

IN DEFENSE OF THE SECOND
AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE UNITED STATES

By

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Mr. President, Members of the Athenaeum Society, and Honored Guests, it is a privilege to be on the Program this evening and the privilege is enhanced by sharing that Program with Tom Westerfield. I have in the past undertaken to regale or amuse the Society with topics of a light and transient nature, which is a fatal mistake with a group as serious and profound as this. It is a mistake I do not intend to repeat this evening, hence hopefully saving myself from the ill-considered and crude humor that occasionally passes for criticism in this august body. I intend to challenge your reasoning processes with the consideration of an issue of vital interest to the citizenry of this democracy, namely a closely reasoned, albeit somewhat personal, defense of the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, an integral part of our imperishable Bill of Rights, which is currently under ill-considered attack from certain elements.

I am reminded, in this context, of the favorite story of Kentucky Governor and later United States Senator William O. Bradley. It concerns a gentleman named Mullins, who was elected to the Kentucky Legislature by his fellow citizens in Estill County. Called upon for a report when he returned home, The Honorable Mr. Mullins mounted a wagon and reported as follows:

"Feller citizens! When you elected me to the Legislatur I wished that I mout have the tallest pine growed in the mountings, so that I mout strip the limbs from same and make hit into an enormous pen, and dip hit into the waters of the Kaintuck River and write acrost the clouds: 'God bless the people of Estill County!' After you elected me, I went down to Frankfort on the Blue Wing, and as we wended our winding sinuosities amidst its labyrinthian meanderings, the birdlets, the batlets and the owlets flew outen their secret hiding places and cried out to me in loud voices: 'Sail on, Mullins, thou proud defender of thy country's liberties!' When I reached Frankfort I went up to the Legislatur hall and thar spied many perlicues a-hangin' from the ceiling to pay for which you had been robbed by unjust taxation. When matters of small importance was before the body I lay like a bull-pup a-baskin' in the sunshine with a blue-bottle fly a-ticklin' his nose; but when matters of great importance came up I riz from my seat, like the Nubian lion of the desert, shuk the dew drops from my mane, and give three shrill shrieks fer liberty!"(cited in Trout, Greetings, volume I, page 60)

A matter of great importance has arisen and, like Mullins, I wish to give "three shrill shrieks fer liberty!"The point at issue, my friends, is that I NEED a gun, a need which is apparently shared by many of my fellow citizens. I am highly averse to facing the world unarmed, for reasons which I believe I can make apparent, and there are those among us who wish to deprive me of that inalienable, god-given right and consolation. Since Amendment Two of the Constitution (an integral part of the Bill of Rights) clearly states "A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed," I feel pretty sure the Militia can be armed constitutionally. Never mind the Militia. They can see to themselves. I argue that I need my own personal arsenal and, furthermore, that I am "Everyman."

This ancient and historical right first became an issue for me in 1950 or 1951 as a result of the vagaries of love and courtship. (I do not count, nor do I wish to recollect, an earlier experience when the father of my best friend, discovering my feet under his table with distressing, to him, regularity, sent me skittering across the field to the echoes of his .38 special. I don't think he was really aiming at me, but the off-chance that he was impelled me to new heights of physical achievement.) Back to the issue. When my wife and I were still relative newlyweds, having been married only two years, we lived in the country next to a favorite parking place of local couples, married and otherwise, seeking the seclusion necessary for various forms of social experimentation. Feeling that my yard was a poor choice, I got into the habit of suggesting another locale. After several startled males made unsolicited travel suggestions to me and even offered to assist me in the journey, I knew I stood in need of my Second Amendment rights and I acted accordingly. Thank God for freedom! My father-in-law, who was never really sure about me, contributed an old Army Colt .45 automatic and a clip of shells, bullets, or whatever. Within the week, a car surreptitiously pulled in about midnight and I knew in my heart it wasn't to admire the lawn. I awakened my wife, dressed in the dark, and pocketed the trusty Colt, having loaded and cocked it. I then reasoned that since I was very apt to shoot myself in the leg a_la Barney Fife, I should unload it and merely use it for a defensive bluff: a sort of pre-emptive strike capability. I quietly sat down in the dark

room, calmly ejected the shell from the chamber, and then the clip from the handle. As a final safety measure I pointed the gun to my side and pulled the trigger. The room filled with fire and thunder, my wife screamed, I uttered what was in effect a prayer in spite of the unusual choice of words, and gravel pelted the house in the wake of a rapidly departing car. Other than a rather large hole through the chair and a similar opening through the wall of the house, no damage was done, at least outside the car. I know you share with me the moral to all this. There is no rational question that, when under siege by lovesick couples bent on whatever it is that lovesick couples bend on, one needs to be heavily armed.

