



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.

VOL. II

MAY, 1993

NO. 1.

ALLOCUTION OF THE RT. VEN. BIANCO GASOLINI, G.:C.:

‘Απαξ λεγομενον.

Hello all – I realize that you haven’t heard from old Bianco in a while. Most of you know that I changed homes – that’s right, I have carried the fight for truth and tradition in fireworks back to my old home in Thunderland. It always seems to be an uphill battle – somehow, many of the locals have been convinced that the Convention, or some semblance thereof, will be held here again in the foreseeable future. Otherwise, life here is fairly placid, with many opportunities to make new friends and renew old associations.

I understand this fine publication has come under attack again – this time during the usual haggling over the *Pyrotechnica* honorarium which has become an annual event at P.G.I.I. conventions. It is rather surprising that certain individuals have chosen to assume that these two periodicals are related. While it is flattering that such eminent figures as our beloved A.P.A. historian have placed us on the same plane as the most highly respected journal in pyrotechny today, I can assure one and all that *The Case-Former* is an entirely independent effort, with its own contributors and editorial staff. It is also a group project, not the work of a single individual, as has also been alleged. Anyone with a semi-literate mind should recognize the diversity of writing styles and subject matter as the efforts of various contributors instead of that of a single author.

I do have a few words of advice for those readers of *The Case-Former* who are not on our subscription list. Occasionally I will receive published materials from organizations that take positions on issues which are opposed to my own (*i.e.*, Greenpeace, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Democratic Party, and various other crackpots). These publications find themselves in the trash as soon as I pick them out of the mail. I know that the result of my reading this crap will be my own infuriation, so I don’t do it – it’s really that simple.

In an unfortunate turn of events, it was impossible to hold the annual I.O.O.J. party at “Shaggy’s” as previously planned. Instead it was held at Goose Island Park, just outside LaCrosse, the evening of October 17. Although the weather was cold, the bonfire warmed us; the fireworks were good, and a fair number of new companions were inducted in ample form. We look forward to another such occasion next year, possibly in the Spring. Until next time, may Vulcan smile down upon us all! ☿

BIANCO GASOLINI

A MATTER OF PRINCIPAL

Ars longa, vita brevis.

—HIPPOCRATES

Adolescence has historically been a troubled time for young people, particularly in the latter part of this century. Trouble is an apt word to use in describing the high school careers of Stephano and myself, for we lived it and breathed it in every waking moment of our early adult lives, which some might say continue on to this day.

Trouble comes in many forms; some choose fist-fights, fast cars, fast girls, and chemical abuse to satisfy these insurrective needs. Such endeavors are all well and good, and certainly were not neglected by us, but they are all rather trite, don’t you think? Stephano and I chose to lean heavily on pyrotechnics as a vehicle directed toward the outrage, humiliation, and free-floating anxiety of our elders and community as a whole. As any citizen of Beirut or Dublin will tell you, the occasional random blast leaves deep psychological furrows, if not outright voids, and with this intuitive knowledge in hand, we set about our work.

Back in the early 70’s (and for all I know, to this day), fireworks were sold openly to anyone with the cash to buy them, entirely illegally of course, in Boston’s Haymarket Square. Haymarket is a

section of Boston's North End which is heavily Italian, there being row upon row of gaudy, colorful, and fragrant open-air markets and fruit vendors' carts along the northern end of the Southeast Expressway, a notorious traffic horror. In this neighborhood, where Italian is still the language of choice, one can tour block after maze-like block of ancient homes, apartments, and shops, where the best language, save Italian, is a genuine, accepting smile, and the worst sin an air of arrogance or condescension.

Into this morass Stephano and I waded, through the foreign, confusing neighborhoods, until we got to the playground. The playground is a section of basketball courts and jungle-gyms, graffiti ablaze from its ancient walls, where the Old Man sits. He is a grizzled, pot-bellied, morose fellow, clad always in a dirty white T-shirt, chewing perpetually on what he must believe to be a cigar. Sometimes it really emits smoke, but mostly he just sort of gnaws it, a vile brown foam about his lips.

