

# Return to Wayne's World

By

Wayne Carlson (and others)

Return to Wayne's World is Volume 2 in the wildly popular series (unfortunately, only in the mind of the author.) Several friends and relatives have made contributions to this anthology. Hopefully, it will be memorable.

Enjoy again!

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## Christmas Miracle

By Marci Sanders

A light dusting of snow covered the back roads outside of Craig, Colorado. Melany and I were bundled up and the pickup truck was loaded to the brim with food and Christmas presents for the needy families of our parish. As we set out that crisp December afternoon, we couldn't have imagined that we were about to witness our own Christmas miracle.

Melany and Jim Neton and myself had been working all fall with the high school youth group in our parish. Once a week we would meet in fellowship and discuss numerous topics. The holiday season was nearing and the students thought it would be a great idea to put two large evergreen giving trees in the foyer of the church. Upon the trees we would hang ornaments stating specific needs for families in our parish. All matching ornaments would correspond to one family in need. No names would be disclosed, only ages and Christmas hopes.

As the weeks progressed we continued to decorate the giving tree with ornaments. The items requested on the nameless tags were not toys or game boys, but rather a warm winter coat, gloves, or a pair of pants for church. The ornaments were rapidly disappearing and beautifully wrapped presents of reds, greens, gold, and blues were returning under the tree.

Melany and I were preparing for our big delivery day. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, we loaded the back of the pickup with all the beautifully wrapped presents and an abounding food basket for each family's Christmas dinner. We had five families that were on our delivery route. We left the church in our sleigh full of goodies with warm, happy hearts. We made our first three deliveries and found families who were gracious and extremely thankful of the abundance of gifts brought to their doorsteps. Each wished us a Merry Christmas and off we went to our next delivery.

The afternoon sun was fading and a soft snow began to fall. Dusk was approaching and we had one more delivery to make. The directions we were given took us out of town on some back-country roads. For thirty minutes we drove until we came to a dead end. According to the directions, we were looking for a blue house down in a valley.

We retraced our path and started again at point A, enjoying the Christmas carols on the radio and each other's company. Again we drove for approximately twenty minutes and again we were at a dead end. By now the early evening sky had been replaced with a blanket of stars and a bright half moon. We were determined to find this family. We knew that their hopes of having a Christmas with presents under the tree and a feast on the table depended on us.

We retraced our path once again, but all the roads began to look the same and because we had lost the light of day, we were feeling disoriented and confused. We pulled over to the side of the road and asked God to help us find this family. We started off again. We took curve after curve and hill after hill and then simultaneously we both fell silent, for as we came over the hill we saw before us in the distance a large five-point star.

We drove slowly toward it. Its magical light was a beacon calling to us. When we arrived at the star it looked suspended in the air, at least twenty feet off the ground. We marvelled at the spectacle. Then we looked over the edge of the road, and there in a valley sat a house with two dim lights illuminating its blue color. Could it be? Could this be the house we had been searching hours for?

Our hearts raced as we rolled down the road. The side door flew open and three little faces peeked out. A woman and her three small children and her older son greeted us with open arms. Although we spoke two different languages, the language of compassion and warmth was undeniably understood. The woman gestured for us to come in. Their home was clean, yet meager in material goods. We were escorted into the family's living room and served hot coffee and milk. There before us were four eager pairs of eyes sitting near a small, decorated Christmas tree, sparse, yet bearing four small gifts.

The children began to come forward and tell us their names and things they had asked Santa Claus to bring them. As they talked, we unloaded the bags of presents and, placed them under the tree. I will never forget the look of joy and excitement on the children's faces and the look of gratefulness upon the mothers'. We stayed and laughed and visited with the family for quite some time. When it was time for us to leave the woman extended an invitation to return any time.

As we left the house we looked at the star that had led us there. There was no explanation for why it was in the middle of a field, suspended on a pole. We were baffled by how it was receiving electricity, who had placed it there, and through our questions we realized that just as the shepherds and wise men had been led to Bethlehem on that fate-filled night, we too had our prayer answered and had been blessed with our own Christmas miracle.

*(Editors note—This story was written by a dear friend whom I used to teach with at Brush Middle School. She now teaches at Thomson Elementary and her husband Robb is the Principal at Beaver Valley Elementary.)*

## My Most Memorable Christmas

By Kevin Carlson

The Christmas I most vividly recall is when I was a young lad of about six years. We lived in Los Alamos, N.M. at the time. We were going to my grandma's house, which is on a farm just outside Galeton, Colorado near Greeley.

We left on the day drive about 8 a.m. a couple days before Christmas. I remember winding down the mesa that Los Alamos was on into the town of Espanola. We then headed north until we reached Walsenburg, where we ate at a place we called "The Hole in the Wall."

After that we headed through Denver to Greeley and then turned east until we reached my grandma's. We stayed there for the night and went into Greeley the next day, which was Christmas Eve. We did some last minute shopping and then went back to grandmas. That night we went over to my uncle's house and met with the family. We had an excellent supper of ham and Swedish meatballs and then had ice cream and ostakaka for dessert.

We sat around and grandpa read the Christmas story from the Bible. Then we sang Christmas carols until we heard a knock on the door. My uncle Oz opened the door and it was good old Santa Claus. He called my cousins and me to him and we told him what we wanted and if we had been good that year or not. I naturally told him that I had been good that year and I told Santa that I wanted a Star Wars x-wing fighter and a toy fire engine. My cousins went up and told him what they wanted too.

Then Santa reached into his bag and started pulling out presents. He called off some of my cousins' names and gave them their presents.

Suddenly, after a long wait, he called my name as he took out my present. I got it and could barely lift it. I ran over and quickly opened it. It was a toy fire engine! It had a big ladder that I could crank up. My cousins got dolls and most of the things they wanted.

The next morning we packed up and left for my other grandma's house, which is in Holyoke. We went out and sat around the Christmas tree and opened presents. I got a fake doctor's kit which had a fake stethoscope. We then ate our Christmas dinner. We had turkey, potatoes, bread, and pumpkin pie for dessert. We visited relatives with grandma

the rest of the day and spent the night there. I slept in a small bed that was made for people my size. We woke up and had pancakes and sausage for breakfast.

After a while we packed up and left for New Mexico. It seemed to take forever to get home but it always seems to when you are eager to get somewhere. We got into Espanola and then took the climb up the mesa. We were home at last! I rushed in and started to play with my toys, glad to be home.

*(Editor's note--This story was written by my son Kevin in the year 1986 when he was a freshman at Brush High School)*

## Lovella and the Jackrabbit

By Wayne Carlson

When God first placed people on earth many years ago, He knew that certain individuals would have significant physical and emotional challenges, and would be more vulnerable than others. In His infinite wisdom, He knew that human nature would cause inequities, and that some people would need special help. Therefore, He created a class of people just a little different than the ordinary. He invested these people with an extra measure of compassion, a greater capacity for love, and an undying concern for the downtrodden. He created a select group of people who were akin to the angels.

These people could be either male or female. Most of them have moved on to their eternal reward, but some still walk among us. Many of these individuals are well known to history. The names of some are noted in sacred books such as the Bible and many have been designated as Saints. Some of them have operated anonymously and have never been officially recognized. Most of you have known some of these people and some of you might even belong to this group. One of these special people is the subject of this story—my Aunt Lovella, who went to her heavenly reward in March of 2005.

Lovella spent her entire lifetime helping other people. Anyone and everyone who needed a shoulder to cry on, an ear to bend, or a back to help carry a load, could count on Lovella. She was a public school teacher for forty years until her retirement in 1976. She taught four years in a three-room school at Lone Tree in rural Weld County, two years in Sedgwick in northeastern Colorado, and one year in Windsor, before moving to Washington for the duration of her career. Literally thousands of kids learned to read, write, and do their 'rithmetic with Lovella's help. She moved to Greeley on retirement, where she spent the remainder of her life.

It was during Lovella's first year as a teacher that she had an experience that would be etched into her memory. The year was 1936, and the place was near her schoolhouse at Lone Tree. This school had three teachers—one of whom also served as the Principal. It was located



about three miles west and two and one half miles south of the town of Galetton. Lovella taught grades three, four, and five, and the Principal, Mr. Whorton, taught grades six, seven, and eight.

Lovella lived with her parents, Berger and Nellie (whom Lovella called Papa and Mama) along with a large number of siblings. She felt fortunate to be making \$75 per month and being paid all 12 months. Many teachers were making \$65 per month and were only being paid during the actual 9-month school year. Lovella attributes her financial situation to school board member Sam Danielson who believed that teachers had to live during the summer, too.

Each morning and afternoon, her father drove Lovella to school, since her driving skills were not yet adequate to drive herself. She had been practicing, under the watchful eyes of her brothers, Elmer, Roy, and George. The morning of this story was special, because this was the very first time Lovella soloed in Papa's car, a 1934 Ford Sedan.

Lovella drove from home very carefully, keeping the speed to about 35 since the gravel road was rough and washboard. Just after she turned south toward her school, she noticed a large jackrabbit on the edge of the road—apparently asleep. Lovella remembered how her brothers in similar situations would honk the horn to startle the rabbit, and how they would laugh as the long-eared animal sped for safety. Almost by reflex her hand slipped onto the horn and she gave it a couple of quick pushes.

“Honk!” the noise broke the stillness of the morning. “Honk!” The slumbering rabbit immediately roused from its dreams of carrots and lettuce and in abject terror knew that it had to flee the huge metallic monster rapidly approaching. Instinctively, it jumped straight up into the air, right into the windshield of Lovella's car! It shattered the glass and fell onto the floor next to the startled young teacher's feet, mortally wounded. It kicked weakly twice and quietly died.

Lovella immediately pulled the car to the side of the road, trembling slightly. She surveyed the damage to her car, glanced around to see if anyone had witnessed the occasion, and wondered how in the world she was going to break the news to Papa. She lifted the dead jackrabbit by the ears and laid it gently on the side of the road. She got behind the wheel of the auto and proceeded slowly toward the school.

It was still early and the only adult in evidence was Mr. Whorton, who approached as Lovella entered the parking lot. "What happened to your car, Miss Carlson?" he asked when he saw the damaged windshield.

"I ran into a rabbit!" Lovella exclaimed.

"Don't you mean a pheasant?" Mr. Whorton inquired. "How could a rabbit do that to your windshield?" he asked incredulously.

The rest of the day went routinely for Lovella. After school, she had to drive to a meeting at a neighboring school in Gill, which she accomplished in spite of the broken windshield. As she approached home, she wondered how she was going to break the news to her parents. The last words Mama had said to her that morning as they said goodbye were, "Don't you wreck the car!"

"Mama, I wrecked the car!" she blurted out as she entered the house.

Mama was quite upset and worried. "How are we going to tell Papa?"

It turned out that Papa was very sympathetic and understanding when Lovella finally worked up the nerve. It cost \$11 to replace the windshield, a great amount of money in 1936. She had to submit to a great deal of good-natured teasing from her brothers. After a few weeks, even Papa got a chuckle from the story. Eventually, the story became legendary in the Carlson family.

Lulu  
By Carol Carlson

Last spring I saw an ad in the newspaper, “Very friendly, affectionate house cat, spayed, free to a good home,” it read.

I called and talked to a man who explained the circumstances. “We live on a farm southwest of Brush. Our cats are expected to keep the mouse population under control, and we do not normally allow them in the house. My wife works and my two daughters go to school in Ft. Morgan, so I take care of this cat. She refuses to stay outside, even hanging on the screens when put out. She does not get along with the other cats. She has become a house cat. Whenever I sit down, she jumps up on me and wants attention. We have two dogs and a rabbit. We may move and we have to find her a good home.”

So, I said I’d take a look at her. “My wife will call and bring her into town when she has time,” he said.

A few days later a woman rang the doorbell. “I’ll go get the cat,” she said as I met her at the door. She and two young daughters brought in a huge gold colored cat. “This is Lulu Belle,” she said by way of introduction. I held the cat so I could get a good look at her. I commented that she was pretty heavy. “Yes, she likes to eat,” the woman replied. I also noticed that her fur was damp. “We decided to give her a bath.”

I could just imagine the hassle of trying to dry her fur, probably with a hair dryer, or possibly with a towel as they drove into Brush. This was April and it was fairly cool. “She is about five years old and needs to have shots.” When I mentioned that I bet that they were going to miss her, tears began to show in the eyes of the two little girls.

“Would you like to have Lulu Belle?” asked the woman. “We just cannot keep her with all our other pets.

“Yes, I would love to have Lulu.” Lulu had not moved or acted skittish in my arms.

“You’ll be okay, Lulu. We had better leave. I’ll get some food for her.” The girls were about to cry and I felt badly that I was taking their cat, but the man I had talked to made it clear that Lulu had to go. I promised them that I would take good care of their cat.

After awhile she came out to investigate and crawled up on Wayne's tummy as he sat in his recliner watching TV. Pretty soon her paws began kneading his shirt. The only problem was that her claws were extended and were digging into his belly. We soon discovered that she loved to do this. We found that she liked to be at our level. We found that she was remarkably athletic. A jump up to the table or counter was no problem in spite of her bulk. Wayne wanted to rename her "Barkley" because she reminded him of basketball player Charles Barkley, nicknamed "the Round Mound of Rebound" because he was a great rebounder in spite of his rotund build.

We soon found that Lulu had a remarkable feline vocabulary. When she gave a little faint meow, it was to ask permission to jump up on our bed in the morning. She would have liked to sleep with us, but Wayne had never let any of our cats do that. Each night she sweetly asked for her snack. Yes, I made the mistake of trying to make her feel more at home at first by giving her a teaspoon of canned food at night. Now she will not let me forget that she should have a snack. She even tries to convince me that she should have another treat just before we go to bed. Another small, faint voice lets us know that she is there, especially at night when we may have to get up in the dark to visit the bathroom. Another voice is loud and really means business. Sometimes there are small squeaks as she stretches. There's another tone to wake us in the morning, even when we want to sleep in.

We bought a round, carpet-covered bed with a place to crawl into, except that she is too big to get in! She began sleeping on top of it. When the blinds are opened in the morning, she loves to sit in the windowsill and watch for birds. As the weather warmed, I took her out with me, and she stayed as long as I was there. At night she became bolder, staying out on our front deck, watching for any cats that might approach our yard. One time we had the bedroom window open with no screen on it. A neighbor's cat on his regular rounds came into the backyard. She jumped down and chased him away.

Luli (my pet name for her) has caused some laughs with some of her antics. She looks forward to our playtime each morning. I have a plastic pole with a long string attached. At the end of the string is a birdlike thing, which she will chase as I whip it around. Often she will

tear and claw at it, or anything else nearby, such as the rug. We find her toy mice all over and the corners of rugs turned up, indicating she decided to play by herself. One time she tried to jump through a small space at the back of a chair and became caught, finally wiggling through. Sometimes her weight is too much and she gets off balance and falls.

When our friend Keith looked after her last summer during our vacation, she hid from him. He looked all over for her, but she apparently found a good hiding place in the basement. Sometimes when we return from a day trip, we see her coming up the stairs when we call her. When I shower, she sometimes crawls between the outer and inner shower curtains. She likes to try to catch the drips from the sink faucet in the bathroom.

A cadet choir from the Air Force Academy recently visited Brush to perform. One evening, twelve cadets spent some time at our house. As they were watching a movie, Lulu made the rounds looking for a suitable lap. All the females were vying for her attention, but Lulu would not give them the satisfaction. Instead, she chose a male cadet who really didn't even like cats.

We have found Lulu to be an interesting addition to our family. In many ways she is a typical feline—aloof, superior, and arrogant. In many other ways she is unique, as friendly as a used car salesman, as sweet as Grandma's homemade fudge, and as entertaining as a barrel of monkeys. She sleeps an average of eighteen hours a day and eats most of the other six. She could be the poster cat for Iams Diet Cat Food. She is afraid of birds and would not recognize a mouse as a food source if one jumped onto her fat stomach. When our son Kevin saw her for the first time, he called her a "football with legs." But, she enriches our lives, and keeps things around the house from becoming boring. She is welcome to share our home as long as she would like!

*(Editor's note—this story was written several years ago by my wife Carol. Lulu is still living with us and still has an excellent appetite. She has put on several pounds since this story was written)*

## Lessons from Lulu

By Wayne Carlson

I was browsing through a bookstore some time back when I noticed a book entitled “Conversations with My Dog” by author/motivational speaker Zig Ziglar. I have read several of Zig’s books over the years and generally enjoyed them, so after thumbing through the book and reading the jacket, I bought it.

Basically, the book consists of a series of “conversations” between Zig (Dad) and his Welsh corgi dog Taffy (Dirty Dog.) They discuss health, happiness, faith and the relationship between humans and canines. I found the book interesting and motivational.

Several years ago, my wife Carol adopted a cat named Lulu. Lulu was a two year old golden spayed female with a pleasant personality and generally acceptable grooming habits. We discovered that she had a few quirks and some emotional eccentricities. She prefers to stay indoors and only rarely ventures outside. She tolerates people, including me, and adores Carol. Her most obvious physical feature is her enormous bulk. She weighs over twenty pounds and looks like a walking blonde football. Lulu is obese.

