

Part 2 - Episodes and Memories

Guns

For most of my life, I was fascinated with the aura surrounding guns. As a youngster, I loved my cowboy cap gun pistols. Pretending to be Roy Rodgers, Gene Autry, or Wild Bill Hickock was much more prevalent in my young brain than learning multiplication tables. I was encouraged to hunt legally and safely.

Aim, Squeeze, Fire. Father was the teacher and not very patient.

My Daisy BB lever action rifle was the highlight of my days. Painting it several times, ending in silver metal and green stocks. It had a long magazine for BBs and a lever spring cock to load air. A BB was loaded into the chamber and then aimed at sparrows or mice or trees.

Never point at anyone with the chamber loaded. Remember, "All guns are loaded until proven otherwise." Learn the rules.

The Daisy lasted at least 10 years. With an unloaded chamber and magazine,, Brother and I would shoot puffs of air at each other and if we could feel the air, fall over dead.

Once, maybe twice, I had to hide for a while when a BB would ricochet and put a hole in a neighbor's window. That resulted in darting to safety and hiding the gun... "Who Me?", when asked. "Must have been Randy on the next block."



From the Chapter "The Farm" in Part 1, the reader can see some of my exploits with the Daisy BB gun.

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Next came a single shot .22 caliber bolt action Stevens rifle for my 12th Christmas. The sight was open with a difficult method of adjusting. Finally, through a lot of target practice, I learned the distances where I needed to raise the barrel and lower the barrel to hit the target. It always tended to the left a fraction though.

Rabbit hunting on the Caprock east of Roswell was a joy with Father and Brother. Father challenged me to not mess up the body of the cotton tails sitting there thinking they were hiding. An eyeshot was needed to harvest the meat without damage. I became very proficient. Winter was the best time for cotton tails. Summertime, they sometimes had worms. Jackrabbits were a lot of fun. They would run about 100 yards away, sit, and look at us. Long-range shooting and shooting while running were skills of luck sometimes.

The gamebird world was beckoning when Father gave me a brand new 16 gauge pump action long barrel shotgun. I was about 14 at the time and we went dove, quail, and pheasant hunting. I could not hit the side of a barn. The dove remained fully feathered. The blue quail were a different story and my favorite bird to hunt. They like to stay on the ground and can outrun humans for short distances.

The coveys of quail, sometimes over a hundred birds, would start running on the flat lands of grass and mesquites. We would see them, get as close as we could in the car, and jump out quickly. When organized so we did not shoot each other, we would start chasing them. Usually, a large bunch would flush and fly away from us. Hitting a bird going away at a shorter distance is easier than hitting a 60mph dove flying left to right.

