

Feathers

My local newspaper is against guns. Maybe the editor has somehow forgotten how we came to have a free press.

There are two enduring symbols of freedom in America, the pen and the gun. The pen has been terribly corrupted, if it was ever clean. Our founding fathers, though moved to protect freedom of the press, certainly did not put much trust in the writers and editors of America. Nor would Jefferson and Madison be impressed today, journalism schools notwithstanding. I can imagine John Adams raising an arched brow at the phrase, "news you can trust." Read the history of the media if you want to see how awful it once was. Washington called the newsmen of his day, "a set of infamous scribblers."

I've come to not expect much from the press. News reporting today is all about money. Turns out "just the facts" won't fill all the pages laden with newspaper ads or the hours of cable news broadcasting. Ted Turner's idea of 24 hour cable news might have been headed for oblivion on the eve of 9/11. The terrible hours of that day spawned a new American pastime, watching for the next televised disaster.

The pen has always been protected by a firearm. I don't recommend everyone own a gun, much less shoot one at somebody. But I do think more people should embrace the gun as a symbol of the people's right to say no to

an oppressive government. A gun is something no citizen should ever want to give up, even if he or she doesn't care to keep one around the house. It is a mark of resistance and a sign of strength. It doesn't matter whether you would fire it. It can be simply one of many hands raised in protest. But a rifle in your hand sticks up higher.



My aunt had a bird that puffed up its feathers when it wanted to show you who was boss. You can say the feathers only made the bird look bigger. I will tell you that bird seldom needed to engage.

I had a dream the other night. I was back in my old neighborhood as a teen delivering newspapers door to door. The streets had decayed and the homes were dilapidated. Many served as crack houses, as they are in reality used today. From far off, I heard explosions and screams. Down at the end of the block, I saw men and women running, away from what I wasn't sure. They wore the kind of blinders seen on draft horses long ago, to keep from worrying about what happens beyond a restricted view. I stood with my bag of newspapers over my shoulder and gazed around me. The same sidewalks that once were filled with kids at that time of day and fathers returning home from work were now dark and empty. In the dream I carried a gun to protect myself. So that I could deliver the newspapers.

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The Windswept Press
Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

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