

The Town Marshal's Chevy or The One Ton Black Bat Affair

One evening, early in the spring, Lee Williams and I decided to go to Lynndyl, five miles away, to play some pool in Curley Mittan's pool hall. We went in Lee's dad's (the town Marshall) old Chevrolet coupe, a one seater.

The top was folded down so it was thrilling to split the breeze at 30 mph with the wind ripping at our hair and faces (we would later regret this break-neck speed.) It was long before state auto inspections. If it would move it was driven with, or without, any of the auxiliary systems. This chevy had headlights stabbing the inky blackness of a moonless night with all of 12 candlepower. Spiders had been living in the brake drums for years, being the quiet places they were. The only thing that happened inside the drums was that the turning wheels wound the cobwebs up tighter, making better bug traps.

I had never played pool before so I looked forward to this new adventure with such great excitement that my toenails got hot. At first I thought the manifold was leaking heat back through the firewall, but upon feeling my shoes I found the front end warm and shoe polish came off on my fingers.

We were sailing along, as I said, at break-neck speed. At one point in the route the gravel grade went down a little hill, and crossed an old meander of the Sevier river, still filled with swamp water. At the bottom of the hill, disaster struck in the form of five big cows lying in the middle of the road. A supine cow does not spring into action like a frog so undesirable events quickly developed.

Our 12 watt headlights were so dim we didn't see those enormous piles of hamburger-in-bed until we were about fifteen feet from them. Lee stomped on the useless foot brake twice before we smashed into the first big pile of unground meat. It was just beginning to get up onto its running gear so the car didn't run over it, the car ran INTO IT. It was actually a rather soft impact as live meat has no metal in it and the chevy was traveling at considerably less than a Mach I speed. Still, as I said, serious consequences did occur.

I don't remember the accompanying noise as the critter came up over the radiator--flattening it back over the top of the motor, mashing down every spark plug -and then on back to flatten the windshield and shower glass over us. We were instantly showered with it as broken glass slashed the meat bag open to soak us with what seemed like ten gallons of pulsating life-blood.

By then the car was hanging over the edge of the grade. It had tipped precariously to the right, threatening to dump us over into the slime infested horrors of the swamp. The night was black; the meat bag had wiped out our pitiful headlights, so it was as though we had been pitched into a bottomless chasm.

With out a single bellow of bovine distress, or other formalities our supercargo slid off the right side. The impact had apparently accomplished a merciful, instant kill.

I was covered with blood, on my face, chest, arms, hands and in my hair. Lee moaned, apparently suffering some kind of post-collision shock.

"I've got blood all over me", he gasped.

I even had blood on my lips and automatically licked it off. It wasn't your garden variety of smooth blood. It had little woody things in it, like ground up stems. I chewed some of these bits with my incisors, or tried to. They were very tough.

"What's the blood on you like?"

"It's kinda funny", Lee replied, "Not sticky like."

As my wits slowly kicked in, I smelled my hands and tasted a finger. "Know what?" These critturs have been feeding on juicy Russian thistle".

Lee answered, "Gack, choke, some of it. I think I swallowed some of it. If it wasn't so dark I'll bet it would be green."

We finally managed to wiggle and squeeze out of the seat. Finding a big rag under the seat, we wiped the "blood" off as best we could. Since we were headed for Curley's pool hall we naturally started off again on foot in that direction. We had stumbled along in the stygian blackness for about half a mile when a car came along headed in our direction. They naturally stopped, suffering from unquenchable human curiosity.

"That your wreck back there?" and then someone called with classical human stupidity~ "What happened?"

This is a favorite phrase humans use when they come across an obvious disaster. They saw cows, maybe a dead one, and the smashed up car, and were unable to figure out that the car had run into the cow. I said:

"Ya know, s'funny. We were traveling along when this big thing, looking like a one-ton bat, fell out of the sky on top of us, wrecking the car". Dead silence for awhile, then, "Git in." We got in, hoping they wouldn't see the green blood. They dropped us off at Curley's pool hall in Lynndyl.

True to form, the next car along was going toward Leamington. Now this was a quiet rural area so anything out of the ordinary excites great interest. People in that car had stopped and looking at our car said, "That's the marshal's car", and of course, "I wonder what happened?" Then they hurried on to Leamington, grabbing the first phone they could find to call the Marshal, hoping they would be the first to break the bad news to him.

"Enybody killed in the wreck? Looked re-e-I bad."

"What wreck", the Marshal gasped.

In the next half-hour he received three more calls, which naturally built his interest up to a wild frenzy. He organized a group of citizens and they sallied forth with ropes and pitchforks to drag the swamp for our pitiful, smashed up bodies.

After a bit of preliminary raking and poking around in the edge of the swamp by dim flashlight, most of which had nearly-run down batteries, someone had a bright idea: "How about I go to Lynndyl to see if the kids are there". And so it ended. Everyone piled into their cars and headed for Lynndyl.

Lee and I were calmly shooting pool in Curley's pool hall when an agitated group of citizens, headed by the Marshall, burst through the pool hall's screen door. They looked at us: we looked at them: thus ending the one ton black bat affair.

I don't remember how I got back to Leamington, but I do remember the old chevy, with its radiator smashed back over the broken spark plugs, setting beside an old shed at the Marshal's place for many years. Ah, those wonderful boyhood memories. For all I know, it may still be there.

Jim and Lee chicken boil - Leamington Crime in the Depression

This title shows up in dad's table of contents as having been written but I couldn't find it. The meaning is clear however. Lee and dad obviously helped themselves to someone else's chicken. The item also refers to "Meacham's bees" so there is probably more to the story than one deceased chicken. He and Lee seemed to have participated in a variety of on-the-edge schemes.

Horses

I felt like I had eaten part of someone after a recent encounter with a horse steak in the lunch room at the Harvard Faculty Club. This left me with a guilt complex that demanded some soul-searching. The event began as a dare. Horse steak? Sure!

While waiting for our order in the Club my friends and I chatted in a pseudo-casual manner creating the illusion that horse steak was as common to us as sauerkraut and wieners. Within our minds we were as apprehensive as anyone ever was when approaching a new experiment in food. So well did I effect the casual air that I even surprised myself by suddenly yawning. Underneath it all, however, I had the strange feeling that I was about to do something wrong, but in spite of this feeling everything went well. The steak tasted great.

I thanked my host and bent myself homeward but couldn't get over a vague feeling of guilt. As I walked a realization slowly emerged? I had eaten part of someone. Yes, that was it. Perhaps I had. Eaten part of someone's mother, or worse still, their sweetheart. I began to sweep things out of the shadows of memory into the middle of my conscious mind and found horses,- horses, and more horses. My mind focused on one compelling reality. When I was a boy horses dominated my life. Not the fillies at the race track, circus horses, nor romantic cow-ponies, but just plain, plodding work horses , all lacking the social graces. There were dullards, faithful hard workers, an occasional rogue, and some rather intelligent actors. Whatever my birthplace in the small Utah village of Leamington lacked in diversionary activities was somehow compensated for by the presence of horses. In those days, before tractors were the source of power on small farms, horses were afflicted on all small boys. Horses meant work, and sometimes injury and pain.

I was a World War I baby, born on the last fringe of a supposedly romantic era when man earned his bread by sweat, muscle, and blood—his and that of horses. The term "power brake" didn't exist but a wide range of swear words did, and were used in connection with horses. In that part of the west we knew nothing about mules and the alleged mule-skinners language—we didn't need to. Work horse cussin' was a highly developed verbal art. It was every boys fundamental course in bad language which emphasized invectives. We learned it from our Dads, brothers and neighbors, and even exercised considerable freedom in developing exclamations of our own when the inability of a work horse to read our minds ripped down the thin veil of patience.

I can think of almost no stressful experience in my formative years that did

not have at least one horse in the middle of it. I was bitten, stomped on, kicked, and strung out in runaways—all inflicted on me by horses. They provided me with a chance to witness, as well as experience, all the emotions of suffering and joy that boil over in the human soul. Success, defeat, happiness, fear, pain, anger, disgust and even pity, were all the result of encounters with horses.

Dobbin and Me in the Manger

One of my first recollections of horses was an experience of pain. But pain wasn't all I felt. I learned a lesson in manners as well, but I knew fear and revenge with an intensity I've never forgotten.

Father owned a pair of medium sized Roans which were able to do all the work on our small farm. From Hambiltonian stock, they were brother and sister, "Dobbin", and "Gen" respectively. I was too young to remember their mother "Doll", but according to father and neighbors she was the smartest horse known thereabouts. Her daughter, Gen, inherited a good deal of this intelligence, as we shall see a bit later on. My first experience was with Dobbin.

