



Memories of My Hunting Exploits with My Father, Henry Artus, Jr.

By John G. Artus

Written for the benefit of my daughter,
Lisa Jean Artus, who asked me to
document my stories for her.

January 2026

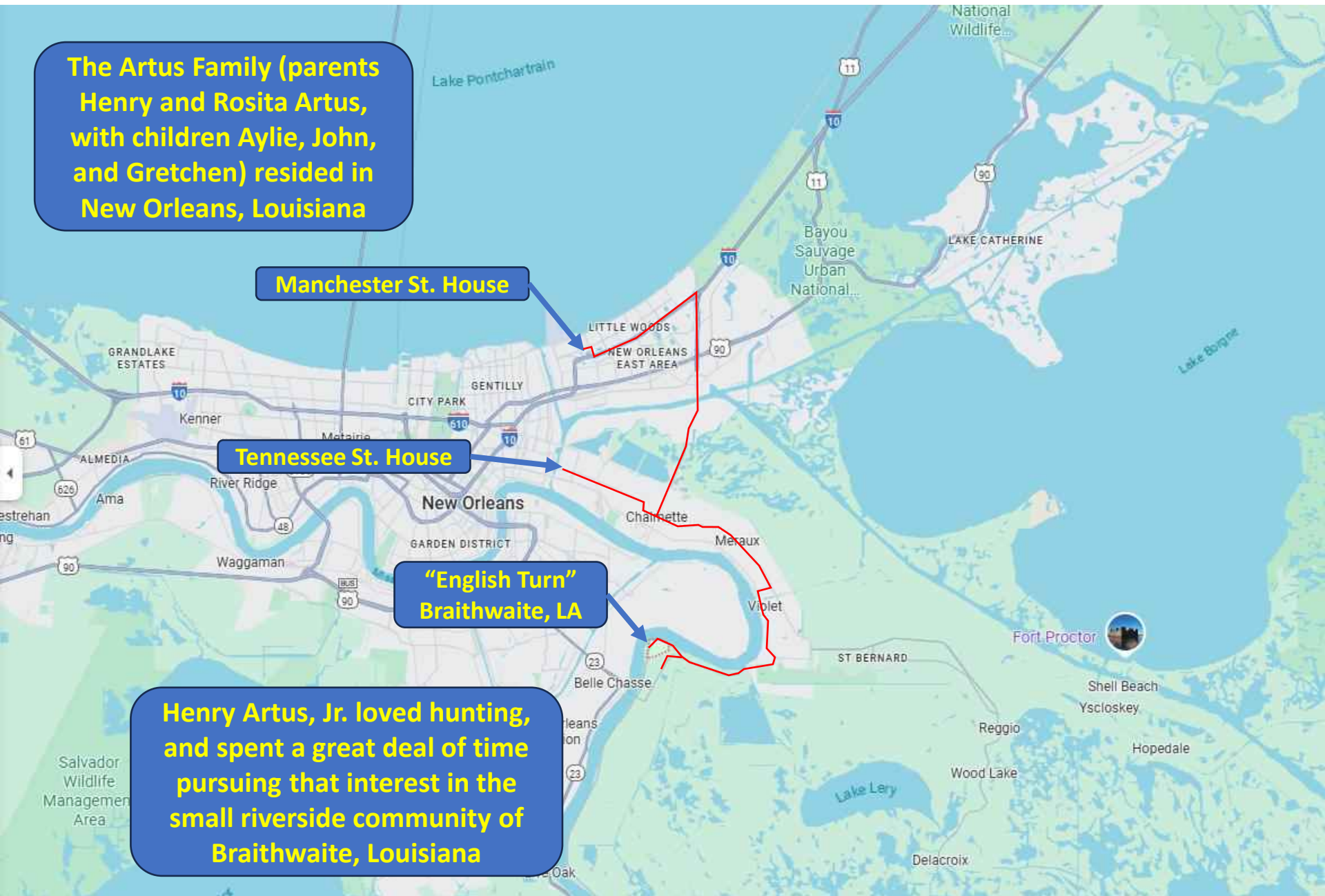
The Artus Family (parents Henry and Rosita Artus, with children Aylie, John, and Gretchen) resided in New Orleans, Louisiana

Manchester St. House

Tennessee St. House

**"English Turn"
Braithwaite, LA**

Henry Artus, Jr. loved hunting, and spent a great deal of time pursuing that interest in the small riverside community of Braithwaite, Louisiana



According to https://historica.fandom.com/wiki/Braithwaite_family,

The Braithwaite family was a prominent Louisiana plantation dynasty which was founded in 1779 when the Braithwaites migrated from England to the United States. The family came to settle in the Louisiana Territory following the Louisiana Purchase, founding Braithwaite Manor in Beauregard Parish in the rural south of Louisiana (in the Scarlett Meadows region). The Braithwaite family came to be quite wealthy due to their cultivation of tobacco and cotton through slave labor, and they supported the Confederacy during the American Civil War; the emancipation of their slaves took a toll on their business. During Reconstruction, the Braithwaites' rivalry with the Gray family escalated due to the Grays' Republican-backed rise to power. By 1899, the Gray-Braithwaite feud turned violent due to the Braithwaites' alliance with the murderous Louisiana Raiders gang and the Grays' alliance with the Van der Linde Gang. Ultimately, Dutch van der Linde played both sides against each other, and family matriarch Catherine Braithwaite retaliated by having gang member John Marston's young son Jack Marston kidnapped and sold to the New Orleans Mafia boss Angelo Bronte. Dutch and his gang, intent on rescuing the boy, showed up with the Braithwaites at their mansion, setting the mansion on fire and killing all of Catherine's sons and bodyguards. Catherine revealed her dealings with Bronte before rushing back into her burning mansion, where she died in the flames. The Braithwaite family went extinct after the burning of Braithwaite Manor.

This doesn't seem to have anything to do with the English Turn area.
I could not find any other historical reference to the naming of Braithwaite, LA.

