

## Wild Cucumbers

These were one of the weirdest things around the place. Wild cucumbers. They looked like eggs on green strings, had a prickly skin and grew like vines. No



Figure 1 <http://www.wisc.edu/botit/img/bot/veg/Wetland/>

one cultivated them. They grew wild along fence lines and along ditches, hanging on the willows. The young branches grew soft tendrils that curled tightly around anything narrow in their reach. Like little skinny fingers. When these tendrils hardened, they were like wood and could not be pulled off the branch they were hanging onto.

Incessantly curious, even about things we'd investigated last week, we'd pull the spiny fruits off the vine, partly for the satisfaction of doing that. Then feel the sharp-looking green spines, noting that they still were not sharp like rose thorns that became sharp even when they were green. We'd break these short cucumbers open using our thumbnails like knives to split the skin along fissures to see what was inside. It was the same stuff we saw last week. White watery stuff

without much definition is what we saw. Little taste. We always tasted things because dad seemed to do that. Some stuff was pretty nasty like Purple Nightshade which had a taste as terrible as the smell. Later we discovered that it was poisonous but we didn't eat enough to be hurt by it. A great lesson in the degrees of risk posed by known poisons. Made for a sort of balanced view of the hazards of things like asbestos, mercury, cyclamate and so on that drive fanatics crazy today, as if a drop will do you in. Hogwash.

The cucumber pods eventually dried over the summer, and turned brown, ripening in the fall. The hard skins split naturally along the same fissures that we would cut with our nails, splitting open, twisting away from the seed core, shedding the seeds in to the breeze to search for fertile ground to do it all again.

## Vaccinations

These things were the bane of every kid's life back then. It was a major event in a grade school kid's life to receive these shots -technically "vaccinations" but no one said that sissy word- in displays of public health policy. Major because of the fear and trauma associated with them. Doctor's offices were the place you kids received your vaccinations. Protect your privacy back then? Perhaps. Silly if that's the reason, however. We weren't scarred emotionally because our privacy was violated when other kids watch us get stuck. No. We were embarrassed at shows of our pain, the grimace while we held our breath for the stab.

Private doctors did have access to the vaccines back then but health care policy had not evolved to require the administration of vaccines by private doctors. In fact, the concept of whole-population, county-wide preventive medicine was foreign to that population, so the best way to move in the direction of prevention was through mandatory, public demonstrations of this sort. Public health people - just who they were or what organization they were I don't have a clue- basically undertook wholesale vaccination as well as education in these circuses.

A substantial driving force behind these vaccination campaigns, a force that didn't exist when you were in school, was the prevalence of so many communicable diseases like typhoid, measles of various types, chicken pox and so on out there in the wild Uintah Valley. Politicians, doctors and parents understood the value of trying to protect the entire reservoir of kids by shooting them up at the same time, forestalling the bugs from getting a foot hold next time they reared their ugly heads. The bugs, that is.

These drives were done in the public schools. We were advised a week or so ahead of the day that it was going to happen and took announcements home. The teachers exhorted us to be sure to be in school that day, to not skip. We started getting nervous even then, a dry mouth and a sense that something bad was about to happen. Interestingly, parents in those days didn't cotton to the idea of their kids skipping school for any reason, except their -either- own death. You went to school, come hell or high water. No phony excuses were taken from the kid, and fewer were forthcoming from the parents. No self-respecting parent in those days would have phoned the school to say, "Oh, attendance counselor [there actually was no such thing then because teachers were capable of doing their own jobs], so and so just doesn't feel good today! Would you please be so *kind* as to excuse him/her?" Nope. When parents were advised of the upcoming episodes in weeping and wailing and rubbing alcohol, there was no way around it. Running away to join the circus was an option, but seemed a mite excessive even for a 'shot'. On the fateful day, we didn't sleep too well and were cheerfully and forcibly pushed out the door by moms who made sure their offsprings were spruced up and in school. With clean undershirts.

We went to class and sat quietly. "Good Morning., Teacher" was pretty somber. The Pledge of Allegiance was pale, but the Lord's Prayer rang out, with a few miscellaneous additions in a few hearts. Dread permeated the classroom, all of us were nervous and distracted. We didn't pay much attention to the teacher so she'd admonish us to "Pay attention," but she knew she was spitting into the wind. When our class was summoned to the cafeteria, we silently and unhappily lined up as ordered and followed single file behind the teacher. As we neared the arena, we could smell the alcohol and heard the quiet hubbub of many voices. We had to stop outside the cafeteria where the ordeal was in process and nervously waited for the command to enter.

Kids who had been "shot" walked past us back to their rooms displaying a full spectrum of reactions, some in a catatonic state walking stiffly like they had developed a severe ataxia, fear that jarring the injected arm would make it hurt worse, some rubbing their arms, pained, some lifting their sleeves to see where the injury had been inflicted, a tiny drop of blood here and there that looked to be a gallon, some teary eyes. But there were smart alecks and show-offs who pretended it didn't hurt, laughing about it. We secretly thought they were lying. Perhaps they weren't but I thought they were, thought there were trying to be brave because they weren't.

We were summoned into the cafeteria and then saw the white nurse uniforms setting up old-fashioned glass syringes, evil looking affairs with glass plungers, and shiny heavy-duty needles. They filled them with stuff out of bottles with peculiar rubber plugs in place of proper lids. They inverted the bottles, sticking in the needle, squeezing air into the vial, drawing out a measured amount, looking carefully at the numbers on the barrel as they ejected the excess into the air, laying the syringe on the table, repeating the process endlessly. As we advanced we were told to loosen our sleeves on the side we wanted the shot. You got to be kidding! We DIDN'T want it, what an unfair way to put it. As we neared we saw kids look away, swallow hard and grimace, while the nurse murmured platitudes and rubbed the skin with a wet alcohol cotton ball. Then she picked up the armed and loaded syringe and squeezed a bunch of skin on the arm muscle, quickly stabbed the syringe in to the hilt. At that point she'd pull back on the plunger to see if there was a return of blood in which case the needle was withdrawn and you got a second injection. When satisfied that things were right, the nurse would finally ram the medicine in. After withdrawing the needle, she'd swipe at the wound and say "Next" at which point each kid tried to walk away without fainting. Some actually did faint and were carried by attendants to cots on the side of the cafeteria, covered with warm blankets and nurses who watched over them till they recovered.

The whole experience was terrible, but I think it was terrible because we all made it terrible. A mob mentality, a mass hysteria phenomenon in reality. There was discomfort and fear if injections were given in a doctor's office but things weren't hysterical there. Partially because your mom had hold of your ear I suppose. In the schools, we exuded anxiety and fed on each other's tensions, listening to a whine, a cry, watching for tears and fears, horrified that we would cry. In any event, we got vaccinations and survived them but experienced a sort of rite of passage.

## Sunday Funnies

I don't remember whether we got the Sunday Paper delivered to the place every Sunday

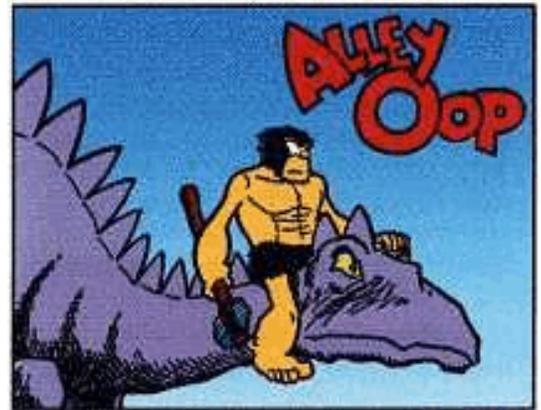
but we got it often enough that it was part of the landscape. I loved the "funnies" and looked for certain strips that I understood, or which were drawn in a style that appealed to me. Dad and Mom read the real paper but they enjoyed the funnies too. Here's a list of most of them, that I found at <http://www.toonopedia.com/>. I'd like to put more information in here about each of them or give you bigger images of my favorites but space doesn't permit

that, so I'll make a comment or two and let it go at that.

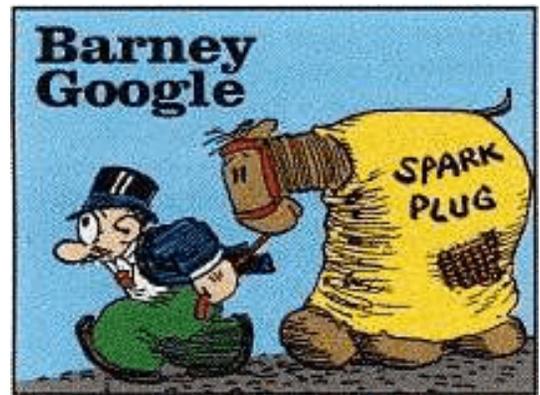
In order to grasp the experience of the Sunday Funnies, please remember that there was no TV. None. Not even in town. Even when TV came into being in the late 1940's in cities Vernal was over the mountains nestled in the bowl of the Uintah Valley so could not even receive the primitive signal. Translator stations did not exist. Either you were in range of the city signal or you were not. There were TV signals that were available in SLC. I remember seeing TV for the first time, probably in ZCMI. I was not sure what to make of it because I had never seen something like it. A screen that was perhaps 6 or 8 inches in diameter, not rectangular. It was green and pale green, not black and white. Basically a dressed up oscilloscope. It is important, if you are trying to grasp the atmosphere of this life on a small farm outside of town in that deep valley in those years, to remember this fact that there was no TV. We just had the scratchy AM radio broadcasts that almost disappeared at night. Newspapers, magazines and radio were our sole entertainment at home.

