

The Cafe - Former

Official Organ of The Society for the Defense of Tradition in Pyrotechny

I.: O.: O.: J.:

“Magna est Veritas et prævalebit.” – I. *Esdras*, iij: 41.

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LACROSSE GASTRONOMIQUE, &c

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate.

–DANTE

Oh, hell, it's that time of year again... hot, muggy, and worst of all, ungodly busy. Because this year's PGII Convention is being held in a location most familiar to me, for this issue of *The Case Former*, I feel it best to digress from my usual editorial capacity and attempt to provide some vital information about LaCrosse and environs. So, good folks, here it is – the I.O.O.J. companion's guide to LaCrosse and vicinity.

FOOD: People sure like to eat in this part of the world, as evidenced by the sheer number of restaurants. Some are obviously better than others, so I offer here a few of the better ones.

- 1) *House of China* – Copeland Avenue and Monitor Street, LaCrosse. A Chinese joint with a salad bar? Sounds goofy, until you realize that almost *every* dining establishment in Wisconsin has a salad bar. Excellent Szechuan and Hunan cuisine, large portions and reasonable prices. A sure, safe bet for lunch or dinner.
- 2) *Hunan Chinese Restaurant* – Fourth and King Streets, LaCrosse. Good standard Chinese fare, generous portions. No salad bar though.
- 3) *Discascio's* – Southeast of LaCrosse on U.S. 14-61 in Coon Valley. A real treat. Fine pasta and veal, attentive service. Make sure to say “Hi” to Lou, the owner. He's a good guy and he loves fireworks.
- 4) *The Windmill Inn* – Also in Coon Valley. Top choice for breakfast. Huge volumes of food and coffee, reasonable prices. Order toast – it's made from homemade bread. Lunch is also available.
- 5) *Sabatino's Diner* – On Twilite Street, off U.S. 14-61 between LaCrosse and LaCrescent. Typical greasy spoon, open all night. Good food, reasonable.

DRINK: LaCrosse's entire reputation and economy are based upon the consumption of alcohol. You can't swing a cat but you don't hit a bar in downtown LaCrosse. These are the best I have found:

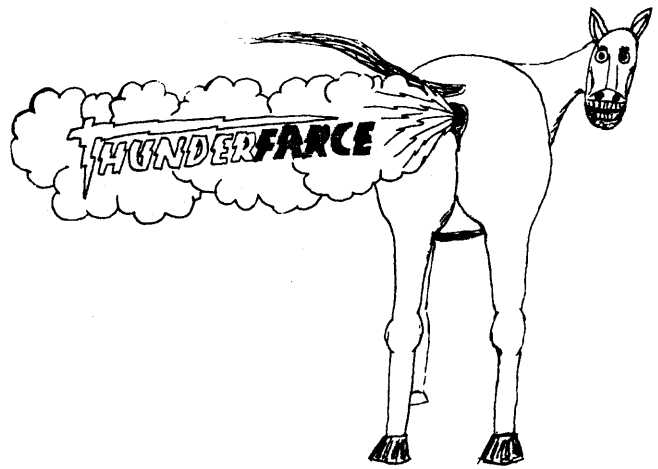
- 6) *The Casino* – Pearl Street between Third and Fourth, LaCrosse. Over 150 imported beers!! Ask to see “the list.” If you have trouble deciding, ask Don – he knows. These people really know beer and how to serve it. Official I.O.O.J. convention headquarters.
- 7) *The Bluffside* – 2712 Main Street, LaCrosse. Nice place, but specializes in those real sweet, fruity, candy-ass drinks that give you horrendous hangovers. Watch out – some of these go down like Kool-Aid and hit you like a ton of bricks.
- 8) *Shady Rest Inn* – On State Trunk Highway 162 in Chaseburg. Owners Jock and LaVonne Hastings love us. In fact, they love us so much that if you give them the due guard and sign of the I.O.O.J., you get a free shot of Jack Daniels. Need I say more? A must stop.
- 9) *Fjord Bar* – U.S. 14-61, Coon Valley. A real Wisconsin small-town bar. Cheap, potent drinks.
- 10) *Duty's* – State Trunk Highway 33, St. Joseph. Another one, complete with deer heads on the walls.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- 11) *Snell's Liquor* – Two locations, Fifth and Main downtown on U.S. 14-61 south side. Don't bring booze from home; Snell's has what you need, and real cheap, too.
- 12) *St. Francis Hospital De-tox Unit* – Tenth and Market, LaCrosse. Excellent, well-trained staff, good food, decent service.