We would stammer out our fireworks orders to the Old Man, and he would snap his fingers once our cash was in his hand. Then an urchin would appear, a brief conversation in Italian ensuing, and the kid would vanish into the labyrinth of alleys and tenements. Although Stephano and I tried mightily to pry some morsel of comradeship from the Old Man, he would rarely discuss even the weather with us, his conversation confined to a few terse grunts.

In a few minutes the kid would reappear with the trademark of our business; two grocery bags inverted upon one another, which was enough to conceal our 12 oz. rockets and roman candles. It was funny how many people on the subway train back to the 'burbs cradled such packages. Knowing smiles were exchanged with these pilgrims, but rarely conversation.

During those days, M-80's were sold for \$14.00/gross through Haymarket. They were very capable devices, made by professionals, and they packed a horrendous punch. Quarter sticks, roughly three times an M-80's power, were also sold occasionally, and on one fine day Stephano and I acquired a couple dozen.

Our high school was a perfect target for such mischief. There were crowds of kids milling around endlessly, smoking cigarettes between each class, and before and after school. It was pitifully easy to light a Marlboro, tear off the filter, and impale the cigarette upon the fuse of a quarter stick or M-80, then amble away after placing the thing in, say, a dumpster, trash can, hallway locker, lavatory, or best yet, in the courtyard, where the racket was merciless, and eloquent when timed to explode during morning announcements. Terrorism was ours far before the I.R.A. and Hezbolla made it fashionable.

Life was good that spring, when girls, booze, dope, and fireworks were all plentiful. Yet I knew things were headed for a fall, since I hadn't been to class for a couple of weeks, having found higher pursuits in the aforementioned areas.

The expected fall came one morning just before home room, as Stephano and I, intent upon testing the structural strength of the school's plumbing, headed up to the third floor boys' lavatory with a quarter stick. We were curious as to how far such a device, flushed down a toilet, might travel before exploding. We were imbued with a deep sense of purpose, having had for breakfast a handful of percodans and a couple of quarts of Ballantine Ale... Breakfast of Champions.

As we rounded the corridor corner, I ran directly into Richard (known to us as Rico) Carbone, the school principal. I heard a shuffle behind me and realized that Stephano had seen Rico first and split. Before I knew it, a meaty hand had me by the shoulder.

I understood that this was curtains; almost certain expulsion. It was not wholly unexpected, however. With my buzz and integrity intact, I marched down the hall, head high, as Robespierre might have, to meet my end. Once in his office, Rico sat me down in a straightbacked, armless chair, where so many students had poured sweat before him. It suited me fine; I expected no mercy.

Rico's desk faced me from the front of the building, ground level. His back was toward the window, as only a clod like him might arrange things. I faced the window, and looked out over his shoulder at the cul-de-sac of Rice Street, where the school busses loaded and unloaded, and beyond it, the soccer field.

"Mr. Tellerini," he began, "It's so good that we've found this opportunity to speak this morning."

A hint of a smile curled one lip. I returned it with as arrogant a gallows sneer as I could muster.

Mrs. Coughlin walked in, handing Rico the summary of my missed classes, outright trancies, and other myriad transgressions. He mused through it for a moment, and said, "Eduardo, it's obvious that you have no intention at all of pursuing your education to any meaningful end."

I sighed, shrugged, and glared at him, which was when I saw the smoke. A thin column of smoke drifted lazily up from the outer windowsill behind Rico's back. For a moment I pondered this, wondering who the hell smokes cigarettes just outside the principal's office window, and I came up empty. This troubled me vaguely.

"In view of your blatant attitudinal problems, Mr. Tellerini, I have no choice but to..."

From there Rico's words were lost, fading away, for far away, far across the cul-de-sac, far across Rice Street, and even across the soccer field, a flash of movement caught my attention. I refocused my

eyes and saw a form, curly long blond hair flying, leather fringe coat flailing, dancing and capering at the edge of the lush green woods that led to the soccer field. The figure had a green quart bottle in its hand, and I watched while it began to offload a bladderfull of used beer, and then I understood.

