

## THE COBBLER'S LAST

Those of you with long memories may recall that some fifteen years ago I brought to the membership a paper about my lifelong love affair with guns. While the response to this effort was polite, it was also restrained. It came as something of a surprise to me that only a few among us share my abiding interest in guns.

Fifteen years later, I am back with yet another paper about guns. But wait before you tune me out... this paper tells a story: a dramatic tale of human aspirations, challenges, success and failure, all seasoned with a brutally painful dose of reality. Gun talk will be held to a minimum, but a small dose is needed for your understanding of my tale. Hear me out before you slumber.

It is important that you understand, going in, that I really like guns. My father was a professional hunter in his younger years, as some of you may recall from earlier papers, and I was raised in a home fairly bristling with firearms and trophies. I have been shooting since I could hold a gun to my shoulder. I particularly like shotguns. To my eyes, a fine shotgun is a thing of true beauty... a work that brings together superb craftsmanship and art.

This very sincere profession of gun-love demands a disclaimer. It does not follow, as some who hear these words may think, that I am a card carrying member of the NRA. To the contrary, I am solidly in favor of tighter gun controls, as all thinking Americans must be. I am filled with contempt for the way this sorry organization preys on the insecurities of poorly educated, suspicious, low income folk who live at the edge of society. The NRA keeps these people in constant fear of midnight raids by "jack-booted government thugs" - this verbatim quote is how the head of the NRA gratuitously referred to the officers of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Bureau. The NRA assures its members that the ATF is ever poised to swoop down on their homes, seize their weapons of defense and leave them the helpless prey of evildoers. And only their NRA membership can prevent this disaster.

But enough stage-setting: let's get on with my tale...

One of my oldest and dearest friends in the advertising business was Milt Gossett, who worked at one of P&G's old line ad agencies for about as many years as I toiled at the Soapworks. Milt was smart, warm and kind: a truly caring man blessed with a wonderful sense of humor. He was always fun. He did brilliantly in his career and rose from the lowest rung to become CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi America. He shared my love of shotguns, hunting, and fishing. We had many fine adventures together over the years.

Somewhere in the early 1990's Milt dropped into my office with a breathtaking proposition: "Gib," he said, "You love guns and I love guns. You'll be retiring in a year or two and so will I. I have come upon an opportunity for the two of us to buy a shotgun company! Just think about it for a minute. We'll be partners in a business we both love... we'll make a wonderful product we can be proud of... we'll travel and shoot all over the world in our retirement and it will be a business expense... we'll make lots of money... and we'll have buckets of fun doing it!"

I thought he was joking. Nothing could have been further from my mind. I was thinking about retirement, but I was certainly NOT looking for a major new investment or career. I have always been a very cautious, almost timid smalltime investor and buying a company was a totally foreign and outrageous idea.

"Just think about it," Milt said. And he gave me the general outline of his concept. Bear with me if I get just a bit technical for a few moments...

In the 1930's the great American gun designer John Browning perfected a new concept: a double barreled shotgun with the barrels on top of one another, rather than the traditional side-by-side. The design was slow to catch on, but eventually shooters discovered that this was an easier gun to shoot - they could hit more targets and kill more game with this design. The Browning Over and Under, manufactured in Belgium, became extremely popular, attracting many imitators.

In time John Browning's patents expired and the Winchester company started producing a good quality copy. These guns were made in Japan, using essentially the identical design, with a few small but important mechanical improvements. The Winchester was a relatively plain Jane gun: totally serviceable, but without the fine wood, fit and finish that many gun owners prefer.

Eventually, Winchester went bankrupt. A handful of entrepreneurs started producing the same gun in the same Japanese factory - but with very nice finish and detail: they called these Classic Doubles and charged significantly higher prices for them. These were a substantial success in the American marketplace.

But then the plant in which the guns were made was sold to make room for a golf driving range (the highest order of land use in Japan) and the gun went out of manufacture. Almost immediately, used Classic Doubles were selling for more than they had cost new. The rights to the design were now available, and Milt's proposal was that we buy these rights and produce the guns in Connecticut, rather than the Land of the Rising Sun. They would have very fine fit and finish, and command a premium price. Most shotgunners have a strong nationalist streak and would far prefer an American-made gun - especially a beautifully finished one - to one from Japan, Milt reasoned.

