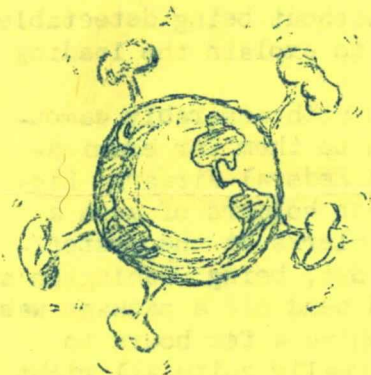


THE GOLDEN APPLE 3



Well — back
to the old
drawing board!

At the close of last issue I mentioned that I would be under forced incommunicado during most of the month of March. Little did I dream at that time with what correctitude I spake, verily. It has been a wowser, b'leev me.

It all began with a letter that came in January from Milt Shapiro, kindly and magnanimous editor of GUNsport Magazine. He said they were planning a special handloading issue for the July number and did I think I would like to do a few full-length articles for it. I replied yes, forsooth, and roughed out the titles of three I contemplated with a suggested fourth that I planned to elicit from my brother. He said okay, go ahead so I commenced the accumulation of data which is by far the most time-consuming part of the production of gun-articles for money.

Two of them were routine--work, yes, but the sort of work I'm used to--the third was not describeable by any term the inclusion of which would not render this circum-spect publication starkly unmailable.

Actually, the troublesome one was one of those spur-of-the-moment deals of the sort which has often brought me to grief in the past. I'd originally planned on discussing the process of reloading ammunition from the standpoint of time/motion study (more often referred to in latter times as work simplification). This is an article I've been meaning to write for some years now and perhaps one day it will see print.

But my favorite gun store turned up with a shipment of a new target pistol that the Colt people had just produced; an automatic to handle the .38 Special cartridge. I'm going to clip short the gun-talk here because many of you have little interest in that and now that I'm (as the old song puts it) selling what I used to give away, I take little pleasure in nattering on about guns when nobody pays me a nickel a word for it.

Suffice to say that the gun, called the "National Match .38 Special Mid-Range Gold Cup" or some such mouthful, is being touted onto the shooting public as a fantastically, ferociously, fiendishly accurate weapon capable of piercing the exact center of the bullseye with monotonous precision from dawn to dusk, inclusive. What I essayed to do was to set forth an article on how to load shells for this firearm to achieve the optimum accuracy with it. What I ended up doing was somewhat different.

To start with, I bought one of the things, Serial #234-MR, for a brisk \$125.00, the full retail price. I took it out to shoot it and the odd thing was that no matter how carefully I lined it up and squeeze the trigger, the holes rarely wound up even close to the spot I aimed at.

I shot off a few boxes of various kinds of reloads and finally decided I was having one of my celebrated slumps so I called on my friend, Mel Heller, of the local PD to try it out. Mel has few peers at the business of slow fire pistol shooting. When he wound up with a batch of targets with the holes dispersed at random all over the paper, I finally was prepared to concede that something was putrescent in Copenhagen.

I took the gun apart and peered down the barrel. The whole inside of the bore was lavishly crudded up with lead so that you could hardly see the rifling. I cleaned it out and tried again. I had about ten shots of mediocre accuracy and then it began drooling forth the slugs in a coarse spray again. As before, the barrel was leaded up to a fare-thee-well. Such things don't happen without a cause. I measured the barrel and found it to be about 4/1000ths of an inch smaller than the .38 barrels to which I've become accustomed. Now .004" could be added to the length of ones nose without being detectable but inside a gun barrel it is a very gross quantity. This tended to explain the leading problem.

I wrote a letter to the Colt works, describing the situation with admirably camouflaged fury. They sent a telegram directing me to airmail the gun to them for examination. The wire arrived the morning of February 22nd. Now I have a Federal Firearms License and this entitles me to send pistols through the mail to other holders of such a license and normally there's no sweat over sending one since the clerks at the postoffice know me and they're familiar with the pertinent regulations. But, being Washington's birthday, the main office was closed and the only place you could send off a package was at a branch in the rear of a downtown drugstore. Sometime when you've a few hours to kill, try convincing a grandmotherly little old lady that's it's really quite all right to send pistols by airmail when a sign right on the wall by her elbow says it is strictly verboten; it's an experience.

