



Outrageously Outdoors **SOMETIMES LIFE JUST STINKS**

the last stop. “A few minutes here, then home to a hot breakfast,” I told myself. One of the traps was a cage trap slid back into a pile of branches with a goose carcass as bait, and as I rolled to a stop I could see that the cage door was closed. From my vantage point, branches blocked my view of the entire cage, but I could see what appeared to be a raccoon rustling around in the trap. I grabbed the handgun and headed for the cage, but as I neared I could see that the coon had a couple white stripes down its back. Chills went down my spine and I suddenly developed the nervous tick that usually precedes my doing something really stupid. “Great,” I thought “Just what I didn’t want to see this morning.” Now I remembered an incident a couple years back where I had a skunk caught in a cage trap. That trap was much bigger than this one, so as the skunk put on an acrobatics show climbing and swinging around at the back of the cage, I was able to get close enough to somehow open the door and prop it open with a stick. That was one of the dumber things I have ever done in my life, but the skunk eventually left without incident.

This trap was much smaller, but the morning had been going so well, I guess I figured nothing could go wrong. It’s at this point that common sense usually flees from my mind like a rat fleeing a sinking ship. This is also the point where I would dip myself in the vat of Skunk-Proof Batter in the back of my pickup. Anyway, I crept up to the trap, quietly talking to the critter as I walked. Skunks are actually pretty laid back especially if the container is covered and you go about things slowly and quietly. Besides, as long as the thing kept its butt pointed the other way, there was no way it could spray me, right? Just as I knelt down, the skunk charged the door! I wanted to run but a warm, wet, sticky feeling in the seat of my pants made it uncomfortable to even move. So there I was, on my hands and knees face-to-

don’t know whether or not it says something about my personality, but I seem to be drawn to unfortunate skunk encounters like a moth is drawn to a flame. I’ve even considered inventing a substance that I could dip myself in like a pronto pup wiener, then simply step out of and leave in the woods, skunk stink and all if I happen to get sprayed. I could call it Skunk-Proof Batter or maybe Stench-Glaze. I’ll let you know how that goes.

Anyway, one particular morning last year I had several bobcat traps out a few miles west of town. The traps had been there long enough and it was time to move them. A busy day was planned, so I got an early start in case hiccups occurred in getting the traps. You would think by now I would have completely removed the words “if,” “in-case,” and “what-if” from my vocabulary, because it’s never a matter of when or if something will happen to me, it’s only a matter of when. I was ahead of schedule when I rolled into



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face with Pepe Le Pew himself when it dawned on me that the little blighter had not turned its butt toward me in an effort to end my life, but in fact had backed into the rear of the cage again. Summoning my courage and forcing common sense even farther from my being, I once again got as close as I thought I dared, and tried gingerly raising the two steel rings that held the door shut so I could quickly prop the door open and skedaddle. Then it happened . . . I heard a sort of whooshing, squirting sound, felt something hit my face and the scrambled eggs and bacon I could almost taste awaiting me at home suddenly reeked of skunk! . . . I do solemnly swear, cross my heart and hope to spit that a skunk's butt DOES NOT have to be facing you to spray you because those beady little demon eyes never left mine during the entire assault. They can spray over their back and about any old direction they choose.

I jumped and ran like I was going

to outrun the stench or something. I wiped a couple droplets from my glasses and started peeling outer clothing that might have been hit. I grabbed the handgun and ended the little beggar's career. Then I made the phone call every hunter's wife dreads; "Honey, I just got sprayed by a skunk!" I did a piece on skunks some years ago and my research then told me that the old tomato juice cure just doesn't work, but rather leaves you smelling like tomato juice AND skunk. Joyce found a tried and true cure that really does work, and she promised to have some ready when I arrived. Mix together 1 quart hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda and 1-2 teaspoons dish soap (not laundry detergent.) Wipe down your entire body and everything else that got sprayed and then rinse. A warning, as clothing cleaned with this solution may discolor, and you may have to wash your hair a couple times (or it might cause your hair to fall out along with some of your teeth.)

So I drove home in my stocking feet with the windows down. I thought seriously about stripping down to my skivvies, but sure-as-the-world a brake light would be out or something and I'd get stopped. I walked through the backyard and onto the deck where two hands strongly resembling those of my loving wife protruded from the back door. One hand held a bowl of the magic "skunk-be-gone" while the other held a bath towel and pointed toward the workshop in the back, which could easily have become my new home if that stuff hadn't worked.

I learned several things that day. First, it's never too late for things to go wrong. Secondly, it's good to know there is something that will actually remove skunk odor, and lastly, I'll never again attempt to do a skunk a favor!

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