will be the approximate equivalent of that of another nation, but as they go down the scale the system varies, as does national significance. For example, United States decorations lay importance upon the suffering involved by the protagonist, whereas German awards were based more on the amount of damage done to the enemy. Though being wounded in action does not win battles, wreaking havoc upon enemy forces usually does. Thus a nation's highest award is often posthumous, though not necessarily so as is often believed.

Be that as it may, intrinsic valor is only seldom the essence of the award-winning act. Heroism is always admirable, but you cannot accurately analyze it by the type and amount of the "fruit salad" currently worn on military uniforms. Wade McClusky, for example, can be said to have turned the tide in the Pacific by his personal act at the Battle of Midway. He was not awarded the Medal of Honor for that, but rather the Navy Cross. He was not hurt in the action and did not receive the highest award, whereas scores of other men won the Medal of Honor for throwing themselves sacrificially upon a hand grenade.

In the matter of the Purple Heart this decoration should not properly be a medal, but rather a wound stripe. We remember the cartoon of Bill Malden in World War II in which the soldier at the aid station declaims, "Just give me a couple of band aids Doc, I've already got a Purple Heart."

Essentially, awards and decorations exist in order to make people feel good, rather than to graduate their military worth. It is hard to get individuals to give you much of an account of the action for which they were decorated. I have talked this matter over with many heavily decorated personal friends, and they are unanimous on the subject. "I just did what seemed to me a good idea at the time, but for *this one* over here I really sweated," is the almost universal attitude.

It seems evident that the basis for civil safety is *homogeneity*. A culture which is socially uniform is pretty well devoid of informal violence. A melting pot may be a pretty rough place at its inception, but as it becomes a *puree*, things simmer down. A city inhabited by people of the same outlook, background, marriage, or apparent wealth is a safe city. The sooner that melting pot becomes a *puree*, the sooner it will dispense with civic strife.

It seems to us that far too much attention is paid by the media to *getting home*. The object of war is not to get home, or we would not have gone to war in the first place. The object of war is victory, and the sooner you win the sooner you get home. In my various wars I certainly treasured the prospect of seeing home again, but I and those with me felt that the way home was made through the enemy's destruction. I was told by my first commanding officer (who was a very great Marine indeed), that the greatest thrill known to man is the sight of the back of a fleeing enemy. To repeat: Getting home is not the object of the exercise. Destroying the enemy is.

Please remember that your declamations at the *Reunion* need not be Shakespearean in polish. We expect to have sufficient expertise available in Clint Ancker and Amy Heath, among others.

We note how little attention is paid at this time to the shooting sling. I have used it extensively since my youth with complete satisfaction. But I notice that it is not advertised, recommended, nor even mentioned in current reading material. We do see an increasing number of people in Africa and elsewhere falling back on shooting sticks, which are essentially a nuisance and must be carried around by a henchman. The old-fashioned military sling does very well, since it is designed to accommodate people of varying builds and clothing, but essentially it is rather bulky and complex. Both the CW sling and the Ching Sling are an improvement over the military design since they can be adjusted once for a given shooter. And now we hear back from Iraq that the Giles Assault Sling, designed by *family member* Giles Stock, is improving our combat situation. The loop sling is of no use if there is no support for the left elbow, so it is of no help when shooting from off-hand. It is a rule that you should never shoot from off-hand if a more stable position can be achieved, but that does not cover all cases. In thick brush or close cover you do not need a sling, but if the country opens out it will improve your hitting capacity very noticeably.

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Apparently "tactical" and "digital" are the way to the consumer's heart. If you wish to sell your motor oil or breakfast food just called it tactical or digital, and you cannot fail in the marketplace.

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The signature of John Hancock on the Declaration of Independence has always been pointed out as a example of exemplary boldness. He insisted that he wanted to make sure that the King would make no mistake about whom to hang first. This picture fits his character, as we learn that when he gave a grand party in Boston for "the important people," he supplied a cask of Madeira outside for "the common folk." Evidently the leaders of the American rebellion were not necessarily proletarian.

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 10

September 2004

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## Turning Leaves

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As we had very little winter last winter, we seem to have had very little summer this summer. Apart from a few weeks of triple digits down in Phoenix, we have not been scorched as usual in this part of the world – which is fine with us. We have always enjoyed the traditional change of seasons, but this need not be overdone.

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The Rifle Project (20x20x20 at 1000) has aroused only a modicum of interest. This may be because shooters as a group are more interested in equipment than in performance. Various correspondents have come up with suggestions about what sort of rifle to use, which is understandable but avoids the element of skill. I think the winning weapon for the Project will have to be a self-loader of moderate caliber, but beyond that no one rifle should prove much better than any other. A weight ceiling of 15lbs or thereabouts should be established to avoid giantism, but essentially the project is going to be won by the man, rather than by his gear.

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We happen upon two somewhat different conclusions from our friends down there in Iraq. On the one hand, our selected riflemen are scoring very well, sometimes at long range but mainly at inner city distances. On the other, we are bedeviled by reports that the people we send over there are basically unfamiliar with rifle shooting. This may be so, and if so it may be attributed to the increasing urbanization of our culture, in which there are large numbers of young men who have never touched a weapon of any kind (possibly excepting a baseball bat) prior to putting on a soldier suit. This may be a reflection of the "Nanny state," in which a large proportion of young men have no fathers. Even if there is a man around the house, he is usually not a father figure. If he does not know anything about firearms, he is unlikely to have anything useful to hand on to his sons. This need not always be the case, of course, since my own father, who was expert in many things from viticulture to epic poetry, never owned a gun of his own and had to be educated by his sons.

Be that as it may, a great many old-fashioned American fathers have come to us for schooling at Gunsite. When we salute the flag, as we do here at Gunsite, we reflect that this country remains the last great hope of liberty, and that there is still enough personal dignity to leave an impression upon the youth. As a group Americans fight well, as the *jihadis* will learn as they pursue the *jihad*.

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We invite all members of the *family* to note the retirement of Larry Mudgett, one of the distinguished *pistoleros* of the age. Larry's outstanding service was with the Los Angeles Police Department, and he not only shot expertly in competition, but also in various street fights. Among other things, Larry was the first man to employ the Harries firing stance in action in full dark, achieving a one-shot stop in a restricted sector. He was also awarded the Medal of Valor for rescuing a wounded comrade under fire. We need more like him, but I fear we will not find many.

---

*Family member* Frederick Astaire contributes this selection from the *Tonopah Miner* of 22 April 1905 concerning the "Wild West."

"A remarkable feature of the new town of Rhyolite is that there is no constable. None is apparently needed. This state of affairs is explained by the fact that every citizen believes that



every other citizen carries a gun and as a result a perfect order prevails."

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We hear that bison are readily available in Alberta. As we attempted it, the bison is not an especially demanding trophy, but the meat is outstanding and the robe is the ideal sofa cover for cold climates.

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In our adolescence we discovered the telescope sight as used on hunting rifles. It was not the norm then as it is now, and we were often jeered at when we showed up for deer or elk hunting. After some experience we concluded that the optical sight, as it is now termed, has various important advantages over iron. Today glass sights are pretty standard worldwide, though they are not the best solution to all of our problems – specifically including dangerous game. I do think, even today, that the novice should be introduced to rifle shooting by way of the aperture sight, in "ghost-ring" form. In recent years I have seen many situations in which the ghost-ring was preferable to any glass sight, but the market commands. It is unsound to draw conclusions from the limited experience available to one man, but in my own case I have killed as often with iron sights as with the telescope. (And I have logged one rather extravagant experience in which the telescopic sight was a distinct disadvantage.)

Today Jim West's example of a "Co-pilot" illustrates the virtue of the ghost-ring carbine over other systems.

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We note that Gerhard Blenk is now offering African-style double rifles from his base location at Ifni in Germany. Herr Blaser is the designer of the ultimate trigger action, as demonstrated in his R93. We have confidence in his ingenuity.

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*Family members* returning from Mugabestan tell us that *meat* is now the most convenient medium of exchange. Things have gone from bad to worse, as was only to be expected. There we have had the spectacle of a thoroughly immoral man dictating affairs to his own liking with no regard for the welfare of his country. This is one of several tragedies of our time. Comrade Mugabe has so wrecked the economy of the country that a hunter can bribe his way through to almost anything in return for venison. The proverbial meat hunger of the local people emphasizes its value to visiting sportsmen.

