

THE

PROSPECTOR

Sixty Years of Adventure Banging Rocks, Panning, Dredging, Staking, Mapping, Bulk Sampling, Aerial Grids, Mill Testing: From— Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, California, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, to the Jungle of Panama.



And Somehow Survived the Real Danger of Being Flipped By the Stampeding Bulls, Attacking Bears, Wild Hogs of Wall Street, London, Ontario, and Hastings Gulch, Vancouver.

≈ THE PROSPECTOR ≈

... a minor miner!

CHRONICLER: BARRY MURRAY

Published with replacement photographs for what has been stolen
from Barry Murray's lifetime negative and slide files

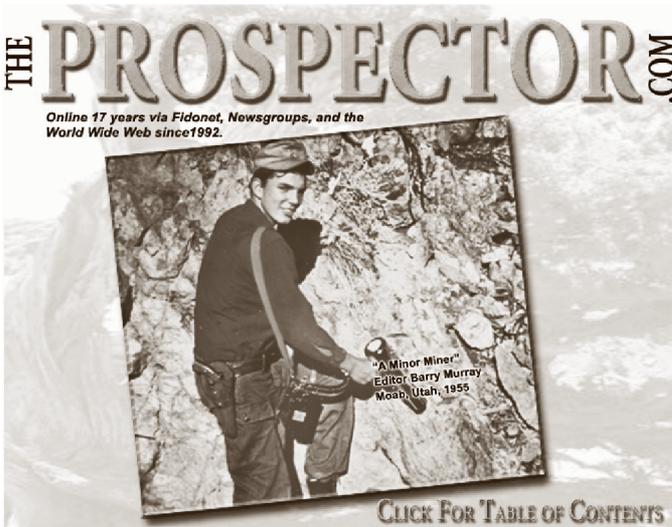
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:
Pending

It was hot that June day, 1955, when I drove in on the highway main street of Moab, Utah, honking my horn. Sixteen years old, I was proud of the fact that I had just driven my first car, a 1947 black Ford coupe I had just finished paying my father's monthly payment schedule off, over 1,000 miles from Portland, Oregon. I wanted the men crossing the road from a bar, to post office, to the single store of this little town on the Colorado River, to know that I had arrived. I was here to be one of them, a prospector/miner. A real man!

Which was, of course, was reflected in a professional working nickname that summer, working for American LeDuc Minerals Exploration as a "prospector/landsman" —was to be "the Oregon Kid." And, in my efforts to be all grown-up, I completely overlooked the importance of why there happened to be a line a block long in front of that post office, and bar, and store. After all the sign naming the only town on an 85-mile stretch of desert highway listed a population of only 200. If I had stopped to count the boots tramping across the road, packing a case of dynamite, a sack of grub, or a sidearm and mean expression, and divided that by two, it should have occurred to me that the population of Moab ran at least 500 to the block. Which, since the town was five blocks long, meant that 2,500 men also wanted to be counted as miners. History books put the figure at 10,000.



Years later, doing research on Dawson City while making a film on the Yukon River, the Klondike, and the Trail of '98, and wishing I could have been one of the Argonauts that sailed north to join trek over the Chilkoot Pass, as I did in another of my searches for a shadow

The start of MiningMagazines.com

of the past in prospecting travel adventures, it occurred to me that I, too, had been part of Old West History. We weren't looking for gold. The jeep replaced the donkey, the horse, and the dog sled. It sounds funny to say The Utah Uranium Rush, but that's what it was. The last of the great stampedes. I can say, "Back in '55 it was. I was there!"

The reason for all this excitement? Make that two reasons. The first being that the U.S. government, having panicked over the realization that most of the uranium needed to build bigger and better bombs was imported, instigated a program that rewarded an individual US Citizen of 21 year of age, prospector \$10,000 (in 1950's dollars) for making a valid Strategic Metal find. Bankers and Corporations were excluded.

The second was a fellow named Charlie Steen. Less than a year before my arrival in Moab he had been living in a wind-blasted one-room shack, borrowing bacon, beans, and gasoline from Vernon Pick, the local grocer. With the discovery of what was to become the NewVita Mine, that produced an annual income of \$3,000,000 each for Steen and his grub-stake partner, this rags to riches story caused a sensation when spread across the country.

Then, with the announcement of the government (Office of Mineral Exploration OME) incentive for finding a provable Carnotite deposit



needed for our national defense panic, men who had been waiting for their "one main chance in life", thanks to the rules of the Mining Law of 1872 favoring the individual over corporate, decided this was a real historical rush!

Spoiler alert, sixty-four years after Moab,

Ten thousand visitors before the new bridge was built ?

when updating what had been a “webzine” article, into chapter one of a BannerBooks.com real news documentary my tale of a “Prudent Man Prospector,” as defined in the Mining Law of 1872, let me tell you from having lived what I write about, the horrible truth is that — especially when it comes to developing age-old metals in minerals— that an out of control bureaucracy that changes its color of a hat to benefit whichever deep state monopoly is in charge of “Prudent Man Prospector” lives, or just fades away.

I very well could be the last of a handful of independent “Prudent Man” prospectors in the minerals exploration business. Oil field characters called wildcatters have almost disappeared, thanks to an unbelievable disobedience of the principles of Teddy Roosevelt’s