

Field Worker: Warren D. Morse
February 15, 1937

BIOGRAPHY OF A.B. Harding
Hobart, Oklahoma

A TRIP TO THE CHEYENNE COUNTRY HUNTING

In the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation in 1892.

Near what is now Cheyenne, Oklahoma.

The Canadian river ran along the east to the south, and on the east side of the river we found timber and sand mountains, this is the place where many cyclones formed, sand would be funneled a hundred feet high, and formed around large cottonwood trees with only a few inches of the tops exposed.

In this range were many different locations and different hunting conditions; the jack oaks for the deer,

Shinnery for the prairie chicken and quail, these were also found on the first, second and third, ridges from the river, the plains for the antelope and turkeys in the hilly sandy country.

Cobb's ranch was 35 miles down and across the Canadian river from the Canadian in the panhandle of Texas, a long day's drive with a team. The abundance of game at that point induced us to endure many hardships that we might enjoy a real and successful hunting vacation and return home with our fullest desires satisfied.

2

On the particular trip we are describing five of us boys loaded up the spring wagon with ammunition and the other necessities: J. H. Hopkins D. J. Young, Bill English, Andy Payne, J. J. Gerlach, H. A. Daniels, and A. B. Harding.

As daybreak came one of those cool, snappy November mornings, the kind that only the old cowboy days enjoyed, we started for Cobb's ranch, hoping to reach our destination by dark, our team consisted of Texas ponies, and our driver had many years of experience in that country.

All went well until some 15 miles of driving brought us to the crossing place on the Canadian river the river bed was dry and ahead we could see a small amount of water. With our horses in a lope we started to cross, but had gone possibly a half mile when the dry sand developed to be a cover for one of those historic sand holes, and the bottom of our wagon immediately hit the sand and slowly but surely would have sank out of sight but for the accidental observation of two cowboys in the distance, who imagined that we were in trouble and came to our relief.

The driver had released the horses, the rest of us tossed our cargo to safety, as the two cowboys came to our

3

assistance and their lariats to the front wheels and all together we worked the wagon out of the hole onto more solid sand beds.

In this kind of performance one must not allow his feet to stop moving but work fast with the feet, hands and head. As we looked back at the place where we might have filled watery and sandy graves, the water as we made our last trip out was almost chin deep. Bill English then shook his head and said he hoped he would never see that place again -- and he was sincere.

We finally landed on the opposite side of the river, sand hills and timer. Presently we drove around a sand hill bank and there were about 50 wild turkeys making their get-away, we all leaped from the wagon, guns in hand, but owing to the labors in the river and our cramped position in the wagon none of us were able to steady our knees. Every "bugger" as he struck the sand fell to his knees and the muzzle of his gun went into the sand. Not a shot could we take at the first big game but we went on without further accident and reached our destination. Mr. Canatzar expecting

4

us was preparing the venison, chicken and turkey. Can you imagine the feast we hungry boys had?

The evening was spent in discussion, gathering information, locating the game we hoped to bag the following day. We then retired (on the floor, of course) had a good sleep and came out in the early morning ready to go.

The first challenge to be cared for was to prove to Mr. English of Macon, Missouri, that he could follow line of travel from the camp, returning within one hour and have more quail than six men he told of, who paired on the oysters, to the greatest number of quail brought in at Macon, that they in all, actually brought in eleven quail.

Mr. English, and he was a good shot too, took directions and made the circuit, returning in 55 minutes carrying 72 quail, and acknowledged there were three he could not carry and left them on the ground.

Vension and fowl then furnished our breakfast.

During the night one of Bill Dqolin's disciples, Tulsa Jack, came in, made his bed in one corner and enjoyed his night's rest with us.

Andy Payne was from Wichita, Kansas. Upon learning

5.

there was a heavy reward for Jack asked why not get the money.

He, however, received agreeably the explanation that Bill Doolin, Dynamite Dick, and other of their gang would surely visit us, should Jack not appear at their meeting place on time.

As we were congregating in front of the cabin a chaparral appeared close to us. Bill English was called to bring his gun. Mr. English was quick to respond and was in the act of shooting when it was suggested that the bird was too large to shoot on the ground and we should make it fly.

Bill yelled "sicem" and threw his hat. The chaparral most fleet on foot, disappeared among the sage brush and grass and not until he was beyond gun range did he show his head, then he stretched his neck at us in an apparant laugh.

This was the first chaparral Payne or English had seen. The best description of a chaparral would ^{be} to say wild peacock.

The day was spent in bagging chicken and quail, and that evening resting for a daylight raid on deer at the china berry trees near flowing water springs and on green spots at

6

at the foot of the sand hills along the river.

Payne, Harding, and English went to the river, trailing along into a large basin formation; it was dark and there we were waiting for daybreak, presently we heard sniffing and realized some animal was near at hand, then their presence was disclosed by the howl of the coyote, dozens of them, increasing until their voices made our ear ring. Closer and closer they came to us, it seemed best to shoot and try to scare them away. No, to cripple one might cause them to come on on us and in the dark we could be easy prey, our hearts were throbbing hard and fast as we stood there back to back, expecting every moment to be torn to pieces by the animals. But, thanks to Allah, the slight gleam of daybreak appeared and increased, we think just in time to save our lives. The coyotes backed off and scattered, but we lost our nerve and trailed back to camp to compose our physical condition.

Not until after dinner did we venture out. Then Payne went to the foothills for deer. English and Harding to the oasis, a long drainage into the river, covered with timber

7

and round bunches of Jack Oaks, cautioning Mr. Payne that his high-powered rifle would be dangerous to us should he shoot toward this line of timber, we separated, going to our selected locations looking for deer. In the evening we almost arrived at camp at the same time. Mr. Payne announced that he had killed a deer but could not load it on his horse, he was given assistance and the deer was brought in. On examination this deer proved to be killed friction of the bullet, it creasing the spine only, no bullet hole in the hide.

We again enjoyed an evening meal and all went to the turkey roasts, every one of us had a tree well filled with turkeys and no telling how many we shot down. We took to camp all that we could carry on our horses but again we had encountered the coyotes and they actually took from our grasp and from our saddles many of the turkeys but did not attack any of the boys.

We were tired not being used to such ordeals, so we spent the following day, chicken and quail shooting. The following day we hunted all kinds of game and loading our wagon beyond capacity, at day break we started on our return trip.

8

It was a custom on such trips to take along twice as much ammunition as you could use, and as we returned along a telephone line we shot many martins as they would fly from the wire, arms sore and black from the rebound of the gun, many flying birds were missed with the shot gun.

Presently here came Tulsa Jack riding his pony at full speed his belly all but touching the ground. A 44 in each hand and down came a bird for each shot. We treated "His Honor" to a good cigar and a bottle of pop thanking him for the exhibition.

We know the day of such exuberance of game is a thing of the past but feel any old-time sportsman will enjoy being reminded of past experiences and good times.