One of the guys at the store had taken another Gold Cup for his own and he said he was having no trouble with it. In fact, it shot pretty good. I talked him into loaning it to me for a week or so in order to continue testing. His did work quite well and it hardly leaded at all despite having the same under-bored size of barrel. The only thing his did was to go boom every once in a while when you loaded it. This is not a desirable trait in automatics.

Then along came a letter from Colt saying, among other things, stuff and nonsense we have been making all our barrels that size for the last 25 years. We are sending you a different gun to work with till we get yours checked over. I allowed that was nice of them and returned the borrowed gun to the store. The new one came from Colt and I joyfully betook it and myself to the range with a hatful of ca'tridges to try out. I had even improvised a sort of testing clamp to hold the gun so as to eliminate the human error. I got my elbows down on the bench with a good tight grip on the gun and clamp, lined up the sights and lovingly squeezed the trigger.

There was a stammering roar as five bullets belched forth is slightly less than a third of a second. Over the cascading roar in my ears, I could hear the merry tinkle as the gleaming brass cases fell in a shower of gold.

The clamp quite possibly saved me from getting punged up a bit. Our range has concrete ceilings and if I'd been holding the infernal thing in one hand in the usual manner it would certainly have climbed up and plunked the last couple in the ceiling over my head. I pondered the consequences of being hit by a ricochet down there all alone at a time of the morning when no one would be apt to come along for several hours. I commented with a depth of feeling impossible to convey with mere words. It wasn't so much what I said. It was the way I said it. You should have heard me.

Well, to abridge a narrative which could become insufferably lengthy, I psychoanalyzed the crazy contraption out of its ridiculous delusion that it was a Gatling in disguise. I fumed and fussed and tinkered and diddled and tested and de-leaded the barrel and tested some more, meanwhile sending out essoesses to anyone I thought capable of shedding some light on the matter. All this time the deadline was coming up like thunder 'cross the bay. One noble soul (who faunches for anonymity in this matter) called me up and conversed at some length via long distance to give me the word on how it looked to him. That call was the turning point. With what he told me and what I'd painfully found

out myself, the pieces dropped into place and the article literally wrote itself. All I had to do was to rattle it off onto the paper. At this point, it looks as though GUNSPORT may be the only magazine with a really candid and factual appraisal of the dinged thing since all the other mags are coming forth with gladsome hosannahs which indicate to anyone who can read between the lines that they sugar-coating the facts with a trowel...or such is my opinion, anyhow.

So that's what I did in March. What did you do?

I managed to read a few paperbacks since last issue. The best of the bunch was one called THE LITTLE WAR OF PRIVATE POST by Charles Johnson Post (Signet D1916, 50¢). The "Little War" in question was the Spanish-American fracas of 1898 and, to judge by the text, Pvt. Post never felt the need of a bigger one. This is, by any standard you care to choose, a hell of a fine book. The writing is top-drawer and the subject is one that has rarely been touched upon in recently published works. If nothing else, it offers a welcome change from the mounting freshet of Civil War books.

It is copyrighted in 1960 by Alice L. Post and Phyllis Bradford Post so one presumes that the author is no longer with us. It's a shame since this is one of those books that makes you want to drop its writer a note of appreciation. The writing is definitely modern in flavor with none of those fin de siecle nuances of phraseology which mar the enjoyment of so many of the accounts of the SA War written at the time. The puzzling thing is that it is so filled with crisp detail that it's hard to believe it was written 62 years after the events took place. When I consider how hazy the details are in my own mind of the events from 1942 to '45 I hate to think of doing them up into a book in 2007 or thereabouts.

There is rich good humor here and whiplash sarcasm, the impact of which is augmented by deft understatement. He rarely expresses his own indignation; contenting himself with setting down the facts and leaving the reader to get indignant for himself. This is a highly effective technique but it takes a master's touch to bring it off.

And then there are paragraphs such as this one:

As will be noted, I am basically and deeply a pacifist. I believe in peace. I believe in law and the justice it codifies. But, together with Cromwell and Jefferson and Washington and Lincoln, I can believe in peace and yet realize that peace, in this slow barbaric consciousness of our human era, can only be preserved by battle. Peace can only be achieved through justice; and justice, so far, has to be fought for.