Recently, I decided to follow the example set by Zig Ziglar. I was going to be especially observant of Lulu and learn as much as I could from her. What lessons could she teach me? How could Lulu and I benefit humanity as Zig and Taffy had benefited me?

I quickly learned that the two most important things in Lulu’s life are food and sleep, so I decided to combine the first two lessons and consider them together.

Lesson #1—Get all the rest you possibly can.

Lesson #2—Never pass by on an opportunity to eat.

When Lulu first moved into our house, she was nervous and tense. She had come from a farm home where there had been lots of other cats, none of whom she had particularly liked or gotten along with. She wasn’t sure what other critters were living in this new environment. To ease her fears and make her feel all home, Carol had offered her a spoonful of canned gourmet cat food. Next day, Carol repeated the

procedure, as she did the next, and the next. Soon Lulu expected her “snack.”

During the first year Lulu lived with us that snack had been the high point of her day. Then, for some unremembered reason during the second year, Carol started giving Lulu two snacks per day so now that is the standard. She gets one at noon and one in the evening.

Lulu normally retires for the night when Carol and I do. She has a variety of sleeping places. Her primary spot is on the floor of our bedroom, next to Carol’s side of the bed. She actually would prefer to sleep on the bed, but she learned that is neither safe nor wise. One of her first nights in our house she joined us in bed, but soon found herself airborne. She learned that the “master of the house” needed his space and was not prone to share.

On one of our subsequent visits to the local discount store, we purchased a cat bed. It was circular, with an opening on one side leading to a sleeping chamber, with a padded shelf on top. We figured that Lulu would love it—but we were wrong. The enclosure turned out to be too small and confining for her bulk, she could barely squeeze through the opening; the top shelf was not big enough for her to properly sprawl out as she likes to do when she sleeps. Today, the bed sits in our bedroom, unused and collecting lint.

Lulu arises in the morning when we do. She stretches, yawns, and walks through the house to make sure everything is okay. While Carol and I shower, have breakfast, and prepare for the day, Lulu snacks on her Iams Weight Control cat food and watches for outdoor activity through the window by her food shelf.

After a couple hours, Lulu prepares for her first nap of the day. She climbs onto the pad on the chest of drawers on the west side of our bedroom and watches the sparrows and finches squabbling at the bird feeder. She observes the neighbor’s three trespasser cats under the bushes at the back of our yard, also eyeing the sparrows and finches, salivating and fantasizing. Lulu’s eyes follow the two squirrels that frequent our trees. After half an hour or so, all this activity seems to have a tranquilizing effect and she passes into a deep slumber, which, unless interrupted, lasts until noon.

Around noon Lulu wakes up—her stomach tells her that it is time to eat. If Carol is home, Lulu reminds her that it is snack time. If Carol is absent,

Lulu proceeds to her food shelf and crunches down a few handfuls of dry cat food. It doesn't go down nearly as smoothly as the Whiskas Tender Bite Chicken Dinners that Carol serves but helps to calm the hunger pangs.

After filling herself, Lulu watches the street and sidewalk traffic out the window, usually until the mailman makes his appearance. Then she jumps down, patrols the house, making sure everything is in order, swats a few of her toy mice around to remind them of their proper place in the household hierarchy, and looks around for some human companionship. If Carol is at her usual spot, sitting at the dining room table sorting through her collection of mail and newspapers, Lulu works her way there. She helps Carol by sitting on the papers or possibly even maneuvers onto Carol's lap for some personal attention.

At three o'clock, the voice of Dr. Phil on TV triggers impulses inside both Lulu and me. I go back to the computer room where I listen to music and read or write while Lulu heads back to our bed, where she doses until supper time.

As soon as she hears activity in the kitchen, i.e. the banging of pots and pans, the sound of the can opener, the opening and closing of the refrigerator, Lulu knows that it is time for another snack. Carol gives her a spoonful of canned food, which she gobbles up in a few seconds. Then she proceeds to her food station where she "tops off the tank" with her dry food.

During the evening Lulu generally craves people company. If Carol is available Lulu lies on her lap or just stays close to her for the evening. Occasionally, just for a change of pace, Lulu visits me, even lying on my lap for short periods. Her idea of the perfect evening is when Carol and I descend to the base of our basement stairs and play a few games on our electronic dart board. This provides Lulu with an opportunity to "play mousey" on the stairs.

Lesson #3—Complaining works.

Most people are familiar with the expression concerning the squeaking wheel getting the grease. Lulu has learned that it is oftentimes



to her advantage to be that wheel. By being loud and obnoxious long enough she often gets her way. When her food is running low; her water is not sparkling; her toilet facility is not quite up to standards; someone has thrown up on her favorite sleeping pad, Lulu lets Carol know about it. She will not take “no” for an answer and doesn’t accept anything less than what she deserves. After all, Lulu firmly believes that she is the hub of the household and everything revolves around her.

Lesson #4—Be sweet and loving occasionally.

As many people (especially men) have figured out through experience, many people (especially women) like to be pampered, spoiled, and treated special. A person can sometimes get special privileges by doing such things as washing the dishes or vacuuming the living room without being asked. Lulu has learned this strategy and often uses it to her advantage. By purring and rubbing and acting especially affectionate toward Carol, Lulu occasionally gets special favors, sometimes even a third snack in the same day!

Lesson #5—Seek and you shall find.

Over the course of human history, there have been many great quests. As far back as prehistoric times, the quest for fire was a top priority. The Knights of the Round Table were preoccupied with finding the Holy Grail. Ponce de Leon spent his lifetime seeking the Fountain of Youth. Francisco Coronado led a grandiose search for the Seven Cities of Cibola.

Lulu, too, is on a quest—she is searching for the perfect lap. During the last few years she has tested hundreds. Nearly every person who has been in our house long enough to sit down has been evaluated. As Lulu has discovered, some laps are too skinny, some are too lumpy, and some just won’t sit still long enough.

Shortly after Lulu moved into our house, we had a group of fifteen United States Air Force Academy cadets watching a movie in our living room. They were members, along with our son Randy, of the Protestant Cadet Choir, and were visiting Brush to perform several concerts. Some of the cadets were sitting in chairs, some were reclining on couches, some were lying on the floor. Males outnumbered females.

In the middle of the movie, Lulu came meandering into the room, diligent in her quest. She ignored the pleas of several of the female

cadets to come to them. She might eventually get to them—they needed to learn patience. Lulu had a time-tested system and would not be deterred. She tried out each lap before moving on to the next—spending more time on some than others. After almost an hour of comparison shopping, she seemed to make up her mind. She curled up and went to sleep on one of the male cadets. The fact that he didn't particularly like cats was irrelevant to Lulu—she had found the best lap in the room and she was going to enjoy it as long as it was available.

Please bear with me as I summarize the lessons I have learned from Lulu. We have had very few philosophical discussions like those between Zig and Dirty Dog. All Lulu ever wanted to talk about with me was about food and/or Lulu. I have reached the conclusion that Lulu is probably not a good role model for any human being. Anyone who emulated her would soon find himself/herself pretty lonely and without much human companionship. Lulu is selfish, vain, and egocentric. If she were a human, she would be a hermit and not very popular. But, looking at Lulu from a feline perspective, she probably falls near what would be considered “normal.”

Martha  
Obituary by Elmer Carlson

Martha Viola Carlson died at the Greeley Hospital at 10: P.M. Jan. 17, 1930, after an illness of fifteen days following and during a series of appendix operations. The suddenness of her illness and death was the more confusing because of her previous good physique. The very picture of health, she had never been sick in her life before, save for one or two minor exceptions.

She came into the world June 20, 1920, two miles south of Galeton, where she has also since resided. Little Martha was the darling of the home—like the blossoms of spring in the sunshine. Her pleasant smile, and quiet, unassuming manner, with her childish faith and hopes combined to make her a perfect blossom of sunshine in the home.

But the east wind kisses the blossom of spring. They go. Nor do they linger to endure sterner fates of nature.

And God called our Martha—kissed the blossom—stilled the childish heart—and took her home; away from this sterner weather, and the storms, and the cold.

And in the beautiful sunshine of a milder, fairer clime, she lives, and plays, and sings.

Martha

Age nine years, six months, and twenty—seven days, she is survived by her mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Berger Carlson, and her brothers and sisters, Elmer, Roy, George, Lovella, John, Harold, Kenneth, and Esther.

She followed on the third anniversary of the death of Dr. J.C. Carlson, our doctor.

And what a beautiful flower she was! How rare and lovely! I reproach myself bitterly for not taking more pictures of her, but in those photos we do have, invariably blossoms forth the same sunny, cheery, smile. What a modest little lady she always was!

And when those last dark days settled down over her stout little spirit, she battled hard—but the gloom settled down—and thickened.

She often expressed the wish of going home. But it was impossible. Mumps paralyzed the intestines and stomach, and she consequently virtually starved to death. Doctors and nurses, Father and Mother worked hard to save her, but it was a losing battle.

And on the last day—after the last operation—the last battle, we appeared on the scene as usual, from school, to take mother home for her customary short night's rest. Father greeted me in the doorway of that somber room, with a troubled look on his face. They he broke down. "The doctor says she can't live more than a few hours" was hard for such a father to say!

Then Roy, George, and I went home. Mother sat by the bed, and bathed her tired, thin little hands with tears. Father sat heavily near—waiting for the end.

"Don't cry, Mamma," she urged weakly, yet characteristically. Later she began to sing, "Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us." But she was too weak to go far, and her voice died away in a whisper.

Then, for a time she underwent the most acute sufferings. And mother and father must stay near, to vainly wish to take the burden away, and hoping for, yet dreading, the end.

And, as the shadows crept nearer, "Papa, my feet are getting cold," cut like a knife, the gently father's heart.

"Oh, papa, it's getting so dark."

"Yes, it's getting dark. Goodnight, Martha."

"Good night, papa."

"See you in the morning."

"Yes," came the faint and dying answer.

And, as in the old, old summertimes at home, mid evening shadows and whispering leaves, she was tucked to sleep to dream of roses and flowers, so now, mid evening shadows, she slumbered away to yet sweeter dreams.

*(Editor's note—My Grandparents, Berger and Nellie Carlson were married in Greeley, Colorado March 22, 1907. Over the next twenty years, they had six sons and three daughters. Their 7<sup>th</sup> child was Martha, who unfortunately died at the age of nine. The oldest son, Elmer, wrote this many years ago.)*

Uncle Pete  
By Wayne Carlson

The family tree from which I sprouted was like a giant oak, with branches strong and numerous; roots deep and secure. My four grandparents emigrated to this country from Sweden during the early years of the last century. They struggled mightily to survive in their new country, eventually becoming naturalized citizens. Sam and Emily Nelson (my mother's parents) produced eleven children; my dad's parents (Berger and Nellie Carlson) nine. Nearly all their kids married and produced children. Family reunions on both sides of the family were usually held in the Eaton City Park—few relatives had homes big enough to accommodate all these people.

As a kid, I was closer to my Carlson relatives than to the Nelsons. Grandma and Granddad Carlson, as well as Dad's brothers George, Johnnie, and Kenneth, all farmed in close proximity to my parent's farm. All of us attended the Eaton Evangelical Free Church, so I saw Carlsons every week. Lovella and Esther, my unmarried school teacher aunts, taught in Oregon and Washington, but spent their summer vacations at my grandparent's, just across the country road from our farm. The wiener roasts they hosted were frequent and well attended. Many Carlson cousins were my classmates at Galeton Elementary and High Schools. Cousin G.B. was my best friend.

Many of my Nelson relatives I saw rarely, since they were dispersed throughout the country. Granddad and Grandma Nelson, as well as Mom's brothers Alver, Reuben, and Delbert and their families lived in the Eaton area so I saw them at least occasionally. Several Nelson cousins were my good friends. Many of the Colorado Nelsons gathered at my Uncle Paul and Aunt Eleanor's house in Keenesburg on Christmas day.

Of all my adult relatives excepting my parents, the one I spent the most time with, and the one I liked and most respected was my uncle Kenneth, known by nearly everyone as Pete.

When he was born in the year 1922, the next to youngest of Berger and Nellie's kids, he was christened Lloyd Kenneth Carlson. Nobody ever called him Lloyd, and only his parents and two sisters called him

Kenneth. Somebody, probably George, who was the most creative of the brothers, started calling him Pete when he was very young. That became his name.

When Pete was six years old, Berger decided to take the family on a trip to the west coast to visit relatives and to see the Pacific Ocean. All the children except the two oldest boys, Elmer and Roy, along with Berger and Nellie, crammed into the family sedan and headed west.

The trip lasted several days. Somewhere enroute, to relieve his boredom, George thought up a new name for his little brother. For the rest of the trip, Pete was known as: PETERPETERPUMKINEATERLLOYDLANKYDADDLEKENNETH SISTICOKLUKLUXKLANYANKEEDOODLERAZZBERRY DONKEYCARLS0N.

Pete had another identity crises when he was a young man. During World War II he was ordered to report to Denver for a physical exam, preparatory to being inducted into the army. Several dozen young men were sitting around the edge of the large room, waiting for their names to be called. Then each would be led away into examination rooms.

“Lloyd Carlson,” the voice over the PA said. Nobody responded.

Again, a few minutes later, “Lloyd Carlson, please report.” Still there was no response.

After the fourth time the name was called, Pete suddenly came to his senses. “Lloyd Carlson. Why that is me!” He hurriedly stood up and followed the young lady to the examination room. He was quite embarrassed when several young men stared and snickered. More that one of them probably thought, although nobody said it out loud, “Doesn’t that idiot even know his own name?”

Pete never did serve actively in the military. In December of 1943, he answered an ad in the Greeley Daily Tribune and was sent to Seattle, Washington, to work for Boeing Aircraft. This job continued until the end of the war and exempted him from the draft.

In 1947, after WWII had concluded, Pete returned to his parent’s farm south of Galeton. His good friend Carl Hendrickson told him about two young ladies living in Greeley that Carl thought they should meet. Pete paired up with Betty Salstrom and Carl gravitated toward Lorraine

Nelson. They spent a pleasant evening together. The four young people enjoyed each others company and spent lots of time together over the next several months.

One evening Pete and Betty were scheduled to see each other, but Pete was not feeling well, so he called off the date. Several hours later Betty showed up at his parent's door. Pete's mother provided supper for Betty and she spent the evening visiting with Pete's parents. When they found out that Betty was the daughter of Algot Salstrom, a man they had great respect for, she had their unconditional acceptance. Pete and Betty were married a few months later. Betty was wise enough to be diplomatic with her new in-laws regarding her new husband's name—she called him Kenneth when they were in the presence of his parents. Otherwise, like everyone else, she called him Pete.

One of Pete's goals as a young man was to go to college and become a teacher. Elmer, Harold, Lovella, and Esther had all managed to get enough credits to obtain teacher's certificates. The other brothers had all married and had become farmers.

Unfortunately, primarily because of World War II, Pete never got a chance to go to college. All his siblings had moved away from the home place; several of the brothers had purchased their own farms. Esther, Lovella, and Elmer were immersed in their teaching careers and Harold had gone to work for Boeing in Seattle. So, newlyweds Pete and Betty reluctantly took over the home place. The laborers house in the yard was remodeled and they moved in. Daughter Renee joined the family a year later.

The farming situation was in dire straights. Berger had given away much of his farming equipment to his other sons to help them establish their farming operations. About all that was left was a bunch of outdated machinery designed to be pulled by horses. Instead of having any of the tractors that were becoming the vogue in the 1950s, Pete and Betty were stuck with outdated farm equipment, and the two family work horses, Dick and Doc.

Pete used the money he had saved from his job with Boeing and borrowed enough from the local banker to purchase a John Deere tractor, enough farm equipment to get by, a dozen chickens and a few milk cows, which he and Betty milked every morning and evening by hand.

By working long hours the young couple managed to make a living. They were not wealthy by any stretch of the imagination, but they were happy.

Occasionally during the summertime, Pete and my dad took several of my siblings and me for a day of fishing in the mountains, two hours to the west. We all loved these experiences. My dad also had a dairy operation so departure for the mountains was after the morning milking was completed and return was in time for the evening milking.

About the third year of Pete and Betty's dairy operation, a neighbor, Fred Meissinger, presented them with an opportunity. Several years earlier, Fred had invested in electric milking machines, when they had first been developed by Surge. The machines made it possible to milk many more cows and potentially make a much larger profit. Now a new product had replaced the first generation milking machines and Fred was going to update his operation. He offered to give his old machines to Pete at no cost. After some brief discussions with Betty, Pete happily accepted the generous gift. Now they could expand their dairy. Soon they were milking about fifty cows, a large number back in the 50s.

