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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

## Volume Thirteen, 2005

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 1

January 2005

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## Practice Time

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We opened the new administration (second term) on a fairly cheerful note. The assault rifle ban was allowed to die, and the courts decided (once and for all, we would like to think) that the Second Amendment protects the individual rather than the National Guard. Crime rates continue to drop, due in some measure to more reasonable regulations regarding personal armament for defense. Our gun makers continue to offer a selection of instruments which ought to be enough to satisfy almost anyone.

The world scene is not so bright, since the nanny states do not seem to understand that it is the responsibility of the individual to protect himself and his family, in the absence of the state. We remain the last best hope of Earth, which would be a rather bleak prospect if it were not that we are now the one great super power. It is comforting, in a way, to observe the ineptitude of our world enemies. Our optimism is fortified by the understanding that we now alone cultivate the warrior spirit. It is not only permitted, but fashionable, for the individual citizen to possess the means and the skill with which to protect himself, his property, his family, and his political rights. There are cultural losers among us, but as of now they constitute a minority. Thus American shooters stand against the encroachments of those who do not believe in liberty.

It is vital, of course, for us to keep up the battle. Despite our majority position, there are plenty of Americans who do not value their political heritage, and who would reject it if given the chance. It is up to us to see that they do not get the chance.

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We note with some amusement the proliferation of pistol lights in various configurations. We cannot actually call these things "coaxial," since the light and the bore do not constitute a single axis. However, the idea is there. Your illuminator should show you approximately where your bullet will strike, but we should not view this as a sighting system since its alignment is insecure and it tends to slow down the firing stroke. I experimented with this many years ago when we were still living in California, and found it more useful as a shotgun enhancer, in its combative sense. You are never going to improve your skeet score with a light or a laser, nor will you improve your tally on ducks, but it may be a distinct asset in house clearing situations. I believe the combat shotgun to be the most efficient house defense implement, and I think the light offers certain advantages in repelling boarders after dark. It is not widely offered in this fashion over-the-counter, and moreover it does not help the expert as much as it does the novice.

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Did your grade school teacher ever point out to you that 50 percent of the people you encounter in any situation are below average? Do not let that spoil your day.

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It is annoying to hear of people who regard a court-martial as a punishment in itself. A court-martial is a means of determining guilt or innocence, and a "full and honorable acquittal" by a court is the equivalent of a commendation. Soldiers have frequently requested courts-martial in order to clear the record in their direction. To say that a man will be court-martialed in no sense means that he will be punished. That is for the court to decide. The court-martial may be the equivalent of a medal, in some circumstances.

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I do not own the dictionary, and I certainly cannot tell people how to use it, but it is annoying to introduce a

term and then see people pick it up and run the wrong way with it. As I have often pointed out, I do not own the term "scout," but I did introduce it to the sport shooting community a good many years ago to describe a rifle of certain definite attributes. I do, therefore, try to define the "scout rifle" correctly and to resist its imprecise use. For example, one of the qualities of the scout rifle should be its adaptability to readily obtainable ammunition. Therefore the scout, as I see it, is a 308. Certainly there is plenty of 223, 30 Russian—short and 30—06 ammunition obtainable worldwide, but the carbine cartridges are underpowered and the 30—06 calls for a long action, which while not exclusionary adds a bit to both bulk and weight in a proper combination.

When we set up the criteria for the Scout at the factory in Austria, we agreed upon just two calibers, 308 and 7—08, the latter for use in those situations where the 308 is forbidden or restricted as a "military cartridge." But immediately the factory people pushed through a rifle in 223, simply to take advantage of the immense stores of this ammunition available throughout the world. The fact remains, however, that no rifle in caliber 223 should be called a Scout.

The factory people offered a notion that its proposed scout rifle should be available in a heavier caliber, and suggested a 9.3 round based on the 404 Jeffrey case. This was to make the piece legitimate in those jurisdictions which enforce a caliber floor for dangerous game. The suggested designation was "375 Steyr," but I pointed out that 376 would be an improvement in avoiding confusion at the gun store.

So the "376 Steyr" was born, using readily available 375 caliber bullets. The results on the test range were interesting. I thought the weapon would have to be excessively heavy to take care of the stouter barrel. As it turns out, the resulting increase in weight was almost undetectable.

Since the ballistics of the 376 Steyr (which I wanted to call the "Dragoon") are only a hair short of the redoubtable 375 Holland & Holland cartridge, some of the factory people thought that a "magnum carbine" would kick the teeth out of the customer. Well it does kick, but not enough to bother a practiced hand, and an unpracticed hand is likely to be bothered even by the kick of a 308 scout. We have now tested the Dragoon on shooters with various builds and degrees of experience, but the stock design by Zedrosser and Bilgeri at the factory is so extraordinarily comfortable (for most people) that in the field the Dragoon has turned into a masterpiece. The factory rejects the "Dragoon" designation, so the rifle in my possession now is the only one in existence, so far as I know. My version is stamped "376 Dragoon," but all others are stamped "376 Steyr."

The result, as I have discovered over the past several years in both Africa and Alaska, is a triumph. It puts a 270—grain bullet, of ample impact area, out of its 19—inch barrel at an amazing 2450 — measured. It starts the 300—grain solid at around 2200, depending whose bullet you use. It works just fine when properly placed, of course. If you do not put the bullet in the right place it hardly matters what bullet it is. I took the bison at 82 yards (lasered), a bit high in the shoulder. He ran 22 paces and dropped dead. I had to take the shot from offhand since I could not lower the sight line and no rest was available.

Now every season I get a few more case—studies involving the Dragoon. It combines the "friendliness" of the Scout with the authority of the 375 H&H. There is a definite place for such a gun, but it may be appreciated only by people who use the piece intelligently in the field. It has not been marketed with any great success, at least in North America, but this does not matter to those who know. "I've got mine, how about you?"

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We wish that people would quit calling our big Western pussy cat a "mountain lion." This practice is not exactly wrong, but it is confusing. No one who has ever got a good close look at a real lion is ever going to confuse him with a cougar, a puma, or a painter, or whatever. We have a pretty good population of cougars here in our neighborhood just now, and while they should not be treated as harmless, neither should they be considered a pressing danger. Be alert, keep your distance, and all will be well.

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We are told that the excellent 45 caliber, 230-grain JTC bullet for the 45 auto is no longer being made. I suggest you get yours while you can, and use something else for practice.

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It seems that brown bears are now becoming a problem in Romania. I do not know many people who spend time in rural Romania, but those who do are duly warned.

We have long understood that while the big brown bears (grizzly and otherwise) are dangerous to man, they rarely regard human beings as prey, whereas if the American black bear attacks people, he usually does so with a meal in mind. A correspondent from British Columbia tells us that his bears have come to regard the sound of a shot as a dinner bell, since their experience leads them to expect a gut pile after the hunter has departed. This has sometimes led to misunderstandings about just what is meant by "departed." If you are hunting in bear country, and not necessarily for bear, be aware that your shot may invite extra guests for dinner. Be alert, as somebody once said.

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Fear is an interesting study, and various authoritative people have studied it. Not everyone reads their work, of course, and the effect of fear on the marksman is not as well understood as it should be. An expert marksman is exclusively aware of his marksmanship at the moment of truth. This does not make him fearless, but it does make him unaffected during the few seconds necessary for him to bring off the shot. Thus a truly masterful shot displays a coolness under crisis which may be misinterpreted as fearlessness. When you shoot for blood you concentrate totally upon two things – your sight picture and the surprise break. No matter what is threatening you or at what distance, you are not thinking about it. In that moment you simply cannot be bothered! This may be why certain people have demonstrated astonishing coolness in the face of death but who do not do very well in formal marksmanship competition. The degree of concentration necessary for a perfect shot is the same on a charging lion as in a formalized shooting match, but the hunter need only bring this off once, whereas the target master must keep on doing it time and again up to 60 shots without fail. In a successful pistol engagement the same conditions apply. If you are forced to shoot an armed goblin, you should be so concerned with two things that you simply cannot muff the shot. Those two things are *front-sight* and *surprise*. They should be automatic, and if they are, you win. That is where the color code comes in. In *Condition Red*, which is the condition which you shoot from, you cannot be afraid – you are too busy with the important matters required for successful marksmanship.

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We're off to the SHOT Show presently and look forward to it with mixed emotions. Each affair we have attended in the past has been presented as miles of displays attended by thousands of salesmen. There is nothing wrong with that, but I am a rather poor prospect for a sales program. The thing is: *I have my guns* and I simply do not need anything new. It has been said that the object of salesmanship is to make a possible purchaser discontented with what he has. The people I know have no need to be discontented – for the most part. That is one of the good things about a good firearm. If you own a good one, you do not need a new one. This makes life miserable for the salesman.

But not necessarily. There are sport shooters – a surprisingly large number of sport shooters – who regard quantity as more significant than quality. Showing such a man something new entices him only because he does not at this point have such a one. So we come up with some very strange and inexplicable products which fill no known technical or tactical niche. The guns available on the market today are quite superior to the shooters who may buy them. On the day that you can shoot up to your rifle, your name must be inscribed among the immortals.

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I have been teaching the Color Code for about 30 years now, but I have not been teaching it well. I keep seeing something handed back to me which purports to be what I have taught, but which is not. Clearly I am not as much of a teacher as I would like to be.

I believe I can speak freely of the Color Code because as it applies to defensive pistolcraft I invented it. I

cannot, of course, say that what I think is right, but only that what I have preached is just that – what I have preached. It works, and it satisfies me, but not all the time. I have scores of cases now from men I have taught and who have reported back to me that their understanding of a Color Code saved their lives. This, of course, is very satisfying, but I do wish the matter were more clearly understood.

*The Color Code refers not to a condition of peril, but rather to a condition of readiness to take life.* Fortunately most people are very reluctant to take lethal action against another human being. Most people are reluctant to shoot for blood on a harmless game animal, until they become used to it. To press the trigger on a human adversary calls for a wrenching effort of will which is always difficult to achieve and sometimes apparently impossible. Thus we live our days in *Condition White*, which may or may not have anything to do with our danger, since quite frequently we are in deadly danger and do not realize it. Any time you cross directions out on a two-lane highway you are at the mercy of that character coming towards you in the opposite direction. Usually he is okay, but when he is under some sort of chemical influence, or is psychologically upset, he may only twitch his wheel to produce a multiple fatal accident. Most of us would prefer to live in *Condition White* permanently, and many do, but those who are more aware of the nature of things are often in Yellow, which is a condition in which we are aware that the world is full of hazards which are human, and some of which may be obviated by our own defensive action. When one is in *Condition Yellow* he is aware that *today may be the day*. He is not in a combat mood, nor is he aware of any specific situation which may call for action on his part. There is a vital difference between White and Yellow, and it has to do not with any specific enemy or a set of circumstances, but rather with your awareness that you individually may have to take decisive action on this very day. If you are attacked in *Condition White*, you will probably die, or at least need a stretcher. If you are attacked in *Condition Yellow*, you will probably win, assuming that you are armed, awake and aware. The difference does not lie in the deadliness of the hazard facing you, but rather in your willingness to take a very unusual action.

If in the course of events you become aware of the possible existence in your presence of a lethal adversary, you switch from Yellow to Orange. The difference lies in the specific nature of your presumed antagonist, not in his evident competence or attitude. In Yellow you say to yourself, "I may have to shoot today." I may actually have to press my trigger on a human adversary, but I don't know who or where.

When you detect the presence of a target who may be the one you will have to engage, you shift from Yellow to Orange. In Yellow your mind-set is "I may have to shoot today." In Orange it is "I may have to shoot *him* today." At this point your normal reluctance becomes easier to overcome. Legal and moral aspects of the conflict are lowered and have been dismissed from your mind. Your attitude is dictated by the presence of that enemy standing there. *You may have to shoot him, now, today*. What is needed is a trigger. The trigger is the act establishing that the situation is indeed a matter of lethal conflict. This is *Condition Red*, and in Red you have solved the psychological problem and have no further concerns beyond the technical. In Red you are *go*, and your mind is concerned only with front-sight and surprise.

Moving from the various Conditions into each other is easy to accomplish once it is understood. If you are attacked in White you will lose the fight. In Yellow you will have the advantage of initiative response over your antagonist. In Orange you are pretty safe, provided you are armed, alert and aware. In Red you win. Simple, isn't it? Clearly you cannot go any further than Red because in Red you have already made the lethal decision. Complications are unproductive.

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We are on the verge of abandoning The Project. You may recall that was the task of putting 20 shots into a 20-inch circle in 20 seconds at 1000 yards. The goal itself may be too difficult, as some people insist, but the problem is more administrative than physical. I simply do not have the staff necessary to set up the task, and I do not know anyone who has. However, if any of the faithful wish to pursue the problem, please go ahead, starting at closer ranges and moving out. On one occasion back at Big Bear, I got a clean score at 630 yards on our steel there which measured 16"×18". I did this with a G3, which is a very sound weapon if you can install

a good trigger in it. Of course 630 yards is a long way short of 1000, but then I do not consider myself a candidate for the ultimate honors. Somebody else may be, and I would like to see him show me.

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We should take note that this indeed is practice time in the Northern Hemisphere. These winter months should be utilized by the Gunsite Orange *family* in tuning marksmanship skills, as well as keeping track of equipment. It is important to remember that you do not have to go to the range and shoot live ammunition in order to conduct practice. Once you have obtained a good measure of competence, you know where the bullet went when the primer popped. You can test this pretty well without expending ammunition. With the rifle much of this time should be devoted to quick acquisition of position, including quick looping up of the strap. You can do this by conscientious work in your living room. You should go from standing to prone in a matter of five seconds or less, and from standing to sitting in three. Start by working with the rifle slung in a travel condition and then progress to commencing with the rifle in *Condition 3*, but do not let it get perfunctory. Every time that striker goes forward, you must tell yourself precisely where that shot would have gone had the piece been loaded. (With the Scout you should practice deploying the bipod.) Any sort of target index will do, from a doorknob to a light switch, but one of the best is your television screen. You will have displayed humanoid targets, usually in motion and for an undetermined space of time. The television additionally affords a proper measure of target discrimination – shoot only the bad guys.

With the pistol procedure is much the same, but the starting position may be more varied. As somebody said, you can't make an appointment for an emergency, and the pistol is an emergency weapon, therefore you should commence dry practice from any assumed position and the target selected should appear in any direction.

It is unfortunately necessary to point out that we occasionally have a nasty negligent discharge on the part of people who start from an unverified position. The procedure for dry practice off the range is carefully instilled at school here at Gunsite, but nothing is infallible – least of all people. Last year we heard of a very bad one which had fatal results. Neither drugs nor alcohol was involved, but the procedures were incorrectly observed. There are those who would say that dry practice off the range is inherently unsafe and should not be attempted. This is rather like saying that driving a car in traffic should be forbidden because it has been known to result fatally. Safety, of course, is a vital consideration, but we cannot seek to eliminate human error just because it sometimes occurs. I marvel that I put in as much time as I did in the company of armed men without ever encountering a negligent discharge. All of my people were armed all the time and yet nobody ever shot anybody – by accident.

All it takes is a nickel's worth of brain power, and despite evidence to the contrary, that is not impossible to obtain.

So keep your practice up during the downtime. Atrocious gunhandling is one of those things that haunts us in the field. If you know the basic four rules, and observe them religiously, you simply cannot have an "accident." We would like to think that nobody will adventure afield without being exposed to proper safety training. We cannot correct the world, but we can indeed keep swinging at the problem.

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In view of the various high quality air rifles now on the market, we consider the case of a friend of ours who is a very fine shot and has set up his backyard and vicinity for air gun control of pigeons. Pigeons can be a nasty nuisance, but the trajectory of a subsonic air gun missile is so curved that one's environment must be studied and calibrated so that wherever the shooter is and wherever the bird is he will know exactly where to hold. Only head shots work, so the target is no larger than a quarter. This calls for good equipment and a good marksman. Also it is frowned upon in some circles. Still, it seems to me an attractive idea, and a way to keep in practice during the off season.

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Among the other horror stories we get from Africa are those of people who insist *after the hunt has commenced* that they cannot shoot without a rest. The problems of the professional hunter are all but insurmountable. The client is paying, but he cannot buy character, and for crisis management, character is the essential. Crisis is not always a feature of the hunt for dangerous game, *but it can be*, and the professional hunter must be prepared for it. This is a problem that money will not solve.

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We continue to get wonderful reports from the battlefield, not from the press or the tube, but from personal communication with personal friends who are on duty at this time in the sand box. Colonel Bob Young has kept up his contacts with active duty Marines in most satisfactory fashion, and the rewards are very great. Here in my hand is a letter from a man who has been in action for most of a month during which time his outfit has scored 147 kills in return for two serious hospitalization casualties on our side. The media bleep continuously about our so-called butcher's bill, and certainly we should be aware of the fact that our volunteer warriors in Mesopotamia are indeed in harm's way. It is embarrassing to reflect upon the amount of hoopla which we see displayed on the screen at a time when our best and bravest are being shot at in our defense. Personally I never thought much about this matter of volunteering. When your country is at war you go fight it, and this is not a matter for exhortation or political discourse. We recall the case of the Shoshone war band which showed up complete with one 30-30 rifle per man the week after Pearl Harbor, and simply wanted to have the enemy pointed out to them. "We hear there's a war going on and we want to go fight it." War is a bad thing, but it should not be regarded as the worst of all evils. Like war, death is to be avoided, but not at the cost of dignity. The American military tradition is a gallant one and should be explained to the young at the mother's knee. As it was said in World War II, "We're in it, let's win it."

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It seems to us that while we are involved in reporting casualties and awards here and there, we should consider the possibility of freedom from taxation as one of the perks of a Medal of Honor. The man who rates the Medal of Honor has certainly paid his way, and should not be troubled further by tax collectors. This would cost the government practically nothing, and yet it would show that our hearts are in the right place. There may be things wrong with this idea, but I think it is worth a try.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Special Edition

February 2005

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## UK Report

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This is not an issue of the Commentaries but it is being forwarded to *family members* on our mailing list. It think it is well worth the rather expensive effort.

I have rarely seen our position expressed so well.

Jeff Cooper, February 2005

*Report from Trevor R. Booker, Brightlingsea, Essex.* Contrary to reports, the shooting community on this side of the pond is not dead and has not given up the fight, despite an urbanite, socialist government and a largely hostile press. The armed crime figures in the United Kingdom are alarming and rise with each piece of restrictive legislation that comes into force. The climate may be changing, however, and some folk are beginning to accept what we take as given, that a disarmed populace is vulnerable to crime and coercion.

The following item was published in a major broadsheet newspaper, the *Sunday Telegraph*, 28th January 2005:

### **There's Only One Way To Protect Ourselves – And Here's The Proof**

By Richard Munday

Today, 96 years ago, London was rocked by a terrorist outrage. Two Latvian anarchists, who had crossed the Channel after trying to blow up the president of France, attempted an armed wages robbery in Tottenham. Foiled at the outset when the intended victims fought back, the anarchists attempted to shoot their way out.

A dramatic pursuit ensued involving horses and carts, bicycles, cars and a hijacked tram. The fleeing anarchists fired some 400 shots, leaving a policeman and a child dead, and some two dozen other casualties, before they were ultimately brought to bay. They had been chased by an extraordinary posse of policemen and local people, armed and unarmed. Along the way, the police (whose gun cupboard had been locked, and the key mislaid) had borrowed at least four pistols from passers-by in the street, while other armed citizens joined the chase in person.

Today, when we are inured to the idea of armed robbery and drive-by shootings, the aspect of the "Tottenham Outrage" that is most likely to shock is the fact that so many ordinary members of the public at that time should have been carrying guns in the street. Bombarded with headlines about an emergent "gun culture" in Britain now, we are apt to forget that the real novelty is the notion that the general populace in this country should be disarmed.

In a material sense, Britain today has much less of a "gun culture" than at any time in its recent history. A century ago, the possession and carrying of firearms was perfectly normal here. Firearms were sold without licence in gunshops and ironmongers in virtually every town in the country, and grand department stores such

as Selfridge's even offered customers an in-house range. The market was not just for sporting guns; there was a thriving domestic industry producing pocket pistols and revolvers, and an extensive import trade in the cheap handguns that today would be called "Saturday Night Specials." Conan Doyle's Dr. Watson, dropping a revolver in his pocket before going out about town, illustrates a real commonplace of that time. Beatrix Potters' journal records a discussion at a small country hotel in Yorkshire, where it turned out that only one of the eight or nine guests was not carrying a revolver.