Hope this all helps. The I.O.O.J. will be holding a party on Saturday, August 10. Bring guns and ammo for target and trap shooting, and plenty

HOPE...



...EXPERIENCE (?)

of Class "C". Imbibo Bourbonini will be demonstrating proper Class "C" display methods. Music will be provided by the Bishops and by the Skeletons, of Springfield, Missouri. This promises to be a real blow-out. However it is a *private* event. If you are not a I.O.O.J.er, a candidate for induction, or a special guest, you ain't coming - PERIOD. Someone will inform you as to location at the convention, if we want you there.

I look forward to seeing you at the convention, hope you all arrive safely, and that your stay is comfortable and enjoyable. May Vulcan smile down on us all!

BIANCO GASOLINI

JUNGLE FEVER

Animus meminisse horret.

-VIRGIL

"MELÉE AT FIREWORKS DISPLAY." "4 SHOT AT JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL AS PARTY TURNS VIOLENT," read the headlines of the daily papers of a large Texas city the morning after. "Juneteenth" refers, in standard English, to June 19, 1865, the day the blacks were emancipated in Texas. (You don't read about it in your school textbooks, but the Civil War continued after Appomattox in Texas, and the Yanks were soundly defeated in the last

battle!) The "Juneteenth fireworks display" in our city brings smirks or grimaces to those knowledgeable in the local trade. It has a history of being cancelled at the last minute because the organizers don't come up with the funding. When it *does* come off, it is always a challenge to find a willing operator to shoot the show - let's be candid - the unruly liquored-and-cracked-up crowds require that the operator have a police back-up to avoid a life-threatening situation!

Let's say that the Juneteenth show is not one that we go across town to see. It's at a park across the street from where my son is bused to junior high, over next to "Jamburgers" which is the "drug-store *cum* hamburger joint" for the schoolchildren. I could hear the show from my side of town as distant muffled thumps; little did I realize that enterprising young gunmen were using the WHOOMP! of the mortars to drown out the pings and pops of their handgun warfare, "triggering a melée in which four were shot, numerous others were beaten, and others still were trampled when the panicked crowd fled the violence."

I was reminded of the now infamous "C***/D*** Letters" exchanged before the PGI Convention held at Gary, Indiana in 1988, in which D*** related the story of his own Gary, IN display:

Back in the mid-70s *** asked me to crew the Gary city fireworks show for the Fourth. Anyhow the Feds were checking me and my magazine and inventory almost monthly. Rumor had it that 1976 was "national

takeover day" and they were checking to see that all explosives were intact. I sent my best crew up to Gary with my trailer full of 'works *and* my M1 Garand *and* my stainless .357 combat magnum. A couple hundred rounds for each and orders: "If it starts, kick the mortars down – aim at the stands, lay the finale down and shoot you way out and try to get home!!" The guns were at arm's reach everytime the loaders went to the trailer for a new box!

I don't know who shot this year's Juneteenth show but the paper tells us it was a "hot 95° summer night" and "the crowd was restless" when the fireworks began a bit after 9 p.m. "Youths" were standing on the park stage watching the fireworks when they heard the pop-pop of gunfire. Police moved in to aid the wounded, but "numerous fights flashed throughout the thick crowd and more shots were fired." Operators from the past Juneteenth shows have told me of having bricks and bottles thrown at them, racist taunts like "MF honky!," "Yo whitey!," etc.; also "taking cover" and "hitting the dirt" not because of a low break or dud but because of errant gunfire!