Second Amendment rights are also vital in mankind's continuing battle with children and dogs. My yard always, like that of our friend Bud Hudson, seems to be part of the shortest distance between two points for both. I have considered a slingshot, but this really seems beneath the dignity of a sober state-of-the-art Twentieth Century Renaissance Man. I have considered a BB gun, but there is something juvenal about them and I gave them up along with cornsilk and rabbit tobacco. The only really manly solution to children and dogs is a gun. Having been dissuaded from this solution recently I have suffered the logical consequence: bankruptcy. First came chemical destruction of the hardy weeds of the original lawn, then seed, then fertilizer, then watering, then a new mower, then a grass catcher, ad infinitum, ad misericordiam. The gun would have

been cheaper, and quicker, and slicker, and would have damaged neither child nor cur. How? you may well ask. I would have done so by the simple expedient of aiming at them when they trespass. This would guarantee them immunity from harm, since I have never in my life hit anything at which I was aiming, and at the same time would have, hopefully, sped them on their busy ways. It certainly had that effect on me when my best friend's father did so, and it seemed to have that effect on the downtown pigeons when Mr. Cravens of Blue Streak undertook this most American of solutions. The ability to miss what is aimed at is a skill, or perhaps even an art, which I inherited from my father. When I first acquired the abovementioned Colt sidearm, he undertook to demonstrate to me the finer points of marksmanship, knowing full well that truism found in Shakespeare, or is it the Bible? that "guns don't kill people, people do." I, being a neophyte, appreciated his tutelage. He had at that time a trailer parked some twenty yards behind the house. He indicated that I should watch carefully the hubcap on the near wheel. I thought that was a nice touch, pointing out the particular wheel whose hubcap he intended to mutilate. Reminded me of Babe Ruth, in a way. He took careful aim and fired. Both of us, of course, shut both eyes. As we opened all four eyes, the tire slowly flattened with a wheezing sort of sound. Having thereby taught me the basics of marksmanship, he returned the weapon with a suggestion that I not mention the matter again, lest we appear to boast or to upset the faint of heart.

Now, having disposed of lovers, children, and dogs, let us consider the manly sport of the hunt, ancient prerogative of the nobility of every culture. Modern males desperately need this evidence of their virility, as do all veterans and innocent bystanders of the great and ongoing Patriarchal Wars. The philosopher Schopenhauer said, in effect, "It's a jungle out there," and the modern male knows this is so, in spite of the veneer of civilization. Hence, there is a deep-seated psychological need to manifest the vestigial skills of the hunt. It is an acceptable substitute, or psuedo-activity, which is the definition of sport. Those who can afford it may go on safari for big game and blast away at assorted hippopotami, rhinoseri, or caravanserai, but the poor, beleaguered American male filling a middle class desk job and anxious about his virility needs something to shoot at, hence demonstrating his prowess in the absence of Indians, bears, and Bengal tigers. This is where the rabbit enters the picture. Ex-President Carter demonstrated that this species can be a real killer, hence challenge. I can add my testimony to that of his Ex-Excellency, having demonstrated my virility sufficiently to last me for a century in a physical encounter with one of our local rabbits. I was fortunate enough to acquire a genuine muzzle-loader, an 1863 Springfield smoothbore with bullet mold, black powder, etc. I originally lusted after this weapon for historical reasons, but I soon desired to put it to a more virile use. I knew it was a deadly device and I felt it would put me on a par with the rabbit population. I was, however, somewhat at a loss as to how much

powder to ram down the barrel behind the miscellaneous chunks of lead, lightheartedly referred to as "balls." I was, and am, of course, far too proud to ask. I shot, reloaded, and re-shot. The only visible effect on the rabbits was to speed their rate of departure. With the logic of a born white hunter, which has not been bred out of me by generations of civilized pursuits, I decided the gun needed three or four times more powder in order to keep the rabbit from outrunning the assorted lead. Taking care of this little oversight, I then leveled down on the next fencerow bunny which appeared. I sold the gun within the week, having proved about all I needed to know and having demonstrated my ability to accept the challenge of pain. Rabbit hunting is not a sport for quiche eaters.

Now, I believe I have decisively demonstrated that, in addition to Constitutional considerations, the citizenry should not be denied guns because of:

1. Clear and present danger from lovers seeking privacy, of which the country must have, conservatively, 100 million.
2. Defense against rampaging children and dogs, when the only alternative is not at all cost effective, and
3. Pursuit of native big game by virile sports enthusiasts who are busy proving their ability to deal with physical pain.

Three shrill shrieks fer liberty! I defy the pointy-headed, panty-waisted, pusillanimous purveyors of persnikity and paltry prevarications to deny us American males our God-given rights.

Normally, I may appear to be a mild-mannered, balding, pot-bellied, be-spectacled slightly beyond middle age gentle soul, but once I am fully armed, stand back! I become a veritable SAMBO.