

THE LORD AND DAVID LYMAN...

By Hap Rocketto

Recently I had an article printed in another shooting publication. The piece was about Colonel Bill Brophy, a legend in both the high power and Marlin collector community. Part of the article related the fact that Brophy shot a 224-36V in the 1968 Palma Match while Clint Fowler fired a 225-31. Mr. Fowler sent me a kind note about the article and saying that this was the first time his perfect score, a Palma Record, had been mentioned in print. He further related that he actually had a higher V count but, in the excitement of the run of fives and Vs, was not paying close attention to his register keeper's call. As a result, he lost some Vs. Those of us that shoot highpower know how careful we must be in our use of language and must listen and respond to the scorekeeper. If, for example, the shooter disagrees with the value of a shot he may ask the pit crew to 're-disk' the target. That simply asks them to pull the target and check to see that the location of the spotter and value panel agree. If the request to 'mark' the target is made the results may well prove disastrous. The pit crew will simply pull the target, past the shot hole, and look for a new hole. They will not find one and a miss will be the result.

The role of the scorer singing out the shot value, and the shooter not firing unless he agrees, recalls an incident during the 1976 Palma Match fired at Camp Perry. That year a group of us, including my brother Steve, Paul Fecteau, and a young Dave Lyman, were acting as scorers. Aware of the majesty of the match we carefully called out the shooter's name and the shot value as each shot was fired. Dave was scoring for the team from Great Britain. His shooter, listed on his score card as Lord Swansea, was a member of the British nobility, an institution with which David was quite unfamiliar. He was totally unfamiliar with the etiquette involved with dealing with a blue blood listed in Debretts. Being a polite young man, David had been taught never to address his elders by their first names, he began his shot call by loudly and clearly crying out, "Mr. Swansea! Your first shot for record is a..."

The members of his Lordship's team listened to this young, seemingly unmannered; colonial make this statement several times. Being of a particular breed that demands the nicety of convention they quickly huddled. After a short conference they sent over a member of their team to correct, to them, David's inappropriate and all too familiar salutation.

The Englishman sidled up to Dave and waited until he called out, "Mr. Swansea!" Clearing his throat he leaned toward Dave and politely said, "That is 'Lord.'" Dave apparently did not hear and again roared out, "Mr. Swansea!" Again he was firmly reminded, "It is Lord!" The next time Dave called 'Mr. Swansea's shot the exasperated English envoy lifted up Dave's headset ear cup and hissed, "It is 'Lord, it is 'Lord', how many times must I tell you it is 'Lord!'"

Dave was startled by the irritated voice in his ear and shaken by the fact that he had made such a terrible error and upset our guests. He came close to knuckling his forehead and

tugging his forelock in his embarrassment. Not wanting to offend our British guests further, he mentally corrected what he thought was his error. As soon as Swansea's rifle barked so did David, calling out, "Mr. Lord! Your shot is a..." The vexed legate slumped onto his shooting stool with his head in his hands in total frustration.

David was unaware that he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire and went on with his duties. Time has passed but the event sticks in my mind as an object lesson. The little scene should remind all of us that while the shooter must listen for his name and value of the shot to insure he gets an accurate score, the scorer has to call out the correct name and value.

Authors Note:

The following obituary appeared in the Daily Telegraph on Wednesday 6th July 2005.

"The 4th Lord Swansea, who has died aged 80, was one of the finest marksmen of his generation and a dogged champion of the shooting lobby in the aftermath of the Hungerford and Dublanc shootings.

Singlemindedly listing his recreations in Who's Who as "shooting, fishing, rifle shooting", Swansea was the chairman of the British Shooting Sports Council and a vice-chairman of the National Rifle Association involved in a vain defence of law-abiding shooters against restrictive legislation. In speeches delivered in the House of Lords and letters to The Daily Telegraph, he supported the banning of Kalashnikov rifles and the requirement for shotguns not in use to be locked up.

But no Home Secretary was prepared to draw on the expertise of the shooting lobby, and Swansea resigned the Conservative whip to sit on the crossbenches before being removed from the House by Tony Blair's reforms in 1999.

As he fought the steady stream of government Bills that included a ban on the private possession of pistols, so that marksmen had to go abroad to practise for international competitions, he argued that the government was shooting at the wrong target. It should turn its attention to the vast underground pool of illegally held weapons, he declared, though he also put his finger on the problem by remarking: "You cannot legislate for nutters." One consequence of his losing battle was that, as captain of the Lords shooting team, he saw the Parliamentary gun club, which met under the Palace of Westminster, closed down after 80 years.

The descendant of a baronet who was created the 1st Lord Swansea after long service as a Liberal MP in the 19th century, John Hussey Hamilton Vivian was born on New Day's Day 1925. He succeeded his father, a game and clay pigeon shooter who had won the DSO in the First World War, at the age of nine. Young John's passion for shooting developed at Eton, where he was in the VIII and took a hand, during the war, in turning out pivots for two-pounder anti-tank guns.

But it was in competitive rifle shooting that Swansea excelled for more than 30 years. He regularly captained both Great Britain and Wales, won a gold medal at the Commonwealth games at Kingston, Jamaica, in 1966, and a silver at Brisbane in 1982. He represented Wales 37 times in the short range National Match and 34 times in the Mackinnon long range. He also won the Bisley Grand Aggregate in 1957 and 1960 and the Match Rifle Aggregate in 1971 and 1974, and competed in the Queen's Prize 18 times, coming second in 1958 and 1968. When an elbow injury curtailed his rifle shooting, he proved a dab hand with a pistol."