This was his proposal and, in spite of a host of screaming reservations, he left me thinking about it...

Several weeks later, Milt dropped by again. Now he had a third potential partner in hand, Walter Lomax, a man I knew and respected at Saatchi & Saatchi. And Milt had found an experienced gun manager to run the operation. For the first time, he mentioned a cost. It was a lot of money, but not an impossible amount. He, Milt, would be the principal investor: Walter and I would come in at a lower level. Hmmm.

Milt kept chipping away at my resistance over the next few months and the bottom line is, of course, that I finally agreed. We gathered for an organizing meeting, and so was born the Connecticut Valley Classics Co, or CVC for short. From the outset, Milt was to be Chairman: living in Ohio, I would be a somewhat less active Vice Chair. Walter Lomax would be President and COO, working very closely with General Manager, David Bruce: a well checked-out shotgun maker

From the start, Connecticut was the preferred location for the operation. In America, this is gun country. It is a state with a long-established history of gun manufacturing, home to virtually every important American firearm. But - more to the point - in recent years a number of time-honored gun companies like Winchester, Colt and Smith & Wesson had gone through severe financial reverses and had to lay off large numbers of Master Gunsmiths (an honored level of expertise and achievement in the firearms industry) who were looking for work - even part-time work. And there were any number of small gun manufacturing facilities standing empty in a depressed area, waiting for tenants. (This might have been a flashing amber light for us, but we saw it as "full speed ahead.") In no time, Manager David Bruce had found us a low cost home and a handful of experienced employees. We were in business.

If you ever go anywhere near the gun business, you will quickly discover that the absolute primary requirement is insurance. It is where you start. It is the "Jacks or better" of the gun game. Guns are inherently dangerous things. Even when used properly, accidents can happen and people can get shot (just ask our recent Vice President). The finest guns can explode if abused. The world is full of hungry lawyers just waiting to pounce. This was the first startup expense we had to deal with. But, happily, the design of our gun was fifty years old and in its years as a Browning, then Winchester, then Classic Doubles it had never lost a liability claim. Insurance was readily available to us, and at a reasonable cost.

To the untutored eye (and that is certainly what Milt, Walter and I brought to the party) making the guns did not seem a daunting process. There were, as best I recall, some sixty-eight parts to the gun, counting all screws and

widgets. And with the aid of computer-driven machine tools, it ought to be as simple as feeding the parts into a machine which would replicate them upon command, spitting out a generous inventory of precision-made parts. You then assemble the guns, put them in a box, mail them off to dealers or buyers, and cash their checks. How hard could it be?

A key element in our planning for this venture, as we saw it, was that our guns would command a premium price. And this meant they must have fine materials, workmanship, engraving and finish. Quality is a relative concept, of course: we were not setting out to compete with the English 'Best Grade' guns by Purdey and other makers, which are the world's finest but which cost up to \$80,000 and a waiting period of two years for delivery. We were aiming more realistically at a level two or three notches above the basic off-the-shelf American, Italian and Japanese guns, and a price tag of about \$3,500 and up. At this pricing, we had to have really first rate materials and workmanship to justify the cost, and these are the standards we demanded of the manufacturing process.

The most complex part of a shotgun is the receiver - where the barrels and action meet when the gun locks closed, and where the firing pin mechanism detonates the shell. We contracted out to a reliable producer an initial order for five hundred of these receivers, using a carefully specified costly steel. It took almost a full day and about twelve consecutive cuts for the milling machines to produce a single receiver from a solid piece of steel: it was an exquisitely complex piece of work. Alas, as the finished pieces came out of the milling machine the worker casually tossed them across the room and into a wooden shipping crate, when they should have been individually wrapped in protective material. Two thirds of them were hopelessly scarred and scraped as they clanked onto one another. They had to be scrapped. This was a significant and costly setback to our startup. We were behind budget before we had barely started.

The barrels were a special challenge. We wanted the best quality barrels and that meant buying them from France. Since the days of the Napoleonic wars, when France made the finest cannons, the French have had a lock on top-of-the-line gun barrel manufacturing. They arrive from France

looking more like lengths of water pipe than anything else... and a long process of shaping and finishing them is needed. And then comes the most critical step of all: fitting two of them together, one above the other, and then into the gun action with such precision - and this is the key - that both barrels shoot to the same point. This is a critically important and painstakingly slow process that must be done by hand, using lasers to ensure perfect alignment. Heaven only knows how this was accomplished before lasers! It gives you new respect for yesteryear's master gunsmiths!