---

Proper rifle handling is covered in "*The Art of the Rifle*," but not everybody has a copy of that and I see violations of good technique all the time. For example, how is a rifle to be carried in a situation anticipating violence? I have taught this material consistently over the years, but I see that some like it better than others. Rifle readiness is not complicated, but it should be understood. When standing erect, anticipating immediate contact, the rifle should be carried at "ready" – magazine full, cartridge in the chamber, index finger straight along side of the trigger-guard, and safety on. If the configuration of the weapon affords it, the thumb should be placed on the safety ready to acuate it, but with the index finger still outside the trigger-guard. In this condition the shooter checks the environment by searching it with his eye on his surroundings but interrupted by the front sight. The call is: *eyes, muzzle, target*, but the safety is on and the finger is off the trigger. Generally speaking, fiction writers do not understand this.

When contact is imminent but the shooter is moving by vehicle, the rifle should be carried with the magazine full but no shell in the chamber. When he dismounts to fire, he has time to rack the action and loop up the sling.

In all cases, the weapon is not in firing mode until the shooter's eye has picked up the target and a proper firing stance is assumed.

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I do not think that we can condemn shooting from a blind as unsportsmanlike, however productive it may be. I have indulged it on a couple of occasions, but only because it was the only system available.

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Those of you who plan to fill the larder in the weeks to come will doubtless make the necessary effort to verify your zeros without any prodding from here. Nonetheless we wish to drop the hint. The more practice you get, the better off you will be. Shooting bench groups is not enough. As *Shooting Master* Louis Awerbuck points out, "If you want a really tight group, fire just one shot."

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To say that the root of all evil is money is to read the matter incorrectly. The word in scripture is not money but rather *cupidity* (in Latin). If you say cupidity is the root of all evil you are closer to the answer. It may be *envy* is the root of all evil, though that is certainly worthy of a seminar topic. The sophisticated personality will be readily aware of envy as the prime evil. He will see, however, as he matures that wanting something that you have not but that somebody else has is a basic moral corruption. Some very old sage (whose name I forget) is said to have opined that the two most distressing discomforts are wanting what you cannot have and having what you no longer want. The innocent may say that he would like to try the second option, but experience will disabuse him insofar as he can discover it.

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Now that Lindy Wisdom, our daughter, is doing her own publishing, we are wondering about some reprints. I am pleased with the number of my book titles which are now rather difficult to obtain, and it may be that we should print up hard copies of publications previously only attainable in paper. For example, the volume called "*Fighting Handguns*" includes original material which was topical when that book was introduced, but now presents a good piece of the history of the handgun not available elsewhere.

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We note that rifle technique is not as well understood as it should be. It is interesting to observe that *Gunsite Rule 3* is now observed carefully by the Marine Corps. It was never taught nor followed when I was a fresh-caught Marine, but photography declares that it is now. This is a matter of great satisfaction. It is nice to be "self-taught," but it is better to be exposed to authoritative doctrine in one's most receptive experience.

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We do not wish to be political in this paper, but we must emphasize that *liberty and freedom are not the same*. The great majority of people seem to be able to get along without liberty, but liberty is what our Founding Fathers fought and died for. Freedom is something else again.

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People seem to be spending a lot of time on uniform patterns for combat troops, such as are usually referred to as camouflage. Anyone who has spent any time in the field must realize that cloth patterns, apart from snow clothes, are almost pointless. If you are close enough to a man to discern the pattern of his shirt, it is his outline rather than his pattern that matters. In the Bush War up in Rhodesia, we experimented with this and our conclusion was that the things most readily discerned about a trooper in the field were the backs of his hands and the black line of his firearm. We conducted a number of tests along this line and decided that if an adversary is close enough for his cloth pattern to be important, he is most readily "camouflaged" by blackening the backs of his hands with shoe polish or mud or something of the sort and breaking up the outline of his weapon with irregular bands of masking tape. Oddly enough the face did not stand out anywhere as prominently as the hands, and facial make up seemed more theatrical than effective.

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It is interesting to note that the new Mateba *automatic revolver* is something of a hit in Europe. Just what anyone might want with an automatic revolver is open to discussion, but there it is and it is a very exotic little artifact. I am admittedly curious about how this piece feels to shoot, but I am not going to spend any money on the attempt.

---

John Hancock may have been one of the most conspicuous of our Founding Fathers, but he was hardly an egalitarian. When throwing a society ball at his residence in Boston he provided champagne for his guests within, but was careful to set up a cask of Madeira outside on the sidewalk "for the benefit of the common people."

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Grand Master John Gannaway is just back from Africa with wonderful stories to relate. He has been looking for a head-on with a hippopotamus for a long time now, and while things did not work out exactly as intended, he did flatten the hippo with one round from his 376 Scout (using the 300-grain solid).

On the same adventure our personal clergyman Tom Russell scored on both buffalo and lion, and must now be presented with the official gold lion badge of the *Gunsite African Rifles*.

On this adventure John used the Steyr "Dragoon" as mentioned, while Tom, who is left-handed, used his Blaser R93 in caliber 416 for everything from impala on up. This is evidence that the Scout should have been made available in left hand option, as originally agreed.

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The behavior of the press at this phase of the  *jihad*  is infuriating. They give us the butcher's bill every day, while they absolutely refuse to report upon the exploits of many of our young men whose successful fighting deserves all praise. It takes no skill whatever to become a war casualty, but it calls for grandeur of spirit to attack successfully in the face of lethal enemy fire. Our men are doing this every day, but you do not see it in the papers or on the tube.

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Did you know that the girl who won the gold for shotgunning in the Olympics did her early training by working on frisbees with a BB gun? The more you think about that, the more clever it becomes.

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The subject of military awards is a big one, and I was exposed to a whole period on the subject in Command and Staff School. There are policies governing these matters, but they seem to be administered with wide subjective latitude. I have spoken at some length to officers who can display a colorful chestful of fruit salad, as we used to call it, and I am impressed by the variety shown by their opinions of their own decorations. Our good friend Mike Ryan received *two* Navy Crosses in the Pacific War, and he insists that while Number One was inconsequential, he really earned Number Two. The same medal, the same war, the same service.

Only the recipient himself knows what he truly deserves.

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I find it interesting that the Olympic games were originally conducted totally without political distinction. Participants traveling from state to state were free from national designation. It was always the man who won the event, with total disregard for his point of origin.

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We recently picked up notice in a domestic newspaper of a professional hunter's fatal mishap in East Africa. The man was apparently of Canadian origin and was killed by a buffalo. I will try to run this down further.

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Continuing experience with various Steyr Scout rifles in Africa shows that the distinct advantages of this piece may only be understood in the field. Such minor features as the double detente, the adapted trigger-guard, the integral bipod, and the twin magazine option do not impress the observer over-the-counter or at the writer's desk, but they show up in striking fashion when the piece is taken afield. We hear back from Africa the query from the professional "Where can I get one of these?"

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People keep asking about the proper age at which to introduce children to firearms. Since people are as different as they are, there is no conclusive answer to this. There is first of all the matter of bone structure. Most young people do not achieve enough length of bone until about age 14 to handle a rifle. With the pistol this is less important, but since the pistol is a more demanding instrument, generally speaking, I cannot really approve of starting under age ten, as some friends of ours have done. This is not to say it cannot be done, and I congratulate the parent who brings it off successfully, but there are other considerations apart from body size. Judgment is the most important of these. Mature judgment is probably the most significant element of the subject, and both children and their parents vary enormously in this department. There are truly precocious children who think like adults at age 14, and conversely there are people who never grow up at all and should

not be allowed to vote, still less handle lethal weapons. I do not know the best age at which a youngster should start shooting, so I must beg the question. This matter of judgment must be left up to you.

I do not think it is a matter of gauge or caliber. It is generally accepted that one should start with a 22, and while I have no objection to this, I know of some very excellent practitioners who began with full caliber weapons and suffered no damage therefrom. This bothers some people more than others, but recoil should not be given too much concern here. Recoil varies, of course, but the blow delivered by the butt of full caliber rifle or shotgun is not greater than that received in any backyard contact sport.

