

Keith's Corner/McGill News

October 15, 2021

Duck Hunting-1940s

The thrill and excitement of hunting ducks for us 12-15 year old, McGill youngsters could be placed, just under the passion for deer hunting. We were busy chasing deer and ducks and were not aware that soon we would be chasing girls instead.

It started with a trip to the Goodman-Tidball store, which is now Bradley's. There were two front doors back then. The area between the doors, was a show window for different items, like toys for Christmas.



We went in the left one, which was the grocery store half. The other door entered into the dry goods section. The area that is now the fruit and veggie area in the back of the store was the hunting/fishing part. We bought a state hunting license and deer tag and a Federal duck stamp. It was around 3-5 dollars, total. What a feeling that was the first time.

Most duck hunting back then was done near Bassett Lake. We had a small blind on the outlet stream along with other McGill hunters. Several had blinds on the edge of the lake and some had blinds in boats. The blinds were usually built several days before the opening as the season usually started at daybreak.

One year, however, the powers that be, set the opening day start time for, 12 noon on a Saturday. Mike Robb had to work that particular day. He instructed his son, David, to have everything ready to go at 11:00, so they could make the opening time. David got all the guns, ammo, coats, boots, lunches and of course the decoys, ready to go and was patiently waiting for Mike. The time drew nigh, but no Mike. Finally at 11:40 a very hot and angry Mike came walking down the alley. Someone had stolen his car from the parking lot by the mill. Opening day was a bust for them.

The car was a 1938 and had a faulty ignition switch that could be turned on without a key. Mike had to walk down to the McGill Sherriff's office to report the theft. There were no telephones in the houses during those days. I believe Ed Hand was the Sherriff at that time. Ed told Mike that they knew about the theft and that the Eureka Deputy was heading to Ely to intercept the thief.

The full story was, that the thief left McGill, went thru Ely and decided to gas up in Ruth for the long trip to Reno. He had found Mike's gas credit card in the "jockey box", (glove compartment to you younger folks). He handed the card to Jack and told him to fill it up and check the oil. Jack asked him about the card and the car. The thief said that he was a longtime friend of Harold's. Jack was a personal friend of Mike and knew that no one ever called him Harold. When the car pulled out and headed for Reno, Jack called the police.

Mike got his car back in time for he and David to get in on the evening hunt. Mike got a new ignition switch as soon as possible.

Each year's hunting seasons provided an abundance of stories to go along with the fishing tales of the summer. Such stories last a lifetime and bring many hours of enjoyment later in one's life. The events and game in the stories, however, seem to have an unusual ability to grow with time. A few drinks at the local bar also help.

One such story centered around Keith Murphy. He was an avid duck and goose hunter. He tried almost all of the duck calls on the market and was very disappointed with them, so he decided to make his own. He experimented with pieces of slate with a metal arm that scratched the slate and made some convincing sounds. He worked on his idea for a few years and one summer he decided he had invented the best of the best, duck call. He tried it out in the alley behind his house on first street, that glorious day in July of 1948. Within minutes, several ducks appeared and attempted to land in the alley, but at the last moment they realized there was no water, so they circled a few minutes longer and then left. Keith was now firmly convinced that he had built the perfect duck call. The summer seemed to drag on for months, before it was finally opening day of duck season. He left early that morning before sunrise and set up his duck blind in the cattails on the edge of the water next to the dike. He waited until the crack of dawn and then jumped up and unleashed the sound of the world's most perfect duck call. It took just a few seconds for the sound to travel all over the area and even beyond. Instantly the air was so full of ducks that a lot of them couldn't get into the air and ended up walking or swimming to his blind. Keith was overwhelmed and quickly filled his limit. His joy was short lived, as he soon heard loud threatening cuss words from all the boats coming in his direction. Other hunters were running towards him on the dike. He was terrified. Ducks were coming in from all directions and yet he could see that no one was shooting. They were coming after whoever had used that call.

Murphy, quickly stomped the call into the mud and claimed that it wasn't him. They searched him and the blind but after finding nothing they calmed down and went back to their own blinds. Years later, Keith admitted what he had done and that set off another stampede of duck hunters trying to find Keith's perfect duck call. They dug in the mud, tried out many different metal detectors and even searched the nearby water with scuba gear. It has never been found and Keith vowed not to ever make another one. Some are still looking.

The friendships and adherence to sportsmanship rules, helps to shape a good moral compass for those involved. There is of course, one exception and that is the car thief. He learned the hard way, that in a rural area, like White Pine, everyone knows everyone else and even what vehicle they drive. Also, it is a long way to the next city or town and no place to hide.

McGill News

It happened. Our first snow of the winter, Octobwe 11. Will it be a snowy winter or a dry one, like last year?? Only The Shadow Knows!!



Oldies

1906—October 26—Louis Cononelos arrives in McGill from Greece.

1921—September 27—Fred Newburg, closes Levins Jewelry Shop, which was where the McGill Antiques Store is now located.

Old Photo



The post office was next door to the Drug Store, until moved across the street in 1920.

