

# A Day Celebrated

and other stories

by

Jack Evans



Compiled October, 2000

Edited by Karen Evans

Bovine Memories

Coincidences over the Years

A Day Celebrated

Flight

The Hazards of Man Power

High Noon at the Farm

A Human Perspective

The Inspection

One September Evening

The Railroad

Social Service

Vignettes of the Fair

The Visit

## Bovine Memories

The barn door, large enough to allow our 1931 Essex to pass, slid to the left. Inside, little space remained in front of the vehicle, but enough alongside to have shoved a second auto sideways to clear the first. The area toward the rear of the barn had been largely appropriated for the bovine abode, namely, the stall for old Popeye, as we called her. Popeye at her peak production manufactured about 12 quarts of milk a day. She exuded a couple of other products that smelled up the place, and gave an aroma to the upholstery in the Essex, which was unappreciated by Mother, or by me.

Popeye was so old she had only a few teeth. My father jokingly considered dentures for her, but concluded they were impractical. As an alternative, he borrowed a cutting machine to chop up the hay, so he could, you might say, spoon-feed her. I don't know what this chopping machine was originally intended for. It consisted of a wooden trough about 8 inches wide into which the operator placed a big handful of the material to be chopped and shoved it toward a revolving blade. The other hand grasped the handle of a large crank, and when the operator put his muscle to the task, the blade rotated at high speed. By its construction, it seemed this device was an excellent instrument to excise a couple of fingers.

Popeye was one of several cows, and undoubtedly the best, that came in succession from Dr. Trott, next door. It was a business arrangement in which he owned the cow, we supplied the shelter, the feed, pulled her teats twice a day, and delivered two quarts of milk to his household. Doc took the cows in payment for his medical services. Although the principal of this barter was the cow, the transaction had a definite horse-trading aspect. Obviously, a farmer was not parting with any prize animal to satisfy medical bills. On the contrary, the object was to foist upon Doc some critter that hardly would be accepted at the sausage works. In general, that was the kind of cow we got!

There came a time when we had to say goodbye to Popeye. Her milk production went way down and she was old and miserable. The morning the truck came to take her away, the thermometer registered 35 degrees below zero, the coldest day of 1933. When I awoke that morning, the water in the tumbler on the pool table rail near my bed was frozen. The linoleum floor covering, considered by my mother appropriate for a room with a pool table, seemed to my bare feet as the surface of an ice rink. The biting cold must have been even more unbearable to poor old Popeye. I had pangs of sympathy for her as she passed the kitchen window aboard an open truck.

Cows came and went. Their quality as dairy animals bordered on the

ridiculous. One in particular earned a permanent place in my memory. The doctor had left a message at the house for me to lead home a cow from a farm two miles to the northwest.

I started on my task directly after school. In the barn, I found a hank of rope about 10 feet long and set out on foot in mid-afternoon on a sparkling spring day. I could hardly object to this duty in such inspiring natural splendor. I knew of the Paul farm, since Lucille, one of the Paul children was in the same sophomore high school class. Part of the route lay along the state highway and part of it over a narrow dirt road.

In about half an hour, I arrived at the farm. Lucille and her little sister were in the garden behind the house. "Hi, Lucille, do you know of a cow that I'm supposed to lead back to the village for Doc Trott?". Yes, she knew about it and could hardly conceal her amazement that I was to perform the task. She pointed to the pasture where the animal was corralled. She stayed a few paces behind me as I approached the field of action.

The pasture was on the order of three or four acres; instantly I spotted its lone occupant. To my astonishment this cow had horns! Most dairy cattle have their horns clipped at an early age. I opened the gate and proceeded cautiously toward the animal. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed Lucille and her little sister quickly closed the gate behind me. I advanced slowly, approaching "Bossy" broadside and looking her over carefully, to appraise her bovine merits. At about twenty feet, she reared, turning her hindquarters toward me. She obviously had learned long before that such a maneuver placed me at an unmistakable disadvantage. Trying to circumvent her rear end, I walked around toward her head, she retaliated by again turning that backside toward me. I perceived then and there the value of the cowboy's horse and his lasso. That's what I needed, a horse and lasso!

I tried to approach her at various angles, but she either swung her rear quarters around toward me, or kicked up her heels and galloped away to another part of the field. I had observed enough to conclude that the cow's udder was non-existent. Retreating back to Lucille, I inquired, "When was that cow last milked?" Lucille didn't seem to know with any certainty, but the conclusion was that it had been a very long time in the past. The truth was clear enough: as a dairy cow, she was worthless! But nevertheless, my duty was to bring back the animal.

Lucille suggested that she could round up several nearby farm kids to drive the cow into a corner of the field. I was agreeable to about anything. I knew for sure that rounding up several schoolboys was much easier than rounding up one uncooperative cow.

It seemed no time at all before Lucille had acquired two boys and an



older girl, giving us a team, including me, of six. On the third attempt, we cornered that ornery animal; I had visions of her turning upon us with those horns. Reaching through the fence, I snatched a handful of alfalfa and thrust it at Lucille, saying, "See if this will get her attention!" That alfalfa, to that cow, was like a cigarette to an addict who was deprived of tobacco for a week. I passed a line with a slipknot around the beast's neck. I gave a tug on the line and we were on our way toward the gate. Momentarily, at least, everything was under control.

I bid adieu to Lucille and her friends, thanking them all heartily, and with a firm grasp on the line started homeward. I soon discovered that, although lacking in those admirable features identified with a fine dairy cow, the animal had remarkable eyesight and discernment of the choicest green fodder. She could recognize a clump of alfalfa twenty-five feet or more in any direction. Once thus spotted, there was no denying her intentions. She headed directly for it. There was no way I could hold her back. I was no match at all for her strength. She advanced from one alfalfa clump to another, dragging me after her as a very unwilling follower. I was hoping that the line around her neck would choke her to death, but the noose did not faze her in the least. Our progress was measured from one alfalfa clump to the next. There were two positive aspects in this tug of war: we didn't backtrack, how could we? All those alfalfa stalks behind us were gone! Secondly, on this back road there was a complete absence of traffic.

Over an hour had passed as we approached the main highway. I was more than a little apprehensive about what would happen. Would I still be contending with the cow's appetite for alfalfa? Would the animal crisscross the highway, risking collision with fast-moving vehicles? My hands were sore and tired of hanging onto that rope. I dared not lose my grip. We made the turn at the main highway towards the village to the south. Not a stalk of alfalfa was in sight! Our forward progress markedly picked up. Bossy actually hit a stride down the right shoulder of the road. The line around her neck hung loose--what a relief! It was as if she recognized that broad shoulder of the highway as her ordained route of travel! She was oblivious to passing automobiles. Together we marched, boy and cow, into the heart of the village.

My instructions were to take the cow to a pasture lot off a side street joining the main highway just a little beyond our house. A fairly long, straight driveway led back to the pasture. I had a sense of accomplishment on that last leg of the journey down the driveway. In school, I had just read from Caesar, *Laboria omnia vincit* (Perseverance overcomes all things). I had persevered;

I had accomplished what I had set out to do, despite obstacles. The last steps to the pasture gate proceeded as a march of triumph.

I opened the small wooden gate, wide enough to accommodate the cow and deftly untied the line around her neck as she slipped through. With some sense of relief, I hooked the gate and turned back toward the side street. I had only taken a few steps when the sound of a crash and crunch startled me. The pasture gate came tumbling off the cow's horns at my feet. She sped past me like the Pony Express, took a left turn at the side street at a full gallop and headed east out of town. What a surprise! What a defeat! I didn't bother to pick up the gate. I just turned toward home and the dinner that was waiting.

Doc had been "had" again. I was a kind of incidental second victim one step down the chain of command. Doc did retrieve that animal, but not with my help. Doc had: an airport and a plane, as well as other sidelines such as a fox farm, a grapefruit ranch in Texas, pinball machines, and other enterprises all fueled by his medical practice. The airplane came in handy. He, or his pilot, a day or two later, spotted the cow about two miles east on a country byway. No doubt she was munching alfalfa! I declined to have much to do with cows after that. You might say I chalked it all up to experience. That's what we live for, the experience!

Coincidences

**Coincidences over the Years**  
**or**  
**Some Personal Events of Low Probability**

J.C. Evans

November, 1991

In Castner and Neuman's book, *Mathematics and Imagination*, each chapter is introduced by a short verse. For the chapter on chance and probability the applicable verse reads:

"There was once a brainy baboon  
Who spent all his time breathing into a bassoon,  
For surely in a million of years he would strike upon a tune"

The probability of striking upon a tune was slim for this baboon. In our own lives we occasionally experience events that have probabilities of occurrence that are likewise, exceedingly small. For example, as an airline passenger you discover that seated next to you is an old school chum of forty bygone years who now lives in a distant foreign land. Both you and this old alumnus are not: frequent world travelers, attention seeking celebrities, roving politicians nor operators of travel agencies, so that the probability of a chance meeting is minuscule, perhaps a number like one in ten million.

As we recount such rare coincidences we may observe that one or more of them has had a significant bearing on our career, or the location of where we subsequently live and work. For myself, the location of Velmex Inc. (for the past twenty-four years) was determined largely through a coincidence.

It was early spring of 1967, when my business partners, three in number, had surreptitiously decided to merge with a highflying West Coast corporation. The deal was one where the controlling ownership in our business was to be exchanged for a minor ownership in a larger corporation having marketable stock certificates and a much-heralded ballyhoo supporting stock speculation for the owners. The conflict, mistrust and suspicion among us owners led to a separation and the establishment of a new enterprise by me. The new business required a roof over its head and a desirable location.

I looked to the south in the direction of my roots where I had spent my first seventeen years growing up in country surroundings dotted with green hills and blue lakes. I had fond memories of: energetic bicycling to

## Coincidences

neighboring villages, playing countless ball games, racing sleds down ice covered highways and skating on ponds illuminated by flickering bonfires. My recollections included: meeting the evening train, peddling the *Times Union*, and going to school during the Great Depression of the thirties. In my mind I can still see: Grandpa and his railroad, the big canning factory, the gristmill, hay storage buildings and coal silos along the tracks, and my dedicated teachers and lifelong school companions.

To the south was a building with a realtor's FOR SALE sign out front. A passing glance sufficed for me to conclude that the construction was never completed and that the building design was somewhat ornate for industrial use. Upon telephoning the realtor, a Mr. Pennington, specializing in commercial and industrial real estate, offered to show me the building.

At the appointed time Pennington arrived with a crowbar and a hammer: the crowbar to pry off the plywood panels nailed over the door openings and a hammer to nail them back again. He was quick to point out that the construction was commenced by a restaurateur whose restaurant, named the Red Top Inn, once located a half-mile to the east, was destroyed by fire some two years or more earlier. The restaurateur and a few local investors were to re-construct in this new location, but alas, their funds ran out and the mortgagee had foreclosed and was offering the property for sale.

It was clear that the building was a mere shell. The only finished installations of any kind were the casement windows. After a forced entry, the realtor and I, his prospect, were greeted by: a dirt floor on the lower level, sub flooring on the floor above, and crudely nailed ladders connecting the levels in openings where stairs should have been. Other than a main distribution box for electrical power there was only a trace of further wiring, no plumbing, no heating system, no finished interior walls and ceilings. Pennington stated that the asking price was \$65,000 and revealed that the owner was on an around-the-world tour. The price seemed high to me.

Two weeks passed and I had discovered no other property that had much appeal. I phoned Pennington again. He reported that the owner was now in Hawaii and was not expected in the continental United States for at least two more weeks. A thought flashed through my mind and I inquired, "Who is the attorney for the owner?"

His reply, "It's some fellow by the name of Al Gilbert."

"Al Gilbert!" I exclaimed, "that's my lawyer, I'll give him a call."

Well, Al Gilbert disclosed that he was authorized by the owner to sell the property for \$50,000. And that was the deal that we made.

What was the probability that my lawyer and the seller's lawyer would be the same? In consideration of the number of lawyers in Monroe County and nearby outlying areas, the probability was roughly

one in two thousand!

Shortly thereafter another case of what might be called improbability arose. Our shell of a building had a skeleton of steel beams projecting out from the front entrance forming a framework for a large canopy to protect the restaurant patrons from the weather. Such a canopy for our purposes seemed superfluous. We tore down the steel frame and piled it to the east side of the building. The restaurateur spotting it from the highway, made a visit to inquire if he could purchase the steel for use in re-modeling another building farther down the road. It was his intention to convert that structure into yet another restaurant.

Having lost his opportunity at our location, knowing he was financially troubled, and being sympathetic to entrepreneurs in general, I said, "Look, we do not need this steel and you do, you can have it and when your restaurant is completed invite me down for dinner."

We shook hands; he took the steel. Do you know what the probability of my free dinner was? It was zero. The restaurateur never completed that restaurant either!

## II

As an airline passenger I never sat beside an old school chum of forty bygone years but a similar event, as improbable did occur. It was a beautiful early summer afternoon as I drove toward Boston through Cambridge on Commonwealth Avenue. As a city street, six lanes wide, it had its full complement of traffic signals. The signal ahead changed to red. I rolled to a stop in the left lane of the three on-going lanes. The windows of my vehicle were open to let in the summer breeze. A sporty convertible, top down, pulled along side; it attracted my attention. Surprisingly the driver appeared familiar and before I could place him, he shouted a greeting, "Hi, there, Prof. Evans!" He was Bill Britton, a former student at the University of Rochester.

He yelled, "I'm on my way to work at B.U.!" (Boston University).

It puzzled me that he was on his way to work at 2:30 in the afternoon but that happenstance added to the mystery of the chance meeting. When one considers that my visits to Boston were infrequent and that the total number of University of Rochester graduates in optics in the entire Boston area at that time was ten at the most, the chance meeting of any one of them on the highway in mid afternoon was extremely small, perhaps a figure like one in several million.

### III

The Wednesday night basketball season for Velmex employees had just begun in the old Hemlock School. The previous season an incident occurred there, which was uncanny. To begin with, we rarely had spectators at our games. However, one night a player from Honeoye brought his girlfriend. She sat upon the stage of the combined auditorium-gym.

During one of the rest periods, out of hospitality and curiosity I approached her and asked if she, too, was from Honeoye. Yes, she was, and I then inquired if she had attended the Honeoye School.

“No,” she said without further comment.

My curiosity impelled me to ask, “Well, where did you go to school?”

She replied, “Oh, you wouldn’t know of the school I went to. It was in a small village in northern New York.”

“Oh, really?” I pressed on, “What village?”

“Hammond”, she replied as if it were located in Siberia.

“Hammond!” I blurted. “I know it well, it’s inland from Oak Point on the St. Lawrence. I attended a wedding at the Presbyterian Church in Hammond. The street where the church is located leads to Oak Point and at its juncture with the main village street stands the Citizen’s National Bank. At one time a close friend of mine had her family’s sterling silverware stored in the bank’s vault for three weeks. I remember on the main street a little restaurant and two small grocery stores, one had a five and dime department. I explored the old railroad depot and the abandoned Utica-Ogdensburg branch of the New York Central Railroad in Hammond. In fact, I know two graduates of the University of Rochester by the name of Hammond that live in the Hammond Township!”

The girl was amazed that I was knowledgeable about Hammond. What astounded me was that a once-in-a-blue-moon spectator at our ballgame attended school in that far away, off the beaten path village with which I was familiar. I’ll give this chance occurrence a figure of one in fifty thousand.

### IV

About six months ago, Evie, in the adjoining office directed a phone call to me from Northbrook, Illinois. The caller was Dick Lepman, a long time friend and a member of our Board of Directors.

“Jack”, he said, “I noticed a classified ad in a farm journal that some

## Coincidences

farmer in Holcomb, N.Y. is raising and offering for sale a breed of beef cattle called Scottish Highland. I'm considering purchasing a couple of them to start a herd on our property up in Michigan."

Dick described the beasts and their merits as beef cattle and asked me if I knew of this cattleman who gave an address on Taft Road. He expressed surprise that someone in Holcomb, N.Y. would be raising this uncommon breed of cattle. Dick wanted to know if I knew or had heard of this farmer by the name of Oliver Scott.

"No, Dick, I don't know of a Mr. Scott on Taft Road or anything about Scottish Highland cattle. Wait a minute, Dick, there is some commotion in the adjoining office!"

Indeed, there was twittering laughter. Evie and Alayne were beside themselves. Through the doorway I could see Evie was on the verge of hysteria.

In a loud voice I asked, "Evie, do you know of someone in West Bloomfield that raises Scottish Highland beef cattle?"

Back on the phone, "Dick, this chap in West Bloomfield is Evie's ex-husband. She should know him well! Let me switch you over to her!"

What a combination of coincidences: that a beef cattle advertisement caught the eye of Dick, that Dick was quite well acquainted with Holcomb although he lives 700 miles distant, that the local cattle raiser was the ex-husband of Evie. Without any meaningful calculations, I give this probability of one in a hundred thousand.

## V

My 1956 model "run-about" motorboat hadn't been in the water in about fifteen years. I decided to refurbish it inside and out. That Spring, after I had the boat looking practically new and before it was launched, I transported the 1956 model, 40 horsepower Mercury outboard motor to a marina for a check-up. I mentioned to the marina operator that during the long period of non-use the motor ignition key had disappeared. He said not to worry; he had on hand over a hundred Mercury ignition keys, and that once I had installed the motor on the boat, to trailer it to his marina so that all of his keys could be tried.

A few days later I brought the boat, motor and trailer to the marina. The marina operator tried his whole assortment of keys totaling one hundred and twenty-two in the ignition lock. Not one of them fit!

"What do I do now?" I asked.

"I don't know." He replied. His mind seemed blank and I was left to

## Coincidences

fend for myself.

Back at home I examined the metal case attached to the inner hull beside the driver's seat which housed the gear shift mechanism, the throttle, and the ignition lock. The case measured about 10 x 5 x 1-1/2 inches. By detaching it from the hull it appeared that the case was made in two longitudinal symmetrical die cast shells held together by machine screws.

My plan was to take apart the case and remove the ignition lock so that it could be taken to a locksmith. Upon opening the case the interior mechanism including the lock were all cast into one large solid rubber harness. The lock, a cylinder about an inch and a half in diameter and an inch thick was firmly held in its rubber surround. I tried to push it out by hand but to no avail. I hesitated to exert too large a force for fear of damaging the lock.

At that juncture it seemed prudent to place a telephone call to Outboard Marine in Wisconsin. A male voice answered in the service department. I told him my problem. He responded, "We have a mechanic in our shop who was here when that motor was manufactured back in 1956. Let me connect you with him."

This seasoned employee gave me great encouragement. He said that the lock could be pushed out of the rubber harness by sufficient force. I thanked him and returned to the task. Sure enough, with a small disc of wood to spread the force and a few hammer taps the lock emerged!

Now, I was ready to seek the services of a locksmith, the closest one was half way into Rochester. My plan was to stop there before picking up a repaired sail at the sail makers. The locksmith examined the lock briefly and reported in a demeaning manner, "This lock is not a ball and tumbler lock and the mechanism, whatever it is, is sealed in the case. The lock case would be practically destroyed to get at the lock. If I could repair it, the cost would be \$40, at least. It wouldn't be worth it. You should get a new lock."

I didn't bother to tell him that there was no such thing as a replacement lock and went on my way quite dejected.

The sail maker's loft was on the second floor of a large old industrial building with a stairway leading up from a parking lot. At the ground level, two men were working on the entrance door of the building. As I approached they stepped aside and I inquired, "Are you, by chance, locksmiths?"

To my amazement they both answered in the affirmative. I explained my quandary to them briefly and asked them if they would take a look at my keyless lock. They agreed and the older of the two men scrutinized the lock closely.

He offered, "I can take an impression of the inside of this lock and



## Coincidences

have a key for you tomorrow morning by ten o'clock."

I reacted with, "Wow, terrific!" It all seemed too good to be true!

I gave him my telephone number. He said he would call me before ten the next day.

About nine the next morning the locksmith was on the wire, "I have a key for you," he said.

"That's terrific! Make me another, I'd like to have two," I responded.

An hour later, I picked up the lock and the new keys at the locksmith's place of business close to the city center.

"It'll be fourteen dollars," he said.

I never parted with fourteen dollars any more joyously before or since exclaiming, "If I ever know anyone that needs a locksmith I'm sending him to you."

With regard to the probability of crossing paths with the locksmith at the door of the sail maker it can be arrived at using reasonable assumptions. Supposing the frequency of the visits of the locksmith is one service call every five years. Let's say that there are 250 working days in the year or 1250 in five years.

Now, further consider that his service call requires one hour. Actually, it is likely that less time than an hour is necessary, but assume that between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM there are three, one hour periods in the morning and three in the afternoon, hence six periods, or time slots, per day that he might be on hand. There are, therefore,  $1250 \times 6$  or 7500 time slots in five years and the probability of any one of them being occupied is  $1/7500$ .

For my visits to the sail maker during the 7500 time slots over 5 years, there will be 2 days per year or 10 days in 5 years  $\times$  6 time slots or 60 that may connect with one of those of the locksmith, or a probability of  $60/7500$ , or  $1/125$ . The combined probability of crossing paths is then the product of  $1/125$  and  $1/7500$  or  $1/937,500$ , very close to one in a million!

The probable time span over which a coincidence would occur is the number of time slots that can be sampled per year, i.e.  $7500/5$  or  $1500/\text{year}$  divided into 937,500 or 625 years, considerably less than the million for that brainy baboon. But obviously, both the baboon and I need a drastic increase in longevity if we are to achieve our goals.

As a subject for speculation, will the biological researchers in reconstructing our genes, and other feats of molecular manipulations within our bodies, extend our longevity to as much as a thousand years? On a more modest scale, what are the probabilities that our life spans will be doubled, or tripled, or quadrupled, in say, 500 years? These probabilities are intriguing but who would hazard a guess?

### A Day Celebrated

It was the era of rail travel, circa 1910. Men and materials reached their destinations pulled by those iron behemoths known as steam locomotives. Jake was a railroad engineer, a captain you might say, of one of those 150-ton assemblies of puffing, hissing and belching steel.

Having access to complimentary rail fare passes, Jake had journeyed to Chicago on a matter of business, some land deal in Kansas involving a Chicago bank. The banks, the railroad stations, the great mercantile establishments of the Midwest, and the restaurant where Jake was seated, were all within the Chicago loop district surrounded by elevated trains clattering by, day and night.

It was noisy inside the restaurant and busy. Waiting for his order to be taken Jake glanced around at the nearby tables. Diagonally across the aisle was a well-dressed patron sitting facing him. He looked vaguely familiar despite his middle-aged spread and graying hair.

The waiter took Jake's order for roast beef and oxtail soup. The fellow with the familiar face seemed to notice Jake also. Jake and the stranger exchanged a few furtive glances before the stranger cut off the view with his newspaper.

Jake finished his soup and was savoring his roast beef dinner. His thoughts drifted to the farm in Kansas and all the financial and legal matters involved in the purchase. Was it a fair price? Could he assume an existing mortgage? Was the land as fertile as advertised? After all, he was buying it sight unseen simply upon the recommendation of a friend.

In the midst of Jake's preoccupation with his business uncertainties and satisfying his appetite, the stranger put down his newspaper and abruptly departed. Jake swallowed his last bite and suddenly that somewhat familiar face loomed clearly in his mind. He recognized the man and uttered a distinctly audible, "Goddamn!" Jake jumped up, dropping his knife and fork, and charged out of the restaurant. His grim determination was written across his face, as if he were to right a great undeniable wrong. It was clear Jake had recognized a former adversary and he was anxious to even the score.

Out in the street, Jake scanned the landscape but in the few minutes that had elapsed since the stranger's departure the culprit had vanished into the labyrinth of the city. Jake returned to the restaurant and sat down once more. His mind flashed back to that infamous day 20 years before.

Jake, as a young man, wanted to explore the world, at least that part of it within the United States. As matters developed, a greater opportunity for adventure was looming on the horizon. Jake thusly arrived in San Francisco on June 20th, 1890. San Francisco was a boomtown. Buildings were going up. Jobs went begging for applicants. Knob Hill was getting its first luxury hotel. The harbor was crowded with vessels, both four masted sailing ships and the newer steam freighters and passenger

liners. In the forty-one years since the Gold Rush, San Francisco had been transformed from a sleepy Spanish mission town into an expanding metropolis.

Jake struck up an acquaintance at the hotel bar with a quick-witted Irishman, Dan Farley. It was obvious that Dan had been floating around San Francisco for some time. Dan said he knew all the sights to see, all the natural wonders, all the best bars and bar maids.

Jake was impressed. Dan offered to take Jake on a personal tour of the city. Jake was a little skeptical but agreed to meet his new acquaintance for breakfast on Saturday prior to touring the city with him.

In the ensuing days Jake did some exploring on his own. He walked up and down the hills of San Francisco, tried out the cable cars, visited the popular fish bars, went to a fashionable opera and to a more indelicate girlie show. Jake was intrigued with the local newspapers full of news from the East as well as advice to newcomers. The fantastic real estate offers and the seemingly endless columns of want ads seeking employees amazed him.

Saturday arrived bright and clear as Dan greeted Jake in the hotel dining room. Over breakfast Dan laid out a plan that would consume the whole day:

“We’ll visit the engineering works that house the mechanism for pulling the cable cars the first thing this morning, quite a mechanical marvel! Then we’ll go over to the Presidio; the Old Spanish settlement area. In the afternoon there’s a horse show out west of the city. In the evening we’ll visit the Golden Nugget, a spectacular new bar that I came across. You might meet the girl of your dreams there.”

“Sounds good to me,” Jake replied.

Jake and his volunteer guide took the Powell cable car at Market Street. Jake looked on with fascination at the cable car operation. The operator had to be athletic and muscular to handle the giant lever centrally positioned through the floor of the car. Grasping the handle of the lever with both hands and with his feet well planted on the floor he hauled the lever back through an arc of about four feet. Having accomplished this the car accelerated to its terminal speed of nine miles per hour.

As the car came to a halt at Pine, a horse and wagon pulled alongside. Two men jumped out, climbed into the cable car and in less than a minute extracted that big lever in the center of the car. They brought in a fresh one from their wagon, installing it in about another minute. Jake noticed the construction of the lower end of the lever which when mounted in the car extended downward below the floor into the slot midway between the rails. This end of the lever had essentially a brake shoe that gripped the underground cable.

“Dan, how often do they do this?” Jake queried.

Dan didn’t seem to know and hesitated but another passenger spoke up: “Every three or four days.”

Recognizing Jake’s passion for the mechanical details of the cable car operations, they disembarked at Mason Street at the engine or powerhouse which was

the vital center for the whole cable car system. Once inside, Jake observed the pulling force on the cable was imparted through a large drum or spindle around which the cable was wrapped with several turns. Jake was impressed with the cable tensioning device that took up the slack and stretch of the miles of cable in the streets of San Francisco. It occurred to Jake that the cable was like an endless belt, in other words, a loop with the cable running in opposite directions between the two sets of rails which provided the two-way cable car traffic.

Jake further noted that the tensioning device was a pulley or sheave about eight feet in diameter on a horizontal axis. The cable came in at the bottom of the sheave, went halfway around and back toward the direction from which it came. The giant sheave was supported from a rail car, the rails parallel to the entering and leaving cable loop. Several other cables tensioned the car by the force of huge counter weights.

“Wonder how much that cable stretches?” remarked Jake.

Dan, eager to please and ill equipped to answer such questions, hailed a workman in greasy overalls at the far end of the building. The man obligingly hurried over and when questioned reported that when the underground cable loop stretched the full length of the tensioning track in two or three weeks the cable had to be replaced.

The two travelers departed from the engine house. Jake was very pleased with that part of the tour. He was mechanically minded and had witnessed one of the wonders of San Francisco, and of the advancing electro-mechanical age.

Jake was less interested in the Presidio area which was largely Federal land used for military purposes. There was a national military cemetery, ruins of a fort, and an officer's club housed in the oldest adobe building in the southwest. The roof had sprung a leak and washed away part of a wall. The wall was being repaired with a new batch of mud. Jake couldn't imagine adobe construction in his own upstate New York.

The horse show was at the Golden Gate Park, only partially developed. A throng of spectators swarmed around a wooden rail fence to watch the festivities. There was an odd mixture of Wild West and eastern culture both in the riding exhibitions and in the dress of the spectators. Sombreros, ten-gallon Texas hats, brown derbies, and black top hats were all in evidence. Refreshments were served from hastily erected tables placed at a distance.

Although Dan had mentioned that he once was a salesman for a horse dealer, Jake didn't regard Dan's judgment of horseflesh as very discerning. Jake had been brought up with horses as a farm boy and was familiar with the basics of good breeding and good confirmation.

Jake had not inquired as to how Dan made a living and it seemed appropriate to ask. Dan was quick to respond that he was looking for work but hadn't quite found what he liked. He preferred a job selling real estate but admitted he had little

experience in the field. Jake raised his eyebrows a time or two and hinted that a background in horse-trading was somewhat appropriate for selling real estate!

It was a long trip back to California Street and the cable cars. On the way Dan suggested that they meet at 6:30 for dinner at the new American Hotel, just a block or two from where Jake was staying.

Dan was waiting at the new American dining room when Jake arrived. The dining room was more elegant than Jake was usually accustomed to: hanging crystal chandeliers, oriental carpets, red velvet upholstered chairs with black walnut frames, exquisitely set tables with Japanese chinaware and the best of silver plate.

The menu was superb. Jake ordered fish soup, a steak with onions, au gratin potatoes, and fresh peas. For dessert Jake chose the steamed chocolate pudding with whipped cream. Dan's order differed only in the selection of prime rib as his entree. He suggested his favorite California wine to accompany the meal.

While they dined Dan shared with Jake his plans for their evening on the town. They'd walk a few blocks north to a small somewhat private bar where two girls were to meet them and after a drink or two they would go on to the Golden Nugget for a gala evening. Jake was concerned to know more about the backgrounds of their female companions. Dan assured him that they were two of San Francisco's finest women, trusted friends and good dancers.

When it came time to pay the check, it was a very significant amount of money. Dan insisted that the dinner was his idea and that he was providing it. Jake made a point of reminding him he was unemployed and that the price of the meal should be shared. Dan stated that he had just received a windfall bequest from the settlement of a relative's estate.