The winter's supply of alfalfa hay was stacked in a "stackyard" with corrals for hay-eating animals built around it. Mangers for feeding the hay were part of corrals along two sides of the stackyard. Horses, cows, and calves each had their own manger.

When the horses were not working during the winter they were put on standby rations consisting of coarse alfalfa stalks and stems which the cows wouldn't eat. The cows were fed fresh fragrant hay twice a day. Before each feeding several forkfuls of leafless stems and stalks were tossed over in front of the horses.

The cows, stupid, gentle creatures that they were, didn't realize we ran the hay through them just to make milk, which they faithfully did. As a kid I wondered if, due to some form of cow vanity, they nursed the idea that we were pleased with them because of their grace and beauty, and that this illusion made them fussy eaters. They continually tossed the hay over and over with their broad muzzles to get at the most tender morsels leaving a coarse remainder, saturated with juicy bovine belches, for the horses. I watched the horses behavior and always felt they were no less than insulted by this arrangement. They would sniff disdainfully at the first forkful of barren stalks to arrive, testing it gingerly with upswept nudges of their muscular upper lips. Then while staring imploringly at the feeder, a coaxing nicker would rumble deep within their chests,

as if to say: "Please, don't expect us to eat this junk? Remember how hard we worked for you in the hot sun last summer? Remember our noble heritage? We deserve better treatment. We'll throw up if you feed us cow belches". But all they got was an offering of coarse stalks flavored with bovine drool.

They would first nibble dejectedly around the outer margins of the pile, searching for less contaminated morsels. Eventually after a careful process of picking, nuzzling, and nibbling, the rearranged stalks and stems resembled a large pile of jack straws. The coarseness and amount of this remainder was in direct proportion to the amount of time they were forced to spend sorting it over before they received the next unwelcome offering. In spite of their apparent humility when being fed I believe their pleading-display was underlain by a deep seated hostility toward humans for such shabby treatment. And I had the bad luck to find this out.

When I was six years old I was given the job of opening the corral gate each forenoon so the cows could get out to drink from the irrigation canal. The horses could go anytime they wished. One morning, which has remained bright in my mind for over a half century, I ran afoul of Old Dobbin's hostility.

The cow's apartment was a horrible, stinky mess that even chickens wouldn't cross, so to get to the cow corral gate I chose to reach it through the horse manger. Old Dobbin was shouldered up to the end of his manger nearest the cows. This was his by right of size, disposition and seniority. Apparently it seemed to be the best place. It was as near as he could get to the fresh hay thrown to the cows.

Carefree and happy, one day I slid confidently over the smooth pole along the top edge of the manger and down into its highly polished depths. I expected Old Dobbin to retreat from my presence. After all I was a human and he was only a horse. About a foot from his lowered head I clucked a couple of times and waited expectantly. He merely tossed his head defiantly, and with a surly look proceeded to chew on a mouthful of stiff alfalfa stalks.

I was well aware that his look of defiant contempt and slightly back-cast ears warned me to be careful. Alas, the sight of a handful of long wiggling stems slowly disappearing between his thick rubbery lips, like they were being drawn in by a machine, fascinated me. I reacted as any small, red-blooded boy would have done. I impulsively reached up, grabbed a handful of stems and gave them a vigorous yank. He must have anticipated my action because he clamped down on the straws with his big incisor teeth and nothing moved.

Instantly I realized I was in big trouble for his eyes gleamed with satanic delight as his ears laid back out of sight along his neck and his mouth dropped the

sticks and reached for me.

Terrified I turned, reaching desperately for the upper edge of the manger. It was impossible to get a toehold on the highly polished manger wood. I knew my doom was sealed. In serious combat a horse can inflict deep wounds on an adversary with his sharp incisor teeth. Dobbin used his.

Grabbing a mouthful of shirt, hide, meat, and bones on my right shoulder he lifted me off the manger floor, dangled me a moment then dropped me onto the pile of stiff straws. I reacted again as any small boy would, just having been bitten by a mean horse. I screamed with all my might. I thought he was going to eat me. Dobbin was probably surprised that a little nip could release such a terrible racket. My prolonged outcry of great intensity brought mother flying out to my rescue. I'll carry the shoulder scar to my grave.

That night as I lay on my good shoulder in bed I could hear the subdued conversation of my parents in the next room. The discussion finally climaxed with a resolute affirmation by father: "...It's the only thing we can do". I knew they were talking about Old Dobbin and me. It sounded like they were going to shoot one of us, and because Dobbin was a very necessary power source on the farm, I wasn't sure which one of us it would be. But things worked out to my advantage.

A week later an itinerant horse trader came by and Old Dobbin went off down the lane among a dusty band horses with scarcely a backward glance. I have always thought biting me relieved a bitter resentment he felt because the cows got the best hay. I also realized that showing a little courtesy and respect for his rights would have spared me some pain.

Gen the Busybody in the Stackyard

From this time on horses dominated my life. Gen, the mare, was with us for many years. I learned many things because of her but she learned little useful from me. When I rode her without a saddle she made my ride as miserable and uncomfortable as she possibly could.

She had a terribly awkward, jolting gait, designed I'm sure, to shake my kidneys down into my back pockets. She had a large round belly and banged along on stiff legs in the most ungraceful, disjuncting gallop imaginable. I don't know how she managed to bound along in such a misaligned, half sideways manner. Her front and rear feet seemed to run on different tracks instead of the rear following the front. I always felt she did this sideways trick to infuriate me, and it did. I would whip her with the reins and kick her in the belly but this instantly

turned her legs into rigid shafts, making her jumps even more jolting and maddening. I could feel my guts being slammed around inside me. How I hated her for this, but she had other tricks contrived to harass me, and sometimes even endanger my life.

One speciality was the sudden side-jump while going at a full gallop. A jackrabbit exploding from a trail side bush was good for at least a four foot offset, with her head thrown up so high I knocked my chin on the crown of her head. It was many years before my chipped incisor teeth wore smooth. She worked at maintaining her half of a hostile relationship, with an automatic response to even the slightest threat of violence from me. Justified violence, of course, made necessary by her ornery ways. One of these automatic responses was a furious display I'll call the "rip-plunge-and tear", during which she rolled her eyes and seemed to go a little mad.

For this performance she perfected a frustrating trick of rearing back against a tie rope when I approached her in an agitated manner or shouted at her (stupid kid). On these occasions, correctly perceiving the possibility of a swift kick in the gut, she lunged backward into a wild escape procedure. And once she began rearing back she would continue to jerk her head around in a frantic manner, while throwing her body weight back against the rope until it broke or the hitching post was ripped from the ground. I'm sure I taught her this behavior. Sometimes this happened when I had her tied up in some remote mountain location where I had gone to hunt fossils. She would break loose and head for home leaving me to walk many weary miles, heaping a thousand curses on her miserable head every step of the way.

As an alternate to tearing loose in my presence, she would use her incisor teeth to untie the rope and head for home. More than once I returned from a long weary climb to find stink-bugs making tracks in the sand where she was supposed to be standing. Again there was the heaping of curses on her head as I stumbled home. I became so exhausted from walking and devising tortures to be inflicted on her wretched hide that when I got home long after dark she was forgotten. As time went on her cleverness knew no bounds as she began to exhibit some of her illustrious mother's tricks.

When she needed to relieve herself she would go to the corner of the corral where we piled the manure, turn around, back up to the pile, and leave her offering. One of her more clever acts was triggered when she suspected she was about to be roped and put to work. At such a time she staged a circus act.

When she saw Dad or I stop at the harness shed for a rope she would feign a bad limp and hobble pathetically across the horse yard, over the canal bridge, and

struggle up a short hill to the far corner of the enclosure. There she would wait in a very alert stance, and I approached her in an equally alert manner. She would make several short jumps, one way then the other, each time being headed off with a matching jump by me as I closed in. She submitted to the rope, but it seemed to me that she did so with condescension, while studying the event, trying to figure out a better way to elude me next time. This trick never kept her from being caught and used, but she never stopped trying with the same old pathetic act. She had other tricks, some of which occasionally paid her great rewards.

A restless busybody, she maintained a 24 hour schedule of patrolling every gate around her corralled area. She carefully checked each gate to see if it had been left without double security. She seemed obsessed with a desire to outwit us. If a gate wasn't double secured she opened it.

Wire gates look like a piece of wire fence, free on one end. This loose end is fastened in place by two systems, each with a snubbing post at the free end. One system simply used two wire loops, one fixed around the gate post near the ground, and the other around the gatepost a little less than the height of the snubbing post. To close this type of gate the lower end of the snubbing post is first dropped in the lower loop, then the snubbing post is pulled parallel to the gate post and the top loop dropped over the upper end of the snubbing post. This pulls the wires tight and makes a good gate.

