

2001 Liars Contest

Shovels, violin making, and magic makeup & spackling were the order of the day during the 2003 West Virginia State Liars Contest, held during the Vandalia Gathering last year. With so much bull flying in the Cultural Center Theater, our intrepid judges had their hands full. They sorted it all out, however, and gave the following awards:

First place — Mike Lantz of Aurora, Preston County

Second place — Dorsey Johnson of Hurricane, Putnam County

Third place — Mark Howes of Helvetia, Randolph County



2001 Liars Contest

Mike Lantz

**Aurora,
Preston
County
(First Place)**

First-place winner Mike Lantz with the coveted Golden Shovel award. Photographs by Michael Keller.

My true story begins on one of those hot, sticky summer afternoons in West-By-God-Smile-When-You-Say-It-Virginia. Me and my ole buddy Cletus Ray Arbagast, we had us a hankering for some panfish. You may know the ones I'm talking about - them roll-em-in-flour, fry-em-in-butter bluegills. Yum, yum. We decided to fetch us some mealworms from Ma's cornmeal and head on down to Hauser's Pond to see if we couldn't latch onto some of those tasty little critters.

I'm here to tell you that we should have, but we just wasn't smart enough to bring more mealworms. The fish were biting better that evening than the bedbugs in Granny's ole straw mattress. I'm here to tell you that we had an exciting time. In fact, we didn't even need mealworms, we was catching 'em on a bare hook, and that's no lie.

I told ole Cletus, "Why don't you just stand there behind me, and I'll flip them back over my shoulder. You can take a fish off, and I'll just cast it back out in forward motion." It was just like fly-fishing. We had it down to a science where we was landing a fish every five seconds. Big ones, too. Most of 'em we had to throw back in because they was too big for the fryin' pan. Then is when the fun really started kicking in. We could see the fish lined up under the water, clear across the length of the pond, just waiting their turn. You see, we can do that where I come from. The water's that clear. Ain't like the water I seen down here. My wife and I took a little walk down here to the Kanawha River a little bit ago. My fifth-grade science teacher must have lied to me because he told me water was odorless, colorless, and tasteless. And what is that stuff floating around in there? Does anybody really know for sure? In any event, Cletus and I was havin' us a good time, and we was having too much fun. It was at that point things took a strange and dramatic turn for the worst. I smelled something so bad, so foul, so rank, so disgusting, I thought I was in Charleston when the legislature was in session. I turned around to see what was the matter, and there stood a 400-pound, West-By-God-Smile-When-You-Say-It-Virginia black bear, staring me right in the eye.

That, however, wasn't the problem. Heck, that bear never scared me none. I'd mud wrestled with Mean Martha at the County Fair, now that was scary. The problem was that that there bear had just ate the bluegills that I'd planned to eat for supper. And, not only that, he'd swallowed my No. 10 hook that was attached to my No. 2 pound test line, that was attached to my brand-new, magnesium, aluminum, fiberglass, heavy-duty, medium-weight, ultralight spinning rod.

Now, we got us a problem. In fact, we got us a problem so serious, I don't think a crooked Republican could figure his way out of this one. Well, I was just going to have to call the new governor, that's all there was to it. Just then, that there bear decided to take off down over yonder hill. Well, I'm here to tell you, there's no way I'm going to let that bear get away with my supper. So I tightened up the drag on my brand-new, magnesium, aluminum, fiberglass, heavy-duty, medium-weight, ultralight spinning rod, and I held on tighter than Al Gore in a Florida recount.

Over the hills and through the woods we went, banging, crashing, and thumping on every stump and rock in the forest. And I'm here to tell you that, sometimes, drastic situations calls for drastic measures in life, and now was one of those times. Just as I noticed that I was beginning to wear that bear down, I loosened up some drag on my new spinning reel, I whipped out about 10 or 12 feet of No. 2 pound test line, and I proceeded to tie me a lasso on the end of my fishing pole. Just when that bear stopped for a breather, I lassoed him around the neck, gave a big ole jerk, and brought that 400-pound bruiser down on the ground begging for mercy. While his head was still spinning around and around, I got up, I pulled his paws behind his back, I tied him up with my No. 2 pound test line, and I hollered up the hill for Cletus, "Cletus, Cletus, come a-runnin'. And bring the Epsom salts and castor oil."

"Epsom salts and castor oil?" Cletus exclaimed. "What the heck fer?"

I said, "Because I'm goin' to give this bear what he deserves, and that's a good physic. I'm goin' to get my bluegills back, one way or the other."



2001 Liars Contest Dorsey Johnson Hurricane, Putnam County (Second Place)

I'm from Hurricane. Many of you probably don't know where Hurricane is at. It's about 11 miles northwest of Tornado, and it's about seven miles south of Winfield. And, if you don't like that, it's about 10 miles west of Nitro. We got a lot of powerful places down there where I'm from.

