

Isaac Antwine

Tiny Memories

I wish everyone could experience the life that I had, the loving family that I was born into. I had what I thought was an easy life growing up; my parents made it feel that way. Not that there weren't trials, but we always had each other. I was especially close with my two older brothers. We were always outside playing. Riding our four-wheelers and dirt bikes, shooting basketball in front of the garage, or creating games like taker-tecker ball which was pretty much baseball that you could play with only two to three people.

So much of our childhood was doing things like this, which led us to having a deep love of sports and being outdoors. More importantly though, we had a love for being with each other. Even today we play golf together regularly and throw the football around at family gatherings which are still a regular thing.

Through my life I've learned that certain objects, images, come with specific memories. We can tell people these stories, we can write them down, but even pictures and videos are just the flattened vision that other people are able to see. They weren't there to live the moment. Other stories, often the most memorable ones, come with scars or objects that can be felt and seen both within ourselves and by the hands and eyes of others. Memories have a strange way of not feeling like reality, especially when they come from childhood. The foggy remembrance feels more like a dream. But for me, there is a small metal BB that is a constant reminder of the innocence and stupidity of young boys.

The one rule we had for that BB gun was to be careful.



Neither of my brothers necessarily look like me. A lot of people said that they could be twins. Tall and lanky with dark brown hair and big noses, the Antwine nose gene runs strong in the family. I grew up with bleach blonde hair and that never changed. I was also always bulkier than the two of them, stronger even at a young age, but I was a softy and hated fighting. If you look hard enough though, or know us, we are definitely brothers.

Being the youngest, I was always messed with. I slept in my parents' room longer than I should have because when they told my brothers I was moving into their shared room they informed me that the green goblin, yes, the one from the spider-man comics, lived in their closet. He was okay with them, but any newcomers would be messed with every night. Needless to say, they didn't want me sharing a room with them, but when we moved houses it happened anyways.

My oldest brother Caleb is a husband and father of the two cutest boys you'll ever see, though I'm biased of course. I get to watch him pass his love of sports, and many other things, down to his boys, and I get to do the same with them until I have my own. I hung out with Caleb a lot growing up, though he wasn't always the best influence on me.

We shared a common love for soccer, even though we played differ-

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

ent positions. While we still lived in Michigan Caleb was in an accident during a soccer game that collapsed his cheek bone. He had to have reconstructive surgery that night and you can still feel the plates and screws through the skin by his right eye. Those added pieces of him come with a painful memory. This didn't make him stay away from his favorite game though, and we eventually got to spend one season playing together. Instead of playing baseball in the spring of my eight-grade year, I played on the high school soccer team so I could play with him during his senior season. We got really close in that time.

When Caleb graduated, we drifted apart. He had friends that got him into the party scene, and a girlfriend that took up a lot of his time. The two of them were supposed to go to Tennessee Tech University together. After pissing his money away all summer, he wasn't able to stay at Tech, and my parents weren't able or willing to help him. He stayed at home and continued working, making worse friends and choices.

He finally turned for good when he met his now wife and they started a good path together. Ashley had a son in high school named Aiden. Caleb fell in love with both of them and after a couple years of dating they got married. Aiden is 7 now, and Caleb and Ashley had a boy together who they named Corr, he's 2. Caleb works for Amazon as an engineer, and we have recently started our own YouTube channel centered around a common love the two of us have, golf. Sports are still very at the center of our brotherly connection.

I am equally connected to our middle brother, Josh, but in different ways. Josh is now a husband and a director at Chick Fil A, though he is currently pursuing a business venture of his own stemming from his love for fishing. He played baseball through college, and I stopped playing in eighth grade, but we still share a common love for sports in general.

After Caleb graduated it was just Josh and I at home. We rode to school together every morning and even though I was the younger one I had to wake him up every day. We got annoyed at each other a lot on those car rides, to say the least, but we didn't have a bad relationship per say.

We actually dated 2/3 of a set of triplets. Weird, I know, but I can't say much because he started dating Sarah before I started dating her sister Jordan. In my defense, they were fraternal, so they did not look anything alike.

