

## The First and the Last

My Lord Jesus said in The Revelation 1:17 “Do not be afraid: I am the First and the Last.” I don’t mean to be disrespectful using this as the title of this story.

Dad and I were guests of Virginia Bader at dinner with General Adolph Galland, the commanding general of the German Luftwaffe Fighters in WW2, in Las Vegas, Nevada in 1985. General Galland was the author of “The First and the Last,” the best of WW II fighter pilot epics from the German side. Dad and I sat next to Gen. Walter Krupinski, Eric Hartman’s squadron commander and wingman at the dinner. Eric was the leading ace of all times (352 victories) and spent 10 years in Siberia after WW II as a guest of the Soviet Union as a result of the role he played on the Western Front. When asked if he hated the Soviets, Eric said “no, hatred will only consume you!” Eric said there are good Russians and bad ones; like all other races. Virginia Bader is the cousin of Douglas Bader of Battle of Britain fame who flew without either leg below the knee! Group Captain Peter Townsend, who almost married Princess Margaret, and several U.S. aces were also at the dinner.

The First and the Last is an appropriate title for this story because our first Arizona duck hunt was on the river last year. And the last hunt this year was there too! We have come a long way in a year. And we did it an unusual way.

My last river story, Raging Waters, had us taking a lot of chances hunting ducks a few weeks ago. Well, the rains are gone and we were left to face a more friendly river on Jan. 25, 2003. We have never gotten to the river before sunrise; we made a special effort to get there before sunrise to see if it made a difference, and it did!



View from my blind was outstanding

The coyotes were barking as we got out of the truck at 5:45 a.m. We have set this place aside for future varmint hunting. We didn’t see any other hunters as we made our way to the river in the dark.

The moon provided a lot of light as we waded down the river. We left the river when the old dry river bottom came close to shore and went back “upstream.” It was a pleasant hike.

The rapids were treacherous as we forded the river near our beaver dam aka The Honey Hole. Scott helped me cross again because the water is very difficult for me to handle in that spot.

As a matter of fact we almost made the title of this story “Leave it to Beaver.” Some smart person probably planted beavers on this river and the beavers have taken over! Their engineering capabilities are amazing as can be seen in this picture and the one below. They have created an ecosystem in the middle of the desert supporting ducks and geese and who knows what else providing an incredible duck hunting opportunity for those lucky enough to find it! And the beavers were not deterred by us and continued to build right in front of our eyes! Beavers are now one of my favorite critters! “Save the beavers!”

This is our honey hole/pot hole, in its entirety. Scott found a place for me behind the beaver dam on dry ground. I had a great field of fire and could even take off my belt of shotgun shells and vest and swing on targets of opportunity unhindered. I also wore my shotgun butt rest bought from Butt rest.com. This simple device is worn on the belt and allows the shotgun to be held with minimum energy and presents a muzzle up condition conducive to waterfowl shooting.



Beavers dam is 2 feet high and created this paradise

Bushes to the rear, camo facemask and gloves allowed me to blend in with the surroundings, this was surely the best platform that I ever shot ducks from.

Scott put out half of the decoys on my end of the pothole and the other decoys about half the way down where he was. The mud was deep so Scott did this demanding job and I appreciate that.

The ducks, mostly teal, began pouring in before Scott could set the decoys out, just at shooting time (30 minutes before sunrise). I waited until Scott got in position and the ducks got close enough to shoot.

And here they came! They would appear from nowhere popping up from behind the brush bordering the pothole, circle rapidly in front of me and land in the decoys before I could move! I didn't want to shoot the decoys or shoot them in the water 10 yards away so I shouted at them to fly and they obliged! And I missed these easy shots, this was frustrating!

Finally got one on my third try! A green wing teal. What a kick! I believe my modified choke was too tight for ducks landing in my lap!



Scott made a beautiful passing shot on a cinnamon teal and found it in the boondocks. He had to wade deep sucking mud and waist high water and stay oriented in the deep brush and cattails to find it. What a retriever! Scott also shot a green wing teal coming into his decoys.

J. R. Adams finally got some ducks

I had a few easy shots, at least for some, on flights of capital ducks that were decoying to my spread of six decoys and missed. Surely the shotgun sling I was using caused these misses. I don't remember using a sling with ducks. The sling made the shotgun easy to carry but changed the dynamics of my swing. Oh well, any excuse will do and this is the best available today.

Dead ducks floated down our pot hole the day we discovered it in Dec. 2002 and up it on Jan. 25, 2003! Either the beavers were regulating the water flow in our pothole (are they really that smart?) or the local farmers were causing it by dumping more or less water into the river or something else was causing it? And there was no wind any time we hunted our honey hole. Surely a master's thesis could be written on this phenomenon.



This is a large bobcat track

We pulled up stakes at 9:45 am; Scott was headed for his son, Dakota's, 8<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Ducks were still drifting in but it was time to close up the season and go home!

You never know what is going to walk in your shoes; we saw these tracks crossing ours near the river. That was a large bobcat! We will be looking for him later!