Pete needed someone to help him out with his newly expanded operation—there simply were not enough hours in a day for him to get everything done. He offered me a job. I lived just across the road. I was in my early teens, a student at Galeton Junior High School, involved in athletics and band, with my own chores to do, but Pete knew that my dad was rather “economically conservative” and that this would provide an opportunity for me to make a little spending money.

I was hired to feed Pete's dairy cows, every morning and evening. In the a.m., my job was to deliver to the hungry bovines a helping of ensilage (ground up, partially fermented corn) using his Ford tractor and two wheeled trailer. In the evening I loaded from the stack in the nearby field and dispersed 25 bales of hay (alfalfa) to his four legged milk producers. Each of these tasks took me about an hour. For my time and trouble, I received the whopping sum of fifty cents a day—a total of \$3.50 per week. Of course I still had my own chores to do.

I worked this job for several years and learned to budget my time. It provided me with a little spending money, which I needed almost daily through high school. Most nights after football/basketball/baseball



practice the guys on the Galeton High School teams would gather at Dillard's (the general store in Galeton.) The money paid for my ten cent Nesbitts grape pop and my nickel candy bar.

Throughout my school years, Uncle Pete helped me in many ways. He and Betty never had a son so Pete unofficially adopted me. He was the uncle closest to my own age. He hired me periodically to work in the fields, cultivating corn and sugar beets and stacking hay. He helped me learn lessons that became invaluable in my later years.

Today, Uncle Pete and Aunt Betty are in their early eighties. Pete has the look of a retired Air Force Colonel or maybe a United States Senator. He is tall and distinguished looking. He reminds me of actor James Stewart, not just physically, but by his demeanor. He is modest and self effacing. His hair has metamorphosed from dark brown to gray. Thankfully, he has not been afflicted by macular degeneration, the ocular malady that cost his mother and several of his siblings their eyesight at a similar age.

Pete and Betty sold "the home place" and live in a lovely home in Fort Collins. Pete has become a master cabinet maker and has made much of the furniture for his church, as well as his own home. He is loved and respected in his neighborhood. Many of kids in his cul-de-sac have adopted him as "Grandpa." They come over to share their artwork and to invite him and Betty to their games/birthday parties/recitals/etc. He is a pillar of his community and is still my favorite uncle. To me, he is still "Uncle Pete."

PeeeUuuww! !  
By Wayne Carlson

Money was hard to come by in rural Weld County in the year 1925. A penny was actually worth something. A fella could buy some valuable stuff with a nickel or a dime. A quarter was a lot of money. Therefore, when fifteen year old Roy and his thirteen year old brother George heard that they could pick up \$2.15 in cold cash for a skunk or muskrat pelt, they got excited and started formulating a plan. They knew that there were several steel traps hanging from a rafter in the barn, and they also knew there were lots of critters living around the farm. When their dad granted permission to use the traps, their plan was put into action.

The traps were judiciously set around the farm, far enough away from the house to spare the family dog and cats from danger. Every morning as the boys were doing their chores they diligently checked the traps.

One morning about a week after they started their routine, George was the one who made the discovery. He shouted, "Roy, Roy, come quick! We have something!"

Roy rushed over to join his brother. They discovered to their great joy and astonishment that they had trapped some kind of animal. Upon examination, they found that it was a skunk and that it was quite dead. Roy picked up the trap, along with the skunk, and carried it to the barn. The jaws were pried apart, and the not-very-sweet-smelling carcass dropped to the ground.

The two brothers had done some research into the process of skinning dead animals so they had a pretty good idea of how to proceed. George was sent indoors to fetch the old kitchen knife that their mother had agreed to let them use. While he was waiting George's return, Roy examined their prize and made preliminary plans for the operation the boys would perform.

When George got back with the knife, Roy quickly removed the hide from the animal. It was bloody and smelly. They stretched it onto a crude frame to dry, and hurried to finish their chores.

Before Roy and George entered the house for breakfast and to get

ready for school, they stopped at the stock tank in the corner of the corral and cleaned up as best they could. Then they proceeded in for a quick breakfast.

Eleven year old Lovella, nine year old Johnny, and seven year old Harold joined their two older brothers as they took off on foot for school in the town of Galeton, two miles to the north. "Boy, someone sure stinks!" Lovella said as the group walked along the side of the county road.

As usual, after walking on the road for about a mile, they cut across a neighbor's field until they reached the railroad tracks that angled toward town. They followed the tracks for half a mile and then cut across another field until they came to the school grounds. By following this route, they were able to save nearly half a mile from the total distance.

The school bell soon summoned them to class. The younger kids hurried to their elementary classrooms, George went to his combination seventh and eighth grade class, Roy reported to history class.

It wasn't long before the rumor started circulating through the school. "Someone has brought a skunk to school!" During the Pledge of Allegiance and morning announcements, more than one person had noticed the awful smell. As the history teacher attempted to get his fourteen high school students (including Roy) to concentrate on the concept of Manifest Destiny, whispers circulated through the room. Some of the girls in particular were having trouble stifling the gag reflex. One young lady even had to rush to the window and stick her head into the fresh outdoor air to keep from vomiting!

Mr. Collins, Galeton High School Principal/School District Superintendent suddenly appeared at the doorway. He was a very large man with a reputation as a strong disciplinarian who would tolerate no nonsense. "Mr. Smith, please bring your class to the auditorium."

Mr. Smith's class, including an embarrassed and increasing frightened Roy, did as they were instructed and filed into the combination lunchroom/auditorium. They could see that all the other classes in the school were already there. Roy managed to make eye contact with George across the room. Roy could tell that George was also uneasy. Their attention was drawn to the stage at the north end of

the room, where Mr. Collins was getting ready to speak.

“May I have your attention please?” It was more a command than a question. “It has come to my attention and to the attention of your teachers that ‘something is rotten in Denmark.’ Someone seems to have smuggled a skunk into the school building. Obviously, this is unacceptable. We can and will not tolerate this act. I want whoever is responsible to stand up and admit what you have done. You will be sent home from school where you will stay until the smell goes away from the building. This will probably be several days. Now, whoever brought the skunk to school, stand up and admit your guilt and we will go from there. We will wait here as long as necessary.”

Roy caught George’s attention through the crowd. His eyes sent the question across the room. “Shall we come clean?” They hesitated. The pressure increased. Roy’s brow glistened with sweat. After a couple of minutes he again looked at George. He indicated with a motion of his head, “Let’s do it. Let’s stand up and get it over with.” Roy decided in his own mind that he would silently count to three and then stand up and face the consequences.

“One. Two.” He started to rise. But, suddenly he stopped and sunk back into his chair. Two rows to his front and several positions to his right, somebody else was rising to his feet! A kid named Bud, one year Roy’s junior and widely recognized as the school’s clown, had risen to his feet. “I admit it, I did it,” Bud blurted out. “I’m sorry. Please forgive me.”

“O.K.” Mr. Collins said. “Bud, come with me to the office. The rest of you are excused to return to class. Let this be a lesson to you. If you mess up and break the school rules, you will be caught and you will be punished. Remember that.”

Roy and George joined their classmates and returned to their respective classes. This turned out to be one of the longest days of their lives because they had to try to ignore the stares from their classmates. They noticed that nobody particularly wanted to get very close to either of them. When the school day ended it was with enormous relief when they met their younger siblings and started the walk toward home.

After they got home and checked on the status of the drying skunk hide, they went in and asked their mother, even though it wasn’t wash

day, to please wash their school clothes. This was quite a chore; mom was already booked solid taking care of her husband, her brood of eight children ranging in age from Roy to one year old Esther. (Oldest brother Elmer had already moved out of the home and was in college.) But, she worked the task into her schedule. The clothes came out smelling much better than they had all day.

Roy and George were left to contemplate why Bud had admitted guilt to something that they well knew he had not done. They came up with two theories; each with some merit. Maybe Bud was feeling guilty about all those pranks he had committed over the years for which he had not been held accountable. Perhaps this was assuaging his conscience to some degree.

The other theory was that Bud had seen this as an excellent opportunity to take off a few days from school. He had never learned to read or write very well and hated school, which was mostly why he acted as he did. After all, negative attention was better than no attention at all.

Bud ended up staying home for three days. By that time, the smell that had permeated the walls, furniture, and the very atmosphere of the building had time to clear up. Roy and George ended up selling their skunk pelt, actually for a slightly reduced price. They had not taken the bone out of the tail which somewhat lowered the value of the pelt. The two budding entrepreneurs found that the financial payout did not make the hassle worth while. This was the last animal they trapped. The steel traps were returned to the rafters in the family barn.

Your Last Chance  
By Wayne Carlson

During the summer of 1929, just prior to his twentieth birthday, my dad Roy, his older brother Elmer, and their friend Rueben Nelson, decided to visit Yellowstone National Park. Elmer had just signed a contract as Principal at an elementary school near his hometown of Eaton, Colorado, and had just purchased a brand new Plymouth coup. None of the three young men was yet confined by the constraints of marriage and all were eager to take advantage of this opportunity to see some of this great country.

Early on a Monday morning in late August, Elmer and Roy loaded their camping gear into the trunk of Elmer's car and drove the several miles to the Nelson farm to pick up Reuben. (He was totally unaware of it at the time, but Roy would one day marry Reuben's twelve year old sister Elvera—my mom) After visiting briefly with Reuben's parents, they loaded his gear and headed north.

When they got to Cheyenne, Wyoming, they stopped to stretch their legs. After fifteen minutes or so they climbed back into the car and headed north. When they got to Casper they stopped at the city park and ate the lunches their mothers had packed for them. By the time they got to Cody, it was getting dark and the three young travelers decided to stay overnight in the city park. They walked around for a while to get some exercise after being cramped up all day. They ate some more of the food that their moms had sent with them, got their bedrolls out and spread them on the grass, and settled down for the evening.

They were awakened the next morning by songbirds, eager to find those early worms. They packed their equipment and prepared to finish the journey to Yellowstone. Elmer pulled in front of a local café and they engulfed some ham, eggs, and coffee. The gas gauge indicated less than a quarter of a tank so Elmer figured he better gas up soon. The price of gas in Cody was 28 cents per gallon (compared to 20 cents at home) and Elmer figured he could find something cheaper down the road so he drove on toward Yellowstone.

Ten miles later they came to a service station. "Thirty-five cents a

gallon,” Elmer exclaimed, “I won’t pay that. That is outrageous! I hope we find another place before too long,” and he continued. Soon they came to a sign that said it was five miles to Yellowstone.

They soon observed another sign on the side of the road—“**Last Chance to Get Gas at This Price!**”—the printing read. Down near the bottom in smaller letters was “40 cents per gallon.”

“That is ridiculous!” Elmer said, but he pulled into the station. If it was 40 cents outside the national park, who knew what it would be inside. “You should be ashamed of yourself!” he told the attendant as the young man washed the windshield, checked the motor oil and tires. Elmer begrudgingly paid the \$7.50.

They got back into the car and Elmer drove toward the entrance to Yellowstone. He paid the entrance fee and proceeded to the campground where they organized their campsite. Then they got back into the car and went about exploring this great national park that they had heard so much about. When they passed a service station in the commercial part of the park, they were astounded to see the price of gasoline—24 cents a gallon! Apparently, the price was regulated inside the park so it was kept at this lower rate.

Elmer, Roy, and Reuben ended up staying in Yellowstone for three days. They saw the geysers, the waterfalls, and other natural phenomena for which Yellowstone owes its fame. They hiked the trails and drove throughout the park. They saw lots of wildlife and met many people from all over the country. Reuben took pictures with his new camera.

Each evening they joined 50 or more other tourists and witnessed the “feeding of the bears.” Park employees spread vast quantities of leftover food from the lodges and housing complexes for the entertainment of the tourists. A set of bleachers, protected by a chain link fence, had been set up for sitting. About 25 black bears of all ages and sizes gathered each night for the handout. Good natured squabbles often evolved into serious confrontations as the bears vied for the choicest delicacies. One night Rueben attempted to take a photo of one of the young cubs, much to the chagrin of its mother. The fence thwarted her charge.

Usually, after half an hour or so of frantic feeding, apprehension would spread throughout the ursine community. Individual bears still

fed, but nervously looked over their shoulders, ready for flight at a moments notice. Without fail, each evening the noise, the smells, and the general excitement would attract half a dozen grizzly bears. When these ill tempered feeding machines came onto the scene, nothing else on four legs was safe. The two legged beings observing the festivities were also somewhat endangered. Mamas hustled their youngsters away as their larger cousins approached. For the black bears, feeding time was over.

On Thursday morning, the three young men reluctantly packed their gear into Elmer's car and headed south. It had been a good hiatus and as they proceeded homeward, each of them looked to the future with optimism. Elmer was due at his new job on Monday morning and was eager to face the challenges he knew he would confront. Roy was looking forward to the start of college in a couple weeks. He would be a freshman at Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley. Rueben was anxious to get his film developed so he could share his pictures. Little did the three friends know that in just a matter of months, the United States was headed into the worst economic depression in its history.



## What in the World are you Guys Doing?

By Wayne Carlson

*A couple of New Jersey hunters are out in the woods when one of them falls to the ground. He doesn't seem to be breathing; his eyes are rolled back in his head. The other guy whips out his cell phone and calls 911. He gasps to the person on the other end of the line: "My friend is dead! What can I do?" The operator, in a calm soothing voice, says; "Just take it easy. I can help. First, let's make sure he's dead." There is a silence, then a shot is heard. The guy's voice comes back on the line. He says; "OK, now what?"*

*The people of what state go to a landfill that's on fire next to a turnpike on alternate weekends to cheer for a team from another state? The answer—New Jersey*

*Scientists at the New Jersey Insurance News Service have determined that one-half of the state's drivers have road rage. It is not known whether this condition is caused by a defective gene or by New Jersey.*

*Why are New Yorkers so depressed? The answer—Because the light at the end of the tunnel is New Jersey.*

*"I believe there is an order to the universe, except for certain parts of New Jersey." Woody Allen*

My brother-in-law Dr. Charles Oz Collins is a Professor of Geography at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado. He has held this position for more than thirty years and is widely respected as an educator. He has won numerous awards and has positively influenced thousands of college students over the years. He is currently on sabbatical from his teaching duties. During this one-semester leave, he has no classes, no requirements involving students. Yet, he continues to draw his salary. To justify this situation, he is required to do something substantial in the area of research and/or publication.

Oz is a man with many interests. He grew up on a farm in Weld County near the tiny town of Galeton. He graduated from high school in Galeton, received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from UNC in Greeley, his

PhD. from the University of Kansas. Today, he and my sister Ruth live on a 40 acre plot of land in rural Weld County where he can fulfill the agricultural interests he has maintained since childhood. In addition to his teaching duties, he is what is commonly referred to “A Gentleman Farmer.” His land is primarily planted in grass, on which 20 to 40 head of Hereford cattle graze. Ruth recently retired from a lifetime of teaching elementary school and enjoys staying home, growing and canning fruits and vegetables and taking care of their beautiful home. She baby sits two small children and enjoys her role as surrogate grandma.

Among Oz’s many hobbies are writing and photography. He has had hundreds of short stories and professional articles published. His photographic skills are remarkable—he has won a myriad of photographic awards. He is a nationally renowned authority on outhouses, an often times overlooked but essential part of Americana.

Prior to Oz’s sabbatical leave this last semester, he researched topics for a project. One of his teaching duties during the past dozen years has been to teach United States geography. Most of his students are majoring or minoring in Geography or Social Science; a vast majority of them intending to become teachers. He has noticed that the majority of them enter his classroom with many misconceptions, things not necessarily true but widely accepted.

Some of these inaccurate beliefs involve the state of New Jersey. The Garden State (its official nickname) was one of the original thirteen states. Several of the key battles during the American Revolution took place here. General George Washington’s famous crossing of the Delaware brought his troops from Pennsylvania into New Jersey. Historians say the first organized game of baseball took place in Hoboken and the first college football game was played by students from two New Jersey colleges—Rutgers and Princeton. Both Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein did many of their experiments in New Jersey, and many of Edison’s inventions took place here.

Yet, in spite of these and many other historical and cultural achievements by New Jerseyans, the state has a generally negative reputation. Stand up comedians have slammed the state and its people for years. The jokes above are just a few of the thousands available

online.

Oz decided that his project was going to be an investigation of New Jersey. Is its negative image deserved? Are there good things about New Jersey? Are there reasons to justify its nickname—the Garden State? Since this was to be a scholarly piece of work, he needed a scholarly title, so he came up with: TESTING MEDIA’S ROLE IN PLACE PERCEPTION: THE CASE OF NEW JERSEY.

This was his introduction: “New Jersey has long served as the target of choice for stand-up comics, screen writers, aspiring office-seekers, and even some academicians, whose intent is to expose what is wrong with America. Crime, corruption, pollution, traffic congestion, and society’s general woes are portrayed as achieving their zenith in the Garden State. So common has the practice become that generic New Jersey jokes abound; examples include, ‘What is the New Jersey state tree?’ Answer: dead.....etc. Purveyors of this brand of humor consider it only ‘good fun,’ and essentially harmless. Is it, in fact?”