I'll go along with that. The Spanish-American War, for all its brevity, was blotched with some of the most gargantuan snafu's in the annals of warfare. Post suffered thru several of them and even the reader who hasn't had the fun of serving in the ranks may wince here and there in sympathy. The reader who did do a turn as an enlisted swine will experience occasional flashes of empathy so deep as to be almost physically painful. I wish I'd never read the book so I could approach it again for the first time.

Not only that, but there's purty pitchers to look at too. Post was no small shakes of an artist and there are several b/w sketches and a few in color.

Redd, commenting on some of my comments on SOME OF YOUR BLOOD in last issue, asked if I'd read Sturgeon's VENUS PLUS X yet. I hadn't at the time but I remembered that I had picked up a copy so I dug it out. I found it mildly interesting but not especially compelling. Nothing in the main body of the narrative struck me as particularly shocking until I got to the author's defensive PS at the end and learned that he had gotten the name of the race of Ledom by spelling, backwards, the name of his favorite pipe tobacco. The thought of anyone being able to refer to Model as their favorite pipe tobacco left me weak and sickened for uppards of a week.

I made at least one serious goof in the review of SOME OF YOUR BLOOD when I said that the bulk of the narrative was in first-person singular by the analysand, when it was actually done in the contrived third person manner employed by Moskowitz in

THE IMMORTAL STORM. When Grennell realized what he had done he smote himself across the brow and voiced a mild vulgarity. "You bleedin' idjit," he thought to himself, "you'll be the laughingstock of organized fandom!" And then, as he considered the advisability of writing to ask Redd to insert a correction on it, he decided to let it stand as written. "After all," he told himself, "it will give the readers a bit of harmless pleasure to point it out to you and if it jogs them into writing, they may include a few lines about other things as well." But, as the weeks slunk past, no one seemed to notice so he gathered his hydraform head together, gave up conversing with himself and made his faintly dichotomous exeunt humming a few bars of "Sam's Song" well beneath his breath.

RICHARD H. ENEY (417 Ft Hunt Rd, Alexandria, Va.), TAFF Candidate par excellence, gentleman, scholar, bon vivant and fancyclopædist yellowsheets the following missive datelined 3 March 1961:

I was checking thru a collection of folklore the other day, before filing it, and ran across a series of versions of the Jose Maniah story...turns out it isn't original with H Allen Smith, after all.

One of them is attributed to Judge Roy Bean, the old SOB:

"Carlos Robles, you been tried by twelve true and good men, not men of yore peers, but as high above you as heaven is of hell; and they've said you're guilty of rustlin' cattle.

"Time will pass and seasons will come and go; Spring with its wavin' green grass and heaps of sweet-smellin' flowers on every hill and in every dale. Then will come sultry Summer, with her shimmerin' heat-waves on the baked horizon; and Fall, with her yaller harvest-moon and the hills growin' brown and golden under a sinkin' sun; and finally Winter, with its bitin', whinin' wind, and all the land will be mantled with snow. But you won't be here to see any of 'em, Carlos Robles; not by a dam' sight, because it's the order of this court that you be took to the nearest tree and hanged by the neck till you're dead, dead, dead, you olive-colored son-of-a-billy-goat!"

Another one, almost a reproduction of H Allen's, was passed by Judge Parker of Ft. Smith, Arkansas, on one Jose Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales; it had the same refrain of "...but you won't be here to see it!" However, instead of refusing to wish for heavenly mercy, Parker's peroration was this one:

"...but you won't be here to enjoy it; for I command the sheriff or some other officer or officers of this county to lead you out to some remote spot, swing you up by the neck to a nodding bough of some sturdy oak, and there let you hang till you are dead, dead, dead. And then, Jose Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, I command further that such officer or officers retire quietly from your swinging, dangling corpse, that the vultures may descend from the heavens upon your filthy body and pick the putrid flesh therefrom till nothing remain but the bare, bleached bones of a cold-blooded, copper-colored, blood-thirsty, chili-eating, guilty, sheep-herding, Mexican son-of-a-bitch!"

