



**THE GREAT
BB GUN
WAR
OF 1983**



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It was the summer of 1983 in an outskirt field of a small-town trailer park in Michigan. There among the fields and forest, a war began. It was not a war of attrition, nor a war of conquering land, nor a war between two superpowers. Nope, this was a war born purely out of boredom. Yes, a war between two groups of 11 to 13-year-old boys with way too much time on their hands, BB guns and not much common sense. It was a recipe for disaster indeed. Eat up!

The back portion of the trailer park had an open grass field. It was probably about 120 yards long and about 60 yards wide. When war wasn't declared, all of us kids were in the field playing baseball, football or kickball. Behind the trailers and across the field was the wooded area. It was quite big, at least 40 acres or more with a stream running through it and a huge pond. At the edge of the woods and field was the ledge. It was basically where the field area ended and the woods began, but there was the ledge that created a border. It was as if years ago the field sunk 10 feet along the trees.

Back in those days, paintball and Airsoft weren't a thing or at least we had never heard of them and we certainly didn't have the equipment. What we did have were BB gun rifles and millions of little copper BBs. These were guns we had received for Christmas or birthday gifts at one time or another. BB guns were something that every young man got from their fathers, grandfathers or uncles. It was the start of learning how to be a great hunter one day. It was to hone your marksmanship abilities by knocking tin cans off a fence at 20 feet away....or chasing the neighborhood cat away (of course I never did that).

Most kids got the basic of all BB guns; the Red Rider or the Daisy Carbine type that mimic the lever action rifles that tamed The Wild West. It was a one trick pony with one swing of the lever to load a BB and get the spring air ready to fire. But these were no joke; they could launch a BB around 150-200 yards. I, on the other hand, had one of the more powerful of BB guns; the Powerline series, which was a multi-pump pneumatic that you could pump up to ten times for maximum PSI and BB carnage. That baby could shoot a BB almost 300 yards and penetrate sheds! No joke.

There were eleven of us trailer park kids involved in the great war of '83 that day...and one, I'll call, the outsider. The outsider was Billy. I call him the outsider because honestly, no one liked him. Sure that sounds mean, but this kid was annoying, to say the least. His father was the manager of the trailer park and he was not liked by anyone. He was a tyrant, a dictator and a pain in the ass. No adults liked him, and no kids liked him or his kid. So, none of the kids wanted to play with the outsider.

During our BB gun wars, the outsider would decide for himself to join in the fight, even though he wasn't invited and wasn't a part of anyone's team. He would go around shooting anyone and everyone he saw. He would laugh, taunt and shoot at random. We tried to ignore him the best we could, but it was hard at times. He would give away other's positions, tell others where people were hiding and shoot into the woods without knowing who he was shooting at and where. It was annoying and frustrating. My only thought at the time was, 'someday he's gonna get it.' I didn't realize that someday...was today.

Instead of just a 12-year-old boy in some small-town Michigan woods, I was a highly trained Navy SEAL sniper in the jungles of Vietnam. I was a trained killer. A force to be reckoned with. Slowly and quietly I pulled the bolt back on my pump BB gun rifle to load another beautifully bright round copper BB. The hot Saturday afternoon sun shined down upon it and made the copper gleam and the sweat on my forehead shimmer.

In full camouflage clothing, I laid in the dense woods hidden under a fallen tree covered in deep green moss. Pushing the bolt forward and the BB into the chamber, I pulled the pump out and in, then out and in again.

Two pumps; that's all I was allowed. I had a more powerful, more modern style of BB gun rifle. The other guys had their replica lever action BB rifles. Since my gun had the ability to send a BB through a house (sort of), I was only allowed two pumps. This was war, but hey, we had rules.

As I lay hidden under the downed tree, my rifle loaded and pumped, I waited for the next victim to come into my iron sights. I scanned the area and listened for anyone to come into range.

My victims came and went that day. I was able to get five confirmed kills. Of course, a kill only lasts about five minutes of playing dead once you were hit, then you could get back into the fight. There was really only one main rule, aside from my two-pump maximum, and that was, no hits above the neck. You see, we didn't have or use protective gear (and the most crucial of what we should have had) and we didn't use any kind of eye protection (see, told you). Looking back at it now, yes, of course we were idiots. I can honestly and luckily say that none of us lost an eye. Thank God!

The sun started to set on the day. The temp was still in the 70s and a gentle breeze was blowing. Everyone was beat, dirty, sweaty, hungry, and had been shot at least a dozen times. We all decided that it was time to call a truce and head for home. We knew that it was dinnertime and we were ready for it. We came out of the bushes and trees and made our way to the edge of the woods. We gathered as a group along the border of the woods and the open field.

