



Points East

By:
Ike Adams

It's probably safe to say that I've given up squirrel hunting. Part of my disinterest has to do with the fact that it's not much of a challenge to kill a mess of squirrels this day and time if you know how to load and shoot a 22 rifle. Here in the flatlands, at least, every little patch of woods has a sizable population of squirrels that have no apparent fear of human presence.

It was not that way when I was growing up and we hunted with shotguns for the most part. The squirrels of my youth were wary and normally when you did see one he had already seen you, in which case he was not prone to be still long enough for you to take a fine bead on his noggin. Most of the time he was leaping from limb to limb as though he was already 15 minutes late for an important appointment in the next county and it required some skill with a shotgun to bag him.

I can't remember anyone on Blair Branch who didn't have a designated squirrel hunter in the family and most boys, from the time they were 11 or 12 years old, either owned or had access to a shotgun. From mid-August when season opened until the leaves were long gone, we hunted on evenings and week-ends and more often than not, came home empty handed even though the woods were miles wide and deep.

I can't remember anything from my youth that tasted any better than squirrel quarry poured over baked sweet potatoes and served with a big piece of hot cornbread. By the time squirrel season came in my family was tired of chicken and it was too early in the year to butcher a hog. For that matter, most of the chickens we'd hatched off in the spring had already been eaten and squirrels were an important source of meat, if we wanted it in our diets.

It wasn't unusual for a gang of teen age boys to pile into a car and drive more than a hundred miles on a Friday night to the National Forest to camp out and hunt all week-end where the human population was not so dense, the trees were taller and the mountains not so steep as they were

in Leitcher County. The squirrels were also much more plentiful and normally everybody in the crowd killed a few.

Before I was old enough to be allowed to own a gun myself, I frequently got permission to borrow Uncle Willie Adams's 410 gauge shotgun. It didn't kick very hard but,

on the other hand, it didn't have much range. For two years I hunted with that gun and took several shots without killing a squirrel. Finally I became brave enough to borrow his old Iver Johnson 12 gauge, single barrel, a gun with a legendary reputation.

If a squirrel was close enough to see, that old shotgun would put it on the ground. Trouble is, it had a reputation for killing on both ends. Numerous of my cousins who were tougher than I ever even aspired to be killed their first squirrels with that old shotgun and they would pull back their shirt collars to show ugly bruises on their shoulders put there by its recoil. It kicked like a mule in a yellow jacket nest and twice as hard.

Late one evening after school when I was in sixth grade I lugged the old gun to the very top of the point behind Lawson Brown's mine where stood a little patch of hickory trees and long before I got to them I could hear the patter of nut shells raining down through the leaves. There must have been half a dozen squirrels feasting on the ripening nuts but I only saw one.

Without thinking about the recoil, I pulled back the hammer, aimed and fired and in an instant I was on my back.

Joe Frazier nor Ken Norton nor Ali ever hit me that hard a punch. I picked myself up, dusted off, found the gun maybe ten feet away and noticed that squirrels were jumping through the limbs in every direction. But it never even occurred to me to reload. I felt around on my shoulder to see if any bone fragments were poking through because I was sure it was broken in numerous places.

Then I saw the squirrel lying on the ground and the pain went away instantly. I whooped and came tear-

ing off the mountain with it in one hand and the gun in the other.

I probably showed it to every kid on the hill and it didn't get skinned until after dark.

Neither Davy Crockett nor Daniel Boone could possibly have been any prouder of their first bear.

In the years to come I would learn to hold Uncle Willie's old gun snugly and relax to the recoil so that shooting it was almost second nature.

I would also own more than a dozen good shotguns and nearly as many rifles, most of which I have since traded or even given away to

nephews or youngsters that that I took a liking too.

I still have a decent old .22 though and the more I think about that squirrel gravy and sweet potatoes, the more I have a notion to go buy my hunting licenses after all. In fact, I think I'll call up Molly Helton and tell her to get the kettle-hot come opening morning. Maybe I'll go to my recently deceased pal, Junior Helton's, woods. That would be a fine way to remember him appropriately because we hardly missed an opening day there together for more than 20 years.