Some recommend that the novice be introduced carefully under supervision to the old man's guns and observed to see just what sort of judgment he displays. The ownership of personal weapons is a very proper right-of-passage for a boy. With girls it is optional. Any man must know how to manage firearms if he pretends to be a man. A girl may be allowed to find her own speed here, and only commence the exercise when she really wants to. With either boy or girl the novice must not be pushed, but must display genuine and sincere desire before taking up arms.

I had some doubts about the 376 Steyr cartridge when it was first introduced, but I have since become much impressed by the "Dragoon." It is as near perfection as may be for the African bushveldt, as well as for northern North America. It is a convincing medium caliber, and in Scout configuration it offers the best of two worlds. The factory did not choose to advance it and so it is now a custom proposition, except for those who were clever enough to get aboard early.

It kicks. Delivery of full power in less than 8lbs is bound to, but that is a subjective matter. Some people are bothered by recoil and others are not. I find the Dragoon distinctly pleasurable to shoot, but I am not a proper judge of this subject.

All wars are peculiar in themselves, but this one seems more peculiar than most. Both weapons and tactics which are suitable for inner city conflict with an enemy devoid of air power will not suffice for more "conventional" conflicts. These things will be hard to discover, but we will discover them.

One of the pleasures about living here at Gunsite is the steady crackle of gunfire in the middle distance. There are some people who might find that bothersome, but to a shottist it is distinctly soothing. As the Countess put it, "That's the sound of the good guys learning how to kill the bad guys." It is not that the lady tends to be bloodthirsty, but that she has been accustomed to troubled times. I have always enjoyed the sound of gunfire, if it is not overdone. Life on that battleship was indeed a bit much, but smallarms are something else again.

The proliferation of shooting sticks in Africa is mildly annoying. The professional hunter always has successful shooting as his primary requirement, and some of the people who show up in the game country need all the help they can get. Nevertheless, a competent rifleman should not depend upon gadgetry carried along by a henchman. It would certainly be nice if the people who undertake the African adventure would perfect their marksmanship before taking off by practicing on small game near home. When you are completely successful on jack rabbits or ground hogs you will not have any trouble with hitting big game – unless your nerve gives out, and that is a problem which must be faced in another chapter.

Bob Young now sets up the Gunsite facility for military organizations who want to play war. This is a far cry from the aim of the API, but it makes much sense. Our current policy makers in the Department of Defense face the need to show large numbers of non-combatants how to "camp out" in the peculiar ambience of the *jihad*, and weaponcraft is not really a large element in this. Gunsite can play its small but not unimportant part here.

Clinton's egregious gunban subsided, as we hoped it would. It was a dismal example of a weakness of democracy – acting frivolity into law. Banning instruments rather than acts indicate a belief that man is not worthy of his own free will. Well, some men are not, but that is no justification for whimsical legislation. The Founding Fathers struggled for the principle that man could and should be trusted with his own destiny. Our current *domestic* enemies, against whom those Americans in uniform are sworn to defend, do not believe in this principle, but we have again won a round in the endless fight against them.

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One hopes that when this election is behind us we can get about the serious business of winning this war. *They* have declared war on us and it is up to us to win it. This will not be as easy as many seem to think, but it must be done. Only when shortages, hardships and serious sacrifice on the home front are made apparent will we get down to the necessary labor. Only when we define our objectives can victory be pursued. So let's do it.

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 11

October 2004

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## Hunting Season!

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Here we are in the finest month of the year (in the northern hemisphere). The trouble with October is that it is too cluttered. People want to cause too many things to happen at the same time. We suppose it was characteristic of our hero Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. to want to be born in hunting season, but however that may be, that is what happened. Earlier we thought to hold our *Annual Memorial Reunion* on TR's birthday, but we found that the national TR society holds too many big things up there at Sagamore Hill. Be that as it may, we all look forward to our *Reunion of the Faithful*, and hope to be able to enjoy a suitable celebration. Clearly you should have your reservations at Whittington in by now, so we will see you there.

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It is embarrassing for those of us enjoying October to take advantage of its sparkling advantages while our best citizens are out there in Iraq. We are immensely proud of those people in all services, but here at Gunsite we get most of our information from the Marine Corps side, and such information tells us again and again how splendidly the globe, eagle and anchor is being held on high. It is gratifying here to learn how much of our personal doctrines have been acquired by the Marines. Method of carry, conditions of readiness and combat mind-set have all been adopted by our active duty Marines, and we are proud of having had this influence. Every little bit helps!

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I assume that the faithful all know that "*C Stories*" is available either directly from Lindy Wisdom or from the Gunsite Pro Shop. (Wisdom Publishing, Inc., 1840 East Warner Road, Box 238, Tempe, AZ 85284, lcwisdom@aol.com) (Gunsite Academy and Pro Shop, 2900 W. Gunsite Road, Paulden, AZ 86334, 928-636-4565, gunsite@gunsite.com)

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The 376 Steyr cartridge has proven conspicuously successful in the bushveldt, hardly to anyone's surprise. This cartridge is ballistically very similar to the 375 Holland, but its virtue is that it can be had in scout configuration, as with the Dragoon. The local people in Africa all seem very much impressed with the Dragoon, and immediately inquire about acquisition.

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We have had several reports of functioning failure with the various micro 45s. I think this matter is worthy of consideration, and I intend to stick to the Commander version for personal carry.

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Functioning of all sorts of weapons has been a plague in the sand box. It is so widespread that it leads us to assume that certain kinds of troops who feel that they are rear echelon people are not sufficiently interested in their personal firearms to keep them running. The sand out there in Iraq is certainly more of a hazard than in any other place where we have fought in recent wars. This is all the more reason why company-level personnel should insist upon meticulous care of their gear.

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Everything has its own particular weaknesses, and we now have found that the bolt of the Scout action is capable of unexpected disassembly if the stud on the left side of the bolt cap is inadvertently depressed. This is not easy to do, but we now have one case in which the bolt cap was fired to the rear.

We have heard nasty rumors now about lock failure with the R93. We cannot discount them completely, but

they are pretty rare. I am a poor critic of these things since in a long lifetime of shooting I have never had any of my firearms fail to function in my hands. I have never had a tire blowout either, so I guess I worry about that less than I should.

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It is a pleasure to report that Barrett Tillman's monumental history of the climax of the Pacific War is now set for publication. I have scanned the first draft and I am immoderately gratified to find myself mentioned by name. I guess that means I have now gone down in history, as I am going down in various other ways since my broken back does not want to get better. This is only to be expected with advanced age.

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It is interesting to learn from the front lines that taunting works very well against the ragheads. Under many circumstances they can be teased into taking suicidal action.

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Mind-set is a peculiar problem in the Iraqi theater. We are trying to be friends, but we do not know that *they* are. We have one report back from the front saying that when you contact a civilian, you should be courteous, friendly and unthreatening, but instantly ready to kill him if necessary.

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It seems to us that under most circumstances if you are kidnaped it is your fault. You should not be caught unarmed and you should be alert at all times. These various contractors in Iraq do not seem to understand that. We are sorry about their misfortune, but they should not have let it come about.

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Paul Kirchner's book on the Code Duelo will be available shortly. On reading of these episodes, we cannot help feeling that if modern politicians were free to use that course of action our political campaigns would be conducted with more dignity. Candidates should not say things about adversaries when they realize they are going to have to live with their words after the election, no matter how it turns out. A personal duel might handle the situation nicely.

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Probably it does not matter, but "terror" is an unsatisfactory adversary, since it is a mental condition rather than a tangible foe. You cannot fight against "terror," since you cannot shoot it or sink it in the sea. In addition, terror is an undignified emotion. Young men should be conditioned to rise above fear at the earliest possible age, and to the extent that this happens, they cannot be terrorized. Nobody likes to look right into the cannon's mouth, but he need not squeal about it. George Patton had some very good things to say on this subject. Nobody is immune from fear, but nobody should let fear affect his conduct.

