CHAPTER ELEVEN

Like many a boy I wanted a Daisy BB gun to hunt with. My parents did not want me to have a gun, but eventually there appeared a Daisy under the Christmas tree, and I was warned not to shoot the gun around the buildings, or even aim it at any person. As there was woods nearby I would go there to shoot me some wild game. The only game I can remember shooting was a sparrow or two, but I did a lot of target practice. I went hunting with a cousin of mine several times, but he had a 22 calibre rifle which I knew it was useless to ask my parents for.

I never did have a gun other than this BB gun until after I had finished law school and was married. I then went hunting with friends, mostly pheasant and rabbit hunting until I got interested in deer hunting which became my major sport, hunting for twenty-five years in Vilas County and later with another group for ten years in Bayfield County.

I remember the first year I went deer hunting. I didn't have the proper clothing and I had to rent a gun which I failed to try out before leaving for the north. There were four of us who went that first time, Charley Jones who organized the hunt, Louie Kraemer, Roy Marsden and myself.

We thought that Charley had found a place for us to stay but when we got near Merrill he informed us we would have to find a place. We took a road leading west out of town and finally saw a tavern. We went in, and after ordering a beer inquired if they had rooms to rent during the hunting season. The woman behind the bar told us they did have several rooms to rent, and also they were going to have several ladies come up from Chicago. We decided that this was no place for us and left.

We continued down the road which seemed to head toward the woods. We saw a farm house and sent Charley in to see if they
would have some rooms they would rent out for the deer season. In those days it was only three days, and the deer season was open only every other year. I think this was about 1934 or 1935. The farm was owned by a middle aged couple who said they would be glad to have us for the season. They were a jolly couple and we enjoyed our stay with them, especially as we could walk to the hunting area from the house.

The next morning we were out in the woods by dawn. We found stumps to sit on for the first couple of hours but didn't see any deer. Finally we lined up to walk through the woods, keeping in sight of each other. One of the fellows on the further end of our line was having a problem getting through the brush so we stopped until he caught up. I was on the further end of the line so I stood still and kept looking for a deer and finally saw a beautiful buck standing about seventy-five feet from me. I looked at him and he looked at me for several minutes until I heard one of my friends call "let's go" and I started walking. All of a sudden I came to my senses and realized I should have shot at that buck, but when I looked around he was gone. Did I have buck fever?

On the last day we were hunting separately when all at once I heard shooting to my right. I knew Louie was in that direction so I slowly headed over there. On the way I saw Roy and the two of us went over until we saw Louie working on his rifle. He told us he had shot several times and severely wounded a buck when his gun jammed. We could see a lot of blood so Roy and I started on its trail. Very often we could see where the buck had fallen and then got up again. Finally we got to where two other hunters were getting ready to dress out the deer. There had been no shots so we knew they had not shot the buck. I called to them and said that was our deer and we were trailing it. They made no pretense of having killed the deer but turned their guns on us and said:

"What are you going to do about it?"

What would you have done under the same circumstances?
We never hunted in that area again.

The next deer season we made better preparations for our deer hunting trip. I had water proof boots, a warm wool coat and pants and a new 30-30 Marlin rifle and I went out in the woods and practiced with it until I could hit what I aimed at at a reasonable distance.

Charley assured us that this time that he had a definite place for us to stay in Sayner, and we would be hunting about ten miles east of there. The roads were icy in the northern part of the state on this trip and just before we got to Minocqua a Cadillac filled with hunters passed us, going too fast. They turned and went down a grade to a bridge to cross the river just outside of Minocqua still going too fast, and broke through the railings and all drowned. The authorities were trying to raise the car when we got there.

We continued on to Sayner and found that we would be sleeping in a garage with a farmer and a school teacher both of whom had been celebrating considerable. The farmer was given to preaching to all and sundry so we nicknamed him "The Preacher" and he didn't know for a number of years why we called him that that name. We kidded Charley about the deluxe accommodations he had found for us. It was very cold and drafty in that garage, but the best part was the cat that insisted on sleeping on Roy's face. He threw the cat out many times but it always found its way back again.

I hunted hard and saw about one hundred or more deer, all does, until dusk of that last day when I heard a crashing in the brush behind me. I stood up and saw a young buck coming toward me down a hillside. I shot at him three times and he kept on going. I thought I had missed him so I sat down on a log. In a few minutes I heard Charley call, "come over this way Carl". I got up and walked toward Charley and when I got to a big log saw the deer lying dead on the other side. This was the first deer I ever had shot.

I dressed it out and dragged it to the road, at least this deer hunt was successful.
The last year I hunted in Vilas County Charley had invited two men who worked for Hult Chevrolet garage in Madison, and one of them brought his son along. We stayed in a cottage about a half mile off the road. It snowed so much that we couldn't get into the woods to hunt so we went to Sayner to get some food and some liquid refreshments. Sayner didn't have any fresh meat so we bought a canned ham along with vegetables, bread, etc. We played cards most of the afternoon until someone started to get hungry and suggested we should put the ham in the oven so it would be ready when everything else was ready to eat. As one of the men started to put the canned ham in the oven we all jumped on him telling him he had to either cut the cover off or at least puncture some holes in it. He told us his wife always put a canned ham in the oven without putting any holes in the can. I told him that if he insisted on doing this and any damage was caused he would have to pay for the damages himself.

Have you ever eaten exploded ham?

We went back to our card game when all of a sudden there was a tremendous explosion--cards went in every direction and so did the players. The oven door blew off and ham splattered all over the refrigerator opposite the stove. The rest of us blew up too and really jumped all over the wise guy who wouldn't listen to us. The stove blew up one second after his son passed the stove. That really shook him.

I refused to ever go hunting with him again.

I hunted in Vilas County about twenty-five years and Charley and I were the only ones left of the original group.

Charley went to his happy hunting grounds and I had to look for another place to hunt. It was just as well Charley left for he didn't really have anything to take with him. His three wives had pretty well cleaned him out.

After we had moved to Mt. Horeb I joined a Mt. Horeb group who had a hunting camp in Bayfield County. They had built a good concrete block building on their land and had a dormitory with
double bunks plus a kitchen and a bath which wasn't finished at the time. They had a chick sales out back plus an old telephone booth which served the same purpose. Later we added electricity and water. There were sixteen shares in the club and I bought a share.

The first year I hunted with this group I got my buck in the morning and shot one for Leo Sutter in the afternoon. The most memorable time happened when Roman Sutter and I hunted together. We each found a stump to sit on and for a while there was no activity. Suddenly I heard a deer crashing through the brush toward me. I stood up and readied my gun but the buck saw me and turned directly away from me. I fired several times and wasn't sure whether I had hit him or not. Roman came over and we followed the direction he was going in and found him laying still. We checked him carefully and couldn't find any blood anywhere. Roman said:

"Carl you must have scared him to death, I can't see any bullet hole anywhere."

When we dressed him out we did not find any bullet hole in his hide but a bullet had blown up in his chest cavity.

Frank Clark who lived down the street stopped at our house one day and asked me if I would like to go fishing some Saturday afternoon. I told him I didn't have much in the way of fishing equipment but I would like to go fishing. Frank and I went fishing together many times on Saturday afternoons and we always caught fish, mostly Perch, Blue Gills, and an occasional Black Bass. Frank made a study where the fish were on Lake Mendota and kept a map to show their movements. Eventually I bought a used boat and Grace and I went fishing, mostly on Lake Mendota.