Braithwaite, Louisiana



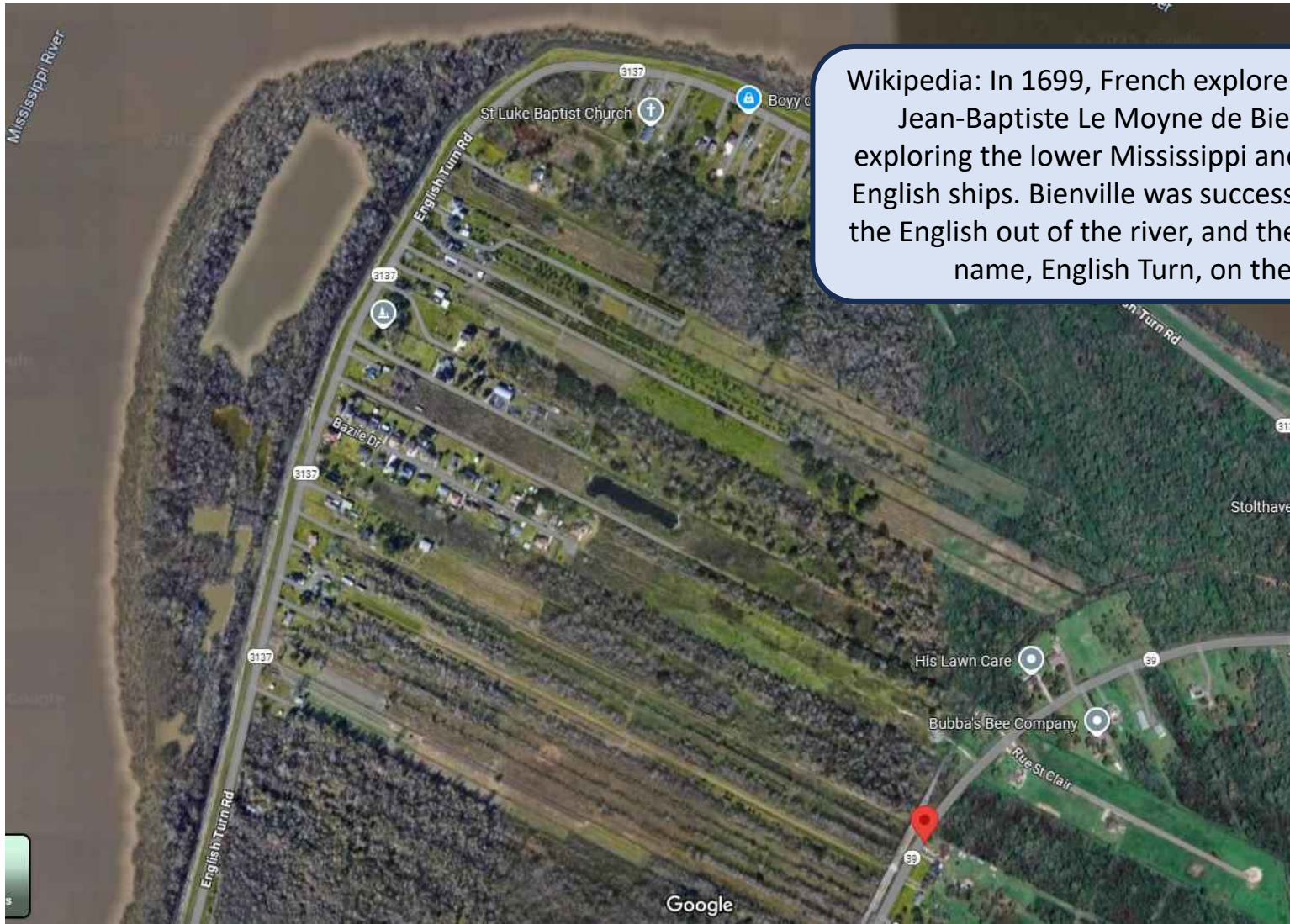
Artus Family Hunting in Braithwaite, LA

- The history of how members of the Artus family came about to go hunting in Braithwaite, LA is a wisp of fog in my memory, but my understanding was that my father, Henry Artus, Jr. served as accountant for several farmers in Braithwaite, including certainly Joseph “Butz” Seibert (because I witnessed dad having business discussions with Mr. Butz), and possibly with Charles Mancuso and Anthony Lagreco (since he seemed to have an ongoing friendship with them.) How my father came about to be the accountant for these farmers is unknown to me.
- My father, whom I will call Grampy (that is how Lisa would come to know her paternal grandfather), would wake me up to go hunting at around 5:30 am on a Saturday morning by knocking on my bedroom door and demanding that I get up. I had no choice but to go, even though I really did not enjoy hunting, and it also ruined my sleeping-in time on Saturday mornings.
- But actually, these were interesting adventure trips even if it involved LOTS of walking, LOTS of mosquito bites, and LOTS of 6-12 mosquito oil (gross stuff), and often, sweltering heat or biting cold. But I definitely didn’t enjoy killing little rabbits and squirrels, especially if it came down to me having to stick my knife into their necks to finish them off, or blowing half the animal away with a bad shot only to see them suffer the last minute of their lives in pain and fear.
- The Artus family members that I am aware went hunting in Braithwaite, LA were: Henry Artus Sr., Henry Artus Jr. (Grampy), John Artus (me), Gretchen Artus (my sister) and Daniel Artus (my son). Dan did not actually hunt, but went shooting with us one time and did not like it at all. We entered the woods one day to take a couple of practice shots with those 12 gauge shotguns, and Dan got scared half to death by the noise. Either Gretchen or I had to walk Dan out and stay with him until the others finished hunting (really, just practice shooting). Gretchen did only squirrel hunting. Only Grampy and I (as far as I am aware) went rabbit, duck, and deer hunting in Braithwaite.
- A great deal of the rabbit hunting that I did with Grampy was done with the invaluable help of Blackie, our beagle dog. Well, rabbit hunting, the way we did it was impossible without a dog to spook the rabbits into running so we could see and shoot at them.
- Grampy and I also did some dove hunting, but we did not hunt dove in Braithwaite (for whatever reason that I am not aware.) We hunted dove on some public property, but I have no idea where that was. Possibly in the Kenner, LA area, but I am just guessing at that.



English Turn

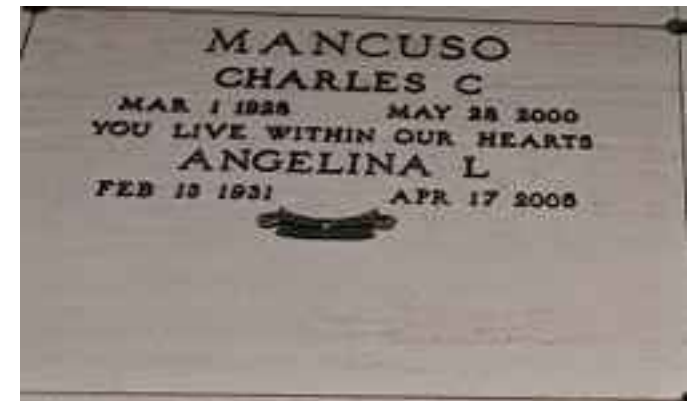
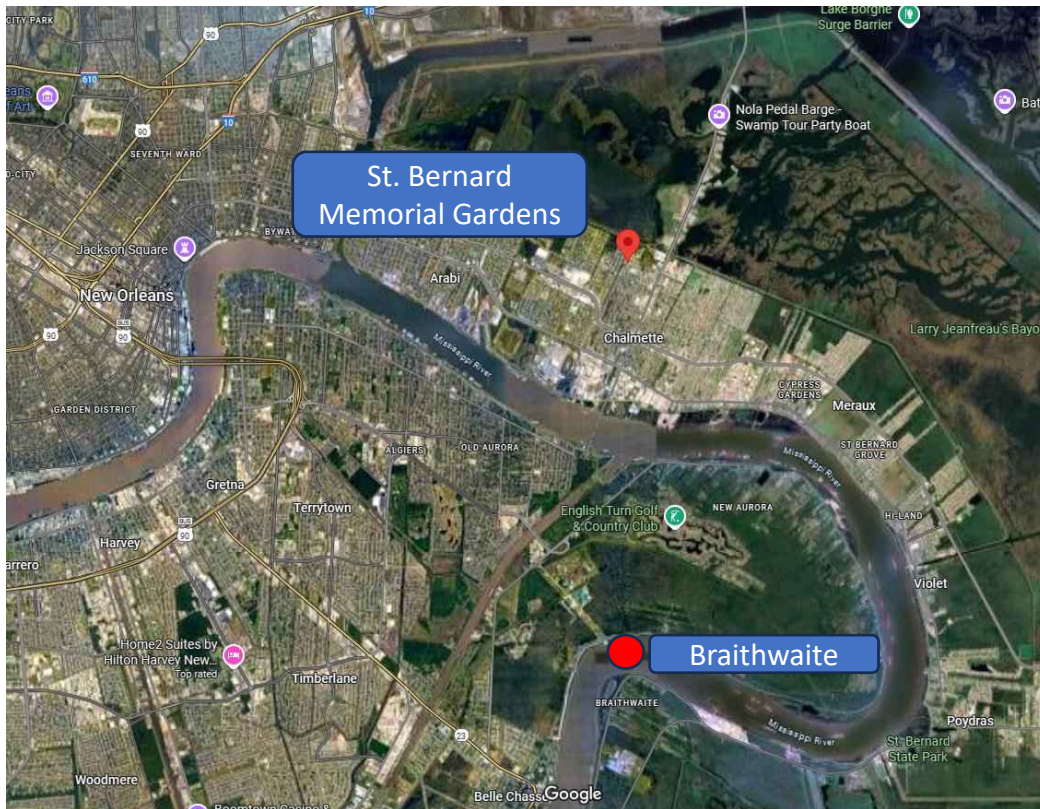
Throughout eons of time, when the Mississippi River would flood, rich sentiment would settle in the lands beyond the banks of the river. These are the rich farm lands that farmers use to raise bountiful crops of vegetables, many of which go to markets in New Orleans. It seems that since many years ago, farm properties were sold and worked in these long thin strips of land.



Wikipedia: In 1699, French explorers Sauvolle and Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville were exploring the lower Mississippi and encountered English ships. Bienville was successful in ordering the English out of the river, and the event left the name, English Turn, on the bend.

Charlie Mancuso

This first person from Braithwaite that I recall being introduced to was Charlie Mancuso. He was an olive- or burnt-skinned person that had a VERY hard Cajun accent. So hard an accent it was that I could hardly ever understand what the guy was saying. We would stop by and visit him inside his house, and sometimes he would say something to me (which I could hardly understand) and I would just shrug my shoulders. He must have known that I did not understand him, and he would just laugh. I wish I had photos of Charlie, he was a nice guy, always smiling and laughing.



Anthony Lagreco

Another Braithwaite person that Grampy had some kind of dealings with was Anthony Lagreco. I must have met Anthony a few times, but I do not remember him at all. All I can remember is that we would stop by Charlie Mancuso's house, talk about where the squirrels were, and sometimes we would get back in the car and go to Anthony Lagreco's property to hunt squirrels. Apparently, it was OK for us to hunt on Anthony's land, but we HAD to get Anthony's approval first before we walked onto his property to hunt. I did not like hunting on the Lagreco place, since it was kind of narrow, and the houses were just too close for comfort.



