

Javelina Double Robin & Carl
February 6, 2016 New Mexico

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”



Thwack! YEEEEOOOWWW that hurt. While scouting for Robin's ibex hunt in December 2014, a mesquite branch rebounded out of control and rammed a toothpick-sized thorn deep into the side of my right index finger joint right where the finger transitions to the hand. It hurt like the dickens, but I was hours from home and just beginning my foray. Not having anything else handy, I yanked it from my hand with my teeth. I carefully studied the tip to be sure it was intact and nothing had broken off inside my knuckle, then removed my glove and studied the wound, which bled profusely. "Good" I grimaced, "that will flush out the wound." I let it drip for a little while and then applied a bandage and continued my successful scouting mission.

I didn't put any thought to my hand until a couple of months later when my knuckle began to feel a little stiff and sore. An X-ray and ultrasound by my primary doctor revealed no indication of thorn remnants, so we opted for a cortisone shot to help reduce the inflammation. Symptoms disappeared for nearly 6-months, during which time I had all but forgotten about the incident.

When my knuckle again grew stiff I became more concerned, but another ultrasound didn't reveal anything and the symptoms weren't bad enough to be bothersome. A second shot was administered, with the thinking that it would just take a little longer for my body to clear up whatever was going on. Again my finger was fine for months. When the irritation recurred I decided to live with it until it suddenly swelled up and became extremely sore. A round of doctors' consultations, a MRI and further evaluation ensued, with surgery being scheduled. By the time I went under the knife, my right hand was all but useless. Any movement or jarring was excruciating and I had to take pain pills just to sleep due to throbbing pain.

Surgery revealed an infected joint and bone; damaged tissue was scraped away and sent to be cultured, and the entire area was flushed. I was referred to specialists at Infectious Diseases & Internal Medicine, the same group who treated me for a freak bacterial brain infection back in 2002. Due to the slow-

growing nature of whatever I was infected with, I was informed that results from cultures could take 3-6 weeks or more, and prescribed with both IV and pill antibiotics for a minimum of 6-weeks. The IV treatment was to be performed at home through a semi-permanently installed PICC line (tube inserted into a vein at my tricep and routed inside the vein to the top of my heart). If cultures revealed anything that required a different treatment regimen, my prescriptions would be modified. I had weekly checkups with the specialists throughout my treatment.

All this background, besides serving as a warning to outdoor enthusiasts, describes my condition in mid January. Robin and I had February javelina tags, and had planned two potential weekends for an attempt. Having had my stitches and big ol' bandage removed only the Wednesday prior to opening weekend, I was feeling a little run down. Laurie wisely didn't want me to overdo it, and on Thursday I told Robin we had to make a final decision as to whether to hold off until the latter weekend. Her response was classic "Oh Daddy, I reeeaaally wanted to go..." (Where in the world did she inherit that attitude?!) I took that to mean it was time to start loading the truck!

As typical, we hit the road after swimming practice, so at 7:30 with dinners to go, we sailed south toward a spot where a friend had crossed paths with some javelina several weeks prior. While there are never any guarantees in hunting, I felt optimistic, given this recent tip. Our drive flew by as Robin practiced her typing by composing a Katie-dog mystery adventure story on my laptop.

We parked at 11:30 and tossed our gear from the bed of our Tacoma; our bedrolls prearranged underneath. I mentioned that we could sleep in tomorrow: javelina aren't known for being early risers, as they prefer warmer weather. After brushing our teeth, Robin declared "We'll sleep in TODAY!" - a glance at the clock revealed that it had ticked passed midnight.

She took her plan literally: it was bad enough that I roused a little after 8 o'clock, but Robin snoozed until after 9! The weather was mild and calm, a welcome change after Robin's unsuccessful attempt for oryx during the Thanksgiving ice storm. After breakfast Robin became engrossed with collecting beautiful quartz crystals from around our campsite. It was all I could do to tear her away to get serious about looking for javelina.

We sat side by side and picked apart the nearby hillside with our optics. Thanks to a special delivery from jolly Christmas elves (that would be, ahem, mommy and me) Robin had her own Vortex glass and I no longer had to share. We turned up nothing for half an hour except songbirds and scattered cattle. I shifted my focus farther away, and soon was rewarded with a distinctively pig-shaped form three quarters of a mile distant. As I attempted to point out its location to Robin, the bugged drifted out of sight behind some bushes, and then reappeared trotting toward a large arroyo before disappearing again.

Although Robin hadn't seen it, we carefully studied the terrain and made a mental plan of attack based on several distinctive landmarks before returning to the truck and hastily stowing our gear to drive closer.

