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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 violen-
ce or control the instruments of that violence.
Because for too many Americans, happiness
IS a warm gun.