We should not fool ourselves, however, that such things were possible then because society was more peaceful. Those years were ones of much more social and political turbulence than our own: with violent and incendiary suffrage protests, massive industrial strikes where the Army was called in and people were killed, where there was the menace of a revolutionary General Strike, and where the country was riven by the imminent prospect of a civil war in Ireland. It was in such a society that, as late as 1914, the right even of an Irishman to carry a loaded revolver in the streets was upheld in the courts (*Rex v. Smith*, KB 1914) as a manifestation simply of the guarantees provided by our Bill of Rights.

In such troubled times, why did the commonplace carrying of firearms not result in mayhem? How could it be that in the years before the First World War, armed crime in London amounted to less than 2 percent of what we see today? One answer that might have been taken as self-evident then, but which has become political anathema now, is that the prevalence of firearms had a stabilising influence and a deterrent effect upon crime. Such deterrent potential was indeed acknowledged in part in Britain's first Firearms Act, which was introduced as an emergency measure in response to fears of a Bolshevik upheaval in 1920. Home Office guidance on the implementation of the Act recognised "good reason for having a revolver if a person lives in a solitary house, where protection from thieves and burglars is essential." The Home Office issued more restrictive guidance in 1937, but it was only in 1946 that the new Labour Home Secretary announced that self-defence would no longer generally be accepted as a good reason for acquiring a pistol (and as late as 1951 this reason was still being proffered in three-quarters of all applications for pistol licences, and upheld in the courts). Between 1946 and 1951, we might note, armed robbery, the most significant index of serious armed crime, averaged under two dozen incidents a year in London; today, that number is exceeded every week.

The *Sunday Telegraph's* **Right to Fight Back** campaign is both welcome and a necessity. However, an abstract right that leaves the weaker members of society – particularly the elderly – without the means to defend themselves, has only a token value. As the 19th-century jurist James Paterson remarked in his *Commentaries on the Liberty of the Subject and the Laws of England Relating to the Security of the Person*:

"In all countries where personal freedom is valued, however much each individual may rely on legal redress, the right of each to carry arms – and these the best and the sharpest – for his own protection in case of extremity, is a right of nature indelible and irrepressible, and the more it is sought to be repressed the more it will recur."

Restrictive "gun control" in Britain is a recent experiment, in which the progressive "toughening" of the regulation of legal gun ownership has been followed by an increasingly dramatic rise in violent armed crime. Eighty-four years after the legal availability of pistols was restricted to Firearm Certificate holders, and seven years after their private possession was generally prohibited, they still figure in 58 percent of armed crimes. Home Office evidence to the Dunblane Inquiry prior to the handgun ban indicated that there was an annual average of just two incidents in which licensed pistols appeared in crime. If, as the Home Office still asserts, "there are links between firearms licensing and armed crime," the past century of Britain's experience has shown the link to be a sharply negative one.

Britain was a safer country without our present system of denying firearms to the law-abiding, is deregulation an option? That is precisely the course that has been pursued, with conspicuous success in combating violent crime, in the United States.

For a long time it has been possible to draw a map of the United States showing the inverse relationship between liberal gun laws and violent crime. At one end of the scale are the "murder capitals" of Washington, Chicago and New York, with their gun bans (New York City has had a theoretical general prohibition of handguns since 1911); at the other extreme, the state of Vermont, without gun laws, and with the lowest rate of violent crime in the Union (a 13th that of Britain). From the late Eighties, however, the relative proportions on the map have changed radically. Prior to that time it was illegal in much of the United States to bear arms away from the home or workplace, but Florida set a new legislative trend in 1987, with the introduction of "right-to-carry" permits for concealed firearms.

Issue of the new permits to law-abiding citizens was non-discretionary, and of course aroused a furore among gun control advocates, who predicted that blood would flow in the streets. The prediction proved false; Florida's homicide rate dropped, and firearms abuse by permit holders was virtually non-existent. State after state followed Florida's suit, and mandatory right-to-carry policies are now in place in 35 of the United States.

In a nationwide survey of the impact of the legislation, John Lott and David Mustard of the University of Chicago found that by 1992, right-to-carry states had already seen an 8 percent reduction in murders, 7 percent reduction in aggravated assaults, and 5 percent reduction in rapes. Extrapolating from the 10 states that had then implemented the policy, Lott and Mustard calculated that had right-to-carry legislation been nationwide, an annual average of some 1,400 murders, 4,200 rapes and more than 60,000 aggravated assaults might have been averted. The survey has lent further support to the research of Professor Kleck, of Florida State University, who found that firearms in America serve to deter crime at least three times as often as they appear in its commission.

Over the last 25 years the number of firearms in private hands in the United States has more than doubled. At the same time the violent crime rate has dropped dramatically, with the significant downswing following the spread of right-to-carry legislation. The US Bureau of Justice observes that "firearms-related crime has plummeted since 1993," and it has declined also as a proportion of overall violent offences. Violent crime in total has declined so much since 1994 that it has now reached, the bureau states, "the lowest level ever recorded." While American "gun culture" is still regularly the sensational subject of media demonisation in Britain, the grim fact is that in this country we now suffer three times the level of violent crime committed in the United States.

Today, on this anniversary of the "Tottenham Outrage," it is appropriate that we reflect upon how the objects of outrage in Britain have changed within a lifetime. If we now find the notion of an armed citizenry anathema, what might the Londoners of 1909 have made of our own violent, disarmed society?

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 2

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## Midwinter

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Despite a couple of bumps and jars, the situation of American shooters is rather good at this time. Our political adversaries will continue to try to make things uncomfortable, but they do not seem to have that degree of forensic hysteria necessary to advance their cause. We do, of course, wonder about that cause. We have never been able to link gun ownership with crime, so we must wonder just what is the basis for this unending political negativism. Our personal view is that the motivation of those who would disarm us remains upon analysis to be sheer envy. The individual who owns his own personal firearms, and commands the skill necessary to use them well, owns a peace of mind that his adversaries cannot match. That is essentially what we have always taught at Gunsite. I used to open each class session by asking the members to ask themselves privately just what they expected to achieve by a week's expenditure of time, money and effort, and then to repeat that to themselves on Saturday to see if they had achieved that objective. And that objective was essentially peace of mind: that was our product, and to a very large extent, we produced it.

The non-coper has reason to feel inferior to a successful Gunsite graduate, and this annoys him enough to supply him with an indefensible political position.

That may be a reason why we have this struggle continuously on our hands. We shooters constitute no hazard to the decent people of our community, but this does not prevent some from seeking to reduce that peace of mind which makes them uncomfortable. So we keep up the struggle, and by keeping track of political winds as they blow, we maintain our rights as well as our guns.

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It is good to know that Steyr Mannlicher has now organized its own import agency for the United States. Finding a really good importer has never been easy, and the cause of much grief over the past couple of decades. We may hope that this step will be the proper answer to a hereto annoying situation.

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Few people really have a problem of personal defense against dangerous animals, but if such a problem exists, we may wonder whether a giant pistol (44 Magnum on up), or a Jim West "Co-pilot" carbine is the better answer. In most cases I think the carbine is the better choice, but if you are occupied with tasks that call for the continuous use of both hands, the pistol has its points. We may recall the case of that surveyor in Alaska who lost both arms to a black bear which stalked her as prey. Her job called for the continuous use of both hands, so the pistol might have been better for her. However, I suggest that the carbine is a better choice in most cases.

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While attending SHOT it is necessary to avoid the question, "What is it for?" If you take this line of interrogation, you may lose a lot of friends.

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We are informed by correspondent Dale Wilson that the 45 caliber, 230 grain JTC bullet is currently available from the Star Ammunition company in Indianapolis. This is only true when back orders build up enough to justify a run. If you are interested in a large lot, the address is: Star Ammunition, Inc., 5520 Rock Hampton Court, Indianapolis, IN 46268, 317-872-5840

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We are glad to learn that Jim West of Anchorage is now manufacturing his excellent "Co-pilot" from the ground up, without buying parts from Marlin. This gives him better control over action quality and calls for less retrofitting of the assembled item.

I have admired the Co-pilot from its first appearance, and I still do. Unlike many other offerings, it does have an operational niche, which is personal short-range defense against heavy, dangerous animals in the most convenient package possible. For the Alaskan bush pilot and for the African PH it presents a well thought out answer to a specific problem. (I do wish they would stop trying to mount telescopes on it. Stopping an angry lion at rock-throwing distance is a task that does not call for a telescope sight – rather to the contrary.)

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Our distinguished *family member* J.P. Denis of Belgium reports that he discovered an abandoned MP40, together with several magazines, in a building that was being torn down. This piece had been left unattended for 50 years with all magazines in full compression, and they all worked perfectly. I think this is marvelous. When you think of the degree to which our culture depends upon springs, it is good to know that spring construction is so well understood.

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As the bell tolls, we learn of the demise of Mike Ryan, Major General USMC. Mike and his family were old friends from Quantico, but he distinguished himself before we knew him. He was the bearer of two Navy Crosses, which is probably more remarkable than one Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor may be awarded for an act of almost hysterical excitement, and a Navy Cross may be similar in the case of one issue. Doubling on it would indicate a continuous demonstration of unusual valor.

Mike pointed out to us how different the circumstances may be. He noted that while he went ashore at Tulagi (across from Guadalcanal), spent the night in the sand, and came back aboard the next day, he does not recall doing anything special at the time. On the other hand, when he earned his second award at Tarawa, he really and truly earned it. Very few people live to make comparisons like that.

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We spent a rewarding four days at the SHOT Show in Las Vegas. As usual it was a massive sales effort directed at making as many people as possible unhappy with what they have and anxious to obtain something new. Since what we already have is very fine indeed, the effort to make us feel the need for something better is considerable. In the sense that more is better, the sub-caliber, hypervelocity varmint cartridges are interesting, but it is unfortunately not easy to pose a question for which we are the answer. This also may be true, if to a lesser extent, of the plethora of miniature, big bore pocket pistols which was offered up. When you reduce the veteran 1911 pistol beyond a certain point, you do not have enough left to hang on to. If you assume that your pocket pistol is essentially a threat rather than a shootable weapon, this may not matter, and these miniaturized 45s are indeed attractive, in a cute sort of way.

The Socom 6 seems to offer promise as a military instrument, which matters if you are in the habit of outfitting armies. The 6.8 Special Purpose military rifle cartridge may have its signals crossed. The special purpose designation implies that there is such a thing as a general-purpose cartridge, for which there might be a need if we did not already have one in the 308.

The Smith & Wesson people were a big presence at the show, offering both their giant 50 caliber, 5-shot revolver and their attempts at improving the 1911. Time will tell whether these are in truth improvements. Replacing the original Browning extractor with an outboard version is advanced as a good idea, though I have never noticed extractor breakage as a problem without a great deal of serious practice. I did break a couple of extractor hooks towards the end of World War II when we were issued steel-cased pistol ammunition. We beat this problem by simply squirting a drop of lubricant whenever we loaded a fresh magazine. Whether the outboard extractor would handle steel-cased cartridges is irrelevant now that those are no longer offered in serious supply.

This growing use of the adjective "digital" for "good," "better" or "best," has reached ridiculous proportions. I suppose it may apply in some cases, but when it comes to digital sweat socks or digital orange juice, I think we have run off the edge.

I am sure that there is an important difference between "electric" and "electronic," but I am equally sure that most people do not know what it is.

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We are at present playing with a Broomhandle Mauser on loan from *Shooting Master* John Gannaway. This is a most curious arm, occupying as it does a special niche between the primary and secondary military sidearm. This niche is not broad, and as a result the "Mauser System 96" was never adopted or issued by a military or paramilitary force. It appeared just as the transition from repeating to semi-automatic military arms took place. Though usually considered to be a pistol, it is more efficiently employed as a carbine for use by junior officers, who at that period were expected to provide their own arms. It is a startlingly ingenious artifact, and while of German origin it spread across the world to great popularity in the Far East in a variety of pistol cartridges. As a pistol it is a dog, as unhandy an instrument as can be imagined, but with its butt stock holster attached it shoots rather well at short range. I expect to go into more detail in a forthcoming issue.

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We had a curious confrontation recently here in Arizona between a cougar and a mule. We do not know who started it, but this mule won decisively. Of course this was a very scrawny cat, but the grass eater in this case was too much for him. Pictures show that the mule picked up the cat by the neck and shook it to death.

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At SHOT, both Ruger and Winchester displayed what might be called a variation on the scout concept – this being a light, short, *comfortable* sporting rifle taking a variety of middle powered, center-fire cartridges. They are both nice guns, though they fall quite a way short of the Steyr Scout. The various superior features of the SS such as the integral bipod, the detachable butt magazine and the composition stock, are not part of these packages, and no provision is made for any receiver-mounted, intermediate power telescope. We should note that a telescope sight is not an essential feature of a scout rifle, original or approximation. Scout 1, which is based upon the excellent Remington 600 carbine, accomplished its first mission in Central America with complete satisfaction – without a scope. Telescope sights on rifles are nice to have, and I effected a good deal of pioneering in this direction before World War II, but they are not essential, and in some cases they may be a bit of a handicap. I had a short-range incident with a lion in which the telescope, on what might be called a prototype scout, was distinctly in the way. At eleven steps range, it is difficult to pick up a proper aiming point in a hurry.

These recent attempts at the Scout concept suggest that the basic idea, while not clearly understood, has definite merit. A good many years ago I ran across a deer hunter over in southeastern Arizona who was displaying a sort of cut-down 1903 Springfield which got me thinking. Perhaps the point here is that bench rest accuracy, while interesting to people who compete in that league, is not something which can be appreciated in a general-purpose rifle. Shedding slivers off of group size is a matter of no concern when you are trying to kill something most expeditiously. Scout VI, which is our current "Ready Rifle," prints one-holers at 100 meters, but this has never been an essential attribute during its long and variegated life in the field. Half-minute accuracy, while pleasant to observe, is in no way superior to one-minute accuracy in any serious rifle. Once I saw a sportsman, who bragged up a storm about the fantastic accuracy of his brand new 264, miss a stationary mule deer by a couple of feet at football-field range.

We need not belabor the issue. We have many excellent hunting rifles to choose from. It would be remarkable if we could find a shooter good enough to take full advantage of them.

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It was pointed out at the SHOT show that these various mega-velocity, subminiature varmint rifles are nothing more than toys, but this is certainly unimportant criticism. In essence, all of our sporting guns are toys, but then most of the things we covet beyond our means are toys – and this applies to everything from

Ferrari to ex-wives. We live in an opulent culture, and perhaps it is better to revel in it than to condemn it as frivolous. Those other people in the unfree world who pretend to view us with moral disdain, might do well to remember that we have achieved this level of luxury by way of political liberty. The free world may be gross, vulgar and immoral, but that is not something that the slave society can fix.

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Muzzle brakes do work, but since there is no such thing as a free lunch, increased blast effect varies with the luncher. A shooter who is overly sensitive to recoil may be more disturbed by the racket than by the push, so a muzzle brake should be no help to him. Within limits the recoil effect of rifle cartridges is pretty negligible. I have noted this to my satisfaction over decades of observation of all sorts of shooters. The renowned gun maker Fred Wells of Prescott, Arizona, specializes in great big rifles, and he states flatly that recoil effect on the shooter is 85 percent mental. I cannot quote an exact percentage, but I do agree with the idea. Recoil effect is something you can rise above if you go about it right. Painting your butt plate green, together with proper mystic incantation, will probably do as much to beat the bump as any other device or system.

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Stopping power debate continues as ever. Those who wish to continue the argument should note that there are no such things as black and white conclusions to this matter. The effect of bullet impact on living tissue must be discussed as a matter of tendency rather than absolute. We can truly say that a certain combination of impact area, projectile design and material, impact velocity, and bullet mass tends to produce more positive response than otherwise. But this is not a matter of absolutes. Certainly it should be expected that a brain shot with a 38 Special revolver cartridge should result in instant incapacitation. But in the course of a priceless discussion I once held with Dr. Lipschitz at Soweto, he told of a case where a subject was hit on the temple by a bullet which transited the forward portion of the brain and came to rest against the skull on the other side, and in which the subject showed almost no immediate reaction – she thought that she had been hit by a rolled up newspaper, that being the normal instrument of discipline in that household. So it is pointless to say that we saw such and such happen once and therefore that is what happens when those circumstances are repeated. There is a tendency to predict stopping power effect, but we must remember that it is never certain. A correspondent recently asked me if a 44 Magnum ought to have greater stopping effect on a human target than a 30–30 hunting cartridge. I responded that any comparison would be useless. Both rounds should be quite adequate if properly placed, whereas neither would work if improperly placed.

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As daughter Lindy saddles up for her forthcoming African hunt, we have little advice to offer. She is a very fine shot. She has demonstrated coolness under pressure, and her equipment is fully up to any task which may be offered it. For practice I suggest quick acquisition of position, proper study of the loop sling and conscientious offhand simulation. It is not necessary to go to the range to practice these things once a basic level of marksmanship has been obtained. Furthermore, it is not necessary to place any particular trophy goal as an essential. The African hunt is sufficiently rewarding in itself and should not be measured in inches. You cannot tell a 60–inch kudu from a 56–inch kudu from across the trophy room. On *Shooting Master* John Gannaway's last excursion he happened upon an unsuspecting leopard, which is remarkable indeed, and he was able to watch the beast at its leisure for perhaps 10 minutes. That experience was better in itself than a 40–inch buff.

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The elections on both sides of the world give us much cause for satisfaction. The Iraqis may not be "ready for democracy," but they have certainly demonstrated their intention to seek it, and with our help they just may succeed. Here at home we note that various groups seem to think that it was the National Rifle Association that brought us home safe. In any election as narrow as this one it is possible to quibble about who or what made the difference, but it is interesting to see the Left blame its loss upon the NRA. The executive vice president of the association calls upon us all to seek and enroll new members, but this is hard to do when we do not know any non-members. We repeat the call, however, to go forth and proselyte where possible. If the US Constitution is the last best hope of Earth, as many consider it to be, the NRA is the sea anchor of American liberty. Congratulations to all!

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Our information sources from Iraq are particularly good since they are *family members* on duty on the spot. Our contacts are mostly through Colonel Bob Young, and they lead us to conclude more than ever that our domestic news services are definitely not interested in our achievements, but only on our discomfiture. They seem almost joyful to report our own losses, but they almost never tell us how much damage we did to the enemy. In terms of blows given and received, this war is going very well for us, and it is vital to remember that our warriors are warriors by choice rather than conscription. When you put on that uniform, you knowingly and willingly accept the fact that enemies of the United States are going to do their very best to kill you whenever they get the chance. Any man's death is a tragedy for his near and dear; whether it is so for him personally depends upon his religious faith. However that may be, death suffered in combat while in the service of one's country is an excellent way to go. "To every man upon this earth death cometh soon or late," as the poet says. The question is not *whether* but rather *how*.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 3

March 2005

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## Winterset `05

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Here at Gunsite we have duly noted what appears to be the local drought. Weather people insist that this excessive rain we have had in the last couple of months should not be taken seriously, since more than that is necessary to bring moisture around to "normal." Nevertheless, the countryside has greened up in amazing fashion and we hear of unprecedented bounty in wildflowers. Wildlife is now less dependent upon meager waterholes and we look forward to a great crop of pronghorns, elk and deer, not to mention javelina and coyotes. The whole scene must be positively *digital*, which seems to be a new adjective for *better* or *excellent*.

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Daughter Lindy is off in Africa showing the Steyr Scout. Despite the worsening political situation in South Africa, the back country will probably remain undefiled for some time. The current regime has made it tiresome to wrestle your personal rifle through customs, which is a dismal business, remembering how comfortable and friendly the hunting situation used to be. Despite these political complications, the African hunt remains one of the outstanding experiences for an outdoorsman. Those of us who have enjoyed the effort in the past are fortunate in our memories, and we hope it will remain possible to rack up a continued series of great hunting experiences – at least for the present.

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It gives us some satisfaction to note that *Rule 3* (keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target) is at this time carefully observed by our troops in the field. We have been preaching the basic rules for safe employment of firearms now for some 30 years, and while it is not universal, *Rule 3* shows up well in photography from the front. Safe gunhandling is not as universally observed as we might wish today, but progress has been made. It is bothersome to try to amplify the basic safety rules by people who apparently did not know that this matter has been successfully understood.