Vernal was a tiny town of several thousands without much activity. Little hustle bustle of commerce out there in this desiccated dry corner of the state where the sidewalks were rolled up at 5pm. That made anything unusual or special out on our farm an event, a 'happening.' Sunday Funnies were that sort of thing. The experience of the Sunday paper was heightened by the fact that dad was home. All day. In the house, with us, reading the paper too. So the Sunday Funnies were a central experience each week. The ones listed here appeared during that era and constituted the framework on which my funny paper memories and experience are hung. Dad and mom with the paper with Dickie and I, relaxing. It was always on sunny days in my memory. Grin.

Alley Oop was a favorite for the simple reason that it had dinosaurs. And my dad liked dinosaurs. A natural combination. Actually, I found the dialogue above my head, too adult for me to really follow or be interested in. But I looked at it anyway, always wondering at the oddly-shaped arms and legs of the man. And at the fact that he managed to tame gigantic creatures that I was afraid to think about.



Barney Google was an odd strip that I didn't really get it. Just look at this image. The humor was over my head. A derelict horse named "Spark Plug". In some drawings the horse was built into a chariot with wheels instead of back legs - which were powered by a large battery sitting on his rump.



Blondie is still around. Dagwood still doing the stupid things he did back then like this image of him running smack into the postman in his haste to get out of the house.



Brenda Starr was always there. And I always didn't read it. I didn't like it. And didn't understand it. Her starry eyes and overdone smiles were phony.



This one I liked. Mother was a strong willed woman with a heavy rolling pin that flew after Father when he came home drunk or forgot to do some task he said he'd so. And the beautiful daughter was beautiful. I was afraid of her. No way in hell I would have talked to HER.



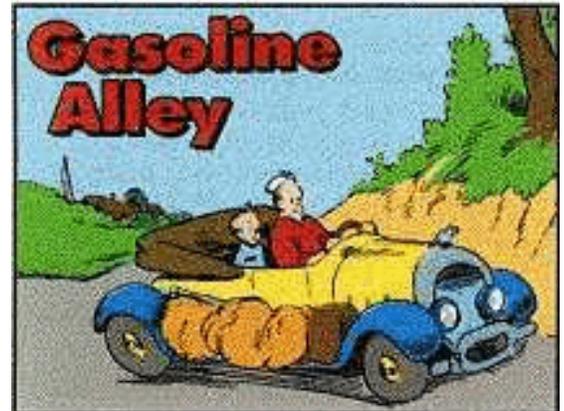
Of course, this was a given. I loved the technology of the strip, not really believing the day would come during my lifetime when there would be such things as wrist watch radios. I have one in my stuff somewhere that I bought in Boise in the late 1970's. It had an ear piece and picked up all the local AM radio stations with the use of a tuning knob. Most amazing. Fighting crime was a commendable duty, parallel to being cowboys.



Flash Gordon has come up in UBW several times. The most frightening series of strips had to do with aliens who came to earth and sucked away all the oxygen, killing everyone who was unprotected. Somehow that rang as possible, as maybe something I needed to worry about. So I did.



This showed up regularly, I read it regularly, and didn't understand it regularly. It seemed familiar, however.



These kids and adults talked in a funny impossible to understand blend of English and I think German or Dutch. I didn't -and don't- know which. But the pictures told most of the tale. These two kids always were in trouble with the adults. Grampa was good to protect them, momma always was whipping them and the goat ate anything in sight. The humor was too subtle - I wouldn't get the kids' humor in this scene.



Al Capp wrote this for decades. I had to good(?) fortune to meet one of his kids who was my age. They lived on Brattle Street not far from Harvard and Rich Hawkes picked the kid up to go see "Around the World in 80 Days". On the way the private-school snobby kid carefully told the story about how the "colonial Americans fired the first herd shot round the world." [Remember your American History?] He was OK. Notice, again, the sexuality of Daisy Mae. She was did not look like Olive Oyl.



This was weird. The drawing were distorted and weird always. Dreams were more like nightmares. Another one I didn't understand well but the drawings were lavish and fascinating. Another trend setter - though I didn't know it at the time.



This apparently is one of the innovative comic strips of the time that set the stage for much of what was to follow. I didn't know that. The humor I appreciated was the slap stick variety. The simple line drawings were easy to understand, however. I'll show you a full Sunday strip on the next page. Reminds you of "Archy and Mehitabel"?





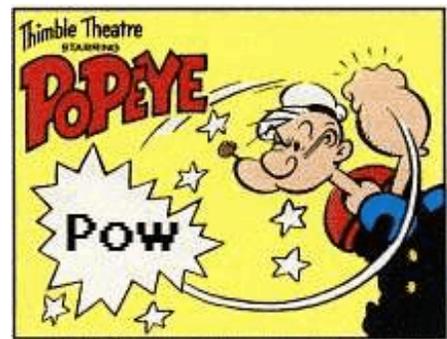
She was always there. Missing her eyes. So did "Rusty" or "Sandy", whatever the dog's name was. Daddy Warbucks was sinister and was not a sympathetic character but he seemed to treat Little Annie well so that was OK. The dog talked, "Arf", a new concept. A dog talking in comic strips.



This was a strip I understood and related to. Two little kids my age doing things I did. Note, however, how they were always dressed well. Not sloppy, even in comics.



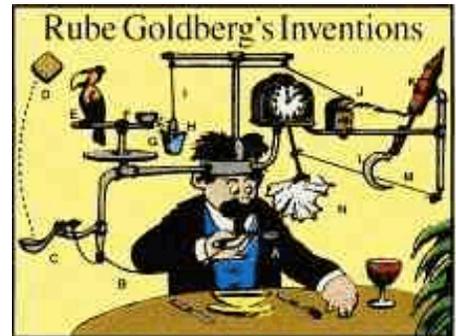
This guy had another set of arms I didn't understand, and the business of gulping cans of spinach to get instantly strong was a bit much. His fights to protect Olive Oyl from the big bad guy were punctuated with these "pows". Wimpie and his hamburgers I didn't get but since he appeared in the strip, I read about him, too. Just didn't get it.



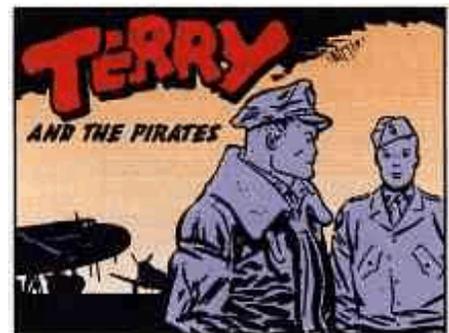
Nice drawings, probably sort of accurate history, but boring as boring can be. I rarely spent any time looking at this adult strip. But I appreciated the fact that it was well drawn with handsome people and an ethic of good and bad.



Rube Goldberg has disappeared from the landscape but he showed up then. The mad inventor who created the weirdest inventions to do simple things. Like in this drawing. Disney used these sorts of inventions in "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang."



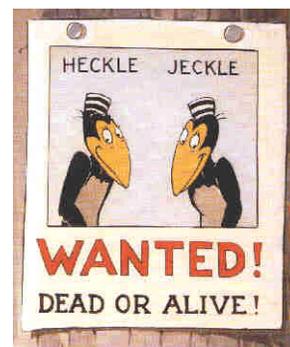
This one must have been about WW II but I didn't understand it or wasn't interested in it. I didn't read it. But note the inventive colors and outlines. Another trend setter. I discovered later.



This was in the category of Gasoline Alley. I related to it because it seemed to capture some of the reality of life as I knew it. But I liked it. Of course, we didn't have a trolley out our way and I'm not sure when I first saw one. No doubt in SLC.



These guys were the rudest meanest people in the strips. I read them, thought they were funny some of the time but didn't approve of their nasty pranks.



