Twitter Thread by Lloyd Shepherd

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So, a little story about conspiracies, conspiracists and America. I'm typing this as I go, so no idea how long this thread is going to be. Just over a decade ago, me and the family went on holiday - to a ranch in Texas.

It my son's choice - he was going through a Westerns phase, thought he was too old to be going on holiday with us, so we let him choose the destination, and just went with it.

The ranch was a lovely old place, run by a guy in his sixties or seventies, though most of the actual running was done by a fantastic Mexican couple who lived there.

The old guy was very Texan - beautiful manners, larger than life, full of stories. The other memory I have is that there were guns *everywhere*. In just about every room.

He spent his evenings online, but not in the way you'd expect these days. He spent his time on networked multiplayer war games, fighting imaginary enemies while talking to his fellow players.

So, it was all pretty strange and new to us - guns, horses, cattle, meat with ever meal, local stores that didn't sell beer ('this county's dry, ma'am'). All brilliant.

Then on the evening of the fourth day, it got weird. The ranch owner was talking about his uncle, who during the war had run a chicken processing plant. The way the story went, this uncle was... a little different.

The chicken plant became a major concern, but the uncle seemed to run it all from his office without any staff. No secretary or assistants or anything. And the office was always kept locked.

And then some time after the war, the uncle died, and the plant was taken over. They got into the locked office. And all they found in there was a desk, a chair and a telephone.

At this point the ranch owner turned to me, and said: 'So, Lloyd, ask yourself this: how did my uncle run this massive plant with just a desk, a chair and a telephone? How is that possible?'

I said I didn't know. 'Well, let me tell you this. My uncle could pick flies out of the air with his fingers. He could stand on a chair and do a flip in the air and land on his feet. Now do you understand?'

I looked at my kids. They were hooked by this tale. But all I could think was: 'There are guns *everywhere*'. But I said I didn't understand. He shook his head, a bit annoyed with me.

'You do understand. You DO. My uncle was not like other people. He was a different type of creature. And you know this, because your Queen is one of these creatures. Winston Churchill knew this! We all know it.'

At this point, the reality (if that's the word) of what he was saying was beginning to hit home. I asked him to stop, worried about my kids being freaked out. And he stopped, immediately. And the evening went on.

I hurried the family out of there, back to the room, and started packing bags and generally getting out of Dodge. I'll say again: there were guns *everywhere*.

But the kids just laughed, and told me how brilliant the whole experience had been. My wife took their side. For them, the whole thing had been a marvellous wheeze. So we stayed another few days, and the Lizard People were never referred to again.

Point of the story, I guess, is that this was in the really early days of social media. Twitter was maybe a couple of years old. This old ranch guy wasn't getting his stories from social. He was getting it from gaming.

I wonder if he's still there, and what he's doing now, and whether he still thinks our Queen will shortly reveal her true self. I imagine the gaming is less central to his life now. Facebook has probably taken its place.

And I think about the lovely Mexican couple, and how they're doing. And I wonder how many guns there are in the place now.