Squirrel Hunting on the Lagreco Property



Lagreco House

St Luke Baptist Church

Boyy oh Boy

St Andrew Baptist Church

Squirrel Hunting

Lagreco Woods that we hunted in

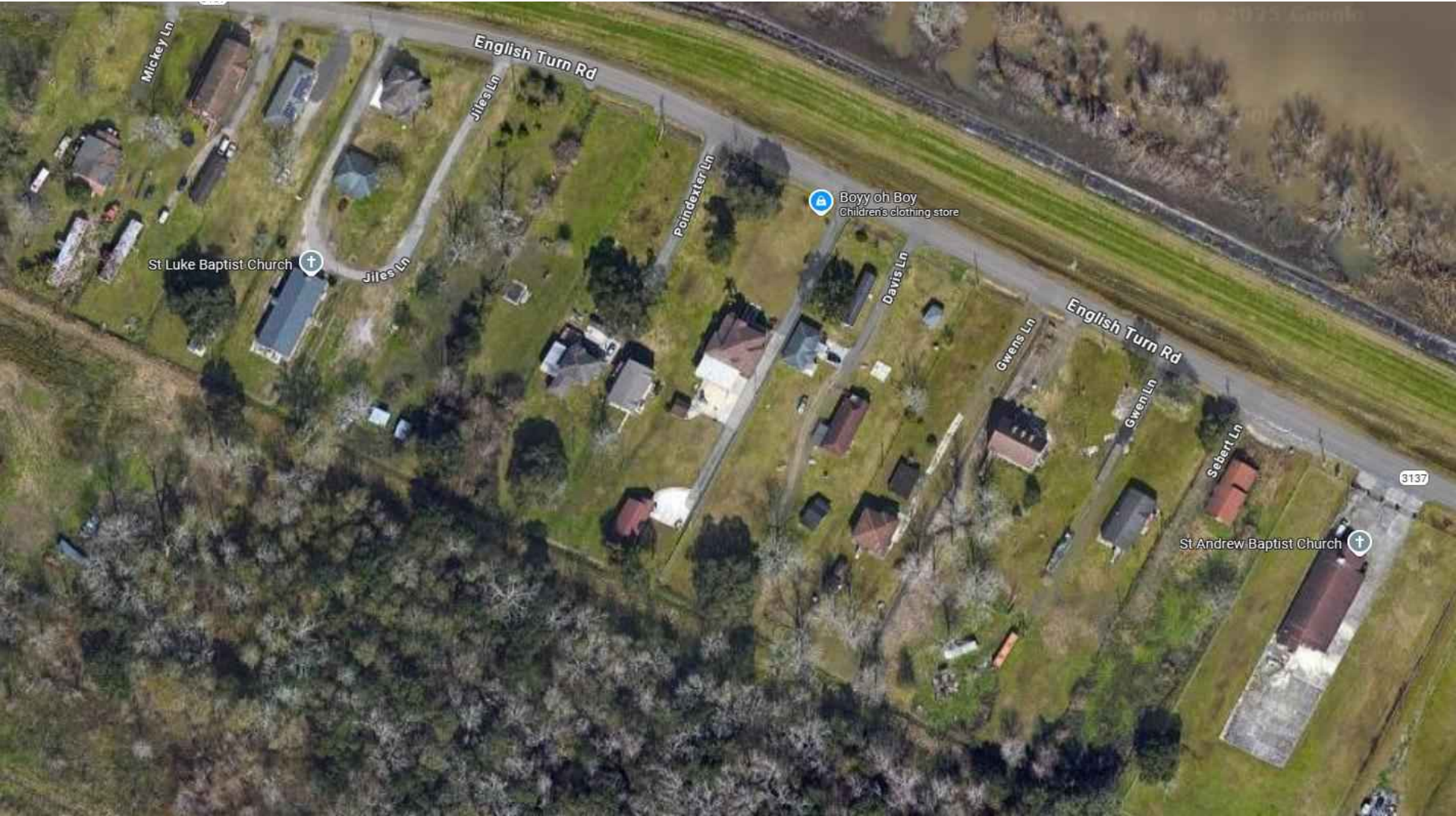
Lagreco Property Line ?

I do not know what the actual Lagreco property line was. I imagine it must include the house plus the woods we hunted in. I only hunted on the Lagreco property a few times. It seems like we only went there if the other areas were "hunted out." My sister, Gretchen, says that whenever she went hunting with Grampy, they hunted only on the Lagreco property.

LeCount N Eggs Farm Co

Squirrel Hunting on the Lagreco Property

The part of the property that had woods was bounded on one side by the back yards of homes and a church or two. I often found myself wandering within eyesight (through the woods) of people's houses with all their junk cars, tractors, and cows in their back yards. When they heard us shooting, sometimes someone would yell at us to remind us that there were houses nearby.



Butz Seibert

We sometimes started our hunts on Seibert property. Grampy would pull into the driveway behind Butz' parents house. If we were hunting in the woods behind Butz' farm land, then we would park by the barn, and walk back to those woods. But we did most of our hunting off of Hwy 39 that went to Scarsdale, LA. Often, when we finished our hunting, Grampy would stop by Butz' or Charlie's house, show them what we got, and they would always offer Grampy to go pick some vegetables for himself, either from inside the barn, or from out in the fields. If we had bad luck at duck hunting, Butz would sometimes offer Grampy a couple of ducks or so from the freezer in the barn.

The Muddy Mississippi

One year, we went to the Seibert house for New Years. The open lifestyle of life in the country was on display (in my mind) when the kids, Skipper, Randy, Robin, and other kids were throwing bottle rockets at each other. On other days, Skipper and Randy would think nothing about taking their guns in the back and doing some target practice.



The Seibert Property

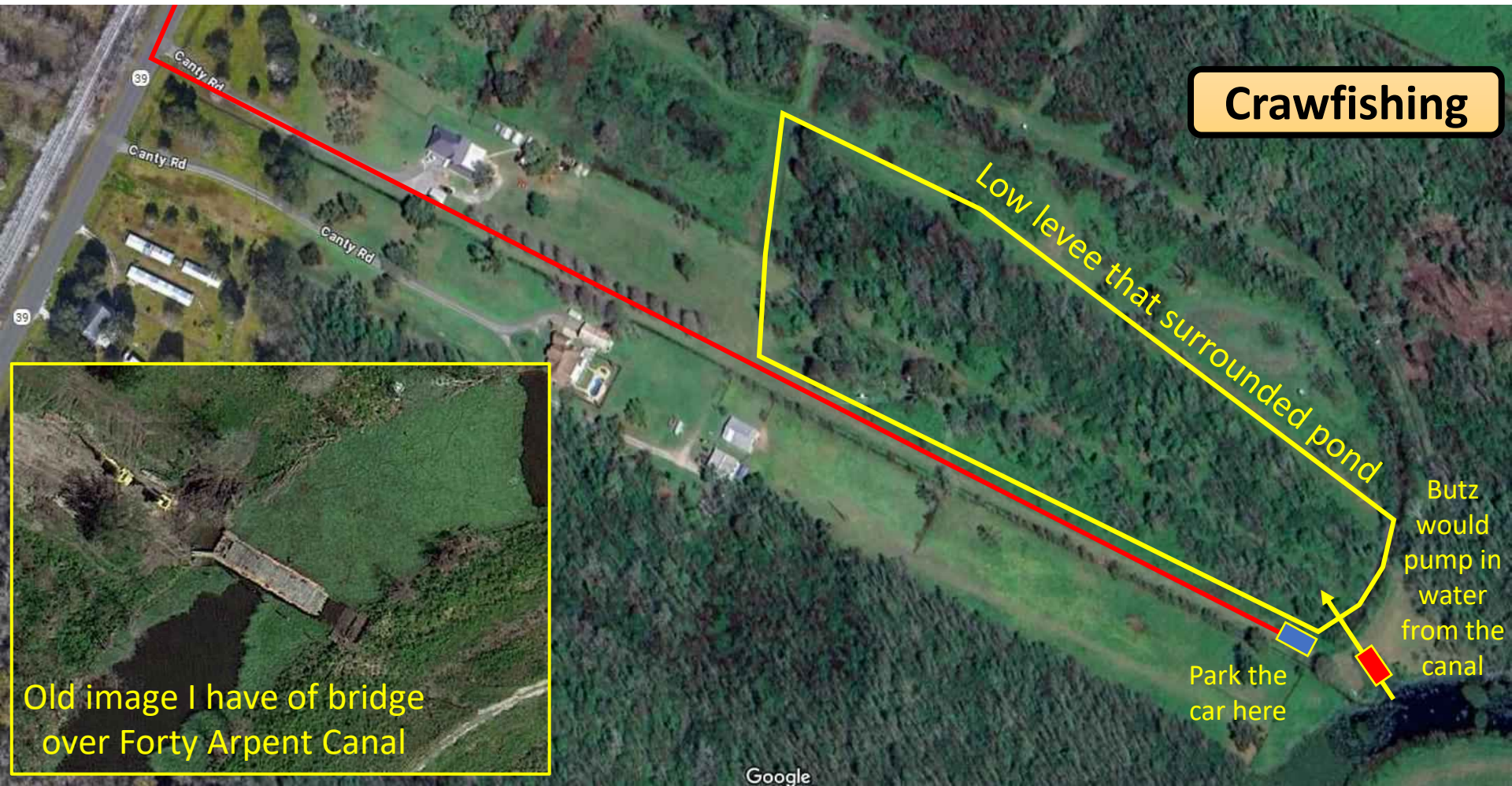
Squirrel and Rabbit Hunting

I do not know what the actual Seibert property lines were, but I assume they were something like this, since these lines include the woods we hunted in, plus the old crawfish farm, as well as what is indicated as the current R. Seibert Construction Company. We spent a lot of time on the Seibert property hunting for rabbits and squirrels. But, mostly squirrels, since there was a different area that we went to where the dog could run more widely to chase down rabbits.

Butz Seibert operated a commercial crawfish farm for some time (some years). Grampy and the family LOVED going crawfishing there and then coming home to cook up a batch of crawdaddies. Butz would pump water in from the Forty Arpent Canal into the leveed part of the farm to flood it and thus provide a favorable environment for crawfish. It would not be unusual, on good days, for us to bring back 7 or 8 onion sacks (maybe 40 pounds each) full of crawfish.

