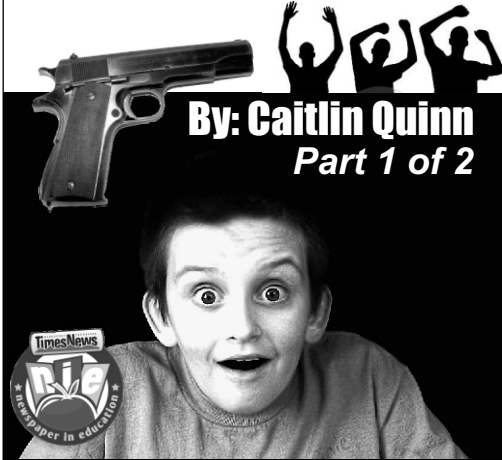


GRANDMA DID WHAT?



By: Caitlin Quinn
Part 1 of 2

“Mom! Why do I have to go?” Jason Stewart asked his mother. She was loading the dishwasher, with her back to him. He watched her square her shoulders and knew it was going to be a hard fought war. But, he had already planned his course of action.

“We’ve talked about this, Jason. I haven’t seen my mother in months, and my grandmother, your great grandmother, Catherine Doran, is getting on; she’s not doing so well.” Anna Stewart dried her hands on a dishcloth and picked up the detergent to fill the dishwasher.

“Why can’t I stay at Kurt’s instead? You know we were planning on an airsoft weekend. I was just waiting for my Mauser SR Pro-Tactical Sniper rifle to get here. Dad adjusted the UTG 5th Gen 3-9X50 scope last night. Mom, it’s deadly accurate! Please, Mom, let me stay at Kurt’s!” Jason put his hands together in front of his face and fell to his knees. When his mom merely lifted an eyebrow at him, he knew he had to change his strategy. “Mom, I’ll be bored and in your hair. If I’m at Kurt’s, you’d...”

“Sorry, Jason, not this time,” his mother interrupted. She closed the dishwasher door and pressed the start button. “I know you’re excited about your new sniper rifle. But, this is family. You know, your grandmother Mattie would be interested in learning about airsoft guns. I’ll make you a deal, you can take your airsoft arsenal with you and we’ll set up a tactical range for you to practice on when we get there.”

“A tactical range at Grandma Doran’s?” he asked. Yeah, that was so going to happen. Though, once he thought about it, it was perfect. Grandma Mattie lived on the family farm in Virginia. There were open meadows, creeks, several old barns, an abandoned cabin, rocky cliffs, woods and an old well and well house on the property. If his mom said he could set up a practice range, she’d keep her word. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. And, his Dad would join them later in the week. Jason knew if he built a really good course, his Dad would compete against him. “Why can’t we wait until the weekend, when Dad can go with us to the boonies?”

“Jason, this is important to me. That old farm in the boonies has been in my family, the Doran line, for nearly 200 years. That’s my heritage - and half of yours. I would think, since you’re so into guns and military battles and tactics, that you’d want to go to a place where history actually took place.” Anna said.

She had her hands on her hips and Jason knew he’d lost - he was heading to Rocky Mount, Virginia. For two long weeks he’d be alone in the boonies. Course, his dad would be there on the weekends. Still, that would be four long days to wait. Sure, it’d give him time to set up the perfect

course, and to practice, but... “Hey, Mom, if Kurt’s mom agrees, can he come?”

“Sorry, not this time. You need to spend some time with your grandmother. You’re twelve years old; mature enough now to appreciate some of the things your Grandmother has accomplished. I think you’ll really enjoy this trip. Go pack your arsenal. Be sure to pack clothes other than the camouflage. We’ll be doing other things and I expect you to wear regular clothes when we’re at the dinner table. I want to leave first thing in the morning. It’s a five hour drive and I’d like to have lunch at your Grandmother’s house.

“Grandma Mattie! Are you serious?” Jason asked. His grandmother’s fresh-squeezed lemonade shot out his nose and mouth and he gasped for breath. He couldn’t believe what he’d just heard. He just sat there, coughing, trying to remain balanced on the porch railing, staring at his Grandma Doran with his mouth open. He was in shock, but his Grandma was just sitting in her rocker, all calm, sipping her lemonade like she’d not just told him the most incredible thing he’d ever heard. “You were taken down by the Secret Service?” Jason squeaked out the words.

Grandma Mattie laughed, “I was indeed!” He looked back and forth between his Grandma and his mother. They were sitting side by side, in old rocking chairs. The porch was lined with them, seven in total; each with colorful homemade padding to make them more comfortable.

“It’s true - your grandmother was a rebel in her younger days. I always had my hands full with that child,” great grandmother Catherine Doran added. She was sitting in a third rocking chair, a blanket over her frail body. Her silver hair framed a wrinkled, but kind, face. “Mattie was always getting into something. I must admit, though, that was quite the shock!”