During the several pages of his proposal, Oz detailed the problem, purpose, methodology, bibliography, etc. He contacted several of his former students, now teaching in New Jersey. He investigated online. He corresponded with a photographer from New Jersey whom he had met when he was doing another project. He made arrangements to travel to New Jersey for a week to personally check out the state. A colleague from the University of Northern Colorado agreed to accompany him on this “mission of discovery.” Oz made all the necessary arrangements for the trip for the first part of October.

Momentum developed for the trip. Oz made a tentative itinerary for the six days he and his colleague would be in New Jersey. He made arrangements to meet several people including his photographer source while they were there. Everything looked good. Until—about a week before the scheduled departure—a monkey wrench was thrown into the well organized plan. Something fairly serious came up and Oz’s traveling mate had to cancel. Oz had purchased the airline tickets, had invested quite a bit of time and money into an endeavor that was suddenly on shaky ground. This is the point where I got involved.

The morning of October 1<sup>st</sup> about 8:00 I got a call. “Hello, Wayne,” the voice said. “This is Oz. How would you like to go with me

to New Jersey?”

“And good morning to you, too” I said. “What did you say?”

He briefly explained the situation to me. “Your job would basically be to

go with me and keep me out of trouble,” he concluded. “I will pay all your expenses. I need to know right away.”

I told him I would get back to him in fifteen minutes, hung up the phone and called for “The Boss.” The dates he had given me were Oct. 10 through the 17<sup>th</sup>. I checked my calendar and the only potential problem I saw was my piano lesson scheduled on the 11<sup>th</sup>. I figured my piano career could survive missing this one lesson. Oz’s and my relationship predated his becoming my brother-in-law forty years ago. He and I had attended grade school together, had played high school sports together, had gone to college together. We have many common interests and hobbies and he was a good friend. “The Boss” looked at this as an opportunity to get rid of me for a week so she could get some chores done. She encouraged me “Go, please Go!” I called Oz back and told him to count me in. I started getting ready for a trip to New Jersey.

We met at a hotel near the airport, where we spent the night of the 9<sup>th</sup> since our flight on the 10<sup>th</sup> was scheduled to leave at 6:00 a.m. Next morning we took the shuttle from the hotel to the airport and departed right on time. Several hours later we landed at Dulles in Washington D.C. and changed planes. We flew over Philadelphia and disembarked in Newark about

3:00 p.m. eastern. It took us an hour to get our rental car, a Ford Escape SUV. We headed north toward Paterson and Passaic Falls, our first photographic goal.

The next five days were excellent! We visited and photographed an amazing number and variety of sites, including: 1. Passaic Falls at Paterson 2. A large and impressive Hindu Temple near Lebanon 3. Clinton Mill and Museum at Clinton 4. Princeton—the city and the University 5. Washington’s Crossing State Park 6. Cape May—the town, the beach, the lighthouse

7. Barnegat Lighthouse 8. A cranberry harvest at Chatsworth 9. An idyllic agricultural valley near Newton 10. Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty.

On Sunday night we checked into a Holiday Inn in Newark. We were due to depart from the Newark airport early on Tuesday. Nearly all of Oz's expectations had been met. We had visited and photographed some incredibly scenic areas. Oz had exposed many rolls of 35 mm slide film and I had taken almost 500 digital shots. He felt that he had ample evidence to disprove some of the myths about New Jersey; that his money had been well spent and that his project would turn out well. But—since we still had one day to spend, he felt we should seek out and photograph some of those stereotypical New Jersey places that he could use for contrast. So, on Monday, after we enjoyed breakfast at the hotel, we went in search of some smokestacks.

Since I had been the designated driver for the entire trip and Oz had been the navigator, I got behind the wheel and we headed south. We soon found ourselves in Elizabeth. We noticed a plethora of smokestacks and worked our way, mostly along little traveled side streets, toward the many factories. I eventually found an adequate temporary parking place that seemed like a very good vantage point to get the pictures we were looking for. We exited the car with our cameras and took many photos. After a few minutes we got back into the car and continued our drive, in an easterly direction toward New York City, which we could see in the distance.

Fifteen minutes later, we arrived next to a huge power plant, with many smokestacks, all belching smoke and steam into the atmosphere. This looked like a perfect site for some more photos! I parked the vehicle, grabbed my camera and hurried after Oz, who was already taking pictures and exclaiming, "What a great place! This is exactly what I had in mind!"

A couple minutes after I joined Oz at his vantage point, we were both startled to suddenly see a police car with its lights flashing pull up next to us. A police officer emerged and rapidly approached us. "What in the world are you guys doing?" He seemed very uptight, ready to grab his baton, or even his holstered revolver if necessary. He apparently viewed us as potentially dangerous.

Since this was all Oz's venture, I let him do the talking. "I am a

Professor from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado, and we are doing a research project. We have been taking pictures for the last five days all over New Jersey. Is there a problem?"

Just then, another police car showed up, also with its lights flashing. The driver braked to a stop next to the first car. Before anybody could say anything, another police car skidded to a stop on the other side of the first car. Both these new officers looked ready for some serious action.

Oz started his explanation again, while I cowered in the background and tried to find a hole big enough to crawl into. He repeated his statement about who he was and where he was from and added a brief explanation of the project. "We have lots of pictures of waterfalls, lighthouses, churches, good things about New Jersey, now we are trying to take pictures of pollution, urban ruin, bad things about New Jersey."

The third officer, the biggest and by far the baddest of the three, said "I think you have said enough, buddy. I suggest you don't do any more talking until you get legal advice. I may already know more about you than I really want to know." It sounded like a threat and I got the definite impression that we might be in some serious trouble.

Suddenly, as Oz and I tried to regain some semblance of composure, another, and another, and another police car added their flashing lights to our circle. One of the guys, dressed not in a uniform, but a suit, took charge. He briefly conferred with the other five officers and strode over to where Oz was standing and I was trying to hide.

"I need your drivers licenses, your social security numbers, and you, sir (He addressed Oz) I need the name and phone number of your supervisor from this school you say you teach at." Of course we quickly complied with the request. Five of the men retreated to the plain black vehicle of the guy who had taken charge. The sixth, obviously the most junior of the officers, stayed to keep an eye on Oz and me.

The men were gone for at least half an hour. Oz tried to make small talk with the rookie, while I pretended I wasn't there. Finally, all the doors opened, and all five men approached us.

The guy in charge gave us back our driver's licenses. "Let me see your cameras," It was an order, not a request. We handed them over.

“How many pictures have you taken of this power plant?”

“Maybe five or six,” Oz said. The cat had my tongue.

“I see yours is a digital,” He was talking to me. “I am asking you to delete the photos you took of the power plant,” It sounded like a reasonable request so I immediately agreed with his suggestion. He handed my camera back and I started deleting the 15 or 20 photos I had taken.

“You,” he was looking at Oz. “I can see you have regular film. Your roll is almost completed. I believe your story about the reason you’re here so I won’t take your film. I could probably do it but it would take more paperwork than I think is necessary. Next time before you point those cameras at anything around here, think. Look right across the street at the gate of the power plant. Do you see the sign that says ‘Level 1 Security Facility’?”

We looked and we saw it, and now that we saw it, it looked very conspicuous. Neither of us could believe we hadn’t noticed it before.

“We are about ten miles from New York City,” the guy said. “We take security very serious around here. You two guys are either a couple of naïve country bumpkins or you are a couple of idiots. I believe the former. Now, go and watch your step.”

“Thank you,” Oz said. “We will.” I said nothing but hurried to the car. I made sure my seat belt was fastened and waited for the police cars to make a clearing so I could get onto the street. We headed back to Newark and the safety of our hotel, where we hunkered down for the duration of the afternoon. Next morning we returned the rental car, felt lucky to get through security, found the waiting area at the gate where our plane would be departing.

Right on schedule, our flight number was called; we walked down the ramp and found our seats. We both felt a great sense of relief when we lifted off from Newark and headed back for Colorado

## The Big Thompson Flood—July 31, 1976

By Wayne Carlson

On September 14, 1879, Emily Bengston was born to Johan and Stina, in a small village in Sweden. In 1898, Emily's widowed mother moved the family, consisting of one son and six daughters, to Greeley, Colorado. A year later they moved to Denver, where they stayed with relatives. Emily worked as a housekeeper.

On May 12, 1882, Sam Nelson was born to Ola and Selma Nelson on a farm near the village of Eskekarra, Sweden. In 1900, when he was 18 years old, he was taken to America by his sister Anna, who had previously migrated and was back in Sweden on a visit. Sam lived in Kansas for two years with relatives until moving to Denver, where he worked in the Pullman shops, along with several of his brothers.

In the fall of 1903, Sam and Emily both attended a Young People's gathering at the Swedish Evangelical Free Church in Denver where they met. Their interest grew to love and they were married on December 17, 1904 in Greeley. On September 18, 1905 the young couple had their first child, a boy who they named Alver. Three more sons followed in succession: Delbert; born on January 26, 1907; Reuben, born on December 3, 1908 and Leonard, born on March 11, 1909.

Sam, and especially Emily, really desired a daughter so they kept trying. Incredibly, their first daughter, Eunice, born on July 3, 1910, was followed by six more daughters over the next ten years! So, eventually, their family consisted of four sons and seven daughters.

My mom, Elvera, was the third daughter, born on September 9, 1916. But she is not the subject of this narrative. That person happens to be the second daughter, born on October 5, 1914. Her name was Genevieve.

When Genevieve was 22 years old, during the year 1936, she married a young man named Glenn Channer of Greeley, Colorado. Glenn worked for *The Greeley Tribune* for the next forty years as a printer/typesetter. Genevieve worked during some of these years as a secretary for the Greeley School District. They had two daughters—Marilyn and Marsha.

About ten years after they were married, Glenn and Gen had the



opportunity to buy a small vacation home in the Big Thompson Canyon near the town of Drake, halfway between Loveland and Estes Park. The house was located on the banks of the east fork of the Big Thompson River, which flows from its source in Rocky Mountain National Park through Devil's Gulch. They used the house as a week-end and vacation getaway.

In the spring of 1973, Glenn officially retired from his job at *The Greeley Tribune*. They sold their house in Greeley and moved into the little house in the mountains. They were quite excited about spending the rest of their lives in their little piece of heaven. Glen was an avid fly fisherman; Gen was involved in a variety of crafts and volunteered for activities in the little town of Glen Haven, as well as in Estes Park, thirty miles to the west.

On the evening of July 31, 1976, Glenn and Gen lost their lives, along with 142 other residents and visitors in the Big Thompson Flood, the worst natural disaster ever to hit the state of Colorado. Ironically, the next day, August 1<sup>st</sup>, was the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Colorado.

## The Big Thompson Flood

*(Editor's note--The following two stories recall the experiences of the Tavel family: David, Marcia, and their children Natasha and Michael, who lived in Toledo, Ohio, but spent summers at their cabin 1 ½ miles up Fox Creek from Glen Haven. Marcia is the daughter of Glenn and Gen Channer, who perished when their West Creek home was washed away in the 1976 flood.*

*The first account is the joint effort of Marcia and David. The second story was written a few months after the flood by then sixteen-year-old Natasha for an English class.*

*All four Tavels currently live in Colorado; David and Marcia in Estes Park, Michael in Denver, and Natasha in Fort Collins.*

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It was shortly after seven o'clock on Centennial Eve when Marcia, David, and thirteen year old son Michael left their Fox Creek cabin for the winding, bumpy, mile-and-a-half ride down to the little village of Glen Haven, and then up Devil's Gulch and the challenging switchbacks for the drive into Estes Park. It was 31 July 1976, and even though the next day was officially the one hundredth birthday of the State of Colorado, they were going "to town" for purposes other than celebration. David was playing in a chess tournament at the library in Bond Park; Marcia would be attending a program on wilderness survival, and had prevailed upon Michael to join her. He had wanted to watch the Olympics on television at his grandparents' house, but reluctantly agreed to accompany her. It was a decision which may have saved his life.

A slight sprinkle began as they backed out of the driveway. A house light burned inside for their sixteen year old daughter Natasha, who remained behind to arrange things for an expected house guest the next day. Except for the family Border collie Yukon she was alone for what was to become a most harrowing night. The dirt road to Glen Haven roughly follows Fox Creek, twisting and turning and, as though showing that its builders decided not merely to ape nature, crosses and recrosses the water six times before emerging at the small concrete one car width bridge which leads into

Glen Haven's lone paved street. By the time they crossed this bridge and turned past the few identically trimmed buildings which give the village its quaint western appearance the sprinkles had become a steady drizzle, typical of what the weather had brought the past few days.

The road climbs gradually at first, then increasingly steeply—so steeply that a series of four switchbacks is necessary to permit vehicle travel. West Creek flows parallel to and below the road for the first mile. In places it comes to within fifty yards of the pavement; in others it stands off a hundred or so. On the slope from road to river, in the flood plain, and on the far bank stand a score of buildings, some permanent homes and some for summer vacationers, some dating back to the earliest years of the century and some of very recent construction, some spacious and substantial and some with but one or two rooms.

Just below the road half a mile from the center of Glen Haven on the way to Estes Park Marcia's parents, Glenn and Gen Channer, lived in a comfortable rustic house whose rough-hewn siding belied the warm well-decorated interior with a cathedral ceiling in the dining and living room area. Marcia's parents, both in their early 60s, had retired three years earlier and moved up permanently from Greeley fifty miles east on the plains. Her father had worked 43 years for the *Greeley Tribune*. Her mother had served for 23 years as an elementary school secretary. On the day she retired faculty and pupils assembled in the school yard at the close of school, and the flag was ceremoniously lowered and presented to her. It had been the ultimate acknowledgment of the person who really keeps the school going.

This home along the county road had been very special to the Tavels, for they knew it meant a delicious hot meal, accommodations if needed, and above all family, whenever they arrived each summer after a long drive from Toledo, Ohio. It also meant that Glenn Channer had been up to their place, closed the pipes, and turned on the electric power and well pump. It meant that Gen Channer had cleaned out the winter's dust and filled the refrigerator.

When the Tavels reached the switchbacks and slowed for the turns a film of mud was starting in several places to creep across the road. At the top no mountains were visible on the horizon, for, as the Tavels were fond of saying "the mist had descended on Brigadoon." Reaching town

they parked on MacGregor Avenue. Marcia and Michael crossed the street to the municipal building where they heard hard rain and thunder throughout the evening. David went the other way to the library.

When the “survival” program was over, Michael and Marcia walked across the street to the library to wait for David’s chess game to end. There was something going on at the fire/police station. Lights were flashing and they thought there was either an accident or a fire somewhere.

The rain had eased, leaving them surprised when, upon reaching the northern end of the Estes valley, they found police telling drivers that that was as far as they could go because of rocks on the road. When it ceased altogether, the Tavel left a house to which they had been directed by the police, and using umbrellas and a flashlight always kept in the car, started down the road on foot. It was quite easy, or as easy as descending a paved hill in darkness with only a flashlight could be. They passed the first sharp turn, and then the second. Except for the fact that there were no lights below and beyond them, everything seemed normal, albeit wet.

Then suddenly they stopped. The flashlight was aimed ahead down the road, but . . . . there was no road. The blacktop ended, and cutting across it was a stream of rock and water whose depth they could not judge, and whose width was at least ten feet. They crossed to the western side of the road, passing a truck on its side in a ditch, and scrambled up the hill far enough to be above this new river. Then they proceeded in what they hoped was a direction parallel to what had been the Glen Haven road. It was down and up and down and up again as lightning and light rain resumed. The ground was so slippery that in places it was necessary to use one’s hands to keep from sliding, especially for Marcia who had worn cowboy boots. At least half an hour must have past before they saw candles in a window of a house well above and away from the road.

Stopping at the first house they came to, they found that others had reached this far – and only this far. Their hope of using the phone to let their daughter and parents know they were all right was met with news that the phones and all electricity were out. They were advised not to try to go any farther by the owners, who insisted they stay the night. The

owners knew the Channers, and possibly also knew that the Channer house had been washed away. Another couple was spending the night there in the candlelight. They had tried to drive down the switchbacks earlier in the evening. It was their truck that the Tavel had seen washed into a gully by the side of the road. Marcia, Michael, and David camped in the living room and watched the constant lightning throughout the night.

With the coming of a gray and gloomy dawn, the Tavel started walking down towards Glen Haven. What they saw seemed surreal. The West Creek floodplain was completely inundated; buildings were torn apart; cars were stranded, headed in all directions. When they came to Marcia's parents' property just below the Red Stallion, they found nothing but water. Marcia's sister Marilyn Heller had a cabin next to the parents' house; both buildings were completely gone. In their place flowed the waters of West Creek, now far out of its banks and deep.

