

## *The Shot Gun*

It was a very hot summer's day and the smell of hay and pine trees hung heavy in the air. My father had decided that today was the day I started to learn how to handle a real gun. Up to this point all I had ever shot was bb guns, pop guns, and cap guns, but that all was about to change. After all it was June of 1972 and I was eleven years old and we had just moved to Cassia about one year before.

As we climbed into the family vehicle I noticed that my dad was in an unusually good mood, and he was actually whistling as we drove down the dirt road to the main highway. Other than that the car was silent. I had no idea what he had in mind and I was a little bit nervous because dad was never happy, and almost always grumpy.

The trip was a short one and I was happy to see my dad pull into Amos' house, this normally meant that we would hear some of the most outlandish stories ever told. But as I found out, that was not the plan for today. You see, Amos was an elderly Florida cracker that had out lived his wife by many years and he chose not to remarry. He lived the life of a bachelor, hunting, fishing, smoking, and moon shining. This makes for some very interesting stories.

The dilapidated door to the house flew open as we stepped out of our car and there stood Amos with the biggest shot gun that I had ever seen. He looked like a wild man bent on killing something and I sure hopped that it wasn't me!! He yelled at me to get over by him, which seen as how he had the gun, I did as I was told.

We walked over to an open area to the side of his house and right behind his classic old pick up truck. Then he started explaining to me how I should handle the big old 10 gauge shot gun. He carefully walked me through the whole process of aiming, pulling back the hammer, and gently squeezing the trigger until the gun fired.

At this point, Amos handed me the shot gun and he walked about thirty-five feet away to a fence pole that was about six to eight inches in diameter, and he place a tin can on top of the pole. He walk back to me quickly and handed me a shell to load into the breach of the gun. Nervously I did as instructed, even though I almost dropped the gun. I slammed the breach closed and he told me to raise it to my shoulder and hold it firmly. I sighted down the barrel and made sure the range was clear, and then I slowly squeezed the trigger and the shot gun exploded with a fury I had never experienced before. I flew up into the bed of the truck and slammed against the cab.

My father and Amos just stood there laughing and Amos said, "I forgot to tell you that old Bessie kicks like a mule". We all laughed even harder when we looked at the can and noticed that it was still sitting on the fence pole. But as we watched, the pole itself fell over to the ground with a heavy thud. It sure wasn't the best shot in the world but, to this day I'll never forget what its like to be kicked by a mule.