"Never thought old Aunt Betsy would leave me any money," Dan said with kind of a smirk.

On hearing this bit of news Jake deferred and begrudgingly handed the check over to Dan.

The sun had dipped below the horizon when the two revelers entered a narrow alley. The nature of the crowded, dingy buildings contrasted markedly to the elegance of the hotel dining room. Dan knocked on a door. A greeting came from within followed by a response from the outside.

"It's Dan, open the door."

A man of medium height opened the door cautiously. He was dark skinned with black hair and a waxed mustache. He wore a faded brown shirt and a leather vest. Jake guessed that he might be of Mexican descent. The man retreated behind the bar at one end of a small room set up with four tables each having four oak chairs. Except for two feminine figures seated at one of the tables, the place was vacant. The girls sat opposite each other with half empty cocktail glasses set before them on the table.

Dan approached the girls with Jake trailing sheepishly behind.

“Donna, this is Jake. He is visiting from the East.”

“June, meet Jake.”

Jake smiled and Donna invited him to sit down. The girls were dressed almost as twins with red blouses, gray skirts that were noticeably shorter than the custom of the day. Their hair was stylishly curled and Jake noticed their dramatic make-up was reminiscent of the girlie shows. Jake observed that Donna’s make-up did not hide her freckled face or her aging years. When she didn’t smile her face possessed a hardness, a map perhaps reflecting life’s cruel blows. When she smiled she was cute enough though.

Dan called to the bartender, “Bring over four glasses of champagne. This is to be a celebration.”

The men shared small talk with the women about their day’s sightseeing adventures. The champagne arrived and Dan held up his glass and proposed a toast:

“Here’s to our friendship and an exciting evening at the Golden Nugget.”

The four clanked their glasses and took long draughts of their champagne. Jake exclaimed it was the best he ever tasted.

Jake awoke to find himself laying on the floor, his head reeling. He was not sure at first whether the floor was swaying, or it was a hangover. His first sensible deduction was that he was in the hold of an old sailing ship. Stretched out on his right side through partially opened eyes he could see light streaming in through a companionway. A bearded ominous looking seaman was patrolling the exit. As his mind cleared Jake had the sensation that he was experiencing some kind of nightmare, that he wasn’t actually awake. No such luck though, it was for real. It became apparent that he had been drugged, kidnapped, and placed aboard that old sailing vessel!

Jake had read in the local newspapers about innocent persons being shanghaied. Readers were warned that sailing ship owners and captains were going to any lengths to acquire crews. Jake also remembered that if such a misfortune should befall an individual, he should seek an audience with the captain and request to be released.

Jake waited motionless, feigning sleep, and watching the sailor guarding the hold. Many minutes passed. Jake’s right side was numb. He wondered if his condition would permit a fast break for the stern end of the ship if the opportunity came.

Quite suddenly the guard disappeared from view. It was now or never. Jake stumbled as he rose from the floor, stretched quickly to regain feeling in his limbs and darted up the companionway. No one was in sight. He ran aft along the port rail as if a Bengal tiger was pursuing him. He knew the captain’s quarters would be close to the wheelhouse. He made a quick turn toward it and spotted a narrow stairway to a lower level. That’s where the shipmaster should be, he hoped. Jake plummeted down the stairs bursting into the captain’s quarters as the old man was munching his toast

at breakfast. To say the least the old man was surprised at the intrusion. He wore a full graying beard. His eyes, set close together, bore a slight twinkle. He was not a large man and wherever his skin was exposed it was heavily tanned and weather-beaten.

“What brings you here, my son?” he asked not appearing to be too annoyed.

“Sir, I request that I be taken ashore. I am here against my will, placed aboard this ship by foul play.”

The captain measured his words firmly, “You are on this ship as a member of my crew.”

Jake retorted, “I am not a member of your crew and I demand to be sent ashore.”

“Well, son, the only way you can get ashore is to hire my first mate to row you ashore. He charges ten dollars and you have no money!”

Jake fumbled for his wallet. It had been emptied, seventy-five dollars in total. The old man tried not to show his satisfaction at the expected turn of events.

Jake calmly said, “Call your first mate. I have the ten dollars.”

The old man was startled at this statement, “You have ten dollars?”

“Yes, I expect you are a man of your word, sir. Call the first mate.”

With that remark Jake took off his right shoe and produced two crisp ten dollar silver certificates.

“Son, you’re a smart one. I need men like you aboard this ship. You know, I don’t like acquiring crews by unscrupulous methods. I’m at my wit’s end as to how to get good men. Son, I can offer you a great sailing career, great adventure, visit the ports of Shanghai, Manila, Tokyo, Singapore, and Bombay. I can make a sailor and man out of you. You can rise in the ranks to be the first mate or even the captain!”

The old man’s plea fell on deaf ears; Jake refused to accept any business proposition introduced through such nefarious schemes. He also knew the days of sailing ships were numbered. Little did he realize the steam locomotive, which he would be captaining in his career, would also become a museum dinosaur just sixty years later.

“Sir, I decline your offer and ask that your first mate row me ashore at once.”

The old man arose from his table and spoke into a speaking tube leading to an adjoining cabin.

“Bill, there’s a young man here to be rowed ashore. The usual fee applies. He’ll meet you at the wheelhouse.”

A muffled “Aye, aye, sir” was returned. Before making his exit Jake asked,

“Sir, do you know a Dan Farley, the shyster that drugged me and got me aboard?”

The old man replied, “No, son, I don’t. That probably isn’t his real name. He is some petty thief that makes his living through deception and betrayal. Son, don’t trust newfound friends in strange places.

First Mate, Bill, a big burly fellow, appeared in a blue pea jacket. Jake thrust a ten dollar bill toward him and the big fellow barked the order, "Follow me."

To disembark Jake had to climb down a rope ladder to the skiff tied up below. The thought crossed his mind: how did they get me aboard this ship when I was out cold? He was tempted to ask the first mate but thought better of it and remained silent as Bill pulled the oars to shore. Jake felt like kissing terra firma as he leapt upon a low dock. He uttered no fond adieu and lost no time in putting the waterfront behind him.

In the few remaining days in San Francisco Jake saw nothing of Dan Farley. The saloons and restaurants where they fraternized showed no signs of Dan. Word must have come back that his last victim was freed.

Now, it was Chicago twenty years later and the scoundrel eluded Jake again. What would have happened had Jake recognized him a few moments earlier is anyone's conjecture. Perhaps Jake was saved from charges of assault and battery. Perhaps, that fellow Jake recognized was the scoundrel's double, who knows?



## Flight

By J.C. Evans

June, 1992

As evidenced by the skeletons of the pterodactyls, the achievement of airborne flight through evolutionary processes in organic life occurred millions of years ago. Flight by humans in powered aircraft, on the other hand, has existed less than ninety years, an infinitesimal length of time in the scheme of the universe. One may marvel at the millions of years of human development required before the brain of *Homo sapiens* could create a flying machine and all of the associated supporting science and technology. Likewise, one may marvel, once the feasibility of powered flight was demonstrated, at the accelerated pace of aircraft development.

We of the generation born in the second decade of the twentieth century have lived in this period of the rapid growth of the air industry. During these years we have accumulated a large reservoir of experiences related to airplanes and commercial airlines. We can say that we've been privileged to have grown up and matured during this stirring era of the technological evolution of commercial flight.

My earliest recollection of airplanes came about because our next-door neighbor, Dr. Trott, possessed a fervent interest in the introduction of the private airplane. A few models of private planes came onto the market following World War I; Dr. Trott probably purchased his first plane around 1925. He fashioned a small airfield north of the village on the high ground between the two valleys. It took a stretch of the imagination to have called this field an airport. It was definitely a field, a hay field with nothing obvious that marked a landing strip. In one corner of this forty-acre field, Dr. Trott erected a small wooden, white painted structure for a hangar. The building had three or four barn doors that could be rolled to one side to permit a small plane, and possibly a second, or a third to enter or exit. Atop the roof of the small hangar was a vertical staff supporting the familiar windsock.

One of the two dictionary definitions of 'barnstorming' defines it as: "appearing at county fairs and carnivals in an exhibition of stunt flying and parachute jumping."<sup>1</sup>

It was in the decade of the twenties that this definition apparently had its origin. I was ten years old when a barnstormer flew into town with his World War I surplus warplane, the venerable "Jenny". He must have landed

<sup>1</sup>The American Heritage Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> College Edition, 1982

about the time school was dismissed. Two or three of my classmates and I joined a number of curious grown-ups to hurry to the 'airport' to see this visitor and his plane. The "Jenny" was a two-seater, open cockpit, wood frame, fabric covered biplane powered by an in-line six cylinder, water cooled engine driving a single, two bladed wood propeller. Quantities of these planes were manufactured in Hammondsport, N.Y. in the plant<sup>2</sup> of Glen Curtis, one of the renowned pioneers of the airplane industry.

The barnstorming aviator flying the "Jenny" was undoubtedly an army war veteran who flew the same breed of fighter plane during the war. It was clear that he was very proud of his airplane and his ability to fly it. The fuselage had an American flag, also various symbols and decorations emblazoned on it that were a mystery to me, a ten-year-old observer. The pilot wore a brown leather flight jacket and a matching leather helmet with goggles to pull down over his eyes if needed in flight.

As the little cluster of the hometown curious gathered around his plane, the barnstorming pilot beamed his approval and offered to demonstrate his wares in flight. He directed the sightseers to move back away from his craft and ordered his assistant to prepare for starting the engine. The assistant, wearing a pair of gloves, took his stance beneath the propeller, and upon a signal from his boss in the cockpit, reached upward grasping one end of the propeller, and throwing most of his weight on it, pulled it down through one compression stroke of the engine. This was repeated several times in succession to fill the cylinder chambers with an air-fuel mixture before turning on the ignition. The pilot then shouted a command, "Contact!" which signaled that the ignition switch was closed and that in the next pull down stroke of the prop the engine was going to fire. This downward stroke was the critical one, and a hazardous one for the cranker of the engine. He had to make certain that his arms and upper body extremities would be clear of the path of the opposite end of the whirling propeller when the engine fired. Serious injury could occur. In this

2 My uncle George was employed at the Curtis plant during World War I. As a souvenir of the war and of the planes manufactured at the Curtis plant, George gave his father (my grandfather) a novel ashtray that was prominently displayed in our living room. It was made from a highly polished aluminum aircraft engine piston, 4" in diameter, cut diametrically through the wrist pin bearing so that when placed with the piston top surface downward, the two semicircular opposite wrist pin troughs provided a pair of ideal supports for a cigar.

instance the assistant performed his task flawlessly and the engine burst into its resounding clatter.

The barnstorming pilot waved to the spectators, advanced the throttle, taxied off to one end of the field, turned the plane around, roared down one side of the airfield taking off into the wild blue yonder, but the blue yonder in this case was at a very low altitude, about a hundred feet. He banked the plane in a tight half circle turn and proceeded to make repetitive figure eight patterns within the extent of the airfield. How he would bank that plane at what seemed like 45 degrees around the arcs and flatten it out on the straight legs of the figure eights! The spectators, including me, stood entranced not far from the center of one of the loops of the figure eight with the "Jenny" roaring past in one direction and then curving back to roar past in the opposite direction. I was awestruck; I haven't witnessed anything quite like it since. Upon landing the plane the pilot addressed his audience, "I bet you haven't seen anyone do a figure eight within the bounds of your airfield before." Obviously, they hadn't! What may be regarded as descendants of the "Jenny", that is, the small high-powered propeller driven biplanes designed for crop spraying of insecticides, fertilizers etc., are capable of similar maneuvers but their routines usually did not require the same acrobatics.

For the years following, on into the thirties, there were the "Air Meets" or "Air Shows" in which the aviators and their planes from far and near gathered at small airports to: show off their planes, take up passengers, demonstrate parachute jumps, perform aerial aerobatics, drop small bags of flour at ground targets from low altitudes and other stunts. Dr. Trott's airfield was one of the meccas of these early airplane enthusiasts. The "Air Meets" were usually held on Sundays with the festivities going on from mid morning until early evening. The airplane was a new phenomenon; it invited curiosity and visions of the future - and so they came, the oldsters, the youngsters and all ages in between. The whole show was free entertainment on Sundays for the entire family.

On these Sundays the highway next to the airfield would be jammed with parked cars necessitating a deputy sheriff or two to control the traffic. The crowd attired in their Sunday best gawked at the planes in the air and on the ground. A refreshment stand served the patrons hot dogs and soft drinks. Souvenirs addressing the Aviation Age were the rage of the day. To a youth like me it was all fun-- exciting and unforgettable. However, as the Great Depression of the thirties deepened and the novelty of the airplane diminished, the "Air Meets" faded into history.

In my high school years airplanes were not my foremost interest. Had

I exhibited some curiosity in them to our neighbor, Dr. Trott, he might have offered to take me up for my first plane ride. My recreational interest tended toward boats, in particular, sailboats. Sailing Alone Around the World, by the old sea captain Joshua Slocum had captured my imagination.

Several years passed in: school, college and more than a year in the workaday world of an industrial laboratory before my first airplane flight, September, 1940. My girlfriend, Madlyn, and I decided to fly to New York City to take in: the cultural attractions, the historic sights, the World's Fair at Flushing Meadows and last but not least, the big department stores! Propriety of the time required that we be chaperoned else some evil conduct befall us! My mother was delegated to perform this laudable task, but mother dreaded the idea of air travel. She chose to make the journey by train. According to plan, Madlyn and I were to meet Mom at the Hotel Commodore adjacent to Grand Central Station upon our arrival by air. On the appointed day of departure, Mother boarded the Empire State Express in Rochester about 3:15 P.M. Madlyn and I boarded the early evening American Airlines flight to LaGuardia just past 7 o'clock.

The plane was a DC-3, the workhorse of early propeller driven commercial aircraft. Like most of its predecessors, the DC-3 had no tricycle landing gear so that the tail of the plane sat essentially on the ground with the fuselage sloping upward at an angle of about ten degrees. In flight the attitude of the plane was horizontal. Passengers entered the plane at the tail end, walked up hill in an aisle off center of the fuselage with one row of single seats on the left and a row of double seats on the right. With the upward slope of the aisle, passengers found it advantageous to grasp the back of the seats and pull themselves forward, working their way to their assigned locations. In this maneuver, passengers with luggage were handicapped. At the assigned seat, inclined backward as it was, the passenger rather dropped into it and pondered that he needed a catapult to get out!

The sun appeared as an orange ball on the western horizon as the DC-3 rose into the air and headed for old Gotham town. The autumn landscape dwindled into darkness as the flight progressed. Dinner was served; it was quite tasty. Lights of the great metropolis came into view before we had finished our dessert. Soon the plane descended affording us a bird's eye view of the '39-'40 World's Fair. The fairgrounds and buildings were highly illuminated and near the center the Trylon and Perisphere, the imposing symbols of the exhibition, dominated the brilliant display. The captain announced that he was circling the fairgrounds so that the passengers could savor the spectacle from all angles. He then brought the plane to a smooth landing at LaGuardia. As a first flight it was magnificent!

## Flight

What followed struck us all humorously. Madlyn and I, with our traveling bags, took the American Airlines limousine into its Manhattan terminal, which at that time, was on 42nd Street directly across from Grand Central Station. The limo made good time and we entered Grand Central at about the time of the expected arrival of the Empire State Express. The display of train arrival times showed that Mom's train had arrived about two minutes before. We hurried to the exit gate just as the arriving passengers began filing past. In a couple of minutes there was Mother stepping briskly toward us. The instant she saw us her eyes popped wide open and her jaw noticeably dropped. She couldn't believe what she saw, couldn't believe that we were there in New York before she was. We told her that we were the welcoming committee for New York City. The three of us chuckled.

Looking back, that first flight was prophetic. It acknowledged the convenience and speed of air travel, its projected rapid expansion and its replacement of travel by rail.

Although the jet engine was developed and incorporated in military planes late in World War II, its refinement and eventual adaptation to commercial aircraft came much later. In the period following the war, i.e. from 1945 to about 1960, propeller driven airliners held sway. This period coincided with my employment on the faculty of the Institute of Optics, University of Rochester. Our department was supported in part by research and development contracts from government laboratories. In order to communicate in detail and reach an understanding of common goals with our benefactors, travel to their laboratories was prudent. Prof. Bob Hopkins and I were two faculty members that often traveled together on such missions. Over the span of fifteen years Bob and I experienced a number of unusual flights.

Undoubtedly the most bizarre was a midwinter trip we took in the early 1950's on an American Airlines flight originating in Rochester, New York and headed for Dayton, Ohio and other points southwest. Dayton was the destination for visiting the extensive Wright-Patterson Propulsion Laboratory, U.S. Air Force. On the morning of the flight the weather conditions could best be described as verging on a blizzard: blowing snow, wind chill index far below zero, low ceiling, visibility vacillating from near zero to perhaps a half mile - all in all, not an auspicious day for air travel.

The aircraft was a Convair, a two-engine propeller driven plane with seating for perhaps sixty passengers. There was a short delay in boarding the plane that morning. Bob and I and the other fifteen or twenty passengers braved the chilly blasts and swirling snow between the terminal and the mobile boarding ramp. Once seated, one of the two flight attendants gave her usual spiel on safety precautions, exiting the plane in an emergency etc.

## Flight

She also announced that breakfast would be served after takeoff from Buffalo, the first scheduled stop. The plane taxied to the runway, waited for the control tower clearance and roared down the runway, taking off at about 7:30 A.M. As could be expected the ascent into the cold gray turbulent sky of February was bumpy.

The Buffalo airport was just twenty minutes flight time away. Twenty minutes passed and we were aware of no apparent descent of the plane. It was circling in the cloudbank a few thousand feet above the Buffalo area. The lake effect snow from Lake Erie was apparently adding to the general foul weather below us. After a few minutes the captain came on the plane's p.a. system announcing that we were in a holding pattern waiting for a break in the cloud cover to make a landing. The circling went on and on. It seemed like a half hour passed before the plane straightened out. Now, it appeared the captain had given up landing at the Buffalo airport and we were on our way to Cleveland, the next scheduled stop. Perhaps we would soon be served breakfast! But, no breakfast was forthcoming as after another twenty minutes the plane was descending. The captain announced, "We are landing back in Rochester. We need to refuel!" The refueling took another half hour as the ground crew struggled in the inclement conditions. We ascended a second time nearly two hours after our first ascent. The captain announced that we were flying directly to Cleveland this time. The message was good news to Bob and me. However, in another twenty minutes we sensed that the plane was circling again. It was! The captain explained,

"There are three passengers down there at Buffalo waiting to board our plane. We are going to hold here for a while to see if we can land to pick them up!"

Now, maybe these passengers were special personages, bigwig politicians, pompous corporate executives or entertainment impresarios that could not be detained. The opportunity to find out never occurred. We circled and circled, and circled some more. Finally, without further announcement the plane straightened out. Now, we were on our way to Cleveland, or so we thought. Although a very short visit would ensue at Wright-Patterson before our return flight, the day, business wise, could still be saved. We did wonder though, why breakfast hadn't been served yet. The flight attendants appeared to be in hiding.

In another twenty minutes we were descending again. Bob and I exchanged quizzical glances. Through the blowing snow the landscape came into view. Bob at the window seat exclaimed,

"Holy Cats! I think we are flying over the General Motors Plant in Rochester! What's going on now?"

In less than a minute the landing gear hit the runway at the Rochester

Airport. At the end of the runway the plane turned into a subordinate parallel one and immediately stopped. The captain announced,

“Folks, a woman called the airline in Columbus (Ohio) reporting that there’s a bomb aboard this plane. Consequently our passengers and crew are deplaning out here. Some vehicles will arrive shortly to take you into the terminal.”

The mobile boarding ramp was waiting for us but the ground transportation to the air terminal wasn’t. The passengers huddled together in the blizzard stomping their feet and clapping their hands trying to keep from freezing. Finally, three or four taxis picked us up. It was now after eleven o’clock in the morning. We had had no breakfast and there was no chance to reach Dayton on that day.

Incidentally, according to the following morning’s newspaper, no diabolical explosive device was found on the plane. It seemed it was a hoax. In retrospect, all that Bob and I can say is that very few airline passengers have had the opportunity to land back at their originating airport twice the same morning!

Bob and I experienced two other flights that were out of the ordinary, not hair-raising nor dangerous but unusual. One of these was a one-day trip to Ocean Springs, Mississippi via American and Southern Airlines to Gulfport, Ms., and the nearest commercial airport for our destination. Close connections had to be made in Detroit and New Orleans both ways. For travel to Ocean Springs we rented a car in Gulfport and after our visitation drove it back to the Gulfport auto return.

We had about a thirty-minute wait before the west bound Southern Airways flight was scheduled to fly us to New Orleans. The arrival time of the Southern Airways plane did not appear to be posted but since we had checked in at the Southern ticket counter and no special information was imparted, we assumed all was routine. As the arrival time of our plane drew near we became a little concerned. After all, a late flight to New Orleans could mean missing our connection to Detroit. Thereupon we marched up to the ticket counter to make an inquiry. The attendant quickly informed us,

“Our flight from Tampa is late and is now not expected for another hour! However, knowing you have to be in New Orleans for a connection with an American flight we have made arrangements for you to be flown to New Orleans by a local air service. Mr. Smith here will walk you out to the plane where the pilot is standing by.”

Speculating as to what kind of southern hospitality Southern Airways was providing, our curiosity, (if not our scheduled plane) ascended. Sure enough, off to one side of the air transport boarding area was a Piper Cub or its close cousin. The pilot had the engine running and was ready to go.

We climbed aboard with me taking the rear seat which could accommodate two squeezed passengers and Bob taking the seat beside the pilot. My mind momentarily pondered: is our life insurance still valid? Is this flight considered a bona fide commercial flight or would some zealous insurance company lawyer contest it in case of our demise? My troubled thoughts were cut short; we had barely buckled up when the pilot gunned the engine and we were airborne. I straddled the rear seat so that I could see the instrument panel through the gap between Bob and the pilot as well as observe to the best advantage the landscape below to either port or starboard. It was low altitude all the way, less than a thousand feet, superb for viewing at close range: the fields, the ponds, the marshes, the highways, the edifices and the other multifarious works of man.

The plane was a leaf in the breeze. Every small change in air currents, a slight up or down draft bounced the plane like a toy ball at the end of a rubber tether. Being a sailor, the stability of the plane compared to a much larger one reminded me of the difference between a small sailboat and a large yacht. (However, I have found it fun to be aboard any of them!)

Although the air speed of the plane was at best half that of the regular scheduled airliner, we landed at the New Orleans Airport in time to make our Detroit connection. As a day's flight from Rochester, the trip had a novel twist and I must hand it to Southern Airways, it performed commendable service in spite of difficulties.

The air carrier that served Washington, D.C. from Rochester in the fifties was Capitol Airlines. The planes on this route were the Vicker's Viscounts powered by two turbo prop engines. If commercial aircraft were to be classified in an ascending scale of noise in the passenger cabin, the Viscount would be near the lower end of the scale. Indeed, the Viscount was quiet and comfortable. It did possess one characteristic that was a little disturbing though. In rough air a passenger viewing the wings might see them flexing up and down, not quite to the extent of the flapping of a bird's wings but to an extent that might be perceived as perilous.

One evening upon boarding such a plane in Washington, the Viscount exhibited one minor defect. Awaiting departure, Bob and I were absorbed in reading the Washington Post and other media publications, unaware of the passage of time. Then we heard some mutterings of nearby passengers concerned that the plane had not moved away from the loading ramp. In a moment or two came an announcement from the captain,

"Folks, we have a problem. The cabin door will not close. We have to take the plane down to a maintenance hangar where the door can be worked on. We have to ask all of you to exit and wait in the terminal for further instructions."



## Flight

Back in the terminal no further instructions were forthcoming, implying just sit and wait and hope for the best. A spirit of activism overtook me and I said to Bob,

“I’m not optimistic about this flight to Rochester. You know there may be connections on other airlines that could get us back via another route.”

Bob more or less agreed, so we checked with the ticket counters of: American, United, TWA, Eastern etc. Our best chance seemed to be Eastern Airlines to Newark, then American Airlines to Rochester. The Eastern flight already at the gate would arrive in Newark about 25 minutes before the departure of the last American flight to Rochester. I said to Bob, “Let’s chance it, it’s better than sitting here.”

Our tickets were exchanged for the new route. We immediately boarded the Eastern plane, a Constellation, one of the largest four-engine propeller driven commercial aircraft. The passenger cabin at first glance appeared empty.

We were dumbfounded to find that there were only eight other passengers aboard! The plane landed in Newark about on time. The air terminal looked makeshift and unfamiliar. We dashed up to the nearest ticket counter asking where American Airlines was located. We were shocked when the attendant said,

“American headquarters is located at the other end of the field. The facilities here are temporary until construction down there is completed. You have to take a taxi to get there!”

She pointed in the direction of the exit to the main highway bordering the airfield. We ran out into a strange dark blacktopped area not knowing where to look for a taxi, but then we sighted some other taxi seekers who seemed familiar with the layout. Our first words to the taxi driver were, “step on it, get us to the main terminal and American Airlines, pronto!” His response to the challenge was immediate and commendable, his tip commensurate!

We hotfooted it to the American counter but horrors; the counter was devoid of an attendant. It was closed down. The plane must have gone! Our hearts sank. Then a miracle, a door opened at the rear of the booth with a male attendant emerging. We yelled, “Where is the plane to Rochester?!”

“It’s all loaded, but just a minute,” as he picked up a telephone receiver and called the loading area. “They’ll hold the plane for you, hurry out there,” he said as he pointed the way.

The next morning at 8:30 a.m., out of curiosity, I phoned Capitol

## Flight

Airlines and asked, "When did Flight #43, due in from Washington last night, actually arrive?" "It arrived about twenty minutes ago," came the response.

Sometimes gambling pays off!

When I reminisce about air travel in the fifties, I recall the various propeller driven planes that flew me to my destinations, i.e. the Convairs, the DC7s, the DC9s, the Lodestars, the Constellations, the Viscounts, the Electras etc. Also coming to mind, beyond salient adventures such as related above, are the more fleeting incidents that cling in memory such as traveling from:

Boston- It was an early morning flight after a night of sleet and freezing rain. Passengers were transported by vehicles to a hangar for boarding the plane, which had been deiced.

Albany - It was a winter, evening flight to Rochester. The portside engine started skipping and backfiring a few moments after liftoff. Flames shot out the exhaust pipe. The pilot made a quick return to the airfield. The emergency squad and the fire engines were waiting beside the landing strip. Passengers were driven by bus to the Schenectady railroad station for rail transportation to Rochester.

Newark- It was a hot, humid summer day with an ominous dark cloudbank observed ahead. The plane was at an estimated 15,000 feet; we couldn't fly above the approaching storm. Wham, we smacked into it, going from daylight into sudden darkness. Instantly, the plane tilted about thirty degrees to the port and dropped as if Jupiter Pluvius pulled a cork in the atmosphere beneath us. Passengers in the aisle seats on the starboard were thrown out into the aisle. They scrambled back into their seats and fumbled with their seat belts as the plane bounced and yawed in the storm. Some occupants reached for their folded distress containers as mal de mer threatened. Hail and lightning flashes engulfed the plane. In a few minutes the rough air diminished and the sky brightened to the relief of us all!

Tucson - It was an evening departure, the air at ground level (5,000 feet altitude) was thin relative to sea level. The DC7 was heavily loaded, stuffed with human and other cargo. The plane consumed the full length of the runway to become airborne. It struggled to gain altitude. The hinged cowlings covering the exhaust ports were open exposing the exhaust manifolds glowing cherry red. The super charged engines

labored to climb above 13,000 ft., the elevation needed to clear the mountains ahead. The hot glowing manifolds seemed freakish, foreboding. The plane circled and circled to reach cruising altitude. Finally, the course straightened, the superchargers were off. The cowlings closed over the cooling manifolds. The lights of Tucson faded.

Those were a few of my “out of the ordinary” airplane experiences!

Then came the jet, an engine that performs best at high altitude.

However, one of the early problems of the jet engine was ‘flame out’. Under certain operating conditions the engine failed, a dangerous and life-threatening situation since, in flight, a stalled jet engine cannot be restarted. Because of this phenomenon, Pratt and Whitney Aircraft at Windsor Locks, Connecticut contracted with our University of Rochester to design a special periscope to look into the jet blast and to take high-speed motion pictures at a frame rate of around 8000 pictures per second. A study utilizing this equipment in which the combustion process could be altered on the engine test stand by manipulating parameters such as atmospheric pressure, temperature, rate of fuel feed, engine design features etc. would possibly yield the clues to unravel the mystery of “flame out”.

Professor Bob performed the optical design of the periscope. The mechanics was my responsibility. Unlike a visual periscope having a small exit pupil to fit the human eye, this periscope required a one-inch diameter exit pupil to match the lens aperture of the high-speed camera.

For descriptive purposes the periscope could be considered in two parts: a horizontal section about 15 feet in length concentric with the jet engine, the first optical element of the system being some twenty or more feet from the jet burner inside the engine, and a vertical section of about ten feet directing the optical path upward through the floor of the data collecting room to a height of roughly four feet where the periscope beam was turned again horizontal for the convenience of attachment of the ultra high speed motion picture camera, and for visual observation. This periscope of unit power, in effect, placed the camera lens at the entrance pupil twenty-five feet from the ring of flame within the engine.

Because of the severe environment in which it operated, the periscope was surrounded by a double tubular housing, the space between the tubes forming a water jacket with the water under pressure spraying out through tiny orifices of the external tube into the jet stream. This water spray, although it converted to steam instantly, protected the outer shell from damage at high temperatures. The periscope tube, itself, was unsupported by the surrounding water jacket. It was cantilevered from the remote end of the

horizontal section near the vertical turning point of the system. Actually, it was secured to a concrete wall of the test cell a foot or more in thickness. By this design, vibration of the water jacket buffeted by the jet stream was not transmitted to the optical system. Both the water jacket and the periscope nosed down to a smaller diameter at the front end. The first optical element of the system was a window of quartz about a centimeter thick located well within the nose of the water jacket. A high velocity air stream was shot out the nose to neutralize the opposing jet engine blast. The quartz window was for protection of the periscope lenses in case the counter air blast became momentarily inoperative, also for interception of occasional stray soot particles.