In a state of shock they kept walking. Their daughter alone in the Fox Creek cabin became their immediate concern, and they walked more deliberately and rapidly to find out if she and their place three miles away were safe. As they passed through Glen Haven they saw cars buried in mud. The Community Building was still standing, but had been dislodged from its foundation. The Horseshoe Café had become the morgue, for that was where Glenn Channer's body had been taken, though they had no way of knowing this as they walked by. Her mother's body would be found later downstream from Glen Haven. It is ironic that the maiden name of Marcia's grandmother was Flood, and that her mother didn't like swimming pools or going into the ocean because she was afraid of drowning.

It seemed like it took forever to reach the cabin. Since most bridges were out they found it impossible to stay on the road, and were going up, over, and around obstacles until reaching the final rise. As they rounded the last corner they saw their cabin apparently unharmed. Briefly the sun came out. Inside and safe were Tasha and the collie. Relief and exhaustion set in. The electricity was out and Fox Creek was over its bank and flooded up near the back door, but the building appeared undamaged. Turning on the transistor radio for information on conditions in the area all they heard was music from the Estes Park

station where everything seemed to be normal. While listening, they set about moving their food from the electric refrigerator to an old gas unit which still functioned.

That afternoon someone came to the door saying that the area was to be evacuated. The Tavel's were advised to pack some belongings and go up to the Cheley camp at the end of Fox Creek Road from where all would be airlifted by helicopter. Each of them filled a backpack and grabbed a sleeping bag. Then, with Yukon, they walked up to the camp. Despite the fact that the latter had no electricity the cooks were able to provide supper for the campers and the Fox Creek "refugees." Everyone then joined in singing camp songs before a roaring fire until it was time to roll out sleeping bags on the floor for what was to be a sleepless night. The Tavel's didn't talk about what they were thinking: What had happened to the Channers? Were they alive somewhere? The likely answers were anything but pleasant.

All were to be airlifted the next morning, but when that time came, more improvising was necessary. The helicopters were heard above, but because of low clouds and more rain they could not land. A decision was made for everyone to walk out. The trek went down to the village and then up to the top of the switchbacks. Volunteers with four-wheel drive vehicles helped transport many of the large group into Estes Park. In the town local citizens had set up a disaster center at the American Legion Hall. The names of all known residents had been placed on a "missing persons list," and there each stayed until the survivor reported in. Friends of the Channers were waiting at the center for news, and when the Tavel's appeared they most generously took them into their home until Glen Haven residents were permitted to return to their cabins.

The month of August was spent searching through the debris along what had been the flood's path between the Channer property and Drake. Marcia's sister came from Hayden with her daughters Mishelle and Claire to aid the search. Family photos were found widely scattered about and covered with mud. Gen Channer's diary miraculously appeared on a kitchen counter of a partially destroyed house one-half mile downstream. Marcia's high school class photo, torn in half, was found caught in tree branches over a mile away. A painting of Hallett Peak and Bear Lake done by Glenn Channer on plywood as a mural in

their kitchen was found in pieces lying in the road half way between Glen Haven and Drake. His wallet was picked up near the Rock Museum on the Drake Road, a structure so badly damaged it later was demolished. The Channers' will was sticking out of the mud a few hundred yards downstream from where the house had been, as was a metal box containing home movie reels. Like archaeologists, the families spent each daylight hour in the following weeks trying to gather what they could of two wonderful lives literally smashed to pieces.

At the end of August, the Tavel had to return to Ohio. Unable to get permission to rebuild even one of the two houses, Marcia and her sister eventually were forced to sell the land to the county. They did obtain from the latter two concessions: the land would remain as open space, and the Channer heirs could plant wild flower seeds and saplings and mount a plaque in memory of their parents. Some of the saplings have grown into young trees. The plaque rests on a large rock near two spruce trees which, as in an ancient Greek legend, have grown as symbols reminding friends and family of the two people whose home rested on the site.

The Big Thompson Flood  
By Natasha Tavel  
(16 year old granddaughter of the Channers)

That afternoon the sky was heavy, just like it is before it rains. But I didn't mind the rain because, finally, this evening I was going to have some time alone in the cabin, reading and getting letters off in the mail. It was my dad's night to play chess at the library in Estes Park, and my mother and brother were going to a lecture on survival, given by a naturalist.

As I lazily flipped through the pages of my book, I was forced to lift my head; the dog was frightened by the loud claps of thunder. I watched and waited, hoping the house wouldn't leak, because we often had that problem.

Then, my grandmother called to see how I was. The crackling on the phone made it hard to understand her. She was explaining that their house was showing traces of water; she said that she could never remember such a downpour. Grandma was hoping it would let up so they could go dancing in town that Saturday night.

Shortly after hanging up, the lights started going on and off and finally stayed off. The rain came harder as I sat and wondered. The night dragged on. I'd gotten candles together by fumbling my way through drawers, rummaging what I could find. I placed a candle in its holder and slowly began to roam the house. I propped my pillows and began to doze off, with the sound of the creek roaring in my ears.

Strangely, I awoke every two hours, grabbing my flickering candle to check if my parents were home. No one was there. Only me.

By 4:30 a.m. I gave up trying to sleep. I looked out the window in disbelief. The creek was a torrent. A blanket of water covered everything.

Still, I wasn't afraid, but I knew I had to set out and find my family. By candlelight, I put together a small pack of clothes, food, and a flashlight. My best bet was to follow the road three and one-half miles to my grandparents' house.

With pack on my back and dog at my side, I set off, completely



ignorant of what I would find. Things soon went from awful to devastating. I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me. The mud swallowed my feet. I made my way down a road from hell.

I knew my parents couldn't get up this road by car. I decided that they had probably parked on higher ground and spent the night in the car or at my grandparents.

I reached places where bridges had been, leaving only a rushing river. I was forced to take several detours over the mountains, increasing my mileage and confusing my directions. I could see in the distance that the once peaceful valley of Glen Haven was overturned. Cars were stacked in mud, many buried along with the houses.

I was dazed and confused. The sky was silver and my thoughts were gray. I couldn't tell where I was or what I was doing. My body burned and my senses ached. I couldn't reach the other side of the river where Glen Haven was located. I was stranded within hollering distance.

My destination was only a little more than a mile now. I followed the new course of the river upstream. I slid over wet, mossy rocks and heavy underbrush. I was at the mercy of the rain, dogs, and barbed wire fences. Knocked-over signs reading "Keep Out" and dead fish didn't make my journey any better. I felt like I was on stage for some disaster drama.

Clinging to the hillside, I was making slow progress. I kept my eyes peeled for a little yellow Datsun, but I didn't see it or any sign of yellow, orange, and red slickers. I pulled myself closer to the river's edge, trying to signal someone's attention. Voices were muffled over the sound of the water.

Slowly, I realized what was happening. The answers I got were merely shrugs of "I don't know" and lost vacant stares. Nobody knew. They only suspected the same things I did.

My dog was in the same state I was—confused. We finally retraced our path back to the cabin. It was still early morning.

I entered the front door and turned on the transistor radio. The news reports were very sketchy this early. Because of the smothering mist, it was hard to get the stories straight. It was a state of mass confusion.

I thought of my parents. Where were they? How were they?

Hours passed and I sat listening to news reports. Then, outside, I heard a strange noise at the back door. I ran to check, my heart racing. My dad was standing there with red swollen eyes and a face whiter than snow. His body was hot and he was dripping with sweat. Without words, we were caught in each other's arms, and now for the first time I was crying. He repeated over and over something like, "If only they had reached high ground." I somehow knew that he was talking about my grandparents.

Two months have passed now, and my life has changed forever. The storm was just a freak accident of nature. It wasn't the first and it won't be the last.

Miracle in the Big Thompson  
By G.B. Carlson

*This is an account of a near miss in the 1976 Big Thompson flood which took the lives of over 140 people*

It was a beautiful, bright, and blue sky morning to which we woke up on the morning of July 31, 1976 at Tee Pee Bible Camp just south of Rifle, Colorado where my entire family had been involved with the usual activities of a Christian Bible Camp. In fact the morning was so beautiful and cloudless that we remarked that this was indeed a day which could be linked to a day in heaven itself. However, the day was young and the distance was far (200+ miles) to our home in Estes Park, Colorado.

We were all saddened to say good bye to all of our friends there at Tee Pee. But camp was over for yet another year and now we must return home. That meant a 200+ mile trip east to Denver then north to Loveland to pick up our dog, Happy, and from there home to Estes Park by way of the now infamous Big Thompson Canyon.

The skies were so blue and clear looking as we began our homeward trek that who in their right mind would predict a storm ahead. As we approached Vail Pass (I-70 under construction) we began to see in the bluest of skies some big billowy cotton looking clouds forming to the north and west of where we now were. They were the typical summer clouds of mid summer Colorado. These clouds may have been a bit thicker and extended higher (50,000+ feet) than the more common ones. Our recollection may have not been the clearest at the time as we were all very tired from a great week at camp.

Soon we were over Vail Pass and then up and over Loveland Pass where the grandeur of the high Rockies was even more ominous and beautiful. Yet our minds were simply on getting home. We dropped off a young lady who had been a counselor at camp in the East Denver area. We said goodbye once again and now we were off to a close encounter with tragedy just ahead (50+ miles.)

As the kids all slept we headed for Loveland (west on 1<sup>st</sup> street) to see my wife's (Louise) parents and pick up our dog. The time now was

about 6:00 p.m. in the late afternoon—just in time for supper. We loved eating with the folks (Hillis and Doris) and so we committed our time now to their home and a delicious meal. Camp food somehow was simply not quite as good as Mom's home cookin'.

Wow, and wouldn't you know that as we ate the Summer Olympics were being show on television! Life at its best—watching track, boxing, and bicycling while eating the best food in the world! This combination proved to be our salvation (7:30—9:00 p.m.)

Well, the kids were tired as well as Louise and I, so perhaps it would be a good idea to head for home. Scott (age 12), Dana (age 10), Aaron (age 7), and Mark (age 4) all agreed that time had come to jump into the car and head for home. As the kids headed for the car I suddenly glanced at the television to see Leon Spinx, America's heavyweight boxer just beginning his Olympic gold medal match. The fight was supposed to be a good one so I convinced the family to wait just a few more minutes to see this important bout. Reluctantly, the family came back into the house to watch the fight (9:30 p.m.) At 9:50 p.m. the fight showed its apparent winner so Louise convinced me that we should now leave.

Into the station wagon we went—loaded to the hilt with suitcases, sleeping bags, etc. and began our approach to the face of death. Over to HWY 34 from the Carter Lake road. We then headed west. Ahead we could see tumultuous lightning and could even hear the roar of thunder. The lightning revealed huge billowy thunder heads which climbed seemingly endlessly into the western skies up and over the area we were about to travel. However, these mountain storms were fairly normal for this time of year in the Rocky Mountains and so our thoughts did not stray from getting back to home sweet home. Just ahead of us an ambulance with its lights blinking was about to enter the mouth of the Big Thompson Canyon (known as the Narrows because of its rocky cliffs on either side of the highway and the Big Thompson River.) A State Patrolman stopped us at the crest of the hill about ½ mile from the Narrows. He said there was talk of high waters up the canyon and that we better wait a few minutes. I asked if the Dam on Lake Estes had possibly broken and he replied that that had not happened and that it was possibly the rain storm we were witnessing. After 2 or 3 minutes I

convinced the patrolman that because the ambulance had gone ahead then perhaps we could continue as well. He agreed and let us go. We were the only car visible on the road at that time (10:00 p.m.) Down the hill we went and again we cared about nothing more than getting home. But a little part of my mind now considered the road ahead and possible high water. As about 10:01 p.m. we approached the Dam Store (a tourist store) just at the mouth of the canyon. It was very dark but the lightning could still be seen in the west. I approached the canyon slowly with a bit of wonderment in my mind. Even I, with lots of daredom in my spirit, was somewhat apprehensive. Then as sudden as death itself, a man in a dark long raincoat appeared from the side of the road into my headlights, waving his arms and yelling at me to stop! As I stopped, he ran to my window, which I opened. He told me to head east immediately or we'd be trapped! I cut my wheels and literally squealed my tires as I burned a U turn and headed east! With my window open I could hear a great roar from behind and blotches of water drops began to hit my windshield as the storm moved eastward. Lightning was all around and the heavens seemed to be opening with a vengeance! However, no rain fell east of the Dam Store. The splattering water was the wall itself literally on my rear bumper.

As we sped up the hill toward the parked patrolman, there were suddenly, out of the low lying Sylvan Dale ranch area, 10-20 cars coming onto the highway and heading east. We merged with the traffic at a high rate of speed even though the river broke away from the road for approximately 2 miles. The only problem was that ahead lie a death trap. After one mile I took a right off HWY 34 headed south on the Carter Lake road heading back to my wife's parents, Hillis and Doris. They were glad to see us as the 10:00 p.m. news had shown a news bulletin telling of the flood in the Big Thompson Canyon.

The cars ahead and behind us on the escape from the canyon had unfortunately continued down HWY 34 to where the river once again crossed HWY 34. However the water wall was so high, so sudden, and so fast (30' above the river bottom and 19' above the highway) in the Narrows that 3 or 4 cars became trapped as they crossed the highway bridge. Six people died at this spot and 138 died on up the canyon.

Even more miraculous that our escape was the ambulance

personnel escaping death in the ambulance just ahead of us. Both people were literally spit out of the cab of the ambulance and onto some rocks at the canyon's edge where they were able to hang on until help came early the next morning. The wall of water was so quick and so big and mighty that it literally hit the ambulance with such force it split the vehicle in half and the two men were thrown out to safety.

To this day, I wonder about our escape from the claws of death. Who was the man in the dark trench coat who suddenly appeared in front of us to warn us of impending catastrophe? His location was at the mouth of the canyon just on the western edge of the Dam Store. His timing was perfect to head us off. He literally saved our lives. Was he an angel sent by God or a man sent by God? If an angel, then he is safe. If he was a man, then the wall of water may have taken him to his death. Perhaps he may have escaped and if so and he reads this story, I would really like for him to contact me. Thank you, whoever you were, and hopefully whoever you are.

Where are we now? I (George Carlson), the father and the driver of the vehicle, live in Fruita, Colorado, where I am a high school teacher, a farmer, and a coach. My wife Louise resides in the same home and is a homemaker and farm caretaker. Son Scott is a preacher in Leadville, Colorado. Daughter Dana is a housewife and church music director in Nashville, Tennessee. Son Aaron is an assistant pastor in a church in Denver, Colorado. Son Mark graduated from the Air Force Academy and is currently in the United States Air Force. Daughter Angela was born two years after the 1976 Big Thompson Flood. Happy (the dog) died years later on the farm near Fruita.

Life can sometimes end ever so quickly but God chose to spare ours. I'm not sure for what season, but we are all serving Him now as we have been all our lives. Fourteen inches of rain fell in one hour toward the top of the canyon just above Drake, Colorado, on that fateful night. The water had nowhere else to go but down the Big Thompson Canyon. A wall of water formed where the Big Thompson and the North Fork Stream came together. The wall was measured at 19' above the road and 30' above the river bottom in the Narrows of the canyon. Large volumes of rushing water possess great power, enough to move houses, giant

boulders, large trucks, bridges, and soil. Worse yet, it kills people. One hundred and forty four were known to have died in this flood. Several other people are still missing.

*(Editor's note—This was written several years ago by my cousin G.B. To update his family situation—He and Louise are in the process of moving from Mack (Fruita) back to Estes Park. They are building a beautiful home south of town in the shadow of Longs Peak. Oldest son Scott is a minister in Pueblo, with his wife Leslie and their five children. Dana and her husband live near Dallas, Texas, where he is studying to be a minister. Aaron is married and has three children and is a minister in the Denver area. Mark is a Major in the U.S. Air Force and is married with three children. Youngest daughter Angela is married with two children)*

I Am the River; I Hurt Too!  
The Big Thompson River  
Author Unknown

Please don't be angry with me, I was just doing what God intended of me.

I am just a small stream. I could only hold so much, I really tried hard. The rains from above multiplied as they came down.

The force became too great for me. I could no longer hold it within my banks.

You know the feeling, when too much gets put on you, and you sometimes fall apart.

Don't be angry with me, I hurt too. My rocks were tossed about and my trees ripped up.

My beauty was no more. I too have lost, for the very same people you loved and lost also loved me.

They came in the summer to listen to my rippling sound, to dip their feet in my cool waters at the end of a long day.

They sat and smelled the pine trees and watched the deer drink from my stream.

The ones who lived beside me year after year, I heard their laughter and I saw their tears.

I miss their sounds, their sitting along my banks after a day at work, Just to relax and say how lucky they were and how beautiful I was.

I liked that; we had great respect for each other.

Don't be angry with me. Twenty years has passed.

I guess some of my beauty has returned, at least people way so.

I have some trees and bushes again, but deep down I will never be the same.

I loved those folks too.

Just remember I was trying to do what was intended for me, and maybe someday, you will no longer be angry with me.



