

## THE MOON RISES OVER GLOUCESTER

by Timothy J. Muise

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Back in the early 1980's the Unification Church, popularly known as the "moonies", came to Gloucester, Massachusetts. If you want to piss off a population of Catholic, blue collars (mostly fisherman and their families) the first thing you should do is purchase the Villa that used to be Cardinal Cushing's; well that is what they did first. If you want to throw fuel on that fire you should then purchase an East Gloucester landmark, Bob's Clam Shack, and turn it into your new tuna fishing headquarters: that is what they did next. The citizens of Gloucester were madder than hornets leaving a batted nest!

The media did not help matters much. They ran stories in the local paper about how the moonies were kidnapping and brainwashing children to join their cult. The mass hysteria spread and anti-moonie coalitions were formed, the city council convened special meetings to discuss how to deal with the moonie problem, and folks started picketing out in front of "our" Bob's Clam Shack. One of my best friends' mom was the leader of the anti-moonie coalition and used to ask us to help man the picket lines with her.

Now my friends and I were knock-about Gloucester kids who were growing up too fast for our own good. The hysteria did not effect us too much, as we had our own ways to pass the time - not too many of which would have been approved by our parents - but we were Gloucester men through and through and if these moonies presented a threat to the homefront then we were going to deal with the issue in our own way. Oh the exuberance of youth!

We all purchased high powered sling shots: called "Wrist Rockets". My uncle used to shoot muskets so I had my cousin steel a few hundred .52 caliber musket balls for us. Across the street from Bob's Clam Shack - the enemy headquarters we liked to call it - was a huge hill with granite boulders, briar patches, and paths through heavy bush cover. The top of the hill was about 50 yards high and the same distance away from the Clam Shack. Our platoon of miscreants; Barry, Clarky, Bolla, Stone, and Zombie, as well as myself, took our positions on the top of the hill. We decided that we wanted coordinated fire upon this target so Barry would call the cadence; Ready (we would all load a lead ball), Aim (we would all pull back the surgical tubes of the sling shot with the ball squeezed between our finger and thumb in the leather patch), and then Fire! We would let the lead orbs fly with the proper arc toward the huge target. A few seconds later you would hear a succession of quick "phwacks" upon the building and if we were lucky some glass shattering. I have to tell you that after each volley we were laughing so hard that it hurt!

No strangers to the Gloucester Police Department (the East Gloucester Patrolman "Pete-the-Hick" was always looking to pinch the Williams Court Crew) we knew that we had to limit the time we spent lobbing volleys at the moonies. After four or five coordinated assaults Barry would make the call: Fire at Will!, and we would launch lead balls as fast as we could for 30 or 40 seconds, then the call to "fall back" would be announced and we would use our knowledge of the surrounding woods to escape into the night. Bob Segar would have been proud of our night moves! We knew if we did this every night we would have Pete-the-Hick waiting for us so we picked random nights at random times. We thought we were pretty slick.

Through some of our nefarious activities we ended up with a case of nine volt transistor radio batteries. We tried to sell them but did not have much luck. Stone thought they might make good sling shot ammo so we took a few up to the back field where our crew hung out and launched a few with the sling shots. They were excellent ammo and even made a cool buzzing sound as they flew through the air. We knew our next covert assault upon the moonies would be done using these formidable projectiles.

Our friend Clarky never had much luck. He sawed off a finger making a shelf, fell in the bushes taking a leak while drink one night and nearly froze to death until his neighbors heard him snoring in their front yard, and immediately broke his leg when his parents bought him a nice new dirt bike. He still had a small cast and was walking with a cane the night of the now infamous battery assault upon Bob's Clam Shack. This would prove to be very unfortunate for him but the cause of years of belly laughs for the rest of us.

With our positions set at the top of the hill Barry made the first call: Ready, Aim, Fire! The first volley was on the money and made so much more noise than the lead balls. Now this was an assault! Volley two: Ready, Aim, Fire! This time it sounded like we got one of their trucks in the parking lot as well, an added bonus. As we were preparing for volley three flashlight beams appeared about 30 feet down the hill face. We did not know who it was but we knew what to do. Barry called out: "Let em' have it!", and we fired a volley of nine volts toward the light beams. He then said, "Fire one more volley and fall back!" We all buzzed batteries toward the direction of the light and then headed for our planned meeting spot up by East Gloucester School. When we arrived, a bit winded but charged by adrenaline, we took a head count and Clarky was missing. We waited but he did not show. We could not go back as those lights may have been Pete-the-Hick and his calvary and we could not yell for him as that would give away our position. We thought we should just head back to Williams Court - our home base - and see if he showed.

We all waited down the Court until about 2:AM. We were out of beer and patience so we all headed home. The next morning Barry and I got up early (I had to wake Barry up as he was not known for early rising) and we went up to Clarky's house. Clarky was laying on the couch in his screen porch, cuts all over his body, a dark red mark on his cheek, and a bit of a shiner under one eye. When he told us what happened we could not help but crack up. He had been taken hostage by a moonie recon squad! It was a moonie "strike force" that had climbed that hill with the flash lights. Clarky's bum leg had caused him to take a spill upon retreat and the moonies captured his dumb ass! They dragged him through the briars, bumping him off of huge granite boulders and brought him to the interrogation chamber within the confines of Bob's Clam Shack. They slapped him around a bit and demanded the names of his cohorts. I'm sad to report that Clarky had the spine of a jelly fish, and I am certain he gave us all up, but we were fearless in those days and just could not stop laughing about the fact that Clarky was captured and tortured by moonies! You could not make this shit up!

The moonies had had enough of our night time sorties. They had flown in the current world tae kwon do champion, who was Korean just like the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, and hired him to head their security force. It gives me no end of great pleasure to know that the current world tae kwon do champ had to fend off nine volt batteries being launched at him at about 150 miles per hour! Bet that shit don't happen in Seoul! We had to change our tactics, cause you know that good Gloucester men don't give up, but eventually everyone in town learned that these poor souls were harmless. They assimilated to Gloucester life and nowadays fisherman do business with them without any thought of those early days.

Clarky was no worse for wear and we got endless hours of recreation breaking his balls about the debauche. He later met a tragic end, as I told you he had no luck, but the story of his antics keeps a bright memory alive for all who knew him. The City of Gloucester has many problems, but it breeds strong men. Some men like myself were misguided, but you cannot take away our pride for the city we grew up in. We felt there was a real threat and we handled it our own way. That is the real Gloucester spirit which I see dying in the fishing industry losses of today. If I was a young man in Gloucester today my sling shot would be aimed at the headquarters of NOAA. Who would they hire to stop us?

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IN MEMORY OF:

Timothy Clark

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