

# He Ain't Heavy

BY HAP ROCKETTO

Everyone thinks that is easy being Hap Rocketto. The casual observer notices a fully retired fairly well preserved 60 year old, a remittance man depositing two pension checks a month with a third, Social Security, just a few years away, the father of two accomplished daughters who are away at college and out of the house, a wife still working, and a paid off mortgage. His gun safe bulges with tack driving rifles, his reloading bench is neat and well stocked, and his trophy case's doors are sprung from the strain of trying to contain the myriad awards he has earned in over five decades of a virtuous shooting life. He is a nationally know author of shooting history and humor and often sought out as a Dewar coach. He has it made and his life seems perfect. But Gilbert and Sullivan described things more accurately when Little Buttercup and the captain sing, "Things are seldom what they seem, Skim milk masquerades as cream" in the light operetta HMS Pinafore.

Author James Clavell also works his way into the busting of this myth. In his epic saga of Japan, Shogun, loosely based on the adventures of the 17th century English navigator William Adams, Clavell hits the nail on the head. Adams was known by the Japanese as Anjin, or pilot. Well, I am a pilot, though aircraft not nautical in nature, and I do show guns from time to time and one of the key lines in Clavell's tale describes my life, as illustrated by the following story.

My brother Steve has a great heart and is generous with his spirit and treasure. He preaches to his students and fellow shooters his mantra of organization, attention to detail, and preventive maintenance. However, this is all lip service for behind this public facade of well managed performance lurks a soul disordered, absent minded, and all thumbs. He is the model of the absent minded professor.

After a summer's shooting campaign it would seem all equipment issues would have been resolved and ammunition selection would be complete, so a relatively low key match such as the Rhode Island State Prone Championship would be a snap. That would be true if one did not have to factor in Steve's fitting in a few high power matches, some pin shooting, and a 200 yard smallbore prone match in the interim. Having participated in the aforementioned shooting he had managed to move sights and scope around to different rifles to meet the needs of the various competitions. Imagine, if you will, a kind of shooter's shell game with rifles and sights.

Arriving at the Newport Rifle Club, site of the championship, Steve carefully began assembling his gear for the metallic sight stage. Turning to me he asked, "Do I use this sight with a riser block, off of a rail, or right on the receiver?"

Trying to get my own act in order I shrugged my shoulders and replied, "How would I know? Why don't you just check your notes?"

Rummaging through his shooting box he mused half aloud to himself, "Ah! I know I wrote it down on a piece of old target or something but I can't find it. I must have stuck it in my shooting diary. But I left that at home. Oh, well, I'll just slap the sights on as I'm pretty sure this is how I set it up."

I was on the opposite relay and, when he popped off of the line after his first misplaced sighter shot on his first target of metallic sights, I grabbed my rifle and simply handed it to him without comment, after all, he ain't heavy, he is my brother. We alternated using my rifle, just as Gil Boa and Gerry Ouelette had done at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

As we packed for the ride home Steve rounded on himself for his carelessness and like Lars Porsena of Cloisium, "By the Nine Gods he swore" that the foolishness of today would happen never more. By the Nine Gods he swore it, and in a thoughtful way, promised to organize his shooting array. Stop he would at the club on the way home, said he, to double check his scope and insure that it was zeroed in on the rifle.

The next day I was again on the opposite relay and, when he popped off of the line, after his first misplaced sighter on his first target of any sights, I grabbed my rifle and handed it to him it to him without comment, after all, he ain't heavy he is my brother.

When we were exchanging the rifle a relay or two later I asked him what had happened. Did he drop the scope or something since he checked it out last night? "

"Check out the scope! Oh, that what I meant to do on the way home. It slipped my mind. You see I had been planning dinner and stopped by the market to pick up a nice thick pork chop to stuff and sort of got distracted" he sheepishly replied.

"How was the pork chop?" I asked dryly.

"Great, nice and moist!" he proudly shot back, "I made two extra so that we can have dinner together when you come over the day after tomorrow to help me zero in my scope."

As I implied, it is not easy being Hap Rocketto. Welcome to my world where Clavell's key line, "A man's fate is a man's fate and life is but an illusion" just seems to fit like a glove.