The Crawfish Pond

Here's the old crawfish pond (dried up and wooded now.) None of the houses and other structures shown here existed back then. We would drive in from Hwy 39, down the dirt road to the Forty Arpent Canal and park there. Butz had a pump that would bring in water from the canal to flood the leveed pond (my best guess of pond's boundary shown in yellow outline.) It is also at this point (where the pump was) where Grampy and I would cross the canal on a rickety wooden bridge that Butz maintained, to go into the open marshes to hunt ducks.



Rabbit Hunting

Park the car here

Seemingly endless walking

Grampy would park the car on Hwy 39, and we would walk the long way along the power lines to get to the area that we hunted in. I do not know who owned this land, nor the extent of it that we hunted. But it was large enough that the dog could run wide without fear of getting onto someone's house/yard.

This is where Grampy and I did most of our rabbit hunting

Power Lines

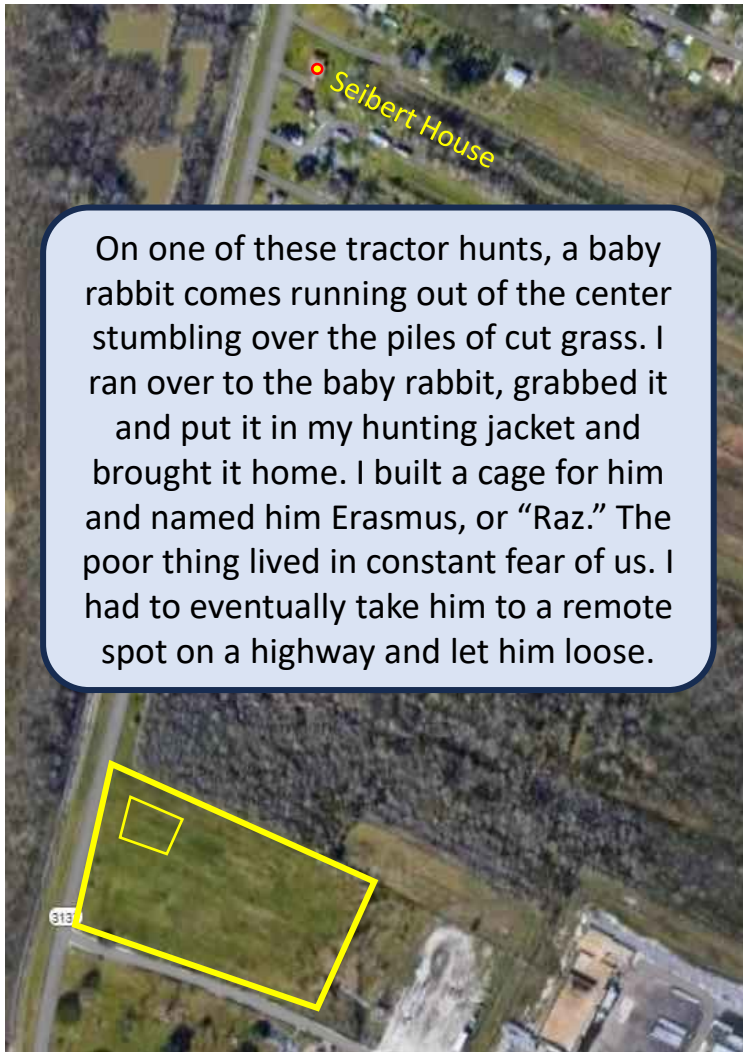
There were a few times when we overshot our limit of squirrel or rabbit where either Grampy or I had to walk out to the road to "scout" the area for Fish & Wildlife agents. If we saw nothing, an "all-clear" signal was made to the other person who would run quickly out of the woods with the loot to get into the getaway car.

Blackie was an unbelievably good rabbit dog. He would dive into the thickets, scare up a rabbit hiding in there, and we had to be on the ready to get a shot or two off before the rabbit ran away from us. If we missed, one of us would run behind the dog, and the other would wait in place for the rabbit to return to its home, which it would almost always do.

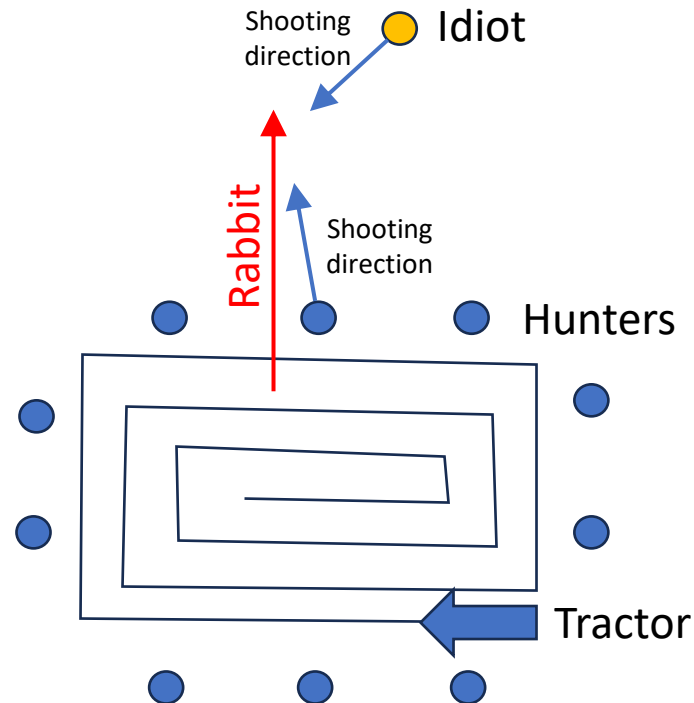
Woods that we hunted rabbit in

One time, Blackie was getting tired and slowing down. Well, Grampy wasn't finished hunting, and wasn't going to take no for an answer from Blackie. He reached down and pinched Blackie's ear. Blackie let out a yelp, but then followed Grampy's instructions to get into more thickets to scare up the rabbits there.

Tractor Hunting



Every so often, Grampy would say that we're going tractor hunting for rabbits. Mr. Butz seemed to be the organizer of these hunts. And I got the impression that these were not exactly in accordance with hunting laws. Around 8 to 10 hunters would gather at Butz' house and drive down the road a bit from Butz' house. The spot I show here is just a guess where this might have occurred. A tractor driver would start circling around a square of tall brush about 7 feet tall and start circling towards the center. On every pass, the tractor would cut down the size of the area being cut, and scared rabbits would come running out.



One time, some idiot insisted on staying on the perimeter of the area and shoot inwards toward the center of the area, putting other hunters in the line of fire. Heaven help the guy if he shot at someone and hit them. He would not have made it back to his car.

Squirrel Hunting on the River Bank



If the squirrel population in our normal hunting spots had dwindled down to the point that it was hard to find any, our last resort was to hunt this strip of land between the Mississippi River and the river levee. This place was interesting because it was different from other areas we hunted, and you could walk right up to the river, if you wanted to (the levee was far away.) I did not like this place because there was a lot of driftwood from tall trees that had been washed in by the river, or had been blown over by storms, or knocked over by the force of the river. In some spots there were really huge piles of driftwood. It looked somewhat surrealistic – like an other-worldly place. It was just too hard to get around, and it was too open. Squirrels could see you coming from a long ways away.

Grampy's Way of Hunting Squirrel

Grampy took hunting seriously, and was an excellent shot. I think he loved squirrel hunting most of all. We had to be in place in the woods for sunup. So, he would time our arrival to the hunting areas just as light was beginning to show in the morning. Right at sunup is a time of the day when the squirrels were active in the trees. We would be walking as a pair through the woods, and when Grampy spotted a squirrel moving in a tree, we would sprint over towards that tree. Grampy just had an eye for spotting squirrels in the trees that I just didn't have. We had to move fast in order to "stun" the squirrel into staying fixed in the tree and not run off. The squirrel would see us coming and would hide behind the opposite side of the tree. Then, it was my turn to slowly walk in a big circle around the tree, so that the squirrel would focus on me, and move around the opposite side of the tree from me, so as to be in line of site of Grampy who would then take a shot.

