



Joë Lanier

SON of A gun

I suppose most everyone had a friend or relative that showed or taught them the finer things of life. . . Things that the parents didn't think were so great — such as smoking, drinking, spitting, and maybe a curse word or two. . . Pete was my tutor. He didn't do it all, but he and I did a lot of experimenting together. Pete was a backwoods fellow. He knew the names of all the trees, the birds, fish — things I didn't know. He knew where the wild blueberry bushes were, the sparkle berry bushes, haw-berry bushes, wild grapes, maypops. He had explored every inch of the woods near his home and knew when things were to be ready as well as where they were. He was an expert shot with a .22 rifle or a sling shot. He never killed for the sake of killing. When he killed it was for his mom's table. One of his failures was trying to show or teach me how to shoot with a slingshot. . . Using a strip of rubber cut from an old innertube, Pete fastened one of the strips to a stick, using an old shoe tongue and string, he fashioned a piece for holding a rock to the other end of the strip. . . It seemed so simple. . . Hold the stick with the left hand, aim at the target, put the rock in the sling, pull back on the rubber strip until it was taut, then let go of the shoe tongue. . . But, J.T. (everyone called me J.T. in my younger days) must have been a klutz. . . For reasons I don't know now, but I remember it happening, I would put my thumb far up on the stick, hold the stick straight up and the sling end would bust my thumb. Or I would get confused and turn the stick loose rather than the sling. . . Pete finally decided to use a forked stick for my slingshot, and that was an extra effort. More rubber had to be used with extra string, both being scarce — almost as scarce as just-right forked sticks. . . Pete was whiz with a pocketknife too. . . I didn't have such a thing. I did borrow Mom's butcher knife to do some fancy whittling and once darned near cut the first finger of my left hand off. . . Everytime I went to see Pete, he would make a corncob pipe for me so we could smoke some left-over tobacco from the barn or some rabbit tobacco he had found and put up to dry. . . On the way home, Mom would break my pipe and throw it away. . . or it mysteriously would disappear. . . I attempted to make a corncob pipe once, but after spending about a day selecting a reed and hollowing it and a corncob out, when I tried to light the tobacco, the corncob caught fire and my pipe burned up. . . I never will forget the time Pete and I first became intoxicated. Pete had found a jar of white lightning and stored it in a secret hiding place until I was at his home one weekend. We lit up our pipes and sat on an old log in the woods, pretending we were adults. . . We drank some of the horrible-tasting liquid. Pete allowed as to how it was good. . . I took a big swig. . . After gasping for breath, coughing, turning bright red, I agreed it was good. . . It didn't take much until our systems were completely out of touch with our brains. . . I spent one of the most horrifying afternoons I can remember. I thought I was falling off the earth. I was on my hands and knees in a crawling position but I thought I was lying down. . . The world was turning around and around and I was holding onto the grass to keep from falling off. . . After sleeping it off and returning to a world of sense, it was many a year before I tried that thing again. . . There was one thing I could do that Pete could not do, but it seemed so insignificant at the time. I could read. Pete couldn't. . . Pete's father had a falling out with the school board and refused to send Pete and his brothers and sisters to school. . . But, that is another story. . . Pete's inability to read or write was no fault as far as I was concerned at that time. You see, I loved Pete and you tend to overlook things about those you love. But for Pete, it was a great disadvantage and as he grew older, it became a greater disadvantage. . . Pete was raised on a farm, but even for farming you need to be able to read and write. . . He moved to Jacksonville to become a part of the "public work force." . . Again his lack of reading or writing ability worked against him. Pete died in a fire one night at a young age. . . Pete, by the way, was my uncle. . . Son-of-a-Gun. . .

Four County EMC Sponsors Students To Co-Op Camp

Four high school juniors have been selected by Four County Electric Membership Corporation to attend Co-op Youth Camp. The camp, sponsored through the Cooperative Council of North Carolina, is scheduled for June 13-17 at the R.J. Peeler FFA Camp at White Lake. Selected for the camp are: William Pone Jr., of Bladen County; Deborah West of Duplin County; Bernard Henry of Pender; and Jeffrey Williams of Sampson. The winners were selected on the basis of an essay and personal interview. Deborah, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James W. West of Warsaw, is a student at James Kenan High School where she is a member of the National Honor Society, drama club and monogram club. She is also a varsity cheerleader. Jeffrey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan E. Williams of Garland, is a student at Union High where he is a peer tutor. Co-op Youth Camp was established to help young people learn more about the cooperative way of doing business as compared to other types of businesses in the free enterprise system. The program schedule calls for campers to organize a mock cooperative, elect a board of directors, hire a manager and staff, and adopt bylaws to govern the organization. Speakers will include representatives of marketing, purchasing and service cooperatives as well as representatives from other types of businesses.

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