## Dad Driving for Wycoff

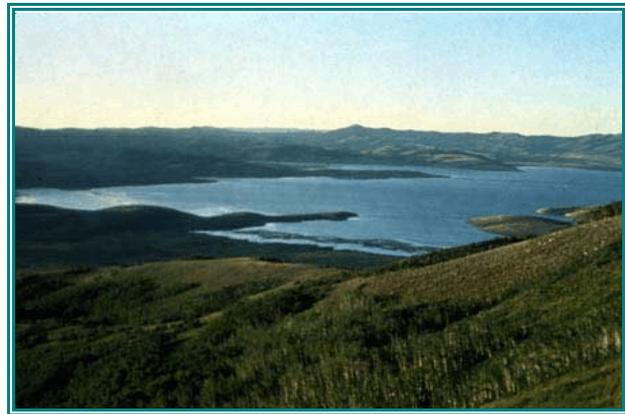
Wycoff Company was based in SLC, a trucking-distribution business with a large number of contracts. It employed a large number of employees in various kinds of trucks and vehicles around the state. As best I can tell from dad's table of contents, he must have worked for Wycoff around 1948 or 1949 because I was so young, and because he worked so many different jobs in the ~4 years we lived in Vernal. Whatever the date, he started to drive a Wycoff truck, a panel truck, from Vernal to SLC and back, five days a week. That might not sound like much of a trip today because people make that 180 mile trip today on the much improved US 40 in something like 3 hours. But back then the road was a narrow, winding up-and-down road that was slow to travel, plus the cars and trucks were slower than today's vehicles. And the speed limit was probably 50, about the limit for most vehicles at the time on that tortuous narrow road. In addition, his trip was lengthened considerably by the side trips he had to make along the way, to Ioka, to Gusher, out to Ouray and so on, places I don't even know today. His job was to deliver newspapers, movies, and small parcels along the way. I don't know what the relationship was with the US Post Office but it seemed to me that he even delivered some postal items.

Whatever the particulars were, this simple-appearing round-trip was calculated to drive a man nuts. A day at a time, with the pressure to meet deadlines, to have to wait for some jerk to get a package ready, for a clerk to come over and sign for the package, for a manager to delay while examining the delivery to really make sure it is all there, plus the boredom of the same road day in and day out, back and forth, winter and summer, may I go crazy before I go to sleep tonight please. God, what an awful job. I don't imagine that the pay was anything commensurate with the responsibility or boredom. But dad needed a change of jobs when he took this one and hoped it would pan out. It didn't, but he had some wonderful adventures to tell. Remember: Adventures are hell while they are happening.

The truck he drove had the usual two front doors and a split door in the rear. No side doors or windows. He'd open the rear doors, throw in whatever he'd picked up, or grab out whatever was to be delivered, get rid of it, and be on his way as soon as possible. No time for small talk. Timing wasn't critical in the morning but in the afternoon around quitting time it was. If he went to Ioka too late in the day, he couldn't make his delivery even though he was outside the store, so he had to make a second trip out there the next day, frustration of frustration, mutter and growl. The truck was grey and had the Wycoff logo on the sides. To me it was an extravagant thing that he drove truck for Wycoff, driving all the way to SLC

every day and returning to us. I was proud of him and his job.

He would leave before we got on the bus for school, in the panel truck that he drove home every day so he obviously left early. It was sort of romantic to a kid to see his dad bustling in the early morning, muttering and complaining and hurrying, while mom made his lunch, getting him ready in his pressured style to leave on his next adventure. Too awed by the event to say anything, I simply watched, admiring his courage and strength to take that trip, clear out to SLC again today, man alive, how could he do that. I was also afraid of him, so I felt a mixture of powerful forces. He was so self-absorbed that we didn't have a great deal of interactions. The trip was long. I knew that from personal experience. It was a long harrowing ride on a narrow road through Fort Duschene, and Roosevelt up through Strawberry and down the other side past little towns and mountains and snow and cold and wind and deer and creatures and accidents and highway patrol.



**Figure 23 Strawberry**  
[www.nr.utah.gov/dwr/strawberry.htm](http://www.nr.utah.gov/dwr/strawberry.htm)

Just to come back to me. To my little home where I waited for him each night, hoping and praying - probably literally- for his safe return. My world would have crashed if he had not come home. So funny to realize that today, as an adult who faults him badly for his bad treatment of me. But I loved him. Beyond words, and if he had gone, I would have died, too. He was my anchor, the anchor of my mother, and the sun rose and sat in him. A giant, a god, thank you god for him, what an extraordinary gift I had in him, my very own dad. I love you dad. Thank you for being you, you rascal. So complex and fearful.

His return in the evening was a time of celebration. Thankfulness, really. I felt in my heart that I was lucky that he came back. In one piece. Dickie and I did the most amazing thing for him that might offend you, but please don't be offended. It was a gracious thing that spoke of my love and affection of him. He would sit himself in a chair, and wipe his forehead with his right hand and exclaim what a terrible hard day it was. While mom would stand and listen to him, waiting for him to come down, to calm down, to be here with us, brushing his hair, examining his neck for pimples that she popped while he talked. Some days when he was in this first phase of coming home, the "arsenic hour" I've told all of you

about, he'd complain about his boots, real work boots, not some silly sissie Adidas or Nike how-stupid-can-we-make-people-look shoes. Men's shoes, by damn, that laced up 6 eyes with 6 hooks above them, rising up over his ankle. Loggers. Men's shoes, fancier than cowboy boots, or irrigation boots.

Some evenings when the sun was setting and the house was warm and cooled by summer zephyrs and we worshiped him, Dickie and I would ask him if we could take his boots off. He would allow as how that would be just fine. So we would. We would each hoist one of his pant legs above his boot top, untie the lace and then carefully un-hook it from all of the eyes, then loosen the crossed lace in the eyes, pull and wiggle the tongue to loosen his boot until we could finally work it off. While he sat there luxuriously, head thrown back on the chair, eyes closed, enjoying the attention -the worship. We loved the smell of his hearty boots and his thick woolen socks that we would remove for him. Secretly waiting for the day that we, too, smelled like that, could wear boots like that, could drive truck like that. Smelling his feet at which mom would scold us which puzzled us each time. We loved dad and everything about him.

In the summer -not the winter- when he returned we always hurried out to the driveway where he parked. To see him, but after that perfunctory exchange had been taken care of, we would both, Dickie and I, go to the front of the truck. And peer intently through the grill onto the radiator. To see what treasures he had collected this day. The smell was of hot metal and cooked insects, a smell that is undescrivable, sort of not nice, sort of interesting smell, while the radiator and engine block crackled as they cooled. We looked and stretched and poked. Butterflies. Large bees. Beetles, etc. anything Insecta we wanted to see. Because they were new and because sometimes they were perfectly preserved. A bug that was caught just right in the vanes of the radiator died immediately and was then dried intact by the heat of the radiator and the wind blowing through it. So we always looked to see what was in there this time, always hoping for a new treasure, a new bug we hadn't seen, one that we would excitedly holler, "Daddy! What's this? What's this bug? Is it a dragon fly?" A time to commune with him, to capture his attention, hence his affection, while we partook with -and of- him the mystery of life in this world, things that mesmerized him, pinned him, impaled him, until he could see them and classify them, both for us and for himself. He'd then wander off, but we always got him for an instant.

The largest wild life he brought for us to see was magical. Magical because he made it so. Today I see there was a trick in what he did, such that one could say he was dishonest. But if he was, I thank him for being dishonest because he gave me such a lovely thing to see and experience. To remember today so I can

share it with you. A creature that could turn its head around and around and around in one direction. With the risk that if it turned around one more time, its head would unscrew and fall off. Onto the ground. Quick, dad, turn it back the other way so its head doesn't come off!

On this trip, he encountered a small gray and white owl. He managed somehow to secure it safely in the back of the truck so he could bring it home - for us to see. It had a broken wing so couldn't fly but he wanted to show it to us and managed to get it safely there. He knew about owls. Like he knew about most creatures of the mountains and desert. This small owl, a gorgeous fierce, defiant creature. Dad perched it on his hand, allowing it to grasp a leather glove to protect his hand from the talons. We stood up close, marveling, leaned up to see it, this wondrous creature, with gorgeous startling enormous eyes, with enormous jet black pupils, that stared out from large fuzzy feather circles, over a down-turned beak that peeked out of its feathers. Grasping tightly onto dad's gloved hand. What eyes. Staring intently, with an occasional slow blink of enormous lids that briefly covered those glowing yellow irises and black pupils with a rugose lid that stretched and recoiled.

The shock, and it was a shock, was when he turned the owl completely around. 360 degrees, a complete circle. The head did NOT turn. Not a bit. It stayed right where it was. Looking squarely at me, so I knew it hadn't turned. Dad turned it again and the head stayed right there, right where it was when he started the turn. When he said the head would unscrew if he turned it in that direction too many times, we knew he spoke truth. He carefully turned it in the other direction to screw the head back on, to preserve the poor owl's head, to keep it from coming off. We were relieved that he did that because it would be a sad thing for an owl's head to fall off. We had no idea how to put it back or what would happen, but it was serious so we wanted it to keep its head on.

Is that a gift? It was. What a marvelous bit of fantasy. With a living



Figure 24 Saw Whet Owl  
<http://www.ai-design.com/stargig/raptor/global/content/report/Saw-whetOwlLarge.html>

creature. Unscrew the head. Right there in my front yard. We understood screws because we lived with a mechanic and had learned about screws and nuts and bolts and screw drivers and wrenches, so when the body turned, but the head didn't, we found it entirely plausible -especially since dad said it was so- to believe that the head could unscrew. We did not want to see a loose owl head on the ground.

The secret that he didn't tell us was that there was a mismatch in the capacity of the human eye to detect movement and the speed with which the owl could make that movement. The fact was that the owl could turn its head so quickly that our poor eyes wouldn't even see that movement -more than 18 frames a second and we wouldn't see it- hence it appeared that it never turned its head. In fact, it turned its head exceedingly quickly just so that it could literally keep its eyes on us. It was wondrous.

