

Nelson recalls 66 pheasant hunting trips

Written by Harold Nelson

Editor's note. The Enterprise received an envelope full of information from Harold Nelson of Denver and found his story interesting enough to be shared in his own words.

I am Harold Nelson from Denver and I have hunted in the Holyoke area every year, with the exception of one, for 66 years on opening day. That one year I made it the second week of hunting.

I keep coming back because of the community, the hospitality and the great people. I have hunted on the Dale Martin and Glenn Bradford farms—now run by their sons Bob Martin and Walt Bradford. It has become multi-generational. This year the “girls” enjoyed the beautiful open house at The Oak Tree, and four generations of “boys” hunted.



Harold Nelson is pictured during opening pheasant hunting weekend this year. The 97-year-old has made every opening day but one in the Holyoke area for 66 years. The one year he missed, he was in town the next weekend. He plans to return next year at age 98 if the Lord allows.

Now for some of the happenings of the past 66 years.

—There used to be 21 of us from the present Keebler Company. Through the years it was formerly Merchants Biscuit Co., Supreme Bakers, Bowman Biscuit Co. It is owned by The Kellogg Co. Out of those 21, I am the only one living.

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—Those of us that didn't stay overnight in the vehicle, stayed in the Burge Hotel. It wasn't uncommon to look out the second floor windows and see a half dozen rooster pheasants. This was in the '40s and '50s.

—Down at the ranches, we spent the day hunting and almost always got our limit, which at one time was 10 roosters/20 in possession. Today that seems like a lot of birds—but there were thousands. We are now lucky if we get one each. The pheasants have very little cover such as sunflowers and high weeds.

—After dark a couple of us would get into the back of Dale's pickup and with a spot light and .22 rifles, we would get 200-300 jack rabbits from the alfalfa field. I was told a mink farmer paid five cents for them. There were literally thousands of jack rabbits—sad that is not true any more either.

—At noon Pauline Martin would set out a table “a mile long” to feed all the hunters. What a meal! What great hospitality and friendship. Bless her heart. She did that out of the greatness of her heart. God bless her. On Sunday, Glenn would be sure we had enough Rocky Mountain Oysters to feed everyone. The barber in town was the Mountain Oyster cook! What a feast we had!

—Sometimes after a day of hunting, a few of the men got a little inebriated. Bill Wagner attempted to ride one of Dale's steers. As suspected, he had sort of a bad ride. When Bill got on, the steer lunged forward and Bill ended up face down in the manure. His mouth was open, hollering and showing off. We had a good laugh at his mouth full of you know what!

—By the way, I don't drink, nor have I ever taken a puff of tobacco. I have never had a swallow of beer in my life. That's probably the reason I'm 97 and still going strong. Kids, are you listening?

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