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We wrung out a series of parallel light sight systems many years ago here at Gunsite, but they have not appeared as popular offerings until quite recently. Our conclusion as to the usefulness of this gadgetry is that while it may be of some use to a novice, it tends to slow down an expert, who can place his weapon on target a bit more quickly than he can find that red spot on the target. Additionally, this incorrectly named "co-ax" sighting system is somewhat uncalled for on a pistol, since a pistol is an emergency device and, as it is said, you cannot make an appointment for an emergency.

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*Shooting Master* John Gannaway introduced us to the 700 Nitro Express cartridge just last week. This cartridge, newly presented by Holland & Holland of England, is said to be the brain child of the factory staff in response to the opinion of a customer who once said that the reason he packed a 600 when hunting elephant was simply that "They don't make a 700." Well now they do. The purpose behind its production is no clearer than before. The 700 Nitro starts a 70 caliber, 1000 grain bullet at 2000f/s. Ammunition is available at one dollar US per shot, so we did not shoot it much. (Actually we did not shoot it at all.) But it is gratifying to know that the material is there if you wish to spend the money. The custom-made single-shot piece has a falling-block action, and at 16lbs per unit it is presumably best used in pairs since a double rifle for this round would be too cumbersome to pack afield. When we raise the ubiquitous query about *what is it for*, we do not get a convincing answer. "To have and to hold," is probably the best attempt, but that is true of a whole regiment of smallarm offerings at this time. We are grateful to John for the chance to examine his specimen.

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As time passes, some of you may have forgotten the cases of O.J. Simpson, Lon Horiuchi and Vince Foster. In the cases of Simpson and Horiuchi, we know "who-done-it." With Vince Foster we do not know, but we know that there are people in very high places who *do* know. I guess it is nice to have a short memory, but not in every case.

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The recent shooting in the Atlanta courtroom raises a couple of points which the press seems inclined to ignore. The notion that one should arm the judge seems quaint when one observes that the bailiffs are now armed and closer to the subject than the judge was. The idea of placing a presumed felon in the physical custody of a middle-aged cop-chick is indefensible. Escorting bad guys around is a task that should not be given to a guard who is not up to it physically. But that is too obvious to merit consideration. The one thing that is clear about this whole sorry business is that you cannot pass laws or regulations in response to a problem which is best met by common sense.

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As the Holy War continues in Iraq, it remains clear that minor caliber smallarms cartridges are not working. The consensus we get back from the war zone is that while the 223 cartridge is a reasonably reliable stopper when hits are delivered to the upper torso region, they are not a really good answer to a fight. The Parabellum cartridge of 1908 is simply not a good idea, except possibly in the full-automatic mode – as with the machine pistol. As a sidearm cartridge it does not measure up – or have I mentioned that before?

While it is possible to scrounge a good pistol out there in Mesopotamia, ammunition is difficult to obtain. Of course a pistol is not fired very much in military combat. My studies of the matter suggest that 50 rounds of pistol ammunition should suffice for an entire war. It is unusual for an infantryman to fire more than a couple of magazines in a whole battle.

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As to that, I once dropped in the suggestion box the idea that some sort of kill-badge should be issued to wear on the uniform, indicating that the wearer has accounted for at least one enemy soldier personally. If each one of our soldiers drops just one of the enemy, the war will be over. As Patton is said to have said, "I don't want you to go out there and die for your country. I want you to make the other guy die for *his* country."

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For many years we at Gunsite have operated what is known as a "hot range." On a hot range all weapons involved in live firing are kept loaded at all times. When a relay finishes an exercise, it is enough to say or command, "Guard, holster, leave the line." The weapons are kept in the holster and not touched, except under supervision, until that relay comes back on the line again. Then the first command is "Pick your target. Check your piece down range. Unload." This procedure not only saves an appreciable amount of training time, but it makes sure that all hands know that *Rule 1* (all guns are always loaded) always applies. There are some people who regard a hot range as inherently dangerous, but it has not proven so to me – rather the contrary. I understand in some reports from the forward area that a good many marines are now operating with a hot range, which is definitely to their advantage. Some of those marines may have learned that at Gunsite, and if so we are pleased to hear it.

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In a recent blurb from one of the participants in the SHOT Show, we ran across a really horrible example of the misuse of the language. This was the verb "*to accessorize*." Presumably you acquire any sort of instrument and then you proceed to *accessorize* it. I can see how that would be a proper motive for the merchandiser, but it is still difficult to swallow. Surely a military man should not be expected to accessorize his equipment or his costume. That is one thing I enjoyed about the military life. You never had to decide what to wear.

Perhaps I am overlooking the swagger stick, which "accessory" was a debatable item of uniform for various services at various periods. *Family member* Shep Kelly recently ran across a military publication dealing with the manual of the swagger stick, which is pretty amazing in *The Age of the Common Man*. Several distinguished marines I encountered on my active duty days seemed to think highly of the stick, and I rather

liked it myself. I never saw a regulation to the effect, but in my day only staff NCOs and field grade officers were properly equipped with a stick. From my personal observation, I can list Cliff Cates, Herman Hanneken, Lem Sheppard, Fred Wise, and John LeJeune. Dave Shoup, the hero of Tarawa, was against it, and his attitude was enough almost to eliminate it in recent years. At the very beginning of World War II I had a buck sergeant who handled a swagger stick very well, and perhaps I profited by his example.

If we can find that document on the subject, I will observe and report back.

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Correspondents sometimes wonder about how my partner came to be referred to as "the Countess." It so happens that I have come to be referred to as a Guru, which is a word for teacher, master or instructor, in one of the numerous Indian languages. As I understand it, the word *pundit* signifies a dispenser of knowledge, whereas a *guru* imparts wisdom. As the saying goes, "Better an ounce of wisdom than a ton of knowledge." In the British scheme of things, the consort of a duke is a duchess. The consort of a baron is a baroness. But when we come to an earl, a word like earless is too awkward for common use, therefore, the consort of an earl is a countess. Thus we suppose that a consort of a guru may properly be called countess. Not that this has any sort of official sanction.

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On this matter of semantics, *tactical* does not equate to *combat*, but the faint of heart seem afraid to use "combat." Now everything from shoe laces to haversacks have come to be referred to as "tactical."

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We note that the noteworthy periodical "*National Review*" opines that the NRA won the election. In a hair-thin victory such as the last one, various sorts of minor increments may be held decisive, but the Leftists tend to feel that organized shooters are largely responsible for their discomfiture. May it indeed be so!

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*Don't run a roadblock!* I thought everybody knew that. But maybe that applied only to World War II. It remains true, however, that if you are flagged down at a control point in a military area, you should not be surprised if you get shot if you attempt to proceed. A friend of ours lost his father in the opening days of World War II in California. The father was a doctor on his way to an emergency and he felt that the roadblock did not apply to him. This was very sad, but no one involved was held to blame.

As a case in point, we recall the tale of Sunday morning in Honolulu December 7th. A senior officer was being driven back to duty station in a great hurry while the shooting was still going on. When his limousine, bearing stars and insignia, was flagged down, the door was opened. Whereupon the general ordered the driver to drive on. The sentry leaned through the open door and said, "Excuse me, sir. I'm new at this. Whom do I shoot, you or the driver?"

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You certainly have noticed how distressing it is for citizens simply to surrender in the face of any sort of threat. In these awful examples you read about, victims commonly submit to being tied up and await their turn. *It is impossible to tie anybody up with one hand*, so the presence of a firearm in such cases is irrelevant. It may be that it is illegal to fight back in Britain, but we in this country have not reached that stage yet. (I would like to think.)

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Those of you who are contemplating the African adventure should remember that while your professional hunter (PH) can provide you with much of what you need, it is up to you to make the adventure adventurous. Actually being there in the African wilderness, rifle in hand, can be a great emotional kick, but only if you tune yourself up to the enterprise. Most of this can be done by reading into the subject, but remember that you must supply the excitement if you want to get the most out of the experience.

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Among several advantages of the 1903 Springfield action was the readily demountable firing pin. This made it possible to replace a broken firing pin in the field without recourse to a specialist; but firing pins seldom break, and there are other advantages. For example, it was possible to issue firearms to individuals or units in

an absolutely safe condition with no worries about pilferage of operational firearms. When I was in high school we were fully equipped with 1903 service rifles – in totally safe condition.

The `03 offered the additional advantage of a magazine disconnect which permitted the piece to be used as a single-shot with five rounds instantly available in the magazine. In those days, of course, soldiers were expected to be able to hit what they shot at with one round, which made for more careful marksmanship. The most serious drawback of the 1903, in my opinion, was its fussy and imprecise rear-sight – a feature which was eliminated in the A3 version. The `03 was, and still is, an excellent service rifle – utilizing a seriously serviceable battle cartridge.

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We note that there are people who prefer the pingpong-ball bolt handle option on the Mannlicher action. We don't. The traditional slim-line handle of the Mannlicher action suits us better. It may be a hair slower than the knob, but the speed of the second shot is a matter given too much importance. By the time the shooter has bounced back from recoil and blinked, he has time enough to work any sort of bolt handle.

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As the years pass it becomes ever more difficult to remember the feeling of national patriotism that characterized the inter-war period in America. The high school I attended boasted a battalion of ROTC cadets, plus a marching band. Cadets were in uniform Monday through Thursday, much as that may horrify current academic types. Every school morning we hoisted the colors on the front lawn to the accompaniment of two snare drums and two trumpets. The color guard, which handled the colors, was directed by the cadet battalion commander or his adjutant. At exactly 0800, the colors would sound attention and everyone then within ear-shot was expected to come to a standstill and face the colors, while the two cadet officers executed the saber salute.

This is how it was, hard as it may be to believe. Indeed, "The past is another country. They do things differently there."

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As we observe the decline of the language, we do what we can to stem the tide. Note that *professional* does not mean *expert*, and *decimate* does not mean *devastate*. Other examples will occur to you.

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We are interested to learn that the Islamic Commission of Spain, claiming to represent Spain's one-million-member Muslim community, has issued a "fatwa," or edict of death, against – guess who – Osama bin Laden! "The fatwa said that according to the Quran `the terrorist acts of Osama bin Laden and his organization al-Qaida ... are totally banned and must be roundly condemned as part of Islam'." Osama's position at this time is not enviable. May the will of Allah catch up with him!

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Anyone who has earned the Congressional Medal of Honor has paid his debt to his country, and should be free from all further federal income tax. This is an idea whose time has come. Write your representative!

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 4

April 2005

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## Torrents Of Spring

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And Spring has definitely sprung – in the Northern Hemisphere. We enjoyed a spectacular demonstration of it here in the Continental Southwest, augmented by Autumnal reports from Africa. Daughter Lindy's account of her ladies' party from the Eastern Cape has provided much of interest regarding generalized antelope shooting, and given us much to study in regard to logistics and technique. We were amused by her pungent observations upon the "long, old fashioned, wooden rifles mounted with moonscopes." It is evident that beginners who can afford it set forth after "plains game." Some of our graduates are deer hunters who have started from stand-shooting on Texas whitetails. Any sort of stand-shooting from a blind allows or encourages the use of what is essentially a shooting-range rifle, as opposed to a true hunting rifle. When you shoot from an elevated blind, as is customary in both Texas and Europe, you need not concern yourself with the handiness or friendliness of your weapon. In effect you simply sit there and ambush your target. The field convenience of your rifle is not an important element in this sort of hunting. Neither, for that matter, is the power of your cartridge. Most shots are taken from a fist rest at a stationary target, and the hunter's fieldcraft and field marksmanship are not critical.

All sorts of hunting for medium game is rewarding to those who practice it conscientiously, but this sort of "bean field hunting" is more of a social arrangement than a challenge. These parties are great fun and less expensive than many realize, but the skill required and satisfaction afforded are somewhat of a secondary nature than those of a major enterprise. The African hunt is always a splendid adventure, but it can provide its own special thrill when conducted properly and with proper regard for the proprieties. True big game hunting graduates from the simple to the sublime. Its rewards are always there for those who understand it.

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"What is *popular* cannot be *good* because not enough people are qualified to judge."

The foregoing idea may be attributed to Alkibiades, Heinlein or Winston Churchill, depending upon your choice of philosopher.

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We were treated to all sorts of new and ingenious items on display at the SHOT Show, and the NRA Annual Exhibits. While much excellent equipment has been introduced to us this year, there still remains a number of unanswered questions, one of which is the availability of a really satisfactory rifle case. Balancing weight and bulk against the protection of the item itself remains to be solved. Many strong and secure items are readily available but portable they are not. All sorts of wondrous materials are available to us, but at the price of excessive weight and the impractical utility. Titanium is both strong and light as compared to steel, but for practical employment as airline luggage it does not suffice – apart from considerations of cost.

Some of our bright graduate engineers might do well to attack this problem. I am thinking of maximum strength plastic webbing, protected by titanium points and a steel spine.

There is a very definite need for this item, and whatever its cost might be that cost is less than might be met by ingenious engineering.

Let's see what we can do with that idea.

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We wish that our current commentators would refrain from confusing *liberty* with *freedom*. Freedom is a material condition, whereas liberty is a political ideal. Note that liberty as an ideal is frequently honored in the works of our Founding Fathers, but freedom is not. This is not quibbling. If we do not know what we mean by what we say, we will never be able to know what we think.

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Most of our big game animals are quadruped grass eaters. This means that those beasts we seek as game animals usually offer us broadside targets, since they tend to present themselves to a pursuer at approximate right angles. When so accepting a broadside target, we find that the vital zone of such a target is presented in the lower third of the target's thorax. This means that the kill zone of our target is usually located lower than the median line of the thorax. Consider then that when we are shooting at a quadruped grass eater, we must remember to keep our shots low. Furthermore we must remember that at any predictable distance, we are not shooting at a point but rather at a roughly circular pattern. Witness your target group. When engaging our target, we must place a theoretically circular pattern on the animal's broadside, and this in turn means that if we miss we will probably miss high, since half of our group size is going to be located above its centerline. To take this further, we discover that when engaging a game animal, our misses will tend to be high – assuming that we are pretty good shots. Most misses in the field, therefore, will be high misses, since we subconsciously tend to "help the bullet." Since our misses on game animals tend to be high, we must remember to avoid "helping the bullet" and seek to keep our pattern low on the target.

This may seem pretty abstruse, but long years of big game hunting have shown us the need to place our group size lower rather than higher on our (quadruped) target. Bear this in mind when next you are offered a target; the duffer's misses tend to be low shots whereas the expert's misses (if any) tend to be high. I have seen fine shots overshoot on mid-range targets, and the misses of the "masters" – rare as they may be – are high misses. (Of course, none of the masters ever miss under any circumstances ... do they now?) Be that as it may, just remember that you are shooting at a circle rather than a point, and keep the group low.

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It turns out that there are four blood types discernable upon Ötzi the Iceman. It suggests that our Neolithic ancestors in Eastern Europe may have been as ethnically diversified as they are now.

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Must a youngster be necessarily started with a 22? I think that depends a certain amount on lifestyle. If you live in open space where you may shoot in your backyard, it is probably better to start with a rifle, since the rifle is the easier weapon to learn. If, on the other hand, you may have to travel many miles to find an indoor shooting range, the pistol is probably a better bet – at least a more practical one.

We have not found that it is necessary to start a youngster with a 22. In my own family we began, in one case, with the 30 caliber and suffered no difficulties with that. Much, of course, depends upon the methods of the instructor.

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And I do not yet understand all this public acclaim for volunteers and volunteerism. There is nothing extraordinary nor heroic about going to war when your country is involved. It is simply a fact which serves to repay the privilege of being an American citizen. The millions who strive with only moderate success to immigrate into this country can explain that if asked.

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This letter comes from a distinguished Gunsite graduate now serving as an assistant division commander in Iraq. It may clear up our national position now somewhat obscured by our news media. It is not an official communication, but rather a private letter.

"Dear Friends,

"It isn't over yet, but today there was a resounding victory for freedom and democracy here in

Baghdad. Having been here for a while now, many of us have grown weary of the hand-wringers, worriers, pessimists, whiners, and host of others who have been telling us for so long that all is lost in Iraq. Today we witnessed just how courageous the Iraqi people can be and how much they love their new-found freedom.

"After listening to the pundits tell us how terrible the Iraqi Security Forces are, today I watched the Iraqi Security Forces stand tall. They protected, 1,188 polling sites in Baghdad. Although there were a number of suicide bombers who attacked today, not a single one penetrated the perimeter of a polling site. There were several Iraqi policemen, and several Iraqi soldiers who lost their lives today. But they did not lose their honor or their courage; none of the 30,000 plus Iraqi Security Forces on duty in Baghdad ran away from danger today.

"At the site of our first suicide bombing of the day, voters did not lose their courage either. They quickly lined back up at the same site, spitting on the body of the suicide bomber as they passed by in line to vote. A woman came out of line and took the shoe of the bomber and put it on his face – a great insult to an Arab. The same was true at any polling site that had violence. Voters immediately lined up again to cast their vote. How many Americans value their privilege to vote enough to show that kind of courage?

"We have listened to many experts talk about how the Sunnis would not participate in the election. Polling sites in Abu Guyreb were moved to Gasaliya because the Iraqi Election Commission was concerned about security in Abu Guyreb. We watched thousands walk down the highway – Sunni Moslems – on the 7 mile round trip to the polling sites so they could vote. All under the threat that terrorists had been making that they would kill anyone who voted. How many Americans would do that?

"All over Baghdad the story was the same and I could tell a dozen stories of great courage and determination. Despite the enemy's campaign of terror, despite danger, threats, intimidation, and the sporadic incidents of violence and terror today, Iraqis turned out in determined, large numbers to vote. The excitement was moving. Even though the terrorists have said they will kill anyone with a "marked finger" (when you voted your finger was dipped in ink to keep people from voting a second time), voters paraded down the street holding their fingers up in joy and overwhelming pride.

"When I told one Iraqi I was sorry that people had died or been wounded today, he just said 'freedom has a price, and this is the price that we must pay.' And every Iraqi I talked to said thank you to the United States for this opportunity, for this freedom, and how grateful they were for our help.

"I am sure it will only be hours until you start hearing all the 'experts,' most of which have never been to Iraq, start trying to convince us that today was flawed, failed, or somehow less than a wonderful day and a blow for freedom. They are the same people who say we are failing here, that you couldn't do an election on the 30th of January, and on and on. It is true we haven't 'won' here yet. It is not predetermined that we will win, and it will take continued sacrifice and determination on our part. Those who hate freedom and democracy will still fight, many to the death, to try to stop this march to freedom and prosperity by the Iraqis with our help. They are terrified of the thought of a free and democratic Iraq that leads this whole region to a democratic future.

"But despite this, I encourage you from here in Baghdad, for at least one day, to ignore the pundits and experts, to enjoy a day where a blow for freedom was struck. Know that

somewhere in the world, because of the sacrifice of your friends, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and countrymen; good won over evil, freedom over terror, and democracy over despotism.

"Last June 30, Iraq was given its sovereignty. Today, they earned their freedom. And we should all be joyful for that."

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We have yet to receive any reports of the use of the leopard light on the Steyr Scout rifle. The rail is there and ready to go, but as yet no one has taken after a night-baited leopard with a Scout. It is one of those various progressive features of the weapon there to be used, if not fully appreciated.

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Whence this sudden anti-Christ! The US is a *Christian* nation. Followers of other faiths (and atheists excepted) are welcome abroad, but they do not make policy. The moral and religious foundations of this country are absolutely Christian as is easily discernable from the written efforts of our founding fathers. It may be that a general lack of history is destroying our sense of morality, but that need not be happily accepted. The nuclear family with church on Sunday is the groundwork of our social righteousness. Times may change, but that does not mean that we cannot tell right from wrong.

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I have as yet no valid opinion about the 45 short cartridge. This should take about a year's worth of field evaluation.

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What British police condemn as "vigilante" behavior has produced an American burglary rate less than half the British rate. And while 53% of English burglaries occur when someone is at home, only 13% do in America where burglars admit to fearing armed homeowners more than the police. Violent crime in the US is at an all-time 30-year low.

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Remember to schedule 23 – 25 September for this year's *Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Reunion*. All seem to be in readiness and we expect our usual pleasantries in honor of our hero and great President. Make your reservations with Chad (or whomever is on duty) at the gatehouse at Whittington Center (505-445-3615, ext. 207) to secure a room in Competitor Housing Building #1. Our function will precede the opening of hunting season and should be free from the shooting restrictions previously encountered.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 5

May 2005

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## 85th Birthday

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One's 85th birthday is not an occasion for special celebration. The "indignities of age" must be suffered with the best possible spirit, considering the alternative.

