

Ambush at Flat Gap! *Continued from Page 35*

Ralph and Jake had moved to the edge of the tall grass surrounding the base of the tree. They were trying to look through the brush toward the gully and my baseball cap.

"Ya don't reckon we kilt him, do ya?" asked Ralph.

Jake replied, "Naw, he's just playin' possum. He's too skeert to fight us."

By this time, I had reached the top of the hill and was in position to seek retribution. Both boys were shirtless, and were exposing large areas of bare skin. I at least had a T-shirt to cushion the blow of the BBs. At that range, a BB was unlikely to penetrate the skin, but it stung like the dickens and left a nasty bruise. Jake was leaned over trying to peer through the tall grass. His too-tight jeans pulled down in the rear exposing a good-sized target of tender flesh. They were unaware that I had outflanked them and had them dead-to-rights.

Heart pounding, I took a deep breath and drew a careful bead on Jake's exposed rump. As I carefully squeezed the trigger, it seemed to take an eternity for the Daisy to fire. When it did, the little .177 projectile found its mark. I was instantly rewarded by a yelp from Jake. Both boys turned to face me and hastily fired in my direction. Both missed. Now, both had guns that could not be readily cocked and were essentially useless. Dropping my pump gun from my shoulder to my waist, I proceeded to cock and fire repeatedly from the hip. At that range, it was hard to miss, and after only a brief salvo each had received three or four hits. The enemy was in full retreat. They jumped the small gully and took off down the hill toward the road with yours truly in hot pursuit. They were a little faster than I was and began to pull away.

I stopped and shouldered my weapon for one last shot as they neared the fencerow. Jake was in the rear and I aimed just about a foot over his head. Immediately after I fired, Jake shrieked and clutched his left ear. Then he went down, head-over-heels into the blackberry briars at the edge of the fence. For a moment I had a sinking feeling. What if I'd actually hurt the little bastard?

As Jake came out of the blackberry brambles, emitting curses that should have been unknown to boys his age, I realized he had merely tripped. He glared at me for a moment and looked as though he might come after me. Hastily cocking my gun, I raised it to my shoulder and took dead aim at his center-of-mass. If he had intended to try to rush me, he thought better of it and shortly disappeared through a hole in the fence.

As I made my way home, my elation soon turned to worry. What if my parents found out? I would surely be punished, and in all likelihood, my BB gun would be permanently confiscated. Had this incident

occurred today, I would have likely been charged as a juvenile miscreant of some sort, and my parents would have faced multiple lawsuits for enormous sums of money.

Apparently, the incident went unreported, though I sweated it for a couple of days. Neither boy was at school the next day, but that was not too unusual an occurrence. Jake's family moved away soon after, and Ralph eventually became an occasional companion for throwing baseballs or exploring the woods. The firefight was never mentioned. The lesson I learned that day was that superior firepower, coupled with solid tactics and the element of surprise can carry the day in the face of a numerically superior force.

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