The second system uses the fixed bottom loop, but at the top a two foot long stick is fastened by one end to the gate post with a piece of wire about a foot long. The loose end of this anchored stick is passed around the upper end of the snubbing post and drawn back to the gate post and secured by a small wire loop. The stick acts as an effective lever, drawing the wires very tight.

On the first system Gen used her chin to alternately pull in at the snubbing post, then push up on the wire loop with her nose. With endless patience she could worry such a gate open and head for forbidden pastures. To double secure this type of gate we tied down the top loop with a separate piece of wire.

On the second system she probably smelled where we always placed our hands and turned her attention to the lever stick. Using her muscular upper lip she would alternately nudge the lever stick in, then push on the wire loop holding the stick in place. Occasionally she could open one of these gates if we failed to double secure it. A third type of gate baffled her for a long time. This was the board gate with a sliding wooden bar.

The harness shed had one of these wooden gates. To lock this gate we had to reach over the gate and slide the wooden bar into a hole in the gate-post, but opening it was tricky. It was necessary to LIFT the wooden bar first before it

would slide out of the gate-post hole.

Dad thought it unnecessary to double secure this gate because it appeared too complex for a horse with only one nose. But a special treat waited for Gen if she solved the puzzle.

One end of the harness shed opened to the north side of the haystack which could provide her with an endless feast of hay, unblemished by bovine breath, if she could open the gate. One night she succeeded and after opening it and going through the shed, she turned around and closed the gate with her chin keeping her companion out while she feasted. She did this for several nights—going out through the harness shed and closing the gate behind her when morning came.

Since we hadn't used the shed during that time her clever trick wasn't discovered. But during one night of gluttony she forgot herself and left a conspicuous pile of evidence. That morning when Dad went out to feed the cows he noticed some fresh green areas along the weathered side of the stack, which had faded to a light tan color. It looked like an animal had been feeding there. Then he saw a group of happy sparrows busy on a fresh pile of damning evidence.

He tried the harness shed gate and found it closed but unlatched. He then recalled that on the previous three mornings Gen wasn't the least bit interested in the cow's leftovers but stood some distance away from the manger looking off into space while Dobbin was in his usual place eagerly begging for something better than the wretched, contaminated stubbles. I didn't dislike Dobbin. I wasn't old enough to ride him before he bit me.

We didn't own a saddle so all my riding as a small boy was done bareback. This provided me with a number of unwanted thrills and spills not available to those having something to hold on to.

I don't believe Gen was really skittish. I think she played the part as an excuse to dump me at the slightest excuse. When my legs grew longer I could partially clamp them around her fat belly by pushing my toes into the indentations behind her front legs. I was clamped onto her like a pair of calipers and rode this way in rough country.

Our farm included a rambling set of sand hills that topped out onto uninteresting clay flats. The miserable Russian Thistle had not yet spread its thorny plague across the country so barefoot rabbit hunting among the sand hills was a delightful pastime. Also there were things to investigate.

The Utah Juniper, locally called a "Cedar" tree, dotted the sagebrush covered hills and harbored many a surprise thrill. My range included about a half dozen large thorny-stick nests in these trees. The nests served the needs of several species of large birds. More than once I was startled when a Great

Horned Owl suddenly, silently, slid out of the depths of an old cedar's thick, dark green foliage. Very visible was the vigilant hawk, clipped to the highest twig on another tree critically monitoring the hot summer landscape with its incredible eyesight.

Old Dan Arrives

Soon after the departure of Dobbin with the horse trader, we acquired old Dan. His former owners, the Talbots, wanted him to be owned by someone who would treat him kindly. Father was a gentle man so the Talbots gave the horse to him.

Dan was old and came from some unknown, choice lineage. He was long-legged and built more like a race horse than the standard, broad rumped work variety. In spite of his age he shared the farm work with Gen and was a submissive creature, never provoked to rash acts. He had a noble quality about him that I greatly admired. Gen immediately asserted herself as the boss and took the best of everything. She now stood at the end of the manger nearest the cows. If it ever appeared to her that Dan had been given the best of the stubble she would lay back her ears, swing her head toward Dan in a threatening manner and he always obliged by patiently moving out of her way. She delighted in bossing him as much as she detested being ruled by Dobbin.

Dan had one remarkable ability: when matched with another horse he could instantly start off on a dead run as if he was shot out of a gun. He understood the racing start so well I was sure he had been at the post. He couldn't run any great distance because of his age but he could outstart every horse in the neighborhood. I was justly proud of him.

He had a long stride and smooth gallop so infinitely superior to Gen's that it always infuriated me to get back on her and have her bound along in her stiff-legged, spine shattering lope. I would roughly jerk her to a stop, cussing her out roundly and start her over again. This was the worst possible thing I could do for then she knew I was at her mercy and took fiendish delight in actually jumping along in a much stiffer gait than before—adding more side-drift from the stern. I was too exasperated to do anything to improve her in anyway way. (It never occurred to me that I may have been a poor teacher)

Leamington is distributed along a small valley at the mouth of a canyon. The Sevier River and the Union Pacific Railroad emerge from the canyon and in a general way follow each other out across the great Pahvant Valley of middle Utah.

Since it was about a half hour, by horseback, to the mountains I rode into them frequently looking for fossils. I usually rode Gen because she was younger and stronger than Dan. Gen was never unwilling to go but I knew she felt doing so was a gross imposition on her busy schedule. If I was not very careful in tying her rope when I left her to climb a mountain she would promptly untie it and head back home, with a big grin on her face, I'm sure.

For years during my teens, in good weather, I spent at least part of each weekend collecting fossils in the mountains. Father was an amateur naturalist and provided me many chances to develop my interests in natural history. I had four sisters and no brothers. Our house was small so father gave me a one room building a short distance from the house where I slept, invented things, studied guitar, did taxidermy, and kept all my collections. These collections included bird eggs and some nests, various stringed instruments, many invertebrate fossils, many Indian relics collected by me, my stuffed birds, a few animal skins, my experiments with dry cell electricity, my art work, and a vast number of miscellaneous treasures. But I did do some things with a friend just for fun.

The Wild Stallion

Darryl Moulton and I made occasional trips into the mountains to hunt wild horses. These trips were exciting adventures and though we always returned empty handed we were always well paid by the thrills of the chase. Wild horses in that area were smaller than domestic ones but were well proportioned and excellent travelers in rough country. When caught and "broke" they made excellent mounts for mountain travel. They were said to be descendants of ancient Spanish stock that spread over the country after Columbus. I doubt this, but they fascinated us.

I remember one magnificent, comparatively large, sorrel stallion. He was in charge, and the protector of, a small band of mares and colts, but occasionally we did sight him alone. His bright coat made him conspicuous among the dark green cedars or out in the dusty-green sagebrush flats. He was wise and aggressive making him a clever opponent in our game of chase so it was him we always sought. We did encounter him at close range a few times but usually saw him on a ridge above us, silhouetted against the sky, or in a saddle between two peaks waiting and watching. When he did run it was with his neck arched and his long mane and tail flowing out behind. He was a thrilling sight.

In a few strategic locations near the mountains stockmen had built blind

trap-corrals in the dense cedars. These were used to catch wary range animals, horses and cows. Drift fences ran for some distance out in the dense cedars from either side of the trap gate. Riders could crowd animals against one of these fences and press them hard until they suddenly found themselves in a circular corral with excited pursuers eagerly shoving home poles closing the opening. The surrounding fence was usually more than six feet high.

Once we came upon the sorrel stallion in just the right location as he was coming up from the river. By riding hard onto him we shoved him into one of these hidden traps. What happened next, I shall never forget. It was one of those rare moments of life-in-the-wild when a human is allowed to witness the thunder gods scream down from on high to invigorate a freedom loving animal with the energy of an exploding bomb.

Never in my life have I seen such agitated fury. We feverishly jammed the poles across the entrance, shutting off his retreat and even reinforced the poles with two large cedar posts. The stallion was like a wild-cat in a pen full of dogs. So intense was his love of freedom and so boundless was his determination to regain it that he dashed around the corral like an insane demon.

Our lathered mounts panted wearily, showing no sign of triumph over their wild brother, as he was dashing madly around in circles developing an ever increasing hysteria. So sublime was his passion to escape and so awesome and spectacular was his muscular display that a cold wave of doubt and regret swept over me. What could we possibly do with such an untamable fury? And why did we presume to tangle with wild lightning?