In one nauseating, dizzying, moment of spinning horror I understood everything. I knew that I was seeing Stephano out there, and I knew what the smoke meant. It meant that there was a quarter stick, with a cigarette fuse attached to it, sitting quietly on Rico's windowsill, just beyond my view. I stretched a bit in my chair and my heart sank. I saw the tip of a cigarette ash, and wondered vaguely if Robespierre had felt like *this*.

I glanced back at Rico, and saw him smiling. I couldn't think of why he might do that, and then I considered myself. I was sitting bolt upright in terror, leaning forward slightly, eyes bulging, jaws grinding, fists clenched, and looking like a man locked in mortal combat with terrible constipation.

Rico was enjoying this. He obviously thought he had scared me into near panic with his threat of expulsion. A moment later the miserable truth of the situation dawned on me; Carbone was going to keep me here as long as he wished, just to watch me squirm. And sooner or later, those Marlboro minutes would run out. If I was still around at that time, I'd be picking glass out of my face.

With Herculean effort I loosened my jaws, relaxed my fists, and leaned back as far as one could in that damned chair. A lock of shoulder-length hair flopped over one eye, and I worked fiercely to crank out that go-to-hell sneer that I had so often fixed upon Rico. It was the only way to end his fun and get out before the place blew. It occurred to me for a moment to tell Rico that we were about to eat some glass, but I just couldn't. Despite the grave situation that Stephano had placed us in, it was still rather funny.

Finally, I offered, "Mr. C., I'll be on my way, and withdraw from school rather than get expelled, just like last year, if that's OK with you."

I waited a split second, without reply, and said, "Great. Thanks, Mr. C., see ya 'round."

As I arose from my chair to leave, further motion from outside caught my eye. This time it was a more intense plume of smoke, and as I hurried through the door to Mrs. Coughlin's office, I knew that the two inches of Visco-type fuse had ignited, and I had scant seconds to get clear of the blast zone.

I saw Rico begin to rise from his desk just as I closed his office door. Perhaps he had more to say to me, I really don't know. As I made eye contact with Mrs. Coughlin, the school secretary, I saw the flash. It was a gray, overcast day to begin with, and the cloud cover made the most of what was truly an impressive explosion. Three out a perhaps

a dozen of Mrs. Coughlin's windows cracked or shattered, and even I was concerned about Rico.

Not to fear, though. Rico lurched through the door a moment later, white smoke pouring after him, looking for all the world as though he'd tried to shave half his face with a straight-razor and a raging case of the D.T.'s. Blood rivulets ran from several small wounds, and his mirthless grin and strangely dark eyes told me that he was dancing along the edge of homicide, hysteria, or perhaps both. His suitcoat and hair were sequined with sparkling shards of broken glass, and he glared at me like a lunatic Liberace. I excused myself very quickly and went to find Stephano, who, having had second thoughts about his idea, had returned to try to disarm his invention. Not in time, though.

After a few more percodans and beers, it all seemed to fall into perspective, as things so often do when viewed thusly, and we laughed until we cried and damned near peed our pants.

Still, I wonder whatever possessed Stephano to blow up the high school office.

"It was, after all, a matter of principal," Stephano answered.

EDUARDO TELLERINI



THE LITERARY FRONT

Habent sua fata libelli.

—TERENTIANUS MAURUS

A Review of *Fire, Flash and Fury: The Greatest Explosions of History*. By Ragnar Benson. (published by Paladin Press, P.O. Box 1307, Boulder, Colorado 80306).

Ragnar Benson's works are less well known in the circles of serious pyrotechnists than those of mad bombers and rogue chemists, yet since our ranks are well represented in this constituency, it would be remiss of this writer to omit mention of a very fine book in a series of fine books, by an author that is obviously a kindred spirit. Excerpts from his preface say it all:

"There are those among us to whom the smell of powder and the feel of the blast have become an addiction. The sense of elation in a high-explosive situation is difficult for most people to articulate. On close questioning, most addicts will admit that this attraction to an earth-rending explosion is completely irrational..."

