

Written, Enjoyed
& Loved
by Family



The

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Articles - 1977

Thursday was a beautiful day not only the weather but ~~also~~ the way things worked out. I was up to my ears in problems and was beginning to feel I'd never get everything worked out. But Thursday ~~everything~~ fell together and the slate was wiped clean.

My problems were not big by some standards, but they were real and they were mine to solve. We had just finished a moving job, the day before. We move lawns and have several large jobs involving 10 to 15 acres each.

We barely finished the last job with only one mower left operating. The other three had already broken down and just as we finished the fourth gave up the ghost.

Earlier in the week I had installed the third cylinder head on my ancient John Deere tractor only to find that like the others it too, was cracked, and leaked water.

And the pigs too, were giving me problems. It was high time to pick out the gilts I wanted to keep for breeding but the problem was I didn't have anyplace to put them. I needed some type of housing and had decided to build a small shelter or hut, but this was going to take time, a scarce commodity.

Then Thursday dawned. I started bright and early with the mowers. A new drive belt and a carburetor cleanout restored the first one to usefulness. Some repairs to the starter got the second going and a new part in the differential restored the third. The fourth needed only some minor tinkering and it too, was back in service. I began to feel good inside primed by my success so I began the next project.

A telephone call and I had secured a fourth head for the tractor and this one was guaranteed to be perfect. Because of the cost factor I had been shopping in the used parts departments of junk dealers all over the area. A new head, while available, would have cost more than the tractor was worth.

With a good share of the afternoon left I jumped in the pickup and drove to a farm near ^{last winter} Hector where I had spotted several hog huts reclining ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~grove~~ behind the grove. I wasn't sure just where the farm was but as I drove past the place there were the buildings just where I had seen them the last time I went by.

The owner was home and we talked a little then went to look at the buildings. He agreed to sell them as he wasn't using them anyway. They were just what I needed and the price was right so I wound up with four buildings for less than I had expected to pay for one.

It was the perfect end to a perfect day. Every now and then there is a day like this that helps clean up the messes you've made earlier. Such days are worth their weight in gold.

Killdeers make good company in field

One evening this past week while mowing lawn over at our country church yard I was ~~suddenly~~ suddenly startled by the sight of a brave Killdeer mother-to-be making with the broken wing act she was prancing around wildly dragging one wing not over five feet from me. I stopped the mow abruptly suspecting that I had driven her from a nest as these birds nest on the ground.

I looked around the immediate area and spotted her nest about a foot from the ~~side~~ ^{edge} of the mow wheel. On the ~~last pass~~ ^{previous pass} ~~ix~~ the mow wheel had straddled the nest and passed directly over it without damaging either the nest or the four brown and white speckled eggs.

I watched her frantic motions/^{for a few minutes that were} devised to lure me away from the nest area then moved on. Next time around the piece I ~~was~~ moving I spotted the killdeer back on her nest just ahead of mow. This time she seemed determined to face any danger that might threaten and stayed tight on the nest in spite of the noisy mow that passed just a few feet from her.

Apparently convinced that I posed no real threat she stayed tight on her eggs each time I passed on succeeding rounds. Finally the piece was finished and I moved on.

Later that evening just before going home I walked over and checked her one more time. There she was glued to her nest as though determined to hatch those eggs no matter what. I stayed a discreet distance so she wouldn't be startled and ~~xxxxxx~~ resolved to keep a close watch when I mow again next week. The chicks might be hatched then and scurrying around in the grass.

she never hit any of them
could feel terrible if I hit any of them with the mow.

I remember ~~seeing~~ ^{found} across my first killdeer nest years ago when cultivating corn on Dad's farm with his old F-12 Farmall. I spotted the nesting bird just ahead of the tractor and stopped puzzling what to do.

The thought occurred to me to go ahead and let the chips fall where they may, but that seemed cruel. So I finally grabbed a firm hold on the ~~old~~ lift handle and wrested the cultivator from the ground. ~~ix~~ With my arms still aching from the weight of the cultivator I gingerly steered the tractor wheels around the nest, dropped the cultivator down and continued on my way.

The next time I cultivated that field I watched for the spot where the weeds had been left to save a tiny bird's nest. When I found it the nest was empty and the birds gone.

In the years since I've come across a number of Killdeer nests and have always spared the long boring afternoons on the cultivator have been made more interesting by the ~~long~~ ^{long} legged bird company ~~xxxx~~ as the tractor passed back and forth over the field.

Kids are under foot 07912

It's official. Summer is here. The kids came home from school today about two hours earlier than usual carrying ~~some~~ all their worldly possessions, at least those that had collected in their desks during the past school year. Summer vacation has begun.

It seems school just started not long ago, but here they are, under foot for the entire summer.

In order to keep the squabbling and arguing to an absolute minimum I have planned a number of activities throughout the summer to keep them too busy to fight.

For openers we are going to have a general cleanup around the farmstead. There are all kinds of unsightly items that seem to accumulate around the yard in a given period of time. These are going to be picked up and put away or thrown away as the case may be.

Next the kids are going to work scraping paint off buildings. Most of the buildings here are due for a paint job and since they always beg to help paint whenever I open a can, they are going to get the chance to prove themselves.

The older boys will get involved in a couple of smaller shingling jobs sometime during the summer as ~~the~~ both the garage and a hog barn need new roofing. The shingles have been stashed in another shed for the past year just waiting to be nailed down.

Some beanwalking jobs have already been lined up and no doubt there will be more as the weeds progress nurtured by the abundant rainfall we've had lately. The kids earned themselves a tidy sum last year by pulling weeds out of soybean fields and this year being ~~some~~ older and quite a bit bigger they should be able to handle even more work.

By the time the bean fields are cleaned out the acre of pickles should be ready to pick. More work and more money, hopefully. An acre of cucumbers if properly cared for can provide a considerable amount of hand work and some nice monetary rewards to youngsters who are ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ still not old enough to pick up steady summer employment off the farm.

The oldest boy who turns 16 this summer hopes to find employment with the Jolly Green Giant. He earned and paid for a car by helping a neighboring dairy farmer last ^{fall and} winter but there are some items he ^{still} needs such as gasoline, insurance, tires, etc. I think he has been surprised maybe shocked is a better word, at how much it can cost to support a car, even an older one.

Then there are several projects I have planned for myself that will no doubt need a extra hands. The pole barn we put up last fall still needs a cement floor and there is possibility a new hog barn will take shape this summer.

If I and the kids accomplish just a portion of what we have planned, it should be

It's summer vacation around here, but you'd never know it. Instead of idle days and lazy summer fun, the kids have been busy helping me build fence, painting, hoeing thistles and other assorted undesirables in the field and a dozen other projects that have been crying for attention.

We had planned to do all these jobs and others as the summer passed by, ^{and} but there seemed no reason to hurry with the whole summer to go.

But wife took vacation from her job in town and that's when the real activity began. She promptly issued an order to me to find those kids something to do to keep them out of her way ^{and out of} the house while she gave the interior a ^{belated but} thorough spring cleaning. Just keeping those kids busy kept me going fulltime. But ~~we~~ together we accomplished quite a bit.

With the house cleaning behind her, wife started a major remodeling and redecorating project in the kids' rooms upstairs. The three rooms needed some work, there was no question about it, and I had planned to get at them sometime ^{day} in the near future, but wife moved that day up considerably.

Armed with wallpaper, ~~and~~ paste, and a scissors, she ^{partially} papered two of the rooms while the oldest son wound up on a spladder painting the ceiling of the third. Second oldest son ducked outside and stuck with dad lending an extra hand where needed, no doubt figuring this was the lesser of two evils.

Third oldest son was caught ~~by~~ up in wife's whirl of ambition and decided to tackle a carpenter job, his first. The boys had long ago voiced their desire to have at least one wall in each room covered with wood paneling. Since I was busy in the fields cultivating and making hay, he went to work ~~on his own~~.

I have a pretty good inventory of wood paneling stashed in the shed picked up through the years at bargain sales and where ever. Our ^{budding} carpenter ~~simply~~ "shopped" until he found a color that appealed to him then went to work measuring, cutting and nailing the material on the wall.

By the time I got home from the field the first day and heard what he had done it was too late to object so I ~~was~~ skeptically climbed the stairs and inspected his work. Much to my surprise he had done a fine job. The seams between the sheets of paneling were tight, there was a good fit at the corners and he had nailed trim at the top to ~~give~~ give the job a finished appearance. I ^{gladly} gave the go ahead for him to do the second room. He finished it today with the same results.

It makes a father proud to see his children ^{follow} develop their ~~talents~~ ^{talents} and develop their abilities.
Now the long delayed project ~~is~~ finished and all the boys were happy with their new rooms.

I felt a little surge of pride in my sons and the fine work they

"How long have you been wearing those pants?" Our daughter yelled at her younger soon-to-be 11 year old brother as she eyed his deeply soiled trousers. She and her mother had just finished washing clothes and somehow the pants ^{in question} had escaped the suds for what looked like the umpteenth time. I glanced over for a look and it was true, they were filthy.

I repeated her question and I got the same blank stare and unconcerned air.

"I don't know," he shrugged, "a week or two maybe. They aren't dirty."

Now that I thought about it, it seemed I had seen those pants for an awfully long time, and on the same boy.

I pressed for a better answer.

"Well, I like them cuz they fit good," he explained sheepishly.

"You can't just keep on wearing the same pants forever," wife joined in. "These things are getting so dirty that they're going to get so stiff the legs will break off and you'll have shorts. You get into the tub and scour yourself clean then throw those pants in the clothes hamper in the utility room."

He slowly got up from this chair and disappeared. An hour later I glimpsed him running outside in the same dirty pants. I thought it best to ~~keep~~ ^{hold} my tongue for if wife got wind of him still running in those pants he would really be in for it.

I later caught him for a moment and warned that if I saw those pants on him again tomorrow drastic measures would be taken. It would be the cattle tank for him, pants and all.

I just ~~can't~~ can't figure that boy out. He can get dirtier than ^{all} the other kids combined in any given period of time and when on occasion he has been literally dragged to the sink and scrubbed by his mother, you ought to hear the screaming and yelling. You'd think she was tearing the ears off his head instead of trying to clean them.

Yet this same boy will be the first to douse himself under the water hose claiming it is the only way he can keep cool. And when the kids go to the local swimming pool in town he is always ~~is~~ the last to climb out and ~~xxxx~~ then grumbles all the way home something about how he hardly had a chance to get wet.

Unless wife scrubs him personally he is liable to show up most anywhere with grimy elbows and a grey toned neck. Sunburn he calls it.

