

## Second Chance

Scott Balvitsch was kind enough to provide a Southwest Airlines free pass so we flew to Chicago, Il. on 15 May 03 in search of the elusive Wisconsin turkey.

Wouldn't you know it but college finals were held on 13 and 14 May; aircraft with many open seats earlier in the week were filled to capacity on 15 May. So we missed our scheduled flight; Scott could have flown by sitting in a jump seat in the cockpit reserved for mechanics however he stayed with me in his usual style.

We finally made it to St. Louis. We planned to catch the 2pm flight to Chicago. Scott asked me to have my ticket ready as we stood in line waiting on the Southwest ticket agents to start processing the flight at 1 pm. I couldn't find my ticket!!! It wasn't in my carry on bag or in any of my large shirt pockets! I had done the unthinkable, lost my ticket! My first reaction was it fell out! My carry on bag was stored in the overhead lying flat; the ticket could easily have fallen out of the outside pocket. The ticket agent told us the flight we caught to St. Louis had just pulled away from the gate!

The ticket agent called Phoenix and the aircrafts destination in Cleveland to see if my ticket was there; no luck! This took time; however she treated us very well. She finally let me fly to Chicago under Scott's cognizance and didn't charge me. Scott called his wife, Marge, and she mailed me another ticket! This was frustrating since I had already blown my first chance to get to Chicago. I could only pray my ticket would eventually be found so I couldn't have to use another one.

Our slick Daewoo Leganza made the trip as enjoyable as possible. It had plenty of power and lots of options. We didn't get to Marge's Mom and Dads until 11:30 pm!

Gene and Dolores were in bed when we arrived however we found our bedrooms in top shape in the basement. It was lovely down there, the walls and floors were polished like epoxy, the bed extremely comfortable and we had a shower, stocked refrigerator and freezer. Even had 3 chairs for dressing in the sitting room.

Scott didn't draw a tag because I submitted his name with my confirmation number! A new confirmation is required for each tag. Wisconsin's computer program could have rejected his tag until a new number was obtained but the program was not this sophisticated. Lesson one, submit Scott's name first on all applications. Scott came on this trip knowing he wasn't going to get a turkey; this was a most unselfish act.

Gary picked us up at 4 am and we were ready to go. Gary discovered his tag covered 21-26 May 03 so he couldn't hunt either! So I had 2 gun bearers, trackers, callers and guides; I never had it so good! As of matter of fact, I was concerned 3 would be a crowd because a turkey can see 5 times better than we can!!!

We parked Gary's car a few miles down the road and headed for the woods. My stool with collapsible un even legs and backrest was attached to my pack frame by straps and

quick release buckles bought from REI. Scott rigged this up and it worked like a charm. My blind attached handily to the bottom of my pack frame; my waist pack carried 2 Sceery decoys, bush trimmer, box and locator calls, water, food bars and ammunition. This left both hands for carrying my shotgun.

We hadn't gone far when we heard fierce gobbling in the dense woods above us. This was exciting!! I picked a position on the top of a knob in the woods after the gobbling got so loud to allow the turkey's to see us, put out my 2 decoys and 6 foot blind, made myself comfortable on my stool and waited. This was as good as it gets! My long johns and coat kept me warm. Gary and Scott were concealed behind me in their 12-foot blind and started calling. The theory was to call the turkeys down off the roost and past my position to allow a shot.

It wasn't long before I heard a racket behind me; the turkeys were past us and we hadn't seen them!! We waited and waited in vain; Gary and Scott called on their Match Maker box calls without success. I even called my wing bone yelper but it didn't help. We eventually we pulled up stakes and scoured the woods looking for turkeys and didn't find any. We found several open areas in the woods that looked promising and even found sign of turkey's kicking leaves searching for food. We set up near one opening but didn't see or hear any turkeys.



Gene, Dolores and Scott relaxing in the living room. Look at that paneling and floors!

We abandoned the field at 9 am and drove home for breakfast. It was great to see Gene and Dolores Manning, Marge Balvitsch parents. Their house is lovely. It has paneled walls, hard wood floors and a beautiful view. It even has a sunroom overlooking neighboring farmlands there in Adams County.