The flame inside the jet engine is normally blue in color and not very luminous, much the same as the flame in an old kerosene kitchen stove. To increase the flame luminosity the experimenters added a sodium salt to the engine's fuel. The flame then appeared a bright yellow. The pictures produced by the high-speed camera exhibited acceptable definition of the flame ring notwithstanding the turbulent gases through which the light passed.

As the developers of this instrument we received no report, that I am aware of, as to the efficacy of our product. Was this because of corporate or national security precautions? Perhaps. We do know that the cause of 'flame out' was discovered and corrected. We had one assurance that the periscope was valuable. Two years later, Pratt & Whitney contracted for a second instrument for installation at its Florida testing station. (This is an outdoor laboratory in a desolate swamp area of interior Florida. There, the jet engines have been tested in the open atmosphere. While their tremendous roar may have disturbed only the alligators, no doubt the environmentalists complained.)

In September, 1961, twenty-one years almost to the day after our first flight in a DC-3, Madlyn and I boarded a Boeing 707 for our first jet plane experience from Cleveland to Los Angeles. At that season in 1961, the eastern United States was on Eastern Daylight Savings Time, California was on Pacific Standard Time with the clock difference being four hours, exactly the duration of the flight. The plane departed Cleveland at 6:00 P.M. and arrived at L.A. at 6:00 P.M! It was impressive how the clock stood still! During the entire flight the sky remained clear; the view below looked like a miniature landscape. At thirty-five thousand feet the Grand Canyon appeared as an irregular trough scratched into a red clay soil by a V pointed hoe.

The main passenger cabin of the early Boeing 707 was outfitted with what

## Flight

might be called a dinette, forward on the port side of the plane. The seating around three sides of the table was not assigned but was available to passengers while in flight to socialize, be served beverages, snacks etc. During part of our first jet flight we occupied this space along with several of our associates who were to attend the same national scientific society meeting in L.A. This cabin feature gave a touch of luxury and pleasure not found in commercial jets today; rather, we find the airline's strategy is one of squeezing in as many fare-paying passengers as possible.

In Los Angeles we had three days of meetings in a downtown hotel. If one ventured forth from the hotel in daylight hours expecting brilliant sunshine he was definitely disappointed. The sky above exhibited a solid gray overcast. By mid morning to an easterner rain seemed imminent. About noon a brighter patch of gray in the direction of the sun could be discerned. Such was the L.A. smog in the early sixties!

In addition to our first jet flight, it was our first visit to Disneyland. After bidding adieu to Mickey Mouse we set out for the Pacific Coast in our rented vehicle. It was dusk when we arrived at the coast highway, US 101. The intersection appeared to be on the fringe of a small town to the north. We turned in that direction trusting that the main street, US 101, would offer a choice of restaurants. Shortly, we came upon a smartly designed, cozy restaurant on the ocean side of the street. We decided to patronize it.

Upon being seated at a table and presented a menu by a youthful, petite and pretty waitress, I inquired, "Where are we here, now?"

The immediate reply, fervently spoken, "You are in beautiful Laguna Beach!"

What dedication to the community, what a sales pitch, I thought. My response, "You must like it here!"

Her retort, "This is the only place in the world to live!"

Wow, I wondered, is this girl hypnotized by her surroundings or is she an ardent promoter of tourism?

I inquired, "By chance is your daddy the president of the local Chamber of Commerce?"

"No, sir, he isn't — but he was last year!!"

Such experiences made our first jet flight a memorable one!

Flying above the clouds and the mixing air masses, and guided by sophisticated navigational aids, jet flight in recent years has not offered the adventure, the uncertainties and the bizarre incidents that occurred in the era of propeller driven airliners. In this day and age it is more likely that frequent flyers have had the experience of being 'bumped' by the overbooking strategy of the airlines than by turbulent air. The industry, it seems, reroutes passengers by some devious route that adds a third more

## Flight

miles and half again as many hours, or forces air travelers to wait until the next day to resume their journey.

Yes, the main uncertainty of the moment is whether or not you have a guaranteed seat as evidenced by a boarding pass. You may have endured something like the following scenario.

I had ordered and received from my travel agency the tickets for flights to San Juan and thence to the Virgin Islands for myself and my friends, Bruce and Jacquie. Boarding passes accompanied Bruce and Jacquie's fares but mine had none. I phoned the travel agency inquiring about this omission. The response, "The airlines are overselling their space. You can try the airlines ticket counter two or three days in advance of your departure. You may be able to obtain a boarding pass at that time."

Well, now, isn't this situation just ducky, I thought?! I am advised to make an extra trip to the airport to acquire a boarding pass without any assurance that such a mission will accomplish its purpose. Anyway, in the interest of our threesome traveling together, I take the time away from work, drive the thirty miles to the airport, park in the airport ramp garage (for a fee) and make my way to the airline ticket counter.

I am dismayed to find a queue of twenty or more travelers ahead of me. Most of them have baggage to be checked and boarding passes to be issued or confirmed. The two agents at the counter proceed in their routine manner as time drags on. Twenty-five minutes pass before my turn to face one of these plenipotentiary attendants. My mood is glum. I'm thinking, why do I have to be doing this? As an airlines passenger hasn't the carrier entered a contract to transport me at an agreed upon price and time? Why is there any question or uncertainty about performance of the contract? I'm convinced it's a sham to benefit the airline.

I shove the envelope containing my ticket toward the agent with the request, "May I obtain a boarding pass for this Friday's flight?"

The agent examines the ticket and shoves it back into the envelope with a matter-of-fact reply, "This is a foreign flight. You cannot receive a boarding pass until the morning of the flight. You will have to be here an hour before departure to get a boarding pass!"

My reply, "Sir, San Juan is not in a foreign country. That is not a viable reason for not issuing a boarding pass."

The agent, now defensive, responds, "The airport authority here does not permit issuing boarding passes until one hour before flights."

What he does not say is that the 'authority' he refers to is, United Airlines. I respond, "Sir, my two traveling companions whose tickets were obtained along with mine several days ago received their boarding passes at that time."

## Flight

The agent, now more defensive and antagonistic retorts, "You're lying. This could not have happened. You will have to be here one hour before flight time."

The agent's tactics, his accusation that I'm a liar when it is he who is the prevaricator, (does he take me for an ignorant bumpkin that accepts all of his malarkey?) incensed me. Although infuriated, at the same time I feel a kind of restrained empathy toward him. He's acting on orders from above just as is done in the military. He'll go to any length to follow orders. In disgust I say, "I do not believe any of what you're telling me. The airline, as a whole, is not performing in the best interest of the public. I'm going to write to my representative in Congress about this situation."

So I leave disgruntled, the time spent: three hours. Then another hour or more will be added for doling out one of the oversold seats the morning of departure, total time: over four hours, almost as long as the booked flight time!

On Friday, 5:55 A.M., my two companions and I arrive at the ticket counter for United Flight 1605 departing 7:07 A.M. for San Juan via Washington, D.C. I am there more than an hour early to better my chance of securing a seat. Surprisingly, there is no throng of passengers queued up awaiting their fate, perhaps a dozen. After 15 or 20 minutes comes an announcement,

"Due to fog at Washington National Airport, Flight 1605 is cancelled. Passengers for San Juan are to transfer to U.S. Air for their flight via Baltimore departing shortly."

I hasten, toting my luggage, to the opposite end of the terminal. There is no problem in receiving a boarding pass. Disturbing speculation monopolizes my thoughts. There seems to have been only a few passengers ticketed to San Juan on the United Flight. Were there more ticketed to Washington? If so, where were these passengers? I ponder that Flight 1605 was sparsely booked. Why, then, the refusal to issue a boarding pass in advance? If air travel to San Juan departing at this date and time is so brisk, how can U.S. Air accept a dozen passengers at the last moment? I conclude, once again, that this whole air travel state of affairs is a disgrace!

A prior excursion to San Juan and the Virgin Islands departing on Good Friday, March 28, 1986 offered us travelers a series of air transport surprises. It is a well-recognized fact that around holidays, air travel reaches full capacity and Easter weekend was no exception. Making reservations on Good Friday for our party of four: Bruce, Jacquie, Jane and me, was a trying task. The only reservations we could obtain were on a U.S. Air flight, Rochester to Newark departing at 6:05 PM, thence transferring to a Newark-San Juan flight arriving in San Juan at 3:00 AM Saturday. Upon arrival in

the middle of the night, we were to have a four-hour wait sitting in the terminal until the first flight of the day to St. Thomas. We were not enthusiastic about losing a night's sleep, reaching St. Thomas groggy and ill humored to face a day of new experiences aboard an unfamiliar yacht and unventured seas.

Bruce's son, Bruce Jr., drove our foursome to the airport in ample time for our flight. He bid us bon voyage and left for home. At the U.S. Air ticket counter we had our tickets confirmed and our baggage checked in.

In the boarding area, there were only two other passengers waiting for the same flight, a man and a woman, each about thirty-five, rather well dressed, i.e. wearing attire a few grades above dungarees (jeans) which seems to satisfy the dress requirements of some travelers.

The four of us expecting only a short wait for our plane from Pittsburgh, stood in a circle carrying on a conversation relating to things left at home and the expedition ahead. The airline agent interrupted us with information that the plane from Pittsburgh was delayed but was expected early enough to enable us to transfer in Newark to the San Juan flight. Time dragged on with no arrival of our plane. The airline agent and we, too, became concerned. She phoned U.S. Air in Newark to check the actual time of departure of the San Juan flight. She reported that the departure was according to schedule.

This information was imparted to us and to the unknown couple who moved into our group of four without any formal introduction. For lack of their names, I'll refer to them as Al and Cindy. They, too, were bound for San Juan and the Caribbean. We shared our anxiety about making the connection in Newark. Another half hour passed. Finally, the airline agent announced that our plane from Pittsburgh was to land within minutes but that we had no chance of catching the flight to San Juan at Newark. She advised that we return home and come back the next morning to take the first plane to Newark which would allow forty-five minutes for a connection at Kennedy airport for a flight to San Juan.

This proposal, requiring a helicopter taxi to Kennedy Airport from Newark, seemed more risky than the connection that we had already missed. Furthermore, we had no transportation to our homes, some thirty miles away. We told the agent that it was our decision to proceed to Newark on the scheduled flight. In our minds we decided to take our chances three hundred and fifty miles closer to our destination! With that decision, bold and seemingly naive, I perceived myself as having the spurious judgment of the character, Sportin' Life, in "Porgy and Bess" as he blindly started out on his journey to find a fantasized Utopia.



By the time we claimed our luggage in Newark it was after 10:00 PM. We carried our bags to the U.S. Air ticket counter on the floor above, where we found one agent keeping a lonely vigil. Our new acquaintance, Al, immediately took charge. Representing the six of us, he confronted the agent with a request for overnight lodging. Al exuded a confidence and aplomb in dealing with the airlines as if he were an old hand in these matters. At the conclusion of his negotiations the airline supplied a motel, transportation to it and reservations for us on the next flight to San Juan at 6:00 AM.!

At the motel the six of us agreed that we should meet in the motel lobby at 4:45 AM to take the motel van to the airport. That night's sleep was short but far superior to sitting in the San Juan terminal from three to seven in the morning. At 4:45 AM the motel van was nowhere to be found. We telephoned for a taxi which arrived in a few minutes. Six passengers, the driver and our luggage were stuffed into one taxi! It was a memorable adventure and one in keeping with airline seating strategy! Bruce and I, and the driver shared the front seat. The other four, the smaller ones, were crammed into the rear along with luggage that had overflowed the trunk. Once packed in, we sped over the deserted and silent streets of the city before daybreak.

At the airline check-in, passengers were arriving. About a dozen were in line ahead of us. I noticed that our traveling companions, Al and Cindy, had mysteriously drifted away. We acquired our confirmed tickets, first class, no less, at no extra charge. Turning toward the boarding area, I caught sight of Al and Cindy at the very end of the long queue of expectant passengers.

Aboard the plane in the first class cabin, I was tickled that lady luck had decreed the best for us. As the seats were filling up there was no Al or Cindy. Jacquie was seated diagonally across the aisle and upon gaining her attention I said, "Jacquie, I wonder if our travel companions managed to get aboard?"

Her reply, "No way! Cindy told me in the taxi that they had no intention to make this flight. They expected to be 'bumped' and to receive free tickets for any point in the United States valid for a year. They haven't purchased airfare in four years! They always schedule their travel during the busy seasons to obtain their free fares!"

What's a game for the airlines can be a game for its patrons too!

In San Juan we had another surprise; the aircraft of Virgin Island Airways for the flight to Charlotte-Amalie was an antiquated DC-3. It brought back memories of that first flight over forty-five years before but with some distinct differences. The seating layout was still the same but now, the upholstery was severely worn and frayed. The closure to the pilot's

compartment was missing. A makeshift door to the forward lavatory consisted of a sheet of unfinished plywood hung by a couple of strap hinges and closed by a barn door hasp and padlock! The padlocked lavatory was baffling, perturbing and, to say the least, unusual. I surmised that the management had decided that on a short flight a lavatory was unessential! The plane, by all appearances, was a flying scrap heap but it landed in St. Thomas without mishap.

Our arrival at the charter rental marina was about six hours later than originally scheduled but there was still time for us to make the first anchorage off St. John before sunset. The name of the yacht escapes me but in the recollection of the chain of events in which initial adverse travel circumstances were transformed into fantastic success, the name could well have been Serendipity.

In the six decades of experiences with airplanes and air travel, the air transport industry has reached maturity. The current jet aircraft flying at an altitude of thirty to thirty-five thousand feet at a speed of approximately nine tenths the speed of sound is essentially fully developed. There may be changes in models, sizes and improvements in controls, navigation, fuel efficiency etc., but these are optional and peripheral. The Mach 2 commercial aircraft, as exemplified by the Concord, has halved the flight time but at a horrendous expense in design, construction, materials, maintenance and fuel consumption plus the deterrent of the sonic boom. Further development of Mach 2 commercial flight appears unlikely.

Thus, we find ourselves in the air travel age with a worldwide fleet of Mach 1 jet planes. These planes connecting all parts of the globe have undoubtedly quickened political and social thought. In the voice of the poet, it may be said:

The skies of today that jet trails span  
Bestow a symbol of creative man,  
And another of his shrinking fragile sphere  
With once distant alien lands now near  
Challenging him in human import to create  
One world joined in a harmonious state.

## The Hazards of Man Power

J.C. Evans

It was a new experience, a triumvirate of amateurs: Dave, Dick and I aboard the Grace entering the Murray Canal. The Grace, under full sail with a following breeze, was gliding effortlessly, silently, majestically forward. To the starboard spread the main, to the port the genoa, wing on wing, as a sailor might say. We sped with the wind, racing with the waves, the water and the sky: blue, the tall grass on the canal banks undulating in a longer wavelength. The turtles soaking up the sun on isolated rocks at the canal's edge ignored our quiet passage.

In this idyllic setting there was only one matter of concern, the navigational hazards, whatever they might be.

"Dave, what does the chart show for bridges that cross the canal?" I inquired.

"The chart shows three bridges. They open on the approach of a vessel, the first bridge is about a half mile ahead," Dave responded.

"Good," I said and we glided on.

Soon in the distance there was the outline of a bridge. It appeared of an iron truss construction, and off to the left a little brown house sat alone, not much larger than a single garage.

"Must be the house is for the bridge operator," proffered Dave, but there was no sign of human habitation. We glided on, the bridge looming up larger and larger.

"Hey, look, there's a turnstile there beside the road. Someone walking around that turnstile must open the bridge. Holy smoke, can you imagine it in this day and age?"

Our smiles of amazement turned into laughter, but all remained quiet at the little brown house; there were no signs of life. The Grace was bearing down on the bridge much faster than a flowing glacier but with the same irreversible, irresistible thrust and with about the same lack of control.

"When is someone going to open that bridge, quick, get the horn out of the cabin!" I barked.

Dave passed up the horn to the two of us in the cockpit. What a coincidence, human power was needed to both: open the bridge and to blow the horn. The horn measured almost three feet in length and appeared to be a relic of the Middle Ages! It took all of one's lungpower as well as concentration, a sedate disposition and unflinching determination to produce a burp. More than a burp was needed now for a bridge signal, actually, we

## Hazards

needed three long blasts.

“Blow that horn,” I yelled, “We are closing on the bridge! Hurry!”

But Dick, in his hilarious mood, was grinning and guffawing practically out of control. He pressed the horn to his lips, took a tremendous breath of air, but, alas, he exploded in a burst of laughter. The laughter was contagious with Dave and I joining in. Laughter reigned; our condition was ludicrous. Not one of us could recapture our sobriety. The bridge was getting closer and closer and not one of us was fit to blow that damned horn. What a predicament!

By visual observation or perhaps by our resounding laughter wafting over the summer breeze, the bridge tender was alerted to our presence.

“Look, there’s an old guy running out-and two kids trailing,” I exclaimed!

The threesome put their bodies to the wheel without delay. A gong started clanging and boom-like gates to either side of the canal lowered to stop vehicular traffic.

Dick hastily remarked, “Gee, it looks like they *have* electric power! Maybe there’s a bridge tender’s union holding out for man-powered bridges”—and we all guffawed again, despite impending peril.

“How can we slow this boat? Where’s the anchor? Throw over the anchor!” I shouted.

Dave scrambled forward towards the bow, tore open the hatch cover, reached down and brought forth on deck the two-piece kedge with a clunk. He fumbled trying to assemble it in haste. The anchor rod was still down in the hold.

“Those kids and the old man are wheeling it like demons, I exclaimed, “Maybe we’ll make it!”

We glided relentlessly on. Decisions, decisions: to heave out the anchor at the bow would swing the Grace sharply around, end for end. The stern end in its sweep could crash into the canal bank, or worse the oncoming bridge abutment. In a flash I cried out, “Hold that anchor, we’re going through.”

The bridge was two thirds turned with the projecting end towards us on the port side. We took aim at the narrow slot that had opened. In a matter of seconds we squeezed past, the boom on the starboard clearing the highway pavement by a mere handbreadth!

The old man, dropping his duty at the turnstile, charged after us, screaming, “Ya damned fools, ya should have an anchor on the stern!”

We were speechless, no retort from us! We glanced at one another half frowning, half grinning. Our feelings were half of embarrassment and half of thanksgiving.

## Hazards

“Dave, get that auxiliary anchor up on the stern just in case, for the next two bridges,” I commanded.

Dave responded as if addressing some superior naval officer but with a slight smirk and twinkle in his eye, “Aye, Aye, sir.”

—And on we glided down the canal. And so it was on that memorable summer day. As Dick often said in later years, “Every time you go sailing, it’s a new adventure.”

### High Noon at the Farm

Jim was psychic; he said the little men from Mars were in communication with him. Hearing this was startling to me. He hadn't revealed such fantasies when I hired him. However, in most respects he seemed to be more or less normal for a kid not long out of high school. As a handyman making repairs on the building, painting here and there, oiling machinery, weeding the flowerbeds and other miscellaneous tasks, he was okay.

One morning in June, I planned to send Jim over to our farm to mow the hay, or perhaps more aptly described, the weeds. I showed Jim how to attach the sickle bar to the tractor, instructed him how to operate it and watched him practice on some nearby patches of dandelions, quack grass and wild timothy.

Before sending him down the road toward the farm, I said, "Jim, mow that lower field near the highway first. I'll be over during the noon hour to see how you're doing."

Jim aboard, the tractor chugged out of sight and I turned my attention to other, more lucrative matters. Noontime came and I drove over to the farm to see what progress Jim was making. As I approached, Jim was holding center stage near the middle of the field riding jauntily on the little iron monster with sickle bar clipping the weeds with near perfection. As I slowed my vehicle down to stop on the shoulder of the road, a sidewise glance to my right caught Jim suddenly leaping off the tractor with his arms flailing the air like a madman. It seemed mysterious to me and then, all of a sudden his one arm went straight up and it didn't come down. Next I knew he was running toward me. He was an uncrowned Statue of Liberty in locomotion but his face was contorted. Jim was obviously in severe pain. He managed to cry out, "Bees...my shoulder, my shoulder, it's out of joint! Can you get it back?!!"

With his right arm extended skyward his stance had a grotesque and somewhat comical aspect but I had to keep a straight face. Something told me that my boy scout training did not qualify me for the task at hand! I could not perceive myself grasping Jim's arm and trying some accidental maneuver to put his shoulder back in commission. I couldn't cope with such a challenge.

"Jim, I, aaah, errrrr, can't do that, I don't know how."

Jim looked at me disgustedly, quickly replying, "Get me over to Doc Howard in Holcomb!"

## High Noon

There was one difficulty. My station wagon had no hole through the roof to accommodate Jim's skyward pointing arm!

"Let's see, Jim, if you can somehow get into the front seat, we can put your arm through the open window as we close the door," I offered.

It was a struggle and painful for Jim but we accomplished it and away we flew toward the village. Jim was leaning away from me against the passenger door with his right arm thrust upward. Someone seeing us might have wondered what kind of weird signal we were sending. Jim didn't say much and I was at a loss of words to console him. He did remark that throwing his shoulder out of joint had happened before.

We stopped in front of old Doc Howard's office and I unthreaded Jim from the car door. He leaned far forward to lower his arm at the building entrance. No one was in the waiting room, no one to witness the strange two-man procession. It was still too early for office hours. We heard a rattling of hardware somewhere in the direction of the examining rooms to the rear and we stepped briskly in that direction. Old Doc was dusting off, or rearranging the accoutrements of his profession in a little room to the left. He was definitely a senior citizen: having gray hair and a neatly trimmed gray mustache. He spotted us in the hallway and greeted Jim as if he had been his patient ever since delivering him eighteen years before.

"You did it again, Jim!" Old Doc exclaimed!

I retreated backward toward the waiting room not wanting to be an onlooker to a perceived grisly anatomical procedure. Out of sight, out of mind, I was forever to be ignorant of putting a shoulder joint back in place.

I surveyed the waiting room looking for a comfortable chair and took note of two tables of various magazines to suit every patient's taste. Before I could make a decision on where to sit, Jim emerged appearing physically fit, and evincing a grin, said, "Let's go. Take me back to the farm."

Jim was as loquacious on the way back as he was silent coming. He reported that his dad had a new tractor; his brother had opened a new restaurant, and best of all, he had a new girlfriend. Jim said she was a luscious blond and she was nuts about him. It was apparent he was nuts about her!

Back at the farm, I instructed Jim to mow the large upper field (which was not visible from the highway) after finishing the lower hay lot.

"Jim, it'll take you a while to mow that fifty acres up there. I'll leave you two five-gallon cans of gas down by the horse barn this evening. I may not get over here tomorrow; I'll be too busy. Check with you later on."

The following day came bright and hot, a farmer's dream for haying. I could envision Jim in all his glory piloting his machine back and forth on the 50 acre field.

## High Noon

Noontime came again and I reconsidered my intention to postpone inspecting Jim's progress. He must have the big field about a quarter mowed by now. It's such a glorious day, I might as well stop over there and then go to lunch, I mused.

It was a winding lane that led up to the high ground. The hay was tall up there and it stretched from woods to woods on two sides and rolled on to a far horizon of meadow in the opposite direction to my approach. The lane ran irregularly along the woods to my right. I drove on, looking to the left for some sign of the tractor. Every now and then I stopped, peered out over the field: no tractor, no Jim, and no visible evidence of anything mowed. Now, what is going on here, I wondered, this is damned strange!

On reaching the far end of the field, I turned my vehicle around and headed back. Again I scanned the field, my eyes searching, searching the rolling terrain, and then something caught my eye, far to the right. It appeared to be the upper extremity of the frame of the tractor loader and a little of the tractor's rear tires peeping up above the prairie landscape.

I quickly bounded out of my vehicle and strode toward the tractor. To my left was a shallow, wide ravine that narrowed and deepened as I strode on. Drainage from the field over the years had worn away the soil, but, nevertheless, the ground kept its grassy cover for the most part. I could see a little more of the tractor now, enough to know that the front end was tipped downward. A few more paces revealed that the tractor had plunged over the edge of the ravine. In fact, the tractor had dived off a cliff! The loader bucket was half buried in the bottom of the ravine! The rear tractor wheels were barely in contact with the ground since the mower was hung up on the edge of the precipice. I noticed one swath of mowed hay leading up from the rear to the snagged tractor.

It was obvious to me that Jim could not have been watching where he was going. He must have been looking backward at the mower's performance, or maybe, he was just daydreaming. Maybe he had had romantic visions of his luscious blond girlfriend. One thing was clear; he was rudely awakened when the tractor bucket struck the bottom of the gulch!

Damn, isn't this a fine kettle of fish, I thought. Wonder how long this tractor has been here? Where was Jim? What do I do now? I walked around the machine. Jim was nowhere to be seen. I surveyed the situation. The bottom of the mower assembly was half buried in the sod at the edge of the ravine. There was no visible damage. The ignition key was in the switch. How could I get this machine out of this hole, what a challenge?!!



## High Noon

My previous experiences prepared me well for the challenge that lay ahead. I would need a shovel and a hammer. A shovel to dig out beneath the mower and a hammer to drive out the various pins that held the mower and its drive mechanism to the tractor. I made a trip to the horse barn for a shovel; the hammer and other tools I always carried in my station wagon.

The ground was hard underneath the mower; I pecked away at it with the shovel, eventually removing the sod beneath it. As I dug the tractor weight shifted from the mower to the rear wheels, and finally, there was daylight under the mower. I knocked out the pins in the three-point hitch, disconnected the power takeoff, hauled and pushed the mower until it came clear from the tractor.

I was now ready for the crucial experiment: to back the tractor up and out. I knew that the loader bucket was literally an ace in the hole in this situation; by rolling the bucket forward, I could apply considerable backward force to the tractor. I gingerly climbed aboard; the slope made it almost impossible to sit on the tractor seat. I revved up the engine, put the transmission in low, then low reverse, let up on the clutch and simultaneously rolled the bucket with its leading edge biting into the soil. The rear wheels dug in and the old machine crept backward up the side of the ravine. A second bite with the bucket and I was well on my way out. The tractor continued its backward crawl. I raised the bucket so that it would clear the precipice. It seemed like a minor miracle; I could hardly believe my good fortune.

Quickly, I hitched up the mower and decided to run the tractor down to the barn. After all, if the key was to be left in it, the machine was safer down there. Jim could take over from there. I parked it behind the barn, retrieved my tools and hurried off to lunch.

The next day was a repeat performance weather wise. I was out of communication with Jim, but I figured, no news was good news. At noontime I decided once more to visit the farm. I took the lane to the high ground and was surprised that the big field looked exactly the same as the day before: no hay mowed, no tractor and mower, and no Jim! Returning to the horse barn, the tractor was parked exactly where I left it the day before.

I wondered; could Jim have been hurt by yesterday's exploit? Could his luscious blond have demanded his daytime attention? In any case, the mowing was at a standstill. I'd better call Jim's house as soon as I get back to the office, I concluded. I dialed the Kelly residence and a female voice answered.

"Hello?"

"Mrs. Kelly, this is Mr. Evans at Velmex. Do you know where Jim is

High Noon

today?"

"He's right here, he didn't go to work today."

"Is he OK?" "Is he hurt?" I asked.

"He's all right. He seems a little quiet though."

"Well, may I speak to him, please?"

There was a long pause and finally Jim answered with a voice, weak and stumbling, "Hello?"

"Jim, this is Mr. Evans, how's the mowing going over at the farm?!!"

Another long pause before Jim answered hesitantly, "The tractor's gone-it-it's disappeared."

"Jim, you're kidding. What do you mean the tractor's gone?"

"Well, aaah-it's gone," Jim replied with an air of mystery, perhaps Jim had a mental picture of those little green men from Mars having lifted it off planet Earth.

"Jim, the tractor's not gone. It's parked behind the horse barn."

"What?!! You mean you got that tractor out of that hole?!! Oh! Well, I-aaah -didn't want you to know what happened. I was going to pull the tractor out with my Dad's truck but he was using it. When I went back over there to try something else the tractor was gone. I couldn't believe it. It was unreal!"

I responded, "It's real, Jim. It's behind the barn and all ready to go. Now, get over there and start mowing while this weather holds, and look where you're going. If you need anything let me know."

I should have told Jim that if a person looks ahead at least part of the time instead of backward, greater things will be accomplished, or, if one doesn't find what he wants in one place he should look for it in another.

## A Human Perspective

J.C. Evans

How do we look upon our relationship to this total world in which we live? How do we arrive at our sense of values and purposes? What do we perceive for the future of humanity? What role shall we take in this changing and developing universe? How should we influence our fellow human beings in this development?

Any responses to the above questions would depend on our knowledge, education and experience. At any period in human history, a philosopher could report that the body of knowledge attained had reached its highest level and he drew his conclusions accordingly. Thus, if one philosophizes today, he does so with the expectation that his ideas and conclusions will be immensely changed by future discoveries.

The growth of scientific knowledge in all fields has been accelerating in the 19th and 20th centuries. It has been postulated that scientific knowledge at this stage in history is doubling about every generation. Both the exploring of the vast and distant universe and the probing of the subatomic structure of matter has given us a much greater comprehension of our physical world. The investigating of the constituents of our planet, its geological history, origin of living organisms and their development has been tremendously illuminating. We believe we know with some certainty how the universe, its galaxies, stars and planets, and eventually, organic life, originated.

If we examine ourselves in relation to this expanding aggregation of knowledge, we realize that none of us has a close acquaintance with all its branches. We recognize that *Homo sapiens* is the dominant animal on our planet, has become thus, because of his increasing intellect developed through millions of generations. He is now able to control, to a large degree, his environment, his longevity, and his enjoyment of life. Evolution is the fundamental theme in this development. We are born, we mature, we reproduce and eventually we die. In each generation there is the possibility for a genetic change, some molecular substitution or structural alteration in the human genome that modifies the character of the offspring. If this cycle of life with its propensity for change and adaptation did not prevail, the human species, or any other species as we know it, would not be here. Each of us is a link in a continuing chain of development that extends back to the first life forms on earth.

