This very cool story was sent to me by site member bhauer.

**A COUPLE KNIVES, A CASUAL JOKE AND AN IPHONE EQUALS A RIFLE OWNED BY GARY COOPER.**

I had a couple of collectable knives my father had given me from his collection in the 70's. They were too valuable to use for hunting or anything other than display. Recently I had become interested in Griffin & Howe rifles but I was reluctant to purchase one until I made the decision to sell the knives giving me the funds to make a purchase without getting into trouble with my wife. I had been looking at the small selection of Griffin & Howe rifles available for sale on various websites for a few weeks. One that stood out and was priced more reasonably than most was for sale by John Mead on his Dead Rat Ranch website. He had purchased the rifle in 2012 from the estate of Bob Peterson of Beverly Hills California who had owned Peterson Publishing. Bob had used the rifle on his ranch according to John Mead.

The photos of the rifle were gorgeous and price seemed very fair compared to other Griffin & Howe rifles so I made a deal with John and was excited to receive it the following week. I bragged to my friends that it was a "two-knife gun", since I only had to sell two knives to raise the funds to buy the rifle. Actually, I even had a little left over to buy some ammo.

The rifle was a bit unusual for its 30-06 caliber. It had a 26 inch "medium weight" barrel and an additional push-button trigger guard safety, another rare feature. I didn't even know about the secondary safety until I received the rifle. Another interesting feature I wasn't aware of until I received the rifle was an inlaid silver oval in the bottom of the stock with the engraved initials "GC". I didn't think anything of it at the time and was more interested in the function of the action and the highly figured wood.

The rifle was extremely accurate both with the attached Zeiss scope and without using the Lyman peep sight. The only disappointment was the safety on the trigger guard wasn't functioning properly. I took the rifle to a local gun smith and they said they could repair it easily but it would be a few weeks before they could get to it. When I got the call that it was finished I made the trip across town to pick it up. Two of the gunsmiths were there when I arrived and they spent several minutes showing me the extraordinary features and workmanship that was put into pre-war Griffin & Howe rifles. As I started to leave, the gun smith who had repaired the safety asked jokingly, who's initials were GC? He said, "Gary Cooper?" I replied, "yea, either Gary Cooper or George Carlin." We both laughed and I left the shop with the rifle.

The following weekend brought lousy weather. Disappointed that I couldn't take the newly acquired rifle out to shoot and with nothing better to do, I was sat in my living room watching old movies and perusing the Internet on my IPhone. I was reading the history of Griffin & Howe on a website when I stumbled onto something that Interesting. They had been a successful business since 1923 attracting celebrity clients such as Earnest Hemingway, Kermit Roosevelt, Clark Gable, and Gary Cooper. I had no idea Gary Cooper and Clark Gable were avid hunters. I soon learned, in fact that Gary Cooper and Earnest Hemingway were great hunting buddies and best of friends. This was very Interesting to me. When I was a teenager I was fortunate enough to guide Pat Hemingway, (Earnest Hemingway's son), on a turkey hunt near my home in 1981.

I was not excited yet, knowing the odds were pretty slim that the GC on my rifle stood for Gary Cooper. But I continued my detective work of Griffin and Howe and expanded into searches of Gary Cooper, still on my IPhone. Within an hour I came across a candid photo of Gary Cooper in his home cleaning a rifle. To his left was a gun cabinet with several shotguns and and rifles. One of the rifles caught my attention. It had the same characteristics and features as my rifle including the heavy 26 inch barrel and a dark area on the side of the stock at the point where the checkering ends above the magazine. Now this was becoming more intriguing but I still believed it was unlikely it was the same rifle.

It did, however, motivate me enough to put a call into Bob Beach of Griffin & Howe's archives and research department. Bob called me back a few days later and said that in fact there was no sales record matching the serial number of my rifle. However there is record in 1936, (the same year the rifle was made and sold), of G. Cooper returning the rifle, presumably to have some modifications or repairs. It is unknown why but it's possible he had the barrel re-bored from the original 220 swift to the current 30-06 caliber. With this bit of information all of the pieces of the puzzle started to fall into place. He had me check the side of the barrel to see if the original engraving of the caliber had been removed and replaced with 30-06. In fact it had. We do not know for sure if it was Gary Cooper who made this change or if it was done by Bob Paterson. But we do know that Cooper brought it back for some kind of service shortly after he purchased it.

A few days later I found even more photographs of Gary Cooper in his gun room at home. He was different ages in all of them but in each the same rifle with the 26 inch barrel stood out. The best photos I have come across to date is of Gary Holding the rifle. These photos were taken in 1937. In one of the photos, after zooming in on the portion of the stock behind the pistol grip and comparing it to a photo of my rifle at the same angle I have identified perfectly matching patterns in the wood wood grain. These photos show even more detail with the matching Zeiss Scope and the Lyman peep sight below it.

I'm still looking for more information on Gary Cooper and his firearms. I'd love to find a photo with Earnest Hemingway and Gary Cooper together with this rifle. No luck so far but looking forward to the next blizzard.