

# Sixgunner New Years: Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blued

By Tank Hoover

The winding down of the end of the year has always been sorta anti-climatic for me. The anticipation of Christmas, friends and family visiting, kids wound tight as drums, Holiday parties, great food, has always been more to my liking. I always like to reflect back on the years past events, both good and bad, count my blessings for the good, and try to learn from, and avoid the bad. Some things are just unavoidable, though. The biggest of these, is the passing on of loved ones. This year I had 2 close friends lose their fathers. Both these men thought of their fathers as their heroes, and best friends. Life is death, and the 2 are unavoidable. It is the events in between the 2 destinies that make for the good memories.

This New Years, I had my good six gunner friend, Mike "Doc" Barranti, and his wonderful family over for dinner, and a great visit. Mike was down from Pittsburgh, to visit our Nation's Capital. With some planning on our part, we were able to squeeze in the New Years meal.

Before dinner, though, there was some business that needed attending to. Mike had made a beautiful holster for me. He calls it his #5 DA, for double action six guns. This is a companion holster to Mikes beautiful EK #5, or Elmer Keith #5, for Single action six guns. This is a compact, minimal leather holster oozing with style, flair, and traditional good looks, that Mike is able to capture in a leather rig that the old time gun gurus would be proud to sport. I know I am! Mikes signature bear track compliments this shuck. I had received an S & W model 29-2, with 4" tube, for Christmas. Mike needed to form the holster, and check the retention strap for proper snap placement. Once this was accomplished, the real surprises started to spew out!

Mike had carried down a box full of tools, and other goodies down to the basement. Besides the above mentioned pistol pouch, Mike had made me a key fob, with miniature bear track engraved on it. There was also some leather working tools Mike had got me for my meager attempts at disfiguring good hunks of tanned hide. There were also about a dozen back issues of selected "Shooting Times" magazines with prized stories by Skeeter Skelton. Mike and I are huge Skeeter fans, along with Elmer Keith. You could read what these 2 men put on paper, and know all there is to know about six guns.

Last year, I had gotten "Doc" a copy of "Hoglegs, Hipshots, And Jalapenos." For his birthday this year, I got him a copy of "Good friends, good guns, good whiskey." Mike said the first story he read in the second book was the one titled, "Dobe Grant." In it, Skeeter talks of visiting his burl tough friend at his Turkey Track Ranch, where they talk guns, eat steak, drink bourbon, and just have a great visit, as only six gun men know, and appreciate. As Skeeter is leaving, Dobe gives Skeeter a large grocery bag of venison jerky. As Skeet starts his long drive home, he reaches into his bag of goodies for some jerky. Inside, he finds something heavy wrapped up in newspaper. Skeeter knows it's a gun, before unwrapping it. Dobe had given his friend a prized gun, something not uncommon in the real gun world. Needless to say, Skeet is all choked up, and vows to come back soon to visit his aging compadre.

"Doc" also pulls out a partially finished NW Hunter Rig, from his Signature Series line. Him, and brother Glenn Swaggart, had joined forces, and gotten this for me, for my Birthday! Daggone!

After "Doc" fastens the snap to the retaining strap, he goes to the bathroom, and tells me to pull out the tools he got me. There is white boxing paper inside the box. When I remove it, the unmistakable heft of a sixgun is obvious, and I wonder what in the heck did "Doc" bring to show me?

As Mike comes back from the bathroom, he is grinning, and says that "Dobe Grant" was the first story he read in the second book, and says, "Sorry, I didn't have any jerky to put in with it." This, to any devout Skeeter fan is code to enjoy your gift, buddy! I am totally dumbfounded by now. As I unwrap the sixgun, I can tell it is a Ruger 3 screw Blackhawk Flattop. Mike tells

me it was our great friends, Dick Thompson's gun. Mike had traded into it with Dick a year or so, ago. This makes this gun priceless! A true gift of friendship, that once belonged to a man we both admire and respect! Unbelievable! When some see a sixgun, all they see is blued steel and walnut. Not "Doc" or me! We see character in every nick or worn blue steel. It is the canvas of a well used gun, full of spirit, and soul, that tells a story. It triggers memories long lost, and brought back by simply holding it in your hand. A connection is re-gained, and memories pour out of our minds, as to how the gun was obtained, and who, so beautifully, put these well worn hunting scars on it. To say this piece is sentimental to me would be a gross understatement. Thanks, Doc!

When we go upstairs, a dinner of NY Strips on the grill, steamed shrimp, "Sixshot" dutch oven spuds, salad, asparagus, and other vegetable platters are consumed. Before dinner, a toast to our departed friends is done with scotch on the rocks, Elmer's favorite.

It was a warm, wonderful evening that went by all too fast, as normally does, when spent with good friends. Couldn't think of a better way to bring in the New Year! Have I told you how I love New Years day?!