One Sunday we had all gone to church and seated in the pew I glanced over at him and to my horror, there he sat in all his grimy glory. He was dressed in his Sunday ~~xxxx~~ best all freshly washed and pressed but around his neck was this black ring. It was one of my more embarrassing moments. ~~It~~ ^{is} only like a snake, he could shed his skin.

Camping! Who Needs It

"How would you like to go camping Saturday night?" wife asked as we sat at the supper table the other night. Her casual tone of voice gave no hint as to what was coming. "I know where we can get a tent if we want," *in fact, I've already made the arrangements.*

I already knew where she planned to have me pitch this tent as we had made plans to ~~go~~ ^{spend} Sunday at the lake cottage of a friend for some fishing, swimming and just general lying around.

But as she unfolded her ~~plan~~ ^{proposal} it became clear she would have the entire family go up Saturday afternoon and spend that night in the borrowed tent. I wasn't too keen on the idea. It had just rained four and a half inches the previous day and it brought to mind another camping trip ~~the~~ our family had taken in Canada some years back.

We had found this great spot in the woods off the beaten trail to set up our camp and after a meal cooked over ~~at~~ ^{an} open fire we relaxed around the ~~fire~~ ^{campfire} and watched the darkness settle over the Canadian wilderness. It was truly an experience right out of a travel folder.

But ~~darkness~~ ^{nightfall} brought hordes of mosquitoes, so we crawled in for the night. Along about midnight I was awakened by this crashing, booming noise. It was thunder, and a minute later rain began falling.

"Don't worry," wife consoled, "this tent is supposed to be waterproof, so we shouldn't have any problems."

In spite of the celestial fireworks, I ~~as~~ soon fell asleep again only to be awakened by one of the kids.

"Daddy, my bed is all wet," he complained.

"It can't be, this tent doesn't leak. Ask your mother," I replied.

But he was persistent and I got up to check. Sure enough water was dripping from the roof and had soaked a part of his bedding. We made some adjustments and I got him settled down again.

"Dad! It's all wet over here," another voice complained. I checked and there was another leak. By now wife had awakened to find that she, too, was sleeping in a swamp of wet bedclothes.

The blasted tent was leaking all over. And the pouring rain showed no signs of letting up. I finally got a lantern lit and surveyed our soggy surroundings. Water was dripping rapidly from at least a dozen spots on the tent roof. Then I noticed that the entire roof was sagging downward under a heavy load of water. I reached up and raised the tent roof and heard a gush of water run down the side of the tent. The tent no longer dripped as long as I held the roof up. I spent most of that night holding the roof up so the rest of the family could get some sleep.

And now with rain in the weekend forecast she wants me to go camping. Some people don't.

"How could you like to go camping Saturday night?" It was a question she asked me one other night. Her usual tone of voice gave nothing away about her opinion. "I know where we can find a tent if you want."

Some people just don't know when they are well off. I already had a tent and I had planned to have the tent pitched in the woods.

They were busy at the time of the tent. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school.

But as she unfolded her plan, I realized that she was not serious. She was just making a joke. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school.

I had found the tent in the woods. I had found the tent in the woods. I had found the tent in the woods. I had found the tent in the woods. I had found the tent in the woods.

I was surprised by the quality of the tent. It was a good tent. It was a good tent. It was a good tent. It was a good tent. It was a good tent.

"Don't worry," she said. "The tent is supposed to be waterproof. It will hold up to anything."

In spite of the excellent first order, I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school.

"Daddy, my tent is all wet," he complained. "It can't be. This tent doesn't leak. Is your mother's tent leaking?"

But he was persistent and I got up to check. Sure enough, water was dripping from the tent. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school.

"Daddy, it's all wet over here," another voice complained. I checked and there was another leak. It was a disaster. It was a disaster. It was a disaster. It was a disaster. It was a disaster.

The pitched tent was leaking all over. The pitched tent was leaking all over. The pitched tent was leaking all over. The pitched tent was leaking all over. The pitched tent was leaking all over.

I finally got a tent that was waterproof. I finally got a tent that was waterproof. I finally got a tent that was waterproof. I finally got a tent that was waterproof. I finally got a tent that was waterproof.

At least a do was good on the tent. Then I noticed that the entire tent was leaking. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school.

If I wouldn't have such a tendency to believe everything I hear and be blessed with a loosely hinged lower jawbone, I'm sure in everyday life for me would be much less frustrating. A case in point. The other day a neighbor came over with some wild tale about how the northerns were biting in Lake Preston, north of Buffalo Lake.

"They're really gettin' em," he insisted. All that was needed was a bucket of big suckers for bait that were available at a local bait shop and a few minutes of my time. He made it sound so convincing that I finally decided this was the time my boys had been waiting for. They have been hounding me all spring about taking them fishing so they could get ~~xxx~~ in on some of this fantastic fishing that they had been hearing about from their friends.

So that night at the supper table I opened my big yap and ~~xxxx~~ committed myself. Tomorrow evening after supper we would head for Preston and get our share of these fish. The boys were more than pleased and for the next day all I heard was fishing talk as they hunted all the long-stashed equipment together for the evening's big adventure. I just couldn't share their enthusiasm as way down deep inside was this rotten feeling that I was about to be had again.

That evening the boys had the car all loaded so all I had to do was get in and drive. One had even remembered to fill the gas tank.

Our family weather watcher had checked the barometer on our dining room wall and found much to his delight that the pressure was rising. Somewhere he had read that when the barometer rises the fish bite. I hated to dampen his spirits but in past times I had seen that needle stand on its head and still the fish never bit.

I headed for the lake anyway with my carload of would-be fishermen.

We found just the spot where the neighbor had claimed he had caught his limit of northerns on three preceding days right from the shore so we ~~stappedxxxxxitedxxx~~ headed over to the baitshop nearby only to find it locked for the day. There would be no suckers except those in our fishing party, I feared.

We headed back to our spot with only a can of bullhead bait, angleworms, that the boys had quickly dug "just in case the sunnies would be biting."

That rotten feeling in the pit of my stomach had grown.

We baited up and cast out. My cork had no sooner hit the water when it popped ~~undxxxxatxxx~~ and disappeared out of sight. I reeled in and just as I had expected, there hung one of the runtiest bullheads I had ever seen. He couldn't have been a fraction of an inch over two inches long.

If I couldn't have such a tendency to believe everything I hear and be pleased with it, I would have been a lot more of a skeptic. I'm sure if every day life for me could be much less frustrating. I caught a half dozen of these little critters and the kids got a lot of fun out of the action there was.

It was awfully quiet in the car as we drove home that night and I felt sorry that the boys had been disappointed again.

But there was still a tiny seed of their former enthusiasm left as one piped up, "I'd like to have to get there earlier next time before the fish had been picked up."

This time I was fishing with my friends. I was sure I would have a lot of fun. Tomorrow night at the supper table I was sure I would have a lot of fun.

Evening after evening we would have a lot of fun. The boys were more than pleased with the next day and I heard that they had a lot of fun.

Long-learned equipment together for the evening. I was sure I would have a lot of fun.

That evening the boys and I had a lot of fun. I was sure I would have a lot of fun.

Our fishing partner, who had looked the part of a professional fisherman, had a lot of fun.

So the delight was the evening was a lot of fun. I was sure I would have a lot of fun.

Two fish were taken. I heard that the boys had a lot of fun.

on his head and still the fish never bit. I headed for the lake away with my friend of fishing.

I found just the spot where the neighbor had claimed to have caught his limit of fish.

On three preceding days right from the shore no fish were taken. There would be no success except those in our fishing party, I feared.

We headed back to our spot. In only a can of fishbait, anyhow, that the boys had picked up but just in case the weather would be still.

That rotten feeling in the pit of my stomach had grown. I raised up and cast out. My cork had no sooner hit the water when it popped back and disappeared out of sight. I reeled in and just as I had expected, there hung one of the finest bluegills I had ever seen. He couldn't have been a fraction of an inch over the inches long.

"It's time to get up," said wife ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{shaking my shoulder} vigorously. I opened one eye and peered at ~~the~~ ^{my} new digital alarm on the bedside table. Always dealing in precise figures the face said 4:58 a.m. That sounded terribly early. Our old conventional clock would have told me the time was a couple of minutes before five, ~~but~~ which somehow sounds much later than 4:58.

Wife was already up and had just called the boys who had to be at their detasseling job at 5:45 a.m.

"I don't have to go detasseling so why bother me?" I mumbled sleepily, rolling over to find a new position.

"You haven't written your column," she retorted shaking me some more. "If you want to get it in the mail this morning you had better get at it."

Ever since my newspaper days I have found it easier to compose columns, news stories and she left to fix breakfast for the boys and I rolled over whatnot in the fresh early morning hours. Seems my head is clearer then and the words come easier. And besides later in the morning the other kids would be up with their usual amount of hoopin' and hollerin' making it next to impossible to concentrate.

I stretched and rolled over as wife left for the kitchen. I fully intended to get up but something must have gone wrong. The next thing I ~~knew~~ I heard music. I turned to squint at the digital which had been programed by wife to turn on the ^{bedside} radio. It glared back at me with its lighted eyes and 5:37 a.m.

I heard footataps approaching the bedroom. Wife was coming back and I bolted out of bed.

"It's about time you get up," she said entering the room. "The kids have gone already and here you sit half asleep."

"Mornin' is the best time for detasseling," I replied defending myself. "It's cool then and lots easier on the boys."

"And it's a lot easier for you to concentrate on your column," she continued getting back in bed.

"What do you think you're doing?" I demanded. "You got everybody else up and now you go back to bed."

"Sure," she laughed. "It's my day off and I can sleep in. Plug the coffee pot in and fix yourself a bowl of cereal for breakfast. And close the bedroom door. That typewriter clicking keeps me awake."

"And women want to be liberated," I mumbled half under my breath.

But I didn't rely on her sleeping in. If it weren't for her no one in this family would ever ^{at any time} be on time.

I set the type-riter down on the dining room table, slipped a sheet of paper under the roller, and prepared to write my weekly columns. My daughter was seated on the other end of the table in front of the sewing machine busily patching holes in her brothers' pants, ^{and} shirts and whatever ~~else had been~~ had been ripped beyond practical use.

She was responding to a suggestion ~~that~~ I had made the previous day about how it would be nice if she would perfect her technique and begin sewing some of her own clothes. She is always paging through sale catalogs and wishing for some of the most expensive and ornate cloth available. ~~so I suggested she get some of her own and save little of her~~ ^{signed} ^{could save} hard earned money.