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The excellent firsthand reports we continue to receive from the sandbox are far more encouraging than one would suspect from the general tenor of the public press. The main thing that the media choose to comment about is the butcher's bill *for our side*. Certainly we have been taking casualties, and every man's death is a disaster for him and his family, but that is not the measure of success or failure in war – *and we are at war*. We have been stacking the Arabs in satisfactory fashion in all engagements. It is infuriating indeed for our people to be killed by crude destructive devices planted at random by the enemy, but we have been improving our box score steadily and should take such satisfaction as is deserved thereby. The whining repetition of queries about when we are coming home are properly countered by the obvious statement – "When we have won!" When Michelangelo was working on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he was continually nagged by the Pope as to when the painting would be finished. And his answer, of course, was "When it is finished!"

Having fought in a couple of wars myself, I do not remember anyone asking us when we were coming home. It seemed obvious that our answer was "When we have won!" It is not practical to set forth a given date or territorial objective as a measure of victory. The thing is to keep the pressure on and build up the box score until we have finished what the Arabs started at 9/11. I remember the war cry repeated to us from the home front – "We're in it, let's win it!" It seems a good idea to repeat that now. We're in it, let's win it, and we won't be back `til it's over over there.

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The 45 Short introduced by Glock seems to be a pretty good idea. If the powder space is there we might as well use it and profit by resulting compactness. I do not intend to rush out and buy a 45 GAP, since I have a couple of very serviceable full-size 45s now. Besides which, I am no longer combat ready. Additionally, there is very little combat taking place in my immediate zone of operations at this time. This is not to say, of course, that the central scene is all sweetness and light in all parts of the world. We should remind ourselves that O.J. Simpson and Lon Horiuchi are still running around free, and the people who rubbed out Vince Foster have yet to be properly identified. So much time has elapsed between Vince Foster's murder and the present that it is possible that his murderers have by this time left us. But the world continues on its rough-shod way, and all careful people of whatever nationality or combat status will continue to be properly alert and properly conditioned.

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It is interesting to learn that the new importer of Steyr equipment is now offering a single-shot sporting rifle in caliber 50 BMG. It is hard to come up with a purpose for such a piece, but as with so many grown men's toys, the purpose of the instrument is simply to have something that nobody else has. The 50 BMG cartridge is an item of strikingly limited utility, but a man need not be troubled by questions about what things are for. If he wants it he might as well have it, as long as he can afford it. Those of us who have used the 50 BMG in the field usually have great affection for it, though under circumstances we would prefer not to see repeated. I guess we should not get too serious about these things. I once saw a defunct Japanese Zero which had been shot out of the air by one round of 50 BMG. Oddly enough it was almost unhurt, except for a half-inch hole through its vitals. One of its 20mm canon, its oil cooler, its starboard side landing gear, and its landing flaps

were defunct, but apart from accompanying cuts and scratches it was pretty close to air worthy. Nobody, however, volunteered to fire it up and fly it away.

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It is always interesting to explore the motivation of the hoplophobe, although philosophical results are seldom satisfying. I have pretty well settled on envy as the fundamental element in the discussion. A man who cannot cope envies and therefore dislikes the man who can. *Family member* T.J. Johnston feels that the far-out liberals who fancy the nanny state like to think of the government as a benevolent father, rather than the fearful master described by the Father of the Our Country. It does seem sometimes that the current beneficiaries of the political liberties secured for us by our Founding Fathers are not up to the gift they have been given – The Gift of Liberty (which is not to be confused with freedom). I repeat for the next time, but not the last time, that freedom is a physical condition, whereas liberty is a political ideal, something we cannot say often enough. Whatever the State can do for you, it can also do to you. The struggle continues and will not go away.

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The speed of the second shot can be overemphasized. Unless you are repelling hordes of howling savages coming over the wall, you have ample time for a second shot, which, of course, you should not need if you delivered the first shot properly. Since we now almost universally enjoy self-loading actions, we do not have any particular need for instantaneous number two. On the occasion of my double on buffalo, I was able to work the bolt in the time it took to recover from recoil, which is noticeable in the case of the 460. The old time elephant hunters generally preferred the quick second shot afforded by the double rifle, but whether they needed it remains an open question.

One thing which has incurred since the advent of the self-loading rifle is improper bolt work. The military no longer trains on bolt work, having no bolt rifles to work with, and this means that "short-stroking" can cause trouble. If you do not withdraw the bolt all the way manually, you may not pick up the next round, with the result that you get a click instead of a bang on your second squeeze. This happened with my late, great friend, Dr. Albert Pauckner, and his day was saved by the back-up rifle of his partner. Vigorous bolt work should be emphasized in current rifle training. Instructors should insist that students show that bolt no mercy, either in practice or in action. The short-stroke can get you killed, and this point should be made quite clear to all students of rifle work.

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On the subject of proper bolt work, we should point up the outstanding achievements of *Shooting Master* Marc Heim of Comano, Switzerland. Marc, as you know, once broke four out of five flying clay birds with his Steyr Scout. What you may not know is on that occasion he recovered from a miss by working the bolt instantaneously and catching the bird before it got away. Now that is good trick! Note that Marc used the so-called butter knife bolt-handle of the Mannlicher action, rather than the pingpong-ball arrangement which has been showing up in over-the-counter items. Hereabouts we have access to four of the Zedrosser/Bilgeri actions, all of which disdain the pingpong-ball in favor of the more traditional bolt-handle.

The more we use the Steyr Scout (and its somewhat more muscular cousin the 376 Dragoon) the more we admire it. It is a sweet and lovely instrument, though it cannot be fully appreciated until it is taken afield and used under field conditions. One of the exasperating conditions I face with this extreme old age is that I am not able to take either Scout or Dragoon afield and enjoy the results of the advanced thinking in these rifles.

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In the material coming back from Iraq we are now amused to hear that a private is now a specialist, the rifleman is now a sniper, and a sergeant is probably something else.

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People are still falling into the error of bragging about shots they should not have taken. It is not how far away your animal was, but how close you were able to get. Generally speaking, no shot attempted beyond 300 meters on a game animal should be exemplified. If you can get closer, get closer. Possibly the old Indian custom of counting coup might be revived. If you can get close enough to a white tailed deer or a Rocky

Mountain bighorn to slap him with the flat of your hand, you have really achieved the remarkable.

Several times over the past couple of decades I have enjoyed the "catch and release" system in the field, thus copying the achievement of the trout fisherman. The idea is to place yourself in a position where when the opportunity offers you carefully extract the cartridge from the chamber and press the trigger on an empty. If you are a good rifleman you know where that shot went, or where it would have gone if it had been hot. I have taken three lions that way, and where I do not feel this is going to replace the actual hunt, it certainly affords distinct pleasure. It will not work on a pachyderm, because you are never quite sure of the bullet's travel inside that beast once it's hit. It does, however, work very well on medium game, and it increases the amount of pleasure you may get from any single hunting trip.

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It is a great pleasure to hear that the giant sable has been rediscovered in Angola. This beast was thought to have been extinct for some time, but these new reports are apparently authentic, which is great, good news.

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Back when I was on active duty I rather enjoyed packing a swagger stick, which was a prescribed item of uniform on or about the turn of the 20th century. General Shoup all but prohibited it when he was Commandant of the Marine Corps, and I think there was a certain amount of dash lost because of this. I see nothing wrong with dash as a feature of the proud warrior. It is obviously out of fashion at this time, but a lot of good things are out of fashion which probably should not be. General Shoup disliked the swagger stick, but General Hanneken did not. I also remember General Cates carrying his, and I leaped happily into the breach when I made major and was therefore entitled to the extra swank contributed by the scrambled eggs on the bill of the dress cap – and the swagger stick. The five elements of the soldier are: skill at arms, discipline, hardihood, valor, and pride, and a warrior should be proud of himself and his profession. He will do better duty for it.

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*Shooting Master* John Gannaway reports a neat one-shot stop on a hippo by way of the 376 Steyr, using the 300-grain solid. I do not think it is the best policy to use any medium cartridge on pachyderms, but that does not mean that they cannot work very well in the hands of good shots. Gannaway, of course, is a master marksman.

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Our granddaughter Amy Heath, who lives in New York City, aspires to membership on the board of directors of the National Rifle Association. I cannot look at this project objectively, since we are most impressed by this lady and her manifold accomplishments. Her résumé is impressive in several different aspects, since she has not only been instrumental in the organization of women's shooting activities in New York City and state, but is also a fully qualified marksman with both rifle and pistol, and a seasoned big game hunter. Her endorsement is limited to 150 words by regulation, and it will be very hard to cut it down to that. Be that as it may, we take this opportunity to inform the *family* that we welcome their signatures on her petitions.

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

Bill Buckley

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The obvious decline in public and civic morality, which we see going around us, has several sources, and unfortunately they are all working together. The loss of history in the schools is certainly a major factor here. If we do not know how we got here, we have no way of assessing those qualities which made it possible. Consider the line in the song, "When brother died on Bunker Hill, my mother said to me, 'Go get your gun and join the men who fight for liberty.'" I do not think many young men today can tell you what the issues were at Bunker Hill, and yet such things are vital to us as a nation if we are to take any pride in our position as the sole remaining world power. The united states of America are not defined by a political boundary or a line in the sand, but by an ideal which developed in the minds of people who knew what they were talking about and what they were fighting for.

But the failure of the schools is only part of this. Possibly more important is the institution of television, which invites parents to relinquish the moral guidance of their offspring to a host of commercial hucksters who cater to the lowest common denominator. Parents who turn their children over to the tube rather than discussing the issues of the day at the dinner table, should not be surprised if their children have no idea about what is going on. The situation is bad, but I do not think it hopeless. There are still parents with a conscience in today's world and do feel the responsibility they have for the character of the world forthcoming. It is a duty of a morally responsible parent to introduce the notion of reading for pleasure to these children. Reading is not something you do, or should do, in order to pass a test, but rather something to entertain you and show you the way of the world in all its aspects. The thought is not lost. I know several young people who read for pleasure, and I invite them to take advantage of our library here at Gunsite. We are, of course, pretty remote but we are not the only source of good reading. Once a youngster can be shown how much sheer fun there is in learning about the adventure of man, we may be able to get the show back on the track. Whether we can or not, it is our duty to make the effort.

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If you are interested in a very simple and yet effective test of rifle marksmanship, try shooting at a cigarette mounted vertically at a range of 10 yards and shooting from off-hand. It seems that this was another common test sometime ago in the southeast. It is simple to arrange and surprisingly demanding.

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We have yet to receive any reports of the use of the leopard light on the Steyr Scout. We do not shoot at night in these parts, so the opportunity does not present itself much. Still, however, if anybody has used the leopard light on the Scout, I would like to hear about it.

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Is there truly a use for a defensive firearm against dangerous animals? Generally speaking, the only circumstance which we can call to mind here would be defense against the big bears. Both the big pistol and the shotgun are suggested, but neither is really handy. The shotgun works fairly well, provided a properly designed slug is used and the range is kept under 20 yards.

It is, of course, quite possible to hit a big animal at ranges up to a 100 yards with a good shotgun, but penetration can be a problem. Beyond very short range, the heavy hair, hide and muscle of a big bear are apt to throw the projectile back at the shooter. A big pistol (44 Mag and up) will do fairly well at ranges up to 50 yards, assuming the shooter is up to the task. As in most such questions, the answer lies with the user rather than his instrument. A properly designed medium rifle, well set up, is better than either pistol or shotgun, but ease of use always makes for a problem. Packing a rifle around is not always handy.

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We repeat the dates for the *Reunion* this year at Whittington. They are 23 through 25 September. Arrange your schedules and make your reservations now.

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It may be unseemly to sound heartless about military service, but it should be noted that when you go to war, coming home is not your objective. When you go to war, *victory* is your objective, and I did not even know that there was such a thing as a rotation policy in World War II until I was astonished to get my orders stateside after 30 months on the line. The objective in any war at any level is the destruction of the enemy and his capacity to make war. This is a grim assignment, but war is a grim proposition. It is our business now to make that clear to the Arabs who have handed the matter to us without asking.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 6

June 2005

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## Summertime – An' The Livin' Is Easy

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As of this point in time The Project has not picked up much momentum – not that much was expected. It is nearly impossible to secure experimental images of 1000 yard ranges. The Europeans, most notably the Swiss, have been working at modified distances, but as we all know the fire cone does not have straight sides but is actually somewhat bell-shaped. A 1-inch group at a 100 is not the equivalent of a 10-inch group at 1000. Working toward a 3-inch group at 500 is more representative. The fact is that The Project is a very tough challenge. Jim Land, Secretary of the NRA and a distinguished target shot, states flatly that 20/20/20 is impossible, and certainly the first man to bring this off will have achieved the first "4 minute mile" in rifle shooting.

We have the weapons and we have the ammunition. If we can just find the place to set up the test, we may be able to find the man. The challenge is there to be overcome.

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Here at the turn of the 21st century, it is apparent that recreational rifle shooting has taken on several different aspects. The formal target shot tends to scorn the field shot, and neither of those individuals is much interested in snap shooting, which is certainly a game of its own. I do not have a good understanding of the problems of the Pennsylvania deer hunter, but I gather that they are not the same as those of the Rocky Mountain sheep hunter, and neither of those has much to do with the military carbine shooter.

All these activities are entertaining and may be pursued for their own sakes, but nobody should look down on Game 1 simply because he prefers Game 4 or Game 2. Personally I have spent the last couple of years skimming the African bushveldt, and this is a good game, but old age has pretty much caught up with me by now and I must derive what pleasure I can from spectating.

All great fun, and the more people we can introduce to the various rifle games, the better off we all will be. Demand for rifle instruction seems to have diminished to some extent here in the Lower 48, but there is much activity in Alaska and plenty of action in Texas.

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I rather wish we had not accepted this term "insurgent" for the bad guys in Iraq. Insurgency has taken on a rather heroic meaning in many parts of the world, specially including Mexico, and we should not give our murderous adversaries in the Middle East the honor of that title.

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As far as we can tell, the military has given up on teaching the shooting sling. Certainly we should emphasize the off-hand position more than we do, but not at the expense of hitting efficiency. In my earlier days, I drew the conclusion that my hitting efficiency was increased by about a third when using the loop sling in the Western prairies and mountains. Trigger control may be the heart of the matter for any firing position, but the more stability the shooter can provide his rifle, the better off he will be.

Field reports indicate that the fist rest should be used more often than it is. It is complicated to teach the fist rest to large groups of people on known distance ranges, but that should not mean that we should forget the matter entirely. Whenever broken terrain or immediate conditions permit, the improvised additional stability available by making a pistol grip out of the forward bight of the sling should be sought. I should have used the

fist rest several times in recent years when I did not realize how handy it was. This is especially true of the use of the ubiquitous termite mounds of the African bushveldt.

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Now it appears that some curious group in England has decided that too many people are getting stabbed, and that therefore long, pointy kitchen knives should be banned. Apparently they think that kitchen knives with blunt points would lessen the incidents of stabbing. Hoplophobes being what they are, it does not occur to them that they might reduce their problems by making armed assault illegal. Of course if they did that, they would find it necessary to do something about unarmed assault, and presently we would be called upon to eradicate boxing, wrestling and kendo.

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*Shooting Master* John Gannaway has now experimented at some length with both the 50 BMG cartridge and the 700 Nitro. John tells us that the 700 is much more offensive to the shooter than the 50. Of course most 50s incorporate muzzle brakes, whereas the one 700 available does not. And there is the important matter of stock design. A well-designed stock does wonders to reduce apparent recoil effect, a point made very obvious with the Steyr Scout.

Here again we run to the question of "What is it for?" There is a reason for the 50 BMG in a handheld weapon, and that is the breaking up of mechanical equipment at middle ranges. It is a great truck wrecker, using the military round, but this does not apply to the big game hunter. And it is pretty hard to come up with a mission for the 700 Nitro (or the 600 Nitro, for that matter). The elephant is a comparatively soft animal in terms of resistance to bullet wounds, and usually goes down quite readily to well-placed hits from cartridges of the 470 Nitro class. A widely experienced professional African hunter once told me that if an elephant were as tough a target as a buffalo, pound for pound, he would not even get off the airplane. In my opinion the primary target in the dangerous game category is the buffalo. This beast needs to be well hit anatomically with the cartridge of decisive power in order to be safely secured. The 50 BMG and the 700 Nitro are interesting experimental developments, but that is as far as it goes. The serious big game hunter has scant use for either of these rounds.

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Tax remission for Medal of Honor winners is such a marvelous idea that I cannot understand why I have not been able to scrape up much response from my various legislative representatives. Certainly any man who has been awarded the Medal of Honor should no longer be pestered by the tax man, and the drain upon the budget would be almost inconsiderable. If you agree with me that this is a good idea, please drop a line to your man in Washington.

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In long arms we are so used to the bolt-action and the self-loader that we sometimes forget the merits of the lever-action. Speed of the second shot is often overemphasized, as we have suggested, but there are certain safety considerations which should not be overlooked. Specifically the lever-gun may be properly carried in *Condition 3* when action is imminent. In this condition there is no shell in the chamber, but the weapon is loaded and cocked as it is mounted into the shoulder. If you have a lever-gun, it is a good idea to practice this. Stand ready with butt on the hip, eyes on the target, trigger finger straight, and shooting fingers (less the trigger finger) inside the lever. When taking the shot, the shooting hand is snapped downward until the action is open. Then as the butt is mounted into the shoulder the action is closed, the eye finds the target, and the finger finds the trigger. When I was teaching we used to try this on flying clays starting with chamber empty. It is surprising how simple and easy this drill can be when it is practiced properly. Among other things, it obviates the use of the mechanical safety, which I think is probably a good thing. I read far too much material from Africa which places an almost religious confidence in the manual safety. The manual safety device may serve a useful purpose, *but it does not make the gun safe*. Only the trigger finger can make the gun safe, and then only by what goes on between the ears.

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Having relished the stories about "The Man Eaters of Tsavo" in our youth, we are distressed to learn that a certain amount of hogwash seems to have been spread about in that connection. Hemingway gave us a couple

of excellent stories about this business, which never pretended to be more than fiction, but two lions were indeed there. People have been killed and eaten by man-eating lions under various circumstances in Africa. It seems too bad to dim the luster of the legend. Perhaps we should borrow from Winston Churchill and insist that "It is all true, or it ought to be, and more and better besides."

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Considered carefully, the great marksmanship masters are now spread rather widely across the country, and no particular group of teachers is currently confined to any one school. There are several noteworthy shooting masters whom I have not personally taught, so I cannot speak for the entire group, but among the greats I would list John Gannaway, Louis Awerbuck, John Pepper, Pat Rogers, Clint Smith, the Stock brothers, Larry Mudgett, Tom Russell, Marc Heim, and Michel Röthlisberger. There may be others, as I have suggested, but the foregoing names may be listed now as "Doctors of Practical Marksmanship." I guess I should get up a program of certification attesting to this.

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Probably all Gunsite *family members* are now aware that our granddaughter Amy Heath, of New York City, is standing for membership on the Board of Directors of The National Rifle Association. Petitions are being circulated by several friends and supporters. If you do not have access to one, and if you are a voting member of NRA and wish to circulate and/or sign a petition, let us know (PO Box 401, Paulden, AZ 86334).

Amy has qualifications so broadly diversified that I cannot squeeze a proper résumé into the stipulated space, but among her other talents which are not so widely known are her remarkable rifle marksmanship (she is the best field marksman in the immediate family), her certification as a high speed driver from Bondurant, her fluency in the Spanish language, and her winning performance in biathlons. She is the founder/director of New York City's Women's Shooting Sports League, and the director of Women in the Shooting Sports for the New York State Rifle & Pistol Association.

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We are steadily asked about the age at which to teach young people to shoot. The answer to this obviously depends upon the particular individual; not only his physical maturity but his desire. Apart from these considerations, however, I think it important to understand that *it is the duty of the father to teach the son to shoot*. Before the young man leaves home, there are certain things he should know and certain skills he should acquire, apart from any state-sponsored activity. Certainly the youngster should be taught to swim, strongly and safely, at distance. And young people of either sex should be taught to drive a motor vehicle, and if at all possible, how to fly a light airplane. I believe a youngster should be taught the rudiments of hand-to-hand combat, unarmed, together with basic survival skills. The list is long, but it is a parent's duty to make sure that the child does not go forth into the world helpless in the face of its perils. Shooting, of course, is our business, and shooting should not be left up to the state.

