

Oh, how I wanted a lever action Winchester .30-30 for my 11th birthday. And when I got home from school there was a present just the right size and shape on my bed. I knelt before it, tore the paper off and beheld the box: "Golden Ranger Replica Winchester Cimarron Lever Action Rifle." I pulled it out of the box, ran outside, stuck the barrel in the dirt, lifted it waist high, cranked the lever to cock the hammer and pulled the trigger.

Wow, cool. It fired with a pop louder than opening a shook up bottle of root beer. Dirt and grass flew out the barrel a good twenty feet. There was even a little recoil. I'd never been happier. I yelled, "Thanks Mom and Dad you really outdid yourselfs this time."

I couldn't wait to show it to my best pal Pat Fadden who lived at the end of the alley behind my house. "Fiends' Alley" we called it because it was where the tough kids smoked cigarettes in the morning before school.

Anyway, I didn't make it to Pat's house. As I was running through the alley an older kid, a teenager on a bike, stopped in front me. When I tried to get around him he said, "nice gun," ripped my Replica Cimarron Lever Action Rifle from my hand, spun his bike and peddled off. I ran after him screaming, "it's my birthday, it's my birthday," and crying. As he turned onto Spring Street his tires slid on some gravel and he went down, the rifle clattering as it bounced toward me. I picked it up. The thief got up and took a step toward me. But, scared off by my screams and crying I

guess, he got on his bike. I stuck my rifle in the tree lawn and as he peddled away, I sighted him, cranked the lever and pulled the trigger. "Take that," I said and laughed at the myself and the futility of my shot.

Nothing like it had ever happened in our little town. Two girls walking home from school found Bill Bantell laying on Spring Street, a stream of blood running from the hole in the back of his head. The police chief was baffled. Who would shoot Bill Bantell, the star of the high school basketball team, and why?

None of the neighbors saw anything or heard a shot. Mr. Winters said he heard someone, sounded like a boy, screaming something like "It's my birthday," but by the time he looked out from his porch, he didn't see a young boy. He looked up the street and saw a bicycle laying on the ground with its rider alongside it and two young girls standing over the scene shrieking. Mr. Winters called the police.

In the local paper and on the TV news Police Chief Rowland said Billy had been killed by one shot to the back of his head with a .30-30 bullet. He asked anyone who might have information to come forward.

No one did. The case was never solved.