A short time later I looked up to see her leaning over the machine and mumbling to herself. I watched her pick up a toothpick and poke around at the bobbin under the needle.

"Got a problem?" I asked.

"Oh, this darn machine!" she complained. "It's got the thread all wound up down in this hole." She kept probing with the toothpick.

~~Finally with~~ my curiosity fully aroused, I got up to take a look at the problem.

"Let me take a look at that thing," I said ^{in a} ~~moving~~ ^{calm} her aside.

The thread was all wound up all right with ends sticking out all over. I sent her after a needle nose plier and ~~with~~ attempted to pull the thread out. It kept tearing but not until it had pulled the rest tighter into the conglomeration of shiny odd shaped parts that make up that part of a sewing machine.

It soon became apparent that "surgery" was required. So I began loosening ^{tiny} screws and removing parts, laying them in a neat pile next to the machine. With the mechanism stripped of all its moving parts the thread gave up the battle and was ^{easily} removed. But putting the parts back in the correct order was not so simple a matter. I fooled with the stubborn beast for a good half hour before it was finally reassembled to the point where everything turned in the proper direction.

"OK," I informed the budding seamstress. "It's ready to go."

With a look of relief on her face she sat back down in front of the machine and I returned to my masterpiece. A few minutes later I noticed the machine wasn't humming and I looked up. There she sat with a puzzled look on her face probing with the toothpick under the needle.

"Did you jam that thing up again?" I demanded in an unfriendly tone.

"No! I did not!" she barked back. "No! I can't figure out how to get the thread started in the bobbin." Guess...

What do you do when your ~~midsize~~ 16-year-old announces his plans to take a girl to Valley Fair next Friday evening? This probably doesn't sound like too much of a problem but it create quite a stir in our household the other day.

"I won't need the car," he informed me, " 'cuz we're going up with a friend and he's gonna drive."

Wife and I exchanged glances and I knew what was in her mind.

"Isn't that a little far from home for your first date?" I inquired. "Valley Fair is way up by Shakopee and that will be a long drive home and get pretty late."

"Who's the girl?" his mother wanted to know. It turned out to be a neighbor who we both knew. "But isn't she a little young?" wife asked again. "She can't be much more than 13 or 14"

"Well, she's big for her age," he answered defending his choice.

with a chuckle

"She's been grounded," interjected one of the younger boys. "I heard her talk about it the other day. She can't go anywhere for a couple of weeks but she didn't say why."

"Why can't you go someplace around here?" both wife and I wanted to know. "You sure don't have to run way up to Shakopee," wife added. "They have so many drugs up around the cities and you'll just get yourself into something."

It was apparent wife had come to the same decision I had. He would not be allowed to go.

He sat by the table with that hangdog look mixed with a smattering of disgust that he did not dare allow to surface.

I tried to explain that it wasn't that we didn't want him to have any fun, it was our concern for his wellbeing that prompted our decision. And ^{just} being 16 doesn't necessarily mean a person is old enough to do anything he wants. ~~xxxx~~ A boy had to have ~~some~~ maturity and ~~some~~ responsibility before he can be turned loose on the world, I added. And I felt he just hadn't done this yet.

I added that this wasn't necessarily his fault. Some people just mature more slowly than others.

"Bide your time," I urged. "The time will come when you can do all this and more. Enjoy your youthnow. There will never be another time like ^{it} in your entire life."

He still had that look on his face as he walked out the door but when he came back after chores he was in better spirits. Being a teenager these days is not easy.

My son's three wild turkey toms are strutting on thin ice even if it is the middle of summer. The problems began about two weeks ago when he opened the door to their pen and gave them the freedom to roam.

The toms and their hens had spent the winter locked up in the barn but when spring came we thought it would be good for them to be turned loose so they could take up residence in the grove and let nature take its course. This soon proved to be a mistake.

Just as soon as the strawberries in the garden began ripening they also disappeared. One morning I got up extra early and discovered why. There shrouded in the early morning shadows were the turkeys, grazing on the ripened berries.

"You'll have to lock those critters up again or we won't taste a berry from this entire patch," I advised the boy. So he set about building a pen out in the grove that would allow them some freedom of movement plus a natural looking spot in which the hens could nest.

The hens refused to lay in captivity and the whole flock looked so miserable that I told the boy that he might as well let them run loose again as long as the berry season was over. ^{soon} As soon as they regained their freedom the hens disappeared into the grove and are only seen on rare occasions. But with the toms it is a different story. They have appointed themselves absolute monarchs of the farm yard and now must investigate closely each and every movement on yard whether it be by man or beast. A walk across the yard by anyone will invite the apparent wrath of ^{the} toms who run behind the offender just out of arms reach gobbling and complaining loudly with their wattles a fiery red and their head and neck an icy blue. So far they have never gathered enough courage to attack anyone so for the most part we all ignore their antics.

But they have developed a bad habit that cannot be ignored. They have taken to roosting on top of the family car. On a recent Sunday morning we were getting ready for church when someone noticed the car had been "painted". We had to wash the car first.

One evening last week wife and I were sitting at the dining room table enjoying a leisurely cup of coffee while the kids were engrossed in the latest episode of "Charlie's Angels". All of a sudden there was a loud "thump" outside the dining room window. I passed it off as just another one of those unusual sounds that are so common around a farmyard. But wife knew exactly what had made the thump.

We peered out the window and sure enough, there sat a tom perched on the top carrier of the station wagon and the other two were preparing to join him.

"Get those doggone turkeys off the car or they're going to wind up in the freezer!" I yelled at my son over the din of the TV. "And take some warm soapy water along. You need it."

"I'm glad summer is finally coming to an end," remarked wife the other ^{night} day evening as we both dropped into bed virtually exhausted. It had been one of those 18 hour days that have been almost too frequent this summer.

That day had started, like most, at the crack of dawn and ended shortly before midnight. For both of us it had included time at our town jobs, a stint in the pickle patch in ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~car~~ late afternoon and then ~~another~~ ^{an} hitch in the ~~pick~~ hog barn as another batch of sows began farrowing. Any ~~spare~~ ^{gap} time between these jobs had been filled ~~in~~ with canning and baking for her and several minor repair jobs for me.

Normally babysitting with the sows as they farrow falls to either myself or the older boys, ^{on} but this particular day the boys and I were baling and packing straw from a neighbor's wheat field. This job had begun several days before but had been slowed by traces of rainfall on several occasions.

It hadn't been a really typical day, but then there have been few of those since summer began.

Although I enjoy summer and hate to see it end, I was inclined to agree with wife's bedtime statement. As summer began we had made plans to do a great number of tasks around the yard with the help of the kids who were out of school. Now they would be returning to their classrooms in another three weeks and most of these jobs were still on the waiting list. It was the same old story, where had summer gone?

As the season began I looked ahead to midsummer and my 39th birthday and now look back as it fades into the past. In just a few days we'll have four teenagers in the house as our daughter observes her 13th birthday. Our youngest, no longer a baby, has become a very good pickle picker and also learned to handle ^{proficiently} any one of the riding mowers on our various mowing jobs around the neighborhood.

This was the summer our oldest son got his driver's license and joined the ranks of the teenage motorist. He also acquired his own car and began regarding girls with a new interest.

For the kids there have been bean fields to walk, tassels to pull and pickles to pick as well as their regular duties around the place. It has been a busy summer for them as well and more than once I've heard them remark, "I'll be glad when school starts again."

But when I remind them of the savings account each has growing in the bank as a result of their labors, it seems to take the edge off the passing summer a little bit.

It has been a hectic ^{season} summer and there is still more to come, ^{but} ~~but~~ ^{even} the kids seem to be learning the value of an honest day.

I have just completed one of the most ^{unpleasant} tasks known to modern man, scraping and painting ~~the~~ ^a house. This job has been put off more times than I can remember but finally one lovely June day I finally gathered enough courage to tackle the beast.

I announced to the boys at the breakfast table that today was the day we were going to begin scraping ~~the~~ ^{our} house. They almost choked on their cereal. It was no secret that their level of enthusiasm for the job ^{was} about parallel to mine.

"Look boys," I pleaded, "this job has been pushed off long enough and it has to be done, and the sooner we start the sooner we get done." My reasoning failed to impress them as they struggled to get another spoonful of cereal down.

We finally got started ^{though} and scraped and painted two sides of the house by mid-July before running out of momentum. ~~again~~ We had the east and south sides done and to the casual passerby ^{down on the road} it appeared we had painted the entire house.

"The north and west sides look pretty good yet," one of the boys reasoned. "Maybe we could let them go for a another year or so."

"Forget it!" I corrected him. "we're gonna finish the job this year."

It was well into August before we got the ladders set up again, but once I got the boys rolling we finished the house in nothing flat. In fact it went so good that today we are going to start on the garage. In fact the boys are scraping right now. I'd better get out there and make the most of this sudden burst of energy before it fizzles out!

* * *

It is ^{soy} THE year of tall beans. I have some that reach up to my chin without being stretched. I tried walking down the row a short way and found it al most impossible as the vines are tangled and intertwined.

I stopped and counted pods on serveral stalks. The count ran anywhere from 5 to 80 pods per stem. A neighbor tries to tell me that yield can be determined by counting pods. The average number of pods per stem is what the yield will be in bushels per acre, he claims. If this is true I'm sure ther'e'll be some yield records broken as well as bins.

Years ago when I first started farming I had a 10 acre field of soybeans that averaged forty three bushels per acre. That was an excellent yield then and I would be more than happy if this year's crop could match it.

But we are not over the fence yet. There is still a chance of frost by the end of this month that could prove very costly especially to the later varieties of corn and beans.

I took my last puff two weeks ago and haven't had another since. I have quit smoking on various occasions before, but have never been able to keep off the weed for good. This time I hope it will be different.

Although there are many benefits to be derived from giving up the habit, there are also some problems, one of major proportions. It seems ~~xxxxxxx~~ no sooner have I ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ground out my last butt and my weight begins to climb. It's happened every time I've quit in the past and this time is no exception.

Last Sunday while dressing for church I ~~was~~ experienced a great deal of difficulty closing the pants of my suit. There had never been any problem before but there sure was one this time. I jerked the scale out from under a nearby chair and reluctantly stepped aboard. I never weigh myself unless it's an emergency (I'm really too chicken), and this was an emergency.

The revolving dial spun crazily and rocked to a stop near the top of the scale or 10 pounds higher than it had last time several weeks ago. That did it! I resolved then and there to get some of this extra lard off!

My diet, if you can call it that, went fairly well for the first several days but then the bottom fell out.

