

JACOB'S LOG:

# Smoke signals

By Jacob Brooks

I was flipping through the December edition and found the "I Remember" stories. I enjoyed reading them so much that I decided to write my own.

It was a warm summer evening here in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The hay field had just been through its second cutting, and hay bales were scattered across the pasture waiting to be put up. It was summer, so obviously I would be into some mischief. My friend, Kevin, had just gotten back from Tennessee and had brought home with him several bottle rockets and firecrackers. We were equipped for trouble-making to say the least.

Kevin, my brother Josh and I spent the evening lighting firecrackers, shooting bottle rockets at each other, ya know, everything that any typical 9, 10, and 11-year-olds would do. We decided to up the ante and light bottle rockets off of a hay bale.

We considered this to be an enlightened idea and began making our trek to the hay field. We looked around the field to choose our launch pad and finally decided on the bale that was closest to my Aunt Kathy's house. I took out a bottle rocket and situated it on top of the hay bale. Josh took the lighter out of his pocket and lit the fuse. We watched anxiously as the fuse deteriorated. Finally, the rocket took off. It was the most beautiful thing any of us had ever seen: a bottle rocket soaring into the air, but more importantly off of an improbable launch pad.

Josh grew bored after the first launch and decided to find something else to do. He provided Kevin and me with the lighter, and we continued to shoot our rockets into space. After the next few rockets, disaster struck. The sparks from the fuse had ignited the hay bale.

Life as we knew it was going to change over the next couple of hours.

Imagine a 9 and 11-year-old running around a blazing hay bale beating it with their shirts as they screamed those four-letter words that we had learned from elders. Smoke was rolling off that hay bale, and we were frantically searching for a solution.

Kathy had a big blue stand-up swimming pool that was full of water. I sprinted to the barn and found my father's 50-gallon wash tub. I decided that this would be the best tool to use. I ran back to the flaming bale and told Kevin to



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help me dip the tub in the pool. Unfortunately, a 50-gallon tub full of water weighs 50 gallons, and we were unable to lift it. Kevin lost hope and fled the scene. The fire continued to rage on, and all I could do was beat it with an inflatable yellow float that came out of Kathy's pool.

To make matters worse, my grandmother was down in the orchard picking apples, and she saw the smoke and soon arrived at the scene. Her lecture began upon her arrival: "Jacob! What in the world have you done?" I would have replied, but I felt the answer was somewhat obvious considering a fire was burning the hay three feet from us.

Then my father showed up. Things were not getting better. He had a question for me, too: "Jacob! What in the name of God were you thinking?" I had just watched a video in school about Native Americans, so I tried to give him an answer that would be realistic: "Well, Dad, I just thought I would practice making smoke signals like the Cherokee."

My father started laughing. My grandmother wondered "Why?" And I was just standing there shirtless and covered in ashes. God bless. 🙏

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