## Roller Derby on Eighteen Wheels By Wayne Carlson

The Interstate highway system in this country is remarkable. One can leave his/her home in a place like Brush, Colorado, and go all the way to some faraway place like Dayton, Ohio, and not encounter a single stop sign. Service stations, fast food purveyors and rest stops are located at convenient intervals and cater to every possible human need. Vending machines and automated credit card gas pumps are ubiquitous and make cash unnecessary and contact with other human beings optional. Speed limits vary some from state to state, but expedite speedy transit. Generally speaking, if you are in a hurry to get somewhere, you are better off to use the Interstates.

Last year, my wife Carol and I drove to Washington to celebrate the wedding anniversary of an aunt and uncle. We spent several weeks exploring much of the state. Several months later we drove to Ohio to visit our son David and to meet his fiancée Toni. Since we had never visited New England, we traveled to the northeastern part of the U.S. We visited Gettysburg, West Point, ocean beaches in New Hampshire and Rhode Island, walked the Freedom Trail in Boston, photographed many lighthouses, and visited Niagara Falls.

Normally when we travel, as on these two aforementioned trips, we drive the back roads—the U.S. highways, the state highways, even the country roads. I do the bulk of the driving, Carol does the navigating, and we search out interesting natural and historical sites. We both enjoy photography, so our stops are frequent and often unscheduled. If we don't notice something with photographic potential until we already passing it, that is O.K. I glance in the rear view mirror, stop as quickly as safely possible, and burn a quick u turn.

Sometimes, when we are in a hurry to get someplace, we use the Interstate highways. That was the case recently when we returned to Ohio for our son's wedding. We needed to travel 1100 miles in two days so I logged onto Mapquest and printed off the suggested route, which involved segments of ten different Interstates. It was during this drive that I was reminded of a "Sporting Event" I used to watch on TV many years ago. It was called Roller Derby

We left Brush on Monday morning, April 9. Normally, I would have had a full tank of gas, but on this day the Subaru registered less than half a tank, so I knew I would have to get fuel before too long. This was fine with me, since I had drunk two cups of coffee with breakfast and I knew I would need a pit stop before too long anyway.

I decided to stop in Sterling, only 35 miles toward Ohio, since I knew there were roadside stations, and I figured the cost would be less than in Julesburg, our next viable option. The station I pulled into was out of regular unleaded, but they were selling mid-grade at the regular gas price. I filled up the tank at \$2.89 per gallon. An hour later when we passed Julesburg, I noticed that regular unleaded was \$2.76.

Shortly after entering Nebraska we merged onto I-80. I noticed that the volume of traffic was much greater and that there were an awful lot of eighteen wheel Semi-tractor trailers. The three hundred million people in our country require an enormous amount of “stuff” to maintain the standard of living to which we have become accustomed. Today, most of this produce is transported by truck.

All the way to Lincoln, we shared the road with these ponderous giants. Mostly, our relationship was amiable. The majority of the truck drivers exhibited good driving skills and were generally courteous. Contrary to most automobile drivers, they usually used their turn signals and kept within five miles of the speed limit, which in Nebraska is 75 for all vehicles. We all moved along together; mostly content to cruise in the right-hand lane, occasionally venturing into the other lane to pass that elderly couple cruising along in their pickup at 60.

When we got near Lincoln, Mapquest took us away from the Interstate—we veered across the corner of Iowa into Missouri. Before long we merged onto I-29, which took us southward across the western part of the Show-Me State. When we got to St. Joseph, my navigator mandated a left turn and we headed east toward Hannibal on US 36. It had been a long day and when we got to Cameron, we checked into a motel for the night.

Tuesday morning we got up early, ate breakfast at the motel, and took off into the rapidly rising sun. We were only a little more than halfway to Dayton, our eventual goal. The morning did not proceed as smoothly as we had hoped. The smooth divided highway we had

followed the evening before into Cameron deteriorated rapidly as we passed from one cone zone into the next. It was almost noon when we finally drove through Hannibal and crossed Old Man River into Illinois. I gladly merged with the traffic on I-72 headed toward Springfield.

I soon realized that travel on I-72 was not going to be pleasant. Interstate traffic in Illinois had two distinct speed limits—for the cars the limit was 65—for the eighteen wheel semi tractor trailers the limit was 55. In theory, this split limit makes sense. Cars are easier to control and are more maneuverable than large trucks and should be allowed to go faster—right? In actual practice, I found that the dual limit created a problem.

It was on I-72 that we recreated the game of roller derby. The traffic was very heavy. About half the vehicles were trucks on their way to ravenous consumers in Chicago or Indianapolis, eager to get to their destinations. They formed an almost continuous line in the right hand lane of the highway. The automobiles, including ours, were mostly in the passing lane.

Apparently, the basic rules of this game in which we unwittingly and unwillingly found ourselves go something like this:

A group of semis ranging in number from five to twelve assemble in a tight “pack” in the right hand lane, led by a “blocker,” who is careful to go the exact speed limit. After proceeding in file for some specified number of miles, one of the individuals toward the back of the pack (the “jammer,”) pulls suddenly into the passing lane (using the turn signal is optional and bonus points are awarded if the jammer can cause the driver of an automobile to slam on his brakes.) The jammer then proceeds to pass the entire pack. He is not allowed to go more than five miles an hour over the speed limit (which is 5 miles an hour slower than the legal limit for cars) at any time. Points are awarded based on how many cars he can get backed up behind him before he pulls back into the right hand lane in front of the blocker. Apparently, there is no time limit.

All Tuesday afternoon we played this game. There were many variations which kept it from being boring. Sometimes, a second jammer would join the first, if he could force his way into the line of automobiles behind the first jammer.

Some players had to drop out when we crossed I-55 at

Bloomington and again at Champaign-Urbana when we crossed I-57. We picked up a few replacement players. The rules had to be adjusted when we crossed into Indiana, since the speed limits increased to 70 for cars and 65 for semis. Most of the better players dropped out in Indianapolis during the late afternoon. The few amateurs who joined us traveling east from there on I-70 were mostly bush league and the game had lost most of its glamour. By the time we crossed the Ohio line and headed for Dayton, I was just another bored driver, eager to get to my destination.

## Why not try Snowshoeing?

By Wayne Carlson

I have always been an active, outdoor type person. When I was a little tow-headed kid on the family farm, I was on the go from sun-up to sun-down. I played like there was no tomorrow. My mom literally had to drag me indoors at suppertime. With three sisters, two brothers, a menagerie of farm animals, my best friend and cousin G.B. readily available for stimulation, I was a 1950s predecessor of the Eveready Bunny.

When I had aged sufficiently to matriculate at Galeton Junior High and then at Galeton High School, I continued my high degree of physicality. I participated in every extra curricular activity available, including marching band and all the sports my school offered. Our basketball team won the State Championship when I was a senior, and all our teams were at least moderately successful. I loved physical activity and I loved competition.

My parents' farm was right across the road from my grandparents'. Lots of aunts, uncles, and cousins lived in close proximity. We spent lots of time together. Almost every Sunday afternoon during the good weather months, many of us assembled, usually at my grandparents place. We played a special hybridized form of ping pong, where each team of two only had one paddle. Teammates were required to hit the ball in alternate fashion, so there was a great expenditure of energy, even in this normally calm recreational game.

The weekly volleyball sessions were legendary throughout the area—friends and relatives came from miles around to participate. One of my cousins, too young to drive a car, drove his father's John Deere tractor six miles each way so he could share in the excitement!

During June, July and August, my maiden schoolteacher aunts Esther and Lovella, home for vacation from their teaching jobs on the West Coast, would host almost weekly wiener-roasts for whichever family members could attend. After the hamburgers, hot-dogs, potato salad, watermelon and kool-aid were all consumed, as we awaited the coals for roasting marshmallows and making smores, the kids (and maybe a grown-up or two) would play games, including my favorites,

kick-the-can and hide-and-seek.

After I “grew up,” married, and moved away from home to teach school in Idaho Springs, I still had an insatiable thirst for physical activity. I coached nearly every sport and participated on several city league teams. Summertime still provided opportunities for traditional family favorites, since we were marginally within commuting distance home. I picked up golf and tennis, played with teacher colleagues, and hiking and bicycling, done with my wife, Carol.

After four years in Idaho Springs, we moved to New Mexico. Over the next nine years, we had three sons and were very busy. My summer job was working with Los Alamos City Recreation. My primary job was leading the wives and families of visiting Physicists to the Lab at Los Alamos on hikes surrounding the area of Los Alamos and northern New Mexico. It was a great job that both my wife and I loved and it provided us with a great opportunity to spend quality time together and with our small boys. Each of them basically grew up in a Gerry Carrier. I played volleyball once a week with a group of teacher friends; golfed several times a week with another group; played tennis whenever I could work that into my schedule.

A career move brought us back to Colorado in the 80s, first to Longmont, then to Brush, where we became Beetdiggers. During our first quarter century in Brush, I remained very active. Coaching a variety of sports at the middle school and raising three sons kept me busy. I played lots of tennis—pretty competitive singles and recreational doubles, consistently hacked my way around the golf course, rode my bike quite a bit.

Three years ago, Carol and I both retired from our teaching jobs. Staying active has not generally been a problem, particularly when the weather is nice. Fortunately, we are both in good health and don’t have any major physical problems. My knees sometimes complain that they are tired and need to relax on the couch with Dr. Phil and Opra. Most days, we manage to get out and walk for at least a mile or two.

Last year around Christmastime, our oldest son Kevin asked what we wanted for Christmas. I relayed the fact that our treadmill had not worked properly for some time, and that we having difficulty getting the exercise we knew we needed. Many of our local hikes were not

accessible during the wintertime.

Kevin lives and works in Denver. His gifts to his parents have always been generous and imaginative. Some of them have revolutionized our lives. Most of the technological things in our house are from him. The fact that I am somewhat capable on the computer is due to his tutelage. The terrific sound system in our living room is from him. He drastically changed our photographic hobby when he gave us a digital camera. Several summers ago, he gave us belly boats, waders, non-slip boots and fly rods.

When we opened our gifts from Kevin on Christmas Eve, we were surprised to find two pairs of snowshoes, along with poles, gaiters, and other accessories. We were apparently going to experience a new form of physical exercise.

During the past two winters, we have been snowshoeing a total of six times at three different locations. Three times we have traveled west of Denver, just past the little town of Empire. From the parking lot near the Henderson mine, we have twice snowshoed the jeep road up toward Jones Pass; once we followed another fork of the trail into Butler Gulch.

Two other times we drove up Guanella Pass above the town of Georgetown where we traversed the trail to Silver Dollar Lake. Our other snowshoe experience happened between the town of Evergreen and Echo Lake, where we climbed toward Squaw Pass.

We have really enjoyed all our outings. Snowshoes provide access to places normally off limits during the wintertime. We have found that our favorite places to snowshoe are far away from the packed roads and trails. No hill is too steep for us to ascend or descend. We have successfully manipulated meadows covered by up to four feet of powder. We go to great lengths looking for challenges.

During most of the time we have spent on snowshoes, either Kevin, one of our other sons Randy or I have taken the lead. The rest of the group follows in single file. The person at the end of the procession, usually Carol, generally has the easiest task since the snow is packed by each individual's progression. Occasionally the "macho guy" members of the family allow Carol the honor of taking the lead. Normally, these intervals are fairly short due to Carol's short legs and generally cautious nature.

My very favorite part of snowshowing is when I get to take the lead down a very steep slope of deep powder. I have found that the most efficient (and certainly the most fun) way to accomplish this process is to take very large steps and to land on the heels of your snowshoes and to “ride the slide” to the bottom. This is definitely an adrenaline rush!

Snowshoeing can be quite strenuous, but it is also an incredible amount of fun, and it has opened up many new opportunities for us. Photographic possibilities have been multiplied. White snow, evergreen trees, brilliantly blue skies, present vistas previously unavailable.

Do yourself a favor this Christmas. One of your children or significant others will ask you, “What would you like for Christmas this year?”

An excellent response would be—“I have been thinking about trying a new winter sport. How about a pair of snowshoes?”



## Disc Wars By Wayne Carlson

I think it might be happening again....

About ten years ago, my friend Ken Leinweber and I, who were both teachers at Brush Middle School, started playing each other in ping pong. We played nearly every day after school. The game for us was therapeutic. It gave us a way of relaxing and coping with the challenges of interacting with the “hormones in tennis shoes” with whom we spent our professional lives.

When we began our competition, each of us used a generic ping pong paddle, made from wood, covered with a thin coat of rubber, and available at any discount store for around \$5. I was a finesse player with a variety of spins and good defense. Ken was an offensive player, who tried to “kill” everything. We were very even; he won some, I won some.

One day, Ken went to a sporting goods store and bought a higher quality ping pong paddle, with thicker rubber and a better handle, for about \$15. It made his topspin-kill-shots very difficult for me to return. He had a definite advantage and won nearly every game...for a while.

After a week of humiliation, I went to another sporting goods store and bought myself a paddle for \$25. This one was superior to Ken’s and I had the advantage. I won most of the game...for a while.

Then, Ken bought a better and more expensive paddle; I bought another, on and on. After about four rounds of escalation, his top of the line paddle and my top of the line paddle basically canceled out any advantage for either of us and we were back to even...he won some, I won some. Looking back at the situation, I wonder, “How could we have been so foolish?”

Last Christmas our oldest son Kevin gave his mother and me several discs, similar to the Frisbees we had thrown back in the 60s. Kevin introduced us to a new game, one called disc golf. We visited the disc golf course in Fort Morgan, even though there was a foot of snow on the ground, and he showed us the basics of how to play.

With the advent of spring, we returned to the disc golf course and played again, and again. We visited Kevin and his girlfriend, Lisa, in

Denver and they took us to other courses. Kevin gave us additional discs and for Fathers Day presented me with a disc bag. We slowly improved our skills and learned to enjoy the game very much.

We learned that all discs are not created equal. Many of them even have names. Some are constructed to turn left in flight and some to turn right. Some fly farther but are difficult to control. Some are easy to control but don't fly as far. Some float on water. Some fly better into the wind while others prefer a tail wind.

As I became more adept at throwing the different discs, I kept adding to my arsenal. I was soon carrying with me the following: 1. Champion Orc, a distance driver, 2. Thumtrac Birdie putter, 3. F-15 Eagle, a driver which floats on water, 4. Gator, a mid-range control disc, 5. Stingray, a mid-range disc, 6. Hydra, a multi-purpose disc which floats on water.

One day in May, Carol and I were playing a friendly round in Fort Morgan. As we teed off on hole number 9, someone familiar came riding past us on his bicycle. It was a friend and former colleague from Brush Middle School, John McDonald. We visited for a while and he asked about the game we were playing. He said he had heard of the game and wanted to try it, so we made a date for the following day.

Next morning, John appeared at the appointed time. I loaned him a couple discs, and we played nine holes. He did not seem to have a great deal of ability and struggled getting the hang of throwing a disc. When we finished he said he would like to give it another try so we made another date for two days later.

About halfway through this round, John all at once seemed to "get it." His throws were longer and straighter and he really started to enjoy himself. In fact, he was hooked on this new game. He asked about different types of discs and where he could get them and we agreed to meet again the next day.

It was a "different" person who met us the next day. John had driven to Denver, had visited a sporting goods store, was now the proud owner of a disc golf bag stocked with a variety of discs—everything from drivers, to mid range, to putters. He had several floaters, discs designed to turn left, to turn right, and not to turn at all. He was ready and eager to conquer this new game. And, he played well. His score this

day was much lower than it had ever been (which in disc golf is good.)

After just a few more games John was on the verge of breaking par. More importantly, he was coming close to beating me! It was time for me to do something. I did some introspection of my game. My long game was not exceptional, but was acceptable. My approach shots and my putting tended to be quite erratic. I realized that this part of my game needed improvement if I were ever to excel. I googled “disc golf” and got 2,500 hits. I visited a site called *lostgravity.com* and started doing some research.

“Here’s one that could help me,” I said to myself after checking out several discs. “The Rhyno ‘stops on a dime,’ ‘stays close to the basket,’ ‘is the best choice for short to medium drives.’” I clicked on the “enlarge image” icon and checked it out. It was beautiful! It sounded like an exact fit for what my game needed. I clicked on “add to shopping basket.” I now had some decisions to make. Did I want white, red, blue, or yellow? Did I want 167 grams, 171g, 175g, or 176g? Did I want the Champion (\$10.99), DX (\$7.99), Pro Soft (\$10.99), Pro Tye-Dye (\$13.99), or Star (\$15.99?) After some deliberation, I ordered a blue 175 gram Star.

My new Rhino arrived four days later. I could hardly wait to try it out. Next day I met John at the course in Fort Morgan. This first hole is par 4 and 313.’ I threw my Orc about 220’ off the tee. John’s first shot landed a little to the left of mine. He threw his second shot ten feet from the hole. I took out my new Rhyno, “accidentally” dropped it next to John’s foot where he would notice it, and prepared for my second shot. I remembered that this disc is supposed to fly straight as an arrow and to stop right at the basket. Unfortunately, my brain was programmed to throw 15’ to the right of the target and to allow for a break to the left that all my other discs did, so that is where my arm threw the disc. It flew straight and true and landed 15’ to the right of the basket. I missed the putt and got a par, John made his birdie.