One of the principal commodities that dad carried on certain days was movies, the latest releases for Vernal and all of the small theaters between Vernal and SLC. Theater managers anxiously awaited his arrival on the days the feature was to change because their attendance was dropping off, and they knew that a new feature would automatically put them back in the black. These films were about 2 inch wide, whatever the industry standard was. They came in heavy metal cans that were strapped shut by leather strips with buckles. He laid the films in the back of his truck in the order he needed them when he returned from SLC along US 40. He exchanged the old movies for the new ones, and store them carefully. On his return to SLC the next day, he returned them to the movie distributor. Each theater got credit only after their prior films were returned. Not a small responsibility as was evident if he messed up somehow.

As a result of his trafficking in movies, we ended up with perhaps a hundred small plastic spools. They were about 2 inches wide and were about the same diameter. Most of them were a bright yellow. A few were a light gray. They apparently were the spools that were used to hold the cartoons. How he ended up with spare spools I never figured out. It would seem that each theater would re-wind its cartoons onto the spools that they came on and return them to the distributor in SLC, but somehow dad ended up with a large number of empty spools. That he brought home for us. We had a grand time inventing games that utilized them. Sharing them with friends like Billie Schafermeyer who played with us often. We even took some of them to Alaska.

Dad drove for Wycoff until he had an accident that put the fear in him that he was going to kill someone if he kept driving and falling asleep. This dad's version of his Wycoff days, that I didn't see until I picked it up Aug. 6, 002 when I went

to 2821 to rummage around in his stuff for these stories that I knew he had written but which never found their way into a book.

### East Wycoff Smash-Up

**James A. Jensen**

***East Wycoff Emeritus***

**In Remembrance of all the Dead Theatres Killed by TV and  
Dedicated to all East Wycoff drivers, before & after Me**

After our little yellow brethren were blown to bits by our Devastating Atomic Might I found my way back from Pearl Harbor to my family in Vernal, Utah.

Grazing around in the job market a bit, I finally took a job driving an express run. It was a grueling, daily, 400 mile round trip from Vernal to Salt Lake and back in a Ford panel truck. It was in the middle forties before US 40 was widened from a narrow two lanes to the straighter, wider highway of today. The Ford hauled film for seven theaters from Vernal to Park City, Utah, and newspapers for people living along the route. On the morning trip to Salt Lake all used film was picked up and distributed to owners on Salt Lake's Film Row, at the same time the next :scheduled feature,' cartoon, news, and trailers advertising coming attractions were picked up for each theatre.

The film business completed, there was time for lunch, minor repairs, or to have a tire, or headlight replaced, etc, before the Deseret News came off the press at 2:00 PM. When these were loaded it was then out of Salt Lake valley as fast as possible. The truck had to complete distribution of film, papers, and be in Vernal at 4:30 p.m.. In addition to dropping large bundles of newspapers in various towns, single papers were thrown off along the route. Midway ,and Charleston, west of Heber, were serviced by a detour from the highway.

Speed limits were a problem. It was necessary to break them to stay on schedule outbound from Salt Lake. The Wycoff Company paid all fines outbound to Vernal; the driver paid fines inbound to Salt Lake, there being enough time to make the trip within speed limits. Highway patrolmen were alert every afternoon to catch East Wycoff speeding. Local teenagers agitated the problem by constantly goading the patrolmen; "Yeah, yeah, you can't catch Wycoff".

It was necessary to watch for patrol vehicles by keeping one eye on the rear

view mirror. When any vehicle, far behind, roared out of a side street onto the highway, wheels spinning, gravel flying, and followed at a fast clip, it was safe to assume it was the Law. Speed was cut immediately to 40 MPH before the law was near enough to clock the truck. Radar didn't exist in those days, but one day E.W. was trapped by a conspiracy. A plan was dreamed up to arrest me when I was doing 70 mph across the Strawberry Plateau. As it turned out, I was arrested' while lying on my back UNDER MY TRUCK in Daniels Canyon.

The Heber Highway Patrolmen, County Sheriff and City Judge, three pillars of Law and Order, representing the very foundation of Civilization, Liberty, and All We Have Fought For, contrived a fool-proof (which meant even they couldn't mess it up) plan, to nab me, and once and for all time, nail my hide to the courthouse wall. However, my hide didn't stay there long enough to shrink and dry. The said Pillars had neglected to calculate the diabolical cleverness of the Wycoff Legal System which sprung me from the Heber Slammer even before the bailiff found the keys to lock me in. The entire operation was a farce.

After servicing Heber valley one day I looked back just before disappearing from sight into Daniels Canyon. In that last half-second I saw a vehicle rip out of the Charleston road, slew around onto the highway and head after me in a cloud of rubber smoke. Instinct told me it was the Law. A plan flashed into my mind. Some work was done on the muffler that day so I would fake checking it. I roared five miles up the canyon, then pulled off the pavement and stopped. There was a mechanical "tattle-tale" in the truck, a clockwork device accurately recording all moving and stopping times, but not MPH, on a time-scale disk. This disk was replaced every day.

Grabbing a crescent wrench I dove under the truck. The muffler looked okay and in a couple of minutes the Patrol vehicle pulled up behind me. Two frustrated officers got out and came towards me. (finding me stopped was a rotten turn of events.)

They were supposed to be on a high-speed chase after me, up Daniels Canyon, across the Strawberry Plateau. Making the traditional heroic dash, scarf flying in the wind, lights flashing, siren wailing, to overcome and collar me, possibly beating me into submission with plastic black-jacks~ demonstrating the glorious truth that Good Overcomes Evil~ instead their bold scheme was falling apart. Things weren't going according go plan- they found me laying on the ground. How can an officer dramatically arrest a victim when said victim is lying down?

As they approached I banged on the muffler with my wrench, and continued this "fake work" until I could see two pairs of feet beside my truck. Tap, tap, clunk, clink, bang, "Damn" (I skinned a knuckle), and then: "Ahem, koff, koff", the

feet signaled me, as if I didn't know they were there. After a bit I crawled out to greet them.

"Nice day, uh?", I said with a smile, "I had some work done on my muffler and was just checking it. Seems okay. I just skinned a knuckle, do you have a band-aid?" This really threw them for a 90 yard loss. How could they put their stainless steel, true blue efficiency to work when the evil victim asks for a band-aid? How disgusting. How pathetic~ it was degrading mockery. "Look here, dammit, we're offi--," the sheriff began, but was cut off by the calmer patrolman.

"Ah, Yuss, uh",yuh see, we're arresting you for speeding", he stammered, "and uh,--, we're taking you back to court in Heber".

Well, you can see how this hit me in the face like a cold bucket of slop. It changed everything. They were ignoring a fellow humans appeal for help. What depraved levels of brutality were they ready to stoop to if I resisted? I considered diving back under the truck where I could kick them in the face if they tried to collar me. But, decided to try a wiser tack first.

"There is a very strict schedule which I must keep," I whined on the verge of tears, "I must get papers to the many young carriers waiting along my route". This ploy confused, and put them on the defensive.

Highway patrolmen had no radio in those days so all decisions were left to each officer at the scene of a crime. They looked at each other. This was an unexpected development. They were caught off guard. Making any concession to me wasn't in their script. They had to come up with something quick, so as no to lose face. The patrolman decided to appear Noble and Just.

He set my trial for the following afternoon and said I could go. My soul being choked up with a burden of guilt and remorse, thanked him profusely and drove on up Daniels Canyon feeling like a rotten hypocrite, but a well pleased "rotten hypocrite".

The next afternoon the Wycoff lawyer followed me to Heber's little red courthouse. I had given him the tattle-tale dis-proving my time into the canyon and up to my stop, and the length of time it took for them to arrest, then let me go.

I was concerned that the lawyer didn't ask questions to give me a chance to explain anything. He was young but, proved to be an expert in confounding rural law. A premeditated plan to get me, hatched by the entire network of Heber Valley jurisprudence, quickly came to the surface.

Embarrassingly, for them, the patrolman and sheriff had failed to coordinate their stories. This came out as my lawyer questioned them. The two officers testified they were in the same vehicle, one following me at 400 yards, and the other at a mile and a half--both in the same vehicle. I bit my lip wisely

suppressing a guffaw. My lawyer caught this discrepancy and rubbed their noses in it. I could then see why he didn't need my part of the story. He had had experience with such country folk and knew that if he pressed them hard enough they would trip themselves up. My lawyer now introduced the tattle tale disk, explaining how it worked and its significance to my case. The judge wouldn't even look at it, ruling it irrelevant and immaterial. This threw my lawyer back on his wits, with which he was richly endowed. He went on to further confound the two officers on various points, exposing wide contradictions in their testimonies. But this had no effect on the judge's predetermined verdict. It was clear he had conspired with the Patrolman and Sheriff to convict me regardless of any evidence proving my innocence.