It all started innocently enough and with good intentions as well. The kids and I had been busy outside that day with our various tasks and all came in to eat a light to moderate lunch at noon. My daughter, chief cook when mother is not home, had laid out a loaf of bread and a jar of jelly, a stick of butter and a jar of peanut butter. Enough ^{ingredients} to whip up a fairly tasty and nutritious sandwich.

I put one together as did the others and we all sat down to enjoy our meal. One of the boys, a quick eater, put a couple of slices of bread in the toaster and asked if I'd like some too.

Since I'm a toast lover especially when there are such goodies on the table as jelly and peanut butter, I consented. In a few minutes I was taking my last bite of the toast when another one of the boys came to table with a pan of hotdogs he had just broiled in the oven.

Now a broiled hotdog is hard to resist so I had one on a piece of bread wrapped in cheese and onions, and soaked in ketchup.

Then I had three more. By this time one of the boys had finished his round of hotdogs and had appeared on the table with a pail of ice cream. "You want some Dad?" he asked. It looks as though my pants are going to be tight again this Sunday.

It takes all kinds of people to make a world and wife and I ~~tax~~ discovered some new kinds
Mass.

in a Boston park on a recent Sunday afternoon.

We had flown in ^{the day before} "down East" for my sister's wedding in a suburb of Hartford, Conn. ~~on the~~
~~previous day~~. Once the wedding festivities were past we decided to stay a few days and take in
some of the sights. Sunday we spent in Boston at places like Bunker Hill, on board the warship
"Constitution", at the Old North Church and the Boston Common.

The Common is an 80 acre park in the center of downtown Boston that seems to draw literally
thousands of people from the inner city as well as a host of "characters". And I spent some time
watching the rather unusual types going about what appeared to be their regular Sunday routine.

An elderly gentleman dressed in a bright green sport coat, matching trousers and a dressy
hat approached us along the ~~xxxx~~ sidewalk. There was nothing unusual about him until he stopped
at a trash barrel. That's when I ~~xxxx~~ ^{really} began watching him.

Acting as though it was the perfectly normal thing to do, the man reached down into the
barrel, rummaged around for a short time and came up with nothing. He stepped across the sidewalk
to another trash barrel and reached down into it. This time his luck was apparently a little better
as he ~~xxxxxxx~~ retrieved the remainder of what appeared to be hamburger sandwich. There
were several hamburger shops across the street and judging from the wrappings around the second-
hand goodie, it ~~pro~~ bably came from one of these.

The man examined his prize then went over to a park bench nearby ~~xxxx~~ where he sat down and
slowly ate the sandwich as though he hadn't a care in the world. Finished with his "meal", he
carefully brushed the crumbs from his front, wiped his fingers in the wrapper and tossed it back
into the barrel.

Then he spotted a Sunday paper that someone had discarded along the street. He walked over
picked it up and returned to his seat where he settled back and began paging through the news.

Wife and I went for a walk around the park then and returned later to find the old man again
bent over a trash barrel. This time he came up with a paper cup that might have held a malt or
some such delicacy. He tipped the cup to his lips and drank deeply before tossing ^{it} back into the
trash.

We both wondered if that was the only means of support the fellow had. It was a sobering
thought.

There were others that caught our eye. Up the street a ways stood a man with terrible
brown teeth yelling loudly ~~at~~ to anyone that would listen about the evils of nuclear power.

A little further up the street sat a man playing an accordion with his hands, a tamborine with one
foot and a drum with the other. A hand lettered sign nearby said simply, "Elvis A. ..."

it takes all kinds of people to make a world and I am discovering some new kinds

connection

I failed to see the significance but maybe he felt that since the rock singer was

out of the picture it was his chance to shine.

That day was an education I will never forget.

at the Old North Church and the Boston Common.

The Common is an 80 acre park in the center of downtown Boston that seems to draw literally thousands of people from the inner city as well as a host of "visitors". And I spent some time watching the rather unusual types going about what appeared to be their regular Sunday routine.

An elderly gentleman dressed in a bright green sport coat, matching trousers and a dressy hat approached us along the brick sidewalk. There was nothing unusual about him until he stopped at a trash barrel. That's when I first began watching him.

Looking as though it was the perfectly normal thing to do, the man reached down into the barrel, rummaged around for a short time and came up with nothing. He stepped across the sidewalk to another trash barrel and reached down into it. This time his look was apparently a little better as he examined the remainder of what appeared to be hamburger remains. There were several hamburger shops across the street and judging from the wrappings around the second-hand french fries, it probably came from one of these.

The man examined his prize then went over to a park bench nearby where he sat down and slowly ate the sandwich as though he hadn't a care in the world. Finished with his meal, he carefully brushed the crumbs from his front, wiped his fingers in the wrapper and took it back into the barrel.

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Life and I went for a walk around the park then and returned later to find the old man again bent over a trash barrel. This time he came up with a paper cup that might have held a half or more than delivery. He tipped the cup to his lips and drank deeply before tossing it back into the trash.

Both wondered if that was the only means of support the fellow had. It was a sobering thought. There were others that caught our eye. Up the street a few blocks a man with terrible brown teeth yelling loudly as to someone that said nothing about the evils of nuclear power.

A little further up the street a man playing an accordion with his hands, a rhapsodic with one foot and a drum with the other. A hand jectored sign nearby said simply,

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There were others that caught our eye. Up the street a few ahead a man with terrible brown teeth yelling loudly as to someone that said that about the evils of nuclear power.

A little further up the street a man playing an accordion with his hands, a saxophone with one foot and a drum with the other. A hand jectored sign nearby said simply,

family *salvage plans for 'Peace and quiet'* 7-10-77
Several years ago I built an addition to our home that was to serve as an entry, a place to come into from the outside where you could wipe ~~off~~ the dirt off your boots ~~before coming~~ into the main house and ~~also a place to~~ hang your coat and cap. While still in the drawing stretch stages, I decided to ~~increase~~ ~~make~~ the project's dimensions a little and include an "office" for myself.

As I visualized it, the room ^{where} could be a place ~~to which~~ I could retire in peace and quiet to read, write, figure taxes or simply relax with a cup of coffee and good music on the radio. It would be my room exclusively, I informed the other seven members of ^{the} my family. Entry would be by invitation only.

To make it more cozy I paneled the walls with sheets of dark walnut and installed a semi shag carpet of a mixed burnt orange and brown color. ~~Then I moved in.~~ The entire north wall was devoted to bookshelves and a large antique ~~rooftop~~ desk was set ~~along~~ the west wall. The east wall was ~~dedicated~~ ~~as~~ a showplace for ~~my~~ ^{an} assortment of guns, both new and old, that I've managed to collect over the years. They were displayed in an antique gun rack that I found at an auction a long time ago. *Then I moved in.*

It was everything I had hoped it would be and I spent many happy hours there. Then the ~~kids moved in.~~ *attack came.*

First clue I had that the place was under invasion was a messy pile of school books and graded papers that one of the kids had tossed onto the desk after school one day. I immediately complained and the pile disappeared. Next day it was back and with reinforcements yet. The pile was much larger and a pair of dirty overshoes covered in a corner of the room on my lovely new shag carpeting.

I sought out the culprits, and after a good dressing down they cleaned the room and returned it to its original state. Things ^{went} ~~were going~~ fine for a few days then ~~one day~~ I was confronted with a huge pile of newspapers and magazines on top of the desk. Wife showed up in time to explain that she just didn't know where else to go with all the mail that was accumulating around the rest of the house.

A few days later I pulled open one of the ^{lower desk} ~~drawers of the desk~~ looking for something and ~~was~~ startled by the sight that greeted me. There were bundles of strawflowers, plastic packs of tiny animals and trees, bottles of glitter and other assorted odds and ends.

"What's all this stuff?" I thundered to wife out in the kitchen.
She quickly appeared in the doorway, "Oh, that's stuff for my crafts projects. I thought one of those drawers would be a safe place to keep it."

As time went by the room gradually became a storehouse for all members of the family. There were games, BB guns, junk, papers, toys, more junk and almost anything imaginable. My shag carpeting was almost totally hidden from view.

Then one ^{rainy} day early in the morning having carefully thought out my strategy, I attacked. I cut out everything that in my estimation didn't belong in the room. When the room was restored to its original state, I issued an ultimatum to the "Hector 7". Any more ~~afixixaxkindxaxatuff~~ messing up this room and sterner measures will be taken!

What I need is a trained Doberman chained to my desk, or a force field in front of the door, or maybe an electric fence, would do the trick.

"Dad, you're not going to be very happy with what I did to the car last night," confessed oldest son at the breakfast table one morning. He looked very ^{penitent} ~~important~~ as he told ^{about} ~~me~~ ~~how~~ ~~he~~ ~~forgot~~ to look behind ^{before} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~car~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~parallel parking stall~~ and ~~smack~~ ^{striking} ~~the~~ ^{next} ~~car~~ ~~behind~~.

"I only bent the bumper a little and didn't hurt the other car at all," he added quickly concluding his tale.

I ~~later~~ ^{found} went out to look and he was telling the truth, it was only a little dent in the bumper. But I had just bought the car a few weeks earlier and was proud ^{of the fact} that it had no dents. But now it had one. ~~I shrugged it off and forgot about it.~~ ~~I bawled him out for his carelessness and forgot about it.~~

A few weeks later wife came home from a shopping trip to a nearby town one afternoon and as she drove onto the yard and past the spot where I was working, she called out the open window, "Feel like fixing on the car?"

I was ^{odd} puzzled by her statement but as I headed for the house and the spot where she had parked, I saw what it was she had referred to. The rear bumper ~~and~~ ^{was} pushed into the trunk lid in a distinct V shape. The lid would not open. It was a real mess.

"Now before you blow up, let me explain what happened," wife pleaded.

"With my boiling point approaching rapidly I fired back," I don't need an explanation! I can see you backed into something!"

"Right! You have terrific powers of observation!" she shot back launching her counter offensive. "If you'd get the brakes fixed on that darn car once this kind of thing wouldn't happen. I backed out of the parking stall and when I stepped on the brakes, there was nothing ~~there~~. The car rolled right into the big steel post behind me."

^{slid in behind the wheel + the engine} I jumped into the ~~car~~ started ~~it~~ ~~up~~ and backed away from the house. I stepped on the brake pedal and the car stopped abruptly. I ^{pull} ~~pull~~ ^{ed} ahead, and ^{again} the brakes stopped the car on the spot.

"There's nothing wrong with these brakes," I advised wife. "They work like a charm."
"Well, they didn't work this afternoon," she yelled over her shoulder as she stomped into the house.