It seemed that after Josh graduated was when we got the closest. We cherished the time when he came home from college or the whole family went to watch him pitch. I was still dating the sister of his ex-girlfriend, so that was strange, but once her and I broke up, he started wanting to hang out with me more.

We had a common bond through our love of Michigan University athletics. We would call each other every week and talk about UofM's upcoming games and our predictions. We would text each other during the game and complain about Harbaugh's (the head football coach) choices to switch quarterbacks at halftime. In October of 2018 we drove to Michigan from Chattanooga and watched a game at the Big House (the name of Michigan's world-famous football stadium). It was my first trip and an incredibly cherished memory of mine.

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

In 2016 I was the best man at Caleb's wedding, and in 2020 I was the best man at Joshes. We were supposed to have a system for who was whose, but that went out the window when Josh said screw it, I'm closer to Isaac and I want him to be mine too. I have no clue what I'll do now.

Growing up my brothers and I weren't the wrestling type. We didn't get into fist fights, though Caleb would act like he was going to, get right up to your face with his fist when he was angry and say, "I would hit you so hard!" Josh and I weren't afraid of his threats. That doesn't mean we didn't do stupid stuff and get hurt. Caleb flipped our four-wheeler multiple times and broke his arm twice. Josh dislocated multiple fingers. I got hit in the face with a golf club for walking behind Caleb too closely. It seems that most of my childhood injuries came from negligence.

We have all grown up a lot, and will continue to, and our love for each other has grown too. My family is close in general, but the three of us have so many memories together that make us who we are. A large amount of those memories center around sports and outdoors, which we still love to this day.



The one rule we had for that BB gun was to be careful. At that age we all knew what that meant but, being the youngest, that rule shot like a bullet between my ears, and I didn't realize how careful I needed to be. I had a habit of popping the heads off of dandelions with my thumb. Holding it tight in one hand, and concentrating hard, I would flick my thumb up and the head would leap into the air as I attempted to catch it before it hit the ground. My brothers wouldn't let me shoot the gun, so I was left to entertain myself on that day the Caleb had lodged the gun away in the barn so my parents didn't know we were out there by ourselves shooting it.



"Isaac you need to stay behind me, okay?" Caleb said.

"Why am I even out here if you guys won't let me shoot it?" I replied

"I don't know, you followed us." Josh interjected.

My brothers and I were close, but I was still the annoying little brother to both of them.



What's funny to me is I don't remember the pain from the gun. I had popped the top on a dandelion, and I was just trying to catch it, playing my own little game. The fun we had is what's called a pump action, so there was a little handle that you pumped to push air into the chamber that pushed the bullet out. We always pumped it up until we couldn't anymore. They still don't have a ton of power, but it's enough to kill a small animal, and if your hand is inches from the barrel when the trigger is pulled it does the trick to puncture the skin pretty good.

My first instinct was to start running, like a child who is stung by the bee for the first time, except I didn't run towards the house, I was just running with my brothers chasing after me. It would probably be a pretty funny sitcom scene.

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

We grew up in a large brick farmhouse with an addition on one side that stuck out like a stain on a freshly washed white dress shirt. The grand house was built in 1865 and was a disaster to keep heated in the Michigan winters. The property had 3 barns which served different purposes at one point, but we used them to store a bunch of useless crap, and one to keep our yard equipment like mowers, four-wheelers, and dirt bikes. We were in the back of the smallest and emptiest barn with the gun. Behind it was a small fenced in pasture which we let grow like crazy and then my dad would use the mower and plow down a path for us to take the four-wheeler on.

I ran out of the barn onto that path and simply kept running. As I said, I wasn't running from anything in particular, maybe I was attempting to keep my brothers out of trouble.

The memories in my head after that are more like snapshots. I have a picture of the pool of water on my sister's lap from my tears on the way to the hospital, one of the doctors looking at my hand, an x-ray of that tiny white dot, and me holding my Oreo Mcflurry afterwards. I love how this is what some childhood memories become, because no parent is taking pictures or videos of their baby boy crying with blood running down his arm.

