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We were shooting cans with Grandpa

WYATT BACKER

Every now and again we'd head up to Iowa, the whole family would, up to Grandpa's place on the farm. Wasn't his farm, though

Grandma had been dead a couple of years, and Grandpa moved in with a friend quickly after the fact. That small house was too cramped, what with the memories and all that

I'd never shot a gun before, neither had my sister though three years my senior

Grandpa took us out to the pasture and set us up a group of cans on a stump some twenty yards away – Diet Mountain Dew

It was his favorite, and the empty cans always outnumbered the full.

We shot a little .22 rifle, perfect for my still developing frame and my very cautious parents.

Now I couldn't hit the ground beneath my feet, and the Iowa wind proved better at knocking the cans over than me. The punishment for my less-than-novice marksmanship was to go set em back up

I don't know why, maybe my sister was trigger happy, or maybe both her and my Grandpa just forgot about me, but my sister sent a round at the cans while I was bent over beneath the stump.

Luckily for me, she was dead on, and hit the top of the can-pyramid, missing me by a couple of feet.

We decided to stop for the day, and we didn't tell our parents about the incident, though Grandpa was proud of my sister's aim.

He died a couple of years later, and that was that.

I haven't been shooting since.

Not on account of fear stemming from that event or any kind of principle against owning firearms. We just decided it would be best that I don't own one myself.

I do think about the incident sometimes, memories conjured maybe by seeing a twelve pack of diet mountain dew or an old picture of Grandpa. It really does sound like the movies.

There's a zip before the bang, even from just 20 yards out, but there wasn't a clang when it hit. Just kinda went right through, and a can gently fell on my head.

I felt no shock, or excitement, or terror-

It was just unusual