"Most regular people don't understand - much less appreciate - us addicts. Some folks can't

even imagine what we're high on. The ultimate high occurred almost twenty years ago, on December 23rd, 1969, in a little village called Moscow, Idaho, where I was visiting my daughter. Some dear soul managed to touch off twenty thousand pounds of ammonium nitrate all in one shot. I was walking down Main Street when the concussion cracked all the west-facing windows. It was truly wonderful."

Benson's book describes in loving detail the most cataclysmic blasts he could chronicle throughout history, from the Krakatoa volcanic blast of 1883, through Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1984, and all the points between. Beautifully pictorialized with vast rubble and carnage, this book is an absolute must for the true aficionado of apocalyptic explosions.

Some of the events covered are:

Krakatoa, estimated conservatively at a yield of ten thousand megatons. Benson describes recorded observations and global effects.

Oppau, Germany, where in 1921, some genius decided to loosen up two thousand tons of ammonium nitrate, caked through deliquescence, with charges of dynamite.

Texas City, Texas, 1947, where and when a freighter loaded with ammonium nitrate fertilizer caught fire and detonated, with 3.2 million pounds aboard.

Novaya Zemlya Islands, U.S.S.R., 1961. The Soviet Union, in one of the more artistic moments of the cold war, detonated a 57 megaton thermonuclear open-air blast.

In all Benson describes twenty monstrous blasts, with the kind wit and intimate care of one that is hopelessly in love with vast megatonnage. His style of writing is dryly amusing throughout, and his attitude toward his subject matter an inspiration to his fellow addicts.

EDUARDO TELLERINI

THE MALEVOLENT ARTIFICER

Ah - summer, July, and fireworks. One of the parts of any midwestern summer (especially at firework display sites) is the woodtick. These repulsive bloodsuckers remind me of the average liberal politician.

Our new shell this time is the "Wellstone," or woodtick shell. Making the shell itself is the easy part; roll up the case with a liner, fill and finish with light spiking and pasting as in a daylight parachute shell. The hard part is getting the ticks.

Ticks prefer tall grass for a domicile, where they can lay in wait until a host walks by, and hitch a ride. Now, you could strip down to your nylon

bikini undies and walk through the grass, then pick. Not exactly my cup of tea. The method I recommend is to pick up a dog, preferably a poodle, from the pound. Shave it bare, except for the puff of hair on his tail. Spraypaint this puff of hair blaze orange, so as to assist in keeping track of the dog. Bring the dog, a ball, a bedsheet, a container, and a paint-stirring stick to tick country. Throw the ball into the tall grass for the dog to retrieve. After you have done this for a bit you will find enough ticks have accumulated on the dog that you can scrape them off him, using the paint-stirrer, onto the bedsheet; collect them in the container. When you have several thousand you can fill a four-inch shell.

These shells are best fired upwind of the audience at Juneteenth celebrations, or riots, whichever term you prefer. It is so nice to have all the parasites (urban or rural, that is) in one spot.

So that's it for now - keep thinking!

MILANO GIANSLAVI

THE YOUNG PYROS VS. JOHN LAW

Never tell a copper nuttin'.

—MILANO

One summer evening in June, the young pyro of the house says, "Milano, can my friends and I make some noise?"

"Sure, boys, but not too much," Milano answered.

A short time later, over the gentle reports of cracker bombs, the war department arrives, and says, "I suppose you gave those boys permission to shoot off all those fireworks! What if the police show up?"

"Well, dear" I said, "they are clever boys. They only need a little advice from old Milano to get along quite well."

A few minutes later, Milano's open-air university is holding class in police science. "Boys, you have to learn how to handle Officer Unfriendly. It's part of growing up. The first rule is, Never tell a copper nuttin'. Next rule, Always split your stash; last rule, Cook up a story beforehand."

Following my advice, the boys split the goods into four lunch bags and hid three of them about the garage. Then they returned to pyro fun. Milano went back to his Michelob. After a short while, the war department arrives, irritated. "The police are in the alley with the boys - now what are you going to do?!"