The realization and acceptance of the evolutionary process is a logical starting point for one's philosophy of life. Following thusly, our existence commences at birth and ceases at death. From a strictly rational viewpoint

## Human Perspective

we accede, with certainty, to living one lifetime. Any other explanation becomes a projection of our ego, wishful thinking, or inculcation from childhood of various myths and stories of bygone religious and secular writers. Such writers, as well as society's leaders, had acquired a practical knowledge of human relationships and an understanding of the necessity for rules of conduct as well as a code of law and ethics. These mores were often merged with concepts of deities and the supernatural.

The process of evolution has been highly successful (albeit long, as perceived by humans) both in development of *Homo sapiens* and perpetuation of the species. Perpetuation has two fundamental driving elements: the instinct of self-preservation and the instinct of procreation. Each of these phenomena is often in conflict with rational behavior, i.e.: having the greatest benefit to the greatest number. It seems that the self-preservation instinct leads to projecting one's self beyond death, to thoughts of an afterlife, of heaven and hell, of reincarnation etc. all of which is irrational. The procreation instinct, unless throttled by higher intellect, leads to sexual excesses, unwanted offspring, rape, incest, etc. It seems plausible that in early human history, behavior was almost entirely instinct driven. If the human race survives for a few more million years, we may expect that the individuals' decisions and actions will be largely intellectually driven. Today, we are somewhere in between!!

Human society appears to be the sole developer and conservator of knowledge that we can substantiate in the physical world. If there is some higher intelligence and order in the universe than we now perceive, it is our challenge to discover, understand and interpret it. We must persistently engage in and support the pursuit of discovery and advancement of knowledge. Simultaneously, we must develop and encourage the abstract thinkers, the theorists, to explain and unify the totality of knowledge.

The human mind is now capable of conceiving the vastness of the cosmos, and to comprehend that only an infinitesimally small bit of it has been favorable to our origin and continued existence. Apparently we are here through the occurrence of a very long sequence of events, each event associated with a definite probability of occurrence. Some of these events had a very small probability. Mathematically, the product of these probabilities is an extremely small number. However, there are two offsetting factors, first the time scale, and second, the space scale (the immensity of the universe). That is to say, that even though the probability is low for a particular event at any one time during a span of millions of years to occur, it can occur, and, the existence of billions and billions of stars and planets increases the likelihood of evolutionary processes at favorable locations similar to those that have occurred on this planet.

## Human Perspective

There is nothing unique about our solar system. Civilizations similar to ours undoubtedly have come into existence elsewhere, may have passed away, may be existing, living on for thousands and thousands of years. It may be speculated that there are civilizations that have advanced beyond ours, having created a species superior to Homo sapiens. Currently in our own realm, we are witnessing rapid advances in molecular biology: unraveling the structure of the elements of cell nuclei and introducing planned structural changes in living cells. Through biological discoveries and techniques, our human race, in time, will be improved physically and mentally.

Beyond the human mind there are continuing developments in machine or artificial intelligence. Current opinion seems to preclude its eventual ascendance to surpass human intelligence. However, work in this field has been of extremely short duration compared to the millions of years of human development. Who knows what artificial intelligence may become in a few decades, a few centuries or a few millennia?

Currently, our own civilization has progressed to a point where we have the capability to destroy the human race and our environment. Conversely, we have the power to preserve our species and our planet. It is our responsibility to save our home: Earth and ourselves. We are compelled to accept the challenge. No deity or supernatural power will achieve it for us, or lead the way.

As we examine our planet today from a political viewpoint, it is at the threshold of emerging from a regional, nationalistic feudalism to a world community and consciousness. This must occur lest human and material resources be consumed to our eventual impoverishment and degradation. We require a world mind or consciousness, a world prospective, a world unity. The achievement of such a goal rests upon several initiatives which are outlined below.

1. Instituting a system of worldwide, universal education comprising a common curriculum in the fields of history, government, philosophy and related social subjects that is formulated from all human experience, all races, all regions, and all ideas. Such teaching would emphasize the sacredness of human life and intelligence and would establish common understanding, human progress and world security. It has been the experience of all cultures and philosophies that have nurtured human progress that the fundamental law in human relationships is: to treat others as one would like to be treated. This concept can be accepted, promoted and amplified by all societies as a unifying force in the world.

2. An initiative closely related to the above is the adoption of a universal spoken language. We do have some communication forms

## Human Perspective

recognized the world over, such as mathematical formulas and operations, musical notation, technical drawings, scientific names and symbols, and also computer languages. However, we lack a common spoken tongue for all humanity. At this time the English language is perhaps the closest to being a world language. It possesses a voluminous vocabulary and diversity of expression. It does lack a logical system of spelling and a rationalization of irregular verbs. The rectification of such impediments in the English language would greatly stimulate its adoption as a world communication medium. Such changes could be expected also to facilitate machine conversion of oral English to print.

3. A third initiative is a worldwide program of conserving resources and improving the environment. Much has been written concerning pollution and contamination of the land, sea and air. There are corrective and preventative measures being undertaken in some regions but a program sponsored by a world constituency, a world government, is definitely needed.

4. Thinking people everywhere realize that growth in the human population is contrary to conserving world resources, maintaining a favorable environment, and sustaining a high living standard. A universal program of social measures, in particular, birth control to reverse world population growth is required.

5. The foregoing goals for human progress can only be attained through a movement away from nationalism toward world community. The United Nations Organization and its forerunner, the League of Nations have been early attempts at establishing a democratic and responsible world government. Unfortunately the independent nations forming these institutions have been primarily concerned with perpetuating their nationalism and political influence. They have yet to conceive of a common humanity with political equality. They fear relinquishing their tribal ways for the common good. This condition in human affairs is reminiscent in many respects to the disposition of the thirteen sovereign American colonies at the end of the American Revolution. The colonists' first attempt at consolidation, the Articles of Confederation, proved impractical and ineffective, a condition similar to that of today's United Nations. To our discredit, on several occasions, the U.S. government has shown disregard and disdain for the findings and rulings of the U.N.

The challenge to form a world government with authority, by laws legislated through democratic processes and the power to enforce those laws, lies before us. It is no simple task: the fostering of public sentiment and resolve for world order and the achieving of a political constituency to demand a world government. All this is needed to come up with an acceptable

## Human Perspective

formula for a structure to accommodate the developed and undeveloped countries, the strong and the weak, the affluent and the poor. It is a task demanding the greatest of insight and foresight, of fairness and justice, of determination and devotion.

World unity and world government demand our attention. One powerful influence directing humanity to achieve a world federation is the threat of annihilation by thermonuclear weapons. The number of such weapons stockpiled by this country alone is sufficient to destroy our civilization several times over. With the achievement of world government these weapons and all other armaments for internecine warfare would become unnecessary, obsolete.

6. The distribution of material wealth among nations and among individuals is a source of conflict. Currently the conflict between nations is over oil in the Middle East, tomorrow it will be claim to minerals at the bottom of the sea. At the individual level the conflict is between the poor vs. the rich and the expanding gulf between their living standards and economic expectations. Such disparity between the haves and the have-nots must be recognized and mitigated. A capitalistic society has a great potential for creating wealth. Persons with new ideas, or with managerial ability, or with recognized talent in science or the arts must be rewarded. At the same time those less able and talented must be supported above a poverty level and be encouraged to realize greater accomplishment.

To summarize, the above requisites for human progress and salvation are: encouragement and support for the discovery of knowledge, a universal curriculum of education, a common spoken language, conservation of resources, reversal of population growth, a world democratic government, and a more equitable distribution of wealth. These aims are all interdependent and interrelated. Advancement in any one of these directions, in general, requires concurrent advancement in all the others.

There is no known group, organization, or foundation that encompasses all of the foregoing goals. There are a fair number that are not so ambitious, concentrating on one or, at most, two of these objectives. Although progress in all of these areas is a challenge of huge proportions, there are several favorable forces and circumstances driving us in these directions.

Today's communication systems with their tremendous capacity for information transfer to any point on the globe in a matter of seconds together with intercontinental air travel have shrunk our concept of the earth, brought us in contact with all peoples and cultures. These developments are stimulating the recognition of the unity of humanity and the folly of localism and isolationism. For example, we can expect in the not too distant future

the publication of a world newspaper in several languages in the beginning, but eventually in a universal language. Only recently we have witnessed the introduction and growth of a national newspaper to serve this area of North America, namely, USA TODAY and a newspaper in Europe called THE EUROPEAN. Similarly, it can be anticipated that simultaneous telecasts throughout the world of news and events will emerge via a universal communications system.

Wherever people are located on our earth they benefit by exchange of goods as well as ideas. Increasing world commerce is a positive factor in spurring world unity. Although subtle and generally passive in their effect, industrial enterprises producing goods and services for worldwide consumption with plants and distribution in many countries is a positive unifying force.

Turning to the negative influences inhibiting the attainment of the goals advanced above; there is the human tendency to resist change, to stay in the same rut, to fear the future with a new philosophic attitude and adjustment required. We exist, and always have existed in a changing world and at this stage an especially rapidly changing world. Courage, foresight, and boldness have to overcome conservatism and complacency.

Undoubtedly, one sphere of human endeavor that is ultraconservative and resistant to change is religion. Today, as in centuries past, sectarian religion has been divisive and counterproductive to human understanding and progress. The wars, violence and mayhem that we are witnessing today in Ireland, the Near East, India, and Sri Lanka are rooted in conflicting religious ideologies. The followers of these ideologies, in general, hold to beliefs in some supernatural power that directs them in thinking and action, confers exclusive beneficence to their clan and tends to set them apart from others of the human race. Here, we have the essential elements for chronic tragedy. To a rational humanist this burden of sectarianism is as pitiful as it is loathsome, a formidable deterrent to human progress, unity and peace.

Associated with nationalism are the advocates for, and makers of, the implements of war, and their influence on governments and national economies. To them there is always an enemy, or potential enemy, that must be surpassed in quantity as well as in superiority of machines of war. What a tremendous waste of material and human resources, what opportunities for influence pedaling and corruption are carried on under the label of national defense! Defense is a euphemism for the word: war. Following World War II this nation renamed its War Department the Department of Defense. Did this change of name signify a flicker of human conscience or did it constitute a dodge of morality and responsibility? The fact that the human condition and survival cannot accept war as a solution to humanity's problems is fast



## Human Perspective

becoming apparent. With the universal recognition of the futility and obsolescence of war, the advocates and operators of the war industry will fade into history.

Future human progress will be measured in terms of achievements in the aforesaid goals of this discourse. Such progress by all appearances is accelerating, largely because of a shrinking world, rapid advancement of science, and accent on universal education. A movement toward a humanistic viewpoint should be fervently encouraged. Homo sapiens needs to continually examine his roots, his present station and his future expectations from total irrefutable knowledge. Mankind needs to celebrate the belief that every person is a sacred being endowed, in the words of our forefathers, with inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that the future of humanity is in our hands and none other, and that the responsibility rests with us to create a better world for future generations and ourselves.

The Inspection

J.C. Evans

The entrance vestibule and visitor's waiting room were one and the same - tiny, with gray glum walls. The eyes of a stranger upon entering had little to survey: one plain brown upholstered sofa, snug against the right wall and at the near end a small table was squeezed in strewn with a couple of trade journals. The full seating capacity for visitors was a threesome of close companions! Across from the sofa the sole variation from solid gray was a sliding window, the communication access to the combined receptionist, telephone operator, secretary and bookkeeper who was nowhere to be seen.

The two visitors who had just arrived could have been taken for enterprising salesmen promoting a product to: boost production, or increase plant safety, or improve the working environment, or some other industrially related gimmick that would earn them a commission. By appearance they were not blue-collar workers seeking employment. This pair stood for a minute or two scrutinizing their sparse surroundings, which could be taken in within a few seconds. Neither of the visitors made a move to be seated on the sofa. The older man of the two spoke up, "We were expected here at eight fifteen and it's past that now."

He took a few steps out into the adjoining, empty hallway, turned to the left and peered into the doorway of the receptionist's quarters, scanning it as if she might be hiding in an obscure cranny. At that instant a gaunt, frail pallid-faced woman of medium stature approached toward what appeared to be her office. She was attired totally in black unfashionable garb, that together with her disturbing physique created the appearance of a fasting nun who had escaped from a convent, or possibly a witch ill prepared to celebrate Halloween. Her appearance belied her age.

"Miss, we have an appointment with your Mr. Glenn Barnhardt."

She barely smiled, "Yes, he's expecting you", she replied in a reserved, matter-of-fact manner. She turned about and disappeared. Visibly, as a receptionist she was not the prim and attractive, hospitable hostess encountered at the headquarters of IBM, GMC, or AT&T. The two visitors exchanged glances blending a smile and a squint, reflecting curiosity and wonder at the unusual reception. The senior of the two men, who went by the name of Jack, unzipped his briefcase and checked the location of its contents as if to be fully prepared for the forthcoming introduction.

## The Inspection

The rumble of machinery from the rear of the building droned on. A few minutes passed before Barnhardt suddenly appeared, announcing earnestly and at the same time apologetically, "Have to keep this shop running every minute of the day."

He said this as if he were heavily burdened by responsibility, as if there were a dagger poised above his head, as if he were wishing that he were doing something more pleasurable like going fishing. He was a large person, six feet two or more, had the likeness of a rugby player, or a one time athlete, who appeared to be in his mid thirties. He had not grown robust or acquired an aura of composure. On the contrary, he appeared somewhat drawn and haggard. In regard to his facial features he had a hawk like nose with high cheekbones and a complexion marred by blemishes. He wore work clothes that were stained; his hands appeared greasy and black.

Before Barnhardt could offer a welcome, Jack reached into his briefcase, pulled out a sample of his company's products and held it out to his host. At first glance it appeared as a bright metal rectangular object, having the proportions of a spectacle case, or a pocket diary.

"This is the kind of product that we manufacture. It's a simple translation device, a dovetail slide of a hard aluminum alloy, special polymer bearing pads, and a stainless steel actuating screw. As you can see, our business is not in competition with yours. I know you expressed concern about this when we talked on the phone," Jack offered.

Barnhardt examined the device with curiosity and interest. He rotated the actuating knob, which indicated linear position to a thousandth of an inch on a drum dial, turned the instrument over and looked at it from various angles. Jack handed him a second one, a longer and narrower model.

"Yes, I see, it's a very nice piece of equipment. It's a far cry from what we do. Where are these used?"

"They're used in light machinery and instruments. We don't always know what the customer's application is. About half our sales are to academic and industrial laboratories."

Jack handed his host two catalogs describing the product. Barnhardt eyed them briefly and placed them on the receptionist's desk. He finally seemed more at ease.

"Call me Glen, and you're Jack and this is.... "Chuck" as Chuck filled him in.

"Chuck's in charge of our production," responded Jack.

## The Inspection

“You want to see thread rolling machines? In particular, you had asked about those made by Tesker. We got ‘em, very good machines. Let’s go out in the shop.”

Barnhardt led us a couple of dozen steps on a right angle course to the shop entrance where he opened a heavy metal door unleashing a roar and rattle of machinery. At that point and beyond, voice communication became practically out of the question. The odor of hot cutting oil permeated the air. A blue haze hung heavy wherever we looked. The dimensions of the shop were about that of a medium size basketball court. It could be assumed that the floor was concrete to support the heavy machines but a thick coat of grime and dirt obscured its surface.

The shop floor on one side was crowded with a mix of thread rolling machines and stacks of horizontal steel bars rising up six feet or more. Actually they were bundles of round bars from a quarter of an inch to an inch, possibly more, in diameter. On the other side of the shop were other types of metal working machinery including one large punch press being fed a thick steel plate by an operator. With every stroke of the press, a resounding KABOOM blasted the eardrums. It sounded like bedlam with heavy artillery. Barnhardt and his trailing visitors worked their way through a maze of machines and stacks of steel bars to several thread rollers. He pointed out two medium size Tesker machines, their dies whirling, vibrating, and squeezing a thread form onto a steel rod. Barnhardt shouted above the din of battle, “These machines are running as fast as they will go. We have to roll 60 tons of threaded rod a week.”

One suspected that these machines, when new, were finished in a green enamel, but, with the deposits of cutting oil, air borne smoke and general gunk, that was uncertain. Nearby two other thread rollers produced by another manufacturer, with a different design, were vibrating and shaking as if the machines might fly apart. Barnhardt shouted again, “This make (of machine) doesn’t hold up well.” Jack and Chuck nodded in complete understanding!

Two nearby employees were kept hustling and well exercised by transferring the supply of steel rods to the inclined trays that fed the thread rollers. Their duties were that of automatons who had no control over the finished product except to bang it out at top speed.

On the machine directly in front of them Jack noticed the dial gauges to control the skewness of the dies, hence the accuracy of the thread, could not be read because of the thick coat of grime on the dial faces. He asked, “Do you ever change the angle of the dies to correct for

## The Inspection

error in pitch?”!

The reply, “No, we never change the settings!”

Jack pondered; this business is decidedly a far cry from ours all right!

One larger thread rolling machine was idle. Before making their exit Chuck examined it closely, noting in particular the setup required to install and align the dies.

It was a relief to the visitors to get out of such a work place - the noise, the smoke, the grime, and the unrelenting pressure of high production. To them the environment was grim, distressing and gloomy. In Jack’s mind such discouraging surroundings seemed to be reflected in the personality and manner of their host. Jack had a feeling of empathy for him and wished him better.

Barnhardt invited the visitors into his office, accessible through his receptionist’s office. Like the rest of the establishment, his office was Spartan, having a desk, a few files and a drawing board. Reaching into his files he said, “You’re interested in buying a thread rolling machine. I’ll show you what literature I have on the subject.”

He brought out several catalogs that referred to machines from two manufacturers. He described the similarities, the differences, the good and the questionable aspects of the machines. His experience was derived from high-speed operation. Barnhardt brought up the subject of competition in his own product line. He regarded his competitive position as desperate, “I have to sell our product for twenty five cents per pound, hardly above the cost of the raw material!”

The visitors shook their heads in a sympathetic gesture. Barnhardt had an extra catalog or two describing machines and offered them to his guests. Jack and Chuck gave their heartiest thanks for everything. Jack’s parting words were, “If you have an opportunity to visit us, we’ll be glad to give you a tour of our shop.”

The visitors emerged from one of the less inspiring workings of man into the wondrous workings of nature. The broad expanse of sky and the freshness of the air welcomed them. Jack emitted a perceptible sigh and then asked Chuck, “Can you imagine having to work in a place like that?”

His reply, “A terrible, terrible environment - and no safety precautions at all.”

## One September Evening

J.C. Evans

February 2,, 1989

There was a time when high water in Honeoye Lake spurred the year-round homeowners and seasonal cottage dwellers on its shores to action. It was a time before politics and government bureaucracy intervened. Action took the form of a volunteer organization of property owners calling themselves the Honeoye Lake Watershed Association. For a number of years the association hired a contractor in late September or early October to excavate the gravel deposited by Mill Creek into the Honeoye Outlet watercourse. The gravel effectively dammed the Outlet and backed up the water, raising the lake located upstream a half mile away.

Both of these streams and their junction were within the boundaries of our land. When the gravel was scooped up, we, along with other opportunists, drew it away for private roads, driveways, parking lots, etc. Of course, one had to own, rent, or borrow a dump truck for such an occasion. We had one within the family and Walt Cratsley, a local resident, was hired to drive it. My own time was needed to earn a living elsewhere, although it was my responsibility to deliver the truck to Honeoye and return it to my in-law's contracting site. The tale that follows is one of an odd adventure on a Sunday evening in late September, circa 1958, when the truck was to be returned to its work place in Sonyea from Honeoye, a distance of about 32 miles.

It had been a sparkling clear September Sunday afternoon. The sun was sinking toward the western horizon behind us as Dad and I came down the highway into the village with him at the wheel of his vehicle and me as a passenger. He asked, "Where do you think the truck is parked?"

"Well, it should be on our private road that leads up to the lake, or perhaps behind the gas station on the other side of the creek."

Dad slowed down as we approached our property located on the right side of the highway, surrounding the liquor store and extending to the opposite side of the Honeoye Outlet. Our road, "Sunrise Lane" came into view, also the dump truck parked in the middle of it, facing south about 25 yards off the street.

"There it is," I exclaimed and Dad swung the car into park behind the rear of the truck.

One September Evening

“The key is supposed to be under the floor mat,” I said as I unlatched the car door and made my way to the truck cab.

The key was where Walt said it would be. I jumped into the cab, inserted the key, and turned on the ignition. My eyes scanned the gauges on the dash. Damn! The gas gauge was barely off the empty mark. Obviously Walt had not put any gas in the truck since I delivered it the Tuesday before. Dad was standing there beside the cab observing my concerned demeanor. Disgusted, I said, “Practically, out of gas!! Need a few gallons to get to Sonyea.”

Dad replied, “I’ll follow you until you can gas up.”

We soon discovered that the two service stations in Honeoye had closed. On Sunday evening in late September, Honeoye was commercially non-existent. I parked for a moment on the shoulder of the highway.

“We’ll have to go on to Hemlock. Maybe there will be a station open over there,” I yelled from the truck cab toward Father in his vehicle as he pulled along side.

“Okay, I’ll follow you,” was his reply.

Up and down the hills we journeyed the five miles to Hemlock. Another disappointment, both service stations in the village were closed.

“Have to go on to Livonia, I guess.”

Again, “I’ll follow you,” was the reply.

Another five miles passed as the gas guzzling truck kept pulling down the fuel indicator over the empty mark. No success in Livonia either, and it was on again another two or three miles to Lakeville.....and no luck at Lakeville!

“Well, Dad, if you follow me farther, it’s out of your way getting back home.”

“I’ll follow,” he said.

Matters were very risky now. I had a sinking feeling that the truck was not going to make it to Geneseo, another eight miles. Night had descended upon us and the thought of an emergency parking on the narrow shoulder of the highway in total darkness for an indeterminate amount of time was frightening. Nevertheless, we proceeded on our way with my scrutinizing every farmer’s driveway and outbuilding to see if the owner had a gas pump just in case the truck stalled a little farther down the road. I threw in the clutch and coasted down every hill, even those of a slight grade, which slowed our progress but hopefully conserved fuel. By now, the gas gauge was registering empty. I was tense as if some cloud of disaster was lurking nearby. My spirits climbed a little as the streetlights of Geneseo came into view. Their glow was so much more significant than usual.

One September Evening

I let the truck coast slowly down the slight slope to the main street, the village center. The town was asleep, not a human in sight. No service stations were visible. We parked our vehicles and stepped upon the sidewalk. My first impulse was to find a telephone and a directory to call a service station but on second thought all evidence suggested that no station was open.

At that moment I noticed farther down the street the village cop checking the local shops' doors. He was working his way toward us. I proceeded in his direction, approaching him as he turned toward me after trying the door of one of a long row of shops.

"Sir, do you know where I could find a service station open?"

"None open now, but I can give you a phone number to call. The owner will probably take care of you."

With that he reached in his jacket for a small notebook and read off a phone number. He also pointed out a public telephone attached to a nearby building. Luckily, the service station owner was home and was willing to open his station, giving me instructions to its location about half a mile away. The station was down hill to Route 63 to the west of the State University.

The owner arrived about a minute after our two vehicles. Although it was not required of me to fill the tank on the truck, I was so relieved and thankful for being rescued, as well as perceiving a sense of obligation to the rescuer that I instructed him to pump in twenty gallons of fuel; the cost was about seven dollars back at that time. I gave him ten dollars and told him to keep the change.

I bade farewell to Dad as we parted, he to Rochester and I to Sonyea. I was relaxed now, the truck seemed to leap forward as I pressed a heavy foot on the gas pedal whether the grade was uphill or down. I passed through Mt. Morris and sped on to Sonyea, to the contracting site where the truck had its temporary home.

Madlyn's Studebaker Land Cruiser was right where I had left it a few days before. I parked the truck alongside. The Studebaker appeared so welcoming - no more noisy, thumping truck, but a comfortable ride home in a rather luxurious passenger car. I seldom drove it; it was Madlyn's, given to her by her father, but she let me take it to facilitate the project in Honeoye.

I retraced my route toward Geneseo passing through a sleeping Mt. Morris without a worry in the world. About halfway to Geneseo a casual inspection of the dashboard showed the fuel gauge pointer to the extreme right side of the meter face, which in my own vehicle indicated a full tank. Suddenly, I recognized that the pointer coincided with the letter E, not F!



One September Evening

Wow! I was in a state of shock. I had driven this car to Sonyea believing the fuel tank was full! How many miles had I gone with this erroneous assumption? What a predicament! I realized that I was in more trouble now, than an hour ago with the truck; I was alone, deeper into the night and running out of gas again. I could visualize barely enough fuel to wet the bottom of the tank. Would I be able to reach Geneseo again? I kept going, but at a slower pace, and although the terrain was relatively flat, I coasted down whatever hills there were. The motor kept on running.

At the outskirts of Geneseo I racked my brain to recall the phone number of that local service station operator. It escaped me. I didn't write the number down since I couldn't imagine that a second rescue would be required. Furthermore, had I remembered the number, it would have been embarrassing to rouse this fellow again. I just kept going on toward Avon, another nine miles. It was back to spotting farms with gas pumps. The expectation of the motor starting to skip or miss haunted me. Very few cars were on the road. The prospect of finding fuel in Avon seemed slim. Miraculously, the Land Cruiser cruised into Avon and I made the right turn onto Routes 5 & U.S. 20. No service stations were open.

I knew the New York State Police had a district station just beyond Avon going east. I detected its glaring lights from a distance. The building was brilliantly illuminated, both inside and out. As I parked at the curb I noticed the front door was wide open. My morale was definitely uplifted as I thought these troopers could certainly provide some kind of aid. I strode up the walkway noting that no official state vehicles or any others occupied the parking lot. On entering, I noted that the main hallway stretched past several offices on both sides of the aisle, the offices were all lit up, their doors were open and not a soul was seen in the building. It appeared that anyone could have walked off with the furnishings or anything else of value; it was an absolutely weird circumstance. It reminded me of a strange story of a full rigged four masted sailing vessel that was found at sea nearly a century earlier under full sail with no human inhabitants. I retreated to the car baffled by the mystery of no occupants in a wide-open building.

I was aware that the intersection of 5 & U.S.20 with Route 15 at East Avon had three of its four corners occupied by service stations. The intersection was about two miles ahead and rather than wait for some state police car to appear on the scene, I set off again toward East Avon with the dismal prospect of not reaching there before the gas ran out, and also of discovering all the stations closed. By the experiences of the night up to that point, my hopes for finding one of these stations open was nil.

It was now about eleven o'clock on this eventful and anxious evening. On approaching the intersection an amazing sight emerged. All three service

## One September Evening

stations were lit up and appeared in operation! This was as uncanny as my experiences leading up to it.

At the intersection I chose the station on my left since I was to turn left onto Route 15 north. The young operator was quick to inquire as to my need.

“Fill ‘er up,” I said. “And by the way, why are all these gas stations open?”

“We’re having a gas war here,” was his reply.

In my revived optimism for travel, I mused that competition has other rewards than the price or quality of the goods.

The last twenty miles seemed thankfully mundane! I reflected on the incidents and circumstances of the evening. How odd the chain of events! The thought occurred, would I again, at some future time have the novel opportunity to risk running out of gas twice on the same night?!

## The Railroad

J.C. Evans

Dec 1986

Bruce had brought a flashlight. As we stepped along the railroad ties beside the freight platform, he flashed the light on and off directing the beam underneath.

“There she is!” he exclaimed as if he had discovered a cache of gold.

It was decidedly of that hue. My boyish eyes beheld a bright yellow three-wheeled vehicle, a two-man handcar, built, I suppose, for a pair of section hands i.e. track workers. Two of the wheels appeared to be on a common axle to span between the rails. The third wheel was in line with one of the other two, between which were two small seats straddling the upright pump lever with two sets of handles, one for each traveler. It was apparent that the twosome aboard this vehicle rode directly above one of the track rails.

A chain had been passed through one of the wheels and around a pillar that supported the platform. A big brass padlock completed the loop at the chain ends but the padlock was left open. Old Bill Maliber, a railroad carpenter whose mode of travel was by handcar, had not snapped the lock closed. Perhaps he had no key. Perhaps he had abundant confidence in the murky obscurity of the hiding place. Perhaps he thought that railroad property was inviolable, unconditionally safe from all molestation. If that were the case he did not reckon with the exploratory spirit of youth. To Bruce and me, the unshackled handcar was an invitation to adventure. Bruce exclaimed, “Let’s get this thing on the tracks and try it out!” and with that remark we hauled and pulled that three-wheeled oddball vehicle onto the tracks. It must have been a formidable task for old Bill to have wrestled that machine onto the rails alone!

My physical instinct assumed correctly that the third wheel had to trail the two located on the common axle, else the third wheel would slip off the rail. A short trial run in both directions soon substantiated that assumption. Even with the third wheel as a follower, it baffled me as to why it hung on the rail. Having solved some of its mysteries, we set off down the track in the dark of night. As a two-person vehicle propelled by human muscle, each of us pulled the big lever, the pump, towards him and let the other pull it back. The action was a little like rowing a boat. There were two or three rail switches that had to be negotiated by lifting the wheels one at a time before we reached the straightaway. Naturally, Bruce and I were itching to find out how fast we could make this machine go. Youth and speed are synonymous! As we pumped faster and faster, the steel wheels caressing the rails sung a rasping low whistle joined by the clackety clack of the wheels jumping the rail joints. Old Bill would have been envious of the velocity we attained, whatever it was. The blackness of the night augmented the sensation of speed. We were flying down the tracks into the ubiquitous darkness. The

## Railroad

night air swished around us. The strange dark outlines of the near landscape sped past. Only the stars stood still. To Bruce and me this handcar adventure was more exciting than a visit to an amusement park, and much more appealing to one's ego since we were in control!

The railroad loomed large in my boyhood experience. Ah, the railroad, what memories, what images, what nostalgia springs forth!