My doubts and regrets were soon dispelled. With one demoniacal scream of rage he flew directly across the corral and in one supreme effort cast himself high upon the six foot fence. It held, but with legs a thrash he literally clawed himself up and over the crest pole to land outside on his right shoulder. My partner gave a loud gasp. In a moment the stallion sprang to his feet, defiantly shook his head, and after swinging around in a semicircle with mane and arched tail flowing in the wind, bounded off into the dense cedars and freedom.

What a marvelous, fantastic creature! We both heaved a great sigh of relief and admiration. It was such an emotional moment we didn't know whether to laugh or cry. It was truly one of the most dramatic events I ever witnessed. Since then, during more than a half century of experience on four continents, I have never seen anything to equal it.

The Shepherd and the Wildcat

On one of our trips into the mountains Darryl and I ran into a large herd of sheep. We found the sheep herders camp-wagon situated on high ground for the best view of the grazing herd. We decided to visit him in hopes of being fed some mutton stew. It was late in the day and at our age we were always hungry.

The shepherd was at his camp and gave us a hearty welcome, saying we were just in time as he was about to set down to supper. What good luck! He dug around in a bin full of miscellaneous objects and came up with two tin plates. Wiping the dust off with his sleeve he set them out for us. Swallowing hard we crowded up around his tiny, knee-high table and fell to.

The stew was delicious and we each had two helpings, and while we ate we couldn't help but notice that the shepherd had three parallel scars down the left side of his face. It looked like he had been run past the tie cutter on a threshing machine.

Noticing our curiosity he said he'd been clawed by a wild cat and this was his story: His two dogs were creating a terrible racket one evening after cornering a wild animal in a clump of sagebrush nearby. Going out to investigate he saw them jumping at something in the sagebrush but couldn't tell what kind of critter it was. Moving in closer he saw it was a big wildcat. At the same time the wildcat saw him and decided he was a better tree than the sagebrush. It leaped out of the brush and onto him. It climbed up his body, knocking his hat off to perch on top of his head.

Then the dogs, having "treed" the cat, set up a great howl and began jumping up and clawing him to get at the cat. He said he turned around a time or two to get shed of the cat but it was well dug in and hung fast. Then he lost his balance and fell over backward, with the two dogs and the wildcat fighting on top of him. Fortunately the wildcat soon left for higher ground with the dogs in full pursuit. We then noticed a slit in the top of his right ear and some light scars on his right temple.

We finished the stew and thanked him. He got up, and gathering up the three plates stepped outside and set them up in a row, leaning against the front end of the wagon tongue like in a shooting gallery. The dogs came running and quickly licked the plates clean. "Beats washin' 'em", the shepherd said with a wink. Darryl and I looked at each other and gulped, but managed to keep a tight cork on our stomachs. We talked about it on the way home and wondered if we would break out in some dog disease.

Gen the Runaway Mare

I was an unwilling victim in several "runaways" conducted by Gen. When she was hitched to any piece of farm machinery, and something unusual happened, such as a loud noise, or a sudden movement near by, her standing rule was to run, run as fast as she could, run through the tomatoes and rutabagas, run through weed patches and piles of old tree limbs, run, run, run through barbed wire fences, run through netwire fences, run through pole fences, run, run until she, and everything connected with her, smashed into a 100 foot high wall, or its equivalent. Dan was a follower, and since she had the personality of a shrew he had to run with her to please her. Together they stampeded me through some wild smashups.

In those days, and in that region, a "runaway" was also called a "string-out", and meant just that. Pieces of farm equipment, kids, dogs, wagon wheels, water barrels, chickens, ducks, geese, straw stacks, and maybe a pigpen, would be strung out the full length of the homestead. With everyone present running after the departing circus, yelling, stumbling, cursing, praying, hoping that at least the kid wouldn't be torn limb from limb. On our farm it was always Gen that started such events.

Gen had one infuriating habit which launched more than one runaway. She persisted in practicing this trick at regular intervals every time she was hooked to a wagon. She would duck her head below the neck yoke and pull her head back up, rubbing the crown of her bridle up against the yoke in a manner designed to pull the bridle off. She occasionally succeeded when the throat latch wasn't fastened or was too loose.

One grand runaway developed when this happened in our east field one day, higher than the middle field, where Dad and I were loading up the haywagon. Dad pitched the hay up, while I tromped it down and drove the team. I moved them forward as needed, progressing from one pile of hay to the next. Everything went well except that Gen was unusually impatient. Every ten or fifteen minutes she would jerk the neck yoke up with her head, and then it happened.

She ducked her head, raking the top of it up against the neck yoke as it came back up, and off came her bridle. This made it impossible to control her. When I saw her bridle drop off I yelled "Whoa!" in the terrified screech of a nine year old. This activated both animals like a starting gun. Gen leaned into her collar, Dan joined her and down we came off the high field. I was yelling, "Whoa! Whoa!", with the team responding as if hit with a bullwhip. The wagon was only a quarter full providing little drag to their acceleration as they put forth a tremendous effort. I guess old Dan fantasized he was once again on the racetrack.

Down we swept across the head of the garden, through the top of the melon patch. Smashed up chunks of half ripe melons exploded in all directions. Dad in frantic pursuit ran through a soggy hail of pink pulp, while on went the melon express. It lunged up a short pitch, wheeling precariously into a sharp left turn through a gate, which it barely missed - hen with the wheels flinging dry clods like a slingshot, smashing glass in the washhouse window, and splattering the surface of water in the trough, we headed for the stackyard where we always stopped to unload. We didn't stop this time but roared on by, out across the canal bridge and up the short hill, following our usual turnaround pattern.

The outside wheels slashed deep furrows in the sand as we careened around the circle and headed back down towards the bridge. The team had walked the route many times and so automatically followed the tracks. As we neared the bridge we made a sharp right turn with gouging outside wheels spraying an elegant sand-fan across purple stinkweeds. Bounding over the bridge we headed back in the opposite direction from which we came. It looked like we would pass the hay pole and watering trough, go down the steep pitch and back up to the east field where we would turn around and come back down the slope, across the end of the garden, forever making a big circle. But something intervened to change our course: one determined Dad.

He was hidden in the harness shed and when we came even with it he made a flying tackle against Gen's head with such force that she and Dan were thrown around at right angles to our course, heading us up toward some giant silver maple trees planted by grandfather Jensen fifty years earlier. (Oh. thank you grandpa!)

Dad had a positive stopping place in mind as he stubbornly hung on Gen's collar, pounding the side of her neck with the flat of his hand, forcing her head in toward Dan, which steered them on a course straddling a huge tree. The end of the wagon tongue crashed into the tree and both horses were slammed around so their heads banged against the tree, one on each side, partially stunning them in an instant stop. I was up against the front end of the hay rack, between the hay and the "ladder", a wooden upright used to fasten the lines to the team. When the tongue rammed the tree with zero compression my chest was jammed up against the ladder with such force as to knock the wind out of me.

Dad panted, "Are you hurt? Are you hurt?" All I could do was groan and gasp. We had just executed the quickest stop ever made by a team, wagon, and kid. This escapade wasn't the worst of Gen's evil tricks. She was yet to inflict painful, bloody wounds on her running mate in another wild string out. One which had to do with cut up cats.

WARNING!!

(delicate city dudes skip this gory event. It's only for farm kids who are used to seeing blood and animals killed, as we did pigs, chickens, and other food animals for eating).

The String-out

I was mowing hay in the east field one warm day in June, and had a wild string-out that ended up with blood at each end. This affair was triggered by cats, not Gen, but she deserves blame for a long disastrous run.

Dad was trying to raise 500 young chickens but was losing many of them to abandoned cats. We lived at the edge of town where irresponsible townspeople chucked their cats. Surplus felines were hauled to the top of the hill south of our place and dumped.

This turned out to be great for the cats, but not so great for Dads economic future. His investment was disappearing into cats at an alarming rate. The cats enjoyed a luxurious life, feasting on the young chickens and then retiring to the dense growth of an alfalfa field to hide out during the day. But their luxury and security were doomed to end as the summer advanced. The alfalfa matured and had to be cut for hay. And so there I was up in the east field, one warm day in June, cutting the hay with Gen and Dan.

In a hayfield the mower starts around the outside edge of the field, going around and around the patch in ever decreasing circles. The uncut alfalfa diminishes in area with each circle. Free-loading cats hiding in the field move toward the center of the circle as the mower goes 'round and 'round. Finally the cats crouch in one narrow strip of alfalfa, to be cut in the last pass. I was making this last pass when the mower cut some legs off a cat. It began springing up and down like a jumping jack. I immediately stopped the horses and got off the mower to put it out of its misery with the butt end of my whip.

