

BILL BARNES, Hartford, Cocke County, Tennessee 1939 / Disc 050a, 050b, 051a, 051b

My father was driving some cattle on what's known as the Cove Creek Mountain, and he come up to a party had been a-fighting a bear, the dogs, and it had eaten up their dogs in a laurel bed, he asked the party for a gun to go around and kill that bear, and there wasn't a man had a load of powder or any loaded gun, and they couldn't get [SCRATCHING] anything to kill it with, and it was just eating their dogs up, he went down to get him a knife, and he went down into that laurel where it was, it had the dogs down, and he run up and stobbed his knife into it and cut a big long gash plumb to the hollow of the bear, and the bear wheeled on him, and he said it felt like he could feel it a-biting him nearly, he could hear it popping its teeth, and the dogs, they come and grabbed it again, you know, before it could, got ahold of him and it wheeled back on the dogs, and as it wheeled back on the dogs, he took a run a go and run his arm into that hole he'd cut into it and run it right up about its heart and give a rake or two, and that bear shrunk down and bawled he said like a calf.

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Me and a party were on Deep Creek fishing, been out camping out in the, in the woods, and we heared something a-hollering, well, they's several of us in the bunch, an older man said it was a panther a-hollering, and it hollered several times whatever it was, traveled, and so went out of hearing directly, later on I'd been up in the field and worked and me and two of my brothers were a-coming down a branch, going towards the house, and I saw something step in the branch, looked to be four or five foot long, way long something, my brother had a gun, smaller brother was in the middle between us, and I axed my brother to give me the gun and he thought I was just a-deviling this boy and he didn't hand me the gun, if he give me the gun I could have killed whatever it was, and all at once I reckon it discovered me and it jumped, appeared to me it went anyway fifteen or twenty feet the first leap, and it was just as high, I just heared it hit the ground a time or two, well I had some good dogs down at the house and I run down and got my dogs.

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I run down to the house and got my dogs, and the dogs wouldn't run whatever it was, and the do-, the older people told me that dogs wouldn't run a panther, later on I was a-going to the mill one morning before daylight, the moon was a-shining bright, I seed something squat down in the road, looked to be a good-sized bulk of something, and I held my dogs, shoot, I had a pistol in my pocket, and I stood down my horse a little bit, and it just lay there a-squatting in the road, and when I started my horse, it sprung right up and I heared it hit the ground two or three times, and it run out of hearing, and if it wasn't one of them things I don't know what it could have been.

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My father was borned in Haywood County on Jonathans Creek or Cove Creek, I couldn't

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I was borned in Haywood County on what was called Cove Creek and was raised on Catalooch and Big Creek, North Carolina.

I: What about your schooling?

I guess all the schooling that I ever got, I got it on a little log, in a little log cabin, sit on a bench split out of the logs, just the legs in it for chairs, they set in it, I don't suppose I never had no kind of a book but just one of these blue-back spelling books, I don't guess that I ever went to school more than a month or not exceeding two months in my life, they got up a writing school.

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And I went to a writing school about a couple of days, and I got some copy, and I kept fooling with them copies till I could begin to write, and I got so I could write a pretty good hand.

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We was out, a-laying out in the mountains at what's known as the Bend of the River, and they was a cornfield had corn in it out there, and a bear got to coming into that cornfield eating corn, and my father set a gun and killed the bear, he tied a string around the trigger and brought it back to behind the guard and stretched the string out way across the path of the bear where he come in the field, when the bear come why, he pressed that string.

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I: Go ahead, go ahead.

He pressed that string and fired that gun and killed that bear, I guess the bear would have net three hundred pounds anyway, then he sh-, you want to know about him shooting another one?

I: Just go ahead.

You have to talk pretty loud, I can't hear you.

I: Just tell about, I'm going to stay back a little bit here.

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Huh? and he set his gun at another place, where they crossed the fence, and shot another one, and we, I was with him, and we tracked that bear about a mile by the blood and it would lay down once in a while, and we tracked it, before we got down to about a quarter to the mouth of the river, we heard a gun fire down at the river, and we just tracked on and

when we got down there why, that bear had swum the river and they was a crowd camped over on the other side, and they shot the bear and killed it, finished killing it, and grabbed it up and run off with it before we got down there, so they told my father later that they got the bear.

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My father and my brother went, went to the mountains a-hunting out in the Bend of the River, and they killed a little deer, and they camped out there, and the next morning they got up just a-getting light and started out in the woods to hunt again, and they looked a-going down a ridge and saw a big large bear going walking down the top of the ridge, and my father had a large rifle gun, shot a good-sized ball, it was a considerable distance for a man to kill a bear but he fired on that bear, my brother never got to shoot, the bear run, jumped when his gun fired, and my brother never shot him, that bear run down that ridge about a hundred and fifty or two hundred yards and dropped dead, well, they run and took after it, away it run and just pretty soon they run up on it a-laying there, batting its eyes, they said, and my brother, he never got to shoot it with the first shot, but he shot the bear in the forehead when it was about dead, and they sent the boy, my brother, in with the little deer that he'd killed, I had a man, a hand hired, he was a-working for me and he sent after me and him to come help carry that bear in, so we struck out, there was a little snow on the ground, very cold weather, and we got to the old man, just about sundown we got to where he was, and he was a-dragging up wood to make a fire, and he never had been back to the bear since him and my bro-, brother left it that morning, he'd been out in the woods a-hunting he said, and we just broke to it as quick as we could and all went into skinning that bear, skun it all out, took that hide offen it, and cut it into four quarter, the four of us, and we every one had just about what we could tote of bear meat, you see, we went back, went to where he was a-dragging up the wood with it, and we went to slicing up that bear meat into slices and sticking it on forked sticks, set it up before the fire and baking it, we laid our bread down and let the grease run out of that bear onto our bread, and it warmed our bread up, and I eat and eat, I said to my father, I says, "father," I says, "I'll have to quit eating this meat," he says, "why was that?" I says, "I couldn't tote a quarter of this meat out in the morning if I can't eat no breakfast," he says "eat every bite you can eat," and he says "I'll guarantee you in the morning you'll, it'll eat just as good as it is now," God knows I don't know how much I did eat, because I eat a tremendously lot of that bear, next morning I, it tasted just as good as the first bite that night.