“What happened?” Jason asked. Grandma Mattie leaned forward in her chair, stopping mid rock. “Well, for one thing, I was still young, about seventeen. It was shortly after my father, your great grandfather, Sterling Doran, died. We had several break-in attempts.”

“Everyone knew we still had most of Sterling’s old military rifles and pistols from his time in WWII, and his father’s weapons from post WWI as well,” great Grandma Catherine told them. She took another sip of lemonade and set the glass back down on the small table sitting beside her chair. “My grandpa kept quite the arsenal here. We have tried to keep all the pistols, rifles and shotguns over the years. We figured the would-be thieves were after them.”

“We’ve had family in nearly every war, from the Revolutionary war on including the Civil War, WWI and II, Korean, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and now my sister’s fighting for the Iraqi’s freedom. And, in most cases, we have managed to hold on to their weapons,” his mother added.

“Mom, I’d like to see them!” Jason jumped up from the railing, nearly spilling his drink. “Can I shoot them?”

“Some of them you can, others are far too old and unreliable; far too dangerous to shoot. But, if you’ll remind me later, I’ll show you some of them. We have Browning’s, Smith & Wesson’s, Colt’s, Winchester’s, Remington’s, old Percussion Caps, revolvers, semi and full automatics. The oldest gun in the collection is the Flintlock Hartman Doran used in the Revolutionary War,” Grandma Mattie told them. “Who wants more lemonade?” She rose from her chair, her hands outstretched to take their glasses.

“Wait, Grandma! You haven’t told us about the Secret Service!” Jason wasn’t about to let this story drop. He looked over at his mom, who was already getting up from her rocker.

“I’ll go get the pitcher, Mom, you tell the story. Grandma Catherine, do you need anything?” Anna touched her grandmother’s hand, careful not

to startle the old woman who had drifted off to sleep in the rocker. “Are you warm enough?”

“I’m fine, dear, did I miss the story?” great Grandma Catherine asked.

“No, I was just getting to it,” Grandma Mattie told her. “Now, like I said, we’d had a lot of attempted break-ins. I had been around guns all my life, but never really shot them that often. Grandpa tried to teach me, but, I just wasn’t that into them when I was a teenager. Anyway, when a handful of hoodlums broke into the house, I ran to the gun closet and grabbed my father’s favorite pistol, a Colt M1911A1. I pointed it at them, told them ‘I’m gonna blow your blooming heads off!’”

“Grandma, how many were there?”

“Three, big boys they were; hired hands from the farm just over the way. The smallest one was over six feet tall and musta weighed nigh near 200 lbs,” Grandma Mattie told him, holding her hand high over her head to demonstrate.

Great grandmother Catherine was holding her hands outstretched to show how big they were. “You should have seen her, this tiny little thing, being all brave. That gun was too big for her hands, but she had those boys pinned against the wall! Yes, sir, my daughter there, she faced down those hoodlums!”

“And when one of them threatened her with a tire iron, she fired on him,” Anna said with pride.

“No way! Grandma shot a guy?” It couldn’t be true, Jason thought. His mom told him that grandpa had taught her to shoot. She was pretty accurate when they practiced with the airsoft guns. But, she’d always talked about her father being a sharpshooter; she’d never mentioned Grandma was the butt kicker in the family. WOW!

“Not quite, my aim was bad and I shot a hole in the wall!” Grandma Mattie laughed.

“Shot the wall right between where two of them boys was standing, she did. Put the fear of God into those infernal scoundrels. She never let on, either. Told them boys the next one ‘twould be between the eyes!” great Grandma Catherine added. “Them boys wet themselves, they did, then scattered to the four corners of the world. By the time the Sheriff got here, they were long gone.”

Grandma’s chair creaked as she rocked back. A light breeze blew her loose hair, a strand refusing to stay behind her ear where she kept pushing it. She was looking off into the distance. Jason followed her gaze, but, all he saw was open pasture. The farm spread out in the distance, meadows with cows and horses grazing, all the way to the craggy bluffs overlooking the river that marked the western edge of their property. His favorite horse, Maggie Mae, was near the corral. He’d have to sneak an apple down to the barn in a bit. Normally, he would have dropped everything else and ran down to the barn with a treat for the mare. But, not today, not right now. At this moment, all Jason could think about was learning what his grandma did that got her noticed by the Secret Service. Jason looked over at his grandma, still staring out into the distance. He thought she was never going to finish the story. She took a sip of lemonade before she finally spoke.

Jason laughed; he could only imagine what it would have been like, being held at gunpoint by all five feet of Grandma Mattie. “So, were the hired hands wanted by the FBI? No, Secret Service protects the President and other high profile politicians. So, Grandma, these guys were potential assassins?”

“You got the potential assassin right, but, it wasn’t the hired hands the Secret Service was after,” Anna said. “They were after your grandmother!”

Look for a Part 2 next week!

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For more information, please call Elaine Riner at 423-245-4954

or e-mail at eriner@timesnews.net