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Marc Heim tells us that the novice should be started using telescope and bipod, so as to allow concentration on one thing at a time. I never thought of the matter quite this way, but the idea certainly seems to have merit. Once the apprentice learns about sight picture and trigger control, he can then study shooting position and successive matters. Shotgunning, of course, is so different as possibly to call for another approach.

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Since we are involved in a major war in the Middle East, it would be nice if we conducted our affairs with a little more style. It is not necessary to go to battle in slob's clothes. A soldier should be proud of his profession, and it is quite possible to dress for the occasion of battle with appropriate elegance. Our media are no help in this matter, insisting as they do on our mishaps rather than on our achievements. The daily news seem to take positive pleasure in telling us that we got hurt without telling us what hurt we have inflicted upon our adversaries. To quote Bedford Forrest, "War means fighting and fighting means killing." Let us emphasize how much of a mistake it was for them to start this fight. In our previous wars we seem to have taken more pride in the punch we packed than the tears we shed. The press at this time seem determined to diminish rather than to increase our morale. If that is intentional, something should be done about it.

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We continue to search for details about the 2004 buffalo fatality which took place up in Tanzania. One of the reports insists that the bull "appeared suddenly out of nowhere." Well obviously a buffalo cannot appear out of nowhere. He weighs over a 1000lbs, he is jet black, and he is impossible to overlook. My experience is by no means as extensive of that of the professionals, but it is broad enough to eliminate the possibility of being *surprised* by a buffalo. I have met this beast often enough to treat him with proper respect, and even if I were still hunting, I cannot envision any situation in which I could be surprised by him. A hunter may possibly be surprised by a leopard, or even by a lion, but not by a buffalo – there is just too much of him. If you are properly alert, awake, adequately armed, checked out in bovine anatomy, a reasonably well-trained snapshot and in command of your nerves, there is no reason to be slammed by a buffalo. I may be wrong about this ("Once I thought I was wrong, but it turns out I was mistaken."), but I do need a more detailed explanation about the possibilities.

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How many of the faithful have actually handled the new Italian *Mateba* automatic revolver? This curious piece seems to be pretty good fun to shoot, though what niche it fills is open to question. Among other things, its ready chamber rides at the bottom of the cylinder when in shooting mode, and it is built to order in almost any cartridge you may desire. I guess its appeal lies in the fact that no other kid in the block has one. I would appreciate details on this matter, at your convenience.

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The term "hot range" signifies a pistol shooting program in which weapons are kept holstered and safe between relays. Using this system, there is no need to clear guns or unload between relays. It not only saves a good deal of training time, but it is actually a bit safer than previously standard routines. On a hot range, there is no need ever to check the condition of the weapons. When the first relay is called upon the line, the commands are *Pick Your Target*, *Check Your Piece Downrange* and *Unload*. This pays due reference to *Rule 1*, which is, of course, "All Guns Are Always Loaded." Between relays shooters are not permitted to remove the weapon from the holster. Magazines may be changed with the piece in a holstered and safe condition. When a shooting drill for all hands is completed, the commands are *Ready on the Line*, *Check Your Piece in the Condition You Wish to Maintain It During the Break*, and *Holster*. If desired, all weapons on the line may be unloaded at this point, though this contravenes basic safety rules to some extent.

We began using the hot range here at Gunsite when we first moved aboard, and while there have been three firing mishaps on the range in just over thirty years, those three have not been due to range procedure.

It is interesting to note the dismay with which the hot range procedure is greeted by various old-fashioned drill instructors. I have been informed both here and abroad that the hot range is inherently unsafe and that its adoption would call for drastic increases in first aid and medical personnel. The fact is, however, that it does not do this. The hot range is distinctly safer than its predecessors, and it saves up to 25 percent or more in training time. It is definitely one of the elements of the modern technique now becoming world standard.

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Range safety results directly from range discipline, and range discipline is a distinct element of military discipline. It is glaringly evident to those who conduct firearms training on both sides of the military/civilian training effort, to observe how much faster and easier it is to get things done with a properly disciplined group. Civilians simply stand around too much, and they are continuously caught unready for whatever it is they are expected to do. I have heard it said that recruits in the UK are abjectly opposed to "being yelled at." Well it is not always necessary to yell at recruits, but sometimes it helps. Young people who are exposed to no discipline at home, involving chores such as housework, yard work and motor maintenance, are all too frequently incapable of coping in any organizational sense. I have always been great for individualism, but the individual does better when he is comfortably acquainted with social discipline.

I dare say I should specifically use the "he or she" speech pattern here, but it does seem that girls take better to discipline than boys. We have successfully raised three girls without any trace of disciplinary problems. Voices were never raised and blows were never struck. It has been suggested that boys are just basically

harder to straighten out than girls, and this may be true, but regardless of gender, discipline is not only necessary on the range, but everywhere else in life.

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It seems that the *practical* element in Practical Marksmanship has suffered drastically due to the lack of variation in the types of courses used in competition, both here and abroad. When the program was started back in California in the 60s, we insisted on each course of fire being radically different from that held during the previous month or session. This called for distinct variation in ranges, firing positions, conditions of readiness and all such matters. However when the movement took off abroad, it turned out that too many jurisdictions called for artificial consistency in course type or course design. In certain places this meant that ranges would always be about the same, the condition of readiness would be the same, and scoring systems would be the same. Note that in Europe today, most major contests require the shooter to start with his weapon resting on a table just within reach, and that spare magazines be presented in specific fashion for each firing string. This means, of course, that speed on the draw has ceased to be a significant element in performance. It is possible that draw speed was overemphasized in the early days, but that does not mean that the idea should be abandoned.

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The matter of power, of course, has been lost completely, largely due to the fact that pistol power is very difficult to measure. The Europeans insist that the 9mm Parabellum cartridge of 1908 has all the power which may be called for, whereas time has proved that this cartridge is distinctly inferior as a means of stopping fights.

The upshot is that practical pistol shooting in the competitive sense has pretty much lost sight of the element of practicality. If a given course of fire did not replicate the conditions of an actual pistol confrontation, it was not a measure of practical skill. Over here and abroad, however, practicality is now viewed askance by a lot of people who really ought to know better. If the show gets too close to an actual street fight, it becomes sort of "antisocial" and thus should be disallowed in polite competition.

All is not lost, however. Competitive practical pistol shooting may not be everything that it should be, but it is immensely better than it was half a century ago. By better I mean more useful. The service handgun is a fight-stopping device, and its practice should reflect its fight-stopping capacity. A serious *pistolero* must commence with the proper attitude, and build both his equipment and his annual skill upon that. There are those who might ask what need there is for a serious *pistolero*, and I cannot answer that question. If one does not know why anyone should be able to defend his life and family and property against felonious aggression, he should move to Britain where self-defense is now illegal.

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We continue to congratulate *Shooting Master* Tom Russell on his magnificent leopard, taken recently in Tanzania. The leopard is a wonderful beast and has been admired for both its grace and its beauty throughout history. It was generally called *panther* by the British colonials, and its melanistic (black) form was particularly glorified by Rudyard Kipling in his jungle stories.

The leopard has become listed as one of the "big five" in recent decades, but I think this is a mistake. He is certainly deadly and upon occasion has taken to eating people in places where they are unprepared materially or psychologically to defend themselves. Personally I have no desire to shoot a leopard. I do not object to others who prize him as a trophy, but he is not for me. He is just too beautiful to spoil with a rifle shot.

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On the occasion of my 80th birthday, I was treated to a regal celebration by Danie van Graan at Engonyameni. This party involved drum beating, ceremonial chanting, eulogizing in Swazi – and enthronement upon a leopard skin (which I hasten to say I had not shot myself). Seated elegantly upon that leopard skin, I reflected that long ago and far away George Washington made his inaugural parades, completed by a leopard skin saddle blanket, in each of the major cities of the colonies which formed the nuclei of the new nation of which he had become the Father. *Like wow!* There is nowhere to find more distinguished company than that.

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We have not got many reports back from the field on the performance of the 376 Steyr Scout, apparently because the factory has made no effort to promote the weapon. Such information as we have is most exciting, but that may be due to the fact that nearly all the people now packing the "Dragoon" in the field are superior marksmen. These nice one-shot stops we are told about come largely from members of the Gunsite *family* and its extension, and those people are likely to get first-rate field results with almost any sort of piece. In a sense this is a penalty for excellence. If you use all the right gear and you do everything right, the results are likely to be superior. (Even if the gear is not perfect, a good shot is likely to get very satisfactory results in the field.)

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It gives us great pleasure to learn that what we have called The Modern Technique of the Pistol here at Gunsite has now been adopted as standard by both the Swiss military and the Swiss customs office, and as of this year, the word "Modern" has been dropped, implying that what we began to develop so many years ago at Big Bear Lake in California is now world standard. Happiness is the byproduct of achievement, and it certainly makes us happy to know what has been achieved. Having now passed age 85, I guess we ought to be able to sit back and put our feet up. The (*Nouvelle*) *Technique de Tir de Combat* is now sort of engraved in bronze. It is there, it works, and it is world standard. (Except, I hope, for the ragheads. I do not think those people could profit by it anyway since in their world God will provide for everything, and man's achievements have nothing to do with anything. Now let's see who wins!)

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Little girls, like kittens, are evidence of God's good nature.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

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## High Summer

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The world toddles along in its customary random fashion. Looking back over the past couple of generations, we do not see much to celebrate, apart from all this *digital* technology. Apparently what is digital is good, and what is good is digital, or something. We are pleased, of course, with the notable success of certain outstanding sporting rifles in the field, but that hardly compensates for the annoying continuation of the jihad in its many pernicious aspects. To pursue this Holy War in which we are now engaged will need an objective. If we can identify a clear-cut target, we certainly have the means by which to defeat it, but our avowed adversaries, at this time, persist in screening it to the extent that we have total confusion of our targets. On the one hand, the *wahabis* insist that they seek nothing but peace and good will, and on the other hand, they insist on indiscriminate murder as their fundamental tactic.

I do not pretend to have an answer to this question, but I am convinced that surrender is absolutely *not* the answer. These people maintain that they do not fear death, and some of them at least act as if they mean it. They do, however, seem to fear pollution, and that just may be an objective of sorts. Tradition has it that the Ay-rab is horrified by anything swine-like. If this is true, we may possibly resort to pig-like pollution of these murderers and their survivors. It would hardly seem couth to drench these people in bacon fat but, for lack of any other option, we might give it a try. Our adversaries are very nasty people; perhaps they will respond to very nasty tactics. Two wrongs do not necessarily make a right, but on the other hand the lesser of two wrongs might achieve an improved confrontation.

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Did we note that 50 percent of the people you run across are below average?

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On the good side, we hear of very satisfactory field results with our recent developments in both cartridges and sporting weapons. For example, we now have a recorded 63-inch kudu taken with the Steyr Scout; as well as with the 376 Steyr cartridge – in proper Scout configuration, of course. This last combination (which I like to call the Dragoon) is as close to perfection as is possible to obtain for both the Low Veldt and Alaska. Neither the factory nor the importer seems to be aware of this, but then marketing is a subject so arcane as to be beyond the understanding of us country boys. Right now, for example, it is difficult to obtain either a Scout or a Dragoon with the proper Mannlicher bolt handle. Somebody suggested that a ping-pong ball offers a better grip for the proper operation of the bolt, and somebody bought the idea. It is not a good idea. Speed of the second shot is more a function of recoil recovery than of bolt work. We see illustrations in the popular press of people who seem terribly concerned with speed of the second shot, but who persist in removing the butt from the shoulder when operating the weapon. Any reputable school or training system insures that the butt remains in the shoulder when the bolt is operated, but then as the Marine said in the fighting top of the Bonhomme Richard, "There is always some S.O.B. who never gets the word."

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It is not surprising to learn that the red dot sight on the M16 works pretty well in war, as long as the range is kept short.

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From my early youth we have marveled at the grandeur of the great sheep at the roof of the world. These are the Marco Polo sheep and the various subspecies of argali. Certainly those great 60 inch spirals are truly awe

inspiring, and should cap the collections of the dedicated hunter/naturalist. There is, however, another aspect of this, and that is atmosphere or background. The great sheep of the Himalaya or the Pamir are normally found above timberline, grazing on relatively flat gravel slopes above vegetation and waterfall. The American Rocky Mountain bighorn, however, inhabits some of the grandest and most dramatic scenery in the world. Just barging into his preferred terrain is a joy in itself, with or without successful harvest. I've come to think that the Rocky Mountain bighorn is the grandest of all trophies, possibly excepting one which we will discuss shortly.

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We have one more buffalo disaster from Kenya (where hunting is forbidden, as you know). I do not have details yet about this case yet but, of course, buffalo will not bother you if you do not hunt them first. (Everybody knows that.)

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As to trophies, I would place Shinano as first overall. Shinano was the world's greatest warship. It was the ultimate carrier, based upon the frame used for the Yamato and Musashi, the two ultimate battleships. Japan attempted to sweep the seas by the creation of three unmatched battleships. The project was undertaken in the late 20s or early 30s and was completed with the Yamato and Musashi. But then the Japanese decided that the weapon of the future had to be the aircraft carrier, and they converted number three of the super team and called it Shinano. It was brought to near completion in Japan's inland sea – but not without the knowledge of the US Navy. We knew what was going on, and when time came for time trials of the super carrier, we had it on our submarine screen as the super target. When Shinano emerged from the inland sea and cruised right around the bottom of the Japanese chain, we had a submarine waiting for it. This sub was the Archerfish, and while it could not hope to cruise with Shinano even at trial speed, it could wait in ambush. And so it did. The carrier completed some tests and then headed back to its home port, where Archerfish was waiting. By superb submanship, Shinano was intercepted, and since it was unaware and unprepared, it was sunk by four well-placed torpedoes which caught it without the protection of its water-tight integrity.

*Now there is a trophy.* Joe Enright, the skipper of Archerfish, could not very well hang Shinano on his trophy room wall, but he knew what it was to be the greatest trophy hunter of them all.

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We have very good reports from Mesopotamia regarding our current weaponry. It turns out that if you hit a man two or three times in the upper chest area with a 223, you will take him cleanly out of the fight. Of course one such hit with a 308 will do the same.

We also hear that the durability of the old 1911 stands still unchallenged. If you need a pistol, you need a *real* pistol. The best available 9mm serves best as a badge of office.

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In an example of where our current public schooling system is taking us, we recently overheard a comment from a middle-aged woman to the effect that the Nips would not have attacked us at Pearl Harbor if it had not been that we hit them first with the A-bomb. (Honest to God!)

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In connection with all of the excitement about the forthcoming London Olympics, we might remember that the original Olympics were specifically and forcefully non-national. Any athlete on his way to or from the games had free passage through all city states, and free hospitality.

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It is time to remind ourselves again that O.J. Simpson and Lon Horiuchi are still running free as of now.

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If you are serious about big game hunting, here, there or elsewhere, practice your off-hand. Remember that you can do this without recourse to the range. Dry firing does wonders once you have learned the basics.

I did not put any material concerning the fist rest or Hawkins position into "*The Art of the Rifle.*" I intend to remedy this with an appropriate short piece in due course. The fist rest, in which the bight of the forward loop

of the sling is used as a sort of forward pistol grip, is extremely useful and should remain where your built-in bipod is inapplicable. More than half of recent field reports emphasize the fist rest.

The bench rest, on the other hand, is not really a field expedient. It is a means of overcoming a very bad trigger action, from the bench or on the range.

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Income tax remission for holders of the Medal of Honor is an idea which seems to be gathering momentum. Whoever gets this put across rates a gold star for the year.

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Such reports as we get back concerning The Project suggest that most people seem to think that this should be attacked by way of highly esoteric equipment. The Project, for those who came in late, consists of the placement of 20 shots in a 20-inch circle in 20 seconds at 1000 yards. There are those who claim that this is impossible, and certainly it is very, very difficult, but then so was the 4-minute-mile until somebody achieved it. We have the equipment necessary for The Project right now. As far as I know, however, we do not yet have the man.

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All systems are *go* for the *Reunion* at Whittington in September. Please remember that your "theatrical" contribution should be regarded as the price of admission. Dream up something appropriate to the great Theodore Roosevelt (or from Rudyard Kipling). You do not have to memorize it, but it is better if you do. My father required me to memorize "Horatius at the Bridge" by MacCaulay when I was in junior high school, and I still have that whole thing pretty much to memory. Those *family members* who have sons are reminded that heroic verse is one of the great gifts that may be given. Poetry surpasses prose in this because it sticks in the memory better. Kipling's "If" has served as a moral guide for young men for over a century, and in the current unisex world it may be equally applicable to daughters. (Brother and sister teams facilitate memorization.)

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For those who are thinking of equipping your own private army, the Socom 16 appears to be the best thing now available. It has not been excessively tested, but it seems to be assembled from proven elements.

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Question: If you are only going to have one firearm available in your home, what should it be? Comrade Mugabe, up there in what used to be Rhodesia, has decreed that the answer is zero – no private firearms of any sort. One wonders how that bird manages to survive. I suppose that the prospect of a retaliatory blood-bath intimidates a lot of people. Possibly this is true, but what intimidates many should not intimidate all. The men who signed our Declaration of Independence put their heads in a noose in so doing. It would be nice to think that there are still men of that sort available today. "By my troth I care not. Man owes God a death, and he that dies this day is quit for the next."

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It would be nice if we could prevail upon people to refer to a "cougar" rather than to a "mountain lion." A cougar (puma, panther, painter, etc.) is almost nothing like a lion, apart from sharing approximately the same color. Lions are fierce, cougars are not. Cougars have been known to attack people, especially children, but not as a normal thing.

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There is a great deal of foolish discussion bouncing around concerning the proper arm position for serious pistol work. Jack Weaver's classic contribution consists in power control. If you crank that left elbow down and pull positive counter-pressure, you dampen recoil very considerably. If you use mechanical means of reducing recoil, and if you lay great importance upon very rapid bursts of succeeding shots, this may matter, but in the overall picture, I do not believe it does. It hardly matters whether you use the Weaver Stance or the Isosceles "with both arms straight" as long as you get hits, and those hits should be delivered with a major powered sidearm under controlled conditions. The argument is silly, and I wish it would go away.

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You must remember that with the rifle it is not how far away the shot was, but how close you were able to get. I have been shooting seriously since my late teens, and I have taken just six long shots that I remember. (By long shots I mean shots 300 meters or over.) I do not mean to set myself up as an example, but I need to point out that if one is forced to take a long shot, he owes himself an explanation. "There was no way I could get any closer."

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This has been a pretty active year for bears in all sorts of places. It is not surprising to hear of bear incidents in Alaska, but we have others, both in the Continental US and in such an unlikely place as Rumania. Bears are not cuddly, wherever you find them. They are not what anyone would call ferocious as a rule, but they can turn hostile quickly, and a full-grown bear of any species must be taken seriously, no matter where found. We have published our *Gunsite Bear Rules* several times, and I see no need to do it again, but bears kill (and eat) people with fair regularity wherever they are found. I have no personal case studies of bear defense, but it is clear that all principles of personal defense apply to bears as fully as to other large animals. Clearly, bullet placement is particularly important with any large, strong animal.

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You will recall that it has been suggested that the reason for the production of the 700 Nitro Express was the unavailability of anything bigger than a 600. For the same reason, we now see offered a 50 ACP pistol.

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Let us bear in mind that *a court martial is not a punishment*. It is a means of determining the guilt or innocence of an individual charged with breaking the law. A court martial can impose a severe sentence in the due course of inquiry. In World War II, the United States found one man guilty of a capital *military* offense. That is to say that he did something which would not have been a serious offense had it not been committed under combat conditions in time of war. This was the notable case of Private Eddie Slovik, and he was shot for refusing to fight. That was one incident not previously encountered and unlikely to be repeated. But a court martial must be understood to be just that – a *court* in which evidence is presented for and against the accused party, who may be punished if found guilty by anything from a literary reprimand to death. To "court martial" a man is not to punish him. It is, on the contrary, a means of deciding whether or not he should be punished.