"Nothing," said I; "I taught those boys what they need to know - be quiet and watch." Well, the

boys handled things quite well. They politely told John Law they were only shooting off last year's leftover fireworks, brought back from vacation in the Dakotas.

"Get me a bucket of water now!" John Law said, pulling up his shirt sleeve. About ten bottle rockets took the plunge, followed by a pinch of jumping jacks and a small handful of cracker bombs the lads had unwrapped for some reason. Round and round he stirred, and when the long arm of the law withdrew, the black, gooey mixture of the partly-dissolved cracker bombs was running out between his fingers. The boys snickered and John Law retreated, shaking his paw, which he wiped on his pants before driving off in his squad car.

"Well boys, how did it go?" I asked.

"Great!" they answered. Then they spent several minutes filling me in on all the details. We all better hope John Law washes his hand before heading for the doughnut shop - lots of lead in those cracker bombs. ♪

MILANO GIANSLAVI

(with inspiration from ANTONIO GIANSLAVI)



IMPROVED ARCHERY PROJECTILES

The bow and arrow is as old as time. Even the famed "Ice Man", discovered recently in the Italian Alps, had one, and he is estimated to be several thousand years old.

Today the bow benefits from fiberglass and boron-epoxy construction, as well as the applied methods of mechanical advantage of the cammed compound bow. The wooden arrow has been replaced by hollow aluminum shafts with razor-sharp bear tips; a fearsome and murderous concoction. Yet I felt that pyrotechny had never been properly applied to this device, so I set about bringing the two into union. Primitive efforts have been made to do so in the past, most notable by Cochise and Geronimo with their flaming arrows, and more recently by my brother Eduardo, with a quarter-stick taped to an arrow's tip. (I warned him it wouldn't fly very far or very well, but he just had to try it. Instead of landing in the open field it was intended for, it traced a low, lazy, wobbling arc, skewering the Driscolls' roof. We watched in miserable horror as it sat there, quivering and spitting smoke, until it finally erased several shingles and a small section of plywood. The Driscolls didn't like that, but at least Eduardo learned how to fix roofing, a skill to come in handy later, during our rocketry days.)

A more modern approach is to utilize the arrow's internal capacity, to be filled with the

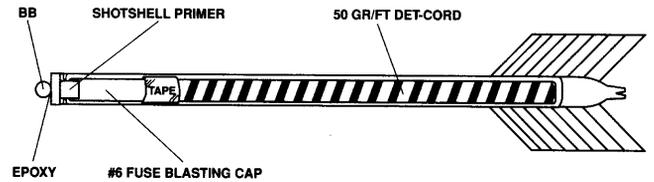


Figure 1. Shotshell Primer, #6 Cap, Det-cord



Figure 2. .38 Cartridge, Flashmix

compound of your choice. After borrowing a yard or so of 50 gr/ft det-cord, a couple #6 fuse-blasting caps, and a cup of flash-mix from Eduardo, I got to work. I'll relate a couple of my designs here.

Take a length of det-cord, and stuff it down to the bottom of the hollow arrow, after removing the tip. Then cut the det-cord 1-1/2" short of being flush with the top of the arrow, allowing room for the blasting cap. Next, mate cap with end of det-cord longitudinally, (see diagram) with tape. Into the cap's fuse end, epoxy a shotgun shell primer, and onto the primer's striking surface, epoxy a BB, which acts as a firing pin. Fill in around the det-cord with Bullseye powder, flash-mix, whatever, if there's room. Now CAREFULLY crimp the aluminum body of the arrow around the primer (see Fig. 1). If this is too exciting for you, as it was for me, an alternate priming method is to epoxy your blasting cap into the exact center of a primed .38 special cartridge, and while the epoxy is still malleable, press fit the primed cartridge onto the arrow, before epoxying the BB onto the primer. If you don't have access to caps and det-cord, simply fill the arrow with flash-mix, cram on a .38 cartridge, glue on the BB (see Fig. 2), and let 'er rip.

