

THE 9TH ANNUAL ISLAND POODLESHOOT AND BBQ

NOVEMBER 26, 2006

DAY ONE

The Annual Poodleshoot opened under sunny, clear blue skies and everyone commented they had not seen such delightful poodle-shooting weather for many a year. It all began as usual when Padraic got up at the crack of Dawn. That is to say, failing in rousing the man with shouts and imprecations, Dawn gave Padraic a mighty whack upon the pate, which finally got him up all right, for Dawn O'Reilly was a mighty woman and not to be trifled with at any time of the day. And so she set him off down the *boreen* with a keg of the official Shoot beverage, Wild Turkey, shortly before sunup.

The day began quietly while a selection of musicians calling themselves the "St. Charles Atonals" performed at the main stage bandstand located in the middle of the baseball diamond. A spirited rendition of "Sha-boopie" done with Jew's Harp and oboe turned out to be a real crowd pleaser . Musical accompaniment was provided by Rex Suru on tuba, Josh Bennett on harp, Professor Schickele on Hardart with Inflatable, Robert Fripp on broomstick-washtub bass, and Ken Collins of St. Charles on the Banjo-Bandsaw Anomaly.

Mr. Collins' 20 minute solo on the Bandsaw Anomaly can only be described as "unique".

Padraic took a few moments to read the Rules and introduce the Special Guests for this year's event: The Fremont L7 Choir and Shooting Club, consisting of the best LGBT crack shots in the East Bay bar none. Event organizers had long realized that belching, farting, cursing and firearms display should not be limited to the male gender and so Padriac was sent to the L7 Clubhouse as emissary bearing formal invitations and the tender offering of a cheeselog as token gift.

So it was that Vicki, Veronica, Velma, Violet, Vanessa, Vivian, Valentina, Vashti, and Susan showed up strapped to the nines with bandoliers and full of that honest American red-blooded poodle-shooting spirit.

Expected later in the day was the annual White House Representative, this time to be none other than the Vice President himself. "Buckshot Dick" is known to have such a love of hunting that he sometimes rushes out into the field before the license formalities have completed. It was thought that last year's contretemps involving the President's Chief Advisor would be avoided by sending someone who has demonstrated greater awareness and care with firearms.

With a jolly crescendo from the horn section of the Hoophole High School Marching Band and Classical Orchestra, the line of hunters then moved out into the field under a blue sky -- 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 the frequent Whump of percussion grenades adding to the Holiday Cheer.

The L7 group made their mark by bursting into a rousing chorus of Der Rosenkavalier after a particularly good hit by Veronica on a male Russian Silverhair. Veronica terrified the normally macho Eugene Gallipigus no end by her excited cries of "Prairie oysters on the barbie!" Eugene took this time to set up a poodle blind on the far side of the Island and he was not seen at all by anyone for the rest of the hunt even though Vashti tried to assure him with, "Don't mind Von -- she's a Separatist, but she has a good heart."

One would think that these new circumstances would have led to a terrible disaster in which the much ballyhooed "War Between the Sexes" would have caused a general degeneration of the whole affair into chaotic sniping at one another among the hunters, but it was only Eugene who seemed to have a problem and he went off to be by himself. In fact the L7 group proved to be extremely capable during a skirmish between the Hunters and the Island Dogwalkers Association who once again picked Crab Cove as the area in which to launch a sortie against one of our platoons.

The platoon was advancing cautiously past the baseball field when the DWA swooped down on them with impermeables and flintlocks, tossing smoke grenades and firing RPG's from across the Memorial Sward that lay before the Cove HQ building. You know the building -- its the one with the cute tidepool

display. Things would have gotten serious if Vicki had not stood her ground like one of Queen Caliafa's Amazons of yore, firing an explosive tipped crossbow dart right into the middle of the RPG unit, messing up their hairstyles real bad and sending the DWA yapping back into the trees.

In general the first day ended well, with most parties bringing in either hearty catches or very colorful stories meant to enliven the fireside for at least three generations. Lynn Depaul, an L7 Associate, experienced significant success with her Therapy Darts fashioned from syringes and IV tubing. Nancy and Sean of St. Charles Street, a heartwarming mother-son couple, used an electrified net strung between two trees and a 9-Iron for final dispatch.

Marin's Paul and Marybeth employed blackpowder rifles and cavalry swords in the Old Tyme Weaponry Division, bagging a pair of Blues, while Suan of the Marin L7 contingent employed a morningstar flail with halberd to great effect during a melee by the boathouse.

Visiting guests, Dee Plakas, Donita Sparks and Suzi Gardner of the "slash-metal" group "Camel Lips" performed on stage at sundown to an approving, if somewhat bemused crowd. "It aint exactly Nashville, but they're okay," commented Jim Kitson of Santa Clara Avenue. "It reminds me of a cross between a gang of chainsaws combined with the sound of a squadron of P16's divebombing into the Pacific Ocean."

POODLESHOOT - DAYS 2, 3 . . . AND 4

No one knows exactly what went wrong for the rest of the Shoot, what happened there at the evening concert, or how it all happened at all despite the best of preparations. Some think that one of the nefarious DWA's, or perhaps even a member of Osama Bin Lassie's outlaws snuck something into the Official Keg, for an empty bottle labeled "Warning: Contains Genuine Spanish Fly Extract. DO NOT MIX WITH ALCOHOL!" was found nearby. Several witnesses mentioned later they noticed a suspicious person wearing a trenchcoat loitering by the keg, who was only deemed "suspicious in retrospect, for everyone loitered near the keg, as it dispensed whiskey bought and paid for already by the entrance fees. Some others said they saw this person run off on four legs.