I was guilty, of course; I was guilty five days a week, but this case was a hilarious charade. I didn't mind being caught, if I was apprehended speeding. But to be arrested for speeding when I was laying on the ground under my truck was ridiculous; clearly an affront to all red-blooded American violaters. The officers knew this too, but stubbornly stuck to their guns, not knowing that to have a successful conspiracy one must be flexible. Devious, to be sure, but not stupid..

We appeared before the judge the next day in Heber. The big-city company lawyer from Salt Lake City arrived late but managed to nail their hides to the wall. He asked the patrolman:

Q- Where was the accused when apprehended.

A- "In Daniels Canyon".

Q- "Exactly where in Daniels Canyon?"

A- "About a third of the way up".

Q- "How fast was the accused traveling when you apprehended him?"

A- "He,--ah,--, wasn't traveling"

Q- "What was he doing".

A- "It sounded like he was working on his truck.."

Q- "Exactly where was he fixing his truck? Could you see him?"

A- "Ah---, no. He was under his vehicle"

Q- "What position was he in, under his truck, when YO1 approached him?"

A- "Gulp, koff, he was layin' on the ground",

Q- "And you arrested him for speeding?"

A- "Ah, er, ah, yes, but The lawyer cut him off.

Q- "You have testified that the defendant was NOT in his -vehicle~ that the truck was NOT moving when you apprehended him for speeding, and your first knowledge of the defendant's presence was while the defendant was

lying on the ground under his vehicle. Is that correct?"

A- "Er, ah, yes".

Q- "How is it possible for a person to be arrested for speeding when he is lying on his back under his vehicle?" Is it illegal for a person to be under his vehicle?— "Your honor, I move the defendant be acquitted, not having been in violation of any law when apprehended".

Judge: "Overruled! I find the defendant guilty as charged.

And thus the gargantuan juggernaut of corrupt justice in Heber valley ground to an un-glorious end. But while the judge was instructing the bailiff (I suppose) to buy timber to erect a gallows out behind the courthouse, my lawyer jumped up and yelled:

"Your Honor, I appeal the conviction". (hooray for us. I ended up being free.)

I never heard any more about the foul deed I allegedly perpetrated on society that day--Iying on my back beside the road in Daniels Canyon. However, for years I was haunted by the specter of having my door smashed down in the middle of the night, by rifle butts, and being dragged off to the Heber slammer as the agonized screams of my loved ones faded away in the distance. The Heber Kangaroo Court was my only official business with the long tentacles of the law in Heber valley. However, a few weeks later, up on the Strawberry Plateau, a possible grab beginning a new case, was averted by quick decisive action.

I saw a vehicle coming up on me at high speed. I just happened to be in the right place where I could disappear around a certain corner. Turning off the pavement where I knew there was some loose gravel, I spun the wheel as I stomped the gas feed into the floor. The old Ford responded beautifully. Spinning around like it was on ball bearings, casting a wide fan of gravel out into the grass. It swung and slid back onto the highway. With my foot still in the carburetor I took off. When I met the patrolman coming into the curve we passed going in opposite directions. He threw me one quick, puzzled stare, making my day.

After he was out of sight around the curve I turned around and headed after him. In about five miles we passed, again going in opposite directions. He nodded weakly to my friendly wave.

As time went on, I saw a variety of accidents, some of which I could see were not the fault of the driver. This weighed on my sub-conscious mind. I knew that some day my number would come up, and when it did, I might take out an entire family or at least a load of hogs. One terrible, inexcusable, ghastly CLOSE-encounter did occur -though noone

was killed.

Inbound one morning I nearly bought the farm near Park City with my wife. As I swung around a wide curve two miles from town something black up on the ski slopes caught my attention. As I stared fascinated at the mountain high above town, I was aware out of the corner of my right eye that my wife's mouth was moving. My eyes dropped instantly to the pavement<sup>1</sup> I realized she was silently screaming.

I was terrified by what I saw--traveling over 65 miles an hour I was on the wrong side of the highway, about 100 feet from a car load of people approaching in the other where I was supposed to be. In a moment that car would pass us on the wrong side of the highway. I was petrified.

The other driver saw I was in his lane soon enough to pull over into mine; the left lane. Had I kept my gaze up on the mountain we would have passed' each other safely, both vehicles traveling in wrong lanes.

In one awful, instant-reflex action that will ring throughout all eternity (St. Peter looked up from his writing and paused--would it be death or escape?) my arms started to jerk the steering wheel back to my side of the road--which would have resulted in a horrible, bloody smash-up, killing everyone. But in a split micro-fraction of a second something resisted and jerked the wheel back, keeping my truck on the inside lane, passing the car on the wrong side. My wife witnessed this miracle.

A group of terrified, open mouths flashed by at about 130 miles an hour. Forty five years later, I am still unredeemed from that terrible blunder which, but for a providential intervention, would have instantly wiped seven or eight lives from mortality.

My memory always reminds me, "what if,---? what if,---?" I still wonder how people in that car felt when they saw me almost cut over in front of them. We could all have died as quickly as slamming a heavy cellar door down on a grasshopper.

My guardian angel certainly stayed my hand in that moment, allowing the other car to pass safely on the wrong side. There is only one explanation but that has never removed my guilt.

In the billions of years of my future existence, stretching off into eternity, I will never forget the horror of that moment; neither will the passengers of that almost ill-fated car. For a long time after that, I would wake up in a sweat gasping at the realization of the many lives I nearly snuffed out by careless negligence. How can one undo such self-recrimination? One can't. But the scar it made sank deep into my sub-conscious mind, adding to a darkening, fatalistic apprehension

germinating there. Other things happened to haunt me.

After more than a year and a half of frantic driving my conscious mind began to flow into an hypnotic, altered state. I gradually began to drive in an unconscious, automatic state. I would be driving along, looking at an empty highway ahead, then glancing in the rearview mirror I would see a vehicle going the other way. It had just passed me, without me having seen it approach.

Or, I would suddenly snap into consciousness, almost jerking the steering wheel from its socket, realizing I was halfway up Daniel's Canyon without knowing how I got there.

In panic I would look down quickly and see that all the big newspaper bundles to be dumped on various corners in Heber and Midway were missing, while the last place I could consciously recall was about five miles before I reached Heber. I would break out in a sweat. How had I made it through all the stops, and traffic, to awaken halfway up Daniels Canyon? Sub-conscious tension built as more hypnotic experiences followed.

Winter, of course, was the most hazardous time. I saw various car and big diesel rig wrecks hit drivers when least expected. Also, very odd expressions of human nature carne into view. One winter morning, after deep snow had been plowed into high sloping banks on each side of the highway in upper Daniel's Canyon, I had curious experience.

I was headed downhill. Coming around one corner I saw five people below, milling around a stalled passenger car. It was crossways, blocking over half of the space between the snowbanks on both sides. I expected that the people in an act of self preservation would rapidly climb the snow banks on either side to safety when they saw me coming, So what did they do? Everyone quickly scrambled into the car, slamming the doors behind.

As soon as I saw them I had begun pumping my brakes as gently as I could, trying to keep from going into a slide. Though I did so deliberately and carefully, I couldn't keep the truck from slowly swinging from side to side on a zig-zag course. The surface was like glass. I had almost no control. Would I hit them? Miraculously, the truck just happened to swing in the right direction, missing their front end as I passed. I had no split-second of time to get a glimpse of their faces, which were probably buried under coats or some other "safe" thing. This experience taught me that when under the stress of great danger, people may react in a ridiculous manner.

There were other incidents, though small, adding to my growing apprehension. I tried diversions to keep my mind occupied and awake. Some worked, some didn't. One was music. When running on long stretches, steering

with pressure from my knees on the bottom of the steering wheel, I learned to play the chromatic harmonica fairly well. But it wasn't enough. Occasionally I still woke up in the night in a cold sweat.

Downhill to Vernal in the winter, nearly to Current Creek Lodge one day, the roads were glare ice but all curves had been sanded. I drove accordingly, foolishly. When I reached the last tilting curve before Current Creek it was unsanded. I couldn't steer the truck went into an uncontrolled slide. Orville Merrell was with me and as I lost control he said, "You're in trouble". I needed him to say that??

The truck spun slowly around as it slid down the highway. The road tilted in toward a high bank and on every other spin the front of the truck hit the bank, bouncing far enough back on to the road so that when the rear end swung around it didn't hit. When the front came around again it was near enough to slam into between the second and third front end imprints in the clay bank, a large sharp boulder protruded a foot out of the bank. This boulder would have smashed the trucks front end in, had it been in the wrong place.

The front end finally stopped in the barpit. I walked a quarter of a mile and got a tractor to pull me out. I don't remember what he charged, but I clearly remember the prints of my headlights and grill in the wet clay bank, made each time the front end banged into it. There were other minor mishaps and many blown tires. Road construction was very hard on them, rear tires averaged only 9,000 miles, instead of 30 or 40 thousand.

Once I stopped at a scattered string-out of abandoned cargo, after the truck had been removed from the wreck. I picked up enough blemished sections of asphalt roofing to cover my coalhouse roof. Another time and place, where in wet weather a flour truck had slid off the road on a curve, I picked up several wet sacks of flour. I had learned in Alaska that when a sack of flour is dumped into water, the flour only wets a couple of inches deep. As the flour soaks up water it also swells up tightly, sealing out any more water. If you let a wet sack of flour dry out, and cut through the shell, the inside 3/4 of the sack will still be dry and usable. Such small events Occasionally broke the daily monotony. One involved a bald eagle.

