

# Charlie McCarthy isn't the only Dummy

BY HAP ROCKETTO

In general I would say that shooters are a very ethical group of people. The social contract that binds us together is a belief that the rules exist so that we all may be afforded an equal opportunity to excel. I strongly believe it to be true but I must bear my soul and confess to a time when I bent the rules.

Those of you who are familiar with airborne operations will recognize the term "wind dummy" A wind dummy is an object, and sometimes an individual, who is dropped from an aircraft so that the jumpmaster may ascertain the effects of the wind. The information so garnered is then used to drop the troops in a safe manner.

In high power long range shooting a wind dummy is a shooter, of known quality, who shoots a string with his rifle set at the no wind zero. Others shooters can then observe the strike of the shots and gain very accurate wind information. The wind dummy is a sacrificial goat and the practice, while not prohibited by the rules, certainly may be viewed as a lapse in ethical behavior.

Some years ago I was part of the best service rifle team the Connecticut National Guard has ever had. A bunch of were in the hunt for Distinguished and we encouraged and supported each other to

such a degree that one of us earning a leg was like all of us earning one. In the end 11 of the 12 of us all became Distinguished. It would have been 12 for 12 but one shooter had to leave shooting when his employer relocated him.

One year during the Excellence-In-Competition Match at Camp Robinson I had a disaster befall me at 300 and was out of the running for a leg. At that point I casually informed my teammates, sotto voce, that I would shoot the 600-yard stage with zero windage so that I could "better learn how to dope the wind." They could do what they wished. It was their business. I had thought that I had given myself ethical cover and believed my hands clean. I now know that not only was I guilty of an ethical lapse but I was also the Judas Goat that lead my friends into moral darkness. And that may be the greater sin.

The range officer's command of, "You may fire when your targets appear!" had barely stopped reverberating when I took up my tightest hold and crispest sight picture. My finger took up the slack and then added the 5 pounds needed to break the shot. The rifle recoiled and the brass hopped down the embankment. I then recorded a ten at three in the call column of my scorebook. Looking up I saw my target was, I thought, up and peeked through my scope to confirm my call. There was no spotter or value panel. After waiting what seemed like a week the target still had not gone down! I was getting ready to call for a mark when I heard voices to either side of me yell, "Mark 10!"

The target went down and the shot was duly marked. My anxious and equally morally degenerate fellow teammates had run out of patience and the match continued. Later Ed Biatowas told me that after he had called for a mark on my target his scorer, an old southern boy, told him to relax because, "That ole boy on ten he can take care of hisself." Little did he know how wrong he was. ☉