After a couple more holes, I figured out how to throw the Rhyno, and had the best score of my life, a three under par 31. John faded at the end and bogied eight and nine and ended with a 32 so I managed to hold him at bay. Just barely. I felt pretty good. We made arrangements to meet again the next day.

John led the way off the number one tee when we commenced our

next game. His disc looked different than his usual driver but he didn't say anything about it. His drive was about 20' farther than normal and was right down the heart of the fairway. He had a simple toss to the goal for his second shot and easily made the putt for a birdie three. I also managed to score a birdie by making a 15' putt.

As we walked to the second tee box, I asked John if he had a new driver. He proudly showed me his new Wraith. "Where did you get this?" I asked. It was really nice, all shiny and streamlined. "Oh, I went online the other day and ordered a few new discs," and he proceeded to show me his new #1 Hyzer, designed to bend to the left for those blind shots around trees and other obstacles and his new #1 Slice, designed to get around those same obstacles from the other side. He casually mentioned that both discs featured a new grip system guaranteed to keep your hand from slipping. Plus, each of these discs floated on water.

John had raised the ante....

Tick Magnets  
Wayne Carlson

Have you ever noticed that some lucky guys are seemingly irresistible to women? These guys are so good-looking, so charismatic, or so rich that they are always surrounded by females. There are many names for these people—including chick-magnets. Recently, I have encountered another type of magnetic personality—this one not so lucky. He/she seems to be irresistible not to chicks but to ticks.

Since my wife Carol and I retired several years ago, we have had lots of opportunities to commune with nature. We have frequented the spectacular Colorado Rockies; have visited the tall grass prairie country of the American mid-west; have sojourned into our neighbor country to the north. We have camped in, hiked over, and photographed an incredible amount of territory. We have had some wonderful, unforgettable adventures.

The local places that Carol and I hike are perfect habitat for ticks. These little blood-suckers are dormant during the winter months but when spring inevitably rolls around in March and April they rear their ugly little heads.

Ticks need hosts to survive, which they seek by a behavior called “questing.” They crawl up stems of grass or perch on the edges of leaves of bushes with their front legs extended, especially in response to a potential host passing by. Certain biochemicals such as carbon dioxide as well as heat and movement serve as stimuli for questing behavior. Subsequently, these ticks climb onto a potential host which brushes against their extended front legs.

This last April, Carol and I invited some friends to go with us on one of our favorite hikes along the South Platte River north of Brush. We picked up Marci, her ten year old son Trevor and her father and proceeded to the parking lot near Chartier Pond. Each of us applied insect repellant as we exited the car and headed single file along the path toward the pond. Carol led the way and I brought up the rear.

After hiking for several hundred yards we reached the pond and observed several people trying their hands at catching some trout. Nobody seemed to be having much luck. We followed Carol to the

barbed wire fence to the north of the pond and everyone climbed over.

Carol led the way along the river, headed west toward our destination about a mile away, a place we call "Far Point." We passed an uprooted hundred year old cottonwood, a reminder of how transitory this environment is. It was a gorgeous blue sky day; we were all feeling energetic; the songbirds were serenading potential mates and us; it was turning into a great outdoor adventure.

There are several reasons why this hike is one of our favorites, including the close proximity to the river. Near the western terminus of the hike is located a large nest, usually occupied during the spring by a mother great horned owl and several chicks. In the same area is a hollowed cottonwood tree, often occupied by a mother raccoon and her brood of young. On this day, we were lucky enough to see the mother owl and two babies as well as momma raccoon and four babies. We took quick peeks and hurried away.

We rested briefly at Far Point, posed for photos, and enjoyed swigs of water and granola bars. Marci mildly startled everyone when she found two ticks on Trevor, one on his leg and one on his neck. She picked them off and threw them toward the river.

It took us about forty-five minutes to return to the car from Far Point. Our path followed a warm water slough that is summer home for many species of water birds and song birds. Red-wing blackbirds were particularly in evidence on this day. We thrilled to their melodious chatter. We saw several frogs in one pond and stirred up a pair of mallards in another.

When we got to the car we felt a sense of accomplishment. We were happy we had completed the hike and that we had seen so much wildlife. We checked ourselves and each other briefly for ticks. Marci picked three more from Trevor's back and neck. Nobody else found any. We loaded into the vehicle and headed toward Brush.

Next day I talked to Marci and she informed me that she had discovered three more ticks on her son. Apparently Trevor is a tick magnet!

For the last year Carol and I have enjoyed the company of another hiking companion. Our friend Don retired from teaching at Brush High

School a year ago. Since we share many interests, including a desire for physical exercise and a love for the outdoors, we have hiked with him many times.

We shared the transition of the cottonwoods from green to gold last fall with Don. We bundled up and trudged through the snows of winter together. As the calendar pages turned through April and May, we also shared spring. We have discovered something about Don—he too is a tick magnet.

We recently went on another of our favorite South Platte hikes, this one at one of the wildlife areas near Brush to the Snyder Bridge. The hike is a distance of close to two miles each way and takes us through some very good wildlife habitat. We normally see lots of birds, including hawks and songbirds and we often catch glimpses of deer and/or wild turkeys. On this particular day in early May the temperature was in the low 70s and a slight wind was blowing from the west. Don's dog Shelby was our companion.

We got to the turn around point of the hike and stopped to rest for a few minutes. Don reached to the back of his neck and grabbed a tick. He looked down at his ankles and removed two more. He threw them to the ground and we headed back toward our car. Halfway there I noticed a black spot on the back of his leg. He pulled off another tick. When we got to his car he picked another from his leg. Neither Carol nor I encountered a single tick.

Why are some people like Trevor and Don more attractive to blood sucking ticks? Both of them applied the same repellent that Carol and I did. Neither of them ventured off the trail more than anyone else, nor did either of them lead the way an inordinate amount of the way. Is there something particularly appealing about their blood types, skin colors, diets, bathing habits, etc.? So far I have not been able to answer those questions but my research is ongoing. Inquiring minds need to know.

Ticks and Mosquitoes and Millers, Oh My!  
By Wayne Carlson

“HOLD STILL! DON’T MOVE! THERE’S SOMETHING ON YOUR LEG! !”

I was standing at the sink in the kitchen in my tennis shorts and t-shirt fixing breakfast as my wife entered the room.

“Sit down and let me see the back of your leg. You have something on it.” she said. Since I always do what my wife tells me to do, I sat down and let her examine the tiny black spot.

“IT’S A TICK!” she said in a much louder-than-necessary voice. “AND IT IS BURIED IN THE BACK OF YOUR LEG!”

“Well, do something and get it out!” I begged. I knew all about Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme disease.

Carol disappeared briefly into the bathroom and soon returned with her make shift first aid kit. She coated the tick with rubbing alcohol, which seemed to detract it from its feast on leg of me, and grabbed it with a tweezers. She couldn’t remember if you are supposed to rotate clockwise or counterclockwise. (Actually I have since learned that it makes no difference—technically you should just pull real gently straight out). She finally got the tick out of my leg and it looked like it had managed to keep its head on so we (especially me!) felt much better.

Several days later, I was driving my car east of Brush and became aware of something crawling on my hand. I thought it was probably a fly so I swatted at it, but that didn’t seem to bother it, so I glanced down to see what was bugging me. It was another tick.

Still a few days later, Carol was sitting at the kitchen table doing the morning crossword when she felt something at the nape of her neck. I was sitting at the opposite side of the table so she knew the nibbler was not me. She reached around and retrieved another tick. It seemed like we had an infestation!

We had been hiking down by the South Platte River north of Brush immediately preceding these occurrences. Springtime had arrived and the warmer temperatures had awakened Mother Nature from her winter



sleep. We had been hiking alongside the river and taking pictures with Carol's new digital camera. Even though we had periodically checked ourselves and each other and had changed our clothes and showered when we got home, apparently the little buggers had hitched a ride on one or both of us to the car and then had hidden there, biding their time for rides into the house.

About the same time we were playing "tick tag", we were invaded by another nuisance—miller moths. Over a period of just a few days, we came under attack from these suffocating little airborne hairballs. Whenever we turned on any light source, here they came! Without even trying, they were making our lives miserable. We learned to be very judicious with our use of electricity.

I did a little Internet research on the subject of miller moths and found out some interesting facts. Millers actually spend the first part of their lives as larvae in the alfalfa and wheat fields of eastern Colorado. In the springtime, caterpillars (cutworms) emerge to feed. Moths emerge a bit later, the vast majority during a very short period.

Newly transformed miller moths give in to the inexorable urge to migrate to the higher elevations of the foothills and mountains to find food. Unfortunately, many are distracted from this instinctive flight pattern by the lights of civilization and stop to socialize, especially at our house. Those that stay their original course spend the short summer in the foothills and then return to the eastern plains in early fall. These autumnal migrations have considerably fewer numbers and are not nearly as noticeable.

Even though millers can nearly drive one to distraction during the time of the spring migration, it is important to remember that the problems they create are fleeting. They pose no real danger to humans, animals, plants, clothing, or fabric.

Toward the end of the miller season, when we could finally see the light at the end of the tunnel (fortunately the millers didn't see it too!), we started hearing persistent soft humming noises. Every time we ventured outdoors for our late afternoon walk we were attacked by another species of tiny monsters—mosquito season was here!

Late at night, usually somewhere between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m., our sleep was interrupted by eerie droning noises. Nocturnal bug sprayers were suddenly taking to the streets of Brush. The annual crusade against mosquitoes had begun! The local newspapers began running informative and rather alarming stories about mosquitoes. Citizens were encouraged to minimize exposure to the miniscule blood-suckers.

Additionally, electronic media types were admonishing us to always use insect repellents with just the right combinations of chemicals. We were exhorted to wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors. We learned about rare but potentially devastating diseases like the West Nile Virus and were warned to take precautions.

I remember back when I was a kid on the farm. I spent every waking hour out-of-doors. I rarely, if ever, used insect repellent and my neck and arms provided a veritable smorgasbord for flying and crawling critters, including the ubiquitous mosquitoes. I never could ignore for long the incessant itching and invariably ended up scratching away, no matter how often my mom warned me about the dangers of infection. My arms were constantly covered with scabs and I usually looked like I had contracted some exotic tropical skin disease. I was a typical farm boy who enjoyed getting down and dirty and was definitely at home in my environment.

Now, I was being warned to stay indoors, or if I dared to venture outdoors to do it very carefully. To minimize the miller nuisance I should keep my doors and windows shut. Under no circumstance should I go near the South Platte River where the dangers posed by disease bearing ticks and blood sucking mosquitoes did not justify the risks. This three pronged attack was bound to make the average person more than a little paranoid. And I haven't even mentioned the spiders, silverfish, centipedes, millipedes, and other creepy crawly things that lurk in our basement.

To Far Point  
By Wayne Carlson

A few days ago, my wife Carol and I took a hike to a place we have visited dozens of times over the past ten years, during every month and in most climate conditions. We have taken many of our friends, family, and acquaintances on this hike, and often suggest it to people who want to experience northeastern Colorado. It was to a place we call Far Point.

The hike commences at the Brush State Wildlife Area, exactly five miles north of our driveway. The parking lot was made to accommodate at least a dozen vehicles, since during hunting seasons, many people use it. All people between the ages of 16 and 64 are required to have on their person a current Wildlife Habitat Stamp.

On this particular day, we arrived at the parking lot at 9:15 a.m. The temperature had cooled considerably from the 104 degrees of two days prior. It was a comfortable 70 degrees and would only rise to 85 by the time we returned to our Subaru about noon. There was one other vehicle in the lot, a nondescript pickup of undetermined age.

Carol donned her binoculars. She was dressed in a sleeveless blue shirt and tan capris, with hiking boots and the Iraqi camouflage hat given to her by our son Randy. I strapped my digital camera around my neck. I was wearing tan shorts, my recently purchased New Mexico State tee-shirt, tennis shoes and an old ball cap from the pile in the closet.

We hiked northward toward Chartier's Pond, a couple hundred yards away. The rustling of the cottonwood leaves blended with the sounds of the tractor and baler coming from a nearby field. Several bobwhite quail welcomed us. Carol answered them and soon got involved in an animated conversation. A babbling brook (actually coming from the Brush Sewage Treatment Plant a quarter mile to our south) added to the tranquility of the moment. Several robins were talking in the cottonwoods over our heads and numerous biting flies moved in from the willows to sample our blood. The faint odor of sewage hung in the air.

After a hundred yards our trail narrowed and we squeezed through some tall bushes and grasses, predominantly cattails. We approached the

metal bridge that crosses one of the fresh water sloughs that make up the South Platte River channel. Carol led and I followed onto the narrow ten foot span. We both grasped tightly the cable hand rails and concentrated on maintaining our footing on the slick surface of the bridge.

At the bridges center we stopped and observed. We knew that a particular log, 20 feet downstream, was often used by box turtles for sunbathing. We saw none. As Carol panned the edges of the slough with her binoculars, she spotted a large bullfrog, suspended in the duckweed. Bushes lined the slough, as well as some stunted Russian olive trees.

We quietly watched the frog for a time. Several carp cruised by in the shallow water. Mosquitoes buzzed our heads, looking for skin. Several buzzed down onto Carol's arms. Fifty yards down the slough, a large bird ascended into the wispy white clouds that were draped in the blue sky. We knew it was a great blue heron, a species we frequently see in this location. We heard in the distance the raspy sounds of a bullfrog.

Eventually, we moved to the other side. Chartier's Pond is located on private property and is leased by the Colorado Department of Wildlife to provide recreation for local residents. We passed through the gap in the wooden fence and proceeded quietly and carefully. We have often seen Canadian geese, several types of ducks including cormorants, great blue herons, even bald eagles on the surface of the water and in the trees surrounding the pond. An old, antiquated orange power shovel was parked on the far end of the pond. It covers about five acres, is 20 feet at its deepest point, and is used as a source of gravel.

We surveyed the area. Carol carefully examined the logs that extended into the pond around its edges. She alerted me that three turtles were visible on one of the logs and I moved toward them with my camera. I got in a couple quick shots before they sensed me and submerged. A couple months ago we had observed a large soft shelled river turtle in this same area, but there was none today. We noticed again the many fallen trees around the pond's edge, evidences of beaver activity. The remains of a lodge were visible at the edge of the island in the pond. Two years ago, we had found the body of a juvenile beaver near here.

We sat on a log and watched and listened. A bobwhite quail was talking. It was trying to reestablish communications with Carol. We

heard the raucous call of a kingfisher coming from the north in the direction of the river. We saw several circles on the pond's surface from feeding trout. Bass also live in the pond and probably other species. We noticed the pungent smell of rotting vegetation and saw a pile of cow manure. A few dozen ants were active at our feet.

After fifteen minutes we rose to our feet and headed north toward the South Platte, a distance of about one hundred yards. I clambered over the sagging barbed wire fence and helped Carol. We angled over to the trail that led to the river.

One of the early explorers of where we were headed had described the South Platte as being "six inches deep and a mile wide." We have seen it as a raging torrent and have seen it as a mere trickle, depending on its moods. On this day, the water was low; the main channel about fifteen feet wide and mostly less than twelve inches deep.

The cooing of doves welcomed us. In the near distance we again heard the kingfisher and on a sand bar near the middle of the channel we could see a killdeer, probably searching for a mid-morning snack. A gentle breeze kept the temperature comfortable.

We followed the path to the west along the river, through the grasses and bushes and enjoyed the shade of the cottonwoods. One medium sized tree had recently lost its battle with erosion and now extended into the channel. The kingfisher was perched on one of the branches.

We walked without talking for the next ten minutes, through burrs and overgrown vegetation. Shadows danced on the water. We noticed the varied patterns of sand. Tracks were clearly visible, including those of a raccoon and a large three-toed bird. On the other side of the channel several redwing blackbirds watched us with suspicion. A squadron of bank swallows performed their acrobatics over the channel as they shopped for lunch for their broods. Carol nearly tripped over a root in our trail.

We arrived at a place we call Picnic Point. "A loaf of bread, a bottle of wine, and Thou" would work well here. The river divides into two distinct channels and the vistas to the west are splendid. This would be a great spot for a photographer in search of a sunset. A persistent droning sound caused us to look heavenward and we could see a faraway

airplane, probably beginning its descent toward DIA.

As we continued west, we left the river, through a section of cheat grass, whose barbs grabbed our socks and made progress difficult. We passed through a stand of wild roses where numerous white moths feasted on their nectar.

We came to a small pond, with different hues of duckweed and a profuse stand of cattails. Last year we had seen carp here, gasping at the surface for oxygen. We saw none this day, but did notice two bullfrogs. To the south side of the trail we saw several asparagus plants. We made mental notes to remember this place next spring when the shoots are succulent.

