

First Real Guns

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Dale, my brother, and I had been playing with cap guns...well, any kind of gun we could get our hands on, actually, for years. Oh, how we thought we were the greatest hunters and soldiers. With our stick guns or whatever we attacked our foes. We even turned the common ground stone into grenades. We would run alongside a slow moving freight train on the tracks behind our house on Three Pines Road and grab onto the ladder on the side of a box car and climb aboard. It was dumb enough to be jumping on trains and we had to do it with our pockets full of grenades. Once inside a box car we would pretend that these tall weeds growing trackside were German soldiers or Indians, whoever was the enemy of the day, and we would throw our grenades at those advancing forces until our pockets were empty. Sometimes we would find ourselves all the way to Hugo and we could jump off the train and go to Mrs. Davis's General Store and spend our pennies on candy. Then we either walked home or caught a train the other direction but usually we walked because you just couldn't depend on that darn troop train to be there when you wanted it.

This kind of play made us wanting for a real gun so we started pestering Pop for bb guns. I don't think it was our pestering but sure enough we got those bb rifles for Christmas. Trouble from the start. One of them wouldn't work. I don't remember if it was mine or Dale's that was no good but we made due that day with one BB gun. We promptly went bird hunting. It took us most of the day but, and again I don't recall which one of us did it, but we finally managed to shoot some kind of little bird. Then we both felt just terrible for having killed that little thing. So off we went looking for targets that were already dead, like cans and stuff in the dump area up on the side hill, or the plow on the tractor that rang pretty good when you hit it and it was also a pretty good sized target so we got to ring it quite a bit. Then one of us got to shooting through the plastic Pop had covered the brooder house windows with. He always covered those windows in the winter. Anyway, we were happily shooting holes in that plastic. This made a neat noise too and was also a big target. But we found another live target on the other side of that plastic. Pop was in that brooder house at this particular moment and one of us, don't recall which one, my memory seems to lack on who was shooting what, shot him in the backside. He came out of that chicken house madder than any wet hen could have and we lost the working bb gun for some time after that shot.