It would seem that shows in such "neighborhoods" would provide a unique opportunity to train the novice shooter. Anything he-or-she is likely to encounter *and more* will be experienced in such an environment. This is one high-stress place where the PGI-certified shootperson can put his-or-her safety goggles, headphone ear protection, and flak jacket (preferably bulletproof vest) to good use. However, he-or-she should not wear his-or-her Birkenstocks – wear combat boots and flame-retardant clothing!

I would dearly love to see certain naïve white folks in the PGI (or APA for that matter) shoot one of our Juneteenth shows down South. For example, those PGI'ers who have on occasion written to me bemoaning that we have no "black people on the guild," or criticizing "the men's-club-railroad car-cigar-smoking-brandy-sniffing-elitist-sexist-atmosphere" that certain of us have been accused of fostering. I can think on one particular loudmouth flack and self-promoter I'd *really* love to see shoot a Juneteenth show. *God knows* what would become of this person's shiny happy HDPE mortars! (They might make good industrial-sized crack pipes!)

"Womyn-in-the-Guild" who are excited about the prospects of combat duty in the army could also volunteer for Juneteenth show detail. Perhaps some of the tough sisters of our local chapter of "Queer Nation" (no kidding) could offer to be bodyguards for our brave "Thelma and Louise" who volunteer to shoot way over in MLK, Jr. Park. I'd also like to see some of our eminent intellectual panjandrums shoot (and dodge the shooting) on June-

teenth for the happy-go-lucky crowd of 10,000 who created mayhem yesterday. Let them try to enforce NFPA safety and distance guidelines and maintain crowd control in the "fallout zone" while dodging .22 and .38 bullets! Maybe they could pull it off if they had the aid of the 35 police and the SWAT teams used to quell yesterday's riot!

Oh well. Some would say it's not too bright even to have a show in such a place. Others would counter that such reservations are "racist." But we are rapidly arriving at a time in this country where worrying about trivial matters like NFPA1123 at firework shows is going to be forgotten in the day-to-day struggle to survive drive-by shootings, gang warfare, muggings, robberies, and what-have-you. Perhaps it was said best in the "C/D" letters previously mentioned: "I wouldn't subject *my* wife to Gary, Indiana!"

SEBASTIANO SBRUFFI



THE EFFECTS OF CONFINEMENT ON EXPLOSIVES AND EXPLOSIVE GASSES

Indocti discant et ament meminisse periti.

—HENSAULT

The physical laws which govern the mechanics of an explosion are well known to many I.O.O.J. members.

Boyle's Law states that the volume of a gas is inversely proportional to its pressure, and gives us mathematical means for predicting the effect of a change in pressure on a gas at constant temperature. It may be expressed as $V \approx 1/P$, where V is volume and P is pressure.

Charles' law states that the volume of a gas is directly proportional to its absolute temperature, expressed by the equation $V \approx T$, where V is volume and T is temperature.

From these two equations, a third is derived, $V \approx T/P$, from which the calculations of the behavior of explosive gasses may be made.

Obviously, any increase in temperature increases the pressure of a gas. Increasing temperature also vastly increases the rate at which chemical reactions occur, such as those that produce explosive gasses.

Containing such reactions in strong vessels serves to not only contain the heat necessary to propagate the chemical reaction more quickly, but also to provide the confinement necessary to boost gas pressures to highly explosive values.

Thus it may be said that confinement is a crucial factor governing the performance of many explosives, particularly those of the non-detonating variety, such as black powder, and to an arguable extent, flashpowder.

The importance of confining an explosive charge was intuitively apparent to me from the earliest beginnings of my experiments. A well-dried cherry-bomb worked much better than a soft or weak one; the stronger the casing, the better.