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So now the Bantu bosses of South Africa have decided to change the name of the traditional capitol, Pretoria. The new word is *Tshwane*. This seems to us to be a conspicuously lousy idea. Andries Pretorius was one of the outstanding heros of modern time. Changing Pretoria to Tshwane suggests changing the name of Washington, DC to Nat Turner City. South Africa was one of our favorite places prior to the revolution, but time has a way of marching on.

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Having invented my own personal color code for individual response to personal danger, I like to feel that I ought to know just what it implies. This is, of course, not obligatory. I may have designed the code, but nobody is obliged to observe it as I declared it. Still I wish people who wish to use it would use it as designed, rather than as improvised after the fact. Specifically, I would like to insist that my own four-stage color code refers to decisions to take deadly action, rather than a degree of danger. As I have designed it, the color code designates that psychological condition which enables you to take action which is very unusual in your experience and which may result in lethal violence. A reasonably well-adjusted human being finds it very difficult to take lethal action against another human being. It is so difficult that it may prevent him from saving his own life. I have described it, taught it and written it up several times, and I am satisfied that it works as I have created it. It has on several occasions saved the life of the individual who had used it correctly. Put as simply as possible, the color code runs White, Yellow, Orange, and Red. It does not need amplification, but it does cover the subject in hand completely.

- In White you are unprepared and unready to take lethal action. If you are attacked in White you will probably die unless your adversary is totally inept.

- In Yellow you bring yourself to the understanding that your life may be in danger and that you may have to do something about it.
- In Orange you have determined upon a specific adversary and are prepared to take action which may result in his death, but you are not in a lethal mode.
- In Red you are in a lethal mode and will shoot if circumstances warrant.

That is putting it as quickly as possible, and we can go into it further at your convenience.

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As the English language continues to be bollixed up by various sorts of mechanical innovation, we would like to point out that "access" is *not* a verb.

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Does it not seem strange that the ancient Greeks were able to achieve a totally painless courtesy death, or courtesy capital punishment, by means of an infusion of what they called "hemlock." We have impeccable eyewitness proof of this in Plato's account of the execution of Socrates. Personally, I do not see any need to be particularly tender to an atrocious felon, but modern penologists do not seem to have read any history.

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Unyielding events in South Africa suggest that the children have been placed in charge of the bus – or did we say that already.

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Recent "kindergarten" sessions have been conducted here at Gunsite with conspicuous success. *Kinder*, accompanied by their parents, make wonderful students. They want to learn, and they apply themselves with more enthusiasm than their parents often show. I must admit that this never occurred to me when I was teaching here, but if the current management is content with very small classes this development is most gratifying.

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Of all the words of tongue or pen the kindest are "It has already been taken care of."

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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. 13, No. 8

August 2005

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## Shooting Weather

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Considering the various kinds of shooting in which the Gunsite *family* is now engaged, we note that the variety is conspicuous. The Holy War offers various sorts of its own. And here at home we are entering into the annual zeroing session. This applies, of course, to long arms, since once you have achieved a satisfactory zero on your most useful handgun there is seldom much need to play around with it. Back in the pioneer days of the handgun revolution, we gave a lot of thought to adjustable sights on pistols, only to discover with the passage of time that except for certain kinds of specialties, pistol shooting does not call for much sight adjustment. Though I think that the adjustable sights on a pistol are pretty much an affectation, I am certainly open to contributions from *family members* who disagree. The elegant super revolvers now being marketed in extravagant calibers may be an exception, but somehow I think that once you have obtained a solid factory zero, you need not fuss around much further. Practical pistol shooting is a short-range proposition, and once your pistol is hitting where it is pointed out to distances pertinent to its purpose, only radical changes in ammunition type call for alignment verification. But this is not true of long guns, and now is a good time to get out to the range with your rifle and check out your currently favored ammunition package.

Your Steyr Scout is probably pretty happy with your chosen medium loadings, probably in the 150 to 168 range combination. The seasonal rifleman is best served with a precise 200-meter center of impact, though 200 yards is ordinarily quite satisfactory, especially if that is what is most readily available at your *Schiesstand*.

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Note that the city council of Columbus, Ohio, has now banned the personal use or ownership of semi-automatic pistols. Presumably revolvers are okay. Apparently being bright is not a qualification for public office in Columbus. We note that there are some pretty good revolvers now available on the market. Any dastardly thing a self-loading pistol can do (quite on its own accord), a revolver can do just about as well (or as badly), depending upon what public office you hold. It is behavior like this which shakes one's faith in democracy.

(Note that Taurus of Brazil is now putting out a very nifty titanium service revolver in a variety of calibers. And note further that Smith's new 7-shot revolver has much to recommend it.)

These city council meetings must be quite something to attend!

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation has concluded somewhat officially that it is not cartridge power but rather bullet placement which stops fights.

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The United States of America constitute the last best hope of Earth. The National Rifle Association of America is the firmest and most dedicated guarantor of liberty in the United States. We have only four million members, where we should have forty million more. Thus it behooves every member to recruit himself one new member at least every year.

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Marine Colonel Christopher Bourne is not only a distinguished Gunsite graduate, but also a combat officer of

broad experience in the sand box. He is particularly articulate in his observations about the progress of the Holy War. He is there. He is doing extremely well, and he expounds with exasperation on the media coverage of the war. Colonel Bourne is explicit and vociferous in pointing out that while we are winning the jihad, the world press and the US press would have us believe otherwise. Just why it is that the leftist media insist upon giving us such a bad press calls for explanation. These news people are simply committed to the viewpoint that the American Right must be wrong. Among other things, it wins elections, which is intolerable to a socialist. Colonel Bourne is very positive of his position. We are delighted to honor him as an Orange Gunsite graduate and a US Marine. May God grant us more like him!

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If you are fortunate enough to have access to a broad and ample backstop, a good zero can be obtained very simply and easily using a sort of artillery system of split differences. If you are a good shot and understand your weapon, you need not expend a lot of ammunition or patches in zeroing. Get as solid as you can on a fist rest or bipod, and fire one shot. Call it. You should know where that piece was pointed when the primer popped. Your partner will observe the strike and call the hit either coarse or fine. (Let's assume that you have not pulled off a pinwheel with that first round.) Correct the first round for deflection only, and apply a correction ample enough to jump across the target. Apply a coarse correction with a quarter turn of your deflection wheel, and try again. If your correction was properly ample, you will have straddled your target by means an observed strike in the dirt. Note that no paper is involved and no fine inspection of the target is necessary. When applying your initial deflection corrections, be sure that you split the difference on each attempt. Three shots will usually get you on for deflection. *Do not correct your elevation until your deflection is on.* Even with the finest quality optics, you may achieve a correction in your uncalled-for plane. That is to say, you may get a slight elevation correction when all that you moved was your deflection wheel. Now and only now you may shift to paper, and if you are a good shot, you may achieve a pretty tight zero with three attempts. *Be careful to call each shot.* If Apollo favors you, you should be on zero with only a few rounds. You should be set for the occasion using only one paper target and one test group. If you wish to make your supreme effort, you may choose to go to a clean paper and fire a 5-shot group, being careful as always to call each shot, using a firing position you expect to use in the field and allowing the piece to cool between shots. Disregard shots called wild.

Using this system and commencing with a cool, dry bore, you are ready to go. Today most outfitters have available some sort of zeroing facility on station which you can use if any long-range firing is anticipated. (The built-in bipod of your Steyr Scout gets you off to a good start.)

Fancy shooting at medium to long range is rarely an element of practical marksmanship – but it can be, and it is up to you to be prepared for the unexpected. Dangerous game is almost never attacked at ranges greater than half a football field, but quick assumption of position is, and it is irresponsible to open hostilities under circumstances which call for match-winning efforts. This does not mean, of course, that you should not take to the field as good a zero as is practical for you under the circumstances expected. Hunting season approaches (in the northern hemisphere). And good shooting is something we should be prepared to deliver. The Gunsite *family* has proven marvelously adept in this department – I am glad to say. So let's keep at it and continue to deliver the goods.

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In our current emasculate culture, valorous behavior is somehow regarded as inappropriate. The Spanish term *machismo* is, for example, often regarded as insulting rather than complimentary. This is by no means as intended. To be *macho*, in the classic sense, is to be manly, rather than boastful. False modesty is no particular virtue. When you earn both ears and the tail in the bull ring, you are fully entitled to take a bow.

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The award of military medals can be a complex business. The more we see of it, the more complex it becomes. George Washington instituted the Purple Heart simply for getting hurt in the War of Independence. Injury has never seemed evidence of excellence. In one view it might be said to be more evidence of incompetence. It takes no special talent to get shot, despite the emotional impact of "*The Red Badge of*

*Courage.*" We may note that in the great age of air-to-air combat, most of the real experts made it through without getting hit.

(What military medals are awarded for varies from time to time and place to place. Valor is a word commonly used in this regard, but without much satisfaction since valor is almost totally a subjective consideration. What seems valorous to me may not seem so to you, and leaving the matter up to a committee has tended to obscure matters. The Japanese would not issue military medals, since they thought that all of the Emperor's warriors were equally meritorious. The Germans, on the other hand, attempted to use some sort of numerical score as qualification for decoration.)

It is quite apparent that in many conflicts the purpose of military medals has been the bolstering of home front morale, irrespective of the action or actions concerned. At Command and Staff School, when I attended, an entire instructional period was devoted to the awards of medals and decorations, but it did not serve to clarify matters much. Our old friend the late Colonel Bud Reynolds, USMC, opined convincingly that there could be no action above and beyond the call of duty, since if anything could be accomplished to further the cause, that in itself was definitively "the call of duty." Our colleague and historian Barrett Tillman points up a case to the contrary in which a crew member of a B-17 bundled a comrade into his parachute and rode his airplane to his death. "Greater love hath no man than this."

*But what is it for?* This is the question that rocks the boat, and in this respect Rudel stands alone, having been the sole recipient of the special medal struck for his sole benefit.

So it is futile to discuss the fairness, justice or suitability of military awards. They are nice to have, and they certainly do brighten up the uniform, but that hardly cleans up the act. The attempt at this time to stratify military awards as denoting some of them higher or lower than others is silly, but I guess we are stuck with it.

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Just as *professional* does not mean *expert*, *freedom* does not mean *liberty*. There are people who insist that the proper meaning of words does not matter. These are people who can get us into serious trouble. For example, a kudu is not a "plains animal." A kudu is a woodsy beast with habits somewhat like a whitetailed deer. So people go on insisting "it doesn't matter." The fact is, however, that it does matter. And those who think that Jihadists are insurgents might go to Mexico City and drive on *Insurgentes*, the main drag. In modern Mexican history this boulevard extolls the insurgents.

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There seems to be something fascinating about the range of 1200 yards in regard to a sniper kill. This is a long, long way, and not much is to be gained by quarreling with it. It is interesting, nevertheless, to see how many 1200 yard kills are now being reported back from the sand box. I think this figure is gained by simply setting the sights on the sniper rifle to that distance. If you deck somebody a long way out, you look at your sights and see that you shot this guy at 1200 yards. I am certainly not qualified to judge, but I think the long shooters deserve full praise regardless of statistics. The late revered Townsend Whelen opined that anything over 300 yards should not be responsibly attempted by a sportsman. This figure, of course, is not properly applied to a soldier. I guess we all know about Billy Dixon at the Battle of Adobe Walls, but I have never seen a long shot brought off properly with the rifle in the field. That certainly does not mean such things do not happen, but I do use Colonel Whelen's index with regard to my own adventures. On game animals 300 may be the maximum responsible shot. On Jihadists we deal with a different set of considerations.

But best not brag about long shots. Shooters are not impressed, and non-shooters do not know the difference.

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It is bothersome to see our defense department continually disregarding marksmanship training. It is true that we have an unsatisfactory personal arm as standard issue, but that does not mean that we should drop the subject. We note that the military is no longer teaching the use of the shooting sling, which under some circumstances can boost hitting capacity by as much as a third. We note the continued reduction in

ammunition allowances for training, and see no evidence of recognition for good shooting in the field – certainly not in the press. The ragheads insist upon their readiness to die. Let us then help them along.

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We have been having trouble with parts availability on the Steyr Scout. Because there are people who feel that the traditional Mannlicher bolt handle is not easy to handle, the new versions of the SS have been coming through with a ping pong sort of arrangement. I do not fancy this idea myself, but let each have his own. I do, however, feel that the true SS should be sold with the original bolt handle. On another point, the marketers have felt that the item would be more saleable if they issued it without the prescribed Leupold fixed–power intermediate–eye–relief telescope. So an interesting little side play has developed. The original concept of the Steyr Scout featured a left–handed action on option. The factory refused to acknowledge this, so you cannot get a left–handed SS. Now a curious variant has developed, particularly for left–handers such as *family member* Tom Russell. He is left–handed, but he finds that the ping pong bolt handle renders the piece easy to operate from the wrong shoulder. So now you can get a left–handed version (somewhat) if you go for the ping pong handle and forgo the telescope. Since the 376 Steyr cartridge is a very powerful one and suitable for dangerous game using the 300–grain solid bullet, this works up into a sort of pocket 375 Holland, which would seem to fill a definite, if restricted need. So the Tom Russell package features the ping pong handle and does without the telescope sight, utilizing the reserve ghost–ring on the classic scout. Odd goings on, but not without merit.

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We continue to apply the question, "What is it for?" when examining handheld firearms. We received a very interesting contribution recently regarding this matter, which I believe is worth analysis.

"The second matter is your question as to whether `digital' is necessarily better than `analog', which led me to do considerable thinking. This is a question that nobody bothers to ask nowadays, which means that few people are prepared with an answer that's accurate, informative, and concise (kind of like the question of iron vs. steel). The matter of digital electronics vs. analog electronics is, in fact, quite complicated. In some ways, digital is better than analog. In other ways, analog is better than digital.

"This issue presents many interesting aspects along with some wonderful opportunities for analogy (no pun intended), one of which leads me to regard the Steyr Scout as a `digital' weapon and the machine pistol as an `analog' one.

"Hence, the analogy to firearms. The machine pistol may, as you've pointed out, be the optimal firearm for repelling pirates at sea, but doesn't seem particularly well–suited for much else. The Steyr Scout, on the other hand, is suitable for a wide variety of shooting activities and may be usefully employed in diverse situations by a skilled rifleman, with his brain providing the necessary `software' to adapt to each situation. Nonetheless, for certain exotic and narrowly defined uses, the SS might be slightly outclassed by specialized weapons.

"Like a digital computer, the Steyr Scout is general–purpose and highly economical. You can have one SS and use it for many things, or you can have a whole golf bag full of specialized niche weapons, which, in the end (once you include the purchase price, the cost of gunsmithing, the expense of accommodating multiple calibers, etc.), could cost a lot more than a single Scout. By the same token, buying a good digital computer with a few hundred dollars' worth of software is much cheaper than buying a typewriter, a movie–editing machine, a drafting table with a full set of drafting tools, a darkroom full of photo–processing equipment, etc.

"Hence my assertion that the SS is, in a certain sense, a `digital' firearm while the machine pistol is an `analog' weapon.

"Perhaps the boys in the marketing department can come up with a way to pitch the SS as 'the ultimate digital rifle'. If they do, I hereby grant them full permission to freely use this concept in their marketing efforts as they see fit."

Nelson Clayton, Sandy, Utah

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Those of us who simply cannot bear the idea of gender differentiation in our pronouns might remember that in English we have a perfectly good neutral example. Rather than saying, "he or she" or "him or her," we may simply use "it," which serves the purpose quite well. Winston Churchill was positive in his observation that in the English language the male pronoun embraces the female, which is, as he said, just as it should be.

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One sort of personal weapon which performs many useful tasks in a rural household is the compact, rimfire semi-auto pistol. With this little gadget you may reach out and touch various small targets at will, either for sport or for tidying up the place. The ubiquitous 22 ranch rifle is usually at hand for this purpose, but it is unhandy in the sense that it is too long always to be there when circumstances arise. The compact 22 pistol, on the other hand, may be worn around the place daily, and while it does not hit hard, it hits hard enough for housecleaning and it is always there when you need it. Many mistakes come to mind in this regard, though certainly they are rarely encountered. A snake's head is a small target, of course, but not impractical at ranges of 6 or 8 feet. The ranch pistol for this use should mount precise sights and incorporate a target trigger. Such features are frequently found on 22 target pistols, but the target pistol, as a rule, is too bulky to be packed around from breakfast to dinner. The practice target for the "ranch pistol" may most conveniently be an empty box of 22 rimfire ammunition. By constant use of this (and always remembering *Rule 4*), you may discover just how useful your little gun can be – even if you do not live on a ranch. It is more practical than your service pistol, most of the time, since its ammunition is much cheaper, usually does not upset the peasantry, and it may be both smaller and lighter.

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Our stout-hearted commentator, Oliver North, calls his selection of memoirs "War Stories," which is okay, but we acquired the term "C Stories" early on in Basic School, where Snuffy Puller, younger brother of the renowned Chesty Puller, was our mentor. Snuffy, who was killed on Guam, had quite a bunch of C stories of his own, as, of course, did his brother. Those of us in that class came away recounting our adventures as C stories, relating to, but not exclusively, the sea going service. It is thus that I decided to call a collection of my own as "*C Stories*" which is the title of the book now offered for sale by daughter Lindy Wisdom. We did not mean to imply that such anecdotes as we recount originated at sea. Sea duty is sometimes regarded as somewhat non-regulation by infantry officers, but it can have its points. One of my classmates earned the Navy Cross in action at the battle of Cape Esperance while serving aboard one of the ill-fated cruisers. You do not have to be a squad leader or a fighter pilot to pull off your share of heroics. Those things just happen, and the circumstances involved are hard to predict. Any Marine is expected to be appropriately valorous, should the occasion arise. If you are not prepared to buckle the swash, you should not join the Marines.

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We are getting a full share of combat anecdotes from the sand box, and some of them are very good indeed. The Jihadis do offer us a target-rich environment, but our uninspiring news media are reluctant to illustrate it. We continue to rack up the bad guys very stylishly, but it would seem that all the press people find interesting is the butcher's bill. We are at war, as the enemy has declared upon us and as the President has announced. People get killed in war (as they get killed on the city streets). This is to be acknowledged with appropriate respect, but not regarded as proof of strategic error on our part. We are proud of our heros, living and dead, and we do better to salute than to wring our hands.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 9

September 2005

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## Hunting Season

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Since our leftist political segment insists that the NRA was responsible for the rightist victories in the last elections, we must give the Association full credit for the maintenance of liberty in this country. Since this country is the last bastion of political liberty throughout the world, we can assert that liberty is now proclaimed throughout the world through the efforts of the organized shooters of the United States. Membership in the NRA is a prideful thing, and those who seek office in the Association should be well aware of the significance of the positions they seek. As a member of the Board, I am often addressed as a sort of ombudsman by citizens who see a need for more active participation by the Association in public affairs. On the other hand, there are those who insist that the NRA is too hard-nosed about this and refuses to compromise. The proper path, I feel, lies somewhere in the middle. If we are too crotchety for some people but not crotchety enough for others, it may be that we are following the right path. It is to hope.

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Currently the solid bronze bullet, designated X, seems a favorite according to field reports. It simplifies manufacture considerably, and it appears to give uniform impact performance throughout the world. When it first appeared, the Bronze X bullet acquired a reputation as being a trifle too hard for uniform expansion at all velocities, but current issue is doing very well. I look forward to more examples from both Africa and North America.

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With hunting season now fully underway in the northern hemisphere, a good many friends and relations are afield at this time seeking to inspire the spirits and fill the larder. We expect many good C-stories to cross our desk before long.

A good place to gather up such things will be the annual *Theodore Roosevelt Reunion* at Whittington. We note that a good many political activists and gun-owning libertarians are not hunters. It has always seemed to me that a properly decorated household includes a careful selection of hunting trophies, located on available wall space, but not to the point of clutter. My father was not a hunter, and my early experience did not involve a house full of noble feral contributions. I have always, however, prized a selection of good examples, and since I am not going to collect any more, I think the balance has come out pretty well. Daughter Lindy is at this point up in Alaska harassing the caribou with Jim West and Steve Lunceford. Her success may or may not provide us with further specimens, which is okay because there is just not any more room.

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Did you notice how much safer we all felt when Martha Stewart was in prison? Horiuchi and O.J. Simpson were obviously much less of a hazard to society – I guess.

