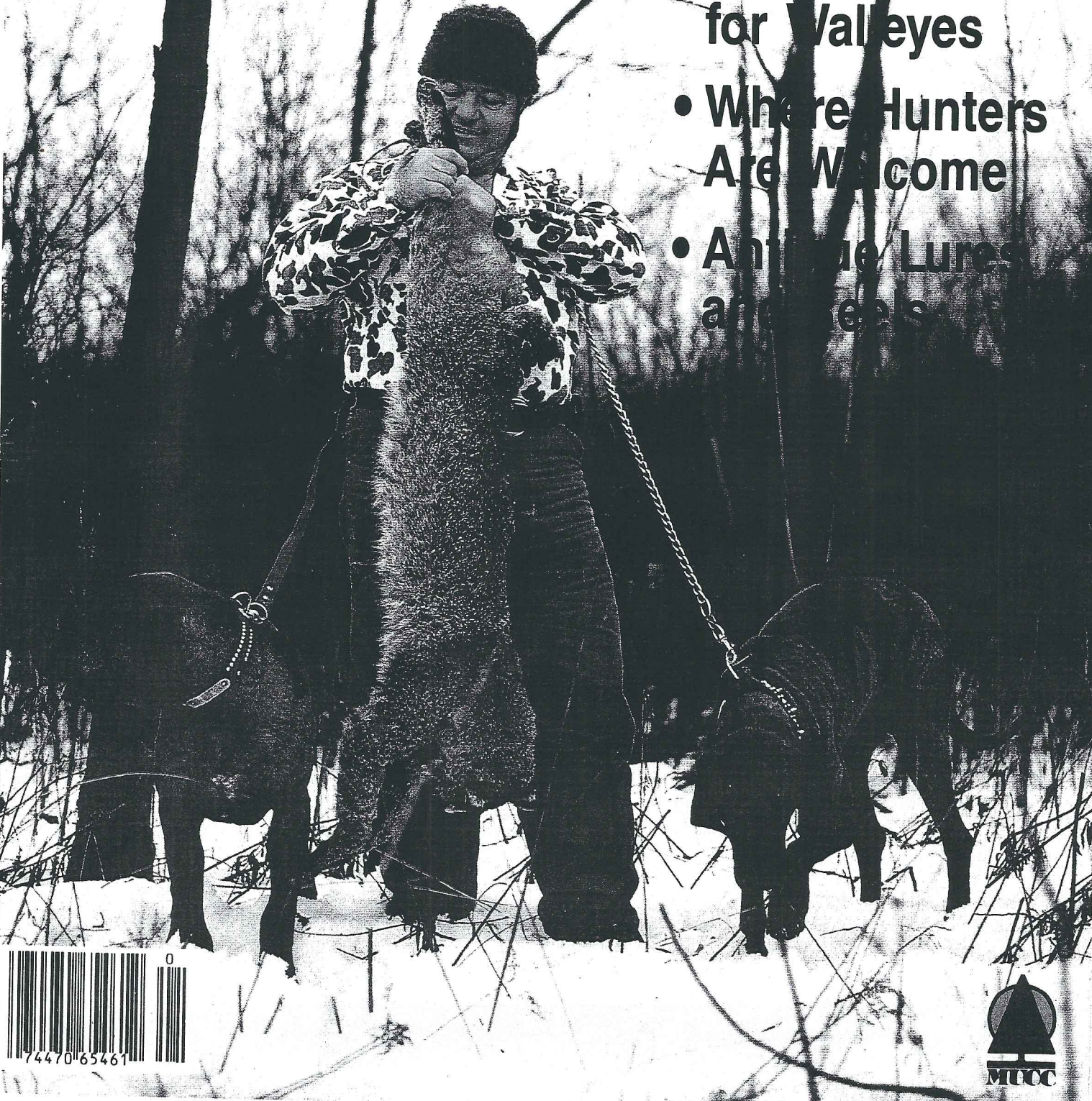


MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS

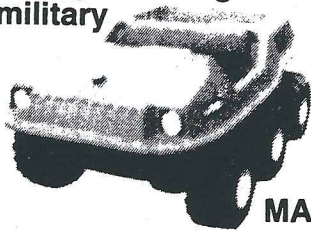
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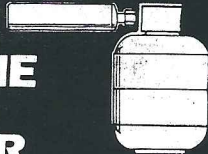
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By Tom Smith