Evidently the targets of both these rhodomontades got ended by want of breath, but something else happened with a chap sentenced by Kirby Benedict of Santa Fe. After the usual gloating preliminaries, Benedict swung into what I suspect is the source of Smith's ending:

"...and that you there be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and the Court was about to add, Jose Maria Martin, 'May God have mercy on your soul', but the Court will not assume the responsibility of asking an allwise Providence to do that which a jury of your peers has refused to do. The Lord couldn't have mercy on your soul. However, if you affect any religious belief, or are connected with any religious organization, it might be well for you to send for your priest or your minister and get from him—well—such consolation as you can, but the Court advises you to place no reliance upon anything of that kind! Mr. Sheriff, remove the prisoner."

But Jose Maria Martin removed himself. He escaped and was never caught, just like Senor Maniah.

Carlos Robles was a rustler, as his sentence indicates; Jose Maria Martin was convicted of murder, "the crime having been shown to be of a very aggravated nature and without

provocation"; Jose MMX Gonzales was a cook with a trail herd who shot and killed a cowboy in a dispute over a game of cards. I suppose H Allen cobbled a good story together from this material; but none of these sources give Jose Maniah's fine counter-speech, which Smith may have composed himself. Good for him, if he did.

Thus much for exegesis. Great racket, huh? (Uh-huh.)

Just noticed an off-beat observation of the sort fen like: you know the convention that the candidate with the longest name stands a better chance? Well:

Ron Ellik

Ronald Ellik

Baffling,

Dick Eney

Richard Eney

what?

But the rule doesn't say which name is to be longest...

Hoping you are the same,
Dick Eney

This is a good place to get something off my sternum. I am supporting Good Ole Eney-san for the TAFF nod this year tho, as I carefully warned him, I've never backed a winner yet and my support may well be a thinly disguised Kiss of Death. But Dick wrote to ask for my support (Brave, Mad Fool) some several months ago, long before I knew anything about who else would be campaigning. I pledged my support and I'm not one to lightly welch on my word. This is not to imply that I'd even want to but this is to re-assure Ron (The Squirrel) Ellik that he has not inadvertantly slipped into my foul graces or something. I approve of both candidates and few things would steep my soul so deeply in joy as to see BOTH of them make the trip across the Big Pond. Which reminds me: I still haven't sent in my ballot. Have you??

As for the Jose Maniah saga, this of course refers to page 143, et seq., in the book "Lost in the Horse Latitudes," By H. Allen Smith (Doubleday, Doran, 1944). In the book, Smith himself credits the tale to one Chuck Daggett (of the Missouri Daggetts), as one he was fond of tossing off for the delectation of the boys at Lucey's. In the Daggett/Smith version the Judge is named Parker--presumably the same one Eney quotes tho the text has metamorphed a bit. Smith, for instance, says "saddle-colored," instead of copper-colored. However the differences are nominal and trifling so I shan't plow thru the judge's lines again. But the retort venomous from Maniah is fascinating enough and (just barely) printable enough to, in the editor's barefooted opinion, justify its inclusion here, in toto. Ahem:

That might have been all had the sheriff yanked Jose out of the courtroom at once. But Jose Maniah had words to utter. He faced Judge Parker, and this is what he said:

That I have taken human life I do not deny, but it was under circumstances of the greatest provocation. So determined was this court to add another to its already long list of slaughtered victims that I early foresaw my doom was sealed. You have sat here through the proceedings of this hellish farce with a ghoulish glee portrayed on your every feature. You and your bloodthirsty jury remind me more of a lot of buzzards hovering over an expected victim, than of a body of men supposed to guard and honor the principles of human justice. Hear me, you half-starved hyena! You cannot break my spirit!

You speak of the pleasant odor of blossoms and the sweet singing of birds, you grandson of a pock-marked whore. You announce to the world that I am to be hanged. As I gaze into your bloated, whisky-fogged face I find no surprise at your conduct. With mock solemnity and cruel sarcasm you have consigned me to an ignominious death. Very well, you disheveled barbarian, you wild-eyed, dirty-nosed, pot-gutted, carnivorous offspring of a cross-eyed maggot, I want you to understand that your words hold no terror for me.