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I had been given to understand that what I prefer to call the "Steyr Dragoon" had been discontinued at the factory. I find that this is not the case. Both the factory representative and the American distributor told us this week that the Steyr Dragoon, which is a Scout rifle in caliber 376, continues in production and sale. This is welcome news, since the piece itself has proven more popular, case by case, since its introduction. Nomenclature is complicated. "Scout" applies mainly to *light* cavalry. If you change to *heavy* cavalry you come up with the term "Dragoon." The factory, however, decided that there are too many things termed Dragoon for sale, and stamped upon the weapons "376 Steyr." This is fine, except that it complicates things for me, since I have a rifle upon which "Steyr Dragoon" was clearly engraved at the factory. It may be the only item of its kind in the world. However that may be, it is an excellent weapon, and I expect the same excellence from its siblings otherwise inscribed. So a 376 *Scout* is available for sale at this time. If you need a medium rifle of this type, sign up for yours now.

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If anyone is still interested in the Color Code, I would like to point out that this psychological footpath does not refer to a state of peril, but rather to a psychological condition. There exists a strong, prominent reluctance in the minds of most people to taking lethal action against a living being. This exists in the gaming fields, but it is much more pronounced in personal confrontation. With most people there exists a strong "thou shalt not" against pressing the trigger when the sight is on the target. The Color Code overrides this, not because of

danger, but rather because of readiness. I know of some very fine warriors who can be counted upon to hit what they shoot at, but only if they are *emotionally prepared to shoot at it*. The civilized "super ego" asks the question, "Shall I *really* shoot now?" And a strong, positive "Yes, shoot now" will result only if it has been prepared in advance. I do not own the term, and I cannot say that people who differ with me are wrong, but I can say that overcoming the mental block is what I hold to be a solution.

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One aspect of the battlefields of World War II was its profusion of 50-caliber empties. In any place where the going was heavy, the terrain was asparkle with brightly gleaming cartridge cases. You could also see this extravagance from the air. I was particularly impressed by it at Guam, when just as the landing craft started in, the F6s went for the beach, and up there against that beautiful blue sky each airplane was suddenly accompanied by a shower of gold as it commenced strafing. This is one of those rare things in war that is not sufficiently enjoyed.

It may be that when the 20mm cannon was employed airborne it retained its empties in the aircraft. I am not familiar with this action, but its feeding must have been beefed up considerably over that of the smaller caliber weapon, since hauling a belt into position against side loading could pose a problem. Joe Foss was emphatic about this with the 50 caliber, insisting that where there had been much heavy maneuvering in aerial combat the 50 caliber Browning tended to malfunction. Thus it was his practice to reserve two guns.

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We are supposed to keep this paper as non-political as possible, but I simply cannot resist feeling that that carrier landing was a true *Beau Geste*. This is the sort of thing a commander-in-chief ought to display, but often does not.

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The proper management of firearms is by no means as widespread as we might wish, either in the hunting field or in war. The day is past in which every young man was instructed in gunmanship by his father, or in some cases by his Uncle Sugar, before venturing out into the world. But it is depressing to note that an otherwise reasonably competent young man may prove to be "a disaster looking for a place to happen" when handling a firearm. Gunhandling in Africa is increasingly unsatisfactory, and this is not a matter of marksmanship, but sheer common sense. Among other annoyances is the tendency of some of these people to go afield carrying the rifle over the shoulder, muzzle forward and butt to the rear. On a recent trip our hunter saw one man carrying a rifle thus who turned quickly in response to a question and smacked his assistant heavily in the face with the butt. I have spent some unhappy times looking right up the muzzle of a heavy-caliber double, right over the shoulder with muzzle to the rear. Too many people in the field feel that the safety is the answer to all this, and as long as the safety is on nothing can go wrong. This is a nasty error, but I cannot change it just by writing annoyed comments in this paper.

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When I was a tad, you did not call anyone a liar unless you expected a physically violent reaction. The term provokes violence. You do not call a man either a liar or a coward unless you are prepared to face forceful response. Remember that "An armed society is a polite society." We should steer in that direction.

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A correspondent recently told us that he did not have a source for the classical opinion that a fool may learn from his own experience, but that a clever man prefers to learn from the experiences of others. That line is attributable to Prince Bismarck, whose full name was Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck Schönhausen, which is a bit long for convenient use

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These are tough times, though probably no tougher than they have seemed to a lot of people at other times. Long ago, Henley's inspirational verse was emphasized in the eleventh grade. Henley was blind, which is about as crushing a condition that can be faced. "Invictus" stands as a triumph to moral courage, and was memorized in full by anyone expecting an "A" in English.



INVICTUS by William Ernest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul.

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We still have no details about that buffalo fatality up in Tanzania. Obviously a serious error was involved. We will keep after it.

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One need not be a warrior to be an Honest-to-God man. But it helps to get a long start.

"Ottmar H. Friz, a master mariner whose seagoing career began in the days of square rigged sailing ships and who lived in three centuries died of the infirmities of age in Piedmont on April 23. Capt. Friz was 105.

"Capt. Friz, who was born in Germany in 1896, sailed out of San Francisco Bay for more than 30 years. He was for many years master of a succession of troop transports sailing for Far Eastern ports.

"Later, he became port captain for the Military Sea Transportation Service, a post he considered the pinnacle of a career at sea. He reached the mandatory retirement age of 70 in 1966.

"`I retired from a job,' he wrote later, `but not from life.' When his wife, Carolyne, died, he remarried, and took up cross-country skiing. He moved into a retirement home, then moved out when he found the people there were too old for him. He published his memoirs when he was 96, continued to drive a car until he was 102, and at 103 joined E Clampus Vitus, an organization that admired drinking and history in equal amounts.

"Capt. Friz was a man of few words. Asked the secret of his long life, he said, `Genes and moderation.'

"Ottmar Friz quit school to go to sea in 1911 aboard a German sailing ship as a deck boy, the lowest rank on board. He sailed around Cape Horn when he was 15, and sailed before the mast on three other large commercial sailing vessels.

"`He is the last of the old Cape Horn sailors,' said Ward Cleaveland, port captain for the sail training ship Californian and a friend of Capt. Friz's for many years.

"In all Capt. Friz served on 34 deepsea ships, most of them steamers. During the depression in the United States he even served as a seaman and later an officer on Key System ferryboats on San Francisco Bay.

"It took him 33 years to become master of his own ship, the US Army transport Will H. Point. He later was skipper of seven other ships, sailing around the world and serving in the US maritime service in three wars.

"`He was respected by all, and he earned that respect,' said retired Rear Adm. Thomas Patterson, former West Coast director of the US Maritime Administration. `He was a tough but fair master, and we won't see the likes of him again.'

"Capt. Friz was preceded in death by his wife, Carolyne, and by his second wife, Edna. He is survived by two daughters, Janet Kruse, of Bend, Ore., Georgia Rosseau, of Atlanta, eight grand children, 18 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren. The last great-great grandchild was born the day before his death."

via Jim Foley

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The war in the sand box is ugly enough, but it does teach many people many things which are very useful to know. The war of ideology is harder to prepare for and to understand than the conventional war of armies. Our people are looking just fine at this time, despite the general tenor of the press. Our people manage fights and score amazingly well in the absence of the sort of political conviction that has supported us in the past. Far too many rear area types do not seem to get the picture, but we must now make sure that they do, so that our front line warriors realize how completely they are supported at home. We must tell them that we did not start this, but that it was handed to us by evil-minded fanatics who do not want to be reasonable. It is our antagonists who thrust the innocent into harm's way. It is our antagonists who are "in love with death" by their own admission. This is a nasty fight to force upon a peace-loving people, but we did not choose it. It is now up to us to demonstrate that we indeed have the will.

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Guru say:

The goal of "higher education" is to make the strong wise and the wise strong.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 12, No. 12

November 2004

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## "A Near Run Thing"

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And near it was, but not so much as the left-leaning media would have us expect. The important thing is that we did win, and now we have the chance to do something about this evil religious conflict that threatens to engulf the world. This is not a political paper, so we will avoid pushing political positions, but we may give thanks as Thanksgiving approaches in the realization that most Americans prefer to face up to a violent challenge rather than to cut and run. Hurray for our side!

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I have little or no progress to report on The Project. Apart from its being very difficult to administer, it does not promise to reward gadgetry. If anyone ever does show that he can place 20 hits in a 20-inch circle in 20 seconds at 1000 yards it will be because he, the shooter, did the job, not that he could assemble an unprecedented collection of gadgets. My own way to creep up on the problem is to start at 400 yards and proceed by 100-yard increments. We will be happy to discuss this with anyone who wants to attempt the task. I have been told by people who should know that it is impossible. Perhaps it is, but so was the four-minute mile. The object is to let man's reach exceed his grasp. Only thus may we discover just what can be accomplished.