Forgetting the horses I concentrated on sending the cat to its ancestors and in doing so created somewhat of a disturbance. This was Gen's cue to act. She triggered Dan to move and off they went on a dead run. They were headed east but made a wide half-circle and headed back toward the garden and chicken coops with me in hot pursuit. The cutter blade shrieked in a high pitched clatter as the mower traveled several times beyond its normal operating speed, which I couldn't match.

Two locust trees stood on each side of the road between the garden and

chicken coop. The cutter bar on the mower had to be raised to pass between these trees. I puffed along in sweaty fear, wondering what would happen when horses and mower hit that narrow opening. The cutter bar whacked a full swath across the top of the garden with a fresh vegetable salad boiling up from the singing blades. And then it happened? in several disastrous seconds it was all over. The cutter bar hit the right locust tree, snapping off the tongue, then the mower swung around to pass through the opening half sideways. This threw it off to the left where the left wheel ripped a huge chunk out of the corner of the chicken coop.

As the mower followed the horses off in a cloud of splintered wood and tar paper a flood of chickens blew out of the hole, flapping, squawking, scattering in all directions. This tumbling tide of white feathers and red heads spread out and subsided by the time I came gasping along. The mower continued to follow the horses across the next field, even though I could see something was wrong in the way that it swung wildly to the left and then to the right.

The tongue was broken but the double trees were still attached to the mower frame. Each time the mower swung to the right the cutter bar, with the blade reciprocating madly, swooped in and chopped old Dan's heels. For some reason Gen ignored the regular route past the chicken coop and up the short hill into the corrals, instead she steered the chicken harvester a bit to the right and headed across the west field which ended at a high netwire fence. This fence ran north and south along the main graveled road.

By now my lungs burned and my lower teeth felt like they were rotting out from intense over-exertion. With tears thickened by chicken dust streaming back across my cheeks and into my ears I saw the team hit the fence.

Strangely, the netwire fence held. Bulging away out toward the highway it stopped the wild stampede of destruction. Mother heard the racket made by the wildly clattering cutter of the coop chopper and acting from experience came to the rescue.

Being raised on a farm where she and her two sisters had to do the work of two men, nothing could happen around horses that she hadn't already experienced. When she saw the team heading for the fence she grabbed a bucket. Dipping it deep into the flour bin she kicked the screen door open and sailed across the stubble field on a dead run. Flour dust flowed out behind her like smoke from a small, calico-colored steam engine. I had barely reached the sweating, panting horses and their infernal machine when she puffed up behind me.

She quickly surveyed the wreck for damaged horseflesh, which is usually present when a horse ends up in a fence. The front end was dry but in the rear

Dan was losing a lot of blood from his chopped up heels. Mother knelt down close to them and began throwing handfuls of flour on the spurting blood. I didn't know what she was trying to do but in a few moments I saw. The flour soon congealed into a thick, tough crust, stopping the bleeding.

I was about ten years old and short on emergency experience so I stood by dumbly as mother unhooked the team from the mower and moved them back out of the fence. Then she unfastened their neck yoke straps and, getting between them, led them back across the field toward the corrals. I followed carrying the bucket of flour. She knew she had to get Dan back to where he could be taken care of before he collapsed from shock, which he did soon after I helped her unharness him.

With a great sigh he came down on his right side under a big tree across from the harness shed. Mother made sure his heels were not bleeding by throwing on some more flour and we left him there. She said? "there isn't anything we could do now but leave it up to him." I didn't know what that meant but in later years came to understand that she meant it was up to his will to survive. I didn't think he was hurt as bad as he imagined. He acted like he was going to die.

He lay under the big tree for four days occasionally rubbing his head on the ground, in a nodding manner, and groaning a bit. Chickens wandered by, scratched their way around him and left. On the third day a magpie flew down to roost on the end of an old wagon box nearby. It watched Dan for awhile wondering if he was a dead carcass but when Dan moved his head the magpie flew off in disgust. In the forenoon of the fourth day I was perched on the old wagon box wondering how long old Dan would lay there, when he raised his head and looked around. He saw he was still on earth and not in horse heaven so he decided to get up.

Horses raise the front end first, cows the back end. Dan awkwardly got his front legs under him and hesitated for awhile, wondering if he could make it. I wanted to help him but sat and watched. Finally he heaved his body forward onto his front legs and pulled his right leg around under his belly and up he came. For a moment I thought he was going to fall back down but he steadied himself. I ran over to him to see if his heels would start bleeding again. They didn't. All I saw was thick, broken flour crusts, stained dark with dried blood. After awhile he hobbled slowly down to the water trough and took long, slow drinks of water. Then he just stood there for a long time with his head hanging down so low his nose almost touched the water. I'll never forget what a pitiful sight he was, but he lived for many years after that.

Mother the Horse-Handler

Mother was a most remarkable woman. She was small but more than made up for it by her grit and determination. After I reached my full height I could hold an arm straight out and she could walk under it. How she ever threw a harness on a horse when she was a girl, I'll never know. When I was very small she would hook Gen's mother, Doll, up to the one-horse buggy and go to town. Doll was cranky and flighty, and hard to control when frightened, as by a passing steam locomotive and train. A neighbor told me years later, with admiration, that when mother got her hands on the lines of any horse, balky or wild, the horse always had to yield to her will. But she also had a gentle touch with horses, particularly with Dan. Sometimes Dad had to call on her when we were unloading hay.

Hoisting the hay up from the wagon onto the haystack was done with a cable strung up through the free-swinging arm on our haypole. It was powered by one horse. We used Dan because he was heavier than Gen. He was unhooked from the wagonload of hay and hooked to the end of the haypole cable, which ran along the ground away from the haypole. When he pulled, the four tined Jackson fork went up, when he backed it came down.

A Jackson fork has a triangular oak framework with four (or more) curved tines fixed along the base of the triangle. A bail is hinged to this base and so proportioned that it would lay against the two short legs of the triangle to be secured there with a catch. The trip-rope was attached to this catch.

The cable, with Dan on the other end, was attached to a ring at the top of this bail. When the bail was latched the cable would lift the oak framework in a way that caused the tines to hook into the hay, picking up a load. When the trip-rope was jerked the latch released the bail, letting the tines drop and dump the hay.

When everything was ready to unload a full wagon, I would lead Dan forward a short distance. This raised the Jackson fork from the haystack, where we left it at the end of our last unload. Dad, standing on the load of hay, and holding the trip rope, would pull the Jackson fork from over the haystack around until it hung over the wagon. I would then back Dan up, lowering the Jackson fork, and as it came down Dad would guide its four tines into the hay. When they were set as deep as he wanted them, he would push the bail down with his feet until it snapped into place and then call, "Take 'er up".

As I led Dan forward the cable lifted the Jackson fork of hay up off the wagon, with Dad holding the trip rope. When the fork was high enough to swing over on the haystack I stopped Dan and when Dad calculated the fork had swung into a good position he would jerk the trip rope. This unlatched the bail, letting

the tines drop down to dump the hay on the stack. This was a routine operation and generally went well.

Sometimes, however, Dad would set the tines too deep in hay that wasn't completely dry, making the load too heavy to lift. At least that's what Dan thought. He would lean against his collar, and when he had applied what he thought was sufficient force and the load hadn't come off the wagon, no amount of jerking on his bridle by me could convince him to try again, and strangely I never felt like hitting him, as I would have done Gen. I would have taken delight in beating her to a pulp.

When this occurred Dad would loudly call, "Dorothy!" a time or two and mother would come out to handle old Dan. He would be standing with his head hanging down in an attitude of defeat. Mother would walk up to him and begin talking to him in a sympathetic voice. "Good old Dan, good old boy. Load too heavy? they're working you too hard? You need some sympathy and encouragement?—all the while rubbing and patting his head and neck.

Old Dan, the big boob, would stand there and cry. I couldn't believe my eyes the first time he did this. Huge tear drops rolled down the full length of his long face to drop in the dust. It was incredible. Then mother would gradually change her voice to a more assertive tone and give him a good pep-talk. When she felt his spirit was rejuvenated, because he was holding his head higher, she would say, "Now let's pull, you can do it, lean hard, dig in your feet, etc." and pull on his bridle and Dan would lean into his collar and dig in his feet and with a mighty heave the load pulled free from the wagon and went on up to the stack. To this day I can clearly see Dan's huge teardrops impacting the powdered earth, making little explosions of dust as they hit. Mother's powers of persuasion never failed to amaze me, be they used to subdue a flighty, balky horse, or to build up Dan's self confidence. I never saw her work with cows.