"It could do more damage trying to take it out than if we were to leave it in there. So unless you think it's worth the risk that is probably what we'll do." the Doctor said.

A couple days later we would be trying to pull the BB back out of the wound with a magnet. I found out that day what happens when a tiny ball of metal runs into a nerve in your hand. You puke your guts out. I still get chills thinking about it so many years later.

In the years that followed I would learn that I could do some pretty cool tricks with it. I could stick a magnet to it, and it would stay on my hand. Everyone always flipped my hand over looking for the metal in the palm of my hand. Or I would be playing ping pong and holding my hand in that position would make it move on top of the bone, so the round shape was very visible through my skin. It was weird but it never hurt, more of a nuisance than anything.

I only thought about it every once in a while, it had become a part of me, like the materials people have added to them to heal after surgeries. I was at one of my first football practices at a new school in seventh grade and I tried to tackle the much bigger than me eighth grader that was carrying the ball. My hand collided with his face mask and I knew in that instant it had moved in my hand.

"It moved, my BB moved!" I yelled

"Your what moved?" the coach came over and asked.

"I have a metal BB in my hand, and it used to be on top of my knuckle. It moved down."

"Well do you need to go see the trainer?"

"No, I think I'm fine."

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

“Good. Let’s get back to the drill.” He said sternly.

Football coaches always seem annoyed. I guess it’s part of the job description. After that moment I didn’t think about the BB very much. I would remember it was there and let people feel it or tell people when I had to share “one interesting thing about me”. I even started carrying around a little magnet in my backpack. It wasn’t until the spring of 2020 that it truly reminded me of its presence.

I’m a cheer leader at Tennessee Tech. It’s definitely not something I ever expected to be doing, but I love it now. Obviously as a male cheer leader you have to use your hands a lot. You literally hold people over your head on a daily basis. Since nationals was over, we were working on learning some more difficult skills. One skill in particular had the girl doing a back handspring and me picking her up mid skill and throwing her above my head. I won’t go into detail about everything that entails, but there is a lot of messing up. Constantly, my partner would kick my hands on her way around, not a big deal, unless you have a piece of metal in your hand tissue that isn’t really supposed to be there.

The pain was pretty bad every time, but there was a lot of testosterone in that room, so I just kept going. Typical guy. Throughout practice the pain kept getting worse, and by the end my hand had swollen up to the size of a golf ball around where the BB found it’s resting place so many years ago at football practice. I decided it was time to call it quits and that I needed to make a trip to the doctor. Amazing how a tiny piece of metal was calling the shots.



“I could cut it out today if you wanted to. Just a little local anesthetic and we’ll pop it right out.”

“How long would it take me to get back to cheer?” I asked.

“Probably a few weeks, it won’t be a huge incision.”

“Do you think it’ll get any worse?”

“I don’t think so. I think the tissue around it is just upset. I can’t promise it won’t happen again after you take a couple weeks off though.” He said.

I didn’t think it would be a hard decision, but I also didn’t think he was going to offer to cut it out the same day. Looking back, it seemed dumb that they would leave it in my hand all those years ago. Now, that tiny BB holds so many memories. Some bad, some good, but all coming together as a constant reminder of the beauty and innocence of childhood. The strangeness of something moving inside your skin, but that doesn’t hurt. A connection to the past that reminds me of the love I share with my brothers and family. How dumb we were, and how much we cherish spending time together. All of this in a little, incredibly tightly wound, perfect BB.

“I think I’ll leave it in for now and see if it gets any worse.”

“Alright man. Come on back if you change your mind.”

21 years old at the time, I never thought a fragment of a child’s toy would mean so much to me. It would be like watching a part of my child-

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

hood, my love for my brothers, cut from my skin. Maybe someday I'll have it cut out so I can show my kids the actual BB and tell them why it means so much to me. It's a memory of my brothers and I, an object, much like ourselves, that was there on that day when a little innocence was lost. On the other hand (get it, other hand), I think it's much more interesting where it's at.