I had brought my bow on the trip, but my first priority was for Robin to fill her tag, and with my hurt finger I didn't want to monkey around with lugging both weapons on our stalk. If she was successful, that would be rewarding enough.

We launched from the truck and noted that the slight breeze was blowing towards us, perfect for stalking. We pushed ahead in an attempt to relocate the "pig". We followed our planned route and I glimpsed a small group (technically called a sounder) of javelina and pointed Robin toward them as they rooted and fed, unaware of our presence.

We continued our careful approach, using the terrain and sparse cover to our advantage. A low, rocky hill afforded both cover and a shooting vantage. I readied Robin's shooting sticks and whispered that after she got one I would grab her rifle and try to fill my tag. A large javelina fed facing us within 50-yards. Robin readied her rifle and I told her to train the scope on it and wait for a broadside shot. Soon it turned and Robin took careful aim before squeezing the trigger. In what has become customary for Robin, the javelina dropped without taking a step. I snatched the rifle as the remaining javelina scattered.

I squalled on our javelina call; a whistle-like instrument designed to sound like a wounded javelina (often the herd will linger or return to protect an injured member). Most of the sounder disappeared in various directions, but two began circling, likely to get downwind and scent for danger. I kept tabs on the larger one, trying to find a shooting lane between the brush and cactus. I blew the call as it reached an opening, and it froze. Thinking I had it in the bag, I pulled the trigger...and pulled...and pulled – yikes, my finger hurt! Initially I thought I had inadvertently left the safety on, so I flipped the lever and pulled with my middle finger...still nothing. Then the javelina trotted off. I had just switched to lighter weight bullets for Robin's gun, knowing that javelina are rather small quarry and having planned to do some predator calling during our hunt. It crossed my mind that the bullets were faulty, but Robin's shot had been fine. I ejected the bullet and then realized my error. The lack of motion in my index finger precluded me from squeezing the trigger, and due to the pain it only felt like I was pulling hard. Robin said later that she heard me groaning, although I wasn't aware of it at the time. Thinking it impossible to be squeezing that hard and the gun not fire, I had then inadvertently switched the safety to the ON position, which of course, made it impossible to fire with my middle finger.

Chagrined at my foolishness in the heat of the moment, I implored Robin to stick with me and began trotting after the fleeing javelina. Occasionally I would glimpse the little buggers scampering ahead, but most of the time I was simply gambling that they would keep going in the same direction.

Soon we approached a large arroyo and I anticipated seeing them on the far slope, some 80 yards distant. I motioned for Robin to hold tight as I prepared for a shot. As the javelina meandered up the other side of the arroyo, I lined up on one of the larger animals. I flicked the safety OFF, and then out of habit, began to pull the trigger...with my injured finger! I instantly realized my error and switched to my middle finger to drop a piggy of my own.

We dragged my javelina back to Robin's for a double photo shoot and as we arranged the two large sows, I shook my head in disbelief "It's only 1 o'clock and we each got a javelina - I can't believe it!" With a grin Robin replied, "Well, wasn't that the **plan?!"**



Typical desert terrain in which we found our javelina



Dynamic duo - or trio, counting Clarice



Pre-Valentine's Day pose



Robin sporting the Vortex cap – she loves her new binos!

I am so blessed to have a little girl that loves the outdoors. She makes me see the world differently than when I'm out alone: from pretty rocks and feathers, to the nuances of hair patterns on game animals. From the priority of stowing stuffed animals in her backpack, to relishing rest breaks and snacks. Robin exemplifies the spirit that there is a lot more to hunting than a filled tag or the size

of horns, tusks and antlers - although did she point out that her javelina was bigger than mine!



Porky chompers



Our little huntress...although at over 5'-1" tall she's not so little anymore!

We hung the javelina by their snouts in a small tree for butchering, as it helped keep their smelly hair from tainting the meat. We worked as a team, with Robin helping immensely by wielding her own Havalon knife, and then packed the meat to the truck after stowing it in game bags. We hit the road and even stopped in Socorro for celebration dinner on our way home. Perhaps it wasn't your typical daddy-daughter date, but certainly was one we'll cherish for the rest of our lives.

We've recently seen work by an artist who uses jewels and paint to decorate skulls, so Robin has plans to more creatively display our trophies, which will make for some fun summertime projects, given her artistic talent and creativity.



Trophy chompers



Say "cheese"!

While this hunt doesn't rank as high on the hardcore meter as many of our adventures, to quote the A-Team "I love it when a plan comes together!"

I'm not so sure that this activity was "Just what the doctor ordered", but it was certainly just what I needed and more than I planned for!

Thank you Lord!
God Bless,
Carl & Robin