Gun stocks are for many, the most important part of all. Buyers of fine guns are incredibly choosy about the wood in their gun stock: it is the first thing they look at. The more a gun costs, the more beautiful the grain in the wood must be, as well as the checkering of the grip, and the finish on the stock. Fine wood is readily available if you can handle the price: the best comes from Turkey. But closer to home, there is still excellent walnut in Arkansas that is more reasonably priced, though by no means inexpensive: this is what we selected.

And then comes assembling and finishing the gun. It is NOT as simple as putting the pieces together. The barrels must be blued, the action must be engraved, the stock must be finished, and checkered, and then fitted to the receiver, and the whole gun must be tuned like a piano to make sure that everything works seamlessly. And then it must be safety tested. For fine guns, this is an intensely time consuming process, and it is of the first importance that it not be hurried. Some eleven months after startup, we finally held our first CVC shotgun in our hands: about twice as long as we had planned, and considerably over budget. But it was a good gun. A very good gun.

This was a deeply satisfying moment for us all. We really had created something worthwhile! But beyond the satisfaction we each felt, there was something more: we each desperately wanted our own gun! We wanted to show it off to our families, our friends, and wherever we customarily shot. More, we all had sons who shot and we eagerly wanted a gun for each of them. How long would it take for us to possess our own guns?

But more to the point, how long could we allow our own ego needs to delay getting this fine new gun into the marketplace? We desperately needed to start some cash coming in to this venture. And there was also a top priority need for sample guns to show the trade and generate orders. At last, we decided that each of us was entitled to just one gun for the first year in business. This was painful, but absolutely necessary.

And now it was time to think about selling these guns.

The hard reality about shotgunning today is that there is less and less open country to shoot in, and less and less game to shoot at. By far, most shooting today is done at clay pigeon targets. And at about this time, a new clay pigeon game was sweeping the country. There had long been Trap and Skeet shooting, Now there was something new called Sporting Clays. This is a very challenging shooting game which - like so many shooting things - came from England. It simulates wild bird shooting under extremely realistic conditions. It is hard. On the theory that all shooters are always looking for a reason to buy a new gun, we would promote our CVC as ideal for this new sport.

From the start we had known there would be no money for advertising. But our manager, David Bruce, was a seasoned veteran with many years experience in the gun business, and he was respected by all the key dealers across the country. His imprimatur would count. But first, we needed some publicity, and it had to be free publicity. But we were ad men: we knew how to do this. We turned to the gun writers. There are a half dozen respected monthly shooting magazines, each with a widely read column on shotguns. The first six guns we made each went to one of these influential writers for review in their magazine. We waited as breathlessly as Broadway producers waiting for reviews on Opening Night. And the reception to our gun was beyond our fondest dreams!

Remember, this was not only a high quality gun, but it was made in America. The gun writers just loved it!

“At long last, a high quality new shotgun from America!”

“This is the finest shotgun made in America today!”

“You need one of these great new American guns from Connecticut Valley!”

“Sporting clay shooters, get in line for one of these American guns!”

This was heady stuff. And the telephone started to ring. Long before we were ready, the orders started coming in.

Meantime, we took the next guns that came off the line to the best known Sporting Clay shooters who compete around an international circuit of tournaments. Two of the best agreed to shoot our gun... and immediately started winning tournaments with it! This was the best possible publicity! More orders came in.

And then there were the gun shows. Few of you have been to a gun show (or perhaps any trade show), I suspect... but I ask you to understand that there are many of them - the 100% legitimate kind, nothing shady about them - all across the country, where gun makers proudly show their wares and the shooting public comes in throngs to see what's new. We took our gun to as many as we could... this was time-consuming work involving long weekends away from home. The biggest and best of them all is the annual Shot Show in Dallas. This is The Big Cajuna! A city block size convention center, and two floors packed with perhaps a thousand booths filled with shooting stuff. And there we were in the middle of it all.

Take it from me, it's hard work. You are on your feet all day long, talking enthusiastically with an endless procession of gun people who stop by to see your new gun. Now, the ones you want to talk to are the dealers who come to buy. But the ones who claim your time and attention are the good old boys who just want to tell you about their guns back home. All the while, you can see - over their shoulders - known dealers with order books in hand... who might place a fat order with you but they wander on by because they can't get up to your booth. It is truly frustrating! But we did

come away with a handful of nice orders, and a hatful of compliments for our gun.