To my grandfather the railroad was the key to life itself. In his seventy years between 1860 and 1930 he saw the great development of American railroads as well as their decline. As a farm boy south of Buffalo, a career in railroading must have been as beckoning as one in astronautics might seem to a youth today. Years of educational preparation were not required, only the desire to start as a fireman or a brakeman. Grandpa chose the fireman entree on the Grand Trunk Railroad between Niagara Falls and St. Thomas, Ontario about 1880. For a short time he and his bride, Emma, lived in St. Thomas. Sometime in the decade of the eighties he recognized an employment opportunity in the construction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad between Buffalo and New York. Joining a construction crew as a steam shovel operator, he dug the cuts and provided the fills for the roadbed. Where the main line of the Lehigh crossed the Genesee, he unearthed various Indian relics, arrowheads, and Indian beads, some of which I possess today.

Upon completion of the main line and the branch line crossing from Rochester to Hemlock at Rochester Junction, Grandpa's experience as a fireman and steam shovel operator apparently qualified him to be a locomotive engineer. He drove locomotives for more than forty years, much of his career between Buffalo and Sayre, Pennsylvania on the Lehigh main line. I can picture him now in his two-piece blue denim overalls, wearing heavy leather gloves with large stiff black cuffs, and his striped denim cap with the long visor. As he sat in the driver's seat of the locomotive cab, his left hand grasped the throttle, his right arm rested on the windowsill of the cab, ready at any instant to reach for the air valve to apply the brakes.

Between Batavia and Buffalo the Lehigh tracks were level and as straight as a stretched string. The New York Central tracks lay parallel to the north about a third of a mile away. It was over the Central tracks in that stretch that a passenger locomotive, No. 999 in the second decade of the century, claimed a speed record of 118 miles per hour. Grandfather opined that such a record was a publicity stunt. He proceeded at every opportunity to race No. 999, or any other New York Central train that he spotted running parallel on the Central tracks.

My Uncle Ansel gave me the bare threads of a tale relating to one roaring ride his father 'engineered' between Sayre and Buffalo. To provide the

following, fully detailed story, I have called upon my imagination and familiarity with the leading character and his railroad. I am certain of only one thing-the conclusion of the run.

## II

It was springtime circa 1915. Number 11 from New York was an hour and a half late at Sayre, Pa. Grandfather, together with Bill, the relieving fireman, climbed into the locomotive cab. Hasty greetings were exchanged with the departing engineer who remarked that a hotbox, that is; an overheated bearing on a freight train up ahead between Easton and Wilkes-Barre had caused the delay.

Dawn had given way to daylight as Number 11 pulled out of the Sayre yards for Buffalo, 210 miles distant. The locomotive huffed and puffed upgrade along the Cayuta Creek for the first thirty miles. Grandpa knew he was pulling a long train as the engine seemed to him to be crawling rather than surging forward. He reached for his pocket watch in the bib of his overalls at nearly every milepost to make a quick mental calculation of forward progress. He surmised he was more than holding his own, possibly making up a smidgen of lost time.

High above Seneca Lake to the west, the tracks leveled. From the driver's seat Grandpa did not take in the expansive, scenic view of Seneca Lake and the surrounding broad green valley. His eyes were directed straight ahead down the tracks that seemed to converge off on the horizon like a distant destiny that was his, day in and day out. His ears were tuned to the increasing rumble and roar as the train gathered speed.

Back in the dining car, a matron with her eleven-year-old daughter was admiring the scenery while breakfasting. The quickening speed of the train transformed the gentle sway of the car to a rapid sideways bounce. The ringlet waves in a full coffee cup spilled over into the saucer at the slightest curve in the tracks. The sideways lateral bounce increased in tempo and a rattle burst forth as some structural member of the Pullman vibrated in tune at the higher frequency. The daughter voiced alarm, "Mom, aren't we going awfully fast? See how fast those telegraph poles are going by!"

"It's all right, dear. The train's late and the engineer is trying to make up lost time. Now, eat your cereal."

The waiters with their trays were putting forth an extra effort to keep an even keel. They gained some measure of balance and security by lowering the tray to waist level and grasping it with both hands. One of them was overheard serving a patron, "Man, this train is really movin' now, suh!"

The tracks dipped down toward Geneva twenty miles distant. Grandpa

eased up on the throttle. His train was roarin' now and concern for safety had to prevail. With some reluctance he reached for the airbrake control and applied the brakes sparingly as #11 thundered through Romulus and Willard toward Geneva. The rather sharp curve before the valley floor was taken at about 75 miles per hour, considerably above the speed for which the rails were banked. As #11 came to a grinding halt at the Geneva station, Grandpa had gained 30 minutes but was still an hour behind schedule.

Thrusting his head out of the cab window, Grandpa peered back along the train to observe the departing passengers, the baggage and mail transfer. His eye caught sight of the passenger conductor running forward. At shouting distance, the conductor bellowed,

"KAAAY-RIST, John, you threw half the passengers into the aisle on that last curve! Don't you know that an officials' car is hooked onto us with some high muckety-mucks aboard?"

Nobody had revealed that situation to Grandpa. He wasn't aware that some vice presidents or other officers of the road could be aboard their special car at the end of the train! He bit his lower lip and yelled back defiantly,

"Gus, they know as well as you that this train is supposed to run on schedule. Now prod those baggage men. Let's get this train underway."

"John, one other thing, the dispatcher here says he's wiring ahead to hold BJ4 at Manchester."

Grandpa nodded approval and withdrew from the cab window. BJ4 was a daily freight made up at Manchester for its run to Suspension Bridge (Niagara Falls). This slower freight train, once departed ahead of #11 would dampen hopes of making up time.

Number eleven sped through Clifton Springs and onto Manchester. The semaphore array on the approach to the Manchester yards signaled a clear track. Grandpa shouted to the fireman to verify the signal.

"It's the highball, John," yelled the fireman. (The expression "high ball" was used by the railroads as part of their signaling system. The signal consisted of a large white sphere suspended from a yard arm. The sphere could be raised and lowered. When it was raised to its high position it indicated a clear track ahead, hence, the expression, high ball, meaning to let her go.)

Grandpa pulled back the throttle a few notches. Up ahead in the yards a couple of freight handlers were about to cross the tracks but prudently changed their minds stepping back a couple of paces. The wind created by the onrushing locomotive practically knocked them off their pins. The roar of steam and of steel on steel was deafening to their ears. BJ4 was poised for its journey with steam up on a siding as #11 thundered past.

Back in the passenger cars, Gus ambled through toward the rear of the train, checking passenger tickets. He wore that matter-of-fact, impersonal expression that was characteristic of most rail conductors. Perhaps, he was a little extra impersonal because his thoughts were of the officials in that last car. Dare he enter their car? Should he show his face and ask if he might be of special service? Although he entertained the idea, it was frightening to him. Association with the high and mighty was not his cup of tea and then this high-speed run with the jostling of the passengers; the officials might take a dim view of this! At the last Pullman before the officials' car, Gus screwed up his courage and decided to enter the lion's den.

Gus opened the door cautiously and forced a smile as his gaze cast upon three officials of the railroad. They were in their shirtsleeves gathered around a worktable halfway to the rear of the car which was considerably shorter than a full sized Pullman. The table was cluttered with business papers. Two of the trio were facing Gus. Mustering all of his self-confidence, Gus greeted the occupants,

"Good morning, gentlemen. Is there anything I can do for you?"

The more senior appearing official facing Gus spoke up,

"Is there any chance of getting us to Buffalo on time?"

The query, although logical enough to executives in a hurry, surprised and baffled Gus. He was taken aback and having no immediate answer, fumbled for his pocket watch and then regaining some composure offered, "Well, sir, it may be possible. We've made up quite a bit of time. The run from the Junction to Buffalo is a fast one, you know."

"Who is the engineer today?"

"It's John Covey, sir - been with the Road since its beginning."

"He seems to be giving us his best."

"Yes, sir, and I'll see what I can do."

With that, Gus turned to make his exit and glanced at the large dial of the speedometer, one of the essential pieces of equipment in the officials' car. The speedometer indicated 77 miles per hour.

At Mendon, Grandpa slowed a little for the "5" curve. The passengers slid in their seats, first to the right and then to the left. Rochester Junction was only a couple of miles ahead. Grandpa reached for his watch again. He concluded that #11 would be 35 minutes late at the Junction. Fifty-five minutes of lost time had been won!

At the Junction, water had to be taken on in the tender. While the fireman was handling this chore Grandpa marched around the engine with his big oil can, lubricating the piston rods and various moving parts for that last 70-mile sally. He was part way up the climb into the cab when he heard the air signal, two long beeps, from the conductor authorizing departure. Bill had

completed his task of taking on water and was shoveling coal into the firebox. He turned to Grandpa entering the cab,

“What’s got into Gus?! He’s in a hurry now!” Grandpa smiled, “That son of a gun”, he said, and stepped up into the driver’s seat, yanked the throttle back a little too far. The surge of steam sent the locomotive drivers spinning on the rails as if the rails were ribbons of ice. Grandpa was quick to shove the throttle back to its off position and then to pull back gradually reaching with his right hand for the valve releasing sand onto the rails. The drive wheels found their traction and #11 moved out on its last and climactic run of the day.

Between the Junction and Batavia, Grandpa reached for his pocket watch every few miles and observed the mileposts. The luxury of a speedometer was for the officials only. By his calculations, he was traveling between 65 and 90 miles per hour according to track conditions. Number Eleven sped into Batavia with Grandpa holding down the whistle cord. The cross streets of the city streaked past in rapid succession. Passengers on board for Batavia could well have doubted whether the train was capable of coming to a stop at the depot. Gus struggled to keep his balance as he passed through the coaches and Pullman cars calling out “BA-TAYV-YA — —“BA-TAYV-YA”. At the last moment Grandpa gave a powerful twist to the air brake valve. The brake shoes slammed against the car wheel rims with sparks a flying. The passenger cars clattered and shuddered. The passengers skittered forward in their seats. Grandpa eased up on the air brakes just in time to bring the train to a smooth stop without a jolt. He reached into his overalls bib for his watch: 9:26. Holding his watch in his right hand Grandpa took his usual leaning position facing rearward, his head out the cab window. Baggage came pouring out of the baggage car. Gus was in the background assisting departing passengers as they stepped to ground level. Fireman Bill uncorked a thermos bottle, took a few draughts of the contents as he sat momentarily on the bench to his side of the cab. Then, he sprang up, began stoking coal into the firebox to get a head start on the engine’s voracious appetite in the next forty miles.

Gus shouted, “ALL A-BOARD!” and herded the passengers for Buffalo onto the train. Gus recognized the last in line as a frequent boarding Batavia passenger and imparted to him, “You’ll have a fast ride today!” Gus scooped up from the ground the portable step stool, climbed aboard and pulled the signal cord for departure. Grandpa glanced at his watch: 9:32 and exhibited a slight smile of satisfaction.

Grandpa didn’t spin his wheels this time. He released sand on the rails, coaxed the train to accelerate rapidly, inching the throttle bit by bit to its last notch of travel. Ahead, the track laid level and straight as an arrow to the



west, to Buffalo. Back in the officials' car the speedometer needle crept upward ninety, then ninety-five, a hundred, a hundred and five, a hundred and ten, and leveled out at a hundred and fourteen miles per hour. The officialdom glanced at one another in awe. Grandpa and his train were in low level flight!

At that speed the engine's appetite for coal was insatiable. Bill poured on the coal as fast as a skilled fireman could shovel. His circuit of movement from coal in the tender to the firebox of the locomotive was a kind of dazzling ballet. The economy of his movements, their precision and rapidity were a feat to behold. Scooping the coal from the tender, wheeling around through half a turn, gliding two steps toward the boiler and landing his left foot on the air valve pedal, the firebox doors went flying open. His forward swing of the coal scoop was timed perfectly to alight on the threshold of the firebox door a split second after the opening. The coal catapulted into the blazing inferno. Springing backward with half a full turn of his body he advanced to thrust the shovel into the heap of coal again, the whole cycle occurring in about seven seconds. The musical accompaniment was a cacophony of roar, raffle, and clatter punctuated by Grandpa's sounding the whistle on the approach to highway crossings: two long blasts, a short toot followed by another long blast.

Up ahead and to the south of the tracks, farmer Herb Hoffman heard the train's whistle at the crossing a mile to the east. He was piloting a more rudimentary machine, a double moldboard plow pulled by a three-horse team. He decided it was an appropriate time to pause, give the horses a rest and watch the train go by. He folded the reins over the bar between the plow handles. Within seconds the train whistle sounded for the nearby crossing. That train must be whistling in more ways than one to be here so soon, he conjectured. He turned toward the crossing. The locomotive shot across the roadway like a charging bull. The drive wheels and connecting rods were a fuzzy blur rocketing westward. The engine's smoke streamed back over the passenger cars as if it were clinging to them. "That train must be doing ninety miles per hour or my name isn't Herb Hoffman," he said to himself. It was ninety and then some.

As #11 conquered the remaining miles, Grandpa in the driver's seat was as a king on his throne, an autocrat in control of his fiefdom. His subjects were all behind him - enjoying the ride! He wore an expression of determination mixed with enthusiasm, stern but with a barely perceptible smile showing through. Now and then, he interrupted his gaze down the track with a glance to the north to see if he were overtaking a passenger train on the Central tracks. But, alas, the only train heading west he spotted was a freight, and at the speed of his train, Grandpa could not discern whether the

freight was moving or not.

Slowing down on the approach to the Buffalo yards, Grandpa examined his watch again. It was 9:57 a.m.; they were due in at 10 o'clock and had three minutes to make it! He reached for the cord to set the locomotive bell into its slow rhythmic dong, dong and turned toward Bill, who had only ceased heaving in the coal moments before.

"Bill, what do you know, it looks as if we will be on time!"

Bill hadn't caught his breath yet, managed a grin of approval,

"John, you're a speed demon!"

"Bill, you're the world's best fireman!"

#11 eased into the Buffalo terminal and came to a halt. Grandpa climbed down out of the cab with the big oilcan and proceeded, religiously, to squirt oil in all the locomotive's moving parts. Although he stood six feet in height he appeared tiny and obscure beside the locomotive.

The passengers commenced filing past into the station. Some of them always paused a moment to pay tribute to that behemoth of the rails, that magnificent iron horse that pulled them to their destination. They admired the massive elegance of it all, the coal black locomotive with its contrasting nickel plated whistle, bell, cylinder heads, and hand rails — a decorated black monster on wheels. Grandpa's mind was not totally on his lubricating chore. He was apprehensive concerning the reaction of any company officials who had ridden in their special car at the end of the train. They would have good reason to be critical of the morning run, accomplished at speeds far above normal and outside the limits for certain stretches of the roadbed. His back was turned toward the passenger aisle as he proceeded with his oiling routine. Suddenly, a hand landed forcibly between his shoulder blades with a simultaneous jubilant outburst,

"John, that was some ride. I'll never forget it. We have an important meeting this morning at 10:30. You saved the day!"

Grandpa turned to recognize the president of the railroad, all smiles and exhilaration. Grandpa's face lit up responding,

"Thank you, thank you, sir," and returned to his religious ritual. Yes, one might say, in a broader sense, the railroad was my grandfather's religion.

### III

Near the end of World War I, Grandpa took the engineer's position at Hemlock at the end of its branch line from Rochester. I was a few months old. My father was in the Army in Spartanburg, South Carolina. My mother and I came along with her parents. It must have been a drastic change for mother to have been uprooted from the city of Buffalo and thrust into a

## Railroad

small village that had none of the conveniences or culture of city living — no electricity, no public water, no cinema, no city acquaintances. One of my earliest memories is of a kerosene lamp at a low flame burning all night long in the bedroom. One of the first sentences spoken by me was, “Go to Livonia to see the lights!”. Livonia had electric power and streetlights which held a fascination for me. I was nearly seven years old when electric power came to Hemlock.

Grandpa was a speed demon on the highway as well as on the rails. I recall riding with him in his 1928 Durant when he drove it for mile after mile as fast as it would go. However, he never had any mishaps or accidents because of speed. It was ironical that his only accident occurred while starting from a standstill in his 1922 Chevy at a complex street corner in Rochester. In this instance, Grandpa had no semaphore (traffic light) to indicate a clear track! Had the accident occurred in the era of safety glass and seat belts, injuries would have been minor. But, in 1924, Grandma’s head shattered the windshield. Her kneecap was fractured beyond repair upon crashing into the dashboard. She was crippled for the rest of her life! This injury, together with my father’s duty away from home for long periods in the railway mail branch of the postal service, must have influenced my parents to stay on with Grandma and Grandpa. This was fortunate for me, because I realize I would have missed elsewhere, many of the impressive and rich experiences related to the railroad and a rural community.

The impact of the railroad on the village was immense by any comparison. Employment on the American railroads reached a maximum in the nineteen twenties. Residing in our village was every sort of rail employee — the engineer, the fireman, the baggage man, the conductor, the brakeman, the hostler, the track section hands, three in all, the station master and the station master’s assistant, and we cannot overlook Bill Maliber, railroad carpenter who worked in Buffalo and came home weekends via the handcar from Rochester Junction. There was also the “stage” operator who drove a model T Ford touring car that delivered the mail from the rail station to the post office, and also the mail and any passengers to the next village east, Honeoye.

One of the earliest recollections I have of the railroad came about in a curious way. My grandmother must have been performing a spring housecleaning and requested Grandpa to clean the living room and dining room carpets. One pleasant spring evening he rolled up the carpets, placed them across the front and rear seats of his 1922 Chevrolet touring car along with me and drove down beside the railroad tracks past the station where the train was berthed for the night. Grandpa and the hostler spread out the carpets on the grass opposite the locomotive. A long rubber hose with a

diameter somewhat larger than that of a household vacuum cleaner was connected to the steam coupling at the rear of the locomotive tender. Live steam was then blown through the carpets. This mode of carpet cleaning must have been one of the fringe benefits of railroading, especially if you were the engineer or fireman! To me, as a preschooler, the long hose with hot roaring steam was so weird and frightening that I wanted to go home immediately.

The hostler used the same hose, or one like it, to connect to a steam operated reciprocating water pump housed in a small shed beside the tracks. Nearby was the familiar railroad water tower with the wood staved cylindrical vat atop a four column supporting structure. The intake pipe to the pump was buried in a steep embankment sloping down to the impounded waters of Hemlock Creek. A concrete faced dam formed a long, narrow curving pond from four to five feet in depth. This pond was the arena where, along with my schoolboy chums, we ice skated and played hockey in winter and boated and fished in summer. The dam, also a means of crossing the creek, provided a clandestine route into the fairgrounds, and we avoided paying the admission charge. What kid would want to part with scarce money to pay admission? — better to sneak in and spend one's dimes and nickels on the amusements of the midway! The old swimmin' hole, however, was at another location on the railroad, at the trestle that bridged a small tributary of the Hemlock Creek, north of the Cadyville Road (now named Adams Road). To one side of the trestle the streambed had been excavated, probably at the time of the construction of the railroad. Although it could be assumed that the excavation filled in with silt during the prior forty years, the water was in the order of 3 or 4 feet in depth in the 1930's.

When a group of us kids would arrive at the swimmin' hole the water appeared quite clear, but in a few minutes it took on a chocolate cast, the mud ascending as the bathers waded in. The more daring of the club, however, would prefer to make their entry by jumping or diving off the trestle about 14 feet above the water. How the mud would roil as the jumper sank his feet six inches into the bottom goo! Not everyone dared to dive off the trestle. It required a very shallow dive bordering on a belly whacker else one's hands might become mired in the bottom!

A few of the boys who were hooked on cigarettes would sit on the trestle with their feet dangling down, puffing their smokes and sunning themselves. One day the three-man section gang (track workers) came down the track on their gasoline propelled little rail car. Pete Bartlotta, of Italian origin, was the gang foreman. He slowed down his vehicle as he approached the smokers and announced with a tremendous roar,

“You burna up da bridge. You hella guys. You-a-smoke. You getta off da

bridge.”

There was an instant scattering of the smokers. Some leaped into the water, others scampered off the trestle. It was plain that Pete didn't sanction smoking. It was also evident that he fulfilled his duty as a conservator of the railroad property.”

#### IV

Riding in the locomotive at any season always fascinated me. This adventure in midwinter was undoubtedly more exciting than at other times. Assume it's a cold, windy winter afternoon. School has been dismissed at 3:30 and the train leaves for Rochester Junction at 4:15 p.m. After checking in with Mother, I set off for the rail station due west into the swirling snow. At intervals the snow, driving against my face necessitates walking backwards into the wind. Visibility is down to about the distance across a baseball diamond. I can not make out any familiar objects and suspect I may be deviating from the path to the station — but, then, I catch a glimpse of the tank car on my right that's parked at the end of the main track and gravity feeds petroleum products to the Wemett Oil Company. The tank car is roughly half way to the station.

I veer to the right to keep close to the track so as not to lose my way. The snow obliterates the rails and tracks. Clunk! My right foot collides with a rail tie. I shift my course in this sea of snow toward the portside. In a minute or two, I make out the rear of the passenger coach, its black exterior more visible than the rail station along side. I break into a trot and endure the blast of snow on my face and in my eyes.

There is some abatement of wind and snow as I pass between the station and the two units of the rolling stock, the passenger and baggage cars. Up ahead I can barely discern a human figure beside the locomotive. Sure enough it's Grandpa readying the engine for its afternoon run. Approaching closer at a slower pace I hear the sound of hissing steam as if it is leaking or escaping from some small orifice. I hear the mechanical rhythmic thumping of the water injector pumping water into the boiler. I hear the metallic scrape of the coal scoop over the floor of the tender as the fireman scoops the coal to fire the boiler. Suddenly, the pressure relief (safety) valve on top of the boiler section of the locomotive opens with a roar sending up a plume of steam skyward that blends with the white background. The roar of escaping steam predominates over all the other sounds. Grandpa, busy at his task, doesn't notice me immediately. While glancing up at the rising steam column I note that the big numbers below the cab window are 1804. That's the number of our engine today. Grandpa now recognizes me and takes a

few steps in my direction.

“Hope you’re well bundled up for the trip today!” and with that he helps me place a foot on the first step up the ladder to the cab, it being about two feet off the ground and I yet to acquire adult proportions. Grandpa climbs up following me.

Up in the cab, the fireman, a jolly Teutonic fellow, calls me “Sonny” and pauses from his coal shoveling. He knocks off the coal dust from the longitudinally located seat (perhaps more aptly called a bench) at the left side of the cab where he and I will both sit, i.e. when he is not shoveling coal. My position is forward on the bench facing ahead with my feet hanging over. In back of me there is ample room for the fireman to sit facing inward. Grandpa is provided with a more elegant and comfortable seat facing forward on the opposite (or one might say starboard) side of the locomotive. The cab is “winterized” by having heavy canvas curtains, one at each side to close the gap between the cab and the coal tender.

Grandpa inspects various gauges: steam, air, and water. Before taking his seat he must shift the position of the slide valve mechanism atop the steam cylinders from neutral to forward. The mechanical system to accomplish this is of huge proportions. At the actuating end a gigantic lever protrudes up through the floor in front of the driver’s seat to the right along the cab wall. The lever extends upward five feet more or less and can be rotated through an arc of about 60 degrees from its rear (reverse) position through the center (neutral) to its front position (forward). For the engineer, shifting direction is a whopping physical effort. Grandpa squeezes the big lever with both hands to release the locking pawl and with feet well braced shoves the lever forward, steps back into his seat, releasing the air brakes. We are now ready and await the signal from the train conductor. Grandpa drapes his left hand over the throttle, another lever rotating in the horizontal plane attached to a vertical shaft close to the boiler at his left.

The crew, forward now, waits patiently for the conductor’s signal to depart. With his right hand, Grandpa reaches through his jacket and brings out his watch. It must be 4:15 as simultaneously the beep, beep sounds in the cab. Grandpa pulls the throttle back a small amount. The locomotive accelerates slowly, silently before exhaust steam is released up the stack with a blast – KERCHOOOF! followed by KERCHOOFS in decreasing intervals as the train picks up speed.

A little snow has sifted through the sliding window on my left. Straight ahead of me at arm’s length is a window about nine inches wide and perhaps two feet high. The view forward is cut off on the right by the main body of the locomotive, and today the visibility straight ahead appears to be little

more than the length of the engine. Now and then through the blowing snow I get a glimpse of the left extremity of the engine's cowcatcher. It's a good thing that this vehicle is on rails so that Grandpa doesn't have to steer the train on a day like today!

We chug along toward the "Y" where, on the return trip, the train will turn around, and back into the station. Going out we'll be taking the right branch of the "Y" curving to the north through a 90-degree bend. The first switch of the "Y" is open to the right and Grandpa slows to a crawl as we enter the sharp curve. The six drive wheels of the locomotive emit a squealing and grinding noise like six tormented pigs joined by a stone crusher. Just how two sets of three flanged wheels in a straight line manage to stay on a highly curved track is a mystery to me. Grandpa applies the brakes to let the brakeman throw the switch behind us to the left branch of the "Y", affording a clear track for backing in on the return trip.

We move ahead with more squealing and grinding to the switch joining us with the straight track to the north. We stop again as Grandpa waits for the brakeman to run forward along the train to throw the switch. I don't envy a brakeman's job today, braving the snowstorm, fumbling around in the snow to find the padlock, unlocking it in the bitter cold, throwing the switch, waiting for Grandpa to advance the train beyond the junction of the two tracks, throwing the switch back to its previous status, inserting and closing the padlock, climbing back aboard the train, his face and hands numb with cold.

KERCHOOF — KERCHOOF, KERCHOOF, at last we're on our way. Grandpa gives the engine more throttle now. At increased speed the engine begins swaying and bouncing. It seems incongruous to me that on straight, smooth rails the ride resembles one on a camel! I wonder how this machine stays on the track. Perhaps the track and the roadbed are not quite up to the standard for the main line. I overheard Grandpa in a discussion one time with one of his railroad brotherhood say that the rail was about 140 lb. (per yard) on the main line versus 110 lb. on the branch line. Despite its erratic motion right and left and up and down, engine 1804 clings to the rails.

As we pick up speed it is increasingly apparent that the locomotive cab is more like a sieve than an impregnable shield from the elements. A cold breeze is circulating and I can sense it particularly on my face. The left side of my body next to the steel outside wall of the cab is getting cold; my right side, a hand's breadth from the boiler is heating up. There must be a temperature difference of a hundred degrees across this little section of the cab! When Grandpa voiced concern for my being adequately dressed, he might as well have said, sufficiently insulated, as I needed the insulation from heat as well as cold!

We are slowing down now. The depot at Livonia Center must be just ahead somewhere. How Grandpa knows where he is in this snowstorm baffles me. It's almost as if he has a sixth sense. Grandpa is applying the brakes now. There is a chattering of the brake shoes against the steel tires of the drive wheels. The depot is on my side of the track and I look out to the left to spot it. Ah, there it is, hardly visible. As we pass by and come to a stop I see what appears to be a sizeable snowdrift off the northeast corner of the depot. I know before we reach Lima that snow will be drifted into several cuts where the track is four or five feet below grade. The mailbag from the Livonia Center Post Office is thrown aboard the baggage car and it's KERCHOOOF and more KERCHOOFS again. We rattle and sway down the track at a speed I estimate at forty-five miles per hour. In a few minutes we pass Murphy's muck. I only know this by the clunking sound as the locomotive traverses the rail switch for the siding where produce, mainly celery, is loaded into refrigerator cars in the fall of the year.

We are approaching the stretch of track where there may be drifts. WHAM! We just hit the first one. It feels as if a giant hand of nature has reached out to shove us in reverse. The train decelerates noticeably. The snow flies through the cab so thick I cannot see the window in front of me. Then, we burst through, the engine quickly regaining its forward momentum. In a few seconds it's WHAM again, a larger and longer drift. We decelerate more this time. The whirling snow inside the cab is so dense and of such duration that little piles of it accumulate on the cab floor. The fireman in back of me exclaims, "Sonny, this is a big one!" but then we burst through, an exhilarating sensation, that sudden change from deceleration to acceleration. It's a roller coaster in the flat!

Snow that lands on the boiler section inside the cab melts instantly, or you might say sublimates, rising as a steamy mist that quickly dissipates. We encounter one or two more snowdrifts after which the big Teutonic fellow takes up his fireman's duty. I lean backward to look around the end of the boiler to see Grandpa. He happens to glance over in my direction and gives me a big smile, knowing full well that I'm enjoying the ride.

I'm enjoying the ride except for the extremes of temperature right and left. By now I feel my left half is frozen and the right side of my body is roasted. If I could only average this temperature in some way, my travel would be quite agreeable. The thought occurs to me of turning around facing backward to soak up some heat on my left side and cool off on the right, but there would be no place for my legs except straight out onto the fireman's half of the bench. Forget that, I decide, I am resigned to endure these disparate conditions.

We are nearing Lima. I can sense a slight centrifugal force indicative of



the sweeping bend about a mile south of town. Closer in, Grandpa may be able to see the PINCO Insulator Works and its rail siding from his perch in the cab. The front entrance of PINCO faces the main highway across the state, Route 5 and US 20. We must be close to it. Grandpa lets loose the engine's whistle with a long series of toots. A motorist on the highway in this blizzard could be completely unaware of the rail crossing or the approaching train. We proceed slowly across the highway with whistle blaring and bell clanging. Grandpa doesn't let up on the whistle until all train cars have cleared the highway.

The stop at Lima is brief, just time enough to take on the mail and we chug on to Honeoye Falls. The track is raised above the level of the countryside and there are no drifts to slam into, how disappointing! We back into Honeoye Falls taking the right hand spur of the "Y". More mail is received but no passengers board; there will be the departing daily commuters on our return trip.

The snowfall is diminishing; darkness is descending as we leave the Falls behind and near the high trestle over Honeoye Creek. Grandpa has switched on the headlight and I can see the track ahead reaching out across the gulch with seeming nothingness below. I know the trestle is a sound piece of engineering construction but it presents me with eerie misgiving. Out on the trestle looking downward obliquely from the side window the track itself is out of view. We seem to be suspended in space! I'm reassured by the sway and clatter that the track is still beneath us; we're not falling into the ravine!

