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"Streamers"-  
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## In America ... Happiness Is a Warm Gun

By Doug Cunningham

Bang! Bang! Shoot, shoot.  
And another one bites the dust. It was so  
damned AMERICAN.

John Hinckley Junior Mark David Chapman  
James Earl Ray Sirhan Sirhan Lee Harvey Oswald.  
John Wayne Clint Eastwood Charles Bronson  
Ronald Reagan.

All hallucinating on the American Dream.  
It was just a tiny little gun Hinckley used. I  
wonder if he kept it by his bedside?

The celluloid cowboy caught a real bullet.  
Should we send military advisors to D.C.?

This didn't hit me nearly as hard as the  
assassination of John Lennon. There's an  
irony there somewhere when a man who ad-  
vocated nothing but peace and love all his life  
is blown away on a New York street corner  
while a man of militarism and violence lives  
through a similar attack.

Every one of the dozen or so secret ser-  
vicemen and cops surrounding Reagan when  
he left that hotel carried a gun. There were  
magnums and an Uzi machine gun. But it  
wasn't enough. If that doesn't teach us that  
the answer to violence isn't more violence,  
then what will?

I hate it when sappy columnists use  
assassinations or assassination attempts to ad-  
vocate gun control. It's so morbidly oppor-  
tunistic. But I also hate that stupid, macho  
cowboy mentality that Hollywood and  
Reagan-types perpetuate.

And while I'm sure there are those who will  
think criticism of Reagan right now is worse  
than kicking an invalid while he's down,  
there are some things that just have to be  
said.

Reagan survived his brush with death.  
Thousands of men less than a third of  
Reagan's age didn't during the Vietnam war.  
Yet Reagan called it an "honorable" thing.  
Death has no honor.

Why drag up the Vietnam war? Because  
Reagan and people like him are often exposed  
to technicolor violence instead of the real  
thing. They don't understand how horrible  
bullets and flesh can be when they suddenly  
meet.

Yet these are the people who don't hesitate  
to send others to that fate. People like  
Reagan manage to isolate themselves from  
most of life's hardships. Poverty, disease,  
hunger are only words to them.

Maybe the one good thing that will come  
out of this is that Reagan will gain a new ap-  
preciation of the reality of violence. There  
were no silver screens outside the Washington  
Hilton. No academy awards will be given for



"Best Performance During an Assassination  
Attempt."

The whole thing still has a Hollywood ring  
to it, though. A seventy-year old man getting  
shot, not realizing it at first, then walking in-  
to the hospital fully conscious and under his  
own power cracking one-liners. Style has  
been so integrated into Ronald Reagan that  
he responds to real life situations as if he were  
in a movie.

It goes without saying, or it should  
anyway, that I abhor shooting attacks on  
ANYONE. I'm glad Reagan wasn't killed. I  
hope James Brady survives and does it  
without significant brain damage.

I feel compassion for the wounded, for  
their families, for a nation that once again  
was forced to come face-to-face with its own  
violence. But damn it, I feel anger, too.

Anger at people who either can't or won't  
eliminate violence as an option for dealing  
with human beings. Despite Reagan's friend-  
ly grandfather image, I believe he's a violent

man.

Not violent in the sense that he would ac-  
tually personally brutalize somebody, but  
violent because he doesn't comprehend the  
preciousness of life enough to be truly non-  
violent.

I've seen the bumper stickers that  
proclaim, "I'll Give Up My Gun-When They  
Pry My Cold, Stiff Fingers From The  
Trigger" and "Guns Don't Kill People,  
People Kill People." And, in my brief life,  
I've seen half-a-dozen assassinations or at-  
tempted assassinations on TV. I'm convinced  
that violence is as American as apple pie.

We've had our hands on the trigger ever  
since we hit these shores and there's no end in  
sight. Our flag is a blood-stained symbol of  
made in the U.S.A. death and destruction.

I'm not naive enough to believe that  
anything will be done now to curb our violence  
or control the instruments of that violence.  
Because for too many Americans, happiness  
IS a warm gun.