In the absence of a proper cardboard casing, necessity one day prodded Stephano and myself to fill an empty Testors model airplane paint bottle with flashpowder, fused with Visco through a hole in the screw-on cap. Much impressed by the resulting section of collapsed stone wall that bordered Stephano's driveway, not to mention his toppled cinderblock cookout so rendered by a similar device later that week, the principle of confinement was thoroughly established to us. Soon the pill vials, perfume bottles, salt shakers, spice bottles and baby-food jars had all but vanished from our houses. And if glass was strong, steel was stronger.

With this in mind, the next logical question was: what is designed specifically to contain gasses under pressure? Well, a CO₂ cartridge is, for one thing. We obtained one and brought it to my basement laboratory, painstakingly filling it with flashpowder and fusing it with Visco. Stephano touched it off in front of my house. Standing not more than 35 ft. from it, the blast was most noteworthy, as was the divot in the sidewalk. An outstanding success, except for the sharp, jagged piece of twisted steel that it took a pair of vice-grips and all my scrawny might to pull from the clapboard side of my house next to the kitchen window. We'd have to watch that flying steel and glass problem. The CO₂ cartridge grenade become our standard device for neighborhood torment, terror, vandalism and fishing. Yet it was not without problems. Getting the fuses to stay firmly in place, yet watertight, was a surprisingly vexing challenge. Epoxy wasn't yet invented, Elmer's didn't stick to steel, and friction tape sometimes leaked.

"Solder 'em in, boys," was Mr. Stouk's advice, when Roberto Stenello and I ran the problem past him. "It doesn't get that hot," he said before we could reply, no doubt well-reading our exchange of askance glances, which harbored images of littered fingers and hospital rooms. Well, Mr. Stouk was a grown-up, wasn't he? Sure he was - he could fix our go-kart engines, and he swilled countless Carling Black Labels, so he should know best, right? With a loaded grenade in the vice, the soldering iron warmed up, came the moment of truth, and that was where the image of a finger-strewn basement won out; we unplugged the iron and muddled by with friction tape.

What else confines explosive gasses? Internal combustion engines, for another, and there was one of those on Stephano's brother's mini-bike. I took the cylinder head off the old Briggs and Stratton, placed the piston at the bottom of its stroke, and upon that placed a film canister full of flashpowder, replacing the head and running our last, *FAR TOO*

SHORT, piece of Visco through the spark plug hole.

It was a quiet Saturday, and this morning's target was the peaceful picnic grounds and tennis court area near Kelly Pond. With the infernal engine in tow, we headed into the woods which sheltered the picnic tables. I agreed to light the damned thing, but my heart wasn't in it. This fuse was *SHORT*, gang, and everyone else was under cover when I tore out of those woods. I'll never forget the hissing screech that accompanied the blast from that baby, as all those pieces of cooling fin and head and cylinder ripped through air, branches and foliage. Autumn fell early in the park that morning, severed leaves and limbs raining down even as we walked back up the hill to ground zero to inspect our work. It seemed like minutes before the pieces of metal stopped dropping through the trees' canopy. This explosion was one of our finer efforts, and we surveyed the scene with awe; nothing remained at all of the engine where it had been, save a splotch of oil and fragments of the boot plate. A dozen trees surrounding the site bled sap from shrapnel wounds.

The explosion seemed sure to bring Officer Maccini, but fetched only a pair of ashen-faced tennis players whose game we'd rent asunder. All in all, it was a great success, yet I was greatly troubled by all those bleeding trees. It was a miracle that I hadn't joined them. It was obvious that, while ideal for mayhem and destruction, steel-cased devices were ill-suited to recreational explosions. After all, the whole idea was to *watch* the explosion, and if you risked gathering a beanful of steel to do so, something was wrong.

Tommy DeChecco, my colleague from across town, reported much the same thing. His devices, known simply as DeChecco bombs, were frightening concoctions produced by:

- 1) Pounding one end shut on a length of galvanized or thin steel pipe.
- 2) Bend this end over in a vice and pound flat.
- 3) Pack pipe with home-made gunpowder.
- 4) Pound other end shut, double over in vice, and pound flat.
- 5) Drill $\frac{3}{32}$ " hole in middle of bomb.
- 6) Insert Visco and solder into place.