It's downhill now to Rochester Junction and the iron horse is in a resting mode as we glide toward the mainline in the valley. Grandpa applies the brakes as we approach the Junction and the threefold vertical array of semaphores on my side of the track. All three blades are horizontal barring our advance. We wait for the control tower to give us a clear track into the station. In a minute or two the lower of the three signals swings upward. The fireman, close in back of me announces to Grandpa, "Highball, it's the bottom board!" Grandpa releases the brakes, pulls the throttle and we clank and grind obliquely through several switches crossing the main line and arrive on the second track from the station on our left. The commuter train from Rochester will soon occupy the intervening track, the train that Grandpa and I will be aboard on the return trip. The fireman climbs down from the cab. Before making his exit Grandpa has to move the big shifting lever to the neutral position. Having dispensed with this, he asks me if I would rather go down the ladder after him so that he might help me but pride prevails!

"Grandpa, I can get down by myself!" and twirling halfway around I back down the ladder hanging onto the vertical rod-like railings to either

side. At the final step I loosen my grip on the railings permitting them to slide through my mittens as I drop to the ground. That was easy enough. (Getting back aboard from the ground is a different matter. My grip on the railings is insufficient to prevent my mittens from slipping downward as I try to pull my full weight upward to place a foot on the high first step.)

Down in the snow Grandpa plods forward and examines the front of the locomotive. The snow is piled up on the cowcatcher well above his height. Higher up the snow appears plastered in gobs and streaks right up to the headlight and above. From a distance the front end of the engine appears to have received an incomplete application of whitewash. The contrast of white on black is startling.

Far in the distance to the northwest a whistle sounds. "We better cross over to the station. Our train is coming", cautions Grandpa. We step lively over the rails where the Rochester train will soon come rumbling in. From the station side I can now see the headlight far down the track. It is dimmed intermittently by blowing snow. Closer and closer, the engine seems to grow in size. It's a black one-eyed monster, #1819, panting steam, wheezing, rumbling, making the earth tremble as it passes by and comes to a halt a little way down the track.

Glancing downward I recognize two of my footprints in the snow ahead of me. I must have stepped back instinctively in the immediate presence of the monster shaking the earth! Grandpa has held his ground, turns around and heads for the station with me trailing. There is no need to board our return train now. We have to await train #130 from Buffalo due in at any moment on the main line, on the opposite side of the station.

Inside the station it's cozy warm. Most of the train crew has formed a little circle just outside the stationmaster's quarters. Bob Cotton, the conductor, is jawboning Steve Farr, the baggage man. The former, at six foot two, towers over the latter by at least a foot. They appear like characters from the comic strip, Mutt and Jeff. Their rivalry, antagonism, and antics often evoke laughter. Their ideas on how to perform their train duties are not likely to coincide. Grandpa joins the group and I overhear Bob Cotton relaying information from the station master that #130 will be fifteen minutes late. Deep snow in Buffalo delayed the train's departure. I move away and take up a position to look out a window toward the main line tracks.

Grandpa has a daily domestic duty to perform in meeting train #130. It's a favor, a token of love, for Grandma; it's the delivery of one specially packaged newspaper, the Buffalo Evening News. The paper is placed aboard the baggage car in Buffalo and handed to Grandpa by the baggage man at the Junction. The Buffalo Evening News is Grandma's link to the days of

yesteryear, of life and times in Buffalo.

Outside, the illuminated switchman's tower across the main line tracks is the only visible object in the distance. Between the tower and the station, snow is blowing about but there seems to be no new snow falling. Close to the station the electric lights beneath the long canopy bordering the tracks cast their glow on the windswept concrete promenade and the small drifts to the east side of the canopy supporting posts.

Grandpa breaks away from the gathering of train crew members and passing near me says, "You may as well stay here where it's warm, be back shortly. Grandpa's on his way to collect the Buffalo Evening News."

I watch through the window as he takes a position where he estimates that the baggage car will come to a stop. The stationmaster's helper, who has been shoveling paths around the depot, is standing by with the high four-wheeled cart ready to pull up to the baggage car door. Train #130 rumbles in, well decorated, particularly at the lower levels with snow. Grandpa is close to his mark as the baggage door opens. The first act of the baggage man is to throw the wrapped up newspaper toward Grandpa. He grabs it with both gloved hands - good catch, Grandpa!

Grandpa wastes no time in coming back to the station waiting room. "We're running behind schedule, should get aboard our train," he says. As we approach engine #1819, I decide to run ahead. With one tremendous effort I jump up grasping the vertical handrails, squeezing them and pulling myself upward, placing my right foot on that high first step. Grandpa is amused. "Jack, you're just showing off!"

Up in the cab, engine #1819 looks exactly like #1804. In fact, any of these 1800 series locomotives all appear the same to me. I'm sure Grandpa knows them all individually, their small differences and peculiarities. Our fireman has the firebox well stoked and steam pressure up. We wait for baggage from #130 to be taken aboard. Train #130 glides out to the east on the main line. From my seat I watch the two red lamps on its last car disappear diagonally into the night.

Bob Cotton sings out, "ALL ABOO-ARD." In a moment more he signals the two long beeps and it's KERCHOOOF and more KERCHOOOFS. We are commencing the long uphill grade to the high trestle, a mile and a half of road bed carved out of the side hill. The engine buckles down to its task like an athlete, a long distance runner that huffs and pants but never loses his stride.

I lean backward and look over at Grandpa. In profile his gaze is forward, sitting motionless as for a portrait. He seems buried in thought. Perhaps he is reminiscing about digging out this very hillside forty years ago, operating a steam shovel ten or twelve hours a day, boarding at the Tinker farmhouse

just down the road past the trestle. I wonder what images pop up in his memory. I know upon completion of the railroad he at various times brought mother and her brothers to Hemlock Lake on weekend outings. Uncle George has told me of such excursions and the various hotels and cottages that lined the lake. All of them long vanished in the name of preserving the lake as a municipal water supply for Rochester. I wonder if Grandpa's memories of these local experiences had much to do with his decision to spend his later years on this rather tranquil branch line of the railroad. Anyway, I'm glad he did. Our train trip back to Hemlock continues.

Past the high trestle we take the near fork of the "Y" and go into Honeoye Falls, engine first. #1819 crunches, groans, and chatters to a stop. I'm on the side of the engine cab in order to observe the departing passengers, as they will pass between the engine and the depot, and then disperse in three directions beyond. To obtain as wide a view as possible, I press my nose against the cold windowpane. There they come, strung out in a column, about two dozen commuters; there's Doctor Allen, my dentist, with his briefcase. This must be one of the days he practices in Rochester, the other two and a half in Honeoye Falls. If it was summertime and this window was open I'd be tempted to yell a greeting to him!

Grandpa has to wrestle that giant lever into reverse, and after the train is back on the straightaway heading south, he must attack it again. This shifting exercise would be a good practice for a heavyweight wrestler.

The track, straight and close to level, stretches away to Lima to the south. Grandpa's zeal for punctuality is obvious now as he opens the throttle on #1819. The fireman jumps up to shovel more coal as we rumble and rattle at a speed of perhaps 60 miles per hour. The leeward side of the cab isn't quite as cold next to the window on my left going south. We roll into the Lima station as if we were aboard a first-rate train on the main line. The depot is on the opposite side of the train. I hear voices and noises associated with unloading baggage. Facing forward I can see that Highway 5 and US 20 has been plowed, piling up two ridges of snow across our path, the nearest one only a few feet ahead. Grandpa sounds the whistle for the highway crossing before we start to move. Not a vehicle is in sight. The storm must have discouraged all travelers.

I'm curious and excited now... what drifts will we encounter a couple of miles ahead? With the snowfall essentially over, the engine's headlight pierces the night air far down the track, possibly a quarter mile. I'll be able to see what drifting has occurred since we passed somewhat more than an hour ago. At a low level the snow is swirling in from the west. Far ahead it resembles a patchy ground fog shifting easterly over the terrain. Grandpa, of course, is in a hurry, not only to preserve his reputation for maintaining

schedules but he knows Grandma and Mom will have dinner waiting. Whatever drifts there are we're going to sock 'em hard. Now I can see a channel through the snow way in the distance. My guess is that the original drift was four feet deep and it's filled in about halfway. Our fireman, scooping coal, suddenly realizes that we're nearing the first drift, quickly leans his shovel against the boiler and scrambles to his seat. BAROOM, the deceleration on impact sends the fireman leaning into me. "Sorry, sonny, better stay put through these drifts." A blizzard reigns again in the cab. The snow smothers the light bulbs but in a twinkle we're in the clear, picking up speed. The next drift is visible. Then it's three more in succession — BAROOM, BAROOM, BAROOM. It's a good thing this engine is a steel monster to withstand this pounding.

The stop at Livonia Center is brief, just time enough to toss off the mailbag and perhaps a couple of cartons of express. The depot again is on the far side of the track. My view of Oscar Smith's bean mill, dimly illuminated by a distant street lamp, blends in with the panorama of the winter landscape.

KERCHOOOF, we're on the home stretch. Grandpa has only to blow the engine's whistle for two more grade crossings. If it were summertime and daylight perhaps he would let me pull the cord to blow for the crossings — what fun! Caught in the beam of the headlight is a small animal paddling through the snow across the track. It looks like a fox. The trestle at the swimmin' hole is just ahead now and Grandpa cuts loose with the whistle for Cadyville Road — who-oo, who-oo, who-oo, whooo. Mom and Grandma can hear that if they're listening; time to set the table for dinner.

We coast on past the second switch of the "Y" and come to a halt. We wait for the brakeman to throw the switch so that we can back around the sharp ninety-degree bend and on into the Hemlock depot. It's taking a long time for switching, must be the switch is clogged with snow or frozen up. I hear voices, must be other crewmembers are out there behind the train to help. At last we receive the signal to move in reverse, grind and squeal around the bend, and then into the station.

The fireman climbs down out of the cab followed by Grandpa and then me. Grandpa has his dinner pail and he gives the Buffalo Evening News to me. As we pass by the baggage car, the stationmaster's helper, Ken Coykendall, and the "stage" driver, Sam Boyd, are sorting over the mailbags and express packages on the high cart. The paperboys, one for the Times Union, the other for the Journal American are ripping open their bundles and shoving their newspapers into their canvas carrying bags for evening delivery. An elderly lady passenger is standing by expecting Sam to strap her suitcase on the rear carrier attached to his Model T Ford touring car

for transporting to Honeoye.

Grandpa leads the way along the path home, he with his lunch pail, I with the Buffalo newspaper in its brown wrapper. When we arrive home I'll carefully slip the newspaper out of its wrapper, twist the cover into a rope-like form and have a tug of war with Bonjo, my French bulldog. His official name is Bon Jour La Salle! Once his jaws close over that wrapper there is no letting loose. I have to be careful though; Mom doesn't appreciate my swinging Bonjo way up in the air around the dining room table!

## V

In the late twenties the Lehigh Valley Railroad as an economy measure replaced the steam passenger trains on the Rochester branch by gasoline-electric cars. These were two-car trains with the first car containing the engine compartment, or cab forward, followed by a baggage section, thence a small passenger compartment designated for smokers at the rear. The attached or second car was a passenger car for nonsmokers. There was no longer a need for: a fireman aboard, a hostler to be a caretaker during the layover at night, a water tower, or a coaling station at the end of the line.

In the engine compartment of the gasoline-electric cars the engineer was seated on the starboard at the very front of the car. He had a clear view forward through a large windshield and to his right through a side window. His field of vision to the left was cut off by the radiator housing which extended aft into the cab as far as the back of the engineer's seat. The forward window on the opposite side of the car was blocked to his view. The throttle at the engineer's left and the air brake valve forward to the right were placed in the same relative positions as in a steam locomotive. One thing was vastly different; the shifting was electrical through a large rotary switch on a vertical axis positioned ahead of and a little to the left of the engineer. The crank or lever for shifting terminated in a large wooden knob. This whole mechanism appeared similarly in trolley cars of that era.

The major space in the cab was consumed by the propulsion system (except for the electric motors in the rail trucks beneath the car.) In cars #24 and 26 two large Winton six cylinder engines standing upright about five feet were each coupled directly to electric generators of waist height. The engine - generator combinations were positioned crossways, one in front of the other with the generator on the same side of the car as the engineer, and, of course, in back of him. The engineer could climb aboard through a side door between his seat and the forward generator; otherwise, he would have to scramble over both generators from the rear door, opening from the baggage section of the car.

In gasoline-electric car #36 manufactured by Brill, the engines were larger and longer, positioned longitudinally with a walkway between them. The engine on the starboard had the generator forward; the engine on the port had the generator facing aft. In all of these cars my seat as a hitchhiker was atop the forward generator looking out over the head of Grandpa. I can testify that sitting on top of a large generator is hard on the buttocks! A pillow would have been a godsend. Car #36 was the most fun to ride in. Because of its greater power it could accelerate rapidly and attain speeds better than 70 miles per hour with seeming ease. Its engine compartment was very neat, clean and roomy. The whole interior of the cab was painted a brilliant green.

In September, 1930 Grandpa suffered a sudden and fatal heart attack. Two weeks later Grandma and Uncle George died within two hours of each other. My romance with the railroad could have ended there, but such was not to be. Grandpa's successor on the Rochester branch, hailing from nearby Manchester, knocked on our door seeking room and board. Mom was not exactly responsive to the request at first, but then, we had the room and bath right off the kitchen that Grandpa and Grandma had occupied. It was ideal for a railroader rising at 5:00 A.M., gulping some nourishment and hiking to the rail station just a comfortable walking distance away. Mom accepted the boarder at \$20 per week which was a tidy sum in 1930 when hamburger was twenty-five cents per pound!

This new engineer was Jacob York Baker, or more well known as J.Y. to his rail companions. I quickly recognized in him some of the same characteristics and qualities that Grandpa had. We became quite attached to each other and I continued to ride the rails with him intermittently. On Sundays he would invite me to accompany him to Manchester to visit his family consisting of his wife, and three daughters, all younger than I. J.Y.'s children came late in his life since he must have been in his mid-fifties at that time. He lived with us until he moved his family to Livonia during my senior year in high school.

In this period, every now and then, I would make the trip to Rochester by train to purchase a special item or perform some kind of errand. One such instance I remember in some detail. Anna Bush, a retired rural schoolteacher was very active in the Hemlock Grange. Mom, Dad, and I were all members of the Grange. (One could join at age 14.) To us the Grange was more of a social organization than a farmers' society promoting agricultural interests. Mrs. Bush was in charge of a committee for Grange participation in the Hemlock Fair and had decided on a float to be paraded down the racetrack in front of the grandstand. As a central figure on the float, I was chosen to be Uncle Sam and I needed the costume for this patriotic figure. Two trips to

the city were needed, one to rent the costume, the other to return it. Any train trip into Rochester required early rising and trotting off to the station to climb aboard the train for a 6:30 A.M. departure. The train arrived at the Court Street station in Rochester at 7:30, an hour and a half before stores or other commercial establishments opened. In this interval I had to bide my time in the depot, or walk the city streets. In the mid thirties I put in a bit of time as an amateur sidewalk superintendent assessing the construction progress of the Rundel Public Library diagonally across Court Street from the Lehigh depot. I saw the large granite blocks slowly accumulate into massive exterior walls. Up near the eaves the stone was engraved with many quotations of philosophers, poets, thinkers, two of which I can recall: "Education is more than preparation for life. It is life itself." and "The shadows will be behind you if you walk into the light."

My route to the rental store for Uncle Sam's costume went through Washington Park, a small plot of ground bordered on two sides by Court Street and Clinton Ave. South. In the park, destitute and wearisome victims of the Great Depression slept, sprawled out on the park benches and on the grass. They hadn't fully arisen to face another day of rejection and disappointment when I marched in. They were ragged, unshaven and ominous appearing. Had I recognized their number and condition before entering their domain I would have detoured around it. It seemed that all their eyes were upon me, scrutinizing me with envy. I sensed that I might be prey to be attacked, seized, robbed; that these derelicts' perception of Uncle Sam or me was not one of honor and respect! My pace quickened. I scanned the more distant landscape for sight of a patrolman; none was to be seen. My pace quickened some more! Fortunately, no calamitous incident occurred. This experience impressed upon me the extent of human despair, and the magnitude of the social upheaval accompanying the Great Depression of the thirties.

The return morning train to Hemlock left Rochester about 11:20 and arrived in Hemlock at 12:15 P.M. The Hemlock train crew, however, made two intervening trips from Rochester to Rochester Junction to meet mainline trains, the second of which was the Black Diamond's connection. The Black Diamond going east, train #10, was the first-rate daylight train from Buffalo to New York arriving at the Junction at 10:30 A.M. Its connection from Rochester departed at 10:00 o'clock. If my shopping task or other errand was brief enough I could be back at the Rochester depot in time to climb aboard the Diamond's connection to take an extra ride in car #36, the fast one. On this trip we charged down the rails through West Brighton, Henrietta and Rush with no stops. The rail ties flew under us as I peered out over J.Y.'s pinstriped cap. The train whizzed past the new River Campus of



the University of Rochester with me having no conception that I would be a student there within three years more or less. Another mile and we sped within a stone's throw of the house where later I would be residing for twenty years, seeing and hearing those same trains rumbling past.

In Rochester, while waiting for either the morning or late afternoon train to Hemlock, another pastime was movie viewing at the old Family Theater between Court Street and Main. The theater must have opened in mid-morning and shown the same flick continuously into the night. The daytime admission was ten cents! On entering the theater from the street on a bright sunny day, all that was visible to the maladapted eye was the movie screen. All else was inky blackness. First, I would have to find an aisle and then a seat by tactual means, perhaps stumbling against the end seats of an aisle. I could not discern the empty seats from the occupied. One time I sat down in a woman's lap. Fortunately, she didn't scream! After finding a seat and adapting to the dark, it was a weird and comical sight to observe others groping their way down the aisles, fumbling to locate their seats.

On one return trip from Rochester I witnessed an unusual incident in Lima. J.Y. had released the brakes and we started up with the horn blaring and bell tingling as we prepared to cross Highway 5 and U.S. 20, a road three lanes wide, constructed at a time when a center lane for passing was the acme of highway engineering. From my position sitting on the forward generator I could see to our left far down the highway to the east. J.Y.'s view in that direction was cut off by the cab's construction. As the train nosed out into the highway, I was startled to see a vehicle approaching at very high speed. Rather than applying the brakes the driver must have floored the accelerator pedal in an attempt to pass in front of us. The vehicle careened across the passing lane and oncoming traffic lane. Whether we would hit it or vice versa was decided while I held my breath, anticipating the worst. We made contact for a split second as the right hand side of the cowcatcher struck the rear bumper shoving the vehicle sufficiently to turn it back toward the center of the highway. The collision could not have been timed more precisely for the preservation of life and property since the automobile was on a path of destruction directly into a utility pole. J.Y. slammed on the brakes and the train crew, including me, jumped off to inspect the damage. A little paint was scratched off our cowcatcher and the automobile suffered a bent bumper and dented fender. The lone driver of the vehicle was in a state of shock, trembling, ghostlike, speechless. In a few minutes he regained his faculties, concluded he was still alive and saved by a miracle. We found out that he was a salesman from New York, obviously in a hurry.

## VI

The Hemlock Fair in the twenties was promoted as the World's Fair on the basis that there was no restriction geographically for entry as an exhibitor! Consequently, the whole gamut of farm animals from far away places was eligible for competition. Each September a couple of days before the Fair, a special freight train arrived in Hemlock loaded with prize dairy cows, pigs, sheep, goats, geese and other various fowl, on tour of all the county fairs. These freight trains were no doubt the longest that ever arrived in our little burg. I remember a locomotive known as "Mother Hubbard" pulled one of these trains. The engineer and fireman had separate cabs, the engineer's in the center of the locomotive, the fireman's at the rear adjoining the coal tender. Perhaps this design ensured that the engineer and fireman would not get into arguments, or play parlor games in transit! As the rail sidings filled up with cattle cars, the school kids flocked in to see all the animals disembark and then be herded or led to the fairgrounds. The spectacle was a little like a visit to the zoo or Noah's Ark.

There were other fauna, as well as flora, that have some connection in my mind to the railroad. Grandpa, in the era of the steam locomotive, when making his freight run in between the morning and late afternoon passenger trips, looked out from his high position hoping to spot puffballs in wooded areas along the track. If he saw one, he immediately stopped the train and proceeded to harvest it, the remaining train crew standing by patiently. Mother was delighted with the flavor of fried sliced puffball and mushrooms. In the fall of the year she prevailed upon me to accompany her to gather mushrooms in a large pasture lot near the rail "Y".

In the animal kingdom, Bruce and I in the spring of the year examined the cinders between the railroad ties searching for dish-like depressions shaped by mud turtles to deposit their eggs. We would scrape off the upper layer of cinders to find out whether the eggs had hatched.

One of our more daring exploits, in addition to trying out old Bill's three-wheeled handcar, occurred after the high railroad water tank, or tower, was no longer used. The cylindrical tank standing about thirty-five feet high was constructed of vertical wooden staves set atop four steel columns. An extremely flimsy steel ladder sloped upward to the eaves of the shallow conical roof. Near the edge of the roof was a square opening affording entrance to the interior of the tank. Originally a cover closed over the opening but after the water tower was abandoned the cover disappeared, perhaps blown off by the wind. With the cover gone pigeons had taken over.

Bruce convinced me that we ought to explore this oversized birdhouse at night to see how the birds roosted and to count the population. It was not of great import to me to know how many pigeons lived there but Bruce was my friend and I agreed to join in this mission.

On the appointed evening we arrived at the tower with flashlights. Because of the questionable condition of the ladder we agreed that only one of us should be supported by it at a time. Bruce climbed up cautiously, reached the top and reported to me on the ground that his flashlight revealed a catwalk suspended from the roof. He said he wanted to lower himself onto the catwalk but needed me to hold his flashlight since he required both hands for this maneuver. Up I came exhibiting my best monkey-like agility. Bruce was sitting on the rim of the entrance. I looked around him into the cavernous interior of the tank, sweeping the inside wall with my flashlight beam. The drop to the floor was at least fifteen feet with no water at the bottom. The catwalk consisted of eight planks of about 10-inch width arranged in the figure of an octagon concentric with the tank. Pigeons were squatted on the planks at various points amid their droppings.

“Bruce, are you sure you want to climb onto those planks? Looks dangerous to me. I can’t see myself crawling around in that mess. Let’s count the birds from here.”

Bruce took another look at the catwalk as both our flashlight beams scanned it. The birds blinked but seemed content to stay put.

“Well, let’s see if we can count ‘em from here,” he said.

I’ve forgotten how many pigeons there were but not the danger. If either of us had fallen to the floor of the tank we would have suffered serious injury and precipitated a horrendous rescue operation. Back on the ground Bruce concluded that this bird exploration was not one of his more brilliant ideas.

Bruce struck upon one idea that was truly ingenious. Clarence Wemett, his father, operated an oil distributorship and also the local hardware store. He had changed oil suppliers. The new supplier did not require the washing of fifty-gallon oil drums. Previously, the oil drums had been washed in a tub acquired by cutting an oval shaped 500-gallon fuel tank in half along its median plane. The tub thus formed had two flat ends with sides curving upward from a relatively flat central area. The opening at the tub’s edge was about five feet between the flat ends and four feet across the curved sides. The depth of the vessel was about two feet. Bruce asked me what I thought of launching this half a tank as a boat. My reaction was definitely positive and that we should try it out on the pond above the railroad dam.

Thereupon, I cut with a handsaw a pair of crude and clumsy oars from unplanned one inch lumber, purchased a set of oarlocks, and bolted two short

two-by-four blocks, one on either side at the gunwale close to one of the flat ends considered the stern end of the ship. The blocks were each drilled with a half-inch diameter vertical bore providing the swivel bearings for the oarlocks. Of course, the flat bow was exactly as flat as the stern, the antithesis of a streamlined hull. My recollection of how we managed to transport this tub, or more respectfully, "acclaimed watercraft", a half-mile or more to the testing basin is vague. It was too heavy for us to carry, but we could flip it end over end for short distances. Somehow, we moved it to the creek and found, that in the water, it was exceptionally stable as a platform. As a boat to row it was excellent for exercise but ridiculous for making forward progress! For seats we laid two boards inside athwart ships across the curved hull. The boards could be shoved fore and aft to accommodate two passengers, one at each end, or moved amidships for one boater centrally located.

The second floor of the Wemett hardware store was crammed with obsolete, odd items of merchandise no longer for sale. There we discovered a large, two colored industrial type umbrella that, when raised, completely covered our unique craft. We had protection from both sun and rain. One drizzly Saturday in April, I caught seventeen catfish in that tub while floating around beneath the umbrella.

Bruce and I lost interest in the tub, especially after we resurrected the hull of a boat abandoned by the City of Rochester. The last I knew of the tub it had returned to terra firma, actually buried in the ground by one of the villagers as a water hole for his pet duck.

## VII

The steam-powered train arrived at the Hemlock depot by backing in from the "Y" and was stationed for the night with the locomotive facing west. It was found desirable for the gasoline-electric trains to come in, cab forward facing east. This direction kept the engines' radiator to the leeward of the winter wind. The water in the radiator was maintained above freezing temperature at night by opening valves to establish a hot water heating circuit with a coal fired boiler in the baggage compartment. In addition, a set of steel overlapping plates about five feet long and eight inches wide was brought forth from a storage tray beneath the engine cab and applied over the exterior radiator surface. Two persons were required, one on each end of a plate to place them, one at a time over the radiator horizontally, building up from bottom to top. About the time J.Y. assumed the engineer's position I had grown to a size that I could help him lift the plates and secure them to the radiator. I took it upon myself during the winter months to be at the

depot every night at the train's arrival to give J.Y. a hand in buttoning up the engine's radiator. The most important equipment in dealing with this task was a pair of extra thick mittens. Those cold steel plates could numb one's hands in short order. Another duty that sent me to the depot to meet the evening train was a newspaper route. Larry Button, the stationmaster's son and I took on the delivery of the Rochester Times Union when I was eleven years old. Larry delivered on the south end of the village, and I on the north end. My subscribers numbered about thirty; the monthly charge to each family was seventy-five cents of which twenty-five were my paperboy's earnings.

Larry and I, along with the carrier for the Journal American and at times, one or more other youths, awaited the arrival of the evening train six days a week. In inclement weather, especially in winter, we retreated inside the depot where two potbelly stoves radiated their warmth, one in the waiting room, the other in the depot office. In the office, Ken Coykendall, the stationmaster's assistant was on duty. He sat in an oak swivel chair facing the long built-in desk that filled the entire bay window projecting out toward the main track. By leaning forward he could comfortably look out down the track to his left to announce the train's arrival. In front of him was the company telephone at the end of an extension arm that swiveled so that the phone could be either pushed or swung away from its communicating position. The telegraph key was to his left on the desk, I presume located there to leave his right hand available for recording a message. Ken would demonstrate and try to teach us the Morse code on the telegraph in between the clackety-clack of the receiver responding to intermittent messages being sent over the railroad system. When Sam Boyd, the "stage" driver arrived we listened to his yarns about his native Honeoye, or the latest gossip there from.

At times I spent a few minutes in the waiting room examining the posters and bulletins tacked on the walls. Most memorable was the "Railroad Calendar" published by the American Association of Railroads. This calendar exhibited the twelve months of the year as one large display of three columns of four months each. The prominent feature of the calendar was the presentation of the economic facts of life of the railroad industry. Each accounting category of expense such as wages, fuel, taxes, insurance, utilities, etc. was shown in terms of the number of days income was required to balance such an expense. Each category was displayed in a distinct color; for instance, fuel expense might have been represented by thirty days colored red. Most striking was the first four months of the year colored green representing real estate taxes paid by the railroads. The profit (in the nineteen twenties) was represented by two or three day's income at the end

of December. It wasn't long after that profits on American railroads became deficits.

The competing transportation systems: highways, waterways, and airways, each one of them supported by government subsidies and ownership, strangled the railroads. Except for land grants a hundred or more years ago and federal payment for transporting the mail for many years, the railroads were on the paying and not the receiving end of government. The management of the railroads with its beginnings in the rugged capitalistic individualism of the rail moguls such as Jay Gould, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and others, disdained any government interference, regulation or support. Progressive, productive government relations and public relations on the part of railroads was not their inheritance or their forte, nor was creativeness and inventiveness. Suppose, for instance, that the rail system had joined in the growth of the automotive industry, by initiating the renting of automobiles at every major railway terminal, perhaps making special fares including the use of an automobile at the passenger's destination; or suppose that every major passenger train had incorporated railcars for transporting the passengers' vehicles. This latter scheme was given a belated try as the "auto train" between northern Virginia and central Florida with partial success, but it was too little and too late.

Did the railroads ever enter portal-to-portal freight service employing highway motor vans at their terminals? — not to any extent. Another factor, albeit not a major one, was the rail unions, or "brotherhoods" organized in the last century. With the railroads in control of national transportation, the union brotherhoods could exercise enormous pressure on management. By the time of World War I the wage scale for rail employees was well up above the national average and incorporated inflexible work rules that were resisted by union brotherhoods to the very end, yet another noncompetitive factor.

Although management may be faulted, did our government and its constituencies ever realize the magnitude of the irretrievable investment in the railroads that was to be abandoned, or foresee the possible economic advantage of a rail system at some point in the future? It seems unrealistic economically that one freight train of a hundred and ten cars with a crew of three or four cannot compete with the equivalent of two hundred or more tractor-trailers with two hundred or more truck drivers expending many times the energy to transport the same weight. Our major highways are dominated by vans and tractor-trailers all subsidized indirectly by government and interfering in some degree with passenger vehicles. Automobile transportation in and out of our cities seems equally unsound economically, especially for daily commuters and, the larger the metropolis

## Railroad

the greater the problem becomes. Nowhere has the decline of rail transportation throughout the world proceeded to the extent that it has in the USA. Historians and economists of the future will ascertain whether the near extinction of the railroads was a benefit or a misfortune to society.

The period in which Grandpa grew and prospered corresponded with the crescendo of the American railroads. The railroad did not offer me the lifelong opportunity that it did to Grandpa, but the railroad, with its many attendant experiences, did offer me an exciting, enlightening and happy beginning. I learned many things from the railroad - about machines and personalities and their meshing together, about attention to duty and punctuality. I reveled in the pastimes it provided - walking the tracks, riding the rails, diving off the trestle, fishing in the pond and exploring the railroad property. Ah! The railroad, what memories, what images, what nostalgia springs forth!!

