



(graphic by Nick Meador*)

Dead-Eye Dad

by TOM CASTIGLIONE

Handguns and bathrobes don't mix well, especially when you're isolated in northern Michigan with plenty of targets around.

It was Saturday morning, around 9. I went out to the kitchen, where I saw my older brother Mike sitting at the table with several guns, and he was cleaning them. Across from him was Dan, a kid from our school who moved from Oregon to stay away from his recovering parents. He was currently living in our basement, as a result of some sort of argument with his grandpa, whom he was living with at the time. He's a pretty cool guy and all, but when the two were together with several large guns, it made me a little nervous.

"Howdy," Mike said, grinning. He was holding a double barrel shotgun and swabbing the outside of the barrel with an oily rag. On the table, besides the double barrel, were 2 30.06s, a .22, a pump shotgun, and an assortment of ammunition that would supply us through the holocaust.

"Are these dad's guns?" I asked.

"Yep, and we're gonna shoot 'em."

My first thoughts were how the hell we had so many guns. Then I thought if my dad knew that they had them out. Then I thought if they would care if I shot them. After all, what 15-year-old boy wouldn't want to demolish a milk carton full of water with a gun that was meant for taking down large animals?

Before I could ask, my dad came out of the hallway in his traditional attire: his ratty red bathrobe was open, so it revealed his white briefs and undershirt. It wasn't uncommon to see this sight. My friends refer this look as "going Castiglione", since he gets into this outfit once "all the work has been done". This always seemed to be right when my friends came over to my house. He usually sits on the easy chair with a glass of scotch, watching TV when this happens. I don't mind it. To be honest, I think it's funny. He thinks it's a way of life.

"Oh good, you found the bullets," he said, taking a swig from his coffee.

"Yeah, but we didn't find the .45 slugs," said Dan. He was looking down the scope of one of the 30.06's, aiming it at the hummingbird feeder outside the window, all the while grinning ear to ear.

Dad set down his cup and pulled out a box of slugs from his robe pocket, and began to bounce them in his hand.

"Yeah, I keep them in the safe at work with the gun."

"What gun?" I asked.

Right then I noticed what was in his other hand. It was a .45 Service Patroller – The Dirty Harry Gun.

"Bad ass!" I said. I began to edge closer to the gun, and my dad took this as a cue to spin the chambers and hoist it in the air. He handed me the gun, and I couldn't believe how heavy it was. I didn't say anything else; I just looked at this massive piece of firepower. I began to wonder what kind of damage this thing could do. Instantly, I thought about cartoons about the old west, where the villain was shot with such a gun, and a giant, beach ball-sized hole sat where his torso used to be. I thought it would do something like that. Then it crossed my mind – how come I've never seen this, or even heard about this gun before?

"Right hand of God, huh?" Dan said. He put the gun he was looking down back on the table.

"Huh?" I snapped out of my daze.

"You said it," dad said. He then picked it up out of my hands, and started to gather up a few rounds.

"You want to see me shoot it?"



Mike and Dan followed my dad out to the porch to see him shoot the .45. I went over to the large window, not because I was afraid of the gun, but because it was cold outside, and I was only in my underwear. I didn't want to miss this spectacle by putting on pants. Dad began to waddle out into the driveway; dressed in his same attire, but now with worn, tan slippers on, which would do nothing as to keeping his feet dry, since the snow was over a foot deep outside of the driveway. He then began to load the slugs into the chamber.

"This may be pretty loud, so you guys should maybe cover up your ears." He said, sliding the bullets into the gun.

"Are you wearing ear plugs?" asked Mike.

"What?"

"Are you wearing ear plugs?" he asked again.

"Oh, hell no!" dad said. "I'm doin' it western style!"

Dad then snapped the chamber back into the gun, and held it at the ready by his stomach; he began to search the cold, dead forest for any sort of life, any creature that was moving in the cold northern reaches of Charlevoix County. Then, a snap and a moving branch gathered our attention, as we noticed two squirrels work their way down to the bird feeder no more than twenty yards from where he was standing, one on the ground by the feeder, and the other closer to him, elevated on a thin branch. Dad began to sway. He noticed them out of the corner of his left eye, yet he didn't move his body to gain a better shot. He just stood there, eyeing his prey. He knew he had a target, so he cocked the hammer back, and spun the chamber. His mind was ready; his nerves were set; all he had to do now was go.

"He-yaaaaa!"

He swiveled his body towards the two squirrels and fired a single shot. The squirrel that was closest to him instantly became a study in overkill. As he fired the shot, my eyes turned to the squirrels, and there, the target seemed to almost sear in half. The shot, one that to this day we still consider to be lucky as hell, ripped right through the midsection of the animal, and both halves of the squirrel seemed to hop into the air, the tail and rear section spun around as it zipped through the air, while the front half seemed to just toss itself on the

driveway. There was a thick spray of blood and fur that shot in a circumference from the animal, about two feet in all directions. After the two halves landed, the poor creature's head lay lifeless on the driveway, staring up at the sky.

"Wooooooo-wee!" my dad yelled, as he spun towards the other target. The squirrel seemed to hesitate for a second; after all, his friend did just explode in front of his own beady little eyes. After he heard the second war cry of the boomstick man, he began to haul ass into the woods. Dad rotated his hands towards the creature, and started to pull back on the hammer.

This is where the debate of whether or not my dad had a lucky shot takes evidence against him. I still believe the first shot that crushed the first squirrel had some skill, while my brother and Dan both agree that there was no skill involved at all, that it was completely lucky. Anyway, like the gunfighters of the old west, dad began to slam the hammer back and fire as fast as he could, sliding it back with his left hand in a shuffling fashion, and pulling the trigger with his right. He managed to get all five shots off within six or seven seconds, but each shot seemed to fall either short or wide by six or seven feet. Squirrel number two managed to escape into the forest, to tell his furry friends about the naked man in the red fur with the boomstick.

Dad went over to the blown-up squirrel and did a damage assessment. After staring at the crater of gore by the bird feeder, he picked up both ends of the animal and tossed them deep into the woods. Dan and Mike were cheering loudly, and dad pointed to them as he walked back in, saying "Eh? Eh? Your dad can shoot, huh?" High fives shortly followed.

I didn't know what to say as they came back into the house. A combination of shock, awe, and a newfound sort of respect came to me after witnessing the spectacle of dad proving once and for all man's ability to conquer nature in an unnecessarily grandiose sort of way. After all, I've never seen my dad take any animal's life intentionally before. He's hunted in the past, but this was the first time in my life I saw him take pleasure in this sort of thing. He's not violent, far from it in fact, so now I was trying to fathom where this other man in the red bathrobe came from.



I decided not to make anything of it. The only thing that I decided was that if I was to ever have kids, I'd hope to be only half as cool and surprising as my dad. I couldn't pull off the briefs and undershirt look like he could, but I wouldn't mind a bathrobe and a box full of slugs while hanging out with my kids and the dude living in my shed. That just makes for an interesting Saturday morning.

**Graphic made with an image from sxc.hu. Access this article online at http://www.supraterranean.com/issues/issue_004/08_10_1_FC_dead_eye1.html*