Dolores made a hunters breakfast second to none with scrambled eggs bathed in home made salsa, toast, sausage, juice

and milk. We never had it so good! This is living and has spoiled me for the good old days of a trail bar and a swig of water!!!

Gary went to work after breakfast for a few hours on his remodeling job. Rick and Maxine Schreiner arrived about that time. Maxine is Marge's sister. Rick showed us his capable 6 X 6 Polaris ATV and new 4 X 4 Ford truck. Scott ran the ATV thru its paces; this baby is just what we need for deer hunting.

Scott and Rick transplanted Gene's raspberries from the old garden west of the house to a new garden east of the house.



Scott and Rick transplanting raspberries

The ATV was just the ticket for this job along with Scott and Rick's digging and planting expertise as supervised by Gene. My part was to carry the plants to the wagon and pour water for transplanting. Gene's Troy Tiller made a good furrow during the transplanting operation.

We returned to the woods about 3 pm and hunted till 5 pm but didn't hear or see any.

We scouted before sundown by driving around and saw turkeys everywhere on the edge of the fields. We even saw turkeys about a mile from Gene and Dolores house. Gary said the turkeys were on Bob Buchanan's place; they looked like good candidates for us! I asked Gary if Bob would mind if we hunted them; Gary said he didn't know.

Mom got a call from Cleveland that my ticket was found in the overhead! They agreed to issue me another in the computer.

We returned to the woods Saturday. We set up to intercept the turkeys as they left the roost. Gary and Scott were behind me. Wouldn't you know it 2 jake's (immature tom's) walked past them; I didn't see them but heard them!

We waited the turkeys out till 8 am but didn't see any more. We searched the woods again then left for breakfast about 9 am. Gary spotted 2 jake's in the plowed field we were pass on the way to the car. We were still in the woods. Gary's idea was to circle the turkeys in the cover of the woods and set up on their most likely route to the woods. We carefully picked our way through the woods while keeping an eye on them. Finally Gary decided we had gone far enough. I found a good spot on the edge of the woods overlooking the ploughed field and set up and waited. This was turkey hunting at its best!!

The jake's headed our way weaving across the plowed field eating the seeds planted the day before, it was beautiful to watch! When they got closer it was easy to see their beards were only nubs (about an inch long) however they were within range (about 30 yards)! I held my fire for a bigger bird! This was a monumental decision for me! Gary and Scott handled it well though. I hated to keep 2 good guys tied up for more hunting but they were ready to be put through the test. This was my first chance for a turkey.

Gene and I drove to Robert A. Buchanan's (1392 20<sup>th</sup> Ave, Arkdale, Wi., 608-564-7188) after lunch (1 mile north of Gene and Dolores house,). My plan was to get permission to



Old John Deere's never fade away

take pictures of Bob's tractors and send them to Phil Fowles in The Boeing Company in Long Beach, Ca.. Phil collects tractors and might want one or more. Gene planned to ask Bob's permission for me to hunt at the same time.

Bob let us take pictures; some of these tractors are old indeed! Gene asked if I could hunt and Bob said I could hunt that afternoon and the next day however he didn't want me

hunting the west side of the road where we saw them the day before because another hunter was hunting it. I was thrilled even though we had not seen any turkeys on the east side of the road. Bob said they were there; this was good enough for me!

Gary, Scott and Rick and I parked in the field at 3 pm. and spotted 2 turkey's at the end of the field; this was good indeed. We tried to skirt a hedgerow to keep them from seeing us but they saw us and ran into the woods.

The farthest corner of the field from us looked like a good place to set up so we headed for it, 4 hunters with one shotgun; a very unusual practice. We headed straight for our destination; our only compliance to the dictum of staying out of sight was to skirt the edge of the field. When we got there Scott suggested we move north along the edge of the field until we could see both fields that were hidden from the main road. This we did; my 3 guides set up behind the 12-foot blind and I set up my 6-foot blind at the side of a black berry bush.