Sweet and Sour

By Zi Graves

A Pounding

For those who associate pounding, as in driving nails with a hammer, beating steak with a mallet, or beating your friend or foe, on their back, either in anger for a mishap or congratulations for a job well done, there is another kind of pounding that has become almost obsolete. That is the one of welcoming the new minister and his family into the church, the community, the parish and, most of all, our hearts, by helping them through the rigors of moving to a new parish, with contributions of "a pound of this, a bundle of that, a few boxes of whatnots, all tied together with a ribbon of love and appreciation of having a Man of God such as Brother Eddie Nation, filling the pulpit of the First Baptist Church of Mt. Vernon.

He has requested the simple salutation of Eddie, when speaking to him, so, Eddie preached his first sermon Sunday morning, sometimes from behind the pulpit, just as often, in the aisle where he could speak more directly to his audience. I'm sure there was some soul searching going on during his problem with the microphones when he got too far from them but it did not lessen the impact of the message he gave about serving God, I, and those I talked to later, went home perfectly satisfied with the new preacher.

After the night service, and an-

other good sermon, everyone was invited to the new auditorium where Bro. Eddie and family would be "pounded." He, laughingly, said he probably deserved a good pounding literally for the fumbling with the with the microphones in the morning service. Personally, I prefer the voice of a preacher or singer, if they speak and pronounce their words clearly in their own natural voice to that of a disguised voice by mechanical means.

I am not good at remembering names, not even those of friends I have known for years, so my welcome to the Nation family will have to be WELCOME. YOU ALL. TO MT. VERNON FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. I will try to remember the names of Mama, wife, son and daughter soon.

It seems summer has grown wings since we watched the leaves appear and gardens sprouting with tender new plants. Now they are being harvested and almost every kitchen is filled with beans, tomatoes and corn being either canned or frozen for the cold months ahead. This has always been a busy time for the womenfolk, especially those of us living on a farm, who realized it was up to us to supply good wholesome meals for the family, and the only way to do it was by planting, hoeing, harvesting and canning it. At one time, I counted fourteen dozen jars, including several dozen half gallon-ones, filled with

beans, dozens of quart size of a variety of vegetables, plus shelves full of pint size jelly, jam and apple butter. You can bet it took a heap of sweat and backaches to fill that cellar so anyone visiting the Graves family that winter would not have to leave hungry. And, many of those visitors left with a quart jar of blackberries or a couple jars of pickled beets, balanced on their arms with pints of apple butter or jam. Mat did the plowing and most of the planting. We all shared in pulling weeds and hoeing. I'm sure many of the readers remember my complaints of picking up rocks in the garden when we moved to Rockcastle county. Well, that chore was never completed so, along with hoeing, there were always rocks to pick up. They are still there. I don't mean the ones we picked up but a new layer is always waiting for willing hands.

Harvesting the toil of our labor, then preparing it for canning was another chore that taxed the patience and strength of all. Beans were picked by the bushel, taken to the spring to be thoroughly washed, carried back to the house where they were strung and broken into small pieces, ready for cooking when they were opened. Beets were pulled up when they were ready for canning.

tops cut off and the rest taken to the spring for washing. They were first cooked till they were semi-tender, then finished by pickling on the kitchen stove. Tomatoes were scalded to remove the skins before being packed in the jars. This was all time-consuming and hard work. There was much more, but I am sure you get the picture of what farm life was like back in the forties and fifties.

Jellies, jam and apple butter were made in the kitchen. Now remember, there was no such thing as air conditioning then. Windows were opened wide so as to catch a breath of cool air if a breeze sprung up. The cold packing, which took several hours cooking, was done in the yard where a fire was built between a frame work of rocks to hold the large kettles, often big wash tubs that would hold enough jars at once to can a bushel of beans, or beets to be later pickled. If women of today's culture think they have a rough time cooking frozen food from the freezer in a microwave oven, make salad from already sorted and washed fresh vegetables, pop a package of canned or frozen biscuits in a toaster oven, grab a frozen dessert from the freezer then announce supper is ready, I would like to introduce her to another period of time and tell her. WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY BABY.

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Mount Vernon Signal

Publication Number 366-000

Periodical Postage Paid in Mt. Vernon, Ky. 40456

606-256-2244

Published every Thursday since November, 1887. Offices in the Mt. Vernon Signal Building on Main Street in Mt. Vernon, Ky. 40456. Postmaster, send address changes to P.O. Box 185, Mt. Vernon, Kentucky 40456.

James Anderson, Jr., Publisher Emeritus - Richard F. Anderson - Editor
Perkins M. Anderson - Managing Editor

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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