

The Morning of Jerry Courteau's Wedding

It was a splendid Saturday morning in June.

Pa, my older brother John, and I had just finished the morning milking.

My final job was to wash the milking equipment and tidy up the milk room.

That meant it was 7:20 a.m.

We were pretty regular about milking times.

Pa and John normally finished their chores and went to the house for breakfast about 5 minutes before me.

I was just walking from the barn toward the house as Jerry pulled into the yard.

Jerry lived with his parents in Dayton, just a few miles away.

My cousin Jerry was several years older than me.

Despite the age difference, Jerry and I palled around a lot in those days.

He often came out on weekends and evenings to help with farm work or to just visit.

Neither was it unusual for Jerry to arrive in time for breakfast.

But this Saturday was unique.

Jerry was getting married this morning at ten o'clock.

Jerry had a couple tense hours to kill.

I suggested we road-hunt for gophers, a popular activity 65 years ago.

Now, never done and considered illegal, immoral, and unsportsmanlike.

It was then too.

The cute little seed eating rodent is a known crop pest.

The most counties had a 5-cent bounty on striped gophers.

Many counties still do, although gophers not a significant crop pest n

Modern crop farming is so toxic that gophers are eliminated from cropland.

To hunt gophers, you would drive slowly along an unpopulated stretch of gravel road.

Many such roads existed in those days.

When a gopher was spotted you stopped the car, took careful aim and shot the varmint.

Through the open window, with a low caliber 22 rifle, preferably using low power 22 shorts.

It was a social sport, never done alone, but with a buddy.

If the gopher was in the right ditch; it was the passenger's shot.

If in the left ditch, the driver took the shot.

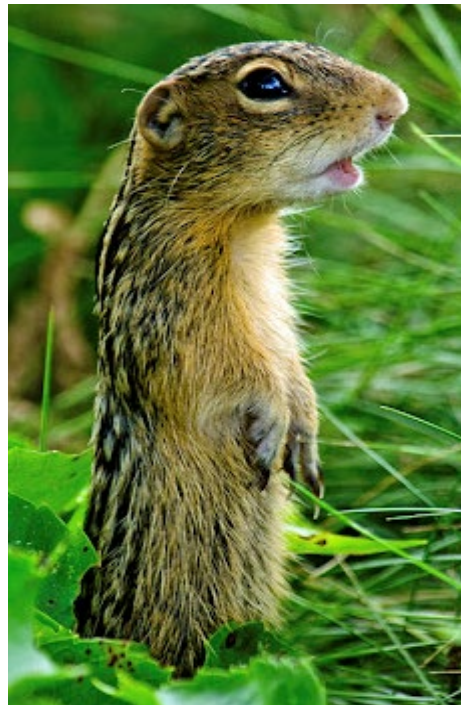
Shooting from a motor vehicle was illegal even then.

The gophers preferred bright sunny mornings.

This was just such a day.

The gopher hunting was pretty good.

We spied one about every quarter mile.



THIRTEEN STRIPED GOPHER

We were good shots.
I was not keeping track of the time.
That was Jerry's problem.
Besides, he was the one with the watch.

Jerry was a good dresser.
He always wore a suit jacket, a white shirt, and a tie, to church.

So, he apparently figured he would need the same five minutes it took to get ready for church that he needed every other church day.

Plus, five minutes to drive the six blocks from his folk's house to the church.



Murial LaPointe, Jerry, Irene and Tuff Courteau

When Jerry left around 7 a.m., no one was awake to see him leave.

Jerry was not much of a writer.

I can not image he left a note.

All anyone knew until 10 o'clock is that the groom and his car left early with a full tank of gas.

No one knew where he was until he showed up at the stroke of ten.

Imagine the scenes that played out in people's heads.



Maxine Courteau, Jim Croteau, Murial, Jerry.