Somebody asked me one time how the town of Hurricane got its name. I've heard lots of different stories, but there's one story this fella told me. He said a big storm came through here. Tremendous winds, just tore up jack. So I asked him, "Well, how fast were those winds? How many mile per hour?"

He said, "Well, I don't know that they ever really calculated that. But," he said, "I tell you this. A personal witness told me he saw this one ole hen lay the same egg three times."

I want to tell you a little bit about my childhood. When I was a real young boy, I had a terribly bad habit of stretching the truth. I would go to school, and I would tell the teacher a taller tale every day. After awhile, the teacher, she got a real burden for me, and she thought, "Well, I've just got to turn this young man's life around."

So, she laid awake at night, and she come up with a plan. She thought, "I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to try some reverse psychology on this young man. The next time he comes to school and lies to me like that, I'm going to lie right back to him bigger than he lied to me. Maybe he'll see how obnoxious that sounds, and he'll refrain from doing that."

So, about the next day, I came to school. I said, "Boy, teacher, me and my brothers went fishing yesterday evening. We fished for two hours. We caught 20 fish, every one of 'em weighed 18 pound or better."

And she said, "Dorsey, that ain't nothing. I went home yesterday evening, there was a big ole black bear in my backyard. Didn't know what in the world I was going to do, like to scared me to death." She said, "About that time, this little ole black-and-white dog come out there and run around the corner of the house. There he stood, about 10 or 12 inches tall. He went out and run around that big ole black bear about half-a-dozen times and sort of got him dizzy. Directly, that ole bear had enough of that, and he bent over and gave a big swat at him, like that. About the time he done that, that little ole dog jumped up there and grabbed a-hold of them jugular veins, and just held right on until he killed that big black bear."

She said, "Now what do you think about that?" I guess she thought she'd let me meditate about how it sounded.

And I said, "Well, teacher, that really doesn't surprise me a bit. That was my dog, that's the second time this week that's happened."



2001 Liars Contest Mark Howes Helvetia, Randolph County (Third Place)

I'm from Helvetia, a little ole farm up there, and every winter seems like times gets harder. Everything on the farm is getting old, all the farm's around the country is growing up.

The chickens in the chicken house are just laying there. You know, sort of like them boneless chickens you see in the store. Well, during the winter, we thought to ourselves, what could make a chicken be more like a chicken on the farms down the road where they walk around, run around, just don't lay around? We discovered that if you crocheted boots - if you could keep their feet warm - that these chickens would actually lay eggs all year round, even during the winter time. Now, the eggs are kind of hard boiled, but they're still eggs.

So my mother, she really got into this. She started crocheting boots for the chickens. She got into ear muffs, the whole works, I mean, little capes for the chickens. Good lookin' chicken farm.

All this worked out just fine until the space station - the Mir - a piece of it broke off and hit in a hole of water out front of the farm. That morning when we got up, my brother said, "There's a Mir in the hole of water out front."

I said, "That's just your reflection in the water."

He said, "No, I mean, the Mir."

So, I thought, well, I'll check that out. Go out there and, sure enough, there sets a water dog on the bank, looking at his reflection in the water. If anybody's ever seen a water dog, they're sorry looking things. They have no hair, absolutely none at all. This water dog went up, started eating from our dog's food.

Believe it or not, first thing them water dogs do - it's instinct - is start chasing chickens. I thought to myself, "This is bad, this is bad. I mean, a water dog chasing a chicken. I never seen nothing like this in my whole life." We penned all the chickens up, got them away from the water dog, and this water dog headed back for the creek.

Well, we got to noticing everything in the creek was changing. I mean, the crawcrabs had growed another pincher. And the fish, they had extra fins. And, of course, the catfish were being run out of the water by the water dog. The water dog looked so sad that I thought, well, maybe we ought to do something for him.

He keeps going back to the dog food. Let's try putting a little Rogaine in the dog food to see if we can't grow some hair on that water dog. And Rogaine is some good stuff, we know for a fact it works.

Believe it or not, we had hair growing on that water dog. He's a slick-lookin' water dog. I mean, he's good lookin'. He wasn't too smart. I mean, he had bumps all over his head from chasing the car parked in the driveway. But other than that, that water dog was smart. He was so smart that he would actually hold catfish, bass, you-name-it, trout, he would hold 'em under a rock and bay 'em till we got there. He's a good water dog.

Well, this was during the dry time of the season, and there hadn't been much rain. Once the rains came, everything got back to where it was. Pouring down like it usually does in our area, it flushed the stream very well with a spring flood. But, sadly to say, everything in that whole water is back to normal. The water dog, he's back under his rock, the fish are back to where they have normal fins, and the crawcrab only has two pinchers.