



Hank Hausmann —A Man of Many Talents

by Carolyn Heinsohn

It seems that in every generation there is one person in a community who “stands out in the crowd” as being uniquely different. Henry August “Hank” Hausmann of La Grange definitely fits into that category. He was well-known for a number of reasons, including a memorable and potentially dangerous stunt, as well as trapshooting competition achievements, earning him a place in a Hall of Fame.

Hank, the son of August J. and Lena Hensel Hausmann, grew up on his grandparents’, Joseph, Sr. and Maria Hausmann’s, farm in the Bluff community. His grandparents were early pioneers in the Bluff Community, having arrived in Texas in 1853. His uncle, Joseph Hausmann, Jr, owned and operated the Hausmann Store, blacksmith shop, cotton gin and gristmill that once were located on present-day Hausmann Gin Road.

Hank was well-known in the area for his sharpshooting abilities with a shotgun, having won multiple awards. He even traveled out-of-state to compete in Team Race trapshooting competitions with the Texas State Team from the 1920s through the 1940s. He was on the No. 1 team, helping Texas to win the State Team Race in 1929 and 1931 in Vandalia, Georgia. He was the State Singles Champion for four years in the 1930s; State All Round
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Champion twice; State Doubles Champion for two years in the 1940s, plus in 1939, he was the Texas State High Overall Champion breaking the world-record up to that time. In addition, he had a long list of other awards, including being the Southern Amateur Championship C.G.C. Handicap Winner in Atlanta, Georgia in 1932. He was a lifetime member of the Amateur Trapshooting Association and the Houston Gun Club. Being a champion shooter, Hank was posthumously inducted into the Texas Trapshooting Hall of Fame, which is located in San Antonio, on July 11, 2004.

In 1934, Hank gave a trapshooting demonstration for the paying public as part of a fundraising campaign for the Fayette County Sheriff's Department to purchase a \$250 "Tommy Gun", a fast-repeating machine gun that would enable the sheriff's department to deal with potential bandits who could overcome all opposition before them with their machine gun fire. This was the era of Bonnie and Clyde and other gangster threats, so the county commissioners felt that this gun was urgently needed for the protection of the citizens of the county, especially against their biggest fear – Bonnie and Clyde. Hank was also a good friend of Sheriff Jim Fluornoy, and being an excellent gunsmith, worked on the sheriff department's guns, sighting them and making necessary adjustments and repairs. He learned his shooting skills from his father, who participated in competitions at the Bluff Schuetzen Verein owned and operated by Heinrich Kreische. August J. Hausmann's target rifle, an 1890s Stevens model especially designed for long range target shooting with a 38 caliber bullet with 55 grains of black powder in the cartridge, was donated to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by his family and is now on display in the museum at the Monument Hill State Park Visitors Center. August J. Hausmann's first cousin, Louis Hausmann, was also a participant in the Schuetzen Verein competitions, having been crowned Verein King one year as a result of his marksmanship.

A young dare-devil, who always wanted to fly, Hank decided to try out his "wings" as a child by jumping off of the roof of the family home holding onto an umbrella. Of course gravity won, and he broke his leg. He was best remembered, however, for an unusual dare-devil stunt that he performed at age 21, when he announced to the locals that he would personally "fly" an automobile off of the top of the 200-foot bluff at Monument Hill. He built a large ramp leading over the edge of the bluff, printed and sold tickets for twenty-five cents each, one of which was donated by the late Verna Reichert to the Fayette Heritage Library and Archives, and then promoted his stunt all over the area. A large crowd gathered at Kreische's Bluff on April 24, 1916 expecting Hank and his car to go over the edge together. Instead, Hank stood on the running board and reached inside to steer the speeding car, but at the very last second just as the car hit the ramp, he jumped off unhurt

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before the car hurled down the cliff. Some of the people felt cheated and wanted their money back. One old-timer later commented, "Hank got enough money to buy a new car...." thanks to the gullibility of many onlookers.