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We have been approached on the subject of a book on mind-set. We have discussed this matter in various articles, but the job has not been completely attacked. A complete work on mental conditioning is probably worth producing. What we read in the papers and hear about on the tube suggests that most people have not faced up to the prospect of lethal violence in today's society. This is curious when we consider the astonishing prevalence of individual conflict as seen in the world in general. Neither the civilian nor the soldier seems ready to face up to this, and certainly it does not seem to be discussed in schools. This is not a world in which one can turn the other cheek. Doing so does not avoid violence, but rather encourages it. The bad guys threaten, but they do not seem to want to get hurt. They should be taught that their presumed victim is more dangerous than they are. This is not a matter of weapons, but rather of will.

At the *Reunion* we had an interesting presentation on the subject in which an elderly man, when approached by a goblin in a convenience store late at night, refused to be victimized. Though unarmed, he simply placed his hand in his pocket and told his would be aggressor to buzz off. The bad guy was defeated by attitude rather than marksmanship.

You cannot count on this, of course, but it is up to your dignity to make the attempt. It is more likely to succeed than to fail.

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We just ran across a clean example of the Le Mat percussion revolver. This curious device is a percussion handgun combining a front-feeding revolving cylinder with a centerline shotgun barrel. It is a French design and was provided in some quantity to the Confederate forces in our Civil War. It is very large and heavy and suitable only for the horseman. It was said to be popular with Jeb Stuart, along with other prominent Confederate cavalrymen. This example lives at present in Prescott, where it is for sale at a fat price, as you might suppose. Please call me if you would like to handle it, or possibly to buy it. It is a very interesting historical artifact.

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Our grandson Tyler is back from Mugabestan and is able to report sadly on the degeneration of that once charming country. Brutality is rife. Money is worthless. Guns are forbidden, and fresh meat is the principle item of exchange. It is hard to accept that Comrade Mugabe is still alive, but he has been able to turn right and wrong into a black and white conflict in a way that pretty well precludes fighting back. Moreover he is supported ostensibly by South Africa. We can only hope that the damage he has already brought about is repairable. There is plenty of game, but running the gauntlet at customs can be a dreary process.

For that matter, getting into South Africa with your personal weapons has become such a tiresome business that one may assume that the current government in power wishes to discourage the hunting business. It took Tyler five hours to get through the customs on the way in. This is commercial suicide, but the revolutionary authorities are not dismayed by it.

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Now that increasing numbers of militant Moslems are showing up in Mesopotamia, their most effective groups are from the Islamic Caucasus. We always suggest that you check six wherever you may be, but now we may add the injunction, Check for *Chechens!*

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This marketing mania for miniaturized magna sweeps the field. I can only envision it as pure fadism. Why do you want a short 30 when you have a perfectly good long 30? I realize there are technical responses of this, but they do not impress. Throughout the 20th century we have enjoyed a selection of calibers for sporting rifles that needs no improvement. The big 30 seems to be all the rage at the gun counters, for no reason that I can make out. In my youth I achieved total success with the classic 30–06 cartridge. I could not have done better with anything to appear on the market since. If this makes me a dinosaur, so be it. I probably am such in any case, but that does not justify going astray after strange gods. I do think there is a needed place in the middle between the 03 family and the heavy rifles. The 30–06 220 does just fine for all game short of the pachyderms, but the family of what may be called the 9mm rifles may offer certain advantages for both Africa and North America, when you consider that it may be had in Scout configuration. I took my one and only lion with the 350 Remington Short Magnum, and I doubt if I could have done better with the 06 220. On the other hand, you can now obtain a Steyr "Dragoon" in 376 Steyr, which produces fine medium-sized ballistics in Scout configuration, and Scout configuration is a true advantage, as anyone can tell you who has used the true Scout (rather than a pseudo scout) in the hunting field. You have to take the true Scout afield in order to discuss it properly, because its great advantage is what must be vaguely termed "friendliness." This is not apparent at the bench, but rather in the bush.

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We now have on loan from the Great Gannaway his copy of the Broomhandle Mauser, and what a weird beast it is! It cannot really be described as a pistol, a carbine, or a sub-machinegun (!). It is about as unhandy (or unfriendly) as an individual weapon can be, and yet its exotic charm is undeniable. It was never adopted as an official sidearm by any major power, but in its early career officers were expected to provide their own sidearms, and the Broomhandle, with butt-stock attached, allowed a degree of hitability that GI sidearms did not provide.

I have acquired some ammunition for this piece, and I intend to do a photo study on it when circumstances permit. I will have to rig up some imitation Arab targets to engage from equine speed to duplicate as far as possible Winston Churchill's efforts at Omdurman. Stay tuned!

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Down with shooting sticks! I realize that a disgusting number of African hunting clients cannot hit a barn from the inside with the doors shut, but the professional hunter must take what he can get, and if his clients have the money, he must grant them what success he can at little risk to himself and helpers. I see why shooting sticks are there, but that does not make them acceptable to a marksman. (So who is a marksman? I have forgot.)

It is continually explained to me that "the grass was too high." We have all seen high grass; also we have all learned how to shoot from offhand. Going back from over a long lifetime of hunting, I discover that when hunting in prairie or mountain as a youth I took most shots from sitting – looped up. In later years I have taken most shots from offhand, this being what was offered in the African low veldt. (I also took my one and only bison from offhand. I took the lion at eleven steps and the bison at 82 yards.)

So practice your offhand. You can do it at home without going to the range. Once you have learned how to shoot, you know where that bullet went when the striker struck.

While on the subject of shooting sticks, I am told that the early hunters of the western prairie used them for a specific purpose which was not overcoming bad marksmanship. These old timers chose long ranges on purpose so as not to spook the herd. Using a low-velocity cartridge, the old timer could put down a bull at sufficient distance to prevent the herd's discovering that it was being shot at. If the hunter could put down two, three or four animals out of the same bunch before they took alarm, his work in skinning his beasts could be vastly simplified. And he could choose targets deliberately, not so much because of the high grass, but because the distance chosen called for additional support even with a good shot.

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As the war continues, we build up a fine series of personal accounts which will never appear in the press. Consider the following:

"And I know you don't have much use for female Marines (neither do I, but let's keep that quiet) but there is one out here who is pulling more than her weight and is doing things no one else could do. She is an educated Syrian-born Lance Corporal, an absolutely delightful and fascinating person. Because of her particular abilities, she can go with units on a variety of missions and help calm a situation by speaking to the women and children, which is something no male Marine can do effectively. She has also done yeoman's work as a translator for the interrogators. All of that is even more impressive when you hear what career she walked away from to enlist in the Marine Corps: she was a practicing physician. I wouldn't have believed it unless I saw it myself."

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The sooner we teach the young that recoil does not hurt, the better we will be able to teach them to handle powerful firearms. I think it obvious that some novices are more distressed by the blast of discharge than by the blow. This is one reason for commencing training with a 22. I have never found this to be necessary, but in some cases it may help. The student should be shown that discharging the firearm is more pleasing than painful. The sense of force delivered, at will at the whim of the shooter, is highly gratifying, but we must work around this with the novice. The US rifle of 1903 and the US pistol of 1911 were wrongly presented to hundreds of thousands of recruits over a long period. Too many young men were led to think that these powerful firearms would punish the shooter on discharge. This was a psychological error which should never have been allowed to grow. Now that we use the "poodle-shooter," the problem hardly exists.

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At school long ago I was told of one of the early church fathers, Telemachus by name, who taught that one of the delights of the blessed in heaven would be looking over the ramparts and relishing the torments of the damned below. This struck us as a bit rough for a true Christian, but after our recent election I can see how it might apply to our current domestic scene. It also bears upon the discomfort of the European Left (but then we said we were not going to talk politics in this issue).

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We are sad to report the demise of Dr. Albert Pauckner, of Ansbach, Germany. I met Albert in connection with some classes I held in Europe, and later on when he got down to Rhodesia with us before that country was wrecked by Mugabe. Albert was a good shot and a good friend, and we had many pleasant memories to share. He got his buffalo plus other assorted game, and was always a general help to the scene. We shared each other's hospitality, both at home and abroad, and were pleased to consider him a good companion. His

spirit went wherever good spirits go, and we hope to join him there in due course. May he rest in peace!