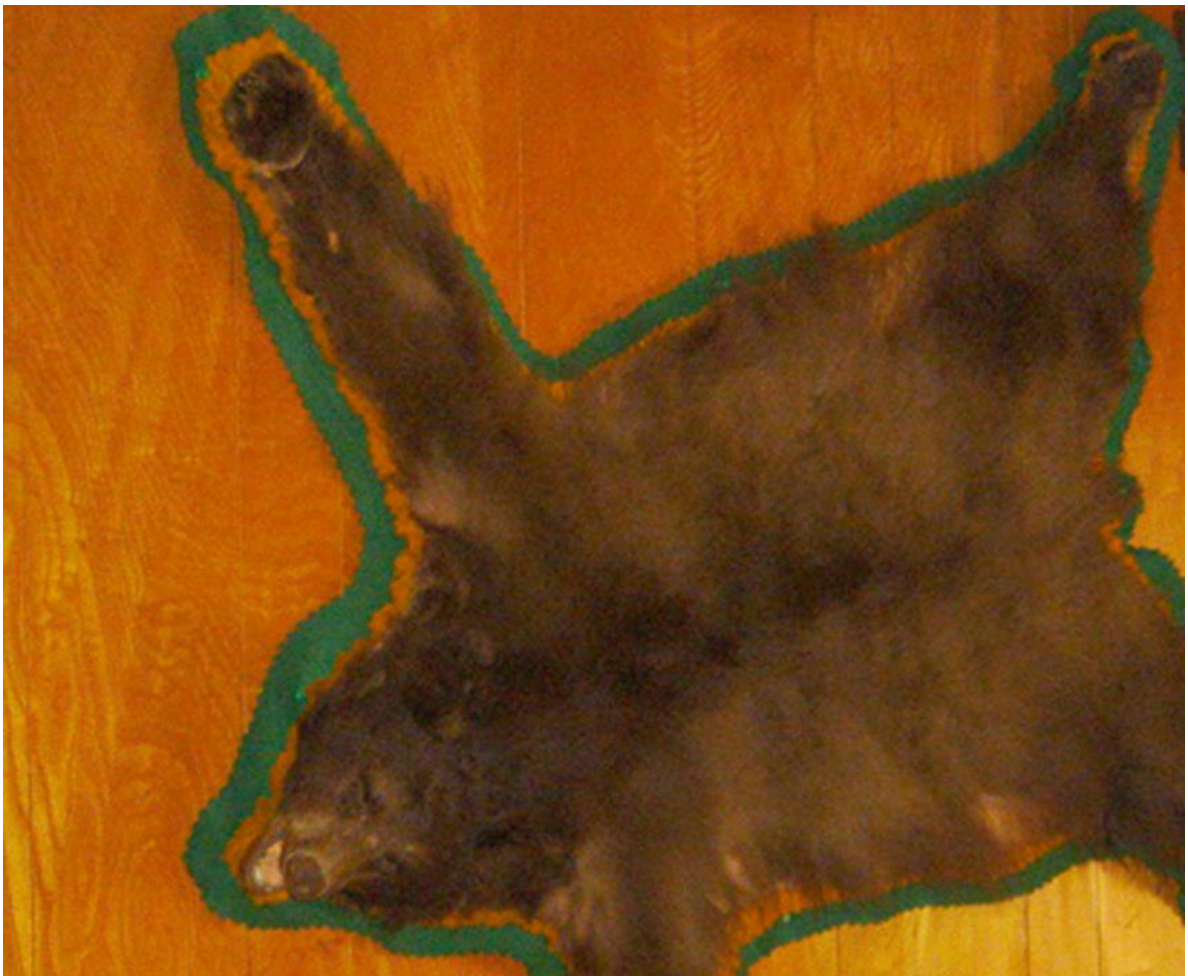
The coveys would split and each of us would pursue different groups. Split them some more and start flushing singles. We managed to get quite a few good quail meals out of these trips, very close to Roswell.

I would go hunting mule deer every winter with Father and his friends. We would camp out in the foothills of the Capitan mountains, usually on the rocky south side. Father gave me a 30-06 "30 'aught' 6" Springfield. It was a bolt action with a 4-5 round internal magazine and peep sights. I sighted it in at 200 yards because we often had to shoot long distances across a canyon. I fired at deer a few times, but I never hit any in New Mexico.

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Father and I went west of the Capitans one year on a big mountain. We were working around the mountain watching for any movement. I was above and he was lower. He fires. I cannot see him or anything moving. He loudly whispers, "Be still ... a bear is coming up toward us." Holy crap! A bear! Father fires again. A few seconds later, he yells, "I got him!"

I slid down through the brush and shale. I found them. Father was shaking with shock and excitement. A bucket list event for him. The black bear was small but indeed deceased. We field dressed it, but that bothered Father. He kept saying it was like dressing out a dog. I do not believe that we ate any of the meat, but the head and skin for a bear rug was what he wanted. We could not damage the skin, so I had to put it over my shoulders and walk it back to camp. I never wanted to go bear hunting again.



Hunting ended for me when I moved to Texas. I thought I wanted some venison, so I harvested a whitetail doe around 1970 in Comfort, TX. There was no sport in that. It was like shooting a pet.

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The US Army introduced me to the M-1, M-14, and the M-16. I achieved expert in all three. I inherited my father's .38 snub revolver and purchased a KelTec .32 semi for protection. I also bought an 18-inch, 20-gauge pump shotgun for protection, but I sold it recently without firing a shot. I have had a Concealed Handgun License since the mid 90's.

I believe in the ownership of guns within reason. Weapons such as those primarily to be used to kill humans as fast as can be done belong in the military not in the hands of civilians. However, I am pessimistic that the USA has the will nor the methods to control these high-powered, rapid-firing killing machines.