

## A trio of memories

Posted on Feb 06, Posted by [John Sloan](#) Category [John Sloan - Outdoors](#)

### The turkey crawl

It is what a spring afternoon should be; warm with a slight breeze and the warm air redolent with honeysuckle and other sweet-smelling blooms. The true turkey hunters have not arrived. Bo and I are taking a busman's holiday and going for a turkey crawl in the Alabama pinewoods. When we were younger, we use to do that now and then. We don't do it all now.

Bo pulls in behind the old, colored church, the one with the buzzard roost beside it. He waves at the pastor/groundskeeper and parks in the shade of some sort of white-flowering bush. "The field is just up the rise." He tells me in a thick AL/FL accent only the trained can understand. Many consonants and a few vowels are swallowed. "We will whaa a piece nen crawl on em. I spet dey be dustin long the edges."

I load the double with number 4, 3-inch mags and off we go. After a bit, Bo motions me to all fours and we crawl, he in the lead, me watching for no-shoulders and far aints.

After what seemed to me to be just under a mile of that, Bo's boot heel gently taps me in the nose and he gestures Indian style with his chin. I look through the more than thick brush and see three...make that four long beards strutting on the edge of a field. They are about 35-yards away.

I nod and slowly slide a tad more to Bo's right, searching for an opening in the undergrowth. I find one...about the size of a much mellon. He lays flat on the ground and covers his ears. Sweat now trickles down my nose and plip-plops onto a dried leaf. The second bird stretches his neck out and the bead is sitting right below his wattle. I pull the first barrel and that is all I need.

I pose back at the church, kneeling by the bush with the white flowers and Bo takes a picture. After a while he, the pastor and I drink an ice cold Coors. I remember it well. It was a good

afternoon, as good a time as I ever had shooting a turkey.

### **I shiver at the memory**

Canada seems to have more than Her share of useless sunshine that does no good. What I mean by that is this. It may be 40-degrees Farhenhugle (they use the alkaceltzer scale.), sunny as all get out, not a cloud in the sky and you can freeze solid in seconds.

It was a morning just like that when I took Shanna fishing. Her husband, a trusting young fellah from Dinwoodie, AB wanted to go run bear baits. So, I took his bride fishing.

Trust me, I would not have gone under any other conditions. I even loaned her my insulated clothing.

I knew we could and would catch fish. Just the afternoon before, I played around and caught two dozen, dandy walleye. I knew we would catch fish and she had a little experience. So, when she smiled that Canadian smile at me, I found myself agreeing to go.

I had jigs and minnows aplenty and the breeze was light. Each time I reached in the minnow bucket or had to take a fish off for her, I lost a finger to frostbite.

When I was down to about three fingers, it dawned on me. I flat did not care. I was having so much fun watching her squeal and scream and jump up and down, it did not matter. I do clearly recall wishing it had been my daughter instead or some hunter's wife, lovely though she may be.

But as I said, I was freezing because she was wearing my insulated clothing and I was wearing everything else I owned-sadly insufficient.

As I shivered and hinted at the cold, she kept catching fish. I pointed out the sow with two cubs on the shore. She could care less. Pelicans? So what, just ugly birds.

“Are we out of minnows already,” said she.

“Dadgum, they shore went fast. Just 25 fish and them suckers are gone. Guess we’ll have to quit and get some hot lunch,” said the venerable and frozen bear guide, storing another memory from 1990.

### **Late one afternoon high above Steamboat Springs**

We were early, Carl and I. So, as we should, we napped. I lay down behind a fallen aspen; Carl chose a tall, wind torn stump. We are a couple thousand feet above Steamboat Springs and it is another fantastic autumn afternoon. It will cool quickly and later in the night, it will frost, turning the aspens trees even more. It is elk season.

I have no idea what woke us. No question we were sleeping soundly. It might have been the cooling air, maybe the click and squeal from one of the cow elk surrounding us. No matter, we awoke as one and realized a small herd of elk had surrounded us as we slept. Neither of us moved.

As they browsed slowly away, I cautiously rolled to a knee and looked dead on at a bull elk at less than 15-yards. He was facing away and I took a chance to nock an arrow on the Jennings Shoot- ing Star and get the second knee down. Just then, a cow came romping up and she had his undivided attention. Unfortunately, she was also between the bull and I. I froze in a kneeling position. Try that on mountain-woodland ground.

Minutes ticked off. I glanced at Carl. He had his eyes closed, lips pursed and fists clenched. Later he told me, he just could not stand to watch because the cow was now less than seven yards from where I was kneeling in the broad open. I have never been so still or so uncomfortable for so long. Then, she made two jumps and stopped.

As the bull moved to her, in one motion, I brought the bow up and the string back and shot instinctively for right behind the front leg. The bull wheeled, hit a tree and vanished down an incline and into some thick aspens. Carl and I both collapsed... I in pain, he in relief.

Halfway to the aspens, I could see the tip of an antler. It was getting dusk so, a couple quick pictures and then to work. I believe that was about 16 autumns ago. It is still fresh for me. I wish I could do it again.

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