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Reports from Iraq suggest that studies in practical pistolcraft should include a certain amount of practice in shooting while moving in a vehicle. This involves what may be called "negative lead" and it does not come naturally. That is to say that you shoot before you are on target, the degree depending upon the speed of the vehicle. I discovered this in shooting from the tricycle before we got involved in the current unpleasantness. It also applies to swordsmanship, in case anyone wants to use his sword while underway. We intend to try this with Churchill's Broomhandle Mauser.

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Gunsite is now teaching the use of the machine pistol, or "submachine gun." We never taught the machine pistol here at Gunsite when I was in charge, for various reasons. In my opinion, it is a slob's weapon, useful only by half-trained or poorly motivated troops. It hits no harder than a pistol and it is no more portable than a rifle. Fully automatic fire in a handheld weapon is a doubtful business, useful only to use up ammunition unnecessarily. But there are certain tasks for which the machine pistol may be recommended. One of these is boat-against-boat action in dim light, plus ship-against-boat action as in the repelling of borders. The machine pistol is also useful as a murder weapon wherein several unarmed victims are confined within an enclosed space. These uses never attracted me, and I did not think that Gunsite customers would be attracted either, but if machine pistol training is something Gunsite customers want, it will be provided. It has always seemed curious to me that European police have preferred the machine pistol to the shotgun, deeming the latter to be too barbarous, whereas in the United States the reverse is true, and the police prefer the shotgun to the MP.

Back when I was doing product evaluation for Uncle Sugar, I really enjoyed the machine pistol, since Uncle was providing the ammunition. In this job I got to be pretty good with the weapon, since I did a great deal of shooting with all sorts of models. The trick to managing fully automatic fire in a handheld weapon is to let the piece ride on its own recoil while the shooter releases vertical support during the burst. This is easy to learn, but it does not come naturally.

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Perhaps we should note that the ragheads killed three times as many Americans in their attack on New York as the Nips killed at Pearl Harbor. Human lives are not properly treated like box office scores, but when we speak of "Weapons of Mass Destruction," we should note that they include three categories at this time – nuclear, chemical and biological. Saddam Hussein used chemicals on the Kurds, but no nuclear bombs nor induced plagues – not that he would not have done so had he deemed it useful. Comrade Mugabe, down there in Africa, is fully as evil as Saddam Hussein, but possesses no nuclear capacity. He remains in office, however, insofar as no faction has got around to eliminating him. One wonders why not?

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Bears have proven uppity all this last summer and fall, both in Alaska and in the lower 48. Some people will not accept the fact that *bears are not cuddly*. They may seem so to the uninformed, but they are big, strong, dangerous animals, and they can kill you with very little effort. A recent incident in the Chugach Peninsula of Alaska was successfully managed with a 44 Magnum revolver. According to the story, this bear charged from cover without warning. The pistol did not provide a one-shot stop, but nevertheless it did the job.

We are always dubious about tales of unprovoked bear attacks, but we cannot simply dismiss them on that account. There are several sorts of things which may irritate a beast which are not duly apparent to an observer.

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In considering how times have changed during the 20th century, it appears that in the early days of military aviation everyone knew that it was Captain Roy Brown who shot down Manfred von Richthofen (or he thought he did). Does anyone today know the name of the soldier who gathered up Saddam Hussein? Is it that we are afraid of retribution?! If so, our loss of respect for heroism suggests a triumph of national cowardice.

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A correspondent recently asked me why I was "against" the pseudo-scouts now available. I am not against pseudo-scouts – which were, after all, the direct ancestor of the true scout. Scout I is an example. It now resides honorably with our number two daughter in Colorado. I killed my one and only lion with a pseudo-scout, which is now engraved as the "Lion Scout." It is just that you are no longer restricted to pseudo-scouts, since both the Steyr Scout and the Steyr Dragoon are available over the counter (the Dragoon now having been reset for production). When you can get the apotheosized Scout ready-made there is no need to put up with anything less.

The trouble here is that the virtues of the true Scout do not stand out on the bench rest at the rifle range. Those that I have tested shoot beautifully, but then so too do lesser guns. Group size is a worthy consideration, but if it is small enough there is no need to try to make it smaller, and no practical advantage is obtained if it is. It is nice to be able to shoot tiny shot groups on paper, but it is nicer to be able to snap a center hit from offhand on the quick count of three, which clocks at about 1½ seconds. A rifle and cartridge combination which encourages this performance is more serviceable and more important than a thumbnail three-shot group at 100.

It may be that I am beating this matter of the Scout rifle to death, if so I apologize, but a lifetime on the range and in the field has convinced me that I am on the right track.

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This continued discussion of the proper rewards for valor should be directed toward recognition of damage done to the enemy, rather than distress suffered by the warrior. Being hurt calls for no expertise, but wrecking the enemy may do so. Old timers may remember the Maulden cartoon from World War II in which the soldier at the aid station announces "Just give me a couple of band aids, doc. I already have a Purple Heart."

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The hunting season is not yet over, but the family freezers are full. Daughter Lindy put her elk down neatly at 182 yards with her Scout. One hundred and thirty-two pounds of dressed venison should certainly serve to hold us through the holidays.

Consideration of the gastronomic excellence of our wild game is a good subject for discussion in our forthcoming food book. In my opinion, it is not the species but the individual beast that should decide the discourse. When we have a choice of mule deer, whitetail, elk, pronghorn, bighorn, moose, and bison, we have room for plenty of discussion.

In my youth I decided that the Rocky Mountain bighorn was the tastiest of all wild game, but the splendid desert bighorn taken by John Gannaway did not measure up. Right now my own vote would be for the prime Texas bison taken at Indianhead. I am certainly willing to be shown the virtues of other offerings, and I really must get cracking on that food book. The clock ticks.

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We continue to reflect upon the need to identify our objective in this Holy War. We certainly have the ability to destroy our enemies; but first, of course, we must be able to point out who they are. The fanatics cannot be intimidated, since tactical suicide is in their minds the pathway to paradise. Therefore they must be personally destroyed. The policy was set forth at the notorious Siege of Beziers. "*Omnes moritatem. Deus suos cognoscet.*"

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It occurs to us (in regard to this current rash of evil extortion), that the payment of ransom should be treated as a crime. We preached this on our various training sessions in Latin America. It is hard to tell the near and dear that they will be punished for trying to obtain the release of a kidnap victim, but nonetheless it must be done. Even if the kidnappers return the victim unharmed, paying them off only renders their atrocity the more atrocious. Neither individuals nor states should surrender to extortion, which foulness must not be encouraged by making it profitable.

Lest we think all Europeans lean to the Left, consider this from our man in Belgium:

"As most `normal people' I am full with enthusiasm thanks to the superb results of the yesterday's US elections and want to share with you my joy.

"I think that this may be the most important positive event for the near and even far future of humanity!

"The challenges are huge but I feel sure that Mr. Bush has the capacity of a winner and that the next four years will be extremely interesting."

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

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## Happy New Year!

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Having packed up and put away the year 2004, we can look back upon it with mixed emotions. Certainly it has been an interesting year and might well be subtitled "Troubled Times." The election takes first place in newsworthiness, and as with most elections it was what might be called a qualified triumph. We put the right man back in office, for which we are truly thankful, but at the same time we are depressed at the thought that there are so many people on the other side of the political spectrum. Having spent all our lives attempting to conserve the republic left to us by the Founding Fathers, we cannot help but wonder who all those other people are. American government has traditionally been studied in our intermediate level public schools, but somehow its nature has not been studied seriously enough. The United States Constitution, a political/philosophical marvel, stands as a monument to direct simplicity unmatched elsewhere. Throughout the world during the 19th century new governments have been established fundamentally on the example of the US Constitution, yet today we see all sorts of specious attempts to improve upon it. Well, we have now won another round, and we face the coming four years in high spirits. That is to say, some of us do. A curious and unhappy faction in both the American Left and the European Socialists seems to feel that the "nanny state" is the way to go, and that the individual citizen is neither capable of improving upon it nor even understanding it.

Well, enough of that. Let us now tackle today's problems with high spirits and glorious confidence. We welcome friendship, but we do not really need it. If our antagonists wish to view us askance, that is their problem. We remain the last best hope of Earth.