Be warned, however, that the addition of the weight of your payload will substantially reduce the arrow's speed and range. Aim high. Our initial tests bear this out. In our first test, Eduardo and I went down to the tracks and waited for a train, and I launched our first arrow, of the det-cord variety, at a freight car as it passed. That was a sweet little bang. Our second experiment was conducted by our parking behind a copse of trees and lofting a flash-mix arrow into the parking lot of a hardware store. We really should have waited until after business hours, but we were drunk and just couldn't. We beat a hasty retreat after we heard the sirens, and we've always wondered whether they found a scorched

empennage of an arrow, and if they did, what did they make of it?

But hey, it's a big world, with plenty of worthy targets to choose from (I doubt that even Eduardo's dumb enough to let me try the old apple on the head routine). So go to it and have a blast!

WILLIAM TELLERINI

Footnote: My brother, William, is an accomplished and skilled archer, as well as a hopeless powderhead (it runs in the family). When he brought over this turbo-charged version of the venerable bow and arrow, I was so impressed with his marvelous infernal machine that I prevailed upon him to share it with you. Hope you like it.

—EDUARDO



De omni re scibili, et quibusdam aliis.

—VOLTAIRE

Dear Eduardo,

We were recently greatly disappointed by our bombing of the World Trade Center. We are in deep depression over the fact that our van-bomb blew down, through parking garages, of all the useless things, instead of up, through the lobby and restaurant, as we had intended. What did we do wrong? We feel like such failures. *Please help!*

MOHAMMED SALAMI
MAHMOUD BULIMIA

Dear Fellows,

Take it easy and don't get so down on yourselves. I can see that you are sensitive perfectionists about your work, but don't be over-critical.

Please realize that yours was a fine first effort, bringing Manhattan to its knees. Give yourselves credit for this, and minimize whatever minor flaws developed, but learn from them.

Remember, rapidly expanding gasses produced by explosives choose the path of least resistance for that expansion and in your case, the garages provided that. If I may make a suggestion, next time try a strategic target which can use the principles of confinement to your advantage. (See *Case Former*, No. 2)

As long as you're in town, perhaps the Holland or Lincoln tunnels would be a useful exercise to enhance your self-esteem.

Remember, no tracable explosives, (ammonium nitrate/fuel oil is my favorite) and simple timers, power transistors, and components from Radio Shack. Above all, *avoid visco fuse!*

Take heart, chin up, get in there and keep on plugging.

EDUARDO



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Abyssus abyssum invocat.

—PSALM xlj:8. (Vulg.)

I started to write what may become an annual feature for the old *Case Former*. When I said I was going to call it "The Year in Review," Herr Pfantodt asked "Did you say "Urine Review?" I said "No, *Year in Review*." He replied, "I though you said Urine Review because you had been talking to the PGI officers. You know how you feel after such an experience - pissed on and pissed off!"

The last year was good for people and bad for fireworks. We had good times and bad weather. New crafts-people appeared, and a few old souls passed. Now, seriously folks, a number of good people either died, moved away, or lost interest and contact, and I won't mention their names as this saddens me. In the true spirit of the I.O.O.J., however, let us commemorate the late Benny Hill. Any guy who likes big hooters can't be half bad. So, Benny, we're going to miss you. And then - line up, guys, here comes Comrade Clinton and his Travellin' Horse Thieves (Democrats, same thing). Drop trousers and moon them, the proper salute for a Democrat. Mourn for our country's lost freedoms.

I did want to mention the passing of two great fireworks animals, Charlie and Ivan. Charlie was a pleasant old tom cat who loved fireworks. He used to watch as we fired test shells, peering intently through the window, usually looking no more than slightly impressed. When we finished he would cock his head as if to say, is that all? Shoot some more, guys.

Ivan, Imbibo's Russian wolfhound, was a true powder-dog. Ivan's favorite trick was to walk into the shell shop, lie down, usually in the middle of the walkway, and fall asleep. We would have to step over or walk around him. Dust and pyrotechnic composition would peacefully drift down upon him. I took bets for a while on what color he would burn if we lit him. Hopefully, not Comrade Clinton's favorite pinko! Ivan had a unique knack for detecting "personality defects." If you could work

around him without disturbing him, fine. If you woke Ivan, however, you were an asshole. Only one creature, to whom I will here refer as "she who must be avoided," ever did in my experience.