Fossil-Hauling Cart

I never had any bad experiences with Dan when he was not teamed up with Gen. I used him to haul fossil bearing limestone chunks down from the mountains. By the time I reached my teenage years we had Model T car and no longer used the buggy for general transportation. The buggy along with extra wheels, axles and other spare parts, rested under a huge silver maple tree at the end of the lane Grandfather Jensen planted many years before. It was a very interesting collection, one which sparked an idea.

Most of the fossils I found in the mountains could be carried home on the back of a horse but some of the specimens were in heavy chunks of rock. I decided to build a two wheeled cart in which to haul them down. I worked on this cart out behind the house. Why I used that location, I don't know, but I dragged two willow poles down from the east field for the shafts. Using odd pieces of lumber I fashioned a box anchored on the axle between the two shafts. I attached a buggy seat on top of this box making a functional cart which I used to haul several hundred pounds of limestone down from the mountains.

I had one specimen weighing about sixty pounds which proved to be more than I could carry down off the ridge. One Saturday Dad rode out with me and carried the block down to the cart. I used the cart for several years, wearing out one of the wheels.

One trip, when I was still a mile away from my mountain destination, the metal tire came off and the fellows collapsed on the right wheel. This left only the spokes to support the cart, which they did, leaving a line of puncture marks along the ground. Surprisingly I completed my collecting trip and the trip back home traveling only on the ends of the spokes. They sank a bit too deep into sandy ground and took a beating when I got back on hard gravel road, but they took me home. Dan and I were teamed up on a number of projects. One was hauling water.

Leamington School (Rondo)

When dad went to school in Leamington he attended an old building that was replaced sometime in the mid 1930's. This is what it looked like, a brown brick building with two stories.

He was skipped one grade about the third grade, a change that he says was not good for him. I don't know where that comment is but you'll find it as you read his writings in this volume.



After finishing all of the grades available in Leamington School he had to go to Delta High School, a sort of regional highschool for that part of the state.

Hauling Water and a Well (Alvin)

We lived at the end of the town pipeline which was badly in need of repairs. The tile and wood collection line up in Fool Creek Canyon was badly plugged with tree roots. The settling tank on top of the bluff above Leamington had remained nearly full of sediment for years. There were numerous leaks along the line, with one a half-mile from our tap creating a swamp a quarter of a mile long. The result was scarcely a dribble from our tap and from that of our neighbors, the Olsons.

Dad finally gave up trying to get the town to repair the line and built a low sled. Placing a large wooden barrel on the sled he had me use old Dan to haul water from Caleb Dutson's place a half-mile from home. The sled runners were shod with an old buggy tire to prevent wear when I had to cross the gravel road. The rest of the time I kept to the grassy barpit where the sled slid along with a minimum amount of friction. Even so I would have to stop every few hundred yards to let Dan rest. Because of age his chest muscles would shake and quiver from the exertion. I really felt sorry for him but he never failed to make the pull back home. A sixty five gallon barrel of water, plus the sled, weighed almost a half ton for him to drag along the ground.

After Dan and I dragged water with the sled for nearly a year Dad dug a well east of our house. He boxed in a six by six space on the ground, built a windlass and started down. He struck water twenty nine feet down and in another three feet he hit a hardpan which represented the base of the water table. Water level stabilized at thirty feet.

A well pulley with a double length of three quarter inch rope and two buckets kept me busy for many hours a week. I drew water one bucketful at a time for all the animals, the weekly washing, and household use, including Saturday night baths for all. I developed great triceps, which I never found any use for the rest of my life. This particular muscle group in the upper arm functions when you extend your arm and push your hand down and should have been very helpful for doing pushups which noone ever forced me to do.

Lost in a Tumbleweed Trap

[Written to his cousin Naomi Stout, the one he wrote the Ole Cat story for.]

Dear Naomi:

When I was about 16, a group of us in Leamington got up a hill-billy band and

played for dances here and there. I have in mind to tell you about being caught in a tumble-weed trap, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the winter, in the middle of the mountains east of Leamington.

One of our trips was up to play a little burg called Mills, in the middle of nowhere. There a wonderful bunch of people would come down out of the alkali hills to dance to the haunting music of Curley Mittan and his Bridge Mountain Ramblers, actually just a bunch of hick kids who banged, twitched and squoze noise out of a number of instruments including an accordion. What a wonderful bunch of unsophisticated people they were. They didn't even care if we could carry a tune, just make some rhythm for them to stomp around on their dusty old school house floor. There was no pavement outside so everyone came in with muddy feet. There was no use trying to get the floor slick with cornmeal, everyone just skated around on the dirt like they were on ball bearings.

In wintertime we sometimes had a tough time getting back over Leamington Pass because of the snow. I can never forget one wreck that, looking back, was pure comedy. We were in a borrowed old 1929 Chevy, with poor lights and no brakes. Brakes weren't crucial as the car would never go very fast, so we figured we could all pile out if we should happen to come upon a big cow. Well, this one night, we had a hard time getting out.

It was snowing pigs and sheep when we hit out from the school house in Mills and started the long climb up to Leamington Pass. The road went up and down a lot as we had to cross the main drainage, and this spelled our doom.

Going down one steep hill and then up another the engine died just before we reached the top. The falling snow was a white curtain; the manual windshield wiper was operated by someone who could barely keep one small arc open for the driver to peer through into the white blanket ahead. All the windows were plastered white with wet snow and when the engine conked out, without any brakes we simply rolled backward down the hill. The driver steered back and forth across the one lane grade and all seemed to be going well.

At the bottom of the hill was a bridge over a deep wash and then the road went back up the opposite hill. The driver, steering blindly backward, managed to keep two door Chevy pretty much on the narrow grade until it just about reached the bridge and then it began to angle off to our right and soon was tipping at a precarious angle as we reached the bridge and stopped. We all sat as still as death with the car tilted away over toward an unknown fate below. Then slowly but surely it began to tip over and landed almost upside down on the 'side of a little bit of grade that crossed the bridge. Window glass shattered. There was no safety glass in those days.

Deep snow cushioned the cars fall so it didn't roll on down into the deep wash, but just hung there sort of suspended by the snow. There was confusion inside, as you can imagine, as we struggled to get our bearings. The broken glass cut Dan Emmett's hand and then his blood added to the confusion as we all tried to find out if we were the one who was cut up. Someone yelled, "Who's bleedin?"

That model Chevy had two doors, each about as large and heavy as a box-car door. We finally got the upper (driver's side) door unlatched and five pairs of arms and legs managed to shove it directly up so it would swing forward and let us out. Dan Emmett was the first to crawl up out of what was quickly developing into a den of crazy snakes, all writhing and squirming around, and voices below were yelling for him to jump so he jumped off on the down side.

I still don't know why everyone jumped off on the down side, into the wash, instead of jumping off onto the bridge side, but they all jumped over into the wash-- with remarkable results. The second man up was Lee Williams, but instead of jumping he hesitated on the edge of the car for what seemed to us an awfully long time. We began yelling to him to get out of the way; jump; move it; etc. He finally disappeared over the side and the next man up was me.

As soon as I got my head up out of the snake pit, I looked over the edge frantically to see where the first two men were. The falling snow made visibility like trying to look through a popcorn waterfall. Where were Dan and Lee? They had completely disappeared into the white void below the wreck, which is the reason why the second man hesitated so long; he was trying to see where the first man landed. I didn't want to jump until I could see where the first two bodies were, but I hesitated too long and the "snake pit" below me turned into a mass of writhing bodies which finally impatiently erupted shoving me off into white oblivion.

I soon learned the mystery of where the first two men were; I landed on them. The deep wash had blown full of tumble weeds, which were strong enough to hold up the snow but not strong enough! to support one, two, three, hurtling bodies; and in the next instant another body crashed down on top of the three of us.

As each man hit the snow covered tumble weeds he shot down through the snow and into the deep tumble weeds without leaving a hole behind. Now with four of us in a jumbled heap in the bottom of the wash, everything became so confused I cannot, to this day, remember how we thrashed, clawed, cussed, pulled and shoved each other up out of that tumbleweed trap.

We got out and hiked about a mile up to old man Sercy's place, who had a dry farm in the Pass, where we found warmth and help. Somehow we got back to Leamington late the next day. But that was only one of our winter escapades, but certainly one I'll never forget. I hope the memory goes with me when I die.

Where ever I end up it will always be good for a laugh.

Hauling Wood

I worked our team of horses on many different projects. When I was a mid-teenager I would take the wagon into the sand hills on top of the clay flats south of our farm to haul in the winter's wood. In one area cedar trees thrived with some of them large enough to provide a complete winter's fuel. One of these great old trees loaded the wagon too heavy and had to be split before being hauled home. The trip was about five miles with a third of the distance being through soft sand. It took me all day to collect one of these cedars.