Social Service

J.C. Evans

March 1995

Jim had left his motel and driven east toward the city. He didn't consider himself a superb salesman but in his family business he, at times, set out to test the market, to gain some further insight as to how the product was used and accepted and how to adapt it to the customer's requirements. But his first stop of the day was at a service station to fill the gas tank and resupply himself with a couple of candy bars to satisfy his particular addiction during the day.

The early morning traffic was heavy. Jim had to wait for re-entry onto the four-lane highway. To his left were the oncoming cars. To his right, next to the curb stood a female figure facing the approaching vehicles. She was signaling that she wanted a ride. Waiting for a break in the stream of cars, Jim had time to make a quick survey of this eye-catching hitchhiker. She was of medium height, quite athletic and shapely with light brown, windblown hair. She wore a gold colored skirt and a matching sweater. But, alas, her face was hideous; the left half was markedly disfigured: black and blue and swollen. It was a disturbing sight. Jim's first thought was that she had been in an accident, perhaps a serious fall to the pavement. How pitiful she appeared; did she need medical attention?

One of Jim's rules of the road prohibited picking up strangers, but this woman was in trouble. She appeared to be pleading for help. Jim lowered the window on the passenger side and called out, "Where are you going?"

Her reply was audible but soft, "To the mall, two miles down the road."

"Okay, I'll get you there," was Jim's cheery response as he reached over unlatching the door on the passenger side. As she approached, Jim guessed her age to be twenty-something but with such a disfigured face and her left eye partially closed it was inconclusive. She climbed into the vehicle and sat down with that raw and sorry side of her face toward Jim.

With a gap in the traffic, Jim swung out onto the highway. In a tone of sympathy Jim inquired, "You must have had an accident?!"

Her reply, in mounting intensity, "My husband beat me up!"

Jim was shocked, how offensive, how horrible! He voiced his reaction, "Terrible!" as he glanced at the side of her mutilated face. Jim was at a loss of words to express his dismay or to inquire into the circumstances of the abuse she had suffered. Isn't any of my business he mused.



The shopping mall loomed up on the left side of the highway. Jim crossed over the two left lanes of oncoming traffic and entered the parking lot of the plaza. The parked cars were clustered near the stores. Jim stopped in the unoccupied area, intending to let out his passenger and circle back to the street entrance, but his rider made no move to exit. She hesitated, saying woefully, "I have no money."

How frightening, Jim thought: a battered woman, miserable, without a penny and no one to help her. She probably needs to buy food or something from the drug store. Jim reached into his right rear pants pocket for his billfold and found a couple of dollar bills and a twenty. Pulling out the twenty-dollar bill, Jim said, "Here, take this. I don't believe you should be out catching rides. You should be home taking care of yourself. If you won't be long, I'll drive you back to your neighborhood."

"Thank you! Thank you! I'll be back shortly," she cried.

Jim watched her walk off toward the stores in the distance. His eyes scanned above the parked cars across the storefronts: at one end, a giant super market, a Walgreen's drug store, then two or more women's apparel stores, a number of smaller shops and at the other end, a furniture warehouse which Jim surmised had the technique of upping their prices a hundred percent and then claiming to offer bargains at half price.

Jim reached for his briefcase on the back seat and pulled out a file folder having a map of the city. He spread the map as best he could over the steering wheel and traced his route again to his first prospect, about four or five miles farther east. He reread the inquiry from the interested party, thumbed through the company's product catalog and marked three items with a pencil.

Looking up in the direction of the stores, he spotted his passenger returning. She was carrying a tall, white paper bag supported with both hands. As she came close to the passenger side of the car, the unblemished, right side of her face came into view; it was actually quite attractive.

Jim opened the door. She backed in and up onto the front seat, turned forward, keeping her left arm around the grocery bag, closing the door with her right. She switched arms around the bag and presented Jim with two or three bills in change from her purchases. Jim ignored their denominations; thrust the bills into his suit coat side pocket without comment. He preferred not to know how much she had spent, not to appear stingy or close fisted, but rather, impersonally benign.

As they sped back toward the home ground of the hitchhiker, she cradled the paper bag in her arms as if it were an infant. Jim was curious about her purchases but did not want to appear nosey. It wasn't any of his business. He desired to be affable though, not aloof and asked,

“After I drop you off, I’m going east to a firm by the name of the S.C. Johnson & Son. It appears to be close to this highway. Are you familiar with the company?”

“Oh, yes,” she said. “Part of the grounds borders the right side of this boulevard. You can’t miss it. You’ll see a sign. The entrance is from a side street.”

The service station on the left, where Jim acquired his passenger, now came into view. He slowed as his passenger informed him, “I live right there in that string of condos on the right. Stop at the curb.”

Jim did as directed, coming to a stop almost in front of the first condominium in the row that stood back from the street perhaps twenty-five yards. Before opening the door his passenger lifted the tall bag from her lap and sat it down next to him. She exited the vehicle and reached back in to retrieve her bag of goods, but not before Jim leaned over and peeked in. Jim was aghast, stunned at what he saw: three bottles of booze! Quickly, she grabbed the bag before Jim could recover from this latest shock, his third of the day!

It all became clear to Jim; she was an alcoholic and needed professional help. As she walked away all he could get out was, “What is your name?”

Without hesitation she said, “Mary Lou Simmons.”

Jim knew that to scold her would be a waste of time. To attempt to take the booze away from her would create a scene, and risk unknown peril. Jim shook his head and blinked, as if he couldn’t believe what had just happened!

He admonished, “You need counseling and all the help you can get. Good luck!”

She turned away toting her loot and walked toward her condo. Jim watched with mixed emotions: sympathy, misgiving and outrage. What would happen to her later when her husband came home? He reflected; why was I so stupid in not recognizing her motives. Jim turned his vehicle around and headed for the S.C. Johnson Co. He couldn’t stop thinking about what had occurred. How he had been duped into satisfying that woman’s craze for alcohol - and the irony of it all, this was the only time in his life that any of his money had ever been spent for booze!

Jim had completed his visit to his potential customer, had eaten lunch and confirmed an appointment by phone with his next prospect. Near the phone he picked up the directory, searched for a listing, found it and entered the number. A female voice answered, “Social Services?”

## Social Service

Jim inquired, "May I speak to someone in your counseling service?"

A second voice came on the line, "Counseling, Mrs. Adams."

"Mrs. Adams, I'm a visitor to your city. I came upon a young lady this morning by the name of Mary Lou Simmons who resides at 4531 Western Boulevard. Her husband has apparently beaten her up. She appears to be an alcoholic and she has just acquired a fresh stock of booze. I think she could use your help."

The immediate reply, "Oh, we know Mary Lou well, it's a very distressing case. We have had to take her baby away from her. We do appreciate your information and we will keep trying."

Vignettes of the Fair

J. C. Evans

1988

Prologue

The Hemlock Fair has its origins in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Agricultural organizations in Hemlock, Livonia, and Honeoye held fairs prior to 1868. At that time the three groups consolidated to promote a union Fair. In 1876 the combined organization was incorporated as the Hemlock Lake Union Agricultural Society.

“Vignettes of the Fair” presents views of the Fair through the eyes of youth as experienced by the author in the late nineteen twenties and early thirties. The various episodes related here all occurred more or less in the sequence narrated.

“Right this way, folks. Three balls for a dime! Win a kewpie doll!” The concessionaire’s eyes scanned the midway crowd to zero in on his quarry.

“You, there, with that pretty gal! I know she wants a kewpie doll. You look like a ballplayer to me! Here, knock over the bottles. Nothing to it!”

The concessionaire’s right arm reached out over the narrow counter to its fullest extension waving three baseballs toward the young couple. The alleged ballplayer hesitated in his advance down the midway. The girlfriend clinging to his arm gave him a reassuring smile. His right hand slid into his pants pocket to find a dime as he warmed to the task.

The concessionaire, or one might say, the operator, a young scamp of medium height, transferred the baseballs to the challenger, pocketing the dime in his somewhat soiled white duck slacks. He stepped to the side of the tent as the ballplayer took his stance in front of the counter to pitch the first ball at the target, one of two arrays of white wooden replicas of quart size milk bottles. The bottles were arranged on knee-high pedestal platforms having a table diameter of about 16 inches. Three bottles in a row supported two more in a pyramidal pattern facing the ball thrower. The two pedestals with their bottles were spaced about two yards apart at the rear of the tent. The distance from the bottles to “the pitcher” out in the midway was a scant five yards. It looked easy. Knock down one of the clusters of five bottles and

## Vignettes of the Fair

win a kewpie doll. The dolls adorned in glitter, and not much else, lined two shelves: one down each side of the tent.

The aspiring pitcher loosened up his right arm and heaved a fastball that missed the mark completely; the momentum of the ball was absorbed by the barrier of straw bales at the rear of the tent. The challenger seemed to be slightly befuddled and disgusted by such a wide and errant pitch. The concessionaire uttered encouragement, "It only takes one ball to win a kewpie doll!"

The young pitcher appeared more determined than ever now and flung the second ball, grazing the upper right bottle of the stack imparting a sufficient sidewise impulse to knock down its companion bottle as well as falling itself. Two down and three to go!

The young ballplayer reacted with a smile, which he beamed to his companion. He gripped ball number three firmly, wound up and delivered. Wham! It hit the bottom edge of the platform, dropping to the ground. The ball, if observed closely, was noticeably flattened into an oval shape. The three lower bottles stirred little if at all, as if they were glued to the platform.

"Wow, if you were just a couple of inches higher you'd hadem!" exclaimed the operator.

"You got the range now, bud. Here, take three more balls, only a dime!" He dangled three more baseballs almost in the face of the challenger who was game to try it again and handed over another dime.

The target this time was the other set of five bottles toward my side of the tent, at the rear, diagonally opposite the operator who had hired me that very morning at an hourly wage of 15 cents. My duty was to pick up the balls and re-set the bottles, a task that a boy of 10 or 11 years could aspire to.

I stood backed up to the side of the tent with the bottle stack edge in front of me. The first pitch glanced off the farther bottom bottle shoving it backward slightly, disturbing it enough to topple the upper right bottle as viewed from the midway. The second ball hit the lone upper bottle near its base propelling it into the straw barrier. The contestant was definitely more accurate now in this second round. Again it was two down and three to go.

The young pitcher appearing confident now, wound up and deposited a fast ball striking high between the farther two bottles which lazily tipped over leaving the one closest to me upright. He spewed out a couple of oaths followed by an angry pronouncement, "Those bottles should have gone down!"

"You almost did it, bud. Here, give it one more try, three balls, only a dime."

It was little wonder that the bottom row of bottles clung to the platform. They were filled at their base with about five pounds of lead! My

instructions were to set up the three leaded bottles on the bottom and the unleaded two on top. Actually, a light breeze could topple the upper two. The baseballs, although they appeared firm, were filled with sawdust and they absorbed a large proportion of the energy upon impact, leaving little to impart movement to the target. The contestant at that point, could well have been thinking that his two dimes might have been better spent buying a couple of hotdogs, or possibly two ice cream cones together with soft drinks, such was the high value of our currency in the twenties.

While the young couple sauntered away into the crowd, I reset both stands of bottles, picked up the balls, squeezing and hammering the deformed ones back into a more spherical shape. The concessionaire took up his cry, "Right this way, folks! Three balls for a dime. Win a kewpie doll!"

Across the midway, a weasely old concessionaire standing on a platform in front of his tent yelled, "Two thousand years old and still alive! You've never seen anything like it before, folks. Right this way!"

Weird and unearthly sounds were emanating from beneath the platform, the sounds attributed to this mysterious thing, age: two thousand years. My playmate, Harland, in the employ of the concessionaire was hidden beneath the platform drawing a violin bow across the strings of an old bass fiddle. I must say he was doing a whopping good job of creating uncanny noise. To the curious and the gullible, for a fee, their eyes could cast upon an old decrepit mummy. Perhaps the mummy or its lure was ancient enough, but it was only "alive" in the sense it, together with the mysterious base notes of Harland, attracted the dupes of the midway.

It's late in the day now. I've had my fill of setting up bottles, hearing the chant of the huckster, seeing the expressions of dismay on frustrated ball throwers. I ask the concessionaire for my day's wages, about eight hours worth. He sidesteps to one end of the counter beneath which is a pile of small boxes of cheap chocolates, tosses me two boxes worth fifteen cents a piece. That's my day's wages! The guile of this guy! If I were bigger I'd punch him in the nose. He's taken advantage of me, a mere boy.

That's the way it was, experiencing skullduggery both first and second hand. I resolved, then and there, forever to be wary of hucksters, on or off a midway. Yes, the Fair was amply educational in a variety of ways.

## II.

That the Fair was educational in the sense of discovering the diverse ways of deceiving the midway patrons was not the motive, I'm sure, of the school authorities in closing the school partly or completely while the Fair was in progress. Their motives, perhaps, were inspired by a vision of

## Vignettes of the Fair

students examining the exhibits, admiring the prize hogs and dairy cows, taking in the horticultural displays and visiting the school tent to take note of their displayed accomplishments. But then again, it could have been purely a defensive action, knowing that if school proceeded during the Fair, truant pupils would substantially reduce school attendance. One scheme consisted of shortening all class periods and dismissing school at noon. Thus, the afternoon was left for learning at the Fair.

The school tent exhibited the students' classroom work, grade by grade in the primary department and by subject in the secondary school. The teachers took considerable time to arrange such exhibits, teachers with exhibits not only from Hemlock but also from other surrounding villages. With the Fair in the fall of the year, the exhibits, no doubt served to acquaint parents with the forthcoming school programs.

It is another year and there is another Fair. It's Thursday, the first big day of Fair festivities. School was dismissed at noon. I have been home for lunch and donned my boy scout uniform in preparation for our troop's performance in front of the grandstand. This is to occur between the second and third horse race of the afternoon. I walk briskly to the Fairgrounds, strutting right past the ticket taker at the entrance since the scout uniform signals free passage. The general exhibit hall nearby doesn't greatly interest me but I pass through it taking scant notice of fancy needlework, crocheted bric-a-brac, knitted garments, homemade jewelry, wood carvings, paper flowers, ornaments, etc., all handcrafted. From my boyish perspective these things appear somewhat dull; they're for grown-ups.

However, the exhibits in the school tent I want to examine more closely. I expect to find the school tent in the area to the west of the Grange Hall, between it and the midway, more or less, and sure enough there it is, made of white canvass about 75 x 30 feet with the main entrance halfway down the long dimension on the east side.

I enter the school tent. Sunlight is diffusing through the white canvass, illuminating with seeming uniformity, row upon row of exhibits displayed from strung horizontal lines supported from six-foot posts. Under foot is irregular, coarse, grass turf showing some wear and stomping down by human traffic. I have the perception of being in the open, yet enclosed, the environment feeling strange and unfamiliar, neither indoors nor outdoors. Every row of carefully hung student papers appears very much like any other, handwritten assignments and essays, blue ink on white paper, not much color except an occasional art piece from the lower grades.

I must find my school's exhibit somewhere in this maze of paper walls. I search, row-by-row, passing mothers, small children and grandparents. Entering the fourth row, I spot Bruce, one of my classmates outfitted, like

## Vignettes of the Fair

myself, in his scout uniform. He's waving his right arm beckoning me to come toward him. The silence and aura of the study hall pervade this tent! He could

have yelled a greeting! On approaching he points to an area of displayed papers remarking with a smile, "We are here!"

Papers from our first year high school English class are exhibited. There's a paper of mine. Gee, it's marked "A" with a 95 encircled. Boy, am I proud! My handwriting is abominable but Miss Rix must have been able to decipher it. I see that my essay concerns the virtues of Ben Franklin as he described himself, in his autobiography. Wow, he did not seem to have any vices at all, not even trivial ones. Next to my essay is one of Bruce's describing the character of Booker T. Washington, and how he persevered in the struggle to establish an educational institution. Bruce's paper is marked 95 also. His handwriting is definitely superior to mine.

"Have you been here long, seen everything?" I ask.

"Pretty much, I'm about to take a couple rides on the midway. I'll see you over by the grandstand."

"Well, I want to look around here some more," I responded.

With that I scan the displayed material noting who among my friends have their great works exposed for viewing. Now, there's one of John Jones', all about the theme of the story, Silas Marner commencing with the memory lines: "In the old days there were angels who took men by the hand and led them away from threatening destruction; a hand is placed in theirs which leads them forth into a calm and bright land where they look no more backward -and the hand may be that of a little child's." George Eliot was a preacher all right, not a very exciting story if you expect fire and thunder!

Farther on I come to the exhibits of the French and Latin classes. Miss Brau, our teacher, asked me to make a replica of a Roman tablet for the Fair exhibit. The Romans wrote with a stylus on a dark wax surface, cutting into the wax to make lines and letters. They erased or renewed their tablet by melting the wax. Aha! There it is! Inscribed on the left portion: *Id est Romana tablella*, and on the right half, *Veni, Vidi, Vici* attributed to Caesar. What the Romans used for black wax was unknown to me. I melted a couple of purple candles that Mom gave me for the purpose, pouring the wax into two shallow wooden trays joined by a pair of hinges. When I presented this creation to Miss Brau she was noticeably pleased and excited about its exhibition potential. Well, it doesn't exactly thrill me to see it here but, it does break up the monotony of all the letter size papers row upon row. I decide to pass by the rest of the school exhibit for now and head for the Grange Hall nearby.



### III.

The judges for the grange exhibits, about a half dozen of them in number, are huddled in front of one of the booths examining the varieties of vegetables, canned fruits and preserves. Must be that quantity counts. Not one item is ever tasted! I suppose by tomorrow the blue, red and yellow tags signifying 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards will be attached to the winning displays.

Up ahead beyond the judging group is the Hemlock Grange booth. Approaching closer I see that it has plenty of material from grange members' farms, gardens, and kitchens. In the foreground there are all the fresh garden vegetables one can think of neatly arranged. Smack in the center is a super size Hubbard squash from our garden and I know why it's so large. That sludge Dad cleaned out of the septic tank early this spring really made the vegetables grow! On the left, on the third shelf from the bottom among the jars of jams and jellies is one of strawberry jam that appears to be in one of Mom's glass containers. It makes my mouth water. It gets my vote for the highest award. The Hemlock booth sure looks good to me. I'll have to come tomorrow to find out the results of the judging.

### IV.

The second race of the afternoon, the 2:20 pacers, is coming up shortly. I'm hunched over for lack of headroom beneath the boardwalk at the lower level of the grandstand. The mingling of many voices, stomping feet, yelling of the hot dog and popcorn vendors are above and behind me. Off to the right of the entrance to the grandstand a hawker is shouting, "You can't tell the horse from the driver without a race program!" Along with all the other kids I'm peering out through the wire fence at the racetrack right in front of us, the platform for entertainers directly across the track, the bandstand to the left of it and just to the right, the race starter or judges stand. The later being a two-story structure open above waist level at the upper floor, affording the race committee full view of the half-mile oval.

A touring group of acrobats has just completed their performance. The sulky drivers have been warming up their horses, gliding back and forth in front of the grandstand. The drivers are garbed in their favorite flashy colorful silks and matching caps. On their sulkies the drivers, legs straight out sloping upward, feet in stirrups as high as their heads, resemble open safety pins. That acute bend at their hips looks uncomfortable and awkward to me but who am I to question this highly tuned time-honored racing

## Vignettes of the Fair

paraphernalia.

It's now time to start the race. The starter, or more often referred to as the Judge, surveys from the high stand facing us the broad expanse of track and racers. To his right at shoulder height is an old bell about a foot across. He grabs the clapper and bangs it against the bell producing a resounding clang. With his left hand he raises a megaphone and bellows a stern command, "Drivers, get your horses to the starting line". The drivers, most of them down the track to our right, pull in their reins, wheel their sulkies around to head back to the starting line off to our left beyond the end of the grandstand.

There are six starters and the track is of insufficient breadth to accommodate six sulkies in line, side by side. There is no precise alignment at the start. The drivers must find their starting position as best they can, each jockeying for position to turn and accelerate at the opportune moment to give them advantage but not so great an advantage that the racers will be called back for a restart! I note that Number 4 in this race has the inside or pole position. The drivers are scrambling for position in a hit and miss fashion. The sulkies charge ahead. The judge screams into his megaphone, "WAIT FOR THAT POLE HORSE! HOLD THERE, NUMBER 2; WAIT! WAIT!" But driver Number 2 does not control his horse by chance or by intention. He has a lead the full length of his rig from the nearest competitor. The sulkies surge forward accelerating past the grandstand. The judge, disgusted, bangs the bell three or four times signaling a false start. The horses now appear excited, snorting and high stepping as they return for a new start.

I hear the creak of rusty hinges behind me. Turning in that direction a small door at eye level opens outward. The opening is actually intended for a horse in one of the stalls beneath the grandstand to put his head through to view the outside world. However, it's not the head of a horse that emerges, but the head of a woman with freckles and a straw hat. She asks, "Is Number 4 the pole horse?"

"Yes, it is," I reply.

"Oh, he'll win!" she remarks, in a matter of fact manner as she disappears from view.

The pacers congregate again for a new start. Less chaos and more order this time, as the pole horse and three other rigs appear more or less in line across the track. Two other racers are in the one and two positions behind the pole horse. They charge up the grandstand stretch kicking up the dust. The judge with one hand on the bell clapper and the megaphone in the other must make a quick decision, the sextet of racers flashes by us and a second later, the judge shouts into his megaphone, "GO-O!" They're off and running!

## Vignettes of the Fair

Due to all manner of visual obstructions, we juvenile freeloaders can see little more than the straight stretch of track in front of the grandstand. I keep my eyes trained on the race committee in their high observation perch. As they observe the racers around the half-mile oval their bodies rotate counterclockwise. Soon their backs are turned toward the grandstand. The horses now are in the backstretch directly opposite, a quarter of a mile around the track. The seconds tick on. In less than a half a minute the grandstand comes to life in a rising crescendo of yells, shouts and screams. The horses have rounded the bend and head down the straightaway. Number 4 is in the lead at the pole position, Number 2 and Number 6 are challenging as the drivers urge their steeds to a greater effort. There's no chance to squeeze ahead of Number 4 as they pass the halfway mark and disappear around the curve. The frenzy in the grandstand diminishes.

I'm wondering now whether Number 4 will be able to maintain his lead. There's an outbreak of more grandstand mania as the racers struggle in the backstretch. Perhaps Number 4 cannot keep up the pace. I can only guess as to the situation. In another half minute we'll have the finish. I hope its close and exciting. Will that prediction by the horsewoman in the stall materialize? We'll find out soon. The grandstand begins to erupt. I push my head against the fence, turning diagonally toward the oncoming herd. Here they come! The drivers are frantic, whipping their horses and shrieking commands. They're thundering toward us! Number 6 and Number 3 are making a race of it, gaining on Number 4 at the pole. The yells of the drivers and the snap of the whips can be heard above the din of the spectators. The pounding hoofs flash past to the finish line. From here it appears Number 4 was the winner by a yard. We must wait the judge's pronouncement.

Shortly, the judge directs his megaphone toward the grandstand. It's loud and clear, "The winner, Number 4, Graham Hanover; Second, Number 3, Georgia Bell; Third, Number 6, Max Migraine; Time of the mile: 2 minutes, 17 seconds." That freckled face woman with the straw hat had it right.

## V.

The second race has been run. It's now time for us scouts to perform. Hugh Drain, our scoutmaster, has arranged the marching routine. As a scout fifteen or more years ago he paraded in a like manner. Today, the scouts are to assemble across the racetrack in front of the bandstand. Hugh will bring forth sixteen wood staves about eight feet in length, one for each scout to hold vertically on his right side. Also each of us will receive a short length of light line for constructing a tower, or platform, of the staves at the climax of our performance.

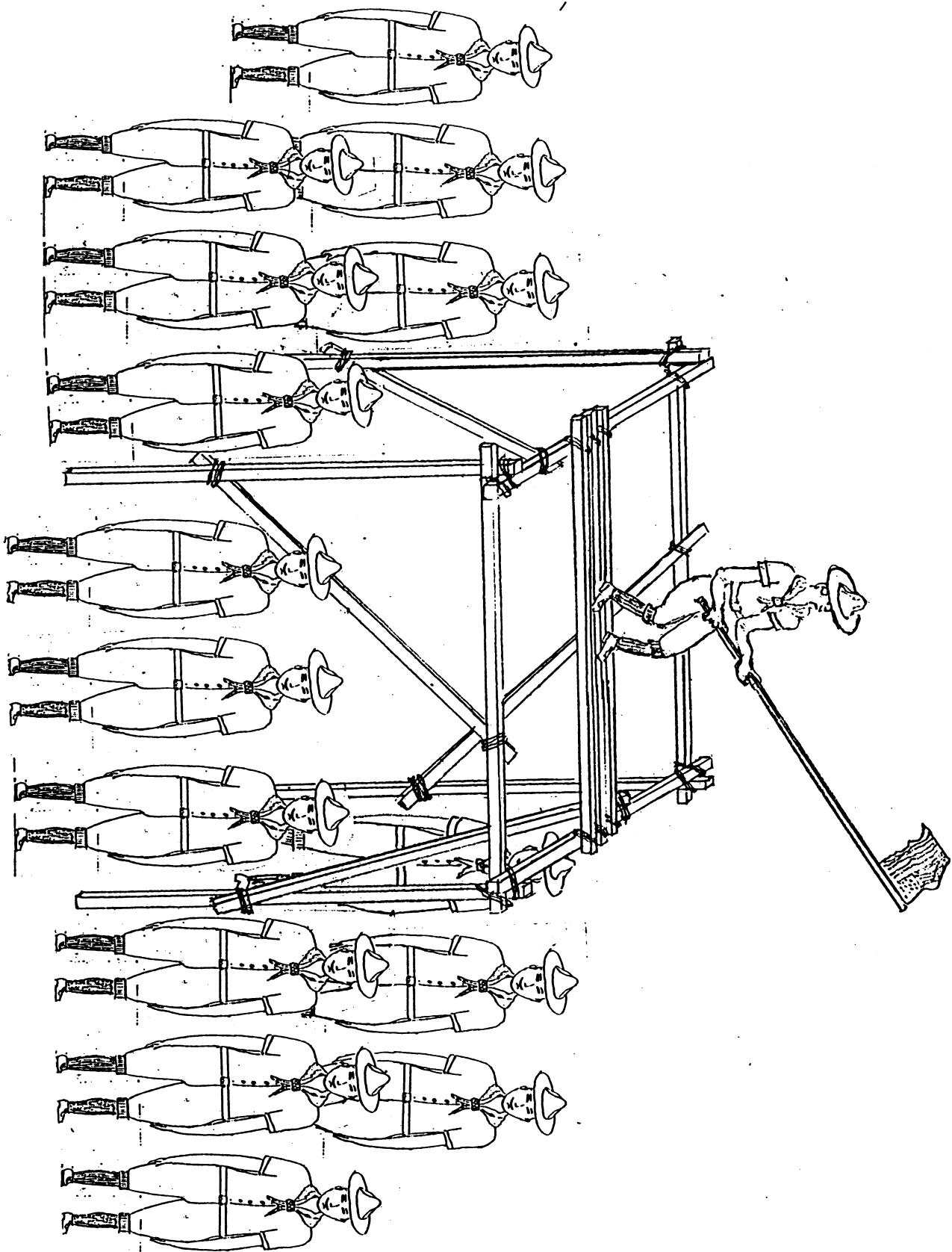


Figure 1.

## Vignettes of the Fair

As Bruce and my other scout friends make our way toward the exit from beneath the grandstand, my mind runs through the marching routine that we've been practicing evenings for the last week. Our troop will form a single marching file facing north along the racetrack rail next to the bandstand. The band will strike up a Sousa march, probably "Stars and Stripes Forever". We'll step up and down in place to get synchronized - left, right - left, right! On the command, Forward March, we start off on our right foot and after a few steps the lead scout will make an abrupt 90 degree turn left to cross the track, another left to march parallel along the grandstand for a distance about twice the breadth of the track, thence left again to recross the track and left again along the rail toward the point of beginning.

A halt will be called with the ends of the column equidistant from the near corners of the rectangle formed by the course of the march. Half our troop at one end of the procession will wheel around 180 degrees, the single file dividing and marching in opposite directions around the rectangular course, each file passing the other next to the grandstand. At the near corners of the course, the columns will head diagonally for the far corners, crisscrossing at the center of the racetrack, a maneuver inviting an accidental trip if all marchers are not attentive to their task. At the turning points at the rail side of the track the two columns will march toward each other to the halfway point, thence form a double column to face the grandstand and march across the track. We will then march in a double column repeating the same maneuvers as performed in single file with the two double columns forming four columns of four marchers facing the grandstand, halting at the center of the track. The construction of our high platform from the eight-foot poles will then proceed. (See Figure 1.

Each scout knows where his stave is to be placed and where his short line is to be tied to connect the skeleton like framework together. Of the sixteen staves three are available for the horizontal surface of the platform. Charlie Wesley, the smallest scout in the troop, will whip out an American flag from his pocket, securing it to one end of his stave. We'll then hoist Charlie to balance himself atop the three-stave platform, pass up to him his flag pole which he will swish and wave around while keeping his balance. The grandstand will let loose with applause and cheers. After that, I'll march toward a refreshment stand for a bottle of pop.

## VI.

The years march on, another year, another Fair, Wednesday afternoon is

opening day. Money is scarce. I must sneak into the grounds by crossing the Hemlock Creek at the dam down the tracks near the railroad water tower. From home the route is west on Railroad Street, past the depot, past the old gristmill and storage buildings serviced by the rail siding behind them.

Stepping at a fast clip past the last structure, I'm suddenly confronted by an unfamiliar sight, two tents pitched between the building and the water tower beyond. The tents are a muddy brown and dilapidated, the larger one circular in shape like a wigwam. A rusty, pockmarked old truck and an antiquated passenger vehicle partially block my view of the tents. Suddenly I notice a person behind the truck take a few quick steps toward the big tent. The human figure is dark skinned and black haired. It's a scantily clad female ducking into the canvass folds. She scarcely disappears before the canvass parts; a swarthy, grim, sinister male face scrutinizes me. My first impulse is to give this assemblage a wide berth, quicken my pace, deviate from a straight-line course to the dam. I look off in another direction feigning indifference to these intruders. They must be gypsies, I muse, that wander from fair to fair.