Tommy got away with making quite a number of these devises, which hissed furiously and spit gouts of flame before exploding, and retired from bomb-making with life and limb somehow intact.

Stephano and I were already considering the abandonment of steel and glass as casings when the last straw arrived.

Stephano set off an 8 inch firecracker, made of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch gaspipe with threaded endcaps, on his sidewalk. One endcap drove deep into the side of Stephano's already battle-weary house, leaving a ghastly wound when we'd pried it out.

And so it was that we returned to our origins and our paper tubes. They're not as strong as steel, so massively constructed casings, reinforced with fiberglass, had to be built. Half inch thick walled cardboard tubes of three inch inside diameter, plugged with one inch thick oak endcaps, doweled and heavily glued into place, became our standard firecracker. A sixteen inch long firecracker so constructed could hold over two pounds of flashpowder, which was usually enough for our purposes; namely the humiliation and torment of the authority and citizenry of Boston's western suburbs. In a state where all fun is illegal, particularly fireworks, and where we had been stopped, interrogated, searched, chased and endlessly bedeviled by the police for a little harmless fun since childhood, we had developed a fine palate for revenge, and now it was ours to serve up, our recipes having been perfected to a high degree.

With these purposes and goals clearly in mind, Stephano and I embarked upon a methodical program of pyrotechnic retribution. Armed with a series of large, cardboard-walled firecrackers of various sizes, we began creating horrific explosions, close enough to populated areas to jam the police switchboards with irate complaints and frantic inquiries, yet without causing any damage whatever. We arranged things so that it was difficult to determine exactly where the explosion had originated, often hanging the devices from twine in tall tree tops, so that they created enormous air blast and little else.

Although we have no way of knowing exactly how much official consternation our efforts might have wrought, we are satisfied that we doled out sufficient misery to certain individuals with badges to at least partially even the score. We ceased operations when we learned of the involvement of the State Fire Marshal's office in the resulting investigation.

Several of our nights' work were rewarded by written recognition in the next days' newspapers, the following example appearing on the front page of *The Middlesex News*, not all that many years ago.

Explosion a mystery

NATICK — A mysterious explosion Tuesday night sent authorities scurrying around town looking unsuccessfully for its cause.

Police said they received several calls reporting the explosion just after 11 p.m. but no one could find any damage or other problems associated with the explosion.

A caller to *The Middlesex News* who lives on Chestnut

Street right near Lake Cochituate, said he saw a flash of light in the sky in the general direction of Natick Labs followed by a "very big explosion. It was definitely something big."

Calls to the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Weather Service added no clues as to the origin of the explosion.

Police said the explosion may have been a sonic boom caused by a jet.

Of course, once I got that job quarry blasting and learned the wonders of high explosives, the role of confinement in recreational explosions was minimal, the sticks of dynamite detonating completely without confinement. It became effortless to produce colossal explosive yields which frightened even Stephano and myself at first.

And yet, with that limitless power of ANFO and pentolite within easy grasp, something was lost. Stephano and I spent many pleasant evenings mixing powder, building bombs, designing ever bigger and better ones, and then gloating over our creations, all the while tossing down innumerable beers. I miss that. Just for old times sake I'd like to... let's see, I've got 10 pounds of perchlorate in the basement, plus a few of alumo, and a three inch cardboard mortar, some fuse... I wonder what Stephano's up to tonight?

EDUARDO TELLERINI











BUY



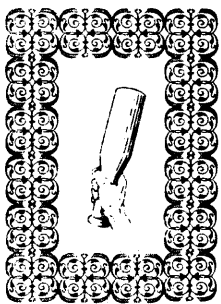
Arm & Former

BRAND

CHEMICALS

-  Chlorates of potash and baryta
-  Paris green
-  Oxide and nitrate of lead
-  Benzene and hexachlorobenzene
-  Bichromate of potash
-  Calomel

Absolutely everything to aggravate the Safety-Fakers



I.: O.: O.: J.:

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