Disarming America

Violent armed assaults have been a recurring problem in America for decades. But when an assault rifle is used—like the AK-47 used in both the Stockton, California, and Louisville, Kentucky, shootouts—the problem somehow takes on gigantic proportions. At the same time, the public's tolerance hits rock bottom. It is safe to say that this intolerance is caused, in large part, by the many misconceptions about assault rifles.

Packed to the gills with misconceptions, the public has almost turned the elimination of assault rifles into the goal itself. They will not simply leave it as an attempt to cure the problem. Remember, the problem is violent armed assaults—it is not the abolition of assault rifles. Usually, when the American people are confronted with a difficult problem, they respond with a solution. However, all too often they respond with a quick and easy solution that is inadequate to the task. Such is the case with the recent lobbying to ban assault rifle sales. This has all the practical effect of prescribing aspirin to a cancer victim. It is quick and easy, but it is woefully deficient in achieving the objective.

There is a huge paradox created, and looming overhead, when the government bans certain weapons when there simultaneously exists hordes of nearly identical, legally available weapons to assume the same niche. As it now stands, the current potential transgressor has a veritable potpourri of *legally* available powerful weapons to choose from. Banning assault rifles would be nothing more than a mere trivial inconvenience for our transgressor. If she/he wants to obtain an *illegal* assault rifle, that would not take much effort. But all they have to do is go down to the nearest sport store to obtain legal weapons that are arguably more powerful or more concealable than assault rifles.

Although you have probably seen many films showing the assault rifle being fired on automatic spewing out 600+ rounds per minute, the version is *not* available to the general public. It is only available to military forces, police units, or a person with a Class III federal firearms license (very difficult to obtain). The assault rifle that is available to the general public is a semiautomatic version that requires one pull of the trigger for each bullet fired. It is the same operation as, say, a Remington semiauto deer rifle (although the assault rifle can be illegally converted to an automatic, so can a semiautomatic deer rifle). Because assault rifles come in all

shapes and sizes, there really is not a difference in length or weight. The only real difference is that the assault rifle can hold more cartridges and it has a much more menacing—if not demonic—appearance. But a semiauto deer rifle fitted with an after-market box clip is the functional mirror image of an assault rifle. In fact, because of the variability of calibers, the sporting semiauto can be a lot more powerful than an assault rifle. No avid hunter will dispute the fact that a semiauto deer rifle calibered for 7mm Magnum or .300 Winchester Magnum or even .30-06 is a great deal more powerful than an assault rifle calibered for .223 or even .308. These powerful deer rifles are easily obtainable and could fill the void of banished assault rifles before you could blink your eye.

What about an automatic (or pump action) 12-gauge shotgun equipped with an 18-inch barrel? At close range, this is just about the most powerful weapon that anyone could ever dream of. And, of course, it is legally available right down your street. If you decided to become the next psychopath, and assault rifles have been banned, you probably would not even delve into the black market for an illegal assault rifle. You would simply stroll right down the road to your nearest sport shop to obtain a deer rifle or a short pump shotgun. In fact, you could probably reach into your own closet and pull one out.

And, lastly, what about pistols? Talk about concealability. In this aspect, pistols have assault rifles, deer rifles, and shotguns beat beyond dispute. If the circumstances were to dictate secrecy and concealability, then surely pistols would get the nod.

Pro-banners have consistently put forth the argument that assault rifles cannot be used for hunting animals, so they should be banned pursuant to the Gun Control Act of 1968 which mandates a sporting purpose for firearms. But this is an erroneous position entirely. First off, these particular weapons *can* be used to hunt game. There is no doubt about that. Assault rifles are of the same caliber as some of the hunting rifles that exist today (.223 and .308). And remember, they are not automatic, they are semiautomatic just like deer rifles. So if you rule that assault rifles don't have a sporting purpose, then you must also rule that many deer rifles calibered for either .223 or .308 do not have a legitimate sporting purpose either. And why should deer rifles be banned? The "sporting purpose" argument seems to crumble under its own weight.

MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS

But over and above the sporting purpose, assault rifles seem to have an intangible appeal quite like antiques and old stamp/coins, etc. There seems to be a prevalent fascination with military forces and their equipment. Some people like to collect military equipment and some would just like to own the "current issue military rifle" of a particular nation. Others would simply like them for investment purposes.

Many people are finding assault rifles desirable. It is clear that they are not just for psychopaths.

It is well known that gun restrictions are not a panacea. To present an analogy that really is a microcosm of this whole assault rifle debate, one need only look at how ban-

ning certain weapons does not usually correspond with a decrease in violent assaults. The analogy concerns Detroit and Washington, D.C. Detroit has been the U.S. murder capital for the last few years based on per capita homicides. Last year Washington overtook Detroit for the first time. The important fact to note is that Washington has had a handgun restriction for years! As you are now aware, this illogical outcome is possible because the transgressor need only avail her/himself with the "next best thing" or "better thing"—and it certainly looks as if they have done that. So let's assume that we can

impose a federal statute prohibiting sales of assault rifles across the entire U.S. Is this going to prevent or even deter incidents like the Stockton massacre or even decrease violent assaults? Hardly.

Although the American populace is warranted in its emotional outburst of rage over irrational acts such as the Stockton and Louisville massacres, the focus on their energies should not be brought to bear on banning assault rifles. If there is a "right" answer to all of this, it surely will not be quick and easy, and it surely does not reside with assault rifle restrictions. It simply does not accomplish the desired goal.

Wildlife Art Expo Scheduled January 12-14

Daniel Smith, Ducks Unlimited International Artist of the Year, and over 60 of the nation's leading wildlife artists will be featured in the Northern Wildlife Art Expo to be held at the Lansing Center in the Capital City January 12-14.

Wildlife art buffs are invited to stroll through the aisles to view original wildlife paintings, limited edition prints, photography, carvings, and other artworks, all of which will be for sale.

A portion of the admissions will be donated to the Michigan State University Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to provide medical care for injured wildlife.

A highlight of the exposition will be presentations of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs' Wildlife Encounters program. Using live birds of prey, the program is designed to help increase citizens' knowledge and appreciation of Michigan's wildlife resources. All of the specimens used in the program are permanently disabled birds that cannot be returned to the wild and are housed at the MSU Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.

Premiering January 12 during opening night ceremonies will be "Shoreline Sentinel," the official exposition print, a depiction of a peregrine falcon standing watch over the northern Michigan shoreline as rendered by featured guest artist Smith.

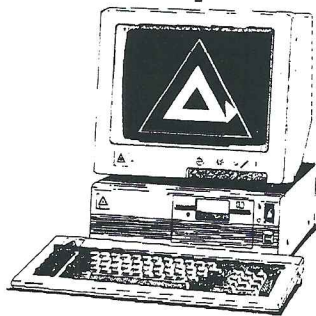
Hosts for the exposition will be Jane Aldrich and David Andrews, news anchors from WLNS Channel 6, Lansing.

Admission charges will be \$5 for adults and \$3.50 for senior citizens. Children under 12 will be admitted free.

For further information, contact Hawk Feathermeyer and Company, Box 54, Dansville, Mich 48819-0054, phone 517/623-6644.

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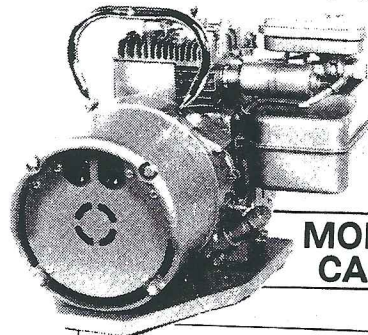


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If you have any questions regarding making a bequest in your will or adding a codicil, please write or call for more information:

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