

## From the Editor

In April of this year, I planned a short road trip. I invited my friend and neighbor Anne along, because “she loves to drive” (her words) and I don’t. Getting from Buffalo, NY, to Harrisburg, PA, which was my destination, is most easily accomplished by car. Plane service involves Rube Goldberg schedules and tiny, pretzel-less planes.

Anne accepted my invitation, and a week or so after it was issued, counter-proposed that, instead of leaving for Harrisburg on Monday, attending the 5th annual Pennsylvania State House Gun Rights Rally on Tuesday and heading home, we leave earlier and make a detour.

Well, more than a detour, actually. Anne proposed we head out on Saturday and drive to suburban Baltimore, where we could visit her sister, Martha, and Martha’s family. We could also deliver a large painting (actually a monotype) Anne had done some years earlier to Martha. Then we could head for Harrisburg on Monday, with a stop at a nursery run by a friend of Anne’s who was also a high school acquaintance of mine.

Not exactly the Lewis-Clark Expedition, but a fairly typical, All-American road trip, in which three state lines would be crossed.

We set out Saturday morning, in my dad’s station wagon, after determining that neither Anne’s nor my car would fit the artwork.

We drove into Pennsylvania and stopped for a break, then drove on until we needed another break and some gas. It rained most of the time, but the nearly 10 hour trip went by quickly enough.

While at Martha’s, her daughter took us to Ellicott City, a quaint little town (at the bottom of a very steep hill), where the first passenger railroad stopped. Anne bought a box of red velvet cupcakes at a bakery and I succumbed to the charms of a stuffed octopus for my dog, Rollie.

On Monday, we left Baltimore (it was

still raining) and head to the nursery, where the artwork was replaced by a couple of tree seedlings and a plant or two.

We rolled into Harrisburg a bit before we were able to check into the hotel, so drove around town which, while on a river instead of a lake like our hometown, was familiar and pleasant, and the rain stopped.

The next morning I got up, met former contributing editor Maria Heil, a Pennsylvania resident, for breakfast, and she and I headed over to the offices of State Sen. Dale Metcalfe (R-Cranberry), who organized this years—as well as the previous year’s—event.

Eventually we all went downstairs to the steps of the very beautiful Capitol building and were met by a sea of gun rights supporters, who, after the speechifying by myself and, among others, Marielle Thompson of Second Amendment Sisters, Suzanna Gratia Hupp, Larry Pratt and Wayne LaPierre, were planning to break into smaller groups and lobby their lawmakers.

The sun had finally come out and the crowd was receptive—in short, a good time was had by all.

I left Maria to lobby and walked the few blocks back to the hotel, where we checked out and headed home.

We made another gas stop and then drove for awhile, deciding to get off the highway in another quaint little town, where I looked over the wares in a bookstore and we had lunch at a tea shop.

We made it home around 8, and I delivered the octopus to Rollie, who, surprisingly, still has it today.

I wrote up a story on the rally for *Gun Week* and one for this magazine, and, frankly, mostly forgot about it.

The other day someone handed me a Sept. 29 report from Outdoor Life online which read in part,

“Don’t like being taxed to pay for wasteful government programs? Want to ensure your Second Amendment

Rights...? Willing to attend rallies and peacefully and legally demonstrate...”

“Then you—yes, you!—just might be a ‘terrorist’.”

Apparently, the Pennsylvania Office of Homeland Security had issued papers in April and June referring to the events in their “terrorism-alert” warnings.

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reported that both events (the gun rights rally and the June anti-tax rally) were peaceful and there were no evidence of militia groups in attendance.

When I backtracked to the original report on the Pennsylvania Office of Homeland Security (PAOHS) website, I found a 10-page PDF that mentioned the gun rights rally on Page 3, after describing the militia groups in detail. The report noted “Members of Pennsylvania militias are apparently planning to attend this event.”

That some group or groups of people were “planning” on attending, was apparently enough to trip the PAOHS’ spidey senses.

It would be laughable, if it wasn’t also a bit frightening, that the fact of an event like the Gun Rights Rally is enough to cause “alerts” of any kind, save perhaps traffic advisories, to be issued.

Most of the folks who attended the rally also went on into the Capitol buildings (a system was in place for those who needed to check their firearms) and spent time with their legislators.

I assume that most gave their names and place of residence, if not more detailed contact information.

There was nothing nefarious about the rally or the lobbying, just American citizens concerned enough about an issue to take the day to drive to Harrisburg.

Such foolishness as that promulgated by the PAOHS should be the subject of “alerts”—to citizens everywhere. Perhaps those alerts could be answered at the ballot box and at greater attendance at next year’s rally.

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