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The hunting year was a great success, and the freezers are full. We had an interesting taste test here inviting opinion on the comparative savour of Texas whitetail, Idaho elk and bison. Utilizing the system, we made all fondue bourguignonne in which individual bite-sized chunks were toasted individually on long forks. We could not definitely establish the superiority in flavor of our samples. Clearly much depends upon the individual animal taken, the time of year, the conditions of the kill, and the particular animal involved. Let us just say that it was all good, and we render appropriate thanks to daughter Lindy for the chance to dine so well.

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There has been a good deal of hazardous action in the game fields this year. Various hunters have established proof that dangerous game is truly dangerous. At least three people have been killed by buffalo. One man was killed by a lioness and another was killed instantly by his hunting partner. The most recent buffalo fatality to come to our attention is reported from Kenya. The prominent British wildlife artist, Simon Combes, was out for a walk in the Great Rift Valley. He was unarmed, as hunting is forbidden in Kenya. According to the news report on the subject, the buffalo appeared "out of nowhere" and beat him to death with both hoof and horn. Wandering around the African bush without a rifle may be compared to driving the wrong way on a one-way street at 2 o'clock in the morning. Gunsite Rule Number 3 for dangerous game is never to enter the wilderness without a powerful rifle and the skill to use it well. Getting squashed by a buffalo is a romantic way to check out, but pretty much unnecessary. Oddly enough, there are both amateur and professional hunters in Africa who do not understand this. Gunhandling is so conspicuously bad in Africa that we are surprised that the death toll from rifle fire is not higher than it is. Danger is indeed the spice of life, as we have long taught, and as Fred Burnham insisted, those who are looking for a safe thing can stay away from Africa.

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And we also note that Ruger now has a couple of new 45 caliber pistols which promise well on the drawing board.

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Here at Gunsite we seem to be receiving much better news from the troops in the field than is furnished by the press. Among other things, the men out there at the cutting edge manifest conspicuously high morale. It may be that the only people who wish to communicate with us are the kind of people who enjoy what they are doing. War is never fun, but it does offer moments of grandeur to people who are tuned that way, and most of them seem to think that we are glad to hear about their efforts.

For example, "We have been in contact with the enemy since we got here. We have sustained three wounded, have killed over 150 of the bad guys."

This may be partly because today's warriors are much freer to express themselves in letters than we were in World War II or in Vietnam, but I believe the main reason is that the coverage we receive from our friends at the front treats of the smallest units – individuals or squads – and is not involved with strategic concerns. Also it may be that we have discovered how to employ our technical advantage in inner city warfare. It turns out that that magnificent 120 main gun of the Abrams tank serves beautifully for reducing urban strong points at short range. However that may be, our people up front are doing a splendid job and merit the highest praise from the old folks at home.

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We note that the people at Ruger are now marketing a pseudo-scout which they call the "Frontiersman" (for obscure reasons). It misses much of the virtue of a true Scout, but it is a step in the right direction.

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It takes a long time for new ideas to catch hold with the manufacturers, and that is understandable. Nobody wants to get caught with a lemon – but innovators should not expect quick results – at least with personal firearms. I remember that before World War II I suffered a good deal of derision when I went afield with a scope-sighted rifle. Now even the military establishments of the world are turning to glass sights, and a personal sporting rifle can hardly be sold unless it mounts glass on top. And we also can point out that the 45 auto-pistol, while long rejected by the law enforcement establishment, is finally coming into its own.

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When we established Gunsite we thought of it more as a university than a locus for repeat training, but things have changed. Today Gunsite may be considered the world's best shooting gallery, where people can return again and again to sharpen their skills. The world offers fewer and fewer places to shoot, and even those established shooting ranges are often opposed to *practical* shooting. Since I have stopped teaching here, I tend to lose contact with new developments and systems, but still I strive to keep in touch despite "the indignities of age."

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The National Rifle Association performed its usual and essential role in the last election. The NRA is the largest and most effective civil rights organization in the world, and it is an honor to belong to it. The association was not organized originally to safeguard American liberty, but rather to improve marksmanship in the public at large. Today, however, the NRA stands its ground in the forefront of American liberty, and it protects not only the American sport shooter but additionally the whole concept of the Bill of Rights. If the Second Amendment did not stand, the other nine amendments would be without teeth.

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Despite the common use of the term, there is no such thing as an "expanding" bullet, since the projectile must finish its task with less mass than it began with. For a long time I have used the term "frangible" to denote a projectile which deforms on impact, increasing the diameter of the bullet channel at the sacrifice of penetration. Now it turns out that the term frangible is being used to denote bullets which fracture radically on impact, with the object of rendering such ammunition suitable for use on indoor ranges. I do not see that this form of projectile can be any safer than other descriptions, since what comes out of that barrel comes out hard

and quite capable of causing serious damage. You may recall that some years ago a young man in show business killed himself very dead with a blank cartridge, assuming that a "blank" was not dangerous. Blank cartridges have their uses, but they are decidedly not harmless, and I do not see that this new product advertised as frangible offers any serious advantage in safety. The four elemental safety rules handle the safety problem very well, and gadgetry affords no improvements.

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Anyone present know what a spontoon is? A spontoon is a "half pike," according to our dictionary, and constitutes a relatively short, retainable form of spear. Now when you hear some crusty old buzzard shout, "Where is my spontoon?" you will know about his military background.

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We have been getting good results in Mesopotamia with the 50 caliber BMG rifles. Clearly the excessive weight of these instruments is no special drawback in stationary warfare, but one wonders if the advantage obtained with the big cartridge could not be had with the 30. When you get to the point where a shot is too long for a 30 (properly set up), you have reached the point where you cannot see the target. Much discussion could be expended here, but I do not have the laboratory nor the staff to draw a conclusion. A thousand yards is a long way, and people treat it more in conversation than in practice. We saw a recent note from the war zone claiming a decisive and *predicted* hit at 2,400 yards. Here from my studio window at Gunsite I can pick up targets at a bit over a 1,000 yards. If I double that distance or more, I am merely hitting the highway. Those of you who have been to Gunsite will know how far that is. I suppose we could see a man at 2,400 yards on a clear, flat, snow-covered landscape if he were wearing a flame-orange jumpsuit. These legendary shots are the stuff of endless bull sessions, and have been since the invention of gun powder, but let us leave them where they belong in the realm of fancy.

We do not know if the popularity of portable range finders is going to change much about hunting legends, but I imagine that the principal use of these devices is to establish an exact range *after* the target has been hit.

There is a big difference, of course, between the hunting field and the battlefield. The hunter owes a clean, instant, one-stop shot to his game, while the sniper is justified in taking a chance and hoping for the best. Thus we may be excused for bragging about sniper kills, where we would be properly put down for trying too long a shot on game. Anything over 300 meters calls for apologies from a hunter, and really good explanations may be accepted but should never be extolled.

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I weary of these tales of "sacrifice" that are thrown to us by the media. I know something of war, and I never encountered anything resembling a deliberate sacrifice, nor have I encountered anyone who has done so. But at this point it would appear that anyone who stubs his toe on the way to the shower is said to have "sacrificed" his foot for the cause. Colleague Barrett Tillman tells of a case in which a member of a B17 crew gave up his parachute to a wounded comrade then rode a wounded bird into his death. That qualifies, but it is pretty unusual. I have seen some acts of true heroism and heard of some more, but they were the result of what might be called "spiritual fire" and in no way matters of sacrifice.

Possibly these Islamic crazies who blow themselves up in the effort to destroy *kaffirs*, are sacrificing something in return for something, but it must be a pretty wild proposition, even to an Arab. It would be nice if people on our side would avoid the term, unless they truly mean what they say.

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I have acquired a Broomhandle Mauser on loan from *Shooting Master* John Gannaway, and I propose to do an article on the subject. This is truly a weird piece, not filling any recognizable tactical role. A model of 1896, it stands on the mechanical brink between *then* and *now*. It could hardly be less handy. Its weird appearance and structural ingenuity make it a charming plaything and it is widely known as the weapon used by Winston Churchill in the cavalry charge at Omdurman. It was used both in Spain and China as a mode of execution. With some photographic help from Bob Shimizu, I hope to produce an amusing magazine piece.