I backed the car over to the shop, removed the rear bumper, straightened it and reshaped the rear trunk lid. When I had it all put back together ^{hours later} ^{partly} the car locked ^{also} much like it had before. But you could still see some of the hammer marks in the bumper from ^{like before} straightening ^{also} and the trunk lid didn't have the tight fit ~~it used to~~, but it made me feel better anyway.

After a few days the whole incident was forgotten and wife and I were back on speaking terms.

Then one morning about a week ago I had to take the kids to school and I took this car that had the alleged brake problem. The round trip was smooth and uneventful and I returned home ~~and~~ pulled up behind the house in the usual parking space. I stepped on the brake pedal and it hit the floor with a dull thud. Nothing.

The car kept on rolling. I hit the pedal again ~~and~~ with the same response. The car kept rolling ~~xxxxxx~~ and jumped the sidewalk. I hit the pedal hard for a third time, panic gripping my insides as I realized that I was about to hit the house!

There was almost no noticeable impact as the car slowly and easily slid through the wall of the patio. There was a ~~xxxxxx~~ sound of breaking wood as the ^{outside} corner of the room crumbled before the oncoming assailant. Finally it was over. The car came to rest with its front end on the concrete patio floor and pieces of broken wood and twisted screening on its hood.

I sat there cussing myself out. How could I have been so stupid! All I ~~xxxx~~ had to do was throw the shifting selector into park or even reverse and the car would have stopped in time. And I could have used the parking brake, too. "Now's a fine time to think about all that," I mumbled to myself out loud.

I got out of the car and sized up the damage. It was considerable, but remarkably the car appeared to have come through without a scratch. But it was hung up on ~~xxxxxx~~ something and wouldn't back out under its own power.

So I hooked the pickup to the rear ~~of the car~~ with a piece of log chain and succeeded in pulling ~~the car~~ out of the house. The car was okay, but the patio wasn't.

With the wife ~~and~~ away at work and the kids in school, I had until about 4 p.m. to get ~~rid of the evidence,~~ ~~the patio repaired.~~ I set to work and almost succeeded in my coverup attempt. The smashed screen was impossible to repair. But everything else was repaired or replaced with only a little touchup painting needed to complete the job.

It ~~xxxx~~ was fully as bad as I had expected. When the family found out what I had done (I ~~xxxxxx~~ cracked under their intense grilling and confessed), I was the laughing stock of the household.

"At least I fix what I break," I countered sheepishly.

#

9-24-77
Globe-watcher, good evening possible
One rainy evening not long ago I became bored with TV and retired to the seclusion of my "private office". I decided to relax ~~xxxx~~ in peace and quiet with a good book, and began checking through the shelves for a title that might catch my fancy.

My gaze ^{soon} came to rest on an antique globe given to me years earlier by a now departed member of ~~my~~ the family. I began ~~to~~ turn it slowly and became quite fascinated with some of the facts ~~I discovered.~~ *it revealed.*

For example, I learned that if one traveled straight south of Minnesota he would cross the Gulf of Mexico and the country of the same name before dropping into the Pacific Ocean, missing the continent of South America altogether. This was news to me. I always ~~said~~ ^{thought} that if one traveled south he would pass through much of ~~the~~ ^{the} neighboring continent in the southern hemisphere. South America is actually southeast of here. You'll never get there by going south.

And if ~~you~~ ^{one} would travel east of here around the world in the same latitude, he would pass through such places as southern France, northern Italy, Transylvania (home of the fabled and legendary Count Dracula), and the lost land of Outer Mongolia.

As ^a small schoolboy I remember the teacher telling us that if we could dig a hole ^{straight} through the earth under our feet we would come up in China. A glance at the globe quickly pokes a hole in that story. You would, in truth, find yourself in the dead center of the Indian Ocean somewhere between Madagascar and Australia, a considerable distance from China.

Other facts that caught my fancy: A ^{jet plane flying in a} straight line between here and Japan would cross much of Alaska and the very edge of Siberia if that were permitted by the Soviets; a plane heading for Scandinavia by the most direct route will cross the subcontinent of Greenland and also the island nation of Iceland. Who would believe that to get there, you must travel ~~in~~ ~~way~~ of such a northern route.

My wife and I flew to Hartford, Conn. last month to attend a wedding and I was surprised to hear the captain tell us while airborne that we were passing over the Canadian Province of Ontario. Later, back on the ground, I checked a map and found he was right. A straight line between Minneapolis and Hartford takes you across ^{a portion of} Canada.

But planes don't always fly the most direct route. On ~~our~~ ^{the} return trip our plane made stops in Washington, D.C., Syracuse and Buffalo, N. Y. My wife and I didn't mind a bit. It was like getting a bonus ^{on} for our tickets. As the plane left the ground in Washington, we got an excellent view of Pennsylvania Ave from the Washington Monument to the Capitol and everything in between.

There hasn't been a dog on our place since ours died suddenly of "lead poisoning" last spring. It seems he couldn't let our farm's feathered residents be.

Life and I agreed that ~~dogs~~^{are} a useless commodity with all ~~their~~^{their} bad habits of dragging things up around the house, sleeping in ~~the~~ the flowerbeds and forever chasing chickens. Kids felt we needed an immediate replacement, but they were ~~so~~ "outvoted".

Then as the summer passed and fall came I remarked to wife one day, "You know, a dog would be kind of nice around here. A farm just isn't complete without a dog." I kept talking fast and heavy before she could voice an objection. "I saw here in the paper today where somebody wants to give away a nice dog with an insulated house and all. The ad says the dog is nice with children."

I pointed out to her that if we got an older dog there wouldn't be that problem of dragging junk all over the yard as puppies do ~~that~~. But she was skeptical.

"You know that we have watchdogs here," she began. Noting my puzzled expression she explained. "Anytime somebody moves around here the turkeys start gobbling and chase them all over ~~the~~^{who needs a barking dog?} the place." I had to agree.

We have three wild turkey toms that are all that's left of a small flock oldest son started as an FFA project. The idea was to get several breeder flocks started in the area and then raise young and populate some of the wild areas around here. But all the hens in his flock skipped the country leaving just those three toms who have appointed themselves keepers of the yard.

Actually they haven't really attacked anyone but they sure have done a good job of scaring the dickens out of a lot of strangers. When I do chores in the morning they run by my side chirping and gobbling constantly but they never make any hostile moves. I've gotten so I rather enjoy their company, weird as they are.

My dad though, has a problem when he stops by. On two occasions they have gotten him cornered. Their wattles puff up blood red, ~~the~~ heads take on ^{bright} sky blue color and they puff up their feathers. ~~While~~ while gobbling and chirping furiously, they dance and cavort around around their intended victim. What they intend to do is still a mystery. But Dad is not the least bit interested, ^{in finding out.}

The other day a neighbor's wife and her preschooler were over to visit the wife who is just home from the hospital. The little guy went out to play and suddenly I heard them gabbie: ~~not~~ their usual clamor not far from where I was working. I guessed what the problem was, ~~the~~ getting theirs.

The little guy stood with his back against the house wall ^{while} ~~with~~ the three gobblers danced ~~noisily~~ around in a semicircle like TV Indians getting ready to burn their victim at the stake.

I grabbed the nearest stick and ~~took care of them~~ drove the would-be assailants off into the grove on the other side of the yard.

Wife has already hinted about having a real homegrown Thanksgiving dinner ^{this year} with potatoes, squash apple pie and you know what!

~~11~~

How do you teach a kid to shut a door when he goes outside. In the summer ~~there is~~ ~~problem~~ the only door that has to stay shut is the screen door and ~~there is~~ an automatic closer ~~which~~ takes care of that at our house.

But when cold weather hits, the inside door should in the interest of energy conservation and common sense, be closed after ~~passing through~~ ^{use.} Understanding this is usually no problem for an adult, but ~~for~~ a kid, forget it!

Thus ^{in a local hardware store} At least it seems our kids can't learn to shut a door. I've tried everything I can think of to teach them why a door has hinges, but all to no avail.

Last year I came across a rather sturdy looking door closer made for just the kind of door we have. Thinking I had found the answer to my problem I bought one, ~~and~~ took it home ~~and~~ installed it the same afternoon. It worked fine. Each time a kid ~~sauntered~~ sauntered out the door it wheezed shut behind him.

Then one day ^{hardly a week later} I noticed the door standing open. Investigating, I found the closer irreparably broken. ~~Someone someone had abused the closer in such a way that it broke.~~ ~~It would have to be replaced~~ ^{needed replacing} or I would have to find another means of keeping the door closed. I considered a hammer and nail but that seemed a little too drastic. A spring strong enough to pull the heavy door shut would also ^{probably} be strong enough to prevent our smallest son from opening it. So that was out. ^{Maybe a door hinged at the top...}

I ^{finally} ~~then~~ resorted to the only means of attack still left at my disposal. I attempted to appeal to their sense of hot and cold.

I reasoned that when a strong north wind drops temps to the zero range ~~or~~ ^{or} lower and snow is ~~falling~~ ^{swirling} through the air, it becomes very uncomfortable inside our home when the door is left standing wide open. ^{losing my cool for a minute} In fact it becomes very cold inside! I yelled ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~children~~ as I tried ~~to~~

~~to~~ convince the six innocent faces seated around the table as I talked, presented my case.

But I could tell by ^{their} ~~the~~ puzzled expressions that my arguments were simple ~~to~~ ^{too} complex for them to grasp.

I needed something more dramatic than a mere scolding. They were used to ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~that~~ ^{with their own funds} If we used gas or fuel oil to heat our home maybe I could have them buy a fill ^{to} help get my point across. But we burn wood and have for the past three winters, and they already are heavily involved in the woodmaking process.

Neighbor came up with an encouraging observation ~~that~~ ^{after listening to my problem one day,} "You'll just have to wait till they grow up and leave home."

Farming is as Bad as they say

11-15-77

Our 14-year-old son got a nasty lesson in the economics of farming last week when he sold his heifer calf at a local sales barn.

Back in June with his first corn detasseling check in hand he came to me with a proposal. "Dad," he began, "I just got my check and I don't need the money now so I was wondering if it would be okay if we went to the sales barn ~~tomorrow~~ and bought a calf with the money. You won't be needing all the pasture ~~anyway~~ and it'll just grow up and go to waste anyhow."

