

# UNCLE EARL AND THE GREAT STING

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Written in 1989*

Now in this short story, we will go back to the year of 1940. I was fifteen years old at the time. Our Uncle Earl Firey lived with us then and did for several years. It was in late August. Uncle Earl and I were dragging out split walnut fence posts with a team of horses. We couldn't get to them with a wagon so we dragged the posts out to where we had the wagon parked. Five years before this in 1935, a tornado had swept through there. The tornado had completely leveled all of the big timber. It was quite a sight to see just a twisted mass of downed timber everywhere. Dad had hired a black man to make fence posts out of the walnut logs. He had split out several hundred of them. After we had made a few trips dragging the posts to the wagon, we spotted a very large wasp nest. That wasp nest must have been sixteen inches across. It was the biggest one I had ever seen. It was completely covered with red wasps. The nest was only about four feet from the ground on a small bush. As we passed by the wasp nest, Uncle Earl said to me, "You know, I read an article just the other day about the wasps. The article said if you would stand perfectly still, don't move a muscle and hold your breath, the wasps would not sting you." Uncle also said he had read another article that if you were a smoker, the wasps or the honey bees would not sting you but would just fly harmlessly on by. Now Uncle was a heavy smoker, so he felt very safe around those wasps. I said to Uncle, "That is not true; Them red devils will get you standin', sitting' or runnin'! They will come off of that nest mad and ready to fight!" Uncle said, "No they won't." I knew Uncle was wrong about that. We boys loved to fight the wasps, bumble bees and the

yellow jackets. We would get stung now and again but, that was just part of the game for it was fun to us boys.

A little later on Uncle said to me, "I will stand out here in the open, then you go over and gouge that wasp nest. Those wasps will fly harmlessly on by and not one of them will sting me." Uncle would not let it be. He wanted to prove his point to me. Again I said to Uncle, "You are wrong - Them wasps will put the hurt on you bad!" But Uncle would not have it any other way. I will never forget poor old Uncle. He was standing out there in the sunlight where the wasps would be sure to see him. With his arms folded and a smile on his face, Uncle was posing as if he was going to have his picture made. I knew the picture would change very soon. I said, "Alright Uncle, are you ready?" He said, "Yes, I am." I picked up a nice sized stick, then went around on the back side of the nest and whopped it hard. Them wasps left that nest like bullets. The first wasp hit Uncle right between the eyes. Then the fight was on. Those wasps were all over poor old Uncle. After a few seconds, Uncle fell to the ground and started rolling. Uncle was fighting for his life. Them red devils were everywhere. All that saved the day for Uncle was that he rolled off in a ditch among he weeds and the wasps settled down some. I crawled up the ditch to where Uncle was. Poor Uncle was in much pain by now. I got him, and we both crawled on up the ditch away from the wasp nest. When we were far out of their range, I left Uncle there, then I circled around to get the team and wagon. I went back to where I had left Uncle, helped him up into the wagon, and I took him home. When I got Uncle

home, Mom used some of her old remedies and doctored Uncle up as best she could. Poor Uncle's eyes were swollen shut. His face and head were twice their normal size and he was in great pain. The best we could tell, Uncle had been stung fifteen times by them red devil wasps. It is a wonder that he lived through it all. But, Uncle was a pretty rugged old boy and he never did go to a doctor. After three or four days he was alright again. As the years passed, I would kid Uncle a lot about that big run-in he had with those red wasps that day. Uncle was well versed on things and had a good education and he did a lot of reading; But, the trouble was he believed everything he read.

I thought a lot of Uncle Earl. He was fun to be with. We did many things together down through the years. All of us kids felt the same way about our Uncle Earl Firey. He was our favorite uncle because he seemed to always have time for us kids even will all of our foolishness. It seemed that Uncle would take great interest in what we had to say. We have good memories of Uncle Earl and we all loved him very much.