John walks
around to the
other side of
the tree

John



Grampy

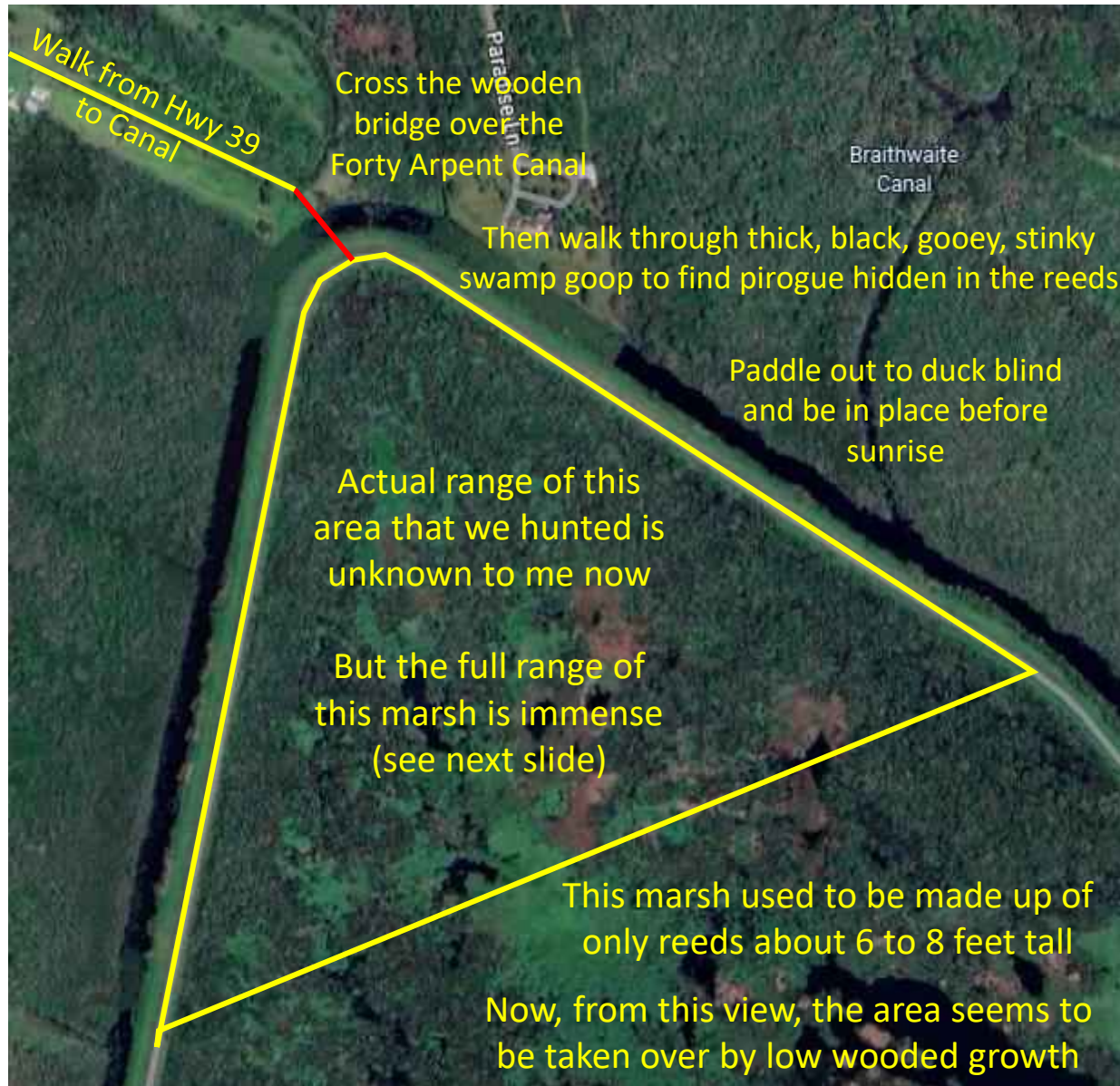
Before the squirrel hunting season opens, squirrels were not used to seeing hunters, and therefore were pretty careless, and did not seem to worry about seeing people walking in the woods. It only took 1 or 2 weekends before they were much more cautious and would not move around so much when a person was spotted walking in the woods.



The squirrel sees John
walking and hides behind
the opposite side of tree
When it comes within
view of Grampy, he then
takes a shot

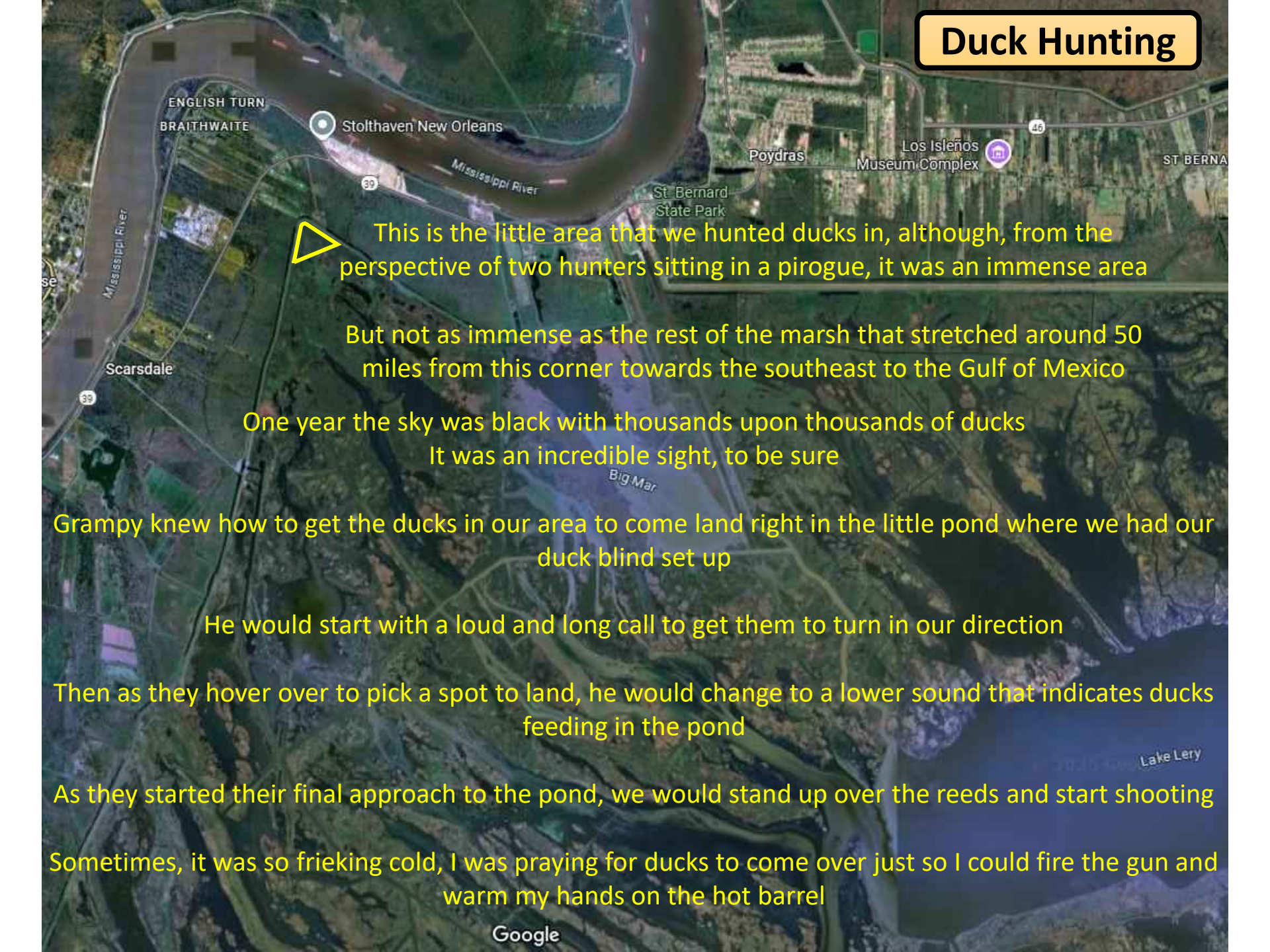


Duck Hunting in the Marshes



One time, Grampy got Mr. Butz to help him play a joke on me. Butz was using a dredging machine to dredge out pirogue slews (small canals) in the marsh. It was probably around 9am and we had finished what we were doing in the marsh (probably building our duck blind.) Grampy took the pirogue to the levee and was talking with Butz. I was walking across the marsh to get to the levee. At one point, Grampy got in Butz' truck on the levee and they started driving off. I thought they had forgotten about me, and here I am running as fast as I could through the marsh, yelling to them to wait for me. They got a good laugh out of that. I really thought I was going to be abandoned there in the marsh to spend time with the friendly alligators roaming around.

Duck Hunting



This is the little area that we hunted ducks in, although, from the perspective of two hunters sitting in a pirogue, it was an immense area

But not as immense as the rest of the marsh that stretched around 50 miles from this corner towards the southeast to the Gulf of Mexico

One year the sky was black with thousands upon thousands of ducks
It was an incredible sight, to be sure

Grampy knew how to get the ducks in our area to come land right in the little pond where we had our duck blind set up

He would start with a loud and long call to get them to turn in our direction

Then as they hover over to pick a spot to land, he would change to a lower sound that indicates ducks feeding in the pond

As they started their final approach to the pond, we would stand up over the reeds and start shooting

Sometimes, it was so frieking cold, I was praying for ducks to come over just so I could fire the gun and warm my hands on the hot barrel

Ducks we Hunted in Braithwaite, LA



Teal



Pintail



Canvasback



Mallard

Grampy actually had a LP record, like this, with which he would practice his duck calling



Spoonbill



Coot (we called it Pouldeau)



Hooded Merganser



Wood Duck

Beauty in Motion

Watching ducks come in for a water landing was such a beautiful thing to behold. They are so graceful and agile, responding instantly to any little shift in the winds. I was simply in awe, watching them come in. Unfortunately for them, this is also their most vulnerable position. It is at this very point, when Grampy and I would suddenly stand above the reeds surrounding the duck blind, aim at the ducks, and fire. Upon seeing us pop-up, the ducks would basically put on their brakes to try to change direction and fly off away from us. Their vulnerable underside is presented directly at us, which offers the hunter a large target to hit.



