



# THE VIGILANTE



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Editor: Nasty Newt SASS # 7365

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## The Quarterly Chronicle of the Robbers Roost Vigilantes

### From the President

#### Desert Willow's Tortoises Think Spring Has Sprung (They're Not All That Bright)

Here we are, once again, in the middle of our annual false spring. Every year in February, which is really the dead of winter, it warms up for a while. Trees bud out, women want the cooler turned on, and desert tortoises can be seen out stumbling around, looking for romaine lettuce, broccoli, and sugar snap peas. And we have some great days at the range, all the while glancing nervously at the mountains and knowing it won't last, and never, ever, uttering the "w" word.

We went out there four times in February, which is about as many times as you can do it, for two cowboy matches, a trail walk, and a BAMM. Every one of those Saturdays was darn near perfect, but reality is about to set in. As I write this on Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, the forecast for the first Saturday match tomorrow is cool and windy. Monet, Remmie, Bob, and Twazzle will not be amused, and with any luck, the pretty white flowers on the pear tree in the back yard won't all blow off.

Update: It wasn't just cool and windy, it was downright cold and the wind was howling. We only lasted four stages and called it off. We might not have shot at all had not 83-year-old Traveling Tinker, who lives in Minnesota but is in Lancaster for the winter, showed up to shoot. We had a nice day yesterday for the trail walk, but it's blowing again today.

The first End of Trail in Arizona is in the books. The overall winner, Dead Eye Dillard, shot the twelve stages in 174 seconds. His slowest stage was 18.26, and on three stages he was in the 12's. That's hard for me to imagine.

Jayne Cobb is turning into a regular Cecil B. DeMille—well, maybe slightly irregular. This is Jayne Cobb we're talking about, after all. Anyway, he has been making movies at our matches, and they're terrific. You can watch them on YouTube. Search for Robbers Roost Vigilantes.

### The Old West's Longest Recorded Shot!

by Old Scout SASS Regulator #323

In 1874, 150 very well armed citizens started out from Bozeman, Montana Territory. This expedition was called the "Yellowstone Wagon Road & Prospecting Expedition", and was financed by the Territory of Montana, and the US Federal Government. The purpose of this exposition was to prospect for Gold & Silver, and forge a wagon road to meet up with the railroad crews working west from Bismarck, North Dakota. A third, not official, purpose is believed to be the killing of as many Indians as possible. Records indicate these 150 men were in fights with Sitting Bull's, Hump's, and Crazy Horse's warriors on nearly a daily basis. The expedition is known to have lost only one man to the Indians, while killing hundreds of Warriors.

One might ask how this army of 150 men were able to route thousands of Indian Warriors. Well, the answer lies above; they were **WELL** armed. The expedition had in its inventory a Cannon, a Howitzer, several pieces believed to be swivel guns, and most importantly, a large body of men armed with heavy, long-range rifles. Many of the rifles were fitted with telescopic sights.

Just southwest of the Big Horn River crossing (used 2 years later by Maj. Reno, trying to reach Custer), a man named Jack Bean may have made the longest killing shot recorded in the history of the West—maybe longer than the famous Billy Dixon shot. A Sioux warrior by the name of Shell Necklace and one of his friends appeared on a point of land quite some distance from the expedition encampment. Just to show their disdain for the white men, the two young warriors fired a few harmless shots at the expedition.

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Another thing we usually do this time of year is begin philosophizing about when to change to summer hours. We always make the change in May, and probably will this year. But we enjoy philosophizing about it.

Whenever I think I'm getting good at something, I tend to start screwing up. Yesterday at the trail walk I loaded a bullet without any powder, and later thought a bullet hadn't left the barrel, then thought it did, then thought maybe. But thanks to M.C. Ryder and Howie, I got back in the match so I could keep missing targets.

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*Long Shot continued*

This vexatious behavior of the two young Braves caused Jack Bean to ready his 44-90-500 rifle, equipped with a telescopic sight. He placed the rifle on cross-sticks and carefully aimed. The friend beside Shell Necklace was killed by one shot to the chest.

The Montana newspapers recorded this deed. The Crow Indian Tribal historian of the period also recorded this event in their oral history. And last but not least, Shell Necklace lived into the early 1930's and recounted the event many times.

OK, so what do we really know? Those that witnessed the shot all said it was a good mile (1760 yards) away. Any long-range shooter today will tell you it's really hard to judge a mile. To tell the difference between 1500 yards and 1700 yards is nearly impossible.

In later years, when interest in this event lead researchers to investigate it, the site of the encampment was easily found. BUT there were three land points that could have been the right one. The best that could be done, was to chain off the distance to each possible point, and let history decide. Those three distance measurements were 1700 yards, 1610 yards, and 1390 yards.

This event took place in March of 1874. Two months later, Billy Dixon performed a similar feat at Adobe Walls. Mr. Dixon's shot is said to have been 1538 yards.