I was within a mile of the Daniel's Canyon summit one day when a bald eagle suddenly plummeted out of the sky onto the road just before I passed over it. As I did so small birds boiled up from under both sides of the truck. Small birds often harass hawks and eagles, driving them out of their territory. The collision was over so fast I couldn't identify the small birds.

I stopped and ran back to examine the eagle lying in the middle of the highway. It was stunned. I picked it up carefully and examined it. No bones were

broken so I thought it would recover in a short time but it needed a safe place to do so.

I put it in the truck and stopped at Bether's service station at the summit. Carrying it inside I found Mrs. Bether and her late teen age daughter. Explaining how I got the eagle, I asked if they would look after it until it recovered enough to fly away. I cautioned them very strongly, "Do not put your hands near it. When it regains its senses it will still be wild and will aggressively act for self protection." I explained that an eagle does not use its vicious looking hooked beak- instead it uses its needle sharp talons. "Do beware of its feet." Thanking them for being willing to watch over it I left.

When I stopped in the next morning I found what I was afraid to see. The girl had a wide bandage on her forearm. They hadn't listened to my warning. Before the eagle was fully recovered the girl carelessly moved her arm near it and "quick as a flash", (her words) the eagle's feet came up and clamped down on her arm. It had her with both feet. Several talons penetrated her skin. Her mother couldn't pry them loose. I had neglected to warn them about one danger: "If the eagle grabs you with its feet, DO NOT KEEP THE LEGS STRETCHED OUT when you try to free yourself."

An eagle's feet are specially adapted to clamp on prey and hold it when it flies away without using muscular force. When its legs extend special ligaments pull its toes into a clamp position. When it picks up a fish or other prey and flies away with it, the extension of the legs clamps its feet firmly into the prey. No muscular force is needed to keep the toes in a clamp position. I learned this in Alaska, once winning a bet on it.

Someone shot an eagle out of a tree near the docks where I was working. The eagle landed in a bush. A longshoreman approached it with a stick. When the stick was near enough the eagle, lying upside down, it grabbed the stick with both feet. When the longshoreman lifted the eagle, it hung from the stick upside down with legs extended. The eagles weight kept its legs extended, which held its feet firmly clamped around the stick. The longshoremen were amazed by the strength of the eagles feet and how it kept them firmly clamped around the stick. They couldn't shake it off.

I told them it was impossible for the eagle to let go of the stick as long as its legs were extended, describing how "clamp" tendons in the leg keep the foot clamped when the leg is extended, but open when the leg is flexed. Guffaws, ridicule, and rough language met this ridiculous claim. A bet was made, I then instructed the holder to lay the eagle on the dock, on its back, and push its feet up against its body. He did so and the feet immediately opened releasing the stick, to

the amazement of the experts. I won the bet.

In trying to separate the eagle's feet from the bird's arm, her mother kept its legs straight by pulling away from the eagle's body, clamping its feet even more securely. Fortunately the girl's sheep herder boyfriend came in and wrestled the eagle down and freed her arm. They said he carried it out behind the station and eventually it flew away.

Eagles, schmeagles: such interesting diversions were so far apart I couldn't depend on them to dispel my hypnotic boredom. Daily I sunk deeper into it. Driving in an altered state of mind progressed until I was driving that way much of the time. When my right front wheel drifted over into gravel at the edge of the pavement, vibrations telegraphed up the steering column signaled my mind to make a correction. I automatically pulled to the left just enough to get the wheel back on the pavement.

This worked fine until late in my second year the state road commission fouled the system up: it irresponsibly widened the pavement without widening the bridges. The railings were narrower than the pavement. Disaster was now impossible to avoid; it was imminent, but when?

I was rolling along one day at my regular 70 mph, five miles from Heber, outbound with a full cargo- when my number finally came up. I suddenly opened my eyes -became conscious- or whatever, in time to see a heavy wooden bridge railing about to hit my radiator a foot inside my right front headlight. I gripped the wheel stoutly.

As the truck smashed into the bridge railing a wild exciting sense of euphoria exploded over me. I couldn't believe it, I WAS ECSTATIC! No fear of death and dismemberment, or of pain and suffering, I was relieved and joyfully happy.

It had finally happened. Oh boy, oh boy, It had finally happened. I was going out but wasn't taking a family, or even some hogs, with me. It sounds crazy, but I was thrilled and stupidly happy. My long wait for disaster to strike, was over. I wouldn't have to sweat it any longer. If I lived, I could drive a couple of weeks and then quit the job. It seems strange to me now that I didn't quit before the wreck, but I couldn't. I was like hypnotized by a cobra, unable to move.

I knew the right front corner of the truck was demolished, including the wheel and tire, so I gripped the steering wheel with all my strength. I didn't know if it would make any difference I did it instinctively. Later the patrolman said I must have been going over 70. The truck's right wheel, fender, and part of the radiator, were pulverized yet I traveled 350 yards, he said, straight down the highway before the truck swung to the left and rolled off the highway into a deep

barpit.

All the heavy metal film cans made a terrible racket inside the van as we rolled over and over. The noise was music to my ears. They were part of the grand happening, music to celebrate my release from a prison, no less, of my mind. We landed among a small band of sheep which happened to be grazing there. When I suddenly crashed down among them, they boiled up over the highway in, I mean, wild confusion. We're talking deep mutton-shock here, orbiting woolies and chops.

A kid setting on the back of a flat bed truck traveling ahead of me, must have been half asleep. The noise of the bridge railing smashing off woke him up in time to see the sheep stampeding up out of the barpit and across the road. He told the patrolman that the sheep ran up out of the barpit in front of me, causing me to wreck. This didn't explain the smashed bridge, which happened before the mutton stampede.

The "kangaroo" patrolman was smart enough to see the sheep were not the cause of the truck hitting the bridge, but he didn't cite me. I believe his guilt over the kangaroo court caper made him extra lenient. Maybe the Wycoff lawyer put the fear into him.

I drove another week then quit. But I have never escaped the awful vision of the many people, including me and my wife, almost being smashed up by my negligence that warm spring day as I approached Park City. It is burnt deep into my eternal memory.

They still plow the snow high in Daniel's Canyon; tourists still beat their way through snow on the high Strawberry Plateau in winter, but my career as a truck driver ended suddenly, the day the sheep boiled up out of that barpit, 350 yards down the road from a bridge with one railing.

## World War II

Our lives were touched by the residue of WW II at every turn. In school it was spoken of, the news reel in the movies always included it, the newspaper had stories and photos of it, magazines and the newspapers carried ads about it. Bell Telephone was a prominent producer of war materiel and advertised constantly. This is an ad from TIME magazine and extolled the wonders of the new "electric brain" they had developed to assist gunners track and shoot down enemy airplanes. Note the propoganda here in the form of smiles on the clean comfortable men sitting there in a shack made of sand bags. I don't think that there was any comfort for anyone who was in battle, sitting inside a sand bag or any other kind of emplacement. These kinds of ads persisted for years after hostilities ceased.

Time - Aug 13, '45

Electrical Weapons by the Maker of Bell Telephones  
No. 4 of a series: for the Army Ordnance Department



**The Electrical Brain in its sandbag pit**

In a trailer, protected by sandbags, an amazing device solves involved mathematical problems with lightning speed. It is an *electronic* gun director which enables anti-aircraft gunners to knock down enemy planes with hitherto unheard of accuracy.

Scientists of Bell Telephone Laboratories, drawing on their years of experience in the development of telephone apparatus and working closely with Army Ordnance experts, evolved this electronic super-brain which adds, subtracts, divides, multiplies, differentiates, integrates,

and "consults" ballistic tables—all the while instantly and continuously aiming the guns at the spot calculated to destroy a speeding target! More than 500 individuals worked on the design—over 5,000 drawings and 1,100 specifications were prepared for its 16,000 parts, which include a great many electrical principles and devices well known in the telephone industry.

Quantity production of this complex device held many problems. But Western Electric's long experience in building complex Bell Telephone apparatus to highest standards of precision, made it possible. Against both planes and robot bombs, these electronic directors have helped AA gunners to hang up new high records of accuracy. *Buy more War Bonds—and keep them!*

**Western Electric**  
IN PEACE...SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR THE BELL SYSTEM.  
IN WAR...ARSENAL OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT.

Figure 25 Electrical Brain

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu:80/adaccess/R/R03/R0366-72dpl.jpeg>

## Whisky bottle and Bee Stings

There were plenty of bees around the place what with all the clover and alfalfa next door grown for hay. They were a natural plentiful part of the background and we learned to deal with them as safely as we could. But there were times when things didn't work out quite right. We'd end up with a bee stinger in our epidermis, not a happy situation. We'd go to mom to complain about the hurt and she'd check out the site of the sting which by that time was already showing some redness and swelling.