I first dug around the tree and cut the major support roots. A cedar tree's roots never go deep but spread out radially making it easy to unfasten the tree from the ground. I then climbed up in the tree, pulling a log chain with me and fastened it as high as its length would permit. Then hooking the team to the other end we toppled it. When the tree fell there was always a breathtaking, moment of uncertainty: would I be able to whip the team up fast enough to get them out beyond the reach of the treetop when it crashed. Gen could never pull a runaway when hooked to one of these trees, which weighed several tons.

After limbing the tree I would pull it to the top of a small rise. Then after positioning the wagon by the hill, parallel to the tree, I laid two skid-poles, brought for that purpose, from the hill over to the wagon. The tree was far too heavy for me to roll across on the skids so I used the team to get it on the wagon. Laying the chain over the wagon I fastened one end to the log and hooked the other end to the team. I never failed to load a log with this system. Another project I worked the team on was leveling land.

Tongue Scraper and Leveling Land

Dad owned an uncultivated quarter section of land covered with low sand hills. He had me take the team and tongue scraper (which had no tongue) a half mile to this land and work at leveling the hills. It was slow work and required a certain agility on my part. When I had the team in position to make a cut I pulled the scraper by its two handles, back to a forty five degree angle, and then climbed up between the handles to stand on the scraper and make the blade dig in.

A couple of feet off the ground, I had to hope the blade wouldn't hit a hard spot or root and fling me like a catapult, up between the horses. If this were to

happen *Gen*, of course, would take off on a dead run with me and the scraper being dragged along in a tangled mess through brush and weeds.

I had miscellaneous other bad experiences with our horses when I was young and when I began to hire out to the neighbors I was unhappily involved with their horses as well. But none were as tricky and obstinate as old *Gen*, cuss her ornery hide.

The Great Pigpen Standoff

Two old-country characters lived in Castle Gate, Utah (circa 1911), a rough coal mining town in eastern Utah. Emilio was an immigrant farmer from Italy; Nick "The Greek" worked in the mines as a trammer. He pulled loaded coal cars out of the mine with a mule, then returned the empties.

The layout of the town is of particular interest to this saga: homely company shacks crowded up near the mine portal. The location of these tar-paper homes looked like a fist full of match boxes crammed into the mouth of Price River Canyon. And while the canyon choked for many years on this unwelcome mouthful, the mine portal was an unobstructed hole in the side of the mountain. The pure coal seams inside were waste-free so no dirty waste dumps stretched away from the portal like rock fingers.

The community of Castle Gate was bulldozed away long ago to make way for progress, but not before our two characters had time to live out a long bitter dispute, pass away and begin to coalify in their graves.

Both men were hard working and honest but fate dumped a load of waste on their relations. They were remembered, not for their children or skills, but for "The Great Pigpen Standoff", an historical event now well accepted as pure unadulterated mule muffins, due to its being told thousands of times. However, I got the story directly from an old timer whose brother once stood alongside the famous pig pen, and even ran his hand along the top pole. Unfortunately, his thumb picked up a nasty sliver. It was loaded with tiny microbes which took charge of his body. Alas, he died of hogsfoot sclerosis. God rest his soul.

Now, the "standoff" was actually a hassle over a pig and a mule, both in the same pigpen, one dead, the other a psychotic wreck. The mule by some very unusual circumstances, and untouched by human hands, ended up dead as wet toast in its original owner's pig pen during an event which scared the stupid pig completely out of its wits, causing it to waste away, infuriating its owner no end.

There were no signs of foul play on the hapless mule; just the wretched thing lying there dead, it's eyes all glassy-like with its ears, limp as wilted lettuce, draped over unsavory objects on the pigs floor. The mule's dilapidated condition appeared to have been the result of having come directly down through the roof of the pig's parlor, impacting the residue present therein with great force. The depth of the impact suggested the creature may have been the first orbiting mule, and one which ended its historic flash across the sky in Emilio's pig pen. Whatever the explanation, the mule was in a very second class condition, suitable only for coyote, or buzzard bait.

A secondary loss was the fact that the event so traumatized the silly hog which, until the mule dropped in unannounced, was busy growing tissues along its underbelly to match a picture Emilio had tacked up over the trough for reference. The picture was cut from one of those packages of limpid, greasy, striped material called Bacon, which people buy, claw apart, burn a dark brown and crumble up with their eggs and toast.

This layered material normally develops down along a pig's underside, eventually being removed (after the pig's spirit is released) and traded on the New York and Chicago stock markets as "pork bellies". The buyer then smokes the repulsive slabs, slices them up and packages them in impervious plastic wraps with little windows in the back to make buyers think they are being given a choice.

Bacon can NOT be made from mule-bellies so pigs are important creatures in the scheme of life, and have been part of man's economy ever since someone discovered eggs under chickens. The critical factor here is that soon after the unsolicited crash of the orbiting mule down through the roof of the pigs domicile, that bacon factory shut down and gradually what was once a robust hog belly shriveled away to look like an old soggy potato sack—which naturally infuriated its Italian owner.

He dragged Nick into court on what became a controversial case, debated long and widely by the masses. There was no legal precedent for flying mules scaring h—- out of bacon factories so the judge was left swimming in a tossing sea of pool-hall verdicts and union hall debates; a legal quagmire at best.

Emilio sued Nick for full payment on the mule; Nick defended himself by saying he had just happened to decide he didn't need the mule before it was sent home without Emilio's consent. He further argued, and this is a legal-sounding point which slowed down many a haircut, and stopped that final shot at the eight ball: Nick claimed that the mule's presence in, and departure from his mountainside stable, did it no bodily harm: IT WAS THE IMPACT OF EMILIO'S PIGPEN THAT TURNED IT INTO MULE BURGER. Emilio owned the destructive object in the form of a pig-pen and so he must take the blame for the mule's untimely demise and its thoroughly useless condition. Nick indignantly refused to pay.

Emilio claimed a "bargeen ees'a bargeen", and that, muleburger or not, Nick owed him for the full, original value and that if Nick hadn't taken the poor creature into the mine it would still be in its home stable making muffins out of weeds from his garden.

Judge: "Who has the mule?"

Nick: "Emilio, he's in hes peeg pen."

Judge: "That true?"
Emilio: "Yes'a, but hees'a not good. Hees'a smash."
Nick: "I can no use a smash a'mule."
Emilio: "But'a you must'a pay, hees'a your mule."
Nick: "Hee's a no my mule. I no work heem; mine send heem back."

Poor Emilio. He got the worst part of the deal, having lost both his mule and bacon maker, but, on the other hand, there was a strong ground swell of opinion washing out of barber shops, through pool halls, and out to the sunnin' benches, that Nick was blameless and shouldn't have to pay for something he never used since it was an act of God, and not of Nick, that the dust blew that ill-fated day.

It all began on spring day in May. The Great American Dream began to gnaw away at poor Nick's brain. Emigrants are supposed to succeed and roll in wealth. He had a contract to pull 40 loads of coal out to the tipple each day—which he could do in six hours with one mule. What could he do with two mules and one of his kids to lead the second mule? Get rich perhaps?

He went to see Emilio because he could see Emilio's blue mule each day when he looked out of the ventilation tunnel. The blue was never doing any work; just leaning up against the manger. A bargain was struck and Nick trudged back up to the mine followed by four mule feet. He wasn't obliged to make the first payment until the first of the next month—an arrangement which he felt freed him from any moral obligation, the way things turned out.

He led old Blue up to the mine portal and sat down to wait for night. The first time a mule is taken into a mine it must be done in the dark so the mule doesn't know he's going into a hole in the mountain. Thereafter the mule is blindfolded and will go out and back in with no protest. Mules are smart and far superior to horses in a mine. If a mule bumps its head it lowers it; if a horse bumps its head it's likely to rear about wildly, bashing its brains out. A mule's feet are also smaller and it will pick its way carefully along across unseen rails and ties in the dark. A horse is more apt to stumble on things it cannot see. We're taking about the days before electric lights in the mines.

Night came and Nick led old Blue deep into the mine and then at a fork in the tunnel, led him back out toward the outside of the mountain through a ventilation tunnel, or "airway". Nick, cleverly, had his mule stabled in the outlet of the ventilation tunnel. It was a healthy arrangement for his mule. Other trammers kept their mules in a stable deep in the mine where most of the mules worked out their entire lives in the many miles of tunnels, never seeing the light of

day. On each trip out to the tipple they were blindfolded. They felt their way along entirely with their feet, clever creatures that they were.