Contemporary reports of the Jack Bean encounter made no mention of his rifle's maker. The only statements recorded were that it was of 44-90-500 caliber and was fitted with a telescopic sight. In more recent years, writers have said the arm was a Sharps. I feel this is in error, and the rifle was more probably a Remington Rolling Block.

The Remington rifle was available in 44-90-500 caliber from early 1873, while the Sharps rifle was not introduced for a 44-90-500 cartridge until 1876. The use of a telescopic sight was not

unusual on either the Remington or Sharps heavy rifles. Such instruments had been in use since the closing days of the Civil War. While the Buffalo hunters rarely used the telescopic sights for hunting, we should remember that the men chosen for this expedition were in large part chosen for their ability to make really long-range shots.

In the time period around 1872-1873 approximately 75,000 buffalo were killed around the area of Dodge City, Kansas. By 1873 the buffalo hunters and the merchants who keyed their trade to the buffalo, were getting desperate to find more buffalo.

The only hope for the hunters and merchants seemed to be the construction of a trading post/fort in the area to the south. It was known that large herds of buffalo, as well as large numbers of Indians were in that "No Man's Land". Two men, Myers and Leonard, offered to build a trading post and operate a wagon train back to Dodge City, if the hunters would provide armed escort for the wagons. This arrangement worked rather well. The hunters were paid for their hides, and then were paid to escort the wagons back to Dodge City, while other hunters were in the field. Not a bad deal for the hunters.

The slaughter of the buffalo so enraged the Indians that they felt compelled to kill every white man they could find (as slowly as possible), and in June of 1874 they launched an attack on the new trading post known as Adobe Walls.

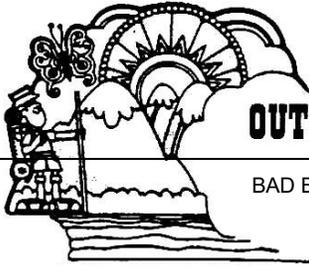
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## Business Card



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## How to Join the Robbers Roost Vigilantes...

Come out to a RRV match, held the third (and sometimes first) Saturday of every month, or call Nasty Newt at 760-375-7618, or MC Ryder at 760-384-2321, or mail it in. Our membership application is here [RRV Membership Application](#) Annual membership dues for the RRV are: single membership \$25, member and spouse \$30, family membership (including children under 18 living at home) \$35. First time shooters will be able to take their FIRST (1) NEW SHOOTERS CLASS for \$10, any subsequent new shooters class or RRV match shoot will be \$10 members, \$15 nonmembers. Donations for shooting regular monthly RRV matches will be \$10 members, \$15 non-members. Memberships run from September 1 - August 31. New memberships purchased after September will be prorated depending on the number of months remaining and the type of membership. **RRV members are encouraged to become Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) members.** Please call SASS at 877-411-SASS. SASS membership information can be found here:

<http://www.sassnet.com/Membership-Main-001A.php>

SASS membership is not required for membership in RRV, or participation in RRV regular monthly matches. **RRV encourages all shooters to join and support the NRA and the NRA Foundation, and Ridgecrest Gun Range Association.** For further information visit our website at [www.robbersroostvigilantes.com](http://www.robbersroostvigilantes.com).

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**Schedule of Monthly Matches**  
Matches are announced on the web site and via email to all club members. **Cowboy matches are first and third Saturday. Usually, Trail Walks are second Saturday, and BAMM and Cowboy Rifle are fourth Saturday, when scheduled.**  
**Winter Hours: Sign up starting ~ 8:00, Safety Meeting ~ 8:45.**

*Long Shot continued from page 2*

At about 4:00 AM on the morning of June 27, 1874, on the order of 250 Indians attacked Adobe Walls. The battle raged for 5 days. In the end 4 of the buffalo hunters, 13 Indians, 56 horses, and 28 oxen were dead. The leader of the Indians was Quanah Parker.

In her book, "The Life of Billy Dixon," Olive Dixon quotes her husband as saying, "A party of about 15 Indians appeared on the bluff... the distance was not far from 7/8 of a mile...the boys suggested I try the big 50 on them and we saw an Indian fall from his horse...". The telescopic sight would have allowed Dixon (and watching friends) to see an Indian fall from his horse.

If you go to the site of Adobe Walls today, you will find two Granite monuments and the grave markers of those that died there. Looking to the East you will see two bluffs or buttes. There are only two! One is at 600 yards and the other at 1233 yards. The 1233-yard bluff is beyond a creek. There is nothing out there at 1538 yards!

Comparing the two historic shots, it seems only obvious that Jack Bean bested Billy Dixon by 157 yards. I would also note that Jack Bean shot one of just two mounted Indians, while Billy Dixon shot one of 15 mounted Indians, a much larger target area. I feel we have to award the "Golden Buffalo Chip" to Jack Bean for his shot. It was probably the longest shot of the Old West.

\*\*\*This article originally appeared in the October 2003 edition of *The Vigilante*.\*\*\*