Some online pictures of
what I remember the
marsh to look like

Louisiana Marsh Land



As you saw in previous pictures, it appears that the marsh that we hunted in has been taken over by low wooded growth. That is a shame, because the marsh, when we were hunting there, was an immense, open, beautiful area.

Duck “Blinds”

This is what a typical Louisiana duck blind looks like. This one looks a little weather-worn and needs to be recovered with reeds.

By definition, a duck blind is a shelter, camouflaged with natural materials like reeds and grasses, and used by duck hunters to conceal themselves while hunting



Nobody “owns” these blinds. You just “claim” them for the day. They are just basically a wooden platform built on wooden 2 x 4s driven into the swamp mud. Grampy had one or two picked out that we would dress up for the season. Other people probably used the blind as well, when we did not have it claimed. In the place where we hunted ducks, we almost never saw other duck hunters.

This is what a typical Louisiana pirogue (aka Flat-Bottomed Canoe) looks like

Duck Hunting



If we shot some ducks and they fell in the marsh water, Grampy would let them lay there for maybe 10 or 15 minutes while we might still get some more shots off. But he didn't want to wait too long, because he was worried that gar fish would get the ducks for themselves.

Grampy had his own pirogue that he kept at the house. But typically, we would just use one of Butz' pirogues that were hidden under brush in the marsh. Sometimes, we would go to the marsh and would have to scrounge around in the dark looking for a hidden pirogue. There were usually around two hidden there. They were not in great condition, but at least they would float.

Of all the time we spent duck
hunting in the marsh, I never
saw a single alligator
But we did see lots of nutria

One time, Grampy and I went to the marsh about a week before duck hunting season started to refurbish our blind. Because the season had not opened yet, we could not take our guns with us. All we had were hammers, nails, and wood boards to build the blind.



The God-Awful Louisiana Nutria



When we finished, we started paddling back to the levee to go home. There was a nutria in the middle of the slew, and not moving as we approached, which was strange behavior for them. All of a sudden, probably about ten nutria come out of the reeds from both side to attack us in the pirogue. All we had were the paddles, so we started whacking those nutria as they tried to climb up into the pirogue. Who knows what they had in mind to do, but I guess we had whacked them well enough that they backed off, and we paddled our way out of there in a hurry. We've told this story to folks, and everybody thinks we were making the story up.

Duck Hunting Stories

Another time, Grampy and I went out to the marshes to build-up the dick blind in preparation for the up-coming duck hunting season. When we topped the levee surrounding the corner of the marshes where we hunted, we were shocked, shocked, I tell ya, to find ALL of the reeds in the marsh, as far as you could see, chopped down to the water. There must have been an over population of nutria over the summer months, and they had eaten everything in sight. It was just an absolute catastrophe. We could do nothing more than to about-face and head back to the car.

On another occasion, Grampy must have had a terrible itch to go duck hunting, despite an approaching HURRICANE that was scheduled to make landfall THAT AFTERNOON. Nanny (my mom) could, apparently, do nothing to dissuade Grampy from heading out into the open (no protection whatsoever) marshes. When we arrived at the marsh, it was quite breezy, with lots of ominous-looking dark clouds. As you can imagine, the weather situation was only going to turn worse – no way it was going to get any better!! It didn't take long for Grampy to realize that no sensible duck was going to be flying around this day. We were there maybe a couple of hours, when Grampy decided to head back home. We climbed into the pirogue and started paddling towards the take-out point. By this time, the winds had picked up SIGNIFICANTLY. This would normally not be a big deal, but for the low gunwales (sides) of the pirogue which are just a couple of inches above water. Any water whipped up by winds can easily fill up a pirogue. That's what we started experiencing as we were paddling like mad down a slew to get out. At one point, it became obvious that we were about to be swamped (in which the pirogue fills with water to the point that it sinks.) Grampy started to panic. There was a very small hunting shack not far from us, so Grampy decided to make all haste to get to that shack to take refuge. We were only about 10 feet or so from this tiny shack, when the pirogue started going under. In my mind, it wasn't a big deal, because we had already paddled over to the side of the slew, where the water depth was just maybe 3-4 feet deep. We were going to get wet, but that was all. I grabbed my gun and got out. We made it to the shack where we put our stuff down so we could bail out the pirogue, get it floating again, and try again to get out of the marsh. We were able to do so. But this was one of the very few times I ever saw Grampy in a true panic state.

Deer Hunting

Dogs (with runner) chasing deer in this direction



I only went deer hunting twice. I hated it. You had to sit in your spot on the perimeter for HOURS without moving. It was terribly boring, until you heard the dogs coming towards your area, and then you knew that a deer was nearby. These deer hunts were organized affairs involving about a dozen or so hunters, and a dog runner that I think was hired for the hunt. Hunters were spread around the perimeter, and I remember being told "DO NOT let the deer past the perimeter. (Meaning: if the deer comes near you , KILL IT.) But above all DO NOT HIT THE DOGS (nor the dog runner!)"

On one of the hunts I was on, after the hunt was over, I heard the fellas laughing about the fact that the deer had run across the golf course, which was in this area somewhere.



I am just guessing about what was the boundary of our deer hunting area, but it was a large area, for sure

This is the old duck hunting marsh area

Mumphy Ditch

Google

Deer Hunting

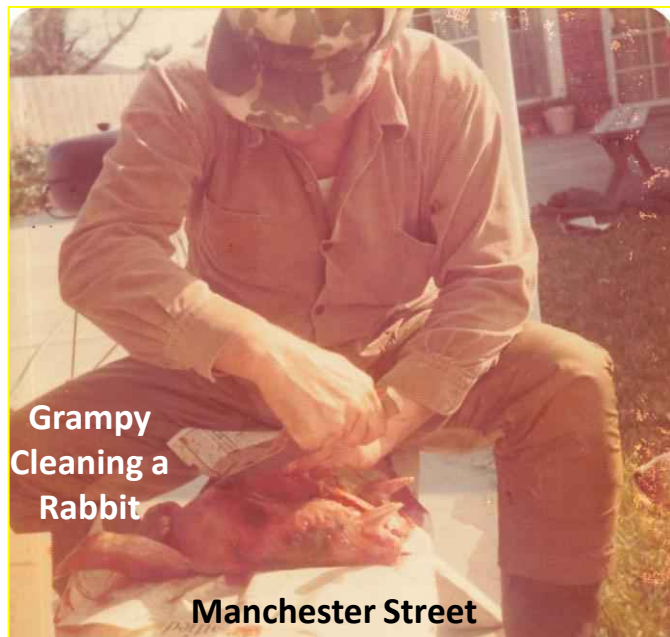
I remember that the dogs being used on deer hunts were called “Tennessee Walkers”
But a google search only turned up a breed known as Treeing Walker Coonhound



After one hunt, I got a glimpse of the two or three dogs used for the hunt before the dog runner left. My memory is of a very tall reddish-colored hound, similar to this, but tall.



Wikipedia says “The Treeing Walker Coonhound was developed in the 19th century. John W. Walker and George Washington Maupin, two breeders from Kentucky, are credited with the breed's initial development through the selective breeding of foxhounds. The dogs were referred to as Walker Hounds and were used to hunt raccoons. In the 1852, a stolen black and tan dog named Tennessee Lead was crossed into the Walker hound line and greatly influenced the further development of the breed.”



Grampy
Cleaning a
Rabbit

Manchester Street



Squirrel Hunting

Tennessee Street



Bad Gun
Handling
Technique

Manchester Street



Rabbit Hunting

Tennessee Street

Crawfishing Stories

Grampy would often invite folks to come along on a crawfishing trip. Once we invited the neighbor across the street, Jim Liverette and his son Jimmy. We had a bunch of folks coming out, so we went in two cars. I drove the old Blue Chevy Nova, and Jim and Jimmy were in the back seat. Unbeknownst to us, Jimmy had brought a rubber snake with him. When we pulled up to the crawfish pond and parked and were getting out, Jimmy threw the rubber snake on his father's lap. Mr. Jim went absolutely white as a ghost and could not move, thinking this was a real snake. It took him an hour or so to calm down and enjoy the outing. I would not be surprised at all, if the snake actually belonged to Grampy and he got Jimmy to do the dirty deed.

On another trip, my High School Band buddy, Ray Lewis, came along. I was driving, and I swear to all that is good and true in this world, on the dirt road going to the crawfish pond, we rolled over a black water moccasin snake that had to be 3-4 inches in diameter. I looked in the rear-view mirror and saw it crawling across the road. Ray and I jumped out to go see if we killed it. We couldn't see it in the roadway. It crawled off into the weeds.

One time Jenny came along, and we had just put nets out and were picking them up for the first time. I was passing by Jenny when she picked up a net that had a small snake in it (probably a water moccasin). I ran to her and told her to put the net back in the water, which we did together. I used a stick to move it out of the net. We never saw any more snakes in nets that day.