What could I say? We went to the sales barn and son came home with a 300 pound shorthorn heifer which we dumped into the lush pasture around the farmyard. The steady diet of juicy ^{hollo-} green grass soon filled the spaces between the animal's ribs and its coat took on a healthy sheen. There was never any question that the animal would have to go again when the pasture petered out in the fall and so when the time came last week to send the animal to market, ~~XXXXXX~~ I was afraid its young owner might be somewhat reluctant to see it go. But instead he was eager to get on with it. It seems he had been estimating weight and potential profits all summer and ~~judging~~ using the current feeder market as a basis, ~~XXXXXX~~ he had been hoping for about a \$25 profit on the 100 pounds or so the animal had gained over the summer.

So when sale day came, off the animal went. "How much do you think she'll bring, Dad?" he asked. "She oughta bring at least a ~~XXXXXXX~~ hundred dollars," he continued answering his own question.

With the additional weight and the vast improvement in condition and appearance, I agreed. As we couldn't attend the sale I made arrangements to have the check sent in the mail. On the way to school Friday son warned me that in case ^{his} that check ~~should~~ come I should wait until he got home to open it. "You know it's my mail," he laughed as he walked out the door.

The check came Friday and wife went down for the mail. By the time she got back to the house I could see the news was bad. She couldn't wait and had opened the envelope for a peek.

"You know what he got for that calf?" she asked not expecting an answer from me. "\$40! That's all! How can they do something like that? There wasn't a thing wrong with that animal and the market is not that poor!"

I was literally shocked. It was as if someone had just stolen the animal from our pasture. He had paid \$86 of his hard earned money for the animal and now had gotten less than half of the check. He's always been the tightfisted businessman in our family and he had plans to reinvest the calf money into some other livestock enterprise, probably ~~go~~ ^{a good one} over the winter.

When he came home from school that afternoon and saw the check he just ~~shook his head~~

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The recent NEA vacation was put to good use by my three oldest boys and a school friend. Together they arranged and financed a trip to northern Minnesota in quest of the elusive ruffed grouse. I was selected to drive the hunting party to their destination as none yet has their own car. But I didn't mind as I always enjoy a trip to the northwoods.

The boys, with some advice from their father, chose an area north of Blackduck in which to hunt. Besides it just so happens we have a close relative who lives in the area on some choice hunting land.

The boys tramped the woods for the better part of two days, saw a lot of birds, but their marksmanship wasn't so hot. They managed to down several but if they could have had the ones they missed instead, there would have been more meat in the cooler.

Since I'm not a hunter, I didn't accompany the boys into the woods. But I did spend nearly all my time in the woods ~~was~~ just the same. It seems this relative had recently acquired another 500 acres of woods he plans to log and ~~is~~ was in the process of bulldozing a system of roads through the trees on which to move logs to the mill.

So I spent a ~~good~~ considerable ^{part} of my stay ~~was~~ on the seat of "Cat" pushing trees and dirt and laying out a passable sort of road. It turned out to be the best time I've ever had on any trip up north. The quiet and serenity of the north woods is medicine for a man's soul. I always feel renewed after a stint in the woods.

On the way home the other night I overheard the boys ^{in the back seat} discussing the possibility of talking Dad into taking them deer hunting next month. They must have gotten some of the same medicine . . .

I'VE READ in several publications at various times that farming is supposed to be one of, if not the most dangerous occupation in the country. And I'm beginning to believe there might be something to that.

I shed more of my own blood the past couple of weeks than I care to think about. It seems no matter what job I was doing, sooner or later a finger would get in the way and sustain a deep scratch or some sort of cut letting more blood drip to the ground.

But the other day I should have stayed in bed. I had finished combining beans and was cleaning up the machine for storage when I tripped over something (no doubt my own big feet) and fell backward to the ground. While falling however, I managed to turn partway around and hit the ground with the forepart of my leg and my hand. It just so happened there were some pieces of wood lying on the ground complete with nails directly in the path of my fall.

One nail ripped out a hunk of meat from my hand and ~~the~~ another buried itself ~~in~~ deep in the muscle of my lower leg. As I hobbled toward the house with my face twisted in agony, ~~wife~~ ^{saw} through ~~the~~ ^{the} window and had the medical supplies ready at the kitchen door. It was going to be another one of those days.

KIECKER ENTERPRISES
HECTOR

It seems that penmanship ~~is~~ vanishing or maybe a completely lost art. My own handwriting for example, is atrocious. And so is most of the handwritten prose I come in contact with from day to day.

Back in school days there used to be a class devoted entirely to the enhancement of the handwritten word. It was called "Penmanship". In addition to learning the correct way to tilt your "i's" and loop your "p's", much time was spent in drawing those weird springlike creatures that resembled the ~~then~~ still un-invented slinky toy. I guess the exercise was supposed to help develop a sweeping style to a student's handwriting. It failed completely in my case.

Back in those days and even today my handwriting is legible ^{only} if I take the proper time and create each character slowly. I have noticed ~~in the past~~ that if an ink pen is used, the final product comes out rather neat and readable. An old fashioned wooden lead pencil even produces a more legible script. But if a ballpoint pen is used forget it.

When I was a newspaper reporter I covered ~~many~~ events and conducted many an interview taking notes on a pad with ballpoint pen. And since I didn't know shorthand, I had to write out quotes quickly in longhand. The result ~~was~~ ^{was} completely illegible.

I can remember one occasion when I had to call the interviewed party back the next morning to find out what he had said. I had written down his quote on my pad but I simply couldn't read it.

I have always envied those old timers who kept records in courthouses and at church meetings. Their handwriting was always impeccable and a work of art. They had a way of putting a tail on letters that would make a peacock envious. And then there were those quill point signatures that looked like something right off the Declaration of Independence.

I have in my possession an antique land grant document signed by the 15th president of United States, James Buchanan. Now there was ^a sweeping style I'd be proud to call my own.

A person's ability to write, happily seems to have nothing to do with his level of achievement. George Washington's signature was completely illegible. If you didn't know beforehand what it was you were reading you'd never figure it out. John Adams on the other hand, wrote like an artist drawing an intricate design. Each letter was formed to perfection just like it came from a page in our penmanship books back in schooldays. Abraham Lincoln's signature showed his common upbringing. It was easily legible and very practical with no fancy tails or sweeps.

President Grover Cleveland's signature looked like something you might find on a prescription. Calvin Coolidge signed with all the sweeps and tails of a finely trained hand. But the lines

10/12/1961
said nothing. There simply are no letters in the English alphabet that resembled in any way those produced in his signature. It's the worst I've seen. Lyndon Johnson and Coolidge must have had the same penmanship teacher. Yet these men all found a spot in history.

I hope no one ever judges more by the legibility of my signature.

... I have in my possession an entire page in our penmanship book that I have used for the last 20 years. It is called "Handwriting" and it is the only one that I have ever used. I have noticed in my own handwriting that it is the only one that I have ever used. I have noticed in my own handwriting that it is the only one that I have ever used.

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Harriet's mother is on the loose again. I believe she first came here about
five years ago. As a matter of fact Harriet was born that way, free.

Harriet is the last remaining ^{descendant pair} ~~xxxxxxx~~ of a ~~group~~ the kids bought about two years
ago. Her father died of unknown causes soon after coming to live at our house. And her
expectant mother, no doubt torn with ~~great~~ grief, climbed out of her old aquarium home and
made her escape.

We turned the house upside down from basement to attic but found no trace of the
widowed hamster.

Then one day about two weeks after she disappeared one of the kids was in the basement
sorting through some empty fruit jars when he ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ made a grisly discovery, the
~~same elusive~~ hamster and five of her newborn children lying dead at the bottom of one of the
jars. It looked as though she had fallen into the jar ^{while nosing about in her usual inquisitive manner} and was unable to regain her freedom.

Apparently she had given birth while a prisoner in the jar and then perished with her
young~~x~~ litter.

My wife breathed sigh of relief that finally ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the search was over.
She had made no secret ~~that~~ of the fact that she wanted that rodent caught and as soon as
possible.

The kids reluctantly cleaned and stored the old aquarium after firm assurance that
there would be no replacements. Wife had had enough of hamsters on the loose in her house.

And there the matter ended, or at least until one day about two weeks later.

Wife keeps a pail under her kitchen sink where she dumps potato peelings and other
similar ~~items~~ ^{bits}. One of the kids has been assigned to see ~~to~~ ^{that} the pail ~~whenever~~ is emptied from
time to time.

One day ~~while~~ he was reaching for the pail ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ planning to empty it when
a movement in the garbage caught his eye. Somewhat taken aback he stirred in the top layer
of peelings and to his surprise, a half-grown hamster poked its nose out at him.

The little critter had apparently gotten out of the jar somehow and managed to survive
by ~~making~~ its ~~own~~ ^{own} and a diet of garbage. While he held on to the wriggling, biting
ball of fur, his brother broke out the old hamster pen and in she went. They christened her
Harriet.

Harriet settled down to her new life and rapidly grew to adulthood while winning the kids' hearts. She became extremely tame and the kids would often ~~take her~~ ~~out of her~~ ~~the~~ ~~pen~~ ~~and~~ ~~xxx~~ let her nose around under their shirts or in a pocket. It was comical to watch her creep about with ~~her~~ nose twitching, pausing occasionally to raise her head and test the scents in the air.

In the daylight hours she spent most of her time ~~xxxxxxx~~ asleep in a baby food jar half buried in the litter at the bottom of the pen. At night she would come out and rummage around the pen until daybreak.

Then on Thanksgiving day one of the boys noticed her pen was empty again. A thorough search of the house turned up no sign of Harriet. Now life has threatened to set mouse traps all over the house if the elusive hamster isn't found immediately. But so far there is still ^{sign of} no Harriet.

At least this time when and if she is found, there will be no family as Harriet has been an old maid for a good year.

Last week one of the boys caught a furry little field mouse and thinking it would make a good companion for Harriet, he put the mouse in the pen. That night ~~when~~ at bedtime he checked to see how the two had gotten along and found the mouse without its head.

Harriet apparently had placed a high value on her loneliness and promptly chewed the head off her companion.

Life commented dryly about Harriet's escape, "Well, maybe she'll get rid of the mice in the house if she hates ^{them} mice that much."

Who knows, maybe we have the ^{proverbial} "better mouse trap" ^{right here in our home.} that ~~everyone has been looking~~ for.