The trunk of a fallen cottonwood tree barred our path. Carol went around it; I climbed over. The thorns of numerous Russian olive trees impeded our progress. We noticed there was no longer any breeze and the heat was suddenly oppressive. We came to a fence and a sign. "Private Property" it stated. "Do Not Enter Without Permission." We ignored it and climbed through. We knew that another sign a short distance ahead identified this as "State Land" administered by the Colorado Department of Wildlife.

We lost the trail and we bushwhacked. For a time we felt like explorers, feeling our way through uncharted wilderness, our eyes the first to see this place. After a time, Carol spotted a familiar landmark in the distance and we moved in that direction. We passed beneath a large nest at the top of a cottonwood where we had seen great horned owl chicks the previous year. We passed a hollowed tree where we have seen baby raccoons in prior years.

Suddenly, from the direction of the river, several whitetail deer sprang to their feet and bounced away. A large number frequent this area and we see them often. Bow and rifle hunters harvest many each year.

Carol relocated the trail and we soon achieved our goal. We came to Far Point. The river rejoined us. The bed here is wide and divided into many channels. The vegetation is unique, with plants we see nowhere else. Some of the plants look almost tropical. The far side of the river is often frequented by wild turkeys. We have often heard their discussions. The views to the west go on seemingly forever. A large fallen

cottonwood tree provides a frame for photographs. The river has carved a deep pool and a large variety and number of animals frequent the area. We could hear many birds chattering overhead.

We remained for quite a while. We observed three blue herons soar and disappear. We shared a bottle of water. I took some photographs. We rested. We said little. We enjoyed the tranquility, each other's company. Eventually, we knew it was time to leave this special place. We also knew we would be back.

Summer of '69  
By: John McDonald

Time passes but the memory of 1969 is deeply etched in my gray matter like a bad dream on a hot summer night. I was just a punk kid looking for a good time on my way through college. My arrival at Adams State that fateful summer was anything but planned. I had just spent the past two years at a Junior College in Sterling hanging with the girl I thought was forever. When she suggested we both go to Alamosa I had my bags packed in a heartbeat. Oh, the crush of heart break when I realized that I had been dumped and my true love ended up 380 miles away at UNC.

Neil had just hopped off the Lunar Lander and I knew it was time for me to take one small step for John and make the giant leap back into college life as an eligible swinging single kind of guy. One problem loomed as I made that jump to reality. I didn't know how to make a connection with the chicks. Maybe I could just hang at the local pub the, "Purple Pig" and hope the right one would appear, as if by magic, and think I was Mr. Right. "Wrong!"

As fall settled into the San Luis Valley I settled into the fact that I was doomed to spending a long cold winter alone and miserable. What the heck I thought. This is probably a message from above to get control of my life, settle down, and hit the books. "Wrong Again!"

It was a cool clear afternoon in late September as I made my way across campus to the music building for an afternoon jam session with the boys. Long shadows cast from the towering elm trees made me feel quite small and insignificant as I crunched through the fallen leaves. Rounding the corner on my approach to the fine arts building I was expecting to hear the sounds of music in the air. You can't imagine the thoughts that raced through my mind when the music I heard was that of a sweet sexy girl calling my name from a distant dorm window. At first I was in denial, maybe that diet of Boons Farm Wine and Pop Tarts was starting to affect my mind. But no the voice came again, "John come to my window we need to talk." This is it I thought, to heck with the jam session with the guys, I need to find the mystery girl calling my name. Sprinting towards the unknown caller I could feel my heart pounding in



my chest. My mind was a blur of wondering as to why I was being summoned. Was it destiny? Suddenly there she was waiting at the window, her long blond hair fell on her shoulders and those cool blue eyes caught mine and suddenly I felt weak in the knees. I remember taking a deep breath to get control of my emotions and after a long pause we both said hello as if on cue.

Laura was her name and in an instant she had me inside her room so we could talk. Ah Ha, this truly is my lucky day. Wrong! Laura immediately began telling me a tale of intrigue and mystery about her recent break up with her boy friend Arenial Juan. It seems he was a demented evil kind of scum bag that took pleasure in the misery of others. If he couldn't have Laura then no one would have her and he began the sadistic ritual of posting threatening letters on her door. The girl was totally distraught and I was now expected to be her knight in shining armor and come to her rescue. Rescuing girls in distress was not what I had in mind but one look into those beautiful eyes and I was convinced that I was the right guy for the job.

A plan, I had to have a plan. What to do? I had previously played in a band for a reception at the home of the president of Adams State so I felt comfortable in calling him and asking him if we could meet with him to discuss the situation. He was a gracious and caring man and invited us over that evening. When we arrived that evening we were greeted by the president's wife who escorted us into the den and brought us buttered popcorn and cold Dr. Peppers. It was only moments before Dr. Landry joined us to discuss the situation. After hearing the facts he got on the phone to campus security and directed them to increase security around the dorms and keep a vigilant eye out for Arenial Juan the harasser. We left our meeting with the president feeling much relieved knowing the authorities would be on the lookout. "Wrong again!" It was only a matter of a couple of days before my phone was ringing. I answered to find a distraught Laura crying in fear because Arenial had been banging on her door and left another threatening note.

A plan, I had to have a new plan. What to do? Let's call the police and discuss a solution to the harassment. Sergeant Thompson of the Alamosa PD took my call that night and I laid out the situation for him to analyze. He took the situation seriously and informed me that it would

be in Laura's best interest if she would meet with him and file a restraining order against Arenial. Sure thing I said we will be right down to fill out the papers. Don't come here replied the sergeant. This Arenial character may be watching her every move and we don't want him to become suspicious of our actions. You must bring her to Beefs, a local 3.2 watering hole, and we will complete the restraining order in the back room.

It was about midnight when we entered the smoke filled tavern. There was a pungent smell of stale beer and the juke box was blaring out a Credence Clear Water tune. Not seeing anyone who looked like a policeman we elbowed our way to the bar and ordered a couple brews. Before I could take a sip a slick dresser with a smirk on his face approached and introduced himself as Sergeant Thompson. He told me to wait at the bar while he took Laura to the back to fill out the restraining order. I slammed down my beer and ordered another. Laura and the sergeant were gone for quite a while and I had time to think that this was a strange place to be carrying out official police business. My train of thought was broken when Laura returned with a frown upon her face. I put my arm on her shoulder and asked her what the problem was. She began crying and informed me that the sergeant had informed her that it was too dangerous for her to be staying at the dorm and it would be in her best interest if she could get away to a safer location. Being a knight in shining armor I of course offered her lodging at my off campus house that I shared with my roommate Dave Furakawa.

Laura moved in that night and being the gentleman I offered her my room and agreed to sleep in the living room on the couch. Everything was cool for a couple of days. Dave and I had someone there who could cook and we were like family. I was back on campus doing my thing in the music department when Laura's friend Sheril Dwenell approached me between classes. She was hysterical and nervously looked over her shoulder as she put a new twist to the Arenial tale. It seems that Arenial was now targeting her and she was in fear for her life. I felt I had only one option and that was to offer her the safety of my home. She didn't hesitate and moved in that night. Once again everything was cool as we settled in to sharing our very small house with these two girls.

October had arrived and we were all at home on a dark and cold evening watching television. Laura had stepped into the bathroom and when she returned to the room I knew immediately that things were not right. She had a look of fear on her face, her eyes were darting around the room, she took another step forward, froze in mid stride and suddenly fell face first with a crash to the floor. She was out cold as we rushed to help her up and onto the couch. It seemed like an eternity before she began to regain consciousness and when she did it was a frightening experience for all. The wind was picking up outside and Laura was truly agitated. Her breathing was rapid and she would look to the window and scream, "He's coming." and then pass out again. This happened once, twice and a third time. We were all starting to freak out thinking she had seen Arenial at the window. We finally got Laura to calm down enough to ask her who's coming. She paused for an eternity and responded, "The DEVIL". Get me help she pleaded, call the Catholic Priest; I am possessed by the devil!

Seeing the terror in her eyes I knew I must respond to her plea for help. Realizing that it was fast approaching the hour of midnight I had a queasy feeling deep inside my stomach as I hastily dialed the number for the parish priest. The phone rang and rang 10, 12, maybe 20 times before there was an answer on the other end of the line. I wasted no time and immediately began informing Father Wogan of the plight of Laura. It must have been the trembling in my voice that convinced the padre to come from his home at such a late hour to console the distressed Laura. The call was over and we expected his arrival within ten minutes. That didn't give Dave and me much time to change our college décor from sinful to respectful. We hastily ran from wall to wall tearing down our dream girls from past issues of Playboy magazine. The last naked lady was torn from the wall just as there was a knock at the door.

A holy man stepped across the threshold into our home and instant calmness came to Laura who was huddled on the couch crying. The priest went directly to her, held her hand and requested that we all pray together. It wasn't a scripted prayer normally associated with the Catholic Church. It was from the heart and we all got comfort from his presence. Following the prayer Father Wogan requested the three of us leave the room and allow him some time alone with Laura. It's a small

place so we all crowded into Dave's 10 X 12 foot bedroom just a few feet away from where the possessed Laura. We didn't have any conversation left so we all just sat there on the edge of the bed listening to the murmur of voices drifting in from the other room. It was past two a.m. before the padre was finished counseling Laura and we were asked to once again join them in the living room for a closing prayer before he departed. Laura seemed better after his visit but strangely we never discussed the chain of events from that night.

Halloween was just days away and the nights in the valley were really starting to get cold. It had been a couple of weeks since the devil incident and all seemed calm. I was sound asleep on the couch when suddenly a blood curdling scream jolted me from my dreams. It was Laura and she was once again being visited by the Devil. Was it reality or was it just a dream. I don't know for sure but the look of terror on her face was back and I once again tried to console her in her hour of terror. She managed to calm herself down and requested that I take her to the church to pray. This is far too strange I thought but what else could I do at this hour. I threw on some clothes, we hopped in my old Fairline, and we sped to our destination. It was a big old turn of the century church with giant carved oak doors. I always thought a church should be the house of the lord but when I reached out to open the door a cold chill raced down my spine. To my amazement the door was not locked and it opened with a creak that would frighten the bravest of men. We proceed into the cavernous interior of the church. I began looking for a light switch and Laura pleaded, "Please no lights." The only light available was that of the vigil candles flickering near the altar. It was an eerie spell those candles cast as the statues around the church seemed to take on a life of their own. Laura requested that I sit in the back while she moved closer to the altar to be alone in her prayer. There I sat, a stream of unanswered questions racing through my mind. The peace of the church was shattered with a loud Clang! Clang! Rang out from the shadows on the left. I was totally freaking out when a Hiss! Hiss! rippled through the air on my right. I was now convinced that the Devil was truly amongst us and I was certain that fire and brimstone would soon engulf the entire church. I pleaded with Laura to hurry in her prayers so we could make a hasty retreat. Suddenly from the back of the altar came a figure in black

moving about as if floating. The Clang, Clang and Hiss became louder and louder. The figure at the altar appeared not to notice our presence so I began to calm myself and analyze the situation. My eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness and I now knew the figure at the altar was the Padre setting the altar for morning mass. As for the sounds I chuckled to myself when I realized it was just the ancient steam heating system making the sounds of the devil. Amen, I said to myself as Laura finished her prayers and we retreated to the safe confines of my 62 Ford Fairline.

Once again we got back to a normal as possible routine. I had an opportunity to get tickets to a Doc Severenson concert in Denver. Laura asked if she could come along and perhaps I would give her a ride to Greeley the next day to visit her family. My roommate Dave and his girlfriend Kim joined us for the trip. It was a pleasant ride through the mountains and our first destination was that of my parents' house. We would all have dinner there before going downtown to the concert. We arrived about five in the evening and I introduced everyone to my mother and father. Everything seemed under control, mom in the kitchen cooking, and dad and the rest of us sitting around talking about our trip and school. Suddenly Laura broke down and began crying uncontrollably. I didn't know how to handle the situation and mom came into the room to offer her comfort. Laura looked very distraught and asked my mother if there was a quiet place for her to be alone and pray. Mom took her hand and led her to one of the upstairs bedrooms. Laura was soon behind closed doors and I was left to face my parents as they tried to understand the drama that had just taken place. I didn't have an explanation and they never pressed me for one. Dinner was served and Laura remained in the bedroom until it was time to depart for the concert.

Sunday; morning we all woke early despite our late night at the Severenson concert. Everything was again back to normal. The sun was shining and it seemed unusually warm for November. We left my parents house and started the final leg of our journey to Greeley to meet with Laura's family. Dave and his girlfriend were not along as they had headed over to his parents to spend the day. Laura's parents lived in an upscale section of town, but I was having second thoughts about our meeting. The door swung open before I could turn to leave and out

strode a man with a look on his face that could curdle milk. It was her father, Edgar, and he reached out with a hand shake that could crank walnuts. Oh no! I'm in for a long afternoon I thought to myself.

Upon entering the Soule home I was greeted by younger brother Tim and Evelyn the mother. Glancing around a pristine foyer and living room I couldn't help but notice on every table a prominently displayed bible. Evelyn took great pride in telling me that she celebrated her birthday recently and had received eleven bibles as gifts. Oh! Oh! I'm in deep trouble this time; I hope they don't expect me to recite any scripture. Following a little small talk we were all called to the table to partake in the noon meal. I was instructed to sit to the right of Edgar, Laura across the table next to her brother and Evelyn on my immediate right. Strangely all the dinner plates were stacked in front of the patriarch of the Soule family. Edgar leaned my direction and informed me that everyone will add something to the prayer before the meal and when it came my turn I should speak from the heart. Mrs. Soule began the prayer with a reference to a second son who was confined to the mental institute in Pueblo and then began asking God to please step in and help Laura, their fallen from grace child. I began to sweat bullets knowing that my turn would be coming last and I wouldn't have a thing to say. Younger brother was next and his version was similar to his mothers with emphasis on Lora's lack of spirituality. It was Laura's turn next and before she could utter a word she broke down sobbing with giant tears running down her cheek and falling to the table. At that point I caught glimpse of her father clenching his teeth and his face became crimson red. He looked at Laura stretched out his arm, pointed to a distant room and bellowed, "Laura, Go to your room and get yourself right with God!" Praise the lord, that was the end of the prayer session and I was spared from participation.

Edgar then proceeded to take the plates in front of him and dish up what he felt was the proper amount of food and pass one to everyone at the table. I don't recall what was on the menu but the memory of our dinner time conversation will be forever be etched in my mind. I was now on the hot seat and I felt like a criminal being interrogated under a hot lamp. Her father demanded to know why I hadn't done more for his daughter in her time of need. He informed me that he had called the

Alamosa PD and there was no record of a restraining order being placed. I had to field a battery of questions ranging from who was this Arenial character to my background and finally my intentions towards Laura. It was as if a bad dream had just turned to reality. Laura finally returned to the room and I was excused to go wait in the living room. After what seemed like an eternity the entire family came into the room, thanked me for bringing Laura home to visit and bid Laura and I goodbye.

Back in the old Ford I had the pedal to the metal in my quest to put some miles between myself and the Soule family. We picked Dave and his girlfriend up in Denver and headed back to Alamosa. Upon our arrival home I told Dave we needed to talk. I informed him that this whole situation was out of control and we needed to get Laura and her friend Sheril out of our house and back to campus housing. That night I informed Sheril that she could no longer stay with us and I drove her back to the dorm. I still felt sorry for Laura and did not give her the bad news just yet.

Sheril was only gone two days when I was summoned to the Dean of Student's office. What was this I thought, everything we had done was on the up and up, why am I being called to the Dean. I was right on time for my appointment and was quickly ushered into his office. He didn't waste any time getting down to the subject at hand. He informed me that Sheril Dwenell had been to see him and was hysterical over the fact that I had dumped her to be with Laura. What? I said in disbelief. I hardly know Sheril. Where is this coming from I thought as I tried to make reason of what the Dean was saying. He concluded that it really upset him knowing that I was the one responsible for this poor innocent child dropping out of college. He informed me that he had no grounds to expel me from college but he would be watching my every move and would not hesitate to take action for the smallest infraction of the rules.

Sheril dropped all her classes but continued to play in the orchestra. I was a member of this performing group and we were expected to be together for the big Christmas concert. There were a lot of parents in attendance and Sheril took that opportunity to inform her mother, at the pre concert reception, that she had dropped from school and I was to blame. Her mom was after me like a mad pit bull snapping and snarling about how I had ruined her daughters life. I was saved from

her verbal attack when the orchestra was summoned to the stage to begin the performance. I still remember that concert because I had direct eye contact with her mother who was crying throughout entire performance.

That was it for me I had to finish the final chapter on this portion of my life. I went home following the concert, informed Laura that it was the end of the quarter and she needed to return to the dorm when school resumed following Christmas break.

That was the last time I saw Laura or Sheril.

*Post Script: Following the writing of this story I went searching for my old college annual from Adam State. There were no photo's to indicate that Laura, Sheril, or Arenial were ever in attendance at A.S.C. during the 1969 / 70 school year. Strangely when I looked through the Northeastern Jr College annual of the previous year I came across a photo of Arenial Juan.*