

THE RABBIT TALE

*J. W. "Bill" Firey, Jr.
Written in 1990*

My brother, Kenneth, and me did a lot of rabbit hunting in the early years of our lives. We dearly loved to hunt the wild cottontail rabbits. There were lots of rabbits back in those days. We hunted them with 22 rifles. We always shot them in the head so as to not damage the rabbit.

Seems we never missed; We were crack shots back then. We could find the rabbit while he was still sitting and shoot him before he had a chance to jump up and run away. Seeing him was not easy, sitting in a clump of grass. Brother Kenneth could find them rabbits better than anybody I ever knew. He could find three rabbits to my one. We would stay out all day in the freezing cold and walk many miles. Many times, when darkness would come upon us, we would be two or three miles from home, tired, worn-out, cold and hungry. When we first started trapping and hunting rabbits, we soon found that we could sell them for 12 1/2 cents each. Then sometime later, we got 25 cents each. That seemed like big money to us back then. Most of the farmers and hill people around us had very little or no money at all, for times were really hard. Later on, we found a place in Tulsa called the White River Fish Market. They told us to bring all of the wild cottontail rabbits we could get and they would give us 50 cents each for them. Of course, they had to be dressed and ready for the skillet. I remember once, we took them 250 rabbits at one time. That is a lot of rabbits! Dressing

and getting them ready was the big job. It would take us many hours; Sometimes it would take us all night and our Mom would always help us dress our rabbits. We would start hunting rabbits in the fall of the year as soon as it started getting cold. We would hunt up until the weather started getting warm in early spring. A friend of ours, we went to church with, said, "When it comes a good snow, come down to my place. There's lots of cottontail rabbits down my way." We told him we would. It wasn't long after that we woke up one morning to find a good 5 or 6 inch snow on the ground. So we hurried around, fed all our livestock, got our rifles and started out for our friend's place. We hunted some as we went along. We cut across the hills and down the creek bottoms. As the crow would fly, it was about four miles away. On the way down to our friend's place, we got 7 rabbits, 4 swamp and 3 cottontails. We ate a late dinner with our friend and his wife. We left the 7 rabbits there, then started our rabbit hunt. There was a little draw that came down through his place, so we started up the draw on the east side. We soon started killing rabbits. There was a time or so we would stand in one spot and kill 2 or 3 rabbits and never move out of our tracks. This was the best hunting we had ever gotten in on. We followed the little draw up to where it ran out, then crossed over to the west side of it. When we got back down to the road from where we

started and all the smoke had cleared away, we had killed 32 rabbits in just a little over three hours times. It was getting late when we went back to our friend's house and picked up the other 7 rabbits which made a total of 39 rabbits. It was beginning to get dark as we gathered up our rabbits and started the long walk home. We followed the road back home which was a little over 5 miles away. The weather was freezing cold, and we were tired from walking in the snow all day, but somehow we made it alright with all 39 rabbits. Life was pretty hard back then for us in some ways, but we were young. Looking back on those times, they were some of the best years of our lives.

I don't hunt the wild cottontail rabbit any more and I haven't in many years. Still some of my fondest memories are when my brother and me hunted the wild rabbits together on those cold winter days so long ago.

