

Nice Day for a Hunt

By Pete Clark

One bright, sunny, brisk day, after there had been a couple of hard freezes, my buddy Howard and I decided to walk out southeast of town to hunt rabbits in Bullet Canyon. Without the hard freezes of winter, the cottontails we were after could be infected with Tularemia also known as Rabbit Fever. We rendezvoused at the Flying Red Horse Filling Station on the southeast corner of the intersection of US Highways 20 and 26 in the middle of town. US 20 veered north into the Big Horn Basin and US 26 continued on west into the Wind River Range of the Rockies.

I didn't take my rifle with me that day, instead I strapped on my holstered Hi Standard Sentinel, a .22 caliber pistol with a swing-out cylinder for reloading. It was a poor man's Smith & Wesson. Howard had a .22 bolt action single shot rifle for the hunt. When we left the apron of the Mobile Station, we headed down the side street towards the southern edge of town.

We had taken a few steps before we heard someone calling to us and we both stopped and turned in the direction of the voice. It was the eleven-year-old son of the man who ran the Standard Station on the west side of the street, across from the Mobile Station. He wanted to know if he could go hunting with us. Howard asked him if he could walk out to Bullet Canyon and back. He said he could. I asked him if it was OK with his dad and he said it was, so we said he could go with us. He went into the house behind his dad's gas station and brought out a shiny new Remington Pump .22 and we began making tracks for Bullet Canyon, which was about three and one half miles southeast of town.

We had been in Bullet Canyon for a little over an hour and Howard had gotten three cottontails, enough for his mother to fix a nice dinner for his family. I got in some target practice, as I really did not want to carry rabbit carcasses clear back to town. Undoubtedly you have heard or read the old cliché, "Like rats leaving a sinking ship," think "Like fleas leaving a dead rabbit," so I had taken my pistol with me, not that I couldn't hit a rabbit with it.

When we started home was when the kid turned weird. He said with the rapid fire of his pump .22, he could shoot both of us before we could shoot him. I considered the situation, the kid was an unknown quantity that may have been just running his mouth or maybe he was nuts. I got his attention and pointed out a large chunk of sandstone about twenty yards away that had a round mineral stain, about a foot in diameter, at its center. I pulled my pistol and fired six quick rounds, double action. All of the bullets hit the brown stain. The kid shouldered his rifle and quietly started for the mouth of the canyon. We were soon outside of the box canyon and safely headed home.