

The SQUIRREL that BIT ME

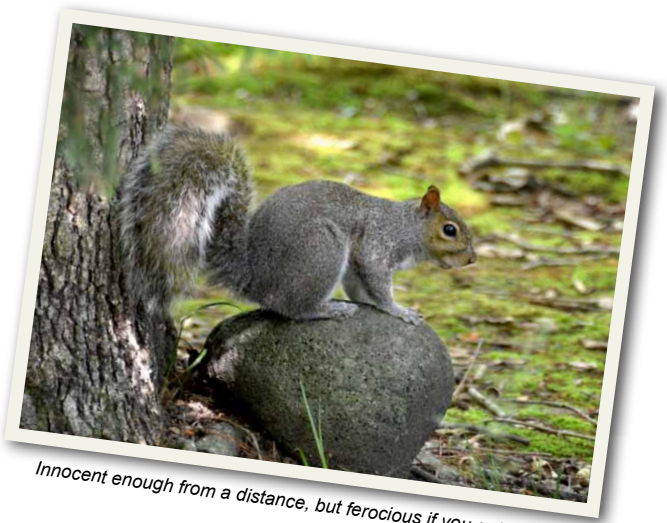
— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #39 —

Dad liked to hunt squirrels and regularly we would have fresh squirrel meat for lunch or supper, when I was growing up. There was a story he told us once about how he had pulled a wounded squirrel from a hollow tree by twisting a forked stick around its tail.

One summer my younger brother Jerry and I were exploring in the back pasture and walked through a small grove of walnut trees, where we spooked a squirrel that was digging for walnuts. Interestingly, the squirrel didn't run up a tree; but rather, he ran into a small hole in the bottom of one.

We were just kids, so naturally we went over to check it out. The hollow part didn't go very far up the tree, as we could hear the squirrel chattering when we got close. Then I remembered dad's story about using a forked stick to pull a squirrel out of a hole like this. Of course, his squirrel was wounded; this one wasn't.

I was nine years old that summer, and was thought to be responsible enough to carry my own pocket knife; so we looked around and found a nice bush, from which I cut a forked stick about two feet long. It was easy enough to engage the squirrel with the stick; but boy was he mad. It was another thing entirely to get the forked part of the stick wrapped around his tail – since we were operating completely by feel. But then everything came together and I had the squirrel by the tail -- and was pulling him out.



Innocent enough from a distance, but ferocious if you get too close.

Now, the moral of this story is to 'always have a plan for the next step in the process' -- which I didn't. The squirrel came out of the hole, but immediately turned his body, came up the stick and sunk his teeth into the skin around the knuckle of my left index finger. I got the message immediately and dropped the stick, _____ at which time the squirrel's tail came undone _____ and he scampered up the tree.

"Boy was he mad..."

My pride was hurt a little, but not as much as my finger. Mom and dad were both sympathetic when I told the story, and of course I've told it to my kids and grandkids -- showing them the scars -- so they will be smart enough not to do something so 'innocent'.

Midway USA

Larry Potterfield
Rural Marion County, Missouri
Summer of 1958



This white oak closely resembles the walnut tree from my memory.



After all these years, the scars are still there; I can never forget.