Nick's old mule had it made. After plodding around in pitch darkness most of the day, the old mule's spirits were renewed each evening as it munched its hay while gazing out through the side of the mountain; out to sunshine, green trees, gardens, old sheds with chickens running around a pigpen--all located on the opposite side of the narrow canyon. He was looking at Emilio's "Great American Dream".

And turn-about, Emilio's vegetable garden, sheds, pigpen, chickens, and old Blue, could look up across the canyon to where, high above, a black hole stared back down at them. That black hole was Nick's mule stable in the beginning of the airway; a sinister black eye in the side of the mountain's soft tan sandstone. What possible harm could a black hole away up there do to Emilio's little empire? None. He never gave it a thought until one day catastrophe struck deep within the mine.

The time was long before the law required companies to cover all coal dust with rock dust to prevent explosions, and that day the coal dust blew KA-BLAMMO! A gigantic blast went off in a mighty explosion that rattled rocks all over the county; shook birds off their nests, knocked squirrels out of trees, rumbling deep through bedrock to be felt in other mines sixty miles away.

Kids stopped their play, housewives crossed themselves in terror, turning instinctively to the mountain. The mountain produced coal and wages, but took away forever, husbands, brothers and sons.

I have been unable to locate any official record marking the exact date of that terrible explosion in the mountain's guts, but one spot lived long in the memories of many -Emilio's pigpen.

The blast, with the destructive pressure of a thousand mighty cannons, shot down the nine hundred foot length of the ventilation tunnel as if it was a cannon barrel. Air in the tunnel, traveling faster than sound, compressed against the wad of hay and old Blue at the opening of the airway. In one second Old Blue was in orbit. Nick, with his blindfolded mule was safely dumping coal cars on the tipple. He happened to look back toward the side of the mountain at the exact moment Old Blue, and the hay, like the wadding in a shot gun shell, were blasted out into the canyon. The hay, like all wadding, spent itself against the air and scattered to float down all over the side of the mountain. Old Blue continued on to his doom. Nick then felt the deep rumble and knowing what had happened, froze stiff as a mine timber as he watched his new set of mule teeth (owner and user attached) sail out in a lazy trajectory, arc over Emilio's house and disappear into the roof of that worthy's pig pen. The rest is history; I swear it.

"Ole Cat" in The White-Fur-Muff Affair

("Originally written as a letter to a lonesome country cousin, Naomi Stout, to cheer her up. It is exactly half true.")

I want to tell you about an unusual cat I had years ago and my great rassel with him. He was a huge Tomcat. I never knew what breed'a cat he was. He was all white with huge feet and could lick anything, man or beast, that set foot on our farm. Yet he was a peaceful cuss until he was riled up.

One day I realized I had begun to covet that ole cat's white hide. I had done some taxidermy and fancied a white fur muff for some as-yet-unknown damsel of my dreams. So I eyed that ole cat up and down and reckoned his hide'd make a real good muff; one big enough for my dream damsel to git both feet in alongside'er hands. I figgerd I could sew a row of black-bellied mouse skins around each end to give it real class.

A muff would be easy to make. All I'd have to do is cut off all the cat things that stuck out in different directions, leavin' a hollow tube-like piece of hide. He was a scrapper and so had a real tough hide, it having been clawed, slashed and punctured over many years in endless, backyard fights. The result was a hide made up mostly of tough scar tissue. But the thick white fur coverin' the scars was soft and glossy and would make up into a real good muff.

I need to digress at this point and prepare you for the way I tried to unwrap the hide offa the cat. This story ain't for just any ole body. It shore ain't for people which can't stand the sound of the word "guts". And there are bleedin' heart animal-protectin' people out there who would break out in a purple rage if I was to as much as knock an ant over the skull with a pipe wrench. Protectin' animal and bug rights is okay for city folks, but on the farm you have to kill things eatin' your spuds and barley, and also kill things for you to eat, like chickens and pigs.

I'm tellin' you this because you was once a farm kid and know that we make hamburgers out of a big thick thing called a "cow", with horns on one end and a tail on the other. A cow always comes wrapped up in a tough thing called a "cowhide", which is made into shoes after the cow is unwrapped.

Well, as they say, "there's more'n one way to skin a cat", but the "Handy Dandy Muff Maker's Manual", I got with my correspondence Taxidermy course, listed only one. I decided to check ole cat out and see how his hide was fastened on.

I made some excuse, like I was bein' friendly with him so I could see if he was a modern variety with a zipper up his belly.

Nope, he was the old fashioned model with his hide shrank on 'im in one piece. I pulled on his belly hide a bit. It was real tite.

Ole cat growled and rolled up one lip, sneery like, showin' his fangs, so I took the hint and leggo his hide. Little did he know what was goin' to happen to him. But first, I had a problem.

I didn't want to make any unsightly holes in his hide, while sending his spirit off to his ancestors. A hole in the middle would ruin the hide for makin' a beautiful muff.

I thought it over carefully and decided that since I wasn't goin' to use the big knobby part that sticks out in front, the one with the eyes, ears, and whiskers. I could work on that end to put 'im to sleep and get his hide offa' him.

I knew it wouldn't be easy. Him being an independent type, he could get real upset when he found out he wasn't gettin' anything out of the deal. Cats are selfish that way. They've lived around humans for more'n 2,000 years and have picked up a few pointers from that tribe on ownership and cat-rights. Why do you think they always look at you so smug and satisfied?

He was one of the biggest cats I have ever seen, and I was proud to have my friends see him swagger around the place, scarin' their dogs and other things. It would have been nice to have kept him as a cat, instead of turnin' his hide into a muff, but romantic notions sometimes make us do things we soon wonder if we should have tackled. Lookin' back now, I can see that I was about ready to take down with a bad case of "stupid", but I was into it and was determined to go all the way.

One bright Wednesday morning my mind was made up. I knew exactly what I would do. I got a Hammer and cold chisel and laid them down on a slab of concrete in front of our old well. I knowed Ole Cat could be lured to the spot without suspectin' he was lookin' at a pile of Muff-Makers tools, and that he was about to supply the hide for said project.

I pulled my belt in a coupla notches and went after him. I could hear the pig grunting nervous-like and figgered Cat was around there somewhere. He always liked to sit on a certain pole above the pig trough and annoy the pig by watchin' it eat without washin' its face.

I "Kitty'kitty'kittyed" Ole Cat out of the pigpen and he let me pick him up—wondering if I could. He must have weighed a half ton. What a cat! I carried him around the end of the pigpen and over to the concrete slab by the well, where the muff-makin' tools were all laid out neat-like.

Now I was a big kid by then, and alongside me the cat was nothin' so I easily flopped him down on the slab, with his four legs all spread out like a flying cat, and

sat down on top of him. He growled and squirmed a bit, but being all solid cat soon settled in to see what he was there for. It didn't take long for him to find out and then the excitement began.

There were two ears on the big knob that stuck out in front and as I examined the space between the ears I found there was a little ridge in the middle. Underneath this ridge, I reckoned, was all the cat power that ran him. If I could just short it out, I would be in charge of the muff material with no fuss from him wantin' to get something in return. It was goin' to be very simple, or so I thought. No big deal.

I made sure which end of the chisel was the sharp one and holdin' that edge on top of the narrow ridge, as steady as I could, I picked up the hammer and smacked the chisel a hard one.

ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE I Talk about a WILD cat, he was one! Ole Cat blasted up offa that slab like a Saturn Rocket takin' me with 'im, but I hung on for dear life as he took off. Such fury and power I had never seen on TV rasslin' matches, or read about in the space program.

Well, I rode Ole Cat up over the top of the pigpen, causin' a panic-struck hog to bolt smack dab out through the logs in the back of his pen and off across the field, truly a bacon dragster.

Next Ole Cat and me swooped down through the chicken coop where a bunch of stupid hens were mixin' up their daily batch of eggs. We ripped through them so fast the place looked like it had been pillow bombed. Rumped up chickens boiled up out of the ventilators, out both doors, and down through the clean-out holes under the roosts. By then I knew I had to get shed of that cat, real quick.

I cut loose by rollin' sideways into some spiny bluegrass and bouncin' up onto a big pile of dry chicken manure. The last I saw of Ole Cat was him toppin' out over the six foot bull-fence on the far side of the field. Over he went in one mighty leap, and was never seen around the farm again.

A neurotic hog cowered in the cane brake at the far corner of the west field, while I sat there on the pile of chicken manure watchin' a flurry of second hand feathers float lazily down to settle around me like the fake snow does in one of them glass balls when you shake it up. I was shaken up, but good, and never again tried to chisel a cat to death, or otherwise mess with the specie. Keep yer powder dry. Affectionately, Cusin Jim.