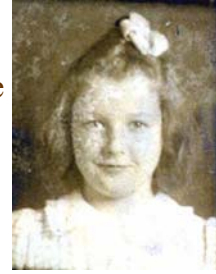


YOU DON'T ALWAYS HIT WHAT YOU AIM AT



For all these many years since boyhood, I have been accused maliciously by my younger sister, Melba. She has asserted that I purposely shot her in the stomach near her belly button with my Daisy Air Rifle (BB Gun). Tain't so, or not quite so, or I have a different version of the story.



As I recall it happened when I was around 11 or maybe 12. It was after school I believe. It was a clear day so my line of vision must have been good. I was heading for the corncrib to shuck some corn to feed the mules, one of my many chores. I was surely overloaded with chores while my little sisters had few to none. Being the manly country boy that I was, I carried my trusty Air Rifle for protection. I might be confronted by such vicious things as a Blue Jay or Mocking Bird, and certainly there would be some mice or larger rats in the corncrib, maybe even a snake that I could protect myself from with my trusty Air Rifle.

On the way, as I left the house, I began target practice. I probably shot at some of the black walnuts as I passed the tree. Maybe I took a long shot at the weathervane on the lightning rod on the barn roof. And certainly I tried the windmill on the mule-lot fence post. That was for practice on a moving target. It's been a long time ago and some of this is a little hazy in my mind, but I **distinctly remember** that I did not shoot at my darling little sister. I may have accidentally hit her, and that was not my fault, as I will explain. But I **did not** shoot at my sister.

As I recall, she was following me down the roadway between the mule-lot and the garden fence. I had suggested that she should go back to the house, probably more than once, but she continued to stalk me. And it was irritating that as she did so she continued to smirk at me. It is irritating and frustrating to a young farm boy when his little sister continues to stalk and smirk at him. After having advised her to return to the house where she properly belonged, because I knew that she certainly was not going to be any help to me, I began to ignore her and continue with my target practice. I knew that I must be prepared for the kill, if the need should arise.

The corncrib was about forty yards from the smokehouse. She had passed the back of the smokehouse and was sneaking along the garden fence; partially hid by the dried butter bean vines that Mom had grown on the garden fence. As quick as a flash (a slow flash) she cut across the roadway and hid behind some farm implements, which had weeds growing up around them. (*If your farm implements are overgrown with weeds, you might be a redneck.*) She was getting close to my practice targets, i.e., fence posts, knots or knotholes in fence boards, farm implement levers, etc.

When the mowing machine blade is in the raised position there is a long wooden handle that angles toward the operator seat so that it can be held to provide some stability

to prevent the blade from falling down before the operator is ready. It made an excellent target for plinking at with my Air Rifle. Well I leveled down, taking careful aim at the wooden handle on the end of the mowing machine blade. I had it clearly in my sights. I squeezed the trigger. Plunk, the Air Rifle sounded, and the BB was on its way. Oh crap. Up jumps Melba out of the weeds right in front of the mowing machine blade. I can see the BB, three fourths of the way there, and headed right for the general vicinity of her belly button. Before I could yell, the BB hit. It sounded like when I had shot one of the watermelons out near the hog pen. But the watermelons never responded. Melba did. **YOU** shot me!! Grabbed her stomach and ran yelling toward the house. Mama, mama! Well mama comes charging out on the back porch, then out into the backyard. Melba is screaming and holding her stomach. I'm imagining she is holding all her insides in her hand. I know I'm going to get it. Why did she do such a dumb thing? I'll be getting the blame and they will probably take my trusty Air Rifle away from me.

Come here young man, Mama yelled! I was expecting to have to help hold Melba's insides, but when I got there she only had a little red spot about the size of a pencil eraser, and they did not even have the BB. Melba was crying. Mama was red-faced and yelling, "young man you are going to get a whipping for this". Before I could say a word Mama got her switch; I don't remember where from, but it was sizeable. She caught me by the left arm with her left hand, and began effectively applying said punishment to my backside. Around and around we went. Young – man – are – you – going – to – do – that – again? NOoo MAMA! What – if – you – had – hit – her – in – the – eye? I wanted to say, "Mama I'm a better shot than that", but I didn't dare. We had made about three circles in the back yard, and were beginning to create our own sort of "dust devil" or "whirlwind". Mama was in perfect rhythm with the singsong questions and laments. So I began to skip about every second step, and that threw Mama's rhythm off. I was amazed how much it lessened the severity of the punishment. When mama tired enough she stopped and sent me back to the corncrib with very specific instructions. Melba had now stopped crying, and was just whimpering. I glanced at her when I turned to leave, and I am sure I saw a smirk on her face.

I was rather uncomfortable in the corncrib. I did a lot of mumbling while I was shucking that corn. It couldn't have been my fault.

I look at this as a classic example of two females, a daughter and her mother, conspiring to abuse a nice young innocent farm boy. I am sure Melba has her own distorted version of this event. But that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Thomas H. Ewing
(My own story)
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