## VII.

I'm soon out of sight of the itinerants as I skid down the steep embankment on a path thinly covered with cinders that slide and roll under foot. Directly ahead the dam spans the creek in two sections, each about twenty-five feet in length separated by a spillway at midstream. The earthen dam on the upstream side is concrete covered, the concrete gently sloping into the pond. The spillway about a yard wide has several horizontal boards stacked vertically that can be withdrawn or added to for lowering or raising the pond level. Water is flowing over the edge of the top board in a uniform sheet, falling about three feet, then gurgling away in rapids.

I pause a moment to glance upstream. A hint of autumn is in the air. Scattered fallen yellow willow leaves float on the pond. In the distance a fish jumps sending out circular wavelets that spread out and slowly die away on the placid surface. Farther on where the pond bends to the south I detect on the distant shore a blue heron maintaining his vigil, absolutely motionless, poised to strike at a passing minnow. In another month this feathered fellow will be winging it to warmer climes. Enough of this gazing at natural wonders, I must be on my way. I run and jump over the spillway, pick my way through the underbrush and emerge as if a paying patron along the racetrack to the north of the grandstand.

VIII.

The horse owners, the jockeys, the grooms and the stable boys are preparing for the first day of races tomorrow. I pass by the horse stalls behind the grandstand. The sulkies are hitched up to the waiting horses in anticipation of being exercised on the track. One elderly horseman has a wheel removed from his sulky in order to make repairs or apply a lubricant. Another is examining a lower foreleg of his racer. A van has just arrived and is about to unload its equestrian cargo. All this activity, no doubt, thrills horse admirers and race enthusiasts but it holds little interest for me. My inclination is toward automobiles and boats. I wander on toward the exhibits of farm animals.

The tent housing the poultry is directly ahead. I can hear the roosters crowing. In a few more steps I pick up the faint, familiar odor of the hen house. Inside the tent the cages are stacked two and three high, sawdust and straw on their floors with an overflow into the aisles. There are all kinds and colors of chickens. I recognize the white Leghorns, the Rhode Island Reds, the Barred Rocks, but none other. There are no labels on the cages for identification. Farther on are the ducks and geese. I know the Pekins and the Mallards but have no idea of some of the others. I reflect that I could benefit by having a person with me who is knowledgeable about species of fowl. At the turkey and goose end of the exhibit, I hear from the direction of the nearby cattle tent one or two male outcries, cuss words, some commotion, crashing and banging noises.

Once outside again, I see that exhibitors are still bringing in their cows to be penned inside their canvass shelter. Entering the cattle tent, my attention is drawn to a small gathering of men and boys surrounding a cattle pen a few yards away. They must be admiring a prize animal, I muse. Moving closer, I observe that the pen has been battered and splintered. A big bull inside has been on a rampage. At the moment, he seems to have quieted down. His caretaker leaning over the fence is holding a bunch of alfalfa in one hand, waiting for a chance to remove a ring in the animal's nose. From the ring a line dangles down to the ground. The bull must have been led in by the line. I'm appalled at what seems to me to be a cruel procedure. I wonder how the owner would react if he was led around by a ring in his nose? Well, the excitement certainly drew a crowd and one of the crowd spots me. It's Art who's older and has been out of school a couple of years.

"Jack, haven't seen you in awhile. How did you arrive? Did you come in

## Vignettes of the Fair

over the dam?”

“Yeah, a little while ago.”

Art, with a little twist of his mouth and a partial wink of his eye inquires,

“Did you see those tents over there by the railroad?”

“Yeah, what are they?”

“Well, it seems that’s a small band of prostitutes. I overheard one guy say that a gal dances on a mirror with only a short skirt on! Bill Fogarty (sheriff’s deputy) is on his way over there now to kick’em out of town!”

My mind is in a quandary; what are prostitutes? Are they women who dance on mirrors? That’s a new word to me; I’d better not reveal my ignorance... ....change the subject.

“Art, what are you doing now, working?”

“Work in the city at the Camera Works nights.”

“Do you like it?”

“Yeah, it’s OK. Rather work days though.”

“What’s your sister, Alice, doing?”

“Oh, she’s training to be a nurse at a hospital in Rochester.”

Hmmm, I’m thinking, I’ll have to look up that word ‘prostitute’ in the dictionary! Back then, youth was an age of innocence or perhaps ignorance, in keeping with the social and educational norms of the day.

To complete my tour of the farm animals today I amble toward the east end of the long, low roofed series of pens that border the south side of the fairgrounds. The aroma of goats greets me; I see black goats, white goats, black and white goats, nannies and billies, their goatees bringing to mind some distinguished bewhiskered personality, or someone not so distinguished. One adventurous billy is sampling a remnant of a corrugated box. He seems undecided on its dietary merit. The bleats of the goats have a semblance of irate sports fans spitting out the raspberries. It makes me smile.

The sheep occupy the next series of pens. Their bleat, in contrast, seems soothing, pastoral, and pleasurable. These woolly quadrupeds I suppose we learn to like as toddlers looking at picture books. I reach out over the board fence to touch their wool. The fleece is thick, dense and long. Already they are prepared for the winter to come.

It appears that the pigs have all had a bath. They look so uncommonly clean. No mud for them to root in either, just clean soft straw. They must feel out of their element. Some of these pigs are enormous, some heap of bacon and pork chops! What’s that in the pen just ahead? A big boar is climbing onto the rear of his companion. Wow, is he excited! Whoops, no success, he retreats, petered out. Yep, more learning at the Fair: lessons on the facts of life.



IX.

Not much of a crowd here today. Tomorrow, Thursday, the Fair will begin in earnest and then the grounds will be well populated. This is the opportune time to ride on the Ferris wheel, my favorite amusement concession. With business slow I should enjoy a long ride today. Sure enough, upon approaching the big Wheel only two seats are occupied. I exchange my one thin dime for a ticket. I wait for the operator to bring the Wheel to a stop. He signals me to come forward up three steps to the loading deck. He plucks my ticket from my hand, presses down the footrest portion of the seat against the deck. I slide in taking a center position leaving space on the seat to either side. The operator swings in the horizontal bar, locking me in, steps aside, pulls the big lever engaging the clutch.

The engine buckles down to its task, changing its tune as I swing out and up toward the sky.

Rising upward, the midway stretches out in front of me curving to the right following the course of the racetrack toward the grandstand. It's the main street of a tent city. The big Wheel slows and stops with a jerk. I'm at the very top. It appears that another rider is coming aboard. The operator must keep this piece of machinery in balance by seating this customer half way around the Wheel.

My seat has been sent swaying by the abrupt stop and it gives me a creepy feeling. I glance downward to the right where the midway passes by and extends back toward the main gate in the distance.

Behind me the merry-go-round spins, the calliope blaring and pounding out its mirthful tunes. Stretching my neck, turning my head backward as best I can, I see beyond the merry-go-round, the Chair Swing whirling, its chairs swinging out to about at a 45 degree angle with the horizontal. Back there on the opposite side of the midway are a couple of large tents surrounded by farm machinery. Closer by to my right across the midway is that familiar erect tall beam or post with the bell at the top. It's a challenge to those who believe they can ring the bell with a mighty swing of a sledgehammer, transferring the momentum to a sliding traveler that shoots up the post but rarely rings the bell. The winner, if there is one, will be given a trinket or a ten-cent cigar.

I'm on the downswing now. Facing in toward the axle I examine the structure of the Wheel, a maze of steel angle spokes, spacers and diagonal cable braces, all parts bolted together as if from a toy erector set. It's up and over again and again. On the upswings I look for the concessions along the midway that I can recognize. In memory I envision the whole gamut of the fakers, cheaters, and fast buck artists that bring their games to the Fair year

## Vignettes of the Fair

after year. I reflect back on that earlier experience with the operator of the “knock over the bottles with the baseballs” concession. Now, I spot the tent with a hoop throwing setup. This concession always attracts the female patrons and children. It’s a consistent loser for the contestants. The hoops fall over upright spikes that surround the larger impossible bulbous targets that might win a wristwatch or an article of similar value. A more likely prize is a penny lollipop.

On the opposite side of the midway is another ball throwing concession. The targets are stuffed catlike figures sitting upright side by side on shelves. They seem to present a contiguous array suggesting that any ball thrown at the proper height will topple a cat. However, the cats have a fringe of fuzz or fur projecting a couple of inches so that a ball, unless striking centrally on the target, readily passes through the fuzz. The concessionaire can also actuate a concealed lever that erects solid invisible pins or posts behind the targets restricting their backward fall when struck. It’s a no win situation.

I can see one of several ‘wheel of fortune’ concessions, the wheel at eye level at one end of the counter, the various alternating series of colors and numbers on the wheel corresponding to colors and numbers laid out in squares on the counter in front of the players. The stakes are higher here; quarters are placed on the squares and the wheel is spun. If there’s a winner he will receive a gaudy, cheap cotton blanket.

Farther on is the big Bingo tent with its side canvass rolled up exposing to view the perimeter of benches and counters. I can hear in my imagination the caller announcing, “B12!” I’m thinking: at least Bingo doesn’t approach the skullduggery of these other games.

Somewhere down there is the frightened mouse game in which a mouse is released at the center of a square table having a clear glass barrier around its edges. The mouse scampers toward the table edge to dive into one of the many holes near the perimeter. Those that gamble can bet on the color of the small square surrounding the hole. For each color the odds of winning are posted. The odds are slim for winning. From my observation the mouse is either color blind or doesn’t care what the color, with the thought in his tiny brain, “Just let me hide from these crazy humans!”

I don’t see from here the fellow with the lightweight chair suspended from a spring scales attached at the apex of a large tripod. This chap estimates your weight after you fork over a dime. If your weight as measured on the scales differs from his prediction by 3 pounds or more, you are the winner of a coffee mug or small flower bouquet.

Interspersed with the games of chance, or perhaps in some instances, skill (?), are the food concessions: those that make the crisp greasy waffles dunked in powdered sugar, the popcorn vendors, the cotton candy makers,

and a host of hot dog and soft drink dispensers. The thought of food stimulates my appetite but I've spent my ten cents and will have to wait another day. Times are not the best, the Great Depression of the thirties is apparent everywhere.

X.

Anna Bush, a retired rural schoolteacher in charge of Fair activities for the Hemlock Grange has designed a float to be paraded in front of the grandstand between the second and third sulky race of the afternoon. At sixteen, I've already been a Grange member for two years and Mrs. Bush has designated me to don the costume of Uncle Sam, to stand erect at the center of her creation, a farm wagon decorated with straw, corn shocks, pumpkins and farm lassies decked out in colorful long dresses and straw hats of fashion. I'm duly honored to masquerade as Uncle Sam. I'm a skinny lad of six feet. I do lack the white chin whiskers and graying eyebrows, however, Uncle Sam's uniform is complete with goatee to be stuck on my chin. The float is to be drawn by a two-horse team supplied by one of the few Grange members that makes some use of draft horses on the farm.

Attired in the uniform of Uncle Sam I can walk in the main gate without paying admission. However, this Saturday morning in order to roam the fairgrounds unencumbered by Uncle Sam's costume and being practically penniless, I take the secret passage over the creek.

Upon approaching the midway, the hawkers, the hucksters and the barkers are putting forth their midmorning histrionic performances. A short distance down the midway on the right side I notice a sizeable crowd has gathered around a platform at the front of a large tent. I must find out the whys and wherefores of this gathering. Approaching closer, three male characters occupy the stage: a barker with a megaphone and two others dressed in wrestling tights. The barker is addressing the crowd, "Who out there will challenge one of these fine wrestlers to a round or two? Five dollars to any challenger that can stay one round with either Danny McGraw, or Bozo Bonnano!"

Now, Danny McGraw appears to be a muscular young athletic type about 6 feet tall and weighing perhaps 175 pounds. Bozo Bonnano is shorter, plump, unshaven, hairy, fierce, resembling the Neanderthal man and if discovered on a dark night could be mistaken for an unfriendly gorilla. This bozo could weigh 275 pounds or more.

"Anyone out there that can wrestle? This is your chance!"

In the swarm of onlookers, I notice a couple of my pals, Bruce and Harland, and make my way toward them. One college age fellow with the appearance of a football fullback squeezes through the crowd toward the

## Vignettes of the Fair

platform.

“What’s this coming up here?! Young man, are you a challenger?”

“I’ll give it a try.”

“Where are you from?”

“Near- ah- ah Batavia.”

“You look like a nice farm kid. You can wrestle?”

“Yep, took a correspondence course in rassling.”

“A correspondence course?! Ho! Ho! I don’t know about you. Which of these wrestlers are you challenging?”

“I’ll rassle your man, McGraw.”

“For three rounds or less?”

“Three sounds OK to me.”

“What’s your name?”

“Mason, John Mason.”

The barker announces, “Mason, shake hands with McGraw.” After a quick clasp of right hands, the barker continues,

“Now, lad, go inside and put your wrestling trunks on and we’ll get underway.”

Turning toward the onlookers the barker harangues,

“Now, folks, we have a challenger. This fight is for three rounds. Now, you will want to see what this farm boy from Batavia can do against our champion, Dan McGraw. Step right this way. Admission is just twenty five cents - a great contest, a great spectacle for your money!”

About half the male crowd proceeds to ante up the admission and file into the tent. Bruce, Harland, and I exchange wistful glances. We have no quarter dollars. A quarter to us is a mountain of money.

Bruce blurts, “Let’s go around to the back and crawl under.”

His last word is barely out of his mouth before we circle halfway around the tent and dive under the canvass. Good thing that I don’t have on Uncle Sam’s costume for this exploit!

We enter the arena undetected and are quick to join the crowd, losing our identity as unpaid customers. The spectators, about forty in number, surround the wrestling ring on all four sides. The barker climbs into the ring and informs the audience that he, along with the referee and a third fellow wearing a derby hat, are the judges of the contest. The contestants are exercising and showing off their muscles in their respective diagonally opposite corners. The barker doubles as judge and timekeeper. He pounds the gong for the start of round number one.

Mason and McGraw charge out of their corners and spar for an advantage at the center of the ring. Mason suddenly grabs the right arm of McGraw and delivers the flying mare, slamming McGraw to the canvass. The spectators

## Vignettes of the Fair

burst into applause. It's clear the challenger has the support of the crowd. The farm boy from Batavia is their hero.

Mason is able to pin McGraw near the end of round #1, but in round #2 McGraw counters with a pin. In the third round both wrestlers are on the canvass exchanging holds, grunts and groans but neither attains a pin on the other. The gong sounds. The three judges compare notes at the center of the ring. The barker addresses the patrons,

"Ladies and Gentlemen, this contest has ended in a draw. Neither wrestler is a winner. It's up to Mason to continue the challenge or not. Mason, is it your decision to challenge McGraw to a fight to the finish, a match in which you or McGraw pins the other, regardless of the length of the match?"

"Yeah, I'll challenge him. He's tough, but I think I can whip him."

The barker doesn't seem to recognize that there are no female onlookers,

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we will exit now and continue this match as a second attraction."

Out on the platform in front of the tent McGraw and Mason flex their muscles and exchange pugnacious glances. The barker proceeds to build up the excitement and rivalry of the upcoming match, "Ladies and Gentlemen, this farm boy from Batavia still believes he can win over our champion, McGraw. He hasn't proven it yet but he has challenged McGraw to a fight to the finish, no holds barred. This match will determine whether Mason is in the same class as our man, McGraw. Now both men are determined to show the other who's the better fighter. This match will continue in about three minutes. Don't miss it! Step right this way for admission - only twenty-five cents for this climactic contest!"

It appears that the attendance at the wrestling ring for this bout will swell. More spectators pay admission and march into the tent.

Harland suggests, "We made it in before. Let's try again."

The three of us hot foot around to the rear of the tent and commence our dive under the sidewall. What's this?! There's a guy laying for us. He's not one of this wrestling gang that we've seen before.

"You kids get out of here," he yells, at the same time swinging his right leg taking aim at Harland's head three inches off the ground. Harland is quick to get his head out of harm's way. The three of us do some fast backward scrambling and rise from the turf.

"You might say we're not welcome," exclaims Bruce.

"Well, why don't we stand here and listen? We can tell by the cheers who's winning."

The barker announces, "Ladies and gentlemen, this bout is the continuation of the challenge by Mason against our man, McGraw. This

fight is to be settled by the first man to pin the other.” The bell sounds and some of the onlookers encourage their hero, “Go get ‘em, Mason! Show that McGraw what this rassling is all about. Pin this bird called a champion!”

The three of us stand facing the back wall of the tent, our ears tuned in for the response of the spectators. There are cheers followed by silence, then more cheering. No pin at the end of round one. Early in round two the audience is in an uproar. There are yells, “You dirty bastard, stop choking Mason!” “Ref, what the hell are you doing allowing illegal holds?!” Then, suddenly there is a wild outburst of cheers and applause.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Mason has won this match. He takes the prize money back to the farm in Batavia.”

It’s the voice of Mason next, “I’d like to challenge your heavyweight, Bonnano.”

“Lad, you must be out of your mind. Why, Bozo will flatten you into a pancake. You can’t be serious?”

“Yes, I’m serious, I’ll challenge Bonnano to a first pin bout, same conditions as for this match.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard what this farm boy from Batavia has said. He’s going to fight the great Bozo, a wrestler of international fame, a wrestler who holds titles in several countries of the world. We’ll exit now and prepare for the next exhibition between challenger Mason and our super champ, Bonnano.”

Bruce, Harland, and I trot around to the midway to the platform used for staging the wrestlers. The barker is in rare form as he promotes the fabulous match between farm boy Mason and this monster, Bozo. Bozo is pounding his chest and appears to be ready to give an exhibition of bending crowbars.

Bruce inquires, “Do you have any ideas on how to get in for the next bout?”

“What about each of us ducking under from different sides of the tent? How about you entering from the east end, Harland from the rear, and I’ll try the west side. If we all act at the same time that bouncer will probably only catch one of us.”

“O.K., but let’s wait until the bell rings for the first round, when the full crowd is in there and the bouncer’s attention is drawn to the ring.”

“Good, the bell for the start of round one will be the signal for the three of us to dive under!”

We repair to our assigned positions, one of us on each side of the tent, and await the bell. At my end of the tent a quick examination of the sidewall reveals several stakes holding down the canvass. I quickly kick loose a couple of the stakes since otherwise there’s no chance of crawling under.

The barker makes his colorful introduction to the match and sounds the

bell. Instantly I'm flat on the ground scrambling inside the tent. All attention inside is directed at the ring. Harland is first in. I'm a step or two behind his approach diagonally from my right. The bouncer is nowhere to be seen.

Bonanno and Mason are cautiously sparring at the center of the ring. Bonanno appears a little slow in his movements but it's deception. Suddenly, as a stroke of lightning, Bozo thrusts his left arm under the crotch of Mason, lifts him above his own head and spins him around - the airplane spin! The spectators gasp. Bonanno throws Mason to the deck, ka-boom, but seems in no haste to jump on top to attempt a pin. The great Bozo is acting more like a proud cat that has just playfully tossed a mouse in a game of catch. Bozo struts around the ring flexing his muscles. The crowd looks on dumbfounded.

Mason struggles upward with one hand reaching around to his lower back. He grimaces as if one can almost sense his saying, "Ouch, my back!" — but he recovers quickly, prances toward Bozo who faces in the opposite direction, puts one foot behind Bozo's right knee which folds as Mason hauls him down backwards to the canvass. The crowd cheers wildly.

The match goes to the third round as Mason is unable to manipulate Bozo for a pin and Bozo seems to miss opportunities. Again Bozo grabs Mason and twirls him in the airplane spin. This may be the end if Bozo can leap on top of Mason after the fall. Ka-boom, the timbers vibrate on Mason's impact with the mat. Bozo lunges for a pin but Mason springs away as if he were a bouncing ball. Bozo lands prostrate on the canvass and before he can make a move, Mason leaps upon him making a pin. The crowd roars, that is, most of the crowd. A few spectators shake their heads in disbelief.

## XI.

I've had enough wrestling for today. Overhead I've been hearing and seeing a couple of small planes. They're landing and taking off from a pasture lot just south of the fairgrounds. Have to go over there and take a closer look. As I amble south toward the improvised landing field I see the opening in the wire fence that leads to the planes. A small sign nailed to a fence post reads: "AIRPLANE RIDES, \$2.00". Just inside the break in the fence a fellow is holding a roll of tickets in one hand. Obviously, he is the seller of the two-dollar plane ride.

"Well, young man, how about a plane ride today?"

"It's a great idea, but I'm broke. Two dollars is a small fortune to me."

"Yeah, I know, a kid like you isn't apt to have two dollars."

"What kind of planes are these, anyway?"

"They're Piper Cubs, seat three comfortably, can squeeze in four."

## Vignettes of the Fair

I stand there gazing in the direction of the landing area. Three male customers are coming up the path toward the exit. As they approach closer, I recognize one of the trio as George Briggs, my Uncle Ansel's father-in-law. He must have just had a plane ride. Mr. Briggs notices me.

"Hello, Jack. Are you enjoying the Fair today?"

"Yeah, it's great, - a great day for a plane ride, too, I suppose!"

"Ya know that was my first plane ride!"

"What did you think of it?" I inquire.

"Entirely different from what I expected. It seemed the plane wasn't moving at all. I asked the pilot how fast we were flying and he pointed to an instrument registering an air speed of 120 miles per hour. I couldn't believe it! I thought there would be some sensation of speed!"

"How was the view from up there?"

"Tremendous view! You can see the whole lake and the valley. Everything looks so small from up there!"

I bid adieu to Mr. Briggs and commence the homeward journey for lunch. After that I'm to return to the fairgrounds outfitted as Uncle Sam. Ahead of me I hear the old dinner bell on the dining hall clanging its call to the fairgoers. This year the Ladies Aid of the Baptist Church is preparing and serving the meals. A queue of diners extends out from the dining hall entrance waiting their turn to be seated. I survey the line up. At the end of the line the patrons appear vaguely familiar. Hmmm! It's that wrestling bunch from the sideshow. There's Bozo dressed in cream-colored slacks and a red sport shirt. He looks almost human now! — and there's the challenger, Mason, also McGraw..and the barker and the bouncer. One of them is an older guy, bald headed - it must be the one that wore the derby hat. Hmmm! I'm curious. Think I'll pretend I'm a diner and join the end of the line. The bald headed one is addressing Bozo and Mason, "You guys could have had a better finish. George, your fall to the mat looked a little phony. Some of the crowd suspected something!"

"I know, Chief, we got to practice it more."

"Now, this afternoon with your match with Tim, why don't you end it with his pinning you using a hammer lock?"

"Yeah, that's a possibility."

The bouncer speaks up. It must be Tim, "Chief, where in hell am I supposed to be from, outside of Brooklyn?"

"Well, you can be the farm boy from Geneva. Geneva is over east of here a ways."

Enough of this, I'm thinking, I'll leave these actors to down a big meal preparing themselves for their afternoon show. Another lesson at the Fair,



## Vignettes of the Fair

nothing is what it seems to be, especially on the midway. It's illusionary; it's a world of deceit and make-believe.

### XII.

Sunday morning at six o'clock, day is dawning in the east. I'm dressed, have gulped a quick breakfast, donned a lightweight jacket, and jump on my bicycle to do some fast pedaling to the fairgrounds. The Fair has run its course for four days and in the debris left behind I might find something of value, a pop bottle worth a nickel if returned to the grocery store, or a coin dropped by a patron on the midway, or a lost souvenir, a prize from one of the concessions. No time to lose, I must be on the scene early before other scavengers arrive.

I pedal into the fairgrounds, arriving out of breath. How quiet the grounds and surroundings are and what a contrast to the noise and bustle of yesterday. An orange tinted sun is climbing up behind me. What splendor, what beauty prevails on this crisp September morn. Not a soul is visible anywhere, but what's that stifling odor borne by the southwest breeze? Whooley! What a stench!. This stink must be coming from the old excavation inside the racetrack oval, from the two outhouses down in there (one for ladies, the other for gents) that have served the fairgoers for the past four days. Those outhouses must be piled high with human excreta - what a thought!! I pounce on the bike pedals and turn south to reach some untainted air.

Toward the midway, litter is scattered everywhere - paper cups, napkins, posters, programs, half eaten hot dogs, fragments of ice cream cones, popcorn boxes, candy wrappers, advertising circulars. Yesterday, the midway was an avenue of tents jammed with humanity. Today, the few tents that remain will be gone by midday. The area is a wasteland of rubbish scattered far afield, empty of inhabitants.

I dismount, push the bicycle along looking downward, examining the well worn turf of the midway, keeping near its boundaries where the patrons had reached into their pockets for coins in front of concessions, perchance dropping a dime or a nickel into the grass. Pop bottle caps, not coins, are the principal objects perceived having any resemblance at all to coins. After a few minutes of this search I'm about to admit defeat but then in the higher grass to the rear of where the 'swing the sledge hammer - ring the bell' concession was set up I spot a foil wrapped ten-cent cigar, totally preserved.

This is not a common five-cent variety; this is a Dutch Master Perfecto to be savored by a connoisseur of cigars. Such a prize has no personal value to

## Vignettes of the Fair

me but I'll give it to Dad to pass onto one of his card-playing buddies. Farther on toward the grandstand my eye catches a glimmer of a pop bottle apparently tossed toward the racetrack behind the location of the concessions on that side of the midway. I put the bottle into the wire basket attached to the bicycle handlebars.

Up ahead of me now is the south end of the grandstand and the separate ticket booth for admission thereto. The ground in between is well littered with half torn tickets and discarded race programs. I lean the bike against the top rail of the racetrack fence and ascend the short flight of steps into the grandstand. The tiers of foot high or higher broad steps serving as seating for the race patrons are littered with oodles of paper trash. I scurry up and down the high steps crisscrossing the grandstand from end to end looking for some token of value. The exploration appears unrewarding, but then on the north side almost to the top tier of seating, lying prone is that familiar green hourglass shaped Coca-Cola bottle worth another nickel. This brings my total treasure hunt profit to twenty cents, that is, two bottles and a ten-cent cigar.

What's that?! Footsteps behind me! Why, it's Bruce!

"You beat me to it," he says. "I noticed your bike down there with the one pop bottle and I see you have another."

"Yeah, I got up extra early to be here. What's your luck? Found anything?"

"One bottle that I hid near a post along the track. Will pick it up on the way out."

"Well, there doesn't seem to be anything else here of value. While we're here let's go up on the roof and look around."

As Bruce and I make our way toward the opening in the roof halfway along the uppermost tier of seating risers, I have flashes in memory of times past as a grade schooler looking for adventure, climbing onto this roof and all the other roofs in the rows of animal pens and horse barns. It was a childhood challenge.

The opening through the roof is about three by three feet. I spring up through it and crawl onto the roof. Bruce follows and we regain our upright stance. The roof slopes gradually upward toward the front of the grandstand to a ridge and thence slopes down an equal distance to the forward eaves. The major area of the roof where we're standing is emblazoned with brilliant yellow letters about twenty feet in height spelling out HEMLOCK. Beneath the name in the same color and stretching nearly the full length of the grandstand is an arrow pointing to the airport a mile away to the north, the airport constructed by Doc Trott, my next-door neighbor. I assume this navigational aid atop the grandstand is to guide any lost pilot to an

## Vignettes of the Fair

emergency landing strip.

Bruce and I ascend the slope to the ridge of the roof. Standing at the peak facing east we have a bird's eye view of the whole fairgrounds and the village beyond stretching from south to north along the main street. Trees mostly hide the houses, their foliage commencing to show their fall colors. The brilliant morning sun intensifies the hues of red and yellow. Off to our left toward the village the dense band of willows conceals the Hemlock Creek as it bends around the north end of the fairgrounds, runs southeast a bit before escaping eastward by the mill once powered by the stream. Closer to us the racetrack oval encompasses the baseball diamond where both our school and town teams have met their rivals. To our right remnants of the midway are still apparent and beyond the grounds are the fields and vineyards toward the lake. In every direction images come to mind of earlier experiences. This panorama before us signifies home. I perceive a keen sense of belonging.

This year's Fair is over; it's history now. I enjoyed it all: the camaraderie, the "educational" experience, and the human adventure. Where will Bruce and I be at this time next year? Both of us will have graduated from high school and have departed for places unknown. It's unlikely that either of us will be here then, or in future years. If we do return, the Fair will never be the same for us. It will have lost its fostering influence, its subtle power to teach us about life and people, its power to shape our character.

## The Visit

against death, plain wishful thinking, completely irrational, and contrary to nature.”

The bespectacled visitor appeared to squeeze his roll of printed matter more tightly, took a backward step, and in turning away mumbled condescendingly, “Thank you”. The vehicle backed out upon the highway and proceeded on its missionary journey.

Dar returned to his snow clearing, his thoughts preoccupied by the missionary zeal of the visitors and the rationale of their motivation. How can they in the present day world of scientific knowledge convince themselves that their concept of life and beliefs have any rational or natural foundation? Why do they persist in seeking converts? By gaining converts do they achieve a certain collective satisfaction that bolsters their spurious religious ideas, making them more convinced than ever of the validity of their dogma? Why don't those of a humanistic philosophy, proselytize their fellow humans? Because, to humanists it seems that the foundation of their philosophy is so obvious and logical that propaganda and persuasion are superfluous, he mused. Dar recollected that he arrived at his beliefs by his observations, experiences and education. He pondered: how many centuries or millennia will be required for a humanistic philosophy to prevail, or will some catastrophic experience of mankind force the issue before a pending degeneration and destruction?

With the last shovel of snow cast aside, Dar also cast aside his philosophic deliberations but with the profound hope that we live for human betterment and progress with the end result that the human race will eventually save itself, recognizing the sanctity, worth and dignity of each individual.

**This writing was given to my father, Mark Wemett, by Jack Evans. He told my father that he had heard of my fondness for local area history and related items.**