You tell me that on the sixth day of the coming month I am to be taken out and hanged by the neck until I am dead, dead, dead. You hope in your filthy heart that my corpse is left dangling until the vultures come down and pick my bones clean. You do not even have the grace to call down the mercy of God on my soul.

And I, Jose Maniah, I say to you that on the sixth day of the coming month I will not be forever deprived of the sweet sounds and the pleasant odors of which you have

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spoken. As for hanging by the neck until I am dead, dead, dead—you can kiss my butt until it's red, red, red, and may God blast your dirty old soul!

That is the end of it, save for the legend that Jose Maniah broke jail a couple of days later, escaped into the hills, and was never recaptured.

William Stavdal (c/o The Herald), Calgary, Alberta, Canada; sometimes known among his intimate acquaintances as Gnorbert the Gnome of the Gnorth, passes along the business card of a firm which goes under the somewhat croggling name, swelp me, of:

ANDROID SERVICE BUREAU LTD.

Bill notes in ever-so-slightly shaken typing: "I tell you they are taking over!" The odd firm name might be partially explained by the fact that their phone number is AM 3-7643 though whether the name stems from the number or vice versa, one can't say. Incidentally, have you ever been bothered by the nomenclatural paradox of the "female android" which appears in science fiction stories every now and then?

Speaking of sf with female androids reminds me that the members of our li'l ole microcosm seem to be invading the field of the men's magazine with the alacrity of rats swarming aboard a floating ship. I recently copped a copy of the Jan'61 HI-LIFE from Casey for a dime to discover that it had an article by Gloria Saunders (the warm, personal friend of William Rotsler) plus what I trust was a piece of fiction by none other than Alex Kirs. To judge from some of the allegedly factual material he used to send Raeburn, he could sell stories for years without being fictional once. Of course, there are such old standbys as Richard E. Geis and issues of a men's mag today without a single pic of Trina Costillo in them are practically collector's items. So, for that matter, is Trina, herself.

One of our competitors in the furnace business ("We love our competitors and we think it's a darned shame their parents never married.") is pushing a make of furnaces, here nameless as is the competitor also, The furnaces are distinguished by a phenomenal lowness of price and a standard of quality (my hum. op.) even lower. Thus ¹ croggled at the slogan they have emblazoned across the bottom of a piece of promotional literature:

"YOU HAVE TO SEE THE QUALITY TO BELIEVE THE PRICE!"

"!" indeed!

Another paperback, far out, mildly amusing, and of possible interest, is THE MAGIC CHRISTIAN, by Terry Southern (Berkley Medallion #BG500, 50¢). It's a slim thing, barely 137 pages of the hugest type ever, somewhat over-priced but it has its hilarious highlights. Sounds like something you might expect to find in Bloch and Gauer's IN THE LAND OF SKY-BLUE OINTMENT. Theme is, what would a diabolically clever person do if he had virtually unlimited funds and no purpose in life save to chevy the masses over the brink of madness.

Last Sunday night I got to thinking along those lines myself while watching Art Godfrey dimpling at the camera during "Candid Camera." Apparently they will re-run a scene if enough people request it (in fact, I suspect, they're glad to). The thought occurred, what if people, suddenly, from all parts of the country, started requesting a scene they'd never done? If anyone can suggest a plausible situation a la CCamera to further the plot, we might see what we could do by of an Operation Flimflam here.

I've still got the FATE tape hung up here tho I now have the Webcor fixed and hope to get it sped along to Raeburn soonish. Yuechs, the last time it was here I mentioned that I'd just got the Blue Beetle and now there are more'n 45,000 miles on its odometer. Lots of things I faunch to be getting at now that the gunstuff deadline is past and the income tax is sent off and TGA is in for another month. Something else is apt to come along to devour my time. Of that I'm certain. #Quoting, now, Milwaukee's Gerald Kloss:

"Paddle your own canoe until Thursday, honest Injuns, when Horace Staccato, who was drummed out of ASCAP for composing that memorable flop, "Aida, Sweet As Apple Caida," will attempt to re-enter the ranks with his latest ditty, a heartfelt tribute to the transportation industry, entitled, "The Yellow Rows of Taxis."

Kloss's stuff appears in the Milwaukee Journal. It must be something in the water.

C a v e a t L e c t o r , y ' a l l . - - d a g