At this point, we had over 600 solid orders on the books, some 300 more pending, and the phone was still ringing. And this, my friends, is the high point of my story. This is the best it ever was. From this point forward, a string of problems beset our venture such as we had never anticipated, and the fun started to go out of our undertaking as hard-nosed realism raised its ugly head...

As we geared up for full production, we quickly ran smack into all the problems of being undercapitalized. Most of all, we didn't have enough parts on hand... and when we authorized the purchase of more, we found that some of our key suppliers had not been paid, and declined our orders. We had no idea that our manager had let us fall so badly in arrears, and we began a desperate struggle to get current with our creditors. But we were not only out of parts... we were out of money. We were seriously undercapitalized. It was time to dig into our pockets a second time: here we were on the brink of success - we had our gun - we had come so far - and we couldn't abandon the project at this point.

But if your gun has sixty-eight parts and you only have sixty-seven in stock, you are dead in the water. We each coughed up enough money to get current with our suppliers and start making some guns. We easily sold our first run of twenty guns, raced to the bank and cashed the checks. And we went looking for new investors. At this point, fate stepped in and took an unanticipated turn.

Four of our new guns went to a snappy gun store in Westchester County, and one was bought by a well-intended woman as an anniversary gift for her husband, a shooter named Vincent Battaglia who, we understood, was some sort of a venture capital guy. He simply loved the gun. He shot better with it than he ever had before, and he started asking some questions about who was behind this venture. In very little time we were sitting across a table from one another, and he was considering a large investment in CVC. He fancied being in the gun business, just as we had a year earlier.

We probably should have checked Vincent out more carefully than we did, but he seemed like a nice enough guy... he loved our gun... and he was prepared to write a very large check - the answer to all our problems!

When the dust settled, Vincent was the majority owner of Connecticut Valley Classics. Personally, I felt very little regret. It had been clear to me for some time that we were in over our heads. We had a very fine shotgun and essentially nothing else. And I, for one, was totally unwilling to put any more money into what was quite clearly a floundering manufacturing operation that was well beyond our management skills. If I was ever to see any of my investment again, it would have to be through somebody else's investment keeping the ship afloat.

So now there were four partners in the deal: my friend Milt, Walter Lomax, Vincent and me, plus our manager David Bruce. And now we were back on a solid financial footing and it was full speed ahead.

Or at least it should have been, but somehow it wasn't. For reasons we never fully understood, we simply could not crank out enough guns. The best we could manage was six guns a week. We tried everything we could think of. We schmoozed suppliers for speedier delivery of parts. We added more gunsmiths. We added a second line to the operation. But we kept being brought back to the inescapable reality that a lot of assembling and finishing these guns was hand work... slow, painstaking, time-consuming. Somehow, we managed to get up to about ten guns a week.

Do the arithmetic: we now had some eight hundred orders on the books. At ten guns a week, people were going to have to be VERY patient. And many of them weren't. They took their money and went elsewhere. Who can blame them?

More of a problem, consider the consequences on our cash flow. Even with Vincent's investment, we were sure to run out of money again, and head right back into the same financial quagmire. When word of these problems reached Vincent, we were summoned to his Manhattan offices for a conference. It was the most bizarre business meeting of my life...

When we got to Vincent's office, it became apparent that Vincent's operation was far more than we had realized, and quite a different kettle of fish. It took an entire floor of the office building. As a snappy receptionist led us to the conference room, we passed a vast open area filled with a sea of desks and perhaps forty or fifty men talking earnestly on telephones while sitting at computer terminals. They were obviously cold-calling prospects to hustle securities: I believe it is called boiler-plating in the business. There was precisely the same scene in the movie Wall Street. I was mildly interested to see the kind of place those annoying phone calls I was getting in those days came from. We hadn't understood that Vincent was in this kind of business. Then we were shown into the conference room and left to wait. A long wait. A very long wait.