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And now we hear the report of a gorgeous 63–inch kudu from Namibia taken nicely with a Steyr Scout. Any full–grown prime kudu is a magnificent wall ornament, but Hemingway was challenged to find a 50–incher. Now let us put down our tape measures.

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Every once in a while we feel the need to mention miscarriages of justice widely publicized in the US. O.J. Simpson walks free, though there is no doubt in anyone's mind that he murdered his wife. Ron Horiuchi murdered Vicky Weaver by means of his sniper–school skill. He was not even reprimanded, much less disciplined. Some people killed Vince Foster before planting him in the park, and the people who did that are very well aware of the circumstances. Future historians will toy with the idea that around the turn of the 21st century it was sometimes possible to commit first degree murder at no legal risk in the United States – if you were a very wealthy celebrity with "minority" status. I thought I would mention that again. It does deserve mention.

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Collectors – of anything – are a special breed. This passion to own something that is in some way peculiar is hard to explain, but frequently encountered. I happen to own a Smith & Wesson 44 Magnum of early manufacture. This piece sets the Smith & Wesson collectors to slaving, not because of its intrinsic merit (which is high), *but because it has the wrong number of screws in the frame*. Does this matter? Apparently it does. And a bevy of experts have simply concluded that it does not exist. I have established three records with it and taken several head of big game in both America and Africa, but collectors get all excited about it apparently because it does not exist. It is not an M29, because it was made and sold before Smith & Wesson used their current system of designation. One expert at the factory insists that it was totally rebuilt after it left the factory giving it, among other things, a new barrel. The motive for doing this is beyond me, but the pistol is there in my armory, and the last time I went down and looked, it was still there. Fine goings on!

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Our personal tactical studies from Mesopotamia conclude that the 223 cartridge (5.56) is a pretty good man–stopper, if you hit your man three or four times in the center of the chest. Just how the United States military service got saddled with the mouse gun is a story in itself.

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How many heros can you name? The war in Iraq has produced scores, perhaps hundreds; but the American news media appear unable to discover them. The Alvin Yorks and the Audie Murphys and the Hannekens are carrying on in the traditions of American military heroism, but to find out about this it is necessary to establish one's own reporting system. Perhaps a set of decals to be worn on the windshield might help. We could do this in a small way here at Gunsite by issuing windshield stars to *family members* who rate them. All in favor say aye!

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We have long insisted that there is no such thing as a really bad hunt, just as there is no such thing as a really good election, but I suppose if we could look long enough and hard enough we could find one. I intend to ask Craig Boddington, who currently stands as the most widely recognized American big game hunter, about his opinion on this, but in the meantime I will consider an example set forth in the works of H.C. Maydon in his book on Indian hunting.

On this occasion he was seeking a 45–inch markhor, which was thought to be off the scale. He and a friend held a conference at Srinagar, establishing that if he could be shown a 45–inch markhor he would pay double the accepted rate to the outfitter. When Maydon and his friend set these conditions all but two of the attending conferees packed up and left.

So he and his friend made their arrangements, obtained the necessary leave papers and set forth up the Valley of the Indus.

They walked, and walked, and walked. No helicopters, no jeeps, no roads, just an endless hike.

In due course they reached the point where they had to cross the Indus River, by this time a relatively smallish stream. They crossed on a rope bridge which bounced around in terrifying fashion. Just contemplating the attempt was enough to freeze the major's soul, but they got across, and established camp. The local hunter set forth immediately and returned before sundown with a satisfied look on his face.

Bright and early the next morning they began skirting the gorge, rounding one tributary ridge after another.

Without ceremony they found the prize. It was seen there across a gorge enjoying the morning sun. It was totally unaware. The range was plus or minus 200.

He missed!

He was stationary. The target was stationary. The ram was the greatest that anybody had ever seen, estimated closer to 50 inches than 45, *and he missed*. Now all that remained was to cross that horror of a bridge and hike back out – a three weeks effort.

General Boddington is familiar with the works of Major Maydon, so he doubtless knows this story. But as of now, it is the worst hunting yarn I have ever heard. If anyone in the *family* has one to top it, let me know.

Major Maydon was one of those Englishmen hard to describe. Hunting was his passion, and the British military service encouraged it in those days. He was, however, uninterested in guns or shooting. He used a somewhat customized 7.92 military Mauser with open iron sights. He never learned to use the loop sling. He knew almost nothing about the mechanics of the kill, and he made no effort to learn – but he really got his money's worth, possibly more than a marksman could have.

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Overheard in San Francisco:

"We shouldn't think too badly of the Japanese. After all, they would not have attacked Pearl Harbor if we had not hit them first with the atom bomb."

Honest to God!

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We note that the venerable arms makers Holland & Holland are now featuring new belted rimless cartridges in sizes 400 and 416. We can see absolutely no need for any such thing. The conspicuous needs are for marksmanship and gunhandling, but you cannot produce packages of talent. We have been getting pretty good results here at Gunsite over the years. Field reports suggest that the equipment available through most of the 20th century is quite adequate to the task of hunting big game. The test of battle, however, calls for a degree of nerve control that is both difficult to define and problematical to achieve. A proper mind-set is the greater need in combat success than any sort of equipment. We can work on that, and we have succeeded to a gratifying extent, but the product is difficult to advertise and still less to achieve.

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On the other side of the procurement story we have the magnificent 45 auto. In the 93 years since its adoption, this piece has established itself as one of the conspicuous mechanical wonders of the 20th century. It acquired a somewhat fanciful reputation in World War I and then slid into abeyance until the discovery of practical pistolcraft somewhere around 1959. Its unequalled merit was overlooked for a generation due to the assumption that target shooting was a valid test of the qualities of a handgun. When practical shooting competition was established in the American Southwest in the 60s, enough people found out about the 1911 auto-pistol to attract its now deserved reputation. When practical pistol competition became recognized worldwide, the 1911 regained the glory it won in World War I. This was only partly due to its performance in practical matches, but what we have come to believe even more at this time is its extraordinary *endurability* under conditions of rough service. We hear back from Iraq that the 1911 keeps on working under conditions

of neglect that would stop almost anything else. Maintenance of personal weapons should be the province of the sergeants. But, of course, we do not have sergeants anymore, but rather "specialists," and evidently we do not have specialists in smallarms maintenance. But the 1911 goes right on working, even in the sands of the two rivers. One Gunsiter reports back that he has seen a pistol so clogged with filth and grit that its detail work was almost invisible, but went on firing as if recently cleaned.

The word comes back to us that there are two kinds of troops in the battle zone now – those who have a 1911 45 auto and those who wish they had.

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We emphasize again that the terms *liberty* and *freedom* are not equivalent. Freedom is a physical condition denoting the absence of bonds or bondage. Liberty, on the other hand, is a political condition certified by the social right to do whatever does not infringe upon the liberty of your neighbor. You are free once you have jumped over the fence, but liberty is not a characteristic of the nanny state in which the government tells you what you must or must not do in all aspects of your life. A man may live a quite satisfactory life without either freedom or liberty, *if he is that sort of man*. Such a man manifests the slave personality, and may be kept happy as long as he is sure of "bread and games." Men – some men – may be willing to fight for liberty, but they will not do so until they understand exactly what is involved. This is how it is possible for us to see catastrophic wars fought gallantly by men who do not know what they are fighting about. It has been my extraordinary good fortune to be involved in various sorts of wars, and I have discovered both good men and bad on both sides.

I was fully exposed to the theory of government at a very good university, and for this I am grateful. I have fought without restraint alongside and against both good men and bad, and it has been possible to observe the triumph of the human spirit for both good cause and bad. In much of the 20th century, the Communists established a system of political commissars in their armies, but this system worked only to a modest degree, for it is very difficult to recruit and train a man to handle the job of political commissar effectively. George Washington faced a formidable task in trying to explain to the colonists that they should risk their lives to get a king off their backs. Lincoln had an equally bitter task, and was on at least one occasion required to turn his weapons against his own side. Today it is not easy to explain to the troops that the political consideration of liberty is worth the sacrifice of one's life. It can be done and it has been done, but it is never easy.

Most men will fight well for hearth and home, as long as they fully understand the threat. Beyond that, Clausewitz says, war is the continuation of politics by other means. This sort of discussion is essential to military morale, but certainly it is easier said than done.

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