She'd look closely to see if the stinger and sac of poison were still embedded in the skin. If it was, she'd flick it off with a finger nail. Later someone told me that the proper way to remove the thing was to use a knife, laying the blade flat against the skin and then moving it slowly across the stinger. The theory was that by moving the blade this way, it would catch the stinger itself and push it out. The objective was to keep from apply pressure on the poison sac because squeezing it would press more venom through the hollow stinger down into the skin. Did it work? I don't know. I'm not sure that mom used that technique and I don't imagine I was sophisticated enough to appreciate the difference. Just get it out of me, please, was my major concern.

After she had removed the stinger, or at least determined that there was none, she would take us out to the enclosed back porch. There were windows on the east and the south sides, with shoulder high cupboards on the west side. She'd go to one of these cupboards, pull the door open, and look for a particular bottle. It was a half-full whisky bottle that had a corn cob stuck in the mouth as a stopper. What happened to the original cork I never knew, nor did I wonder. I do now. This whisky stuff was described as "bad" or "not good for you", or some such thing. Words to put us off, to keep us from experimenting. They worked. I never opened that bottle to see what was inside. The penalty, if caught, was too severe. Of course, I didn't know specifically what the penalty was, but I knew my mom.

After getting the bottle of whisky, she'd turn it upside down to wet the corn cob stopper. Then she'd pull the corn cob out of the bottle, sit the bottle safely down, and then locate the stung anatomy. She would apply the corn cob like a dauber on the sting, on the theory that the whisky would remove the swelling and reduce the pain. Did it work? I don't know. Adults probably would apply their mouth to that of the bottle with better results. I do know that I was fascinated and repelled by the smell of the whisky. Because mom made sure that I disliked its smell. She learned this remedy from her mom so it was probably a common one in the area. I was also fascinated and repelled by the fact that this evil stuff that she graphically portrayed as evil or bad or nasty was actually applied to my skin. I probably expected it shrivel or turn black since the stuff was so nasty. It never happened but to this day the smell of whisky creates a peculiar negative reaction.



**Figure 26 Apis Mellifera - "Apis sweet carrier"**  
<http://beelab.cas.psu.edu/P-gals/Gal3/Hymenoptera/hy08.html>

## Eucalyptus 44 Shampoo, Lemon Rinse, Vinegar Rinse

I was introduced into the world of personal hygiene, not by Miss Isabelle, although she made a memorable attempt to teach us first graders about the risk of not washing your hands, and of the benefits of blowing your nose in tissue that you discard instead of on your sleeve and of putting white grease -Jergens Lotion- on your hands after you wash them, the most outlandish of them all because it promptly collected dirt, but by mom. Did you get lost?

Mom was always -as I've said a hundred time so far- conscious of her appearance, and the first evidence I remember of this fact is the way she took care of her hair. To me, hair was hair and while Dickie and I tended to get a bit smelly a few days after the Saturday night bath, it wasn't unbearable. It was the natural order. I wasn't impressed with the notion of somehow striving to look clean, let alone smell clean. Whatever I was, was good enough for me. I was just me, but that was offensive, apparently, to some, hence the need for those Saturday night baths which were sort of a waste of time - though there was always the payoff of clean P.J.'s and clean bed sheets that smelled so wonderful from the clothes lines that afternoon. That was a good mom.

Mom took pains to keep her hair in good repair, to brush and care for it, to have permanents -Toni "Which twin has the Toni?" was the brand- and so on. She would shampoo this hair between Saturday baths, the first clue that there was something special about doing shampoos. Even today shampoo connotes at an emotional level something sort of extravagant, probably because while mom purchased this gorgeous smelling Eucalyptus 44 shampoo, we were not allowed to use it on our hair. We had to use a bar of soap - which incidentally is probably part of the reason that our hair became so odoriferous so fast out there in the sunshine, sweat and dirt don't you think? Not rinsed off thoroughly, the residue would attract dirt. Shampoo was a treat reserved for her.

She would set the dish pan on the kitchen counter, put water from the water bucket under the pump into the teakettle and fire up the coal stove. When the water was boiling, she'd pour it into the dishpan with ladles of cold water from the bucket to get the right temperature. Then she'd put a towel around her shoulders, clothespin it together in front, and lean over the basin and wash her hair. She used a glass cup to lift water from the pan to wet her hair. Then she'd uncap the Eucalyptus shampoo, pour some in her hand and spread it on her head. Then magic happened. I saw so much magic in my childhood that I thought it was natural. She'd rub the stuff and voila, a thick white foam developed all over her head. Bar soap didn't do that. She'd rub the stuff thoroughly in her hair like she

was going to rub it off.

After scrubbing it sufficiently, she'd lean over the dishpan and scoop water up and pour it over her hair again and again to rinse out the shampoo. She'd empty the wash version of water, refill the basin with fresh water and complete rinsing. After being satisfied that she was basically free of shampoo, she'd skillfully swirl the towel around her hair and head like a turban to hold the hair in place. Looking like an exotic Arab princess. She'd pour the water into the sink again where it drained out the stub onto the ground by the root cellar, disturbing the brooding flies. The final act was to put some water in the pyrex glass cup, pour a bit of vinegar into it, uncover her hair and then pour this "vinegar rinse" through her hair. She said it "cut" the soap, like cutting grease I supposed. This mixture was left in for a few minutes and then she rinsed the rinse out by pouring fresh warm water over her hair until she was satisfied it was clean. Then she'd dry and style it.

When she was in an extravagant mood, she would allow us during our weekly baths to use a bit of the eucalyptus shampoo on our own hair, a real treat. When she was really in an extravagant mood, she would follow the shampoo with a vinegar rinse. Those were rare and memorable experiences. The sweet camphorish smell of the shampoo followed by the tangy smell of apple vinegar overloaded my olfactory lobe every time. What delicious odors.

Occasionally for reasons that I don't know, she would substitute a "lemon rinse" for the vinegar rinse in her mid-week shampoo. This was done by squeezing lemon juice instead of vinegar into the warm water that was poured over her hair to cut the shampoo. We never got this courtesy, probably because lemons were expensive while vinegar was not. The smell of crushed lemon skin remains one of my favorites. Any citrus skin produces in me near euphoria. I would sit and smell a citrus skin for a long time.

### Toothpaste and Toothpowder

**Brusha, Brusha, Brusha,  
New Ipana [eye-pan-ah] Toothpaste,  
Brusha, brusha, brusha,  
Does wonders for your teeth!"**

This jingle came out of the radio, pitching a new toothpaste. We clamored to try some, but found that we didn't like it after all. Mom preferred the standard, i.e. Colgate,



**Figure 27**

<http://www.icehouse.net/flanman/objects.htm>

which means we did too, though we didn't know that until we tried this stuff.

Another brand of toothpaste that we persuaded mom to buy was Pepsodent. The jingle -remember, no TV- that persuaded us that we needed to try it ran:

**"You'll wonder  
where the yellow  
went, When you brush  
your teeth with  
Pepsodent!"**

That's a pretty gross  
jingle for a pretty  
gross toothpaste.  
Anything that didn't  
have the minty bite of

Colgate just wasn't any good. Notice who's pitching this stuff. Notice the same sales gimmick you see today - some product free.

Toothpowder was the only tooth care product without mint that I'd use regularly - at least as regularly as I ever used tooth care products. It came in skinny cans with a lid like a salt shaker. You'd shake some of the powder into your palm, and pick it up with a wet toothbrush. I didn't know why mom would buy tooth paste of tooth powder. Gritty powders that didn't seem to me likely to do the job.

When we brushed we were sent outdoors for the project. We stand on the top back step of the four, scrubbing our teeth for enough time to satisfy mom who'd yell at us to brush some more if she thought we were stopping too soon. We held a glass of water in our left hands during this process that we used to swish our mouths out, after we swirled the brush in the water to rinse it. Spitting the water out was a constant attempt to do it like a man, often with streaks down our shirt. Not an easy thing to do.