And then we became aware of voices just outside the conference room door. Voices raised in anger: it was a boss threatening a subordinate with promises of physical violence such as I had never, ever heard one person speak to another. This was way beyond the drill instructor chewing out a new recruit... these were threats of brutal mayhem, yelled in menacing rage and in a heavy Brooklyn accent. This was mob stuff, straight from The Sopranos. Those of you who would like to hear a choice quote, see me after the paper. Milt, Walter, David and I looked at each other in wonder: what kind of place was this, and what kind of people screamed such violent threats? And why was this happening right outside our conference room door? Were we meant to hear this tirade? Was it to put us on notice?

We sat for another half hour wondering what we had gotten into... and then the door opened. In came not Vincent, but his right hand man... I was already thinking of him as Vincent's consigliere. This man had been all smiles in earlier meetings, but now he was straight from a Godfather casting call. He wore an intimidating scowl, chomped on a smelly cigar, and looked furiously at the four of us.

He spoke: "Vincent ain't coming. Vincent ain't happy with you guys. You assholes pissed away his money and you got nothin' to show for it."

He glared at each of us in turn... a burning glare with three or four silent seconds for each of us. And then he spoke: "We're makin' some changes in this here operation." His glare locked onto David Bruce, our Manager: he jabbed his finger in David's face. "You!" He swung his glare to Walter Lomax, our COO... "And you... You two is fuckin' outa here," he said (his very words).

He turned his glare to Milt and me: "You two can stay if you want... Vincent figures you're harmless." What an accolade!

"And another thing. We're closing down that chickenshit operation you're trying to run out there in Connecticut. Right now - I mean right fuckin' now - we got trucks out there loading up everything: your whole operation - gun parts, machines and all - and Vincent is moving this whole fucked up mess to Montana, and our guys is gonna run it out there and they're gonna run it right!" He paused to let this sink in: "You got anything you want to say to Vincent, you say it to me." He glared at us.

There was a long silence. We stammered out a very few questions. After all, Vincent owned more than half of CVC at this point. It was his football. We didn't have much leverage. And, personally, I did not feel much like taking on these tough guys. It turned out that Vincent had bought a second gun company that made quite lovely hunting rifles in Montana. He was going to merge the two operations into one, and the rifle company management would run our shotgun business.

Connecticut Valley Classics was now a Montana company: something of an oxymoron, I suppose. Milt and I would continue as figurehead directors but with no active role. Walter and David were summarily dismissed. We mustered up what little dignity we could, we shook the dust of Vincent's premises from our feet, and made what we hoped was a dignified departure - never to return. When we got back to Connecticut several hours later, our factory and offices were empty. It was all over.

More than anything, I had a feeling of relief. It had been clear for months that my investment was in jeopardy, and Vincent's coup felt like we had just

been put out of our misery. And maybe - just maybe - the new management in Montana could get the operation on track and make some money. In the weeks that followed, I kept a respectful distance from anything to do with Vincent, but Milt - wracked with guilt over getting me into this mess in the first place - stayed as involved as they would permit him to be. He reported that after a brief startup they really were producing our gun in Montana, and doing a pretty good job of it, too. It was amazing, but there was still a flicker of hope for CVC.

But there were more astonishing developments still to come. Several months later, Milt called with amazing news. Vincent was in jail, Milt said! Good God! In jail? You mean, behind bars? In the slammer?

Yes, Milt said. He had been told that Vincent had been arrested for some kind of stock fraud, (we never knew exactly what, but happily it did not involve our stock!). He was at that moment in a cell on Ryker's Island, Milt added, while the Feds and the State of New York argued over who was going to get first whack at him. And over the following weeks, the whole gun operation dwindled down to nothing and finally expired - not with a bang, but a whimper.

But wait... there's still more! The last act of this drama had not yet played out!

Almost a year passed. And then Milt and I each received in the mail a registered letter from the Attorney General of the State of Louisiana. What on earth was this about?

It turned out that, before the collapse of Vincent's company, his battalion of boiler plate stock salesmen (remember them?) had been trying to recoup his investment by hustling stock in CVC to unsophisticated Louisiana investors who (like the rest of us) had lost their entire investment. The State of Louisiana took a dim view of this. There are laws prohibiting this kind of pressure-selling to simple folk. Complaints had been filed, and the Attorney General wished to discuss this matter with Milt and me, whose names had

appeared as directors of the company! Would we please report to his office in Baton Rouge, and that right speedily?

Good God! Was this thing NEVER going to end?

