

Fastest Jewish Gun in the West

Frank Gallop's 1966 spoof recording, "The Ballad of Irving," left most people laughing heartily. ("He came from the old Bar Mitzvah spread, / With a 10-gallon yarmulke on his head. / He always followed his mother's wishes. / Even on the range he used two sets of dishes.") What nearly no one knew then and few know now is that there was a real Jewish gunfighter in the Old West, and he ranked considerably higher than the "142nd fastest." In researching the Old West over many years I often came upon Jewish merchants, which was no surprise. There was the shopkeeper and tailor Jacob Davis of Virginia City, who fashioned the blue-denim work pants with copper rivets that Levi Strauss of San Francisco marketed; the tobacconist Adolph Sutro, who built a stamp mill and then dug a tunnel through Mt. Davidson to haul ore from the mines of Virginia City; the peddler Michael Goldwasser, who arrived in Arizona with next to nothing and laid the foundation for what would become the Goldwater chain of department stores; and many others of similar business acumen. There was also Jim Levy, who traded only in bullets.

Levy began life not in a ghetto in Eastern Europe but in Dublin, Ireland. In 1850, at the age of eight, he immigrated with his parents to the United States. He would spend the next ten years in New York before heading west to the mining camps of California. Levy was not a good Jewish boy. He behaved more like his Irish buddies, drinking, gambling, fighting, and facing death with cool indifference. He became the only known Jewish gunfighter in the Old West.

Lured by the silver strikes, Levy crossed the Sierras to Nevada and the mining camp of Pioche. The "chief" of Pioche was Morgan Courtney, a fearless gunfighter and, like Levy, an immigrant from Ireland. Although two years older than Courtney, Levy looked upon the Kerryman Court-

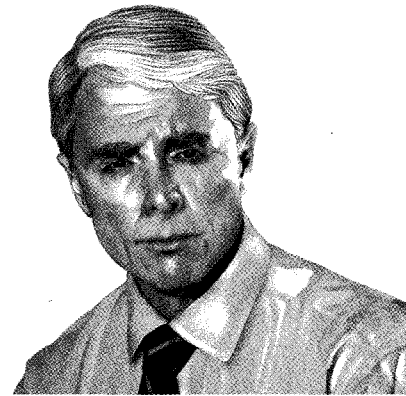
ney as a hero to be emulated. By the time Levy met Courtney, the Kerryman had already killed four men in gunfights. He would kill two more before he himself was shot to death.

Levy's first deadly confrontation occurred in 1871 and involved feared shootist Mike Casey, who had earlier mortally wounded wealthy Pioche businessman Tom Gorson in a gunfight. As Gorson lay dying he bequeathed all his holdings to his friends and \$5,000 to the man who avenged his death by killing Casey. Hoping to bait Casey into a fight, Levy went about Pioche's saloons declaring that Casey had gunned down Gorson "without giving him a show." Casey soon caught up with Levy in a saloon and called on him to draw. Levy protested that he was unarmed but said, "I will go and fix myself and when I come back I will come back fighting."

Levy later found Casey standing on the sidewalk talking with a friend, Dave Neagle. Yelling "Casey, you son-of-a-bitch, I'm here!" Levy closed on Casey and fired at near point-blank range. The bullet hit Casey in the head. Levy fired again and a second round hit Casey in the neck. Levy then turned his weapon on Neagle, but the latter had drawn his own revolver and fired a round that struck Levy in the jaw. By then a sheriff's deputy was on the scene to put a halt to the gunplay.

Casey died from his wounds, but Levy recovered, although he was left with a sinister-looking scar. He got the \$5,000 and also was released from any criminal prosecution when a preliminary hearing determined that he had told Casey that he would be coming after him—fair warning in the Old West.

Levy notched his second kill a little more than a year later when he shot Tom Ryan in a dispute over a Pioche mining claim. Then, 1876 found Levy in Deadwood, and the next year in Cheyenne. It was in the Wyoming



town that Levy was involved in his most famous gunfight. After losing a high-stakes hand at the poker table, Levy declared he had been cheated. Renowned gunfighter Charley Harrison, who raked in the pot, loudly declared that the Irish were always poor losers.

Levy leaped to his feet and drew his revolver. Harrison spread his hands, saying that he was unarmed but would get himself healed and meet Levy in the street. Excited saloon patrons began placing bets. Harrison was a heavy favorite. Within minutes Levy and Harrison were facing each other in front of Frenchy's saloon on Eddy Street. Harrison's draw was lightning quick, but his first shot missed. Levy's struck Harrison in the chest, and he fell to the snow-covered street, firing another round on his way down. Levy ran to Harrison and fired another bullet into the prostrate gunfighter. Harrison hung on for two weeks before dying.