Proposed 2002 - 2010 - 2011 - 2012 - 2013 - 2014 - 2015 - 2016 - 2017 - 2018 - 2019 - 2020 - 2021 - 2022 - 2023 - 2024 - 2025 - 2026 - 2027 - 2028 - 2029 - 2030 - 2031 - 2032 - 2033 - 2034 - 2035 - 2036 - 2037 - 2038 - 2039 - 2040 - 2041 - 2042 - 2043 - 2044 - 2045 - 2046 - 2047 - 2048 - 2049 - 2050 - 2051 - 2052 - 2053 - 2054 - 2055 - 2056 - 2057 - 2058 - 2059 - 2060 - 2061 - 2062 - 2063 - 2064 - 2065 - 2066 - 2067 - 2068 - 2069 - 2070 - 2071 - 2072 - 2073 - 2074 - 2075 - 2076 - 2077 - 2078 - 2079 - 2080 - 2081 - 2082 - 2083 - 2084 - 2085 - 2086 - 2087 - 2088 - 2089 - 2090 - 2091 - 2092 - 2093 - 2094 - 2095 - 2096 - 2097 - 2098 - 2099 - 2100

FOR YEARS I'VE been toying with the idea of growing a full beard. But each time I bring the topic up for discussion, my wife vetoes the idea in no uncertain terms.

"I'm not married to a gerilla, and you don't have to try to look like one," she reasons.

Apparently she doesn't trust me. Early this fall I went for several days without shaving and the dark growth on my chin was beginning to hide my facial features. One morning at the breakfast table wife issued a ~~direct~~ ^{direct} warning, "Either you get rid of that weed patch, or I will."

Something in the tone of her voice convinced me that she meant business, so I reluctantly headed for the bathroom and plugged in the electric razor.

But now the problem has reared its ugly head again. It seems the last issue of the local newspaper carried a story about how a beard growing contest was being launched as part of the local bicentennial festivities this summer.

"Here's my chance," I thought to myself. "With the chance to win a cash prize how can she refuse?"

When I confronted her with this contest thing she merely shrugged her shoulders and replied, "Go ahead, but you're going to sleep on the sofa until you shave that horrible thing off."

So now the problem is whether to go ahead with the beard and risk the lumps on the sofa till next summer or to can the whole idea and stay in her good graces.

I decided to procrastinate. "I won't start with a beard until after the holidays," I assured her. My reasoning is that I don't want to look like an unshaven bum at Christmas time ~~just~~ ~~when~~ the growth is reaching its prime.

After the holiday season has passed I can make like a hermit and stay out of the public view until the beard is presentable.

Wife had no comment on my new plan of action, but I'm sure her views have changed little.

[Handwritten mark]

No matter how long and bleak the winter ahead may look, there is always a promise of the coming spring lurking somewhere. Yesterday when I picked up the mail here was a catalog from a Missouri hatchery offering special prices ^{as an inducement} ~~to order~~ to order my chicks early.

About four years ago we ordered ~~xxxxxxixixix~~ an assortment of chicks from the hatchery through an ad that appeared in a national farm magazine. The chicks arrived by parcel post, all alive and good condition.

We all had a good chuckle when the postmaster called to say ^{they were holding} ~~there was~~ a box "that peeped", and would be kindly call for it as soon as possible.

The chicks must have been of good hardy stock as many of them are still around today.

Since that order we have been on the firm's mailing list and regularly receive catalogs and fliers.

There must have been at least two dozen distinct breeds in that box and when they matured I'll bet we had the most unusual laying flock in the county.

* * *

WHAT EVER HAPPENED to popular singers and groups with real "people" names?

I happened to glance through a magazine the other day and came across the latest "top 100" list.

Included on the list were ~~such~~ "artists" with such unlikely names as "Silver Convention", "5,000 Volts", "Jaguar", and "Eagles" to name a few. But when it comes to weird names for singing groups, ~~xxxxixixix~~ nothing can top the "Grateful Dead" as the weirdest, in my opinion. And after seeing a picture of the group I am convinced they are probably the weirdest looking as well.

What attracts today's kids to such weirdos? When my generation was in its youthful prime our parents no doubt wondered the same about us. But somehow the groups and their music today ~~ixxxxxix~~ seems much more "far out", to borrow a term from the modern language.

I guess that is why I gradually became attuned to what is currently known as "country music". At least ~~is~~ this music is ~~xxxxx~~ sung by people with real names and has lyrics that are both understandable and believable.

But then maybe the real problem is that I'm just getting old.

Large family presents ~~shopping~~ problems

by FK

AS much as I dislike the thought, I suppose I'll have to face the inevitable and get at the Christmas shopping before time runs out.

Every year it's the same thing, what to get everyone. And with seven others in the family, that can be a real problem.

My wife's want list is short. ~~She only wants one thing, a new automatic washer with a large very large load capacity~~ ^{will please her immensely.} ~~and~~ with a family of eight contributing something to the hamper every day, she ~~usually~~ washes up to 20 loads a week. And the old machine has been gasping its last for several weeks now.

Many of the toys advertised daily on TV have found their way onto the kids' Christmas lists. Although many of the offerings this year are new ~~to~~ on the market, they really are a repeat of the same old things offered in previous years. And almost all have one thing in common, they break the day after Christmas.

Some toys, of course are quite ingenious and while the novelty lasts, they are quite entertaining. But when the newness wears off the child tires of watching it do the same old thing over and over again, the toy ~~itself~~ winds up in a corner of some dark closet where it is left to rest indefinitely.

That has been my loudest complaint about toys, few allow the child to use his imagination. Everything is already built into the toy and the child has only to flick a switch and sit back and watch it perform its brief ^{and repetitious} show.

I remember ~~xxxx~~ my years as a small boy. Some of ~~the~~ ^{my} most enjoy^{able} toys ~~that~~ were made on the spur of the moment out of some old pieces of board and an occasional hunk of metal. These creations probably in no way resembled what they were supposed to ~~be~~ represent, but they worked and fueled by a small boy's imagination, they did everything necessary and more. If they broke I had two alternatives, both ~~available~~ at my immediate disposal. One was to make emergency repairs using materials ~~xxxx~~ at hand or to make a new, improved model that would allow my imagination to ~~xxxx~~ create more interesting situations.

Some of my interest in homemade toys has apparently rubbed off on my sons. The old "sand pile" at the corner of the yard is piled high with homemade concoctions ^{some} vaguely

resembling farm machinery and others are ~~not~~ so apparent. But all get used for some purpose in their games.

"stone bought"

Of course the kids appreciate ~~children~~ toys, but they seem to get more fun out of making their own. I suppose ~~that~~ way they get exactly what they want, just as their father once did.

Last summer my daughter embarked on a complicated project ~~it~~ ^{and} when all the sawing and nailing was finished a dollhouse ~~was~~ stood on the shop bench. It was rather crude by anyone's standards, but it did the job and she was thrilled by her accomplishment.

Unfortunately the structure collapsed one day under the ~~weight~~ ^{bulk} ^{overweight} of the ~~family~~ ^{thought} tomcat she apparently ~~thought~~ the roof would be an ideal place to nap in the warm ~~summer~~ fall sun.

Some years ago when the kids were smaller I decided to make all the Christmas gifts for them that year. Wife and I simply couldn't find suitable gifts on several shopping trips around the area and so we decided I should go ahead and build a table and chair set that they could use in the basement playroom. And as we had several budding craftsmen in the family we felt a scaled down shop bench might also come in handy.

The items are still in the basement and have held up rather well through all the years of hard use. Problem now is that the children have grown just a bit too large to use the ~~set~~ ^{items} comfortably.

But it was a good Christmas that year. The children were thrilled to get something that their dad had made, and dad was pleased with his creations and the sense of accomplishment that came with them.

Although it's getting a little late for this year, I have another project in mind for a future Christmas.

#

Winter always comes too soon

Why is it that no matter when the first snowstorm of the season strikes, it always catches some people not quite prepared for the wintry weather. I'm one of those persons. It's happened every year since I can't remember when.

There is always something or things that are left to be done. Like this year for instance. The snowstorm ~~last~~ last week caught me smack in the middle of a building project. I had just finished the foundation the week before, ~~and had~~ nailed down the floor and had raised the stud walls.

Meanwhile the weatherman on the radio was ^{practically} promising rain for the next day, ~~and so~~ ~~so~~ I figured it was time to get the roof on and covered before the predicted downpour struck. So the next morning I began putting up rafters one by one. But working at such a job alone is slow at best and the day was wearing on while dark clouds ^{gathered overhead} ~~gathered~~. I wanted the roof on so I could work inside the structure in case ~~of~~ rain really came.

^{Parajing,} ^{school at noon} I finally sent the wife to ~~xxxx~~ to get two of the boys home to help. We finished just at dark. That night it rained more than three inches. And the next day it snowed another three and blew like the dickens.

I meant to start the project earlier in the year but somehow never got at it as other things seemed to press for attention, ^{anyway} and ^{this year} it always seemed there was still plenty of time. Now if I ~~cannot~~ finish the building ^{it's going to be with frozen fingers.}

The same ~~same~~ thing happened with the wood pile we planned for all year. Last year we ran short, and had to go into the woods in late winter ~~and~~ ploughing around in the deep snow try to ~~fix~~ out and haul wood.

I and the boys resolved then ^{and there} that next year it would be different. When winter came we would have all the firewood needed for the season ~~cut~~ and neatly stacked on the yard where it was no problem to get at. We kind of achieved about half our goal. A good amount of cord wood has been cut and stacked in the woods, but it still has to be sawed into stove size lengths and hauled home.

It seems the weatherman sees clear and warm weather ^{for} this weekend, ~~and so~~ so I've ^{warned} the boys that all stops are coming out and we're going to make and stack enough wood for the entire season before the sun sets Sunday night. You wouldn't believe the nasty looks I got with that announcement.

Next year we are going to start in the spring ~~and~~ like we were this year, and ~~last~~ the year before, and the year before that.....

It's been said probably thousands of times before but it is still true, "There sure is a

difference in kids."

My wife and I got home from a major shopping jaunt the other afternoon just as the kids were getting off the school bus. The snow storm and sharp drop in temperatures outside last week brought on a sudden demand for warmer clothes and new boots for about half our brood.

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"Can you come over and babysit tonight for a while?" asked a familiar voice over the phone the other evening. "I have league bowling and I can't get out of it and Dad, you know, is on deer hunting and the sows are coming in."

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ The voice belonged to a longtime friend ~~XXXXXX~~ who with her husband and family raised hogs among other things on a small farm a short drive away.

"And to make things more complicated," she ~~XXXXXX~~ went on in an almost frantic voice, "The boys are away at a wrestling match tonight. ~~XXXX~~ It would only be for about an hour and a half."

She ~~XXXXXX~~ turned to me and explaining the problem ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ wife, who had taken the call, cupped her hand over the phone's mouthpiece ~~XXXXXX~~ and asked, "What do you think?"

