

THE POODLESHOOT THIS TIME

NOVEMBER 27, 2005

The day dawned gloomy with Matrix-like storm skies and proper November weather as the official bugle tooted its toot and the official toast of the Hunt -- served up in the official beverage, Wild Turkey, -- was downed. With a jolly crescendo from the horn section of the Hoophole High School Marching Band and Classical Orchestra, the annual Island Poodleshoot and BBQ had begun. Soon, the merry sounds of the hunt drifted across the Island: shouts of "Poodle there!", the sharp crack of freshly oiled Winchester rifles, the occasional sputter of automatic weapons and machine guns and the frequent Whump of percussion grenades. A couple caballero's from San Francisco clattered down Otis Drive, armed with riatas and lances. Peter, from McGrath's, set himself up near the Washington School with a small nine-pound howitzer stuffed with grapeshot, while Leonard Gardner from Marin showed up with genuine black powder blunderbuss.

Not to fear for Leonard's safety, as he also packed a Colt .45 revolver should the thing fail to ignite in a pinch of poodles.

We had a number of celebrities among us, beside Mr. Gardner for the renown of the annual affair has spread far and wide. It may be the accidental

torching of the entire Strand the year Artie brought in a flame-thrower pulled from US Army tank and mounted on the back of his truck, or it may be the destruction of several thirty-footers in the Marina when Hans Brinker employed mortar rounds that started the buzz that the Island is THE place to be on Thanksgiving.

The Island tends to be rather peaceful most of the time, but there is something about the atavistic blood lust stirred up by a really exciting poodlehunt that beckons the imagination to romp in full glory.

In any case, we had the honor to have among us the Chief Advisor to the President of the Bums and main architect of the War on Terriers as well as the invasion of Newark, Karl Manley Stovepipe. Mr. Stovepipe showed up in his usual regalia of full camo pants and jacket with camo spats, waistcoat and patterned boots of the most martial kind. His Clint Eastwood eyes glared coldly with the ferocity of a natural born killer from underneath his helmet and he chomped a cheroot with such savagery that one could almost pity the poodle that would encounter this superior species of Republican. It was well known that he had the skull and crossbones tattooed upon his naked pate. About his virile chest he strapped bandoliers of hollow points, dumdums, bear slugs, explosive shells and armor-piercing bullets. By his one side he strapped a two-foot long Arkansas toothpick and on the other he sported a modified 45 caliber automatic pistol which had a circular loading cartridge that held 24 shells. It looked like something from a science fiction movie and in order to shoot it, normal men had to tie their arm to a tree to handle the kickback. Mr. Stovepipe's main weapon of choice that

day was a simple hand-held anti-tank bazooka. Clearly he did not care much if his catch was totally destroyed. The man loved war and killing, purely and simply.

Padraic showed up with a barrel of his special home brew, which he rationed out, but Mr. Stovepipe would show his spunk by downing a double portion. And when Padraic was not looking, he tapped yet more of the keg into his hip flask, for as mentioned, he was a Republican and that is their way.

Padraic did not have a chance to say anything of the part that keg had played in the infamous Poodleshoot of 2001 or that this liquor was minimally 150 proof. No he did not.

It was over by Chipman Middle School that things went badly awry. Besides the explosion over by the former W.W.I memorial at Crab Cove; that was another story with unfortunate consequences.

There, across from the schoolyard Officer O'Madhauen pulled the two caballeros over and cited them for exceeding the speedlimit in a school zone and turning left without signaling. The men were riding palominos at the time, but choice of vehicle matters not to this vigilant officer of the traffic law, for this is The Island and on this Island, traffic enforcement exceeds all others in priority. As a consequence, we have the same accident rate as Berkeley, which is notoriously not an island, proud defenders of the Department have said.

The Island Dogwalker's Association -- a rather unruly and provacational bunch in the best of times -- had gathered to watch from the schoolyard, and on such a day, they were all armed with umbrellas and other secret weapons.

"Look Fifi! Look at the horsey!", one of them said.

In any case, while the Officer was inspecting one vehicle for possible code violations, the unfortunate beast relieved himself of internal gaseous pressure. This caused the Officer to jump back. In fact he jumped back so far that his foot caught on the curb there and he fell flat on his back beside the stone sign there. That stone sign with its vegetation that makes such a perfect hiding place for a hunter looking to draw a bead on Fifi. Startled, the hunter there, for it was Mr. Gardner, dropped his match into the pan and accidentally discharged his gun. Which harmlessly broke a school window. But which also startled the horses.

Unfortunately for the horses and also for the caballeros, these were not true caballeros, but a couple of homeboys from Fruitvale and they had gotten their silver-studded outfits with sombreros from a costume supply shop. More importantly, they were a bit unclear on what to do exactly about a spooked horse.

Not to fear, for the riders need only lasso a tree and tie off the horse until it calmed down. Which one rider did quite successfully. The other however discovered he had made a terrible mistake when the bush began screaming as it got dragged along the ground. The man had not lassoed a bush; he had lassoed Mr. Stovepipe, who had been steadily finishing the last of Padriac's home-brew on the other side of the concrete marker among the real trees.

As he was being dragged along the grassy baseball field there, the pistol on his hip started firing, adding to the ruckus and everybody ducked down with dogwalkers throwing aside their leashes and impermeables this way and that so as to take cover for their lives.

About the time the bullets ran out of the gun the horse reached the Dogwalker's banquet table and leapt right over it, dragging Mr. Stovepipe through several angelfood upsidedown cakes as well as a large and formidable tub of that substance found inevitably at Rotarian and Kiwanis Club picnics, the misnamed "ambrosia".

This trivia is not so significant compared to the fact that although possessed of poor taste and questionable morals, the Dogwalkers Association did not consist of overly cruel individuals. An enterprising Mr. Beasley tied a couple leashes together to make his own lasso with which he captured the horse who had run into the baseball backpen area and gotten confused. After much discussion and the employment of mini-scissors, a pocketknife and tweezers, the rope attaching horse and man was cut in the middle while the man part lay semiconscious amid a crowd of yapping, yipping and licking dogs and there were poodles among them.

Some of the hunters came up, having regained their courage after a few more nips of the bottle and the cessation of random bullets, but being so near the school they could not discharge their weapons.

"I think it rather a good idea to call it a day all around," said Mr. Beasley. And he added, "We have your man in our power."

The hunters were rather concerned about the potential ramifications of this affair involving the President's Chief Advisor, so they eagerly agreed to halt the proceedings. Everyone was called back to the BBQ, where Padriac supplied the

drink from his cask and the meager grill with seared Ahi, so nobody went home hungry that day. Or sober.

And that was the end of the 2005 Annual Island Poodleshoot and BBQ.

As for Mr. Stovepipe, he not only survived his wounds, but would brag about them and the incredible battle he had enjoined against superior numbers with his back to the wall, armed only with his Arkansas toothpick. He told everybody who would listen that he gave the enemy a damn fine licking.

We hope you had a pleasant and peaceful Thanksgiving. That's the way it is on the Island. Have a great week.