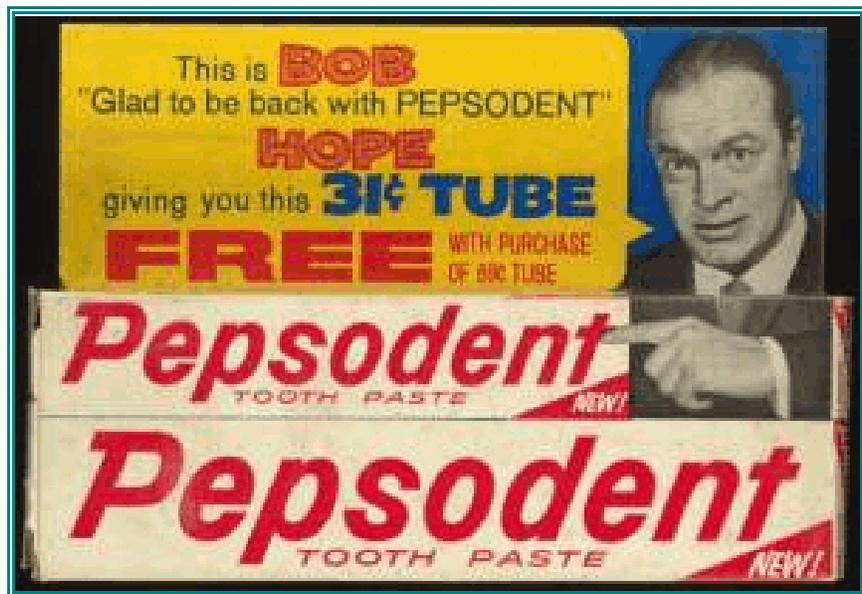


Figure 28

## Dentists

I visited a dentist a few times but don't remember much about what was done to my mouth, just how the process unfolded. Mom would make us wash our hands and arms and faces and put on clean clothes on the fateful day. She dressed up, too. Any visit to a health care professional, or even a bank for that matter, required nice Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. Then she took us into town to the Dentist's Office, a place with the aura of a haunted house. Scary. I had to sit outside of the operatory in a drab



Figure 29 <http://www.consumerreports.org/content/Home/Gallery/Photos/195003.jpg>

office with old magazines. The whole place had a smell of alcohol which was unnerving because that was the smell was associated with the dreaded "shots" at school. The people were always dressed in white and efficiently friendly, i.e. not friendly at all, just play-nice. Sitting down in the chair felt like giving up. Open up please, and then he'd poke around with a probe, using a little round mirror to see what was behind my teeth, reflecting light from the overhead light that he swung this way and that to get a better view. I'd wait with some trepidation for his diagnosis, i.e. how many cavities.

When there were cavities, he'd set up to drill and fill. He'd do a stick with Novocain, an unpleasant painful thing. Then he'd drill out the cavities with a drill exactly like the one in this picture. They were driven by bands of cord, rather than air pressure used exclusively today. A bit in the latter turn 200,000 RPM, while the mechanical ones like this one turned about a tenth of that speed. The

advantage of the higher speed is a decrease in the amount of pain and a shortened drilling period. The sound of these large bits cutting into your teeth could be heard inside your head like a grating, grinding that vibrated your jaw. The holes were created by bacteria that ate sugar. I never understood how microorganisms eating sugar would make holes in my teeth but these big people were pretty confident that was what happened.

### Green Eggs, Green Ham and Coke

Actually, "Green eggs" has nothing to do with this story. I just put that in because I liked how it sounds. Reminder of your tour of duty with Dr. Seuss' book, "Green Eggs and Ham."

This is probably the dirtiest moral trick mom played on me. I suspect she knew what she was doing but don't know that for sure so probably should be lenient with her. What happened can be viewed in different ways. From one perspective, she was just doing what a mother should do who is concerned about the moral welfare of her offspring, but from another, she was using the neutral results of a scientific experiment in an inaccurate manner to prove a moral point which was unrelated.

The background for this story is the health code of that group, a health code that had never been really adhered to. I believe that Mom's generation was one of the first to finally live it. But something bizarre happened. They went beyond the basic concept and converted it from a reasonable, take-good-care-of-your-health thing, into a decree that equated 'violations' with moral turpitude equivalent to adultery, murder or perhaps just bank-robbery. It has become an extraordinarily important factor in evaluating new members of the congregation, and is the first measurement taken: does s/he smell of tobacco? etc. If the answer is yes, the evidence is conclusive, the person is evil and must be avoided at all costs lest one's own salvation is threatened. If a visitor smells of tobacco, members do one of two things, both of which are wrong. Either they shun the person, feeling superior, or they patronize and condescend to him, pretending to "not care". If they point out that they "Don't care", then the truth is that they in fact do.

The problematic substance I'm talking about here is caffeine. Caffeine use is the other measurement -beside tobacco or alcohol smell- taken to determine the moral fitness of a person. If the answer is yes s/he uses caffeine, then beware, there is moral turpitude in the vicinity. The faith made an understandable but gross error: It formed a shaky syllogism something like this:

- 1) Coffee was proscribed
- 2) Coffee contains caffeine.
- 3) Therefore, caffeine is proscribed.

But the logic is fallacious. The order was that coffee by itself was off limits. No reference to this caffeine. The bizarre thing is that this health code allows believers to use caffeine as long as it's in medicine, i.e. excedrin. Then you can overdose but escape censure. [So what's the difference between 2 Excedrin or a coke and 2 aspirin.?] Some other religious groups have done the same thing. Lawrence of Arabia noted:

"The Wahabis, followers of a fanatical Moslem heresy, had imposed their strict rules on easy and civilized Kasim. In Kasim there was but little coffee-hospitality, much prayer and fasting, no tobacco, no artistic dalliance with women, no silk clothes, no gold and silver head-ropes or ornaments. Everything was forcibly pious and forcibly puritanical."

-SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM (Lawrence 1963:150)

Caffeine was a hazard there as well.

Coca cola became an evil substance, something that would harm your essential soul. This is where mom did her dastardly trick. She somehow discovered that if you put a piece of ham into a dish of coke it -the ham- turns green. So she hauled me and Dickie one day into grandma's kitchen behind the store in an ominous state of mind sort of like that of the assigned member of the sanhedrin who makes his annual entry into the holy of holies. Where she opened a bottle of coke, and then carefully -as if it were picric acid- poured it into a dish and proceeded with her demonstration. And lecture. She said she was helping us understand why we were not allowed to drink coke -that we otherwise thought was just fine since our uncles drank it without evidence of injury. She wanted us to know that we would actually be harming our stomachs if we drank it. Perish the thought. That got my attention. My own stomach? I hadn't much worried about that but now that she had pointed it out, Well, I better listen up. I also listened because I could tell that failure to at least appear like I was attentive would result in a painful something or other on some part of my anatomy. Life filled with that sort of evidence makes one acutely sensitive to the settings wherein pain happens. Tended to make a true believer out of you in anything set before you even if you didn't understand or care.

She took a small thin slice of ham that we recognized as coming from a ham

off from what used to be a pig, and told us to watch. She laid it slowly into the coke and told us to wait a bit. This was interesting. An experiment always arrested me. She had already done or seen this experiment because she knew what was going to happen and how long we had to wait while she explained again her concern for our welfare. But the underlying thread of this lecture had nothing to do with the state of our gastric pouch -itself filled with quantities of hydrochloric acid anyway, but don't confuse me with facts, please. The underlying thread had to do with morality, with principles of rightness and wrongness, with the concept of doing something evil. It was pretty difficult for us little kids to see how pouring a brown liquid in our mouths was evil, but if mom said it was so, then...that was what she believed.

See the skip? The three little dots? Diaeresis, hysteresis, whatever the '-esis it is. The pause, the change in emphasis? That's unfortunate. But it's how little kids operate. You know it from your own experience and can probably list instances where you, too, did the same thing. Little kids have BS Meters operating, as finely tuned as any meter possessed by adults. More authentic and honest. When the little kid hears some of the stuff, the needle is pegged at the top, the setting is recorded, the message is memorized, but the little kid knows better from painful experience than to say anything. S/He simply makes note of all things that happened then. The unfortunate consequence of these kinds of situations is that the kid ultimately learns to display behaviors that APPEAR to be obedience when s/he actually couldn't care less about the "principle". The kid is simply doing what he has to do to preserve his or her hide or mind. But s/he doesn't believe it. The really unfortunate consequence is Cynicism. A whole generation, indeed generations, have learned that cynicism, which goes hand in hand with hypocrisy.

After the proper length of time, she said, "Watch!" and dramatically poked a fork, not her finger -demonstrating thereby the risk of the liquid- into the stuff and pulled the poor piece of pig up for inspection. Sure enough, it was green all over. Triumphant, mom grinned and pointed it out to us, explaining that if we drink this stuff, our own stomachs will turn green. That got my attention, green stomachs apparently were bad things I promised never to touch it and so on. She won that round, but lost the match. A cheap trick on a little kid will backfire in the end. It did. But not till I was 27 years old.

I actually was more interested in the fact that there were small round thick-walled bubbles adhering to the surface of the pig. The green was nice, sort of corroded copper color, but I wondered, "How could it be that bubbles would stick on the surface of the pig?" And "Where did those bubbles come from

anyway?" I vividly remember the situation and these little bubbles. But do you think I asked her about the bubbles? Not on your life. We were being instructed and edified and far be it from me to point to some interesting scientific phenomenon that rudely intruded on the lofty doctrine that were being wafted my way. I still wonder about them.

The irony of the caffeine business has to do with another member of the class of drugs -termed methyl xanthines or methylated xanthines- that is named "theobromine". It acts directly on the heart. It turns out that this drug is the drug of choice of the LDS church. It is the active ingredient in chocolate. Tell me, then, "What is the rationale that allows this class of drugs to be split into useable and unusable divisions, allowed and not-allowed groups?" To my way of thinking, it is more reasonable or logical to use all of them or to not use any of them. Fastidiously turning one's nose up at caffeine while gorging on chocolate, smacks of a severe case of phariseeitis. [If you're interested in a deeper discussion of this matter, see chapter 25 of TMG.] So you are allowed to take an excedrin for your head ache and elicit a sympathetic word or two. But if you accomplish the same medicinal effect by taking an aspirin with a glass of coke, you earn criticism and judgment. But they are medically equivalent so you better soft pedal the "logical" explanations.