Levy spent the late 1870's in Leadville but was in Tombstone by 1880. With partners Dick Clark, Wyatt Earp, and Doc Holliday he staked three water claims, which in that arid region could rival veins of ore in value. Levy did not figure in any of Tombstone's many gunfights but would make news on a visit to nearby Tucson in 1882. A dispute in a faro game led Levy to exclaim that he would shoot the eyes out of dealer John Murphy. Fair warning. A short while later when Levy emerged from the Palace Hotel, Murphy, gun in hand, was standing in the street waiting for him. Levy never knew what hit him. The fastest Jewish gun in the West was 40 years old. <C>

The Obama Presidency

The Triumph of (Lots of) Experience Over (a Little) Hope?

by Doug Bandow

It has been an awful two decades. Say what you will about Ronald Reagan, he did not leave people feeling depressed, even hopeless. Then came four years of George H.W. Bush—an honorable man, but hardly an inspiration. And his tax and regulatory policies were largely indistinguishable from those of the Democrats.

Then we endured eight years of the Clintons. Bill was embarrassing enough, devoting perhaps too much attention to the White House intern program. This freed Hillary to spend her time attempting to socialize the medical system and punish the Clintons' enemies. Given his nonsensical interventions and wars (Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo) and the mere presence of the atrocious Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, January 20, 2001, could not come quickly enough.

That was before President George W. Bush and his neo-conservative Greek chorus took us on a glorious crusade to Mesopotamia while letting Osama bin Laden get away; before the President centralized control over education and created a vast new welfare program, the Medicare drug benefit; before the White House baptized the elections in Palestine that brought Hamas to power; before the President followed Louis XIV in declaring "*L'État, c'est moi*," claiming the right to declare an American arrested in America an "enemy combatant" beyond the reach of the Constitution; and before the President and his Republican friends in Congress increased domestic spending as fast as Lyndon Johnson did.

After almost eight years of George W. Bush, who in America doesn't hope for "change"?

Almost anyone, other than the crazy warmonger from Arizona, would offer a positive contrast to President Bush just by voicing a couple of coherent sentences. But how likely is Barack Obama to put real flesh on the promise of change and hope? Alas, the passion and eloquence with which he speaks do not make up for the absence of substance. Change from a mixed economy could just as likely mean socialism as capitalism. Change from crazed neoconservative interventionism overseas could as easily mean loopy liberal interventionism as conservative non-interventionism.

Still, a glimmer of hope remains—but only a glimmer.

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Obama is no dummy. Of course, many smart presidents have done lots of dumb things. Intelligence is no bar to ideological inanity. Still, consider Bill Clinton. He did not like having to care what the financial markets thought of his economic policies, but he moderated the Democratic Party's worst excesses to avoid ruining America's financial reputation. That is more than we can say for George W. Bush and his "permanent Republican majority," who together turned a budget surplus into a growing deficit.

Obama taught at the University of Chicago Law School. Granted, mere proximity to "Law and Economics" professors does not guarantee anything. But at least through osmosis he should have assimilated some rational thoughts about economics and policy. How could anyone attend the university home of Milton Friedman and not gain at least a passing appreciation for the free market?

Occasional glimpses of rational policy have peeked out from beneath the blizzard of stupid campaign promises designed to win the Democratic Party nomination. There have been hints that Obama understands the value of educational choice and genuine Social Security reform. As an Illinois state senator, he was one of the few Democrats to voice opposition to the Iraq invasion. He has offered occasional criticisms of the Bush administration's war on civil liberties in the name of fighting terrorism.

And, yes, there is that basic assumption: How on earth could it get any worse? As Joe Biden reminded us, Barack Obama takes a shower, dresses well, and sounds good when he speaks. What more is needed to improve upon the present situation?

As George W. Bush so dramatically taught us, it is very dangerous to assume that things could not get worse. And there are many reasons to think that they might. First, there is the overarching hubris, the apparently sincere belief of Obama and many of his followers that he really is different from any other candidate ever to appear on an American ballot, and that he has been uniquely anointed to transform the United States. Lots of politicians have spouted lots of nonsense over the years, but Obama's rhetoric is more silly than most.

There is also the informal, unofficial Obama campaign. He came to represent the fondest hopes and dreams of the left. That is not all bad—for the most part, the left wants us out of Iraq and denies that the executive branch has the power to imprison and torture people at will. But