In any case, the following day began desultorily. Every once in a while a mortar would go off and an Uzi would tear loose, but the Island seemed suspiciously quiet. In the evening everyone came back, laughing and rosy-cheeked from the cold, to the pit at the Ferry Landing, but the catch seemed rather small in comparison with previous years so that Padriac was forced to break out the frozen Ahi to add to the BBQ that night and no one seemed to mind.

The following day, almost no explosions were heard and only a couple blasts from a Mossberg echoed over the Island. But still, the hunters returned, laughing and chatting and joking amongst themselves as usual.

Entirely empty handed.

For the gloomy and overcast Sunday, the final day of the shoot, the hunters were offered premiums for the biggest or most inventive catch and the

morning passed with silence across the land. Padraic quizzed the spotters and rulesmen, who reported that all the hunters had disappeared. Padraic left the Command Post to see for himself. In disbelief, while standing on the corner of Otis and Grand, an Island Dogwalker passed him by merrily leading a prancing pom-pommed Motley French, who waved at him cheerily. The unarmed Padraic fled in terror across the field, falling into a poodleblind set up improbably and quite obviously to all upon the uncamouflaged pitcher's mound. Wherein he found Victoria and Verne in an advanced state of dishabille upon a cot. And they were not hunting for poodle by any stretch of the imagination.

Around the corner he went to step over Marybeth -- who was on top of Paul more or less in a bivvy sack -- to bump into Veronica and Velma, who were going at each other like crazed weasels with their lips locked together in the corner of the schoolhouse where a few bushes blocked the wind. They were not hunting for poodle either, at least not in any canine sense. In the distance he noticed a Cabela's Blind planted out in the open and rocking back and forth as if set on the pitching deck of a ship.

Out by the Strand he found one of the Officials. And Vice President Richard Cheney. And a phalanx of men in dark suits who kept speaking into their lapels while looking about them constantly through dark sunglasses. Despite the overcast heavens. With them, carrying a Mossberg 12 gauge, was the Archbishop of Boston.

It was inquired of Padraic about where the rest of the hunters might be. "Other men with guns." One of the men in dark suits said flatly.

"Ahhh!" Padraic said, smacking his forehead. "We thought all about security. This section of the hunt is Reserved for the Vice President. The others have been . . . retired for the day. Out of respect and deference you know."

"Good!" said the Veep. "That's the way it should be."

With many excuses Padraic dashed back to the Command Center, leaving the Official, Mike Ramsey, in charge of guiding the VP and his escort. All along the 8th Street area he noted blinds of every description setup without any care to disguise or camouflage as if the people had been in terrible haste to erect their, um, constructions. In the normal year, one might find one or two of these things set up by newbies, but this time it appeared as if every last hunter had secured one for him and herself. Back at CP, Padraic called over to Big Five Sports to inquire about blinds

"What's going on out there? We sold every last one from this store and the store in San Leandro over the past 48 hours. Nobody would take a special order though." Said the salesperson.

That's when Padraic noticed the bottle beside the keg. And that is when, tears pouring from his eyes, he took up Suan's morningstar flail -- god knows where she was and what she was doing at this point without her weapon -- and with a mighty swing, stove in the side of the keg with a shattering of oak and an eruption of whiskey. Dawn came tearing around the side of the BBQ trough then shouting, "What in god's name are you doing you omadhaun! Have you taken leave of your senses?"

And before he could stop her, she took up a flagon, filled it with the draining whiskey and downed half of it as Padraic cried out, "No!"

"I'm not going to let it all go to waste. And that is no way to treat daycent water o' life. What did you do that for?"

"It's pizzened," said Padraic who dropped dejectedly onto a bench.

This statement caused some concern in poor Dawn. "That's why we hear no shots anymore. The lot of them, poisoned!" She looked at the flagon from which she had just gulped a pint of poisoned whiskey. "What's going to happen to me?! Will it be quick?"

"Noooo." Padraic said, shaking his head. "The Poodleshoot is all destroyed."

Dawn shrieked something in Gaelic. "God save my soul, I'm murdered!" And she sank down beside him on the bench.

"Tell me how the others looked. Sufferin' and agonized like? Was there pain?"

"Noooo." Padraic said. "They all looked pretty happy."

"And you tried to save me by staving in the keg. Me dearest chum-chum Padraic." She snuggled up against him. "Give us a kiss before we die, a long hot one."

"O, we've been married twenty years and more and I do not think you are ready for what's coming." With that he stood up and drank down the rest of the flagon on the table there, dipped it into what remained of the whiskey in the shattered barrel and drank that down too as Dawn protested and clung to him.

"Do ye want to be like the rose and the briar, now?!" She said.

For answer, Padraic said, "Make love, not war." And he kissed her just as the heavens opened up with torrents of rain, sending all the Ruleskeepers under cover, including the Vice President, and putting an end to the day's official activities. As the Officials ran this way and that a peace descended upon the Island such as it has not seen for many a year and there was an end to all the war making and shooting, and although the rain put out the coals in the Pit, a number of embers continued to glow well into the night elsewhere.

In truth, every participant, save perhaps for Eugene, who spent the entire four days all by himself in his blind, reported perfect satisfaction with this year's Shoot. Or it may be nobody would cop to what went on. Even old Buckshot Dick came away with a nice kill of a surprised Motley French down on Shoreline. And he only managed to slightly wound the Archbishop in the buttocks in the process.

And that is the way the 9th Annual Island Poodleshoot and BBQ came to an end, so help me god in truth.