And it wasn't long until I saw turkey crossing the field north east of me skirting a woodpile. Then another. Neither responded to my one yelp. Gary and Scott called liberally with their Match Maker's, the call Marge and Jesse manufacture. Mark and Pam Cain of Modern Calls, our neighbors, market this call.

I kept a keen eye on the field to my left where the 2 turkeys were. I asked Gary on our Motorola radio to let me know if he saw one coming from my right. A turkey from the right would have to cross directly in front of my 3 guides. This was the preferred direction for me because I was hidden behind a black berry bush.

About 15 minutes later I happened to look right and a jake was headed my way and it was a big one with a 6-inch beard. Now was the time for action! I poked my 12 gauge Benelli Super 90 shotgun with super full turkey choke loaded with 2 ¾ inch Hevi Shot

number 4's thru the bush, rested it on my knees, took aim at his head and fired. It couldn't have been more than 25 yards. The turkey dropped like a stone! Scott was on it in a flash congratulating me, what a thrill!!! Scott broke its neck and we had a 15-pound jake on our hands; we had our Wisconsin turkey!



Results of skillful use of the Match Maker box call

J. R. Adams and chief guide, Gary Manning

As it turned out Gary was reluctant to use the radio after he saw the turkey because their position might have been compromised. There were 3 guides behind their blind showing the effectiveness of a good blind and their capability to remain motionless! This was my second chance and we took the opportunity offered!!! We hope we inspired Rick to try turkey hunting; it only takes one good hunt to see how much fun it is!



Gene, J. R., Dolores and Gary's dog, TBD and the "bird"

Dolores heated a pot of water to 160 degrees and we dropped the turkey in after pulling the wing feathers off for our wing calls and cutting the head and feet off. Gary recommended water heated to 160 degrees to prevent overheating the meat, this water was perfect because Dolores used a thermometer, and the feathers fell off that bird after we dipped it in the pot in the front yard. Scott gutted the bird and we had one good-looking bird! We were happy as clams!

Scott took us to supper at the Woodbine where Maxine worked while she was in high school. We all went through the buffet with selections of prime rib, duck and ribs. And the food was outstanding and our spirits were high.

We went to church in Adams Sunday and drove to Camp McCoy where Uncle William (Dad's younger brother) took his Engineer training during WW2. Gary plans to hunt deer at Camp McCoy this year with his friend because the deer are big there.

We drove by a cranberry bog on the way to Gander Mountain in Eau Claire; Gary said his friend runs the cranberry bog and the duck and turkey hunting is outstanding. And is our usual good luck we ran into Gary's friend at the Wal Mart and he invited us to hunt with him this season! We are set up. Couldn't happen to nicer guys!

Dolores made pancakes for breakfast Monday morning at 5 am, what a nice send off! This was quite a sacrifice on her part. We hated to go but we had to.

We arrived Chicago at 9:30 am. My ticket was issued from the computer to Phoenix. However, we had trouble getting my Samsonite suitcase thru the x-ray machine. The checkers didn't like the fact I was carrying several boxes of 10 gauge shotgun shells. Scott told them we were authorized 6 boxes and they finally believed him. Little did we know Scott would lose his indispensable Leatherman and a miniature box call from that suitcase on that flight.

It took a long time to get thru security so we didn't get to our gate until 10:15 am, not early enough. However no stand by's got on that flight other than Scott so it didn't make a difference. We agreed Scott should catch the mechanics jump seat and I would fly to St. Louis and try my luck there.

The ticket agent took my Phoenix ticket over my objections; so I was without a ticket for the second time in St. Louis!! And sure enough I heard the dreaded words, "your ticket please!" But I didn't have a ticket! She looked into the computer and realized what had happened and issued me a ticket to Phoenix, what a relief!

The flight to Phoenix was pleasant, and Scott took all our bags home with him. A most considerate move.

This ended our turkey season. The Match Maker did its thing and that was important to us! Scott, Gary, Gene, Dolores, Bob, Todd Baggs (in Missouri) and Bill and Jody Rosecrance (in California) helped my season significantly, I appreciate that!