Hank's E-M-F car, a four-cylinder, 3-speed sliding gear manual, was manufactured by an early American automobile company that was named with the initials of the surnames of the three owners; the company only operated between 1909 to 1912. E-M-F eventually was sold to the Studebaker company. The E-M-F cars were known for their bad-build quality and acquired the nicknames, "Every Morning Fix-It" and "Every Mechanical Fault". No wonder Hank was willing to drive it over the bluff. People were finding pieces of his car under the bluff for a number of years, as well as other trash discarded from the Bluff Schuetzen Verein Pavilion.

Hank later owned the Magneto Garage, an automotive repair shop in La Grange, located on the corner of N. Main and W. Colorado Streets. Presently, the Texas Country Title building is located at that site. He probably acquired some of his automotive repair skills from having to frequently work on his "flying" car. He also repaired lawnmowers, tractors, cars, guns and other mechanical equipment on the old Joseph Hausmann, Sr. property while he lived there for awhile. Small parts and pieces of metal are not only strewn under a very large live oak tree, but are also embedded in the tree.

In the early 1930s, Hank built a hunting trailer that he covered with non-corrosive tin sheeting called Scott's Extra-Coated Roofing Tin that came in square or rectangular pieces that had to be crimped and soldered together. He used the trailer as a base camp for duck hunting and fishing at the coast, parking it all winter long at a fishing camp at Olivia near Port Lavaca. Hank also lived in the trailer for a year in the 1930s while working for the CCC Service Center in their maintenance department, which was located in Yoakum, Texas. For the duck hunting trips, which usually included quite a few people, Hank was the organizer who made sure that all of the gear was gathered up and taken along with the trailer, which included decoys, boats, motors, lanterns, camp stoves, etc. All of the boats were handmade by Hank. One of the boats that survived for quite some time was a 14 foot V-hull boat constructed with marine grade plywood.

Many people would go hunting with Hank and would live in the trailer for no less than a week. They would hunt ducks and geese in the morning, fish during the day, and then hunt again later in the day, coming home with washtubs filled with ducks that would be divided among friends and relatives. During one hunt, there were six persons staying in the small trailer built to accommodate four, which meant that they were almost sleeping on top of

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one another. Those who went on that trip were Hank, Gus Hausmann, Louis Hausmann, Buddy Loehr, Robert E. Loehr and Glen Roy Hausmann. The old trailer has been restored by Hank's grandson and sits in the yard near the old home of August J. Hausmann, which is now used as a family weekend home.

Hank also carved his many duck decoys from cork that came from the interior walls of the old ice house in La Grange that had burned in the late 1930s to early 1940s. The old ice house is now the La Grange Farm and Ranch Store building. Hank also carved decoy heads out of cedar with a pocket knife, many of which were made while he was sitting at the bedside of his wife, Dora (Niemeyer), during her illness, which eventually led to her death in 1954 in the La Grange Hospital. He and Dora had one adopted son, Glen Roy Hausmann, the biological son of Hank's sister and brother-in-law, Pauline (Hausmann) and Paulie Lueders. Glen Roy was only nine months old when his mother died of pneumonia.

Hank Hausmann died at the age of 69 in 1965; both he and his wife, along with their son, Glen Roy, are buried in the La Grange City Cemetery, and Hank's posthumous Trapshooting Hall of Fame award is displayed on a brass marker that has been placed by his grave. Always ready for an adventure, Hank was a very honest and moral person – a talented man, who could do or make anything. He lived a very colorful life that is noteworthy and deserving of this biographical recognition.

Sources:

"A Machine Gun for Fayette County"; Fayette Heritage Museum and Archives staff; material extracted from the La Grange Journal files, May 3, 1934; published in the "Footprints of Fayette", January 19, 2003.

Fayette Heritage Library and Archives

Pete Hausmann, grandson of Hank Hausmann; Austin, Texas