Milt was immediately deep into discussions with his elegant New York attorneys. It was perfectly clear that this was going to cost us even more money. Could no one end our agony?

And then, a week or two later, came yet another totally unexpected letter. This one was from a Louisiana lawyer with one of those double barreled Southern names - Billy Bob Jones - which seemed totally out of place on his law firm's fancy stationery. He was aware of our difficulty, he said, (goodness knows how - we never found out), and was writing to offer his assistance. His proposal was quite simple and direct. If we would both send him our checks for X thousand dollars (it was not an impossible figure), he would make the whole thing go away. No more detail than that. No discussion of how he would make it go away, or what would be done with our money.

This was an extremely tempting proposition - but a worrisome one, too. Above all, Milt and I were prepared to do almost anything to put this mess behind us... and if Billy Bob could do it for the sum he named it would be a real deal. But was this an ethical thing to do, or a legal one? What further difficulties might it lead to? For starters, what could we find out about Billy Bob and his firm? We put the Old Boy Network on the case...

In time, we learned that Billy Bob's firm was well established and respected in those parts, that Billy Bob himself belonged to a particularly fine duck hunting club where he was held in high esteem, that he was a fine shot, that he was generally thought to be the best duck caller on the bayou. and he was without a doubt a Good Ol' Boy, for sure and certain. Now, these are fine credentials, to be sure, but not exactly what Milt and I were looking for. We hadn't taken a very close look at Vincent, and look at the problems that had created! Nevertheless, this was the best we were going to get on

Billy Bob from the Old Boy Network... and it began to appear that we were going to be going down to the bayou country to meet Billy Bob in person.

Milt's Manhattan lawyers were aghast when they heard we were seriously considering the Billy Bob alternative. They conjured up all kinds of dire consequences and told us tales of misdeeds by unscrupulous Louisiana lawyers who, they darkly suggested, were the worst of the breed.

So, let me ask you: what would you have done? I would be interested in a show of hands to each of the following alternatives...

- Go down to Louisiana to meet with Billy Bob and the authorities and straighten this mess out?
- Send Milt's high-priced Manhattan lawyer down there to deal with the whole mess?
- Do nothing and wait for the Louisiana attorney general to make the next move?
- Or put aside your concerns about the legality and the ethics of Billy Bob's proposal, put your faith in a Good Old Boy duck hunter, and send him the check?

The more we thought about it, the more we wanted to take the risk. We were desperate to get out from under this mess-without-an-ending. And the upshot was that we both mailed off our checks to Billy Bob and then held our breath to see what would happen next.

Nothing happened! The checks were cashed. Weeks and then months passed. Waves of silence. No nasty letters from the Attorney General. More than ten years have now flowed under the bridge, and we have not heard a word. It begins to appear that putting our faith in the integrity of a Louisiana duck hunter was, after all, the right thing to do! Milt is no longer with us. Maybe the final curtain has at last come down on the ill-fated Gun Company venture.

Looking back on it all, I am reminded of Milt's initial proposal to me:

"We'll make a fine gun that we can be proud of." That's the only part that came true. My two sons and I each have a CVC and they are indeed good guns: we shoot them a lot. They are also extremely expensive guns, when you figure my total investment in their cost: they might as well be Purdeys. Used CVC's (there are few of them, but every once in a while one turns up in the marketplace) are selling for more than we ever asked for them.

"We'll hunt all over the world and it will be a business expense." Nope... we never got around to hunting all over the world with our CVCs.

"We'll make a lot of money." Absolutely, positively, and forever NO WAY: This did not happen. To the contrary...

"We'll have a lot of fun doing this in retirement." That's another absolute NO. I can't remember it ever being much fun. It was so clear from the get-go that we were in over our heads, and that we did not have the kind of expertise we needed. More than anything, we needed good engineering. Managing a manufacturing process - even a small one - is a very complex operation, far beyond the ability of a couple of advertising guys, however well-intended. And some good financial management would certainly have been a plus!

I recall our jokingly asking one another, way back when, "How hard can it be?" A whole lot harder than we realized! I have read cautionary advice from wise men who counsel against ever investing in your hobby. And the foolhardiness of getting involved in businesses you know nothing about. I invite you to think of my gun company adventure as a cautionary tale. Indeed, as the wisdom of the ages counsels us, "The cobbler should stick to his last."

G G Carey

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