

## Minutemen Idea Grew Out of Duck Hunt in 1959

By MAURICE CARROLL

Ten men went duck hunting in 1959, and somewhere along the way, they came up with the idea for the Minutemen.

"We got to talking," Robert Bolivar DePugh recalled later, "about how bad off the country would be in case of invasion and how such a group as ours could become a guerrilla band."

Mr. DePugh went on to head the organization—or, more properly, the concept—that resulted.

The Minutemen operate with such secrecy and absence of administration that they keep no rosters and have no command structure. There is no apparent way for one Minuteman to recognize another Minuteman, unless they should happen to be members of the same band.

The first sign of the movement in the New York area was an advertisement published in The New York Times in October, 1961.

### Flurry of Publicity

"Join the Minutemen," it read. "An organization of loyal Americans dedicated to the preservation of both national and individual freedom. Help put real strength in civilian defense. Pledge yourself and your rifle to a free America . . ."

It was about this time that the Minutemen's field maneuvers with bazookas, camouflage uniforms, Jeeps and other such military paraphernalia got a flurry of publicity across the nation.

The subsequent investigation indicated that there was more sound than substance to the Minutemen.

Some of them put on a highly publicized field maneuver in California in 1963, but otherwise they seemed more often sensed than sighted. A week or so be-

### Structureless Concept Seems Founded on Secrecy and More Sound Than Fury

fore last year's New Jersey elections, for instance, the State Attorney General ordered an investigation of what he said was an armed group "similar" to the Minutemen. But if his investigators ever came upon a rifle-toting extremist, the fact has never come out in public.

### Manufacturer of Compounds

Mr. DePugh himself proved a willing and articulate subject for interviews. He heads his own company, Biolab Products, a manufacturer of compounds for animals, in Norborne, Mo. The way he told it, the shadowy nature of the Minuteman structure was deliberate.

"A definite chain of command is a weakness in a strictly underground movement," he said once.

And, on another occasion: "All we ask is the name and address of the unit leader—and that can be a pseudonym. I have no way of knowing exactly how many members we have, except that each group is supposed to have a minimum of five and a maximum of 15. So I strike an average of eight."

He claimed in 1961 that total membership was about 25,000, in 40 states. But in California, where a Minuteman spokesman said there were 2,000 on call, state investigators said there were a few hundred at best.

Still, the California Attorney General, Thomas C. Lynch, issued a report in 1963 calling the Minutemen and four other extremist groups "a threat to the peace and security" of the state. Minutemen are expected to

train themselves in guerrilla warfare so that they can carry on the fight if the country is taken over.

"We are making good use of the proven military axiom that the best defense is a good offense," says a pamphlet to prospective recruits. "The bomb shelters, which we are building, are not merely holes to hide in. Each one is being well camouflaged, stocked and fortified to serve as a 'center of resistance' for a future underground army."

The pamphlet also suggests that the Minutemen hope to forestall a take-over instead of simply keeping in trim to overthrow the overtakers.

### Mao's Book Quoted

Among their aims, according to the pamphlet, are:

" . . . To resist and expose the spread of Communist influence and propaganda within our own national boundaries . . . to investigate by means of our own secret memberships the possible infiltration of Communist sympathizers into American organizations of government, business, labor, religion and education . . . to detect and expose waste, corruption or disloyalty in any American enterprise or activity that might subvert the defense effort . . . to resist by all legal means the passage of laws which regulate the private ownership of firearms or which detract from the individual's ability to defend his own family and personal property . . ."

Mr. DePugh quoted Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese Communist leader, in a copyrighted 1961 essay on "The Guerrilla."

Mao, he said, had put it this way: "Enemy attacks, we retreat; enemy halts, we harass; enemy tires, we attack; enemy retreats, we pursue."