As we gathered at the ledge, we were laughing and telling stories about fantastic shots, how many people we shot, where we were shot, how our beautiful guns operated and how the battles were reminiscent of the great ones of WWII.

We made our way down the ledge and into the open field still talking about the day's scuffles. As we walked towards our homes, we heard...him, the outsider. He was yelling all kinds of insults at us and even tried to shoot at us. Fortunately for us, we were too far away from him at that point. His BBs missed us, but unfortunately we could still hear his stupid mouth yapping! And that's when it happened. Something came over me. Something evil in nature I guess I would describe it as.

We were probably at least 50 yards away from the ledge where the outsider stood. He was continually tossing out insults, being rude and obnoxious. Well, I had, had enough and something had to be done. I brought my BB rifle up close to my chest. I pulled back the bolt and loaded a BB with his name on it (figuratively, his name would never actually fit on a tiny BB). Anger was making my blood boil and I could feel my face turning red. The BB was loaded and I began to pump the

gun. One, two, three, four, five and six. Four more pumps than our standard war rules would allow. Yup, I meant business.

The other boys just stood there, staring at me with bewildered looks on their faces. I could hear them muttering, but never actually heard a word. I could feel the sweat dripping down my forehead and the grip tightened on the rifle. I placed the butt of the rifle on my hip and pointed it in his direction. I had intended to fire a BB in the outsider's direction. I guessed that the sound of a BB racing and ripping through the leaves above his head would have him running for his life; thus, leaving us alone and no longer having to hear his taunts and foul mouth. I had good intentions and logical thoughts. Except life doesn't always work out sometimes when it comes to good intentions and logical thoughts.

With the butt of the rifle firmly against my hip, I placed my finger on the trigger. I yelled as loud as I could, "SHUT UP, OUTSIDER!" and pulled the trigger. I could see a puff of air from the barrel and the BB was loose. The boys all took their eyes off of me and looked in the outsider's direction. I looked up at the outsider. Then, my heart dropped into my stomach.

The deafening scream could be heard for miles. It was a guttural, but high-pitched squeal, like the kind of noise a horrid banshee would make. The outsider's arms flailed upward, straight to the sky. His BB rifle launched into the woods and disappeared in an instant and then his right shoe came clean off. His head snapped backward and his body tumbled in reverse as if he had stepped in front of an oncoming train. I swear he flew 10 feet in the air (although I'm sure in reality it was probably an inch or two) as though it were a scene from the greatest

Hollywood action movie. He landed flat on his back with a cloud of dust, dirt and leaves filling the air around him. Then everything was silent.

The boys next to me all turned and looked at me, then at each other and then back at the ledge. We all wore a worried look on our faces. We all felt sick to our stomachs. I looked at them again, then back at the ledge. We all just stood there, frozen. At first I thought, *no way that BB hit him, I didn't aim and it was at least 50 yards away, he's faking it. Yup, faking it for sure.*

Once my initial rational thought was over, another thought kicked in; *I just killed that kid! My life is over. I'm going to prison for the rest of my life. Oh God!* I think all of us had that thought. I felt like puking.

Snapping back into reality, we began running towards the ledge and the dead outsider. If he wasn't really hit and dead, we were going to beat his ass and if he was dead, well, we were probably going to jump a train to Kansas.

As we made our way up the ledge, we could see him moving around and whining. He was rolling back and forth in the dirt with both hands over his forehead. We all crowded around him. I reached down, grabbed his hands and pulled them from his face. ...and there, in the middle of his forehead, right between the eyes...was a BB-sized, red and swollen welt.

Instantly more thoughts raced through my head; *oh man he's alive. Thank God!* And just as quickly, *holy crap that was a Hell of a shot. Nice job!*

The boys and I each breathed a sigh of relief. No need to jump a train to Kansas and no one is going to prison. We picked him up, dusted him off and told him he was going to be alright. He was not happy.

He went on his way with tears streaming down his face. The rest of the boys and I headed for our homes hoping never to hear of the incident again. We were wrong. Crap!

The next day my parents got a visit from his parents and words were exchanged. Lucky for me my parents hated him and his parents, so my punishment for the incident was...drum roll...nothing! That's right, nothing. I mean, of course, they lectured me about not shooting at people and I did get my BB gun privileges taken away for a month, but that was it. Wheeew!

And so ended the Great BB Gun War of 1983.