Well, so much for the sorrows – now for the joy. Fireworks shows were great. The Lake, the Lake, the Lake, need I say more. Fabulous shells, great low-level devices, a waterfall made from morning glories, cases of Class C in the fire, Jack Daniels in the glass, buzz-bombs in the water, and not a fuse-cutter or safety-faker in sight. Imbibo, where's the *food*? To top it all off, we had "dinner music."

The Duckhunter's shows went off with their usual aplomb. Fireworks in abundance, food in excess, fun in plenitude! I can't say enough about Ducks' shows, certainly a high point not to be missed. But, Ducks, get rid of those cheap, seamed, plastic mortars. Seams belong on ladies' silk stockings. When I can burst a mortar with a modestly-loaded little mine, it's got to be garbage. Did you get those mortars from some charlatan?

Then we had two new events. Putting the last first, in the fall we went to the Hill Country shoot. I hope this will be an annual event, as it was a great time. Brats and lampare, seeing old friends, a hug from Jennifer, Denise Rasmussen announcing she's getting married, and of course, the police.

It happened like this. We were shooting off some small stuff waiting for dinner to end when up pulls the local sheriff. He explains that this is the opening of duck season and people hearing our noise thought that there were hunters lost in the swamp. We would have to stop shooting, permit or no permit, right now! The lady next to me chortled, "He's my brother-in-law. Watch this." She walked up to him, called him by name, and asked why he was ruining everyone's fun.

He looked at her and said, 'Oh, it's you, the fireworks people – carry on.' He had a brat and a Coke and left. May I say, this is a sensible law enforcement. I commend the Hill Country's police department. I hope that the Hill Country boys and girls have us back again. It was a blast. Saw a couple of fabulous shells – shell-of-shells effects to crossettes, perfectly built and timed. Too bad you don't see these in PGI competitions but when you treat the members like dreck, you don't get their best performances.

Earlier, last spring, had been Imbibo's wedding. The show was put on by his friends. The reception featured Jack Daniels and powdered-sugar doughnuts, and Schell's dark for us beer people. The fireworks were remarkable. Ground work unseen or unheard of in years. Lance, wheels, a bishop's cross, walls of swallows, just on and on. And the aerial fireworks were incredible! Large complex multi-breaks, special effects, rarely-seen rockets, and the most amazing finale by Eduardo. Eduardo made

the spider shells go in a circle in the sky. He even did it twice, just to show that it could be done. I've never seen this before, and let me tell you, it was amazing. I'll remember that show forever.

Now, for the flip side. At a dusty, sparsely attended convention, the PGI officers changed. Companion Shy-lift was replaced by the Grand Squirrel Molester. Here is a person who proudly details (in a publication we shall not name) his principal pyrotechnic achievement, an electrically-squibbed booby-trap to discourage squirrels from raiding his birdfeeder. A word of advice: if you're bothered by squirrels, use a twelve-gauge shotgun. One shot, no more problem. Trust me, it really works. At any rate, the G.S.M. joins the ranks of non-fireworks-makers now leading the guild. I do apologize to two of the officers as they are decent, hardworking people who truly care for fireworks and seeing that people have a good time. But seriously – the "Offissary" is not a place for toadies, charlatans, mountebanks, fools and half-wits. That's why we have competition judges, after all!

I'd also like to report that new people came on the scene. People who matter. People who make a difference. People who care about fireworks. This is encouraging.

Well, I still haven't found a Lust-bombe, but I'm a year older and I hope wiser. If you are at the Lake, or Ducks', or Hill Country, or maybe even the PGI Convention, give me a sign, I'll give you its due. We can then spend a while speaking of friends, barbecue, beer, beautiful women, and fireworks. You know, the most important things in life.

Until next time...



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The original compilation of *The Case Former* is produced July 2004 in co-operation with The International Order of Old John (I. O. O. J.) The Society For the Defense of Tradition in Pyrotechny.