Our favorite crawfish boilers (best at top):

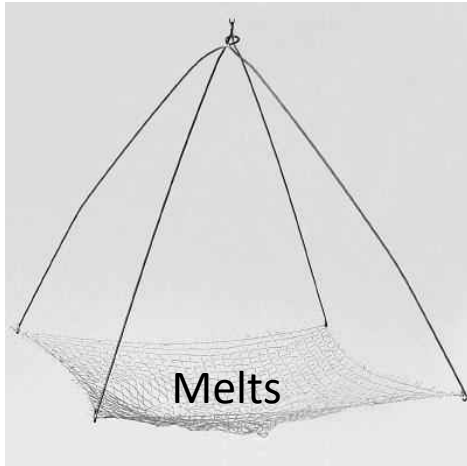
- Uncle Steve
- Grampy
- Cheli (not a Louisiana native, but a helluva good crawfish boiler)
- Kevin Abshire (Lake Charles / Fort Worth)



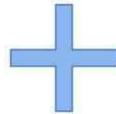
Water Moccasin

Cooking Up a Mess of Crawfish

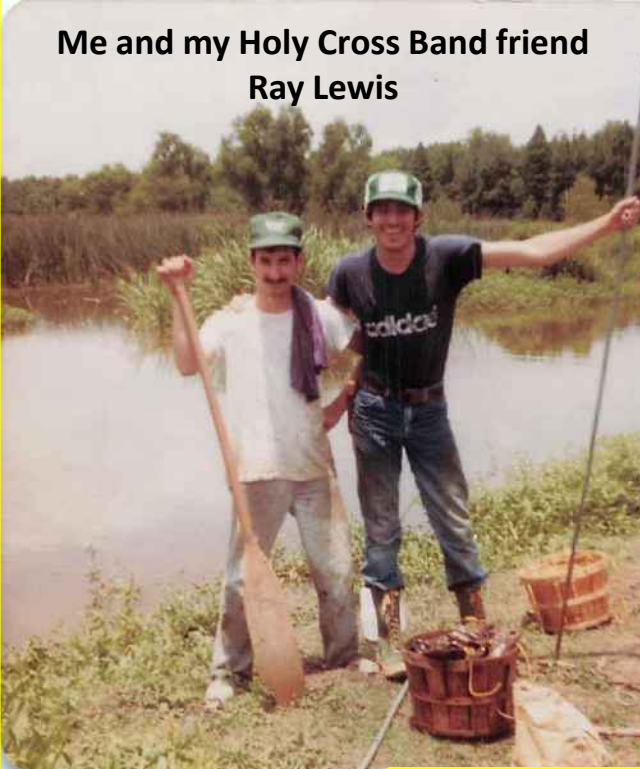
This is exactly the kind of crawfish net we would use when we went crawfishing



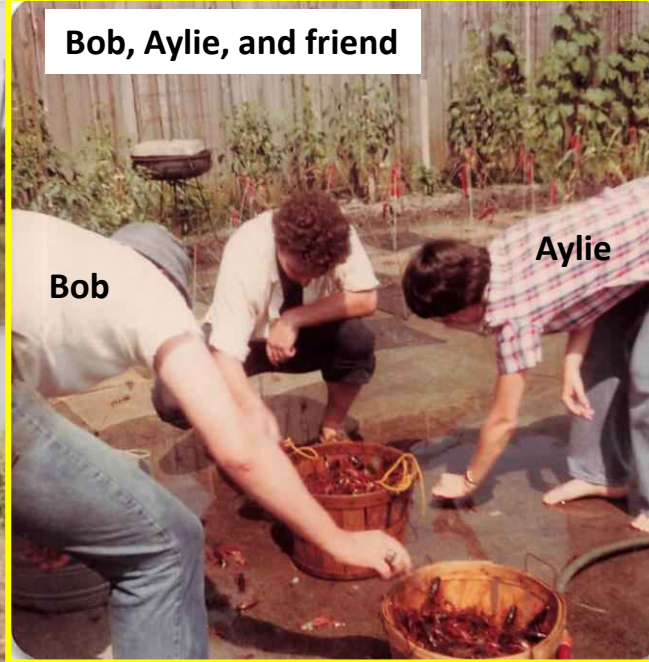
We would bait the nets with something called “melts.” With a little research I found that “beef melt bait is made from the spleen of a steer. This cut of meat is not commonly used for human consumption, but it has become a popular bait for catching alligators and catfish in the bayou.”



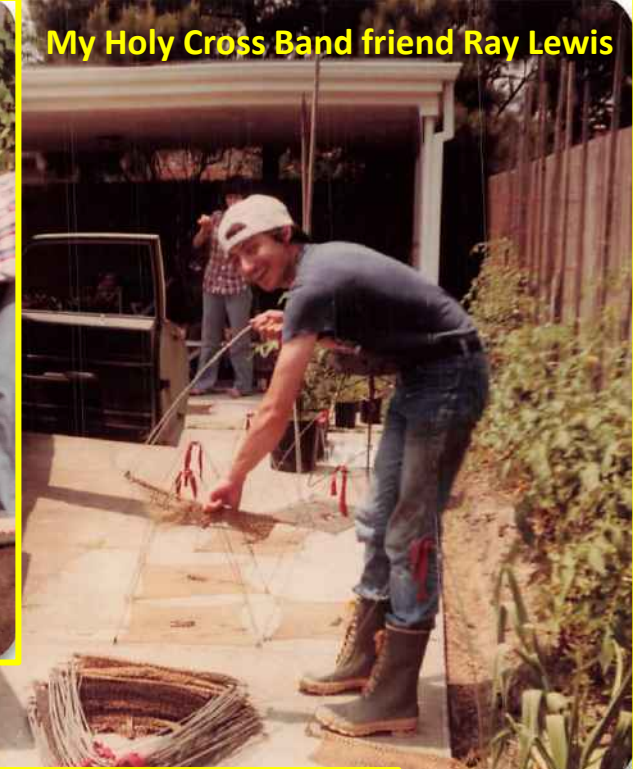
Me and my Holy Cross Band friend
Ray Lewis



Bob, Aylie, and friend



My Holy Cross Band friend Ray Lewis



Crawfishing

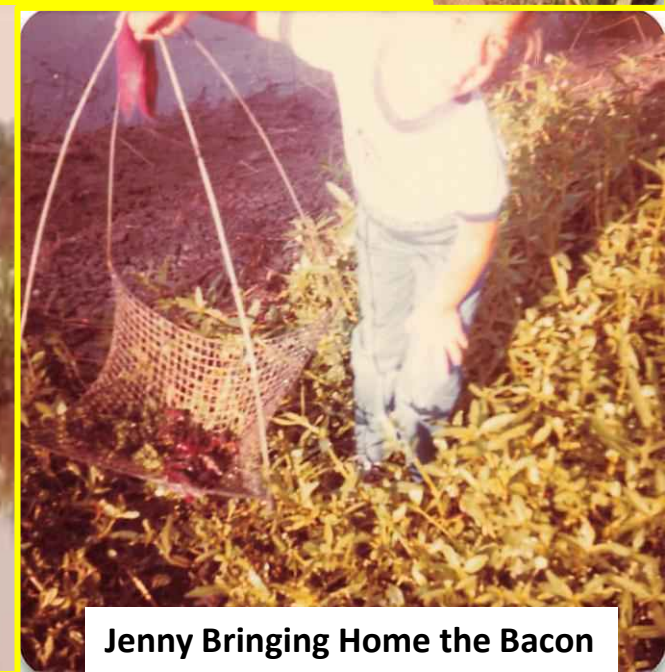
Cooking will
have to wait,
I'm hungry!



Expert Pirogueman Bob



Jenny Bringing Home the Bacon



Guns and Ammo

Grampy did a pretty good job of preparing me to use a shotgun in the woods. To start out with, I used a very simple, bolt-action, 0.410 inch bore, single-barrel shotgun. Obviously, the shells were small, and therefore the shot did not have much of a kick. It sounded like a large firecracker.



At some point in time, probably when I was around 14, I think, Grampy got me a Winchester Model 1400, 12-gauge, semi-automatic, single-barrel shotgun. I could load up to five shells in the gun. A 12-gauge shell packs a good wallop, and makes a hell of a loud bang, that leaves your ears ringing for a few minutes.



Here, you can see the difference between a .410 inch bore shell and a 12-gauge shell

Guns Safety

I took gun safety seriously. I always rested the gun down when crossing over or through a fence. I always avoided carrying the gun in a manner in which the barrel was pointed in the direction of someone. I always left the chamber open, the magazine empty, and the barrel clear whenever transporting the gun. Grampy warned me that any barrel obstruction, such as packing mud into the barrel during a fall, could be potentially catastrophic. I actually had this happen to me once. The Louisiana woods are often wet or damp, and a fall forward with the barrel down can easily lead to a packed barrel. I was alone, and very afraid of having a serious incident with the gun. So, I took it apart and used sticks to clean as much mud out of the barrel as I could.

I looked on line and found a site where they performed experiments with obstructions in shotgun barrels. This certainly proves that significant damage could possibly occur.