"I have to write the weekly column tonight," I reminded her.

"Take the typewriter along and do it there," she countered. "I'll go along and watch the sows and you can set up on a bale of straw in a corner somewhere and do the column."

"Write my column in a hogbarn!" I stormed. "What will you come up with next?"

~~XXXXXXXX~~ Without waiting for my answer she had turned back to the phone and was telling our caller that we would be glad to come. What time would she like us to be there?

Our caller expressed enthusiastically her thanks and advised wife there would be a juicy steak in the deal for us both after bowling that night. We both agreed that would help ease the burden some.

HERE I SIT in the hogbarn on a bale of straw with my portable typewriter resting on the bale between my knees. Not at all a comfortable position.

A radio is blaring at the far end of the barn. It has a double purpose its owner once informed me, to keep the sows contented and to ~~keep~~ do just the opposite to any rats that might happen by. But it's not totally effective. I just saw a furry ^{rat like} body ~~about the size of a rat~~ run through the shadows to my left. Maybe it's deaf.

Wife is standing at the end of a farrowing crate ^{watching} ~~containing~~ the current star of the show. She has farrowed 13 live pigs and is still going strong.

I have a feeling I'm being watched. I turn to the right and sure enough. About a dozen feeder pigs are ~~six~~ lined up along the ~~XXXXXX~~ pen gate watching me through a crack ~~XXXXXX~~ between the boards. ^{Always curious} ~~(the click of the typewriter must have attracted them)~~ ^{caught their fancy.}

I suddenly stand up and zip shut the case of my portable without even removing the paper from the roller. How can anyone concentrate ^{under} such conditions? I yell stinging.

Winter with all its snow, cold and assorted ills descended on our family with a heavy hand this week.

Two moderate snowfalls blanketed our place with a quilt of white and subzero temperatures made sure it would be a permanent winter cover. I would have much preferred the grays, browns and blacks of a snowless winter. Seems it never gets as cold when the ground is bare and it's a lot easier to move around without snow to push aside first.

Then came the first toothache. I made an appointment with the dentist who extracted the offending molar. But this didn't stop the pain. A few days later a second tooth began complaining.

The dentist filled this one giving some relief. But the worst was still to come.

Early Thanksgiving day a third molar went on the rampage sending me to the aspirin bottle on ~~the~~ ^{the} run. But the pain wouldn't go away. I finally found that a mouthfull of cold water would give temporary relief as long as the water ^{stayed} cold.

Since I couldn't sit in church with a mouthfull of cold water, I sent the rest of the family and stayed home to ^{do} battle with my tooth. But the real ordeal was still ahead, Thanksgiving dinner with the wife's relatives. But I figured that if worse came to worst I could sit with my mouth full of cold water and at least smile, if not ^{edit out} visit.

When we arrived brother-in-law was passing cordials around in the form of a small glass of wine. I sipped mine because it tasted better than water and controlled the toothache as well. When the glass was empty I noticed my aggravation was gone and it didn't return all day. Wine must truly have some medicinal value as I have heard on occasion.

I got a small bottle the next day and it helped me make ^{it} to my next appointment, ^{dentist.} with the

But last night it was the rest of the family's turn. ~~Miss~~ The wife and four of the kids came down with a dose of the flu. I doubt if the bathroom light got turned off all night.

Once when I awoke someone was in the bathroom, another was upchucking at the kitchen sink and a third was coming down the stairway in a hurry. Only two of the older boys and myself escaped the grip of the flu monster. But as I warned the boys, tomorrow is another day.

Biggest complaint among the kids was that they had to spend part of their holiday from school in bed sick. Why couldn't this have come on a school day, they asked.

This past week has been kind of a depressing way to start another winter ^{especially} ~~and~~ when you consider the fact ~~that~~ we haven't yet seen the end of November. It could be a long cold winter.

"I'm glad summer is finally coming to an end," remarked wife the other night as we both dropped wearily into bed. It had been one of those 18 hour days that have been almost too frequent this summer.

That day had started, like most, at the crack of dawn and ended shortly before midnight. For both of us it had included time at our town jobs, a stint in the pickle patch in late afternoon and then a hitch in the hog barn as another batch of sows began farrowing. Any gaps

Our youngest son appears to have a good thing going. He's selling teeth to the "tooth fairy".

"Look, Dad," he said walking up to me with hand outstretched and filled with quarters, "I got all these from the tooth fairy." He pulled his lip down so I could see the vacancies in his mouth as proof.

"There's ²⁺² eight quarters there," I replied counting the loot. "You didn't lose that many teeth."

Inflation had done its dirty work in the tooth fairy business in past years pushing the price of a baby molar from a nickel when our oldest was ^{little} up to the present rate of a quarter.

But our youngest is pumping the well pretty hard with eight quarters in hand and only three teeth missing in his mouth. "How's he been doing this?" I questioned the "fairy".

The explanation I got left me wondering what kind of a shyster we were raising. It seems he extracted one molar in pieces and received ⁴⁺¹¹ payment for each piece.

Accepted procedure for collecting ~~quarters~~ on a fallen fang in our house is to place the tooth on the corner of a china cupboard ~~in~~ on the way to bed in the evening. Then if the Fairy has been alert, the payee will find a quarter ^{the next morning} in place of the tooth. Except for occasional ^{when a tooth is overlooked for several days at a time,} complaints of poor service the system has worked quite well.

While his brothers and sister watch their bank accounts dwindle over winter, he is steadily filling his and without a lick of work.

Wife, who knew she was being "taken" but didn't seem to mind, explained that our son had received fifty cents for two whole teeth and \$1.50 for the third, in pieces.

In fact it's been working so well that I've been toying with the idea of putting the broken molar the dentist yanked from my mouth the other day in the china cupboard. If a chip from my son's tooth is worth a quarter my giant should bring at least a five dollar bill. But then the bill would come from my wallet anyway so what's the use.

LAST FRIDAY after school wife announced to the kids that they were going to help butcher ducks the next day. I haven't heard such moaning and grumbling since my last visit to the dentist's office.

We had tried to butcher the ducks a month earlier but they still were full of pin feathers. It hadn't been cold enough yet.

Kids were hoping that it was too cold now to pick feathers, but they got fooled.

"Boy, Dad! you should see the big drift behind the sawmill!" chimed the two smallest boys almost in unison as they came tramping into the house excitedly after the blizzard blew itself out Friday. "I'll bet it's seven feet deep!" exclaimed the smallest his eyes wide with excitement.

I wished I could have shared his excitement and happiness over the frozen white world outside. But to me it meant only more and harder work. There still was a pile of cordwood to saw for the basement furnace and it was directly under the big snowdrift the kids were so excited about.

It would mean digging out way back to where the mill stood, then digging the wood out for cutting up into burnable lengths. There also was a pile of slabs next to the sawmill that I had hoped to cut up before snow covered them. They too would have to be dug out.

But then labor is something we have in great abundance around here although you won't hear such a statement from any of the five boys.

Although some very deep drifts did stretch themselves through our grove, remarkably none blocked the exit from our yard. We were free to go as soon as the wind died down and the snow cleared the roads. Normally a huge drift stretches across our yard diagonally sealing off all chance of escape. For some reason this did not happen Friday.

In past years big storms have laid drifts on our yard that have been almost beyond comprehension. Several years ago after a three day blow our pickup truck that had been parked behind the house was completely covered. Not one speck of red paint could be seen from any angle.

The first winter we lived on this place a snowstorm dumped so much snow and blew it ~~saxxaxd~~ into such solid drifts that I had to hire a cat and dozer to open the driveway and yard. The old tractor and loader simply couldn't handle it.

That time we were locked in for several weeks. Cat operators were so busy that they were ~~being~~ swamped with work. Most were working on public roads to clear them properly before another blow hit. When our furnace fuel finally ran out our number ~~simply~~ got moved to the top of the waiting list and we got cleaned out.

Luckily just as the storm was beginning I had the foresight to take the car off the yard and leave it at the end of the driveway. At least we had wheels during our isolation. We sure could have used a snowmobile that year but the machines were ~~just~~ still practically unheard of at the time.

This morning, the day after the blizzard, dawned clear and gold bone rattling cold. The kids have just gone stomping out the door wrapped from head to toe in warm clothes. Their purpose is they tell me, to find the best drift for the construction of a snow fort.

I wished them luck ~~and~~ crowded closer to heat register.

It seems the press got more excited about the farmer strike than farmers themselves did, least in this neck of the woods. Locally I haven't seen any indication of activity that would hint of a strike.

There may or may not be grain sales ^{going on} but there is no grain moving ^{on roads} around here, ~~at any rate~~, and the milk truck still picks up the neighbor's milk each day. A relative in the livestock hauling business near here says he is as busy as ever.

Whether or not farmers are supporting the strike they no doubt are sympathetic toward its goals which would benefit them as well. But many simply don't think the strike will do any good. Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland, himself a farmer, shares these sympathies. He has publicly voiced his doubt but ^{like a true politician} quickly added he hopes the strike will achieve some degree of success.

Striking farmers are asking for 100 per cent of parity as compared to only about 60 per cent currently. USDA officials figure that if farmers received this kind of raise for their products consumers' food bills would jump about 20 per cent. This wouldn't be so bad if you consider other consumer items that have doubled in price in recent years such as gasoline. After some grumbling and complaining consumers kept right on buying gas. ~~and~~ No doubt the same thing would happen with food. After all people have to eat.

Supposing the strike were 100 per cent successful and farmers received ~~this~~ ^{would} almost double the usual "paycheck". What ~~do~~ ^{do} they do with all this new wealth? Pay off debts and bills, most would say. But then what would they do with the accumulating cash ^{after that?} ~~once they were in the black?~~ Buy more land, new and bigger machines and generally expand their business until they wound up in the same ~~spot~~ ^{are usually} they ~~have always been in~~ -- too many bills and not enough income to keep up this new standard.

Any sizeable increase in farm prices in past years has triggered the same results. It seems farmers are always looking somewhere for someone to blame for their woes, except themselves. If they could be content with good prices and not immediately seek to expand the size of their business that's just possible good times on the farm might become a way of life rather than a sometime thing.

Trouble is there are too many farmers who are only employed parttime. During warm weather months they plant and harvest their crops and during winter they sit in the cabs of their new four-wheel drive pickups cruising from town to town looking for more things to buy. Without livestock farming is only a parttime job.

The help rural America is seeking is not going to come from "Big Brother" but rather from the people who live there themselves and are willing to work year around for the things they want.

That is all for 1977.

Watch for upcoming years to be put together
and posted.