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When we dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, there was certainly no reluctance for this dire act. Amongst the men involved in the fight in the Pacific, we gathered the idea that the Nips were simply not going to surrender, and that if we went forward with the invasion of the Japanese homeland, we could expect to suffer about 1 million American dead, at the same time killing about 20 million Japanese. That was the figure that I gathered in my job as an assistant G2 for the landing on Kyushu. It meant to me that the only way that I could avoid being killed in the invasion would be to suffer a critical injury and be evacuated alive – not a pleasant prospect. Historical review seems to agree that Japan had been so reduced by our submarine campaign that,

coupled with the B29s, the Emperor might actually have decided to surrender. We did not know this, nor did we suspect it, and we were prepared for a very nasty campaign – on both sides.

Further research discloses the presence of a Japanese policy directive which called for the murder of all American prisoners being held at the time. This comes to the number of 144,000, all to be put to death immediately upon the landing of the first allied soldier on the homeland of Japan. I thought the decision to drop the bomb was fully justified at that time, and I think so even more now. The atom bomb was a dreadful thing, but its use turned out to be an enormous life-saver.

This poses a massive political option at this present stage in history. Various powers now have the capacity to employ the nuclear weapon, but the choices do not seem to force any cataclysmic decision. Just how does one employ nuclear power against an enemy who has no concrete political structure? I suppose that the Jihadis may feel that the eradication of Israel is not only a feasible, but a desirable course of action. That, however, does not offer a contrary move. Parallels are offered in regard to the refusal of either side to use poison gas in World War II, but the circumstances are not comparable. Such a puzzlement!

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In times of major popular crisis, we often propose a "Department of Public Security." If we look at this calmly, we must realize that the *Department of Public Security is the armed citizen*. This is so obvious that there would seem to be no need to announce it further.

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This 2006 election is going to be a really nasty contest. I do not know where to place any bets at this time.

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We hear that there have been two buffalo fatalities this year and at least one attributable to lion. So far in 2005 we hear that one of the losers wants to sue Federal Ammunition for the efficiency of the lion, or something of the sort. Certainly litigation seems to be the answer to everything, and someone will figure out a way to hold Katrina financially responsible for rinsing out New Orleans. It has also been suggested that we have a parallel here in the cleansing of Sodom and Gomorrah. This may make some sense if we can just find an opposing legal entity.

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We note with satisfaction that the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is a Marine General who wears his shooting badges meticulously.

"A US Marine is a shooting machine  
*And don't you ever forget it.*"

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We invite the brotherhood to complete the verse.

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It seems to me that our public school systems covered more ground and covered it better back when I was involved in it. I do not believe that this is mere simple-minded nostalgia, but rather has some basis in fact. For example, in junior high, which included the 7th, 8th and 9th grades, six practical subjects were required of all students – one per semester. The subjects included wood shop, machine shop, agriculture, mechanical drawing, auto shop, and electric shop. These subjects were required of all boys. Girls were required to take six other subjects more suitable to their presumed future occupations. The six practical subjects did much to fit a man to being useful around the house, in addition to saving a good deal of money after graduation by doing things which he would otherwise have to pay for. I do not think this program has been continued at this time, which is too bad when we now have a whole department of federal government devoted to the subject. Back at the time that I mentioned, there was no federal department of education, which may have something to do with it.

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On the subject of what is now called "higher education," I note that in times gone by a doctorate in philosophy (PhD) was pretty hot stuff, whereas today I encounter various holders of advanced degrees who can hardly write a constructive sentence, much less contribute to the total store of human knowledge. I also note that today's students in "lower education" select specialized subject matter long before they have really begun to acquire a general education. We find students opting for fairly advanced esoterica even before they have acquired a basic familiarity with geography, zoology, political theory, or basic chemistry. In these times gone by, the student could not enter a major university before he had taken basic ground work in both chemistry and physics. (It is true, though, that some universities required remedial course work from freshmen in English, math and history. We used to label those subjects with the derogatory title "bonehead," as in "bonehead English," etc.)

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Have you noticed this peculiar attention that journalists have been paying to firearms terminology? We see them insisting upon "a semi-automatic, 9mm handgun," when just "pistol" would do. The action of a firearm is hardly ever relevant to the story itself, and if it is, the journalist usually knows too little about the subject for him to use it in a significant fashion.

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This Blackwater organization seems to have unlimited money, and offers very nice contracts to qualified fighting men. Several Gunsite graduates have been taken on for mercenary service in the sand box, and it is good to know that there is a place where they can find proper employment.

The *condotieri* of the Italian Renaissance were generally paid in loot, but one wonders who is putting the loot up at this time.

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We hope to see the term *monsoon* dropped now that the summer rains have passed. The term *monsoon* refers to the periodic rains of Southeast Asia, and it has no relationship to the Southwest United States.

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There does not seem to be any question but what the ragheads will hit us again. It is not whether but when. One cannot back out of a Holy War. Preemptive defeat of the opposition would seem to be the only answer. The problem is detecting and defining the hostile entity.

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Our friend and colleague, Hans Edelmaier of Salzburg, has come up with a neat, specific definition for the fighting man. The kind of man who is aware that the world is crisp and violent, and that he may have to use lethal force to enjoy it, is termed *Homo pugnans*, as opposed, presumably, to *Homo herbivorus*, or *Homo ovidis*. All members of the Gunsite *family* may be called *Homo pugnans*. Let us be prepared to discuss this at length at the forthcoming *Reunion* at Whittington coming up shortly.

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The Countess would like it pointed out that two terms *feminine* and *feminist* should be carefully separated. Laura Bush is feminine. Diane Feinstein is a feminist. There is a difference.

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The Katrina disaster has developed for us a new consonant in the form of a combined *t* and *n*, as in *Baton Rouge*. The current crop of commentators cannot separate the *t* from the *n*, but use a sort of gulp to join the two. You get this by failure to separate the tongue from the palate when shifting over to the *n*. It does sound a bit odd until you get used to it.

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We hear with great interest the possibility of a revival of the giant sable in Angola. At one time we thought that the giant sable was simply a color phase of the sable itself, but now it appears that the giant sable is a separate species, thought to be extinct. It would be wonderful news that it has indeed revived.

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Pat Robertson seems to have stirred up a storm in his suggestion that we "take out" the current president of Venezuela. Political assassination may be a good thing to use from time to time – most would agree that the

world would be better off if Fidel Castro had been taken out a long time ago – but this sort of thing is not good to discuss. Sovereign states have been known to arrange a murder of personal opposition from time to time throughout history, but it is above all *a secret* operation. If you talk about it, you open a Pandora's box, best remained closed. Certainly it is difficult for any government to carry out operations which are truly secret, and it is best if they do not try. Stalin arranged for the murder of Trotsky, but he did not do so very well. Calvo Sotelo was murdered by the Spanish communists to their advantage, but this was an exception. Julius Caesar, of course, is a classic example of political assassination, but we are still not quite sure of how that was done, or whether, for that matter, it was a good thing. Robertson may have thought that he was chatting loosely, but his topic was taken seriously by too many people. Today assassination is fairly widespread throughout the Near East, but its conduct is difficult to follow in a society where almost all important people use some variety of the same name. I think we can conclude that murder is a bad thing. The less said about it the better.

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Note that Pat Rogers, one of the fully qualified masters of the modern technique, has now separated himself completely from Gunsite, and may reestablish himself at a new location in Virginia.

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We can find nothing wrong with John Roberts as our Chief Justice. Evidently the socialists feel that he should have an "agenda," while he maintains that the job is to *interpret* the law as written. The bad guys pick at him in an effort to disclose some degree of partisanship, so far without success. Chief Justice Roberts would be a great forward step as a strict constructionist, which I think is what the Constitution demands.

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We are delighted to learn that our suggestion about income tax remission for winners of the Medal of Honor has been accepted by various persons of consequence. This is such a nifty idea that we can't see why it has not been acted upon long ere this. It is a *no-lose* proposition without any negative aspect. Anyone who holds the Medal of Honor has paid in full for his membership in the Liberty Club, and his individual periodic contribution is too slight to dent the budget.

The idea needs important support. The President is the one to act. Write him!

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Does anyone find that the 376 Scout (Dragoon) kicks too hard? I have asked this question for some years here at the Ranch, on both novice and expert marksmen, and I do not find it to be the case. Personally I only can detect the difference in recoil effect between the Scout and the Dragoon by side-by-side tests, and I think that the notion of excessive recoil in the Dragoon is an error. I suppose that if the cartridge is indeed too rough for the piece, it will wind up by breaking reticles in telescopes. So far it has not done so, but we have fired the combination too little to justify a conclusion. I think that the Dragoon is a nifty item, though I was not impressed with it when it was introduced. It is practically perfect for Alaska, and also for the African low veldt. It almost duplicates the impact effect on the 375 Holland when using the 300-grain bullet, and it does this in a weapon which provides the wonderful convenience of the Scout configuration. Everybody should have one!

It appears regrettable that Steyr Mannlicher does not seem to organize its activities as well as it should. It produces wonderful weapons, and has for a long time, but its corporate management and marketing has always been less than what we might desire. I presented a Mannlicher Model M to the late, great Joe Foss a decade ago, and he was delighted with its performance. That was before the appearance of the Scout, but it established the point that the Mannlicher people have always been able to produce excellent firearms, even if they do not know how to sell them.

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Last time when we were in the Alps, we attended a major practical pistol contest put on by the family of the late Alessandro Cirila, a distinguished sportsman and member of the Gunsite *family*. This event put us in mind of the funeral games of ancient Greece. At our current advanced age we feel that it might be fitting for the *family* to contemplate a funeral rally when the time comes, properly starting in Chamonix and winding up at

Steyr or Munich. The route might include various favorite spots from Grindelwald to Salzburg, and provide a pleasant measure of sports driving, including Lo Stelvio.

Not to hurry. Just a thought.

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

Vol. 13, No. 10

October 2005

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## Right Rites

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Autumn is the best time of year, and doubtless that is the reason it is so busy with group activity. President Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. arranged to be born in late October, and thus those of us who make a point annually of celebrating his birthday find our calendars crowded at this time. Many years ago we decided to hold a gathering of the *Gunsite Family* in connection with TR's birthday, but we discovered at once that there were far too many Americans of similar inclination. Thus what turned out as a reunion and gathering of the *Gunsite Family* became gradually impractical. This year our reunion was a great success, but it certainly came at a conflict with all sorts of other activities, and I believe that next year it would be wise to move it. So now we are considering the first weekend in October for our celebration.

This year at Whittington we had all sorts of interesting activities, varying from histrionic presentations by Colonel Clint Ancker to vocalizing by grandchild Amy Heath to shooting demonstrations of a variety of heavy rifles presented as before by John Gannaway. (I still do not have my hands on "Baby," my elephant gun, but I have reason to believe that it is now on its way from Africa and will soon be available for our proposed museum. This rifle is based upon a Czech Brno 602 in caliber 460 G&A Special. Today there is almost no need for an elephant gun, since the great elephant days are past, but this rifle is a joy to handle and to shoot, and I have used it on a couple of notable occasions which I have written up in memoirs, bearing in mind that it is placement rather than power that makes the difference in a lethal confrontation. Shooting Baby gives the shooter a very warm, authoritative feeling that is hard to duplicate. As a "rock buster" it remains a joy.)

There are not many places where aerial shooting with the sporting rifle is convenient, and while there are hardly any circumstances under which it is called for, quick target acquisition is one of the important talents of the rifleman which is obviously usable but seldom taught.

We hope to see you all again next year at Whittington, if not on TR's birthday. Try to keep the dates open on your calendar – 6, 7 October 2006.

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This year the autumn directors' meeting of the board of the National Rifle Association was held at Anchorage, Alaska, in late September/early October, and to our astonishment it was not rained out. It always rains in Alaska, but on those dates we felt only a few sprinkles.

Alaska is rifle country where everyone operates his own float plane and packs his rifle. It also supports plenty of bears, which run in size from moderate to huge. The taxonomy of bears has undergone repeated reorganization during my lifetime, though the zoologists have not yet been able to sort them out. The Alaska brown bear and the grizzly bear do run to type, but they cross readily and are not mistaken for the American black bear, which, while found throughout northern North America, grows to its best size in Alaska. When I was a lad it was held that a grizzly bear was fierce but that a black bear was not. This idea is not supportable anymore. All bears, including the great white sea bear, are strong, dangerous animals – not to be taken as cuddly.

On his latest adventure Bob Brown of *Soldier of Fortune* collected a very nice brownie with one shot taken

from a shore-skirting skiff at very short range. In the same time frame, though not in the same excursion, daughter Lindy harvested a very nice barren ground caribou, also with one shot, from her Mannlicher Scout using the 168-grain Bronze X bullet. The trophy will not make the record book, but the meat is splendid in steaks, hamburger and sausage. Lindy's shot was taken from braced sitting, using the looped sling, at 125 yards – target angle 270, in one side and out the other.

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We are told by people who are supposed to know about such things that the readership of this Commentary is much larger than I would have supposed. This may be because it is free, but I like to think that it is because it is not commercial. I write these items without any economic motive, and I do not advertise anything professionally. It may be suggested that I push the Steyr Scout rifle pretty hard, but I do not do so for cash or any other sort of economic reward. I push the Scout because to me it represents excellence, and I revere excellence. It is not perfect – nothing is – but it is close, and since it is my personal concept, I take parental pride in it.

I also push the "Co-pilot," the Blazer R93 and the 1911 Colt pistol without royalties. In that connection, I once proposed a royalty to the president of Steyr-Mannlicher, that is the man who was at that time president of the corporation. The prospect seemed to distress him to the extent that I quickly changed the subject. I would not have turned down a royalty on the Scout if it had been offered, but the issue did not seem important. The Steyr Scout is not any great commercial success. The market evidently does not prize any sort of general-purpose item to the extent that a special purpose product does anything well. This inhibits "turnover," which is the life of trade. Few men *need* a rifle. What rifle producers sell are toys, and the more different kinds of toys are available, the better it is for trade. If a man has a Steyr Scout, he does not need anything else in that line, except for specialties. The Steyr Scout is not a target rifle, nor an inner city riot suppresser, nor an elephant gun, but it will do for almost anything else, if we exclude the ubiquitous 22. A recent friend and disciple taking off next year for Africa acquired a 416 Remington, when what he needed was a Steyr Scout, as issued or in Dragoon (376) configuration. What the Steyr Scout offers above all is convenience and "friendliness." It is the most "shootable" instrument I know of.

You may note that I stick closely to "Steyr Scout" because of the misuse of the term "scout" by itself. Two domestic approximators are now producing what they evidently consider to be scout rifles, utilizing a term scout in the tradition of the old American West, which is not where I got it. My concept derived from the US military doctrine which defines a scout as a soldier working alone or in partnership with one other soldier. Frederick Russell Burnham was particularly proud of his title of "Chief of Scouts" under Lord Roberts in the Boer War. The scouts, of which Burnham was chief, were frontiersmen only coincidentally. Basically they were reconnaissance troops sent out beyond lines to determine the location and operational conduct of the enemy. In one notable operation prior to his working for Lord Roberts, Burnham undertook the assassination of the enemy leader, which turned out to be a remarkable success – roughly paralleling Hanneken's assassination of Charlemagne Peralte in Haiti in 1918. Thus a scout can be a "hit man" if the occasion demands, but that is not his primary definition. According to a manual which I studied in high school, "A scout is a man trained in ground and cover, movement from cover to cover, map reading, rifle marksmanship, observation, and accurately reporting the results of his observation." Note the stipulation of rifle marksmanship. A scout must be a good shot – a good practical shot, a hunter. A "scout rifle" should be a rifle for such a man. As it turns out, the current Steyr Scout rifle is a good deal more than that, and what a happy development it turned out to be! What it is not, however, is a short, bolt-action rifle with the telescope mounted forward. The scout rifle does not need a telescope sight, and I used Scout I extensively in Central America mounting ghost-ring only. The features of the Steyr Scout now offered are primarily mine, except for the superb stock design, which is the result of Zedrosser and Bilgeri at Steyr. This stock is, in my opinion, a triumph – marvelously comfortable for almost everyone. I do not think it needs the optional length of pull. A short stock is no handicap to a man with long arms, whereas a long stock is uncomfortable for a shooter with short arms. I suggest simply abandoning the stock spacers on the Steyr Scout and leaving it at short option.

As now issued, the Steyr Scout has only a couple of minor drawbacks. Its magazine well should be cut forward about a quarter of an inch to facilitate breech inspection with the little finger. The bipod retaining pin should be made of metal rather than plastic, as it has been known to sheer with extensive use. It has no need for an intermediate sling socket on the starboard side, and it has no need to be offered in goofy calibers such as the 223.

I am clearly very proud of the Steyr Scout as it stands. I am mildly annoyed to see low-rate copies being offered by major producers. With firearms as with many other things in life, you get what you pay for.

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Jim West of Anchorage was showing us around at this time, and he is off now visiting Danie and Karin van Graan at Engonyameni in South Africa. Jim's concept of the "Co-pilot" is an excellent one which the Marlin people attempted to copy from him in their so-called "Guide Gun." The Co-pilot is to the Guide Gun what a Cadillac is to a Chevrolet – they are related but they are not interchangeable. Jim is now building his basic parts at his shop in Anchorage, and they are stouter and better conceived than the original Marlin components.

Jim West insists upon mounting all of his Co-pilots with telescope sights, to my mild annoyance. The mission of the Co-pilot is short range defense against heavy, dangerous animals, which are not hard to see. Jim points out that as one gets on in years, he loses the ability to focus on his front sight and thus needs the assistance of a telescope. This is true enough, but one need not anticipate the onset of physical disability. I think it unsound to fit a Co-pilot with a glass sight until you definitely need to – meanwhile, it clumsifies the weapon.

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Note that the new run of Kimber 1911s is dehorned. Its sharp edges have been rounded off to avoid excessive wear on hands and clothing. This is a good step.

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Among other presentations of John Gannaway we were shown the new Czech heavy rifle intended to supplant the 600 series. We hoped that this piece would be an improvement, and specifically we hoped that we would see the reintroduction of the outstanding rear-sight of that bolt-action series, which was the best thing of its kind. Sad to say, we did not see it. If you want that 602 rear-sight for your custom heavy, you will have to find an oldy or fabricate a new one on your own.

In addition, the fit and finish of the new rifle was not all it should be. Checkering was coarse and wood selection was mediocre.

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At Whittington we missed Samson, who is an addition to any gathering of sportsmen.

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Up in Alaska we cruised Prince William Sound aboard a nifty excursion catamaran, which zipped us along at up to 35 knots on the glassy fjord. The many glaciers drop off medium to massive ice chunks which crack like a rifle and serve to keep the water nice and cool. The catamaran ran a slalom course amongst the ice chunks at surprisingly high speed.

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Lindy was able to do some fine game spotting in Alaska. She sighted a beluga, a wolverine, and a flaming red fox, which few people rarely have. The beluga is the white whale, and pure white he is, though not huge. This one popped out of the icy waters of Prince William Sound just in time for a quick sighting. Out in the boonies west of Anchorage Lindy ran onto the wolverine, which is a rare item. I had always thought that wolverines were pure black, but this one showed a good measure of white fur. The wolverine is a notorious camp wrecker, and is taken to tearing up hunting establishments with a will. He is certainly one of the fiercer animals, and though he is not large, he is known to intimidate both wolf packs and bears. We acquired a good picture, and intend to send it along to Paul Kirchner for enrichment.

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You will recall that it has been suggested that the reason for the production of the 700 Nitro Express was the unavailability of anything bigger than a 600. For the same reason, we now have offered a 50 ACP pistol.

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We note another buffalo fatality, this time from the great Rift Valley in Kenya where hunting is forbidden. Simon Combes was a noted wildlife artist who was hit by a bull which "just came from nowhere." A buffalo is very big and very black. He cannot very well "come from nowhere," despite the first-hand account. If you choose to frequent regions inhabited by dangerous game, it seems that you should keep your eyes open. We do not wish to speak ill of the unfortunate, but whether you are in Los Angeles or the African bush it is important to *check six*.

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Larry Mudgett, distinguished paladin of the Los Angeles Police Department, has retired from law enforcement and has come to Gunsite as intermittent staff. Larry's record is too great to be touched upon in a note, but it has to be said that he understands pistolcraft, both in theory and in practice. Additionally he is an outstanding teacher. He will be a credit to the enterprise.