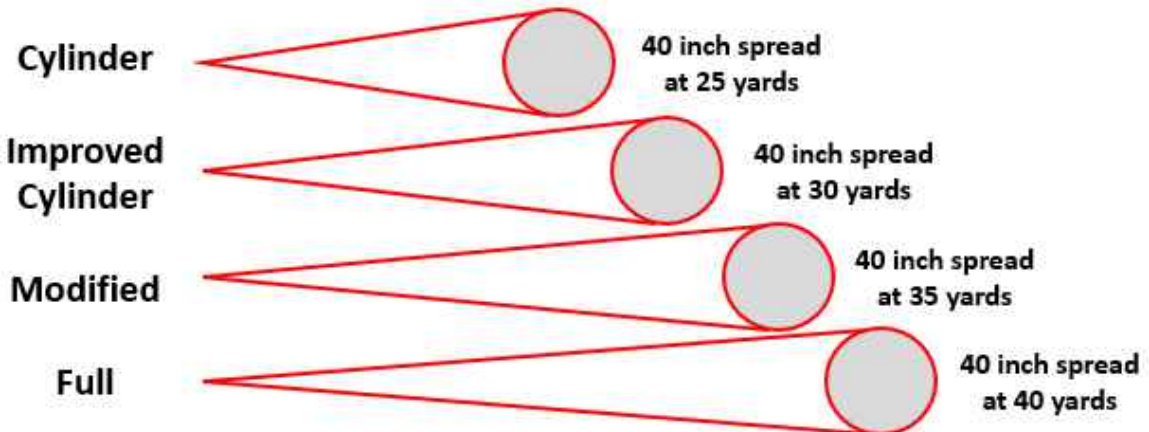


Grampy's Double Barrel Shotgun

Grampy used a Winchester Model 24 double-barrel, 12-gauge shotgun. He could whip that gun around like nobody's business, and get the shot off. The gun had one barrel with a modified choke (for a more open pattern at short range) and one barrel with a full choke (for a smaller, tighter pattern at long range). When firing against a fleeing target, such as a dove, he would first fire with the modified choke for the more close-in shot, and if he missed, he would then fire with the full choke since the target would be at a further range, so that the pattern would not be excessively open at the longer range.

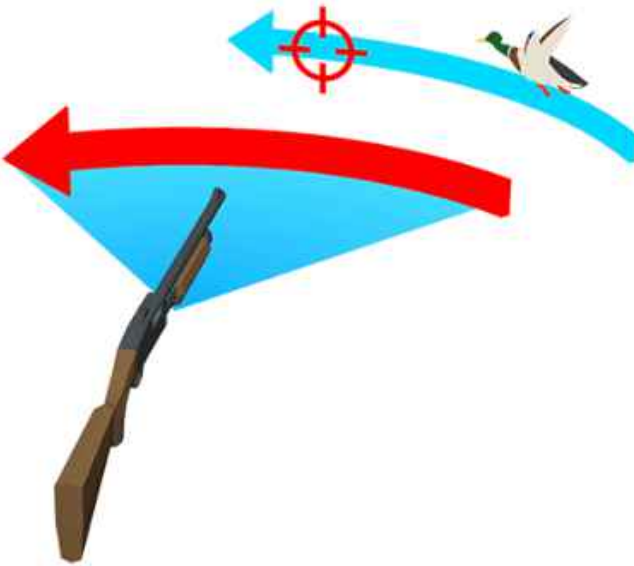
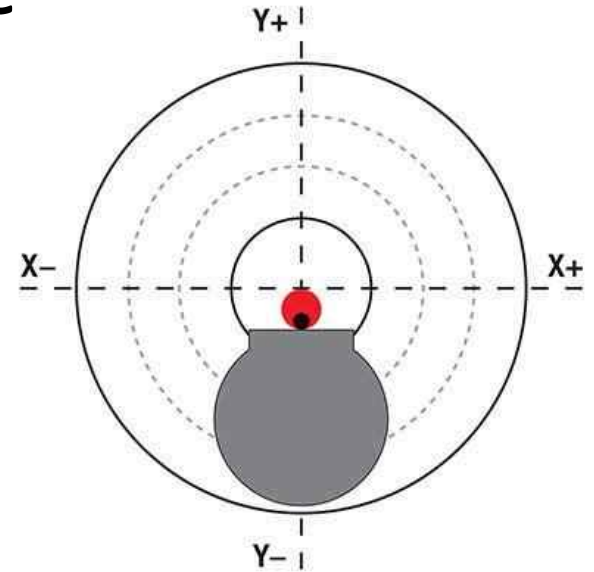


Popular Shotgun Choke Types



Shooting Technique

What Grampy did NOT do well for me was to explain how to properly aim a weapon. He explained how to put the bead on the target, but he did not explain how to line up the rear end of the barrel rib with the sighting bead and the end of the barrel, and line those up with the target. I know this sounds rudimentary when it's explained, but as a kid, I didn't see the geometry involved, and didn't pay close attention to the rear alignment with the shot path. If I had had that clear in my mind, I am sure I would have had much better kill performance than I did.



I also had very little experience with how to lead the aimpoint for side-moving (radial) targets. To get this right requires a lot of practice, and I simply did not have sufficient experience (practice time) with actual live targets. At times, I would get it right and get a kill. But more often than not, I would miss. It's simply a matter of trial-and-error practicing. There is just no other way around that.

One time I told Grampy that I thought the gun was misaligned, since I was getting so few kills. He just gave me this look of incredulity, and said "Give me that gun!" He instructed me to put an aluminum can on a tree trunk about 15 yards away. He took aim and put the pattern right on the can. He handed the gun back to me and simply said "There's nothing wrong with that gun," with the obvious deductive implication.

The Wonder of the Woods

There were a lot of things I did not like about going hunting, the sweltering heat, the biting cold, the endless walking carrying a heavy weapon, and most of all, the need to occasionally manually end the life of a creature. The concept of killing for survival was simply something lost in my generation, I believe.

What I DID enjoy was being out alone in nature - in the woods and in the swamp. It was just so peaceful and quiet. In the woods, whenever Grampy suggested that we split up (to cover more ground while squirrel hunting), I would occasionally take advantage of that to find a nice tree to sit under, and a few times to just doze off to sleep – only to be rudely awoken by Grampy’s screams of “John – where are you? Get over here, quick.” This could only mean one thing, Grampy had found a nest of squirrels (meaning 2 or 3 in one spot) and he needed my help to get as many as we could.

One other thing I liked about being in the woods was seeing the sun crest over the horizon in a blaze of fire in the treetops. The tall pecan trees, with their bright green leaves were especially pretty when the yellow sunlight broke on them.

There was one particular spot in the woods on either the Seibert or Lagreco properties, where there was a huge oak tree with an enormous spread of branches, maybe 50 feet across. Because of the dense canopy of dark green leaves, nothing could grow under that umbrella. So, popping put of the thick, briar-nested woods into this small dark meadow under that tree was refreshingly nice. I loved it when our movements put us in that area. While Grampy hardly ever lingered in one spot for any length of time, for me it was just a delight to at least pass by this sight, it was so curious a thing.

This image to the right is about as close as I could find to show you what I mean. The tree in this image is larger than the one I remember, but you get the idea.



The Serenity of the Swamp

Being out in the swamp was also a unique experience for a city boy. With few-to-no trees around, the sense of space was just enormous – a wide-open sky, and beautiful vistas of water and reeds. There were, of course, down sides, especially in winter. In Louisiana, Teal season opened up early, sometimes in August (if I remember correctly), and the heat was oppressive. But we did most of our duck hunting in the late fall and early winter, and those times, on an open marsh, with the wind blowing, were bitter cold (for a southern boy.) Not to mention the thick clouds of mosquitoes that were endlessly harassing us (me) while we silently, and without movement sat or squatted on the duck blind platform for hours on end. Sometimes, when there were no ducks in sight, I entertained myself (in a twisted way) by watching the mosquitoes migrate towards my upper thigh, where it was nice and warm, I suppose, to feast on me. I waited until there was a thick collection of them trying to reach my skin through my thick hunting pants, and then I would splat my hand nice and hard at them all and try to squash as many as I could in one whack. There was a simple sense of joy to this when thinking of how efficient I was being by killing so many of them with one move. Nevertheless, I couldn't help thinking that in the large scheme of things in that vast swamp, those couple of dozen or so mosquitoes would easily be replaced by more to come in the next 15 seconds or so.

This is a nice image that I found on the internet to give you a sense of what I see in my mind when I remember piroguing around in the marshes of southern Louisiana.



Dove Hunting

I do not recall Grampy and I ever going dove hunting in Braithwaite, for whatever reason. If, I had to guess, I would think that the dove hunting trips we made were in Kenner, LA. I remember it was a good drive away, and it was public land, since there were usually other dove hunters there.

The grass/brush was just above a persons head, with a few clearings here and there where you could scare up a covey of doves simply by walking around. I was too young to figure out how it worked, but somehow, hunters knew to not get too close to each other, maybe in order for each hunter to have “claim” over a certain area of ground, or because it was just too dangerous being too close together. But, I do remember Grampy saying specifically to NEVER shoot in the grass/brush, or even in the air through the top of the grass. The only proper shot was one in which you had full sky in the background, or free open space for as far as the eye can see. If there were trees in the line of sight in the distance that was ok. But never let a shot off that you do not have clear vision of where the pellets were going. I remember often hearing pellets come raining down around us, but by the time they have arced up into the sky and come back down, I believe their velocity would have been non-lethal.

One time, Grampy took a pellet in the bridge of the nose. He got really mad at the hunter that fired at head-level (the top of the grass/brush) and Grampy yelled at the guy that he had been hit. The guy yelled something back, like an apology, I guess. Grampy HATED hunting on these public lands where some hunters didn't know or understand proper rules of safe hunting.



The End
Hope You Enjoyed the Trip

