



Rolling Her Eyes and Rolling Coyotes

By Steven Bridges
The Goldthwaite Eagle

It was a typical afternoon last November, when I walked into my house after a day of work at the office. I immediately heard the ear-piercing screaming that indicated Amber, my 18-month old daughter, was in a bad mood.

I saw Debra, my wife, was frazzled — holding a screaming Amber in one hand and a poop diaper in the other.

"Amber has gas; she's upset, and she wants to go to the ranch," Debra said, which I've come to understand translates ... roughly ... to "I need a break. Let's go to the ranch."

So, we all piled into the truck. Just as I was about to slide in behind the steering wheel, Amber screeched,

"I need my baby!"

The "baby" is a soft, fuzzy satin

blanket that Debra's friend, Kim Meek, gave us when Amber was born. My daughter seldom sleeps without her "baby," and it's especially instrumental when she's not feeling well. It's the only thing that consoles her.

So, I rolled my eyes, sighed, and jogged back into the house to get the "baby."

On the way, I decided we might see something at the ranch that I could shoot (i.e. salvage this afternoon after all), so I grabbed my .223 varmint rifle. With my rifle in one hand and the precious "baby" in the other, I got back in the truck, throwing Amber her blanket.

She immediately stuck her thumb in her mouth, closed her eyes and smiled sweetly.

I then handed my rifle to Debra, who rolled *her* eyes and said, "Am-

ber's baby's is pink ... looks like yours is .223 caliber. Everyone has a baby now."

I shrugged my shoulders and set off toward the ranch. Amber was settling down, and all was going well. We drove along the highway, then bounced along a dirt road. As we approached the ranch gate, I got out to open it, as Debra was in shorts, a T-shirt, and sans shoes. She quickly scooted into my seat, taking the wheel, thereby making me the official "gate getter" for the rest of the drive.

As she drove by, I grinned — the rolling eye balls back in my court.

"It's OK," I thought. "At least I might get to shoot something."

I got back in the truck after that first gate and reached under the seat, pulling out a magazine for my rifle. I held the rifle gently. The truck bumped along the two track ranch road. The sun was setting behind us. Amber cooed at the cattle and goats. Life was good.

All of a sudden, out of some thick brush, a coyote dashed into sight about 75 yards away.

I told Debra to stop, and she hit the brakes. I swung the door open, jammed the clip into the rifle, loaded a shell and took a shot at the coyote just as he crossed the road right in front of us.

One shot. One less coyote in Mills County, Texas.

I don't even remember seeing him in the scope, but when I saw the coyote roll, I turned to Debra with a huge grin on my face, asking "Honey, did you see that?!"

Debra, however, was now leaned into the back seat, having sprung into action by covering Amber's little ears, trying to make sure the sound of the rifle going off wouldn't upset Amber all over again. There was once again a rolling of eyes as she replied,

"Yes, I saw it, and now I'm going to have to hear about it forever. You know, that was the luckiest shot you've ever made in your life."

"Luck? No way! That coyote never had a chance," I joked. As per my years of training, however, I quickly followed up my gratuitous bragging with, "I'd rather be lucky than good any day. That's how I ended up with you."

There wasn't much she could say to that.

And Amber, as it turned out, didn't seem to mind all the commotion. She sat giggling uncontrollably and rolling her eyes at us as if to say, "silly parents!"



Steven Bridges with his 'Baby' AR-15 platform .223 caliber rifle and the Mills County coyote he rolled while hunting with his wife and daughter.

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