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In a recent confrontation in Petaluma, California, the bad guy was hit 27 times with 10mm pistol bullets, whereupon he died. The 10 is a pretty satisfactory cop cartridge, but it is not the ultimate answer. Nothing is. I suppose that the 69 caliber, cap lock, front-feeder of the 1840s was about the best thing of its kind in stopping power, but men have been hit with heavier blows than that and still kept coming. The answer, of course, is placement. You have to put your bullet in the right place and this, of course, calls for a cool hand.

On his recent excursion to Alaska, Colonel Bob Brown socked a 9-foot plus coastal bear just behind the ear at rock throwing distance, and achieved an instant one-shot stop. Almost any bullet placed just there would probably have done the job as well – even a paltry 223 – but it is hard to know just what to expect. Robert Ruark cautioned us famously to "use enough gun." The late Dr. Albert Pauckner certainly had enough gun for his elephant, but he short-stroked the bolt and might well have come to grief if he had not been backed up by Ian McFarlane, using a double-heavy 465 #2. He had placed his first shot pretty well, but we will not know where his second shot might have gone had it been available. This is a tale now appropriate for the "Life at Riley's" series.

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"He who goes unarmed in paradise had better be sure that is where he is."

James Thurber, via Joel Ebert

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The barren ground grizzly has been acting up in uppity fashion this year. People who observe the Gunsite bear rules do not experience any trouble, but there are too many people who do not know the bear rules, and too many who simply will not accept the fact that a bear is a dangerous animal. From New Jersey to Point Barrow, bears not only kill people, but they *eat people* with gusto when the occasion affords. This is no cause for alarm if you are squared away for the boondocks, but if you refuse to pay attention (and many people do just that) life in the boonies can be distinctly hazardous. Take heed!

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Chuck Lyford, the archetypical adventurer, is the classic speed demon. He is in love with high performance machinery, "On the ground, in the air and on the sea." Having tried his hand in the construction and employment of all sorts of esoteric machinery, has now taken up the productions of – of all things – *racing lounge chairs*. Having discovered my need for a personal vehicle at the time he showed us around up at Bruce McCaw's aviation museum, he decided that what was needed was something better. So he set forth to produce a high-tech lounge chair. It appears that there is a club up there in the far northwest conducting competitions in lounge chairs. It turns out that they go pretty fast, but they do not corner well, which is not exactly unexpected. What is now needed is one that I can pack around like a suitcase. Pretty strange goings on.

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Since we no longer use bolt-action rifles in the military service, many people never learn how to use them. The curse of the bolt-gun is *short-stroking*. If you don't withdraw the bolt far enough, you will not pick up the next round, and will be rewarded with a click when you expect a bang. This is a bad development and may

get you killed. Show that bolt no mercy. *Slam it back!*

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Not being computer oriented, I find myself left behind in many phases of the current jargon. For example, I like Spam. I was introduced to Spam in World War II, and I considered myself lucky when we had it available. I take it to mean something else now – something to do with bloggerism – or something of the sort. Now there are those who complain about current military provender, but I am not one. From the beginning of time soldiers have been fortunate to get anything at all to eat, and we have certainly eaten well in the century just past. These MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) are a luxury with which I am unfamiliar. A large portion of the world's population has never eaten as well in what it considers to be normal times than when it is provided with MREs. In my youth we used largely C-rations and K-rations, which were monotonous but satisfying. There is no need to worry when the troops complain about the chow. I am told that it is time to worry when they do *not* complain about the chow, but that has never been my experience.

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Does it not seem that far too much is being made of "a college education"? Just what is meant by that? A bachelor's degree from a major institution was at one time pretty significant, but now it seems to be solely a matter of money. We find that what used to be certification of a rounded personality is now sort of a remedial trade school. When I was a boy the major universities were distinguishable from the second rate. Perhaps they still are, but that is hard to verify. We find people majoring in some sort of tradecraft before they have learned to tell the Greek myths from the Old Testament. And in an increasingly technical culture, it is difficult to tell what matters in the way of background, and perhaps it does not, but still it is nice to know what is being paid for when one is paying for "a college education."

When I went aboard the USS Pennsylvania at the beginning of World War II, officers of experience dined in the "ward room," whereas ensigns and second lieutenants were assigned to the "junior officer's mess." In the JO mess we took pleasure in needling each other about the relative backgrounds of the naval academy boys and the graduates of civilian universities. The naval academy boys insisted that our shortcoming was that we had never suffered a "pleb year," whereas we maintained that they had not obtained a "college education" but rather a trade school certificate. In those days the academy did attempt to turn out "officers and gentlemen," insisting upon such things as French and ballroom dancing, which was more than Harvard or Stanford could do. On the other hand, the academy boys were a distinctly unworldly group and without social contact for the previous four years. There was room for endless discussion here. Snuffy Puller, brother of the distinguished Chesty Puller, was our company commander at Basic School and made no attempt to conceal his scorn for what he thought of as "college boys." Just what a young man is good for at age 21 is a good question, but more depends upon his family than his school. This, of course, is assuming that he has a family. In today's culture there seems to be less and less of that. Before a young man leaves home, there are certain things he should know and certain skills at which he should be adept. We used to kick this around on watch and we covered a lot of ground. What should a young male of 21 know and what should he be able to do? There are no conclusive answers to those questions, but they are certainly worth asking. We agreed upon "civics" or what was called American government. A young man should know how this country is run and how it got that way. He should know the *Federalist Papers* and de Tocqueville, and he should know recent world history. If he does not know what has been tried in the past, he cannot very well avoid those pitfalls as they come up in the future.

Superficialities, of course, are rife. A young man should be computer literate, and moreover should know Hemingway from James Joyce. He should know how to drive a car well – such as is not covered in "Driver Ed." He should know how to fly a light airplane. He should know how to shoot well. He should know elementary geography, both worldwide and local. He should have a cursory knowledge of both zoology and botany. He should know the fundamentals of agriculture and corporate economy. He should be well qualified in armed combat, boxing, wrestling, judo, or the equivalent. He should know how to manage a motorcycle. He should be comfortable in at least one foreign language, and more if appropriate to his background. He should be familiar with remedial medicine.

These things should be available before a son leaves his father's household. They do not constitute "a college education," which may or may not be a trade school. Some of the academy boys were fairly well qualified for life, and some were not. The civilians varied widely from superior to disastrous. We had a major war to fight and we did the best we could, which was not bad, considering the problem. I met some pretty good people in that war and I am pleased to have known them. My first tour at sea-going was not deadly, and only a couple of my friends were killed. Later on things changed. The hazards of war as they stand today vary as to time and place, but the risk is always there. When large numbers of people of opposing viewpoints are trying to kill you, they may sometimes succeed. We play this as it comes.

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

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# Jeff Cooper's Commentaries

*Previously Gunsite Gossip*

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## Many Thanks

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It appears that the Austrian factory at Steyr rather dislikes the term "Steyr Scout" since it abbreviates to SS, which suggests evil memories of the Third Reich. Therefore the product is being designated at its point of origin as the "Mannlicher Scout," or MS, which is a nomenclature we intend to follow in the future.

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The evolution of the sword was due more to chemistry than to configuration. Prior to the Industrial Revolution the design of the sword was left entirely up to the immediate employer and could vary considerably. Thus the Roman short sword or *gladius hispaniensis* showed up in a number of forms over a long period, any of which could be called "authentic." Since the Roman infantry fought primarily with the "pilum" or pike, this is not a critical consideration. Throughout the ages the pike has been the universal arm of the infantry soldier. It also was the basic instrument used for repelling boarders during *The Age of Fighting Sail*. When a vessel was in danger of being boarded it deployed boarding nettings, if they were available. Boarders had to scramble over or through these nets to reach the enemy deck, and for this they needed both hands. Sailors traditionally have been unskilled in hand-to-hand combat and they have never been swordsmen in any highly developed sense. Hence the *cutlass*, which presumably could be carried in the teeth of a boarding sailor, though this certainly seems hard on the denture. A single-shot pistol – flintlock or caplock – was a tremendous help in a boarding operation, but pistols would usually not be issued to sailors, for several reasons. Edward Teach, the notorious pirate known as Black Beard, preferably wore as many as eight pint-sized caplock pistols on a baldric. This sort of thing would only be useful if one had plenty of warning of impending action, but in *The Age of Sail* this was usually the case. Times have certainly changed, and the role of the pistol in modern combat has changed accordingly. The fact remains that stopping power continues to be the primary desideratum of the handgun. This may be obvious to those who study the matter, but few people do. No pistol is capable of one hundred percent stops, or even seventy percent stops, depending upon placement. It is, of course, necessary that the shooter insure the placement. You have to put your shot in the right place, and then you must deliver the most power the weapon will afford. So we get back to the fact that in our current war, our contact people fall into two categories – those who have a satisfactory big bore pistol and those who wish they had.

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It seems that the academic world is increasingly dominated by "those other people." In this case I refer to the custom of replacing BC and AD with BCE and CE. The idea is to get Christianity off center stage. This effort has another aspect, however. When I see a historic paper using BCE in place of BC, I simply reduce the credibility of the author by two or three clicks. It is not so much that religion is not important in this respect, but that scholarship is. I find that reference material using the traditional designators is superior. It is just better scholarship than the more recent examples we get from the major academic institutions. If a historian chooses to redo our traditional terminology, he may quietly step to the rear of the class.

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Does anyone know what a *spontoon* is? This is a "half-pike," a spear no longer than a man, with or without a chopping blade short of the point. It was used for a while as the badge of office of a senior non-commissioned officer and used to point things out, dress the line and, if necessary, counter a mounted musket. It differs essentially from the Swiss pike in that it is short and stout, rather than long and thin. The Swiss pike was the arm of the mobile hedgehog of the Renaissance.

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English is a marvelously explicit language, and the US Constitution is marvelously explicit. "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof." It says nothing about a "separation of church and state." It asserts that the Congress shall not *establish* religion, and stops there. Yet there are those who insist upon some sort of barrier which just does not exist. For Congress to establish the Baptist Church, for example, would be unconstitutional. To display the Decalogue, or a star and crescent, or a crucifix, would not be. This does not need interpretation. Read the Constitution! It is marvelously clear.

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It is widely asserted that we have the best army in the world – the best ever seen – and we hope that is true. However, it may be short on physical strength. When I was in high school, the infantry ROTC battalion was issued the 1903 Springfield rifle, which weighed about 9½lbs. With that rifle it was customary to step off from the position of order arms to right shoulder arms on a smart count of three. We did not fire the `03 but we handled it freely and adroitly. It was not excessively heavy, yet today the Pentagon seems concerned about the weight of our standard smallarm, as well as its recoil. For a long time now I have taught rifle marksmanship at Gunsite without any recoil problems for men, women or children. For children I suggest about age 14 and up, depending upon individual configuration. It seems to be felt, however, that the proposed new 6.8 cartridge is superior because it does not kick as much as the 308. The recoil of the 308 in a 7 or 8lb rifle is negligible, assuming a reasonably healthy adolescent body. Wells of Prescott has long taught that recoil effect is about 85 percent mental. It can be measured, of course, but it is simply not much of a blow to a reasonably athletic body. This leads us to the speculation that perhaps today's young people are to a considerable extent not "reasonably athletic." Is this a function of *screened entertainment*? Touch football, rather than television, was the prime after-school entertainment in those days prior to World War II. At that time the military considered 55lbs to be a reasonable load to pack at good speed for short distances. Perhaps they do not play much touch football today at the Pentagon.

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*Family member* Joe Sledge informs us that he has now been reduced to buying beef, but we hope he did well during deer season.

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A drawback of the big 50 may be its vulnerability to side-loading when delivered from a moving aircraft. Its recoil action must act upon a very heavy ammunition belt, and this suggests that you should use it from straight and level if possible. Of course you should always shoot from straight and level if possible.

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The Glock pistol seems to be doing what is necessary. It is not a weapon for the master, but it seems to work well and, of course, reliability is a major consideration with a defensive weapon. So we see more Glocks all the time in school and in competition. The marvelous 1911 and its clones continue to be the first choice of the expert, but only a few *pistoleros* have the intention or the ability to become truly expert. The word we get back from Mesopotamia continues to emphasize that big calibers are nice to have. The 223 will put a man down reliably if you hit him well centered several times. The 308 will do that once, but the object of veneration is the 50 BMG – yet another wondrous contribution of World War II. The 50 was a little late for World War I, but it got in just at the tail end and it has been doing a marvelous job ever since, both in the anti-personnel and anti-vehicular mode. I never had the pleasure of using the 50 in combat, but I did practice with it, to my intense satisfaction. The virtue of the big 50 is not so much range – although it does hit well and to as far away as you can see a viable target – but it does hit with a solid, comforting smash, something like Thor's hammer. And in the air, on the ground, and at sea it apparently is going to be with us for a good long time.

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You may remember a notation in a previous Commentary to the effect that when a young man was called upon to list the four seasons he named Trout Season, Duck Season, Deer Season, and Christmas. Christmas, as the name implies, is a *Christian* celebration. The men who gave us this country were Christians, and they did not celebrate a "winter break." The fact that the traditional date for Christmas happens to coincide with

Winter Solstice is a coincidence. But this is a *Christian* country. People of other faiths may be welcome, but they did not give us our traditional holiday, and it is mildly annoying to hear people suggesting that they did.

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Colleague Barrett Tillman has just released his new book "*Clash of the Carriers*," in which he tells the tale of the colossal battle in which the Western Pacific was set up for the invasion of Japan. As is usual with Barrett's work, detail and enlightenment are masterfully blended. It was my luck to catch that battle, though not intimately. The command decision to turn on the lights is one of the official burdens of command for which admirals are prepared, and I well remember my astonishment when it was broadcast. You wear stars on your shirt in anticipation of this sort of thing, and history is made.

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The following quotation from Theodore Roosevelt in 1907 is appropriate at this time:

"In the first place we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact an American, and nothing but an American ... There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag, and this excludes the red flag, which symbolizes all wars against liberty and civilization, just as much as it excludes any foreign flag of a nation to which we are hostile ... We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language ... and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people."

via Leon Flancher

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This problem of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals is unlikely to go away. It grows out there in the San Francisco Bay region and it gets worse with each passing case. This egregious court's rulings seem to get overturned on appeal as often as the issue arises, but it is unpleasant to have to count on that.

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"For forms of rule let fools contest; whichever best administered is best." This suggests that good government is a function of good people, no matter what form it takes, which is a very sound rule. But getting good people is the problem, since good people do not as a rule seek employment in government. We may thank God very sincerely for George Washington and a couple of others. The problem remains with us. People like George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt seem to turn up mainly by accident.

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Correspondents have suggested to us that we should discuss the matter of our raven totem yet again. We have gone into this in the Gargantuan Gossips, but those were done quite a while ago. The Raven (*Corvus corax*) has had a long social relationship with mankind. He is found worldwide. Entering into mythology and legend, he tends to be pretty bright for a bird, and he plays his cards well. In Europe he is featured in Norse legends and in North America he shows up continuously in American Indian legendry.

Here at Gunsite we adopted the raven following the ancestral accounts of the Countess, whose background takes us back to the Norse raiders of *Pictslea*. The holding was acquired around 1040 from Edward the Confessor. It would seem that the emblem of the raven lent itself to Viking activities since it was conspicuously black, appropriate for improvised artwork. The original Norse raiders at first operated out of one vessel, but when their activities increased in size they learned to put together task groups of several ships. In the misty waters of the North Sea, and elsewhere, it was necessary to maintain contact when the sun rose in the morning. The sail was the most conspicuous feature of the raiding ship, and it was convenient to mark the sail conspicuously so that the group could get together. Black paint is convenient to improvise from charcoal and fish oil, and the raven makes into a conspicuous locating emblem. Ragnar Lodbrok appears to have been

the first task force commander, and a raven on his sail was a handy device. The raven was indicated because the two mythological ravens, Hugin and Munin, were the intelligence gatherers for Odin – they brought him the word before he became deified. Thus when the sun rose you looked about for a ship with a black raven on the sail, which would mark the task force commander.

And all this led us to pick up a raven for the Gunsite totem, and black raven emblems have been with us ever since. It seemed a good idea at the time, and it appears that people like it. Besides, we have ravens all around. Hence the Gunsite raven.

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We note that a good many people who presume to teach modern smallarms technique are clumsy about their terminology. I make no claim to hold copyrights on these things, but since the doctrine is already established, using established nomenclature, it would be nice if people paid attention to these things more carefully. For instance, a "double tap" is not a "hammer," nor vice versa. There are other examples.

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Note that there is no real need for a telescope sight on a rifle for dangerous game (unless your eyes have begun to fail). Anything that is big enough to maul you is easy to see, and he cannot hurt you unless he can touch you. If he can touch you, you do not need a glass sight.

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We are given to understand that the Chicoms have cleaned up a long stretch of the Great Wall to fit it for a hot lap in a fast car, assuming that the aspirant is properly qualified. Our grandson Tyler Heath is a graduate of the Bondurant School of High Performance Driving, and he is going before long to some graduate business study in China. Now there is something to look forward to!

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We now hear great good news that our elegant heavy rifle is at last on its way back from Africa. It got hung up in paperwork following the revolution, and for a while I thought that I would never see it again. Now, however, rifle master John Gannaway informs us that it seems it have broken through. We called this one "Baby," somewhat erroneously, since it confuses that term of the giant heavy rifle of Sir Samuel Baker. Our Baby, of which there are now six examples, is the original of a series destined for our prospective museum. This one is indeed an exemplary piece, throwing a 460-caliber 500-grain bullet at about 2400f/s from its 20-inch barrel. It is featured in some very fine memories, once having decked a wounded buffalo, running, at 125 steps. (It is not good form to engage a buffalo at that distance, but this one had been attempted previously with a 375 Holland in the hands of our late good friend Albert Paukner, and I felt that we had to put him down to avoid his achieving bush cover. This was an episode in which a heavy rifle was definitely called for.)

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Note: The Kurds appear to be solidly pro-American and fearless fighters. Salah-ad-din (Saladin) was a Kurd.

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The Socom 16 seems to be a *Very Good Thing* (VGT), though I have not yet had a chance to wring it out. If you need a general-purpose rifle, your first choice is the Steyr Scout, but if you are equipping your private army, the semi-automatic feature of the Socom is handy. One of the many desirable features of the Scout is light weight (7lbs or less), but this is important only if you are seeing most of your action afoot. If you travel all the time in vehicles, light weight becomes a minor consideration. Here at the *Sconce* we are fortunate in having access to a good supply of action studies from the sand box. Contrary to what we hear in the press, morale at the front is gratifyingly high.

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I believe it is noteworthy that high school boys were considered strong enough to handle an '03 rifle easily in a prescribed manual of arms at that time. Is it that kids were a lot stronger in those days? I must look into that.

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We called the "Barnes X" bullet a *bronze* in the last issue. Well it *is* bronze but that is not its trade name. Sorry about that.

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The following quote is from the father of a Marine recently returned from Iraq:

"According to Jordan, morale among our guys is very high. They not only believe they are winning, but that they are winning decisively. They are stunned and dismayed by what they see in the American press, whom they almost universally view as against them. The embedded reporters are despised and distrusted. We are inflicting casualties at a rate of 20-1 and then see s - - - like 'Are we losing in Iraq' on TV and the print media. For the most part, they are satisfied with their equipment, food and leadership. Bottom line though, and they all say this, there are not enough guys there to drive the final stake through the heart of the insurgency, primarily because there aren't enough troops in-theater to shut down the borders with Iran and Syria. The Iranians and the Syrians just can't stand the thought of Iraq being an American ally (with, of course, permanent US bases there)."

Jordan reports on weapons in use in the sand box. This is his evaluation of the 45.

"The .45 pistol: Thumbs up. Still the best pistol round out there. Everybody authorized to carry a sidearm is trying to get their hands on one. With few exceptions, can reliably be expected to put 'em down with a torso hit. The special ops guys (who are doing most of the pistol work) use the HK military model and supposedly love it. The old government model .45s are being reissued en masse."

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We are now given to understand that the Japanese high command gave forth the order when things finally began to look bad in World War II that all allied prisoners (which included about 144,000 Americans) were to be put to death immediately when our invasion forces set foot on the home islands. These lives were therefore saved by the bomb. The bomb was a dreadful thing, but that whole war was pretty dreadful. I, for one, felt no remorse, but then I was pretty closely involved in it. I still feel no remorse. Sorry about that.

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It is an axiom that people get the government they deserve. This certainly seems true of San Francisco.

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