

Brownie Reaves' Potato Gun

April 1997

Last December 31st we gathered with friends in Cumming, Georgia to celebrate the beginning of 1997. During the festivities, Brownie Reaves, the preacher for the South Forsyth church, unsheathed his famous potato gun. "What," you ask, "is a potato gun?"

A potato gun is a homemade firearm made from PVC pipe. The bullet, an Idaho spud, is stuffed down the "barrel"; hair spray is squirted into the breech, then ignited with a match and "f-o-o-m!" – the potato is skyward.

Well, Brownie and his cohorts began launching potatoes into the midnight sky. The darkness prevented us from seeing the soaring spuds, so we waited expectantly for the resulting "thud" as the potatoes returned to earth.

F-o-o-m! Thud. F-o-o-m! Thud. After a couple of launches our hostess became somewhat concerned as potatoes began to rain down amid her guests. She nervously started for the house but stopped short when reassured that "nothing could possibly go wrong."

It doesn't take a physics major to know that what goes up will come down according to the angle with which it is launched. "F-o-o-m!" went the next spud straight up into the air. Everyone covered their heads and waited: one second ... two seconds ... three seconds ...

Thud! The plummeting potato scored a bull's eye upon ... our hostess. Surely there must be a lesson or two in this crazy episode.

1) *Unusual things happen randomly.* God's will is not evident in every happenstance. Some people are quick to identify quirky or unusual things as a sign from God. Saul concluded when David entered Keilah, a walled city, that "God has delivered him into my hand ..." (1 Sam 23:7). But this was not true; it was merely wishful thinking. Our hostess just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. No message from God intended.

2) *Be careful where you aim; you might hit somebody.* It is difficult to anticipate the effect of our words and actions. David's request for Ahimelech's help resulted in the entire city of Nob being wiped out by a deranged Saul (1 Sam 21:1-9; 22:9-23). He didn't intend for this to happen, but it happened nevertheless.

3) *Use all your faculties.* Shooting off the potato gun at night robbed us of vision. Sin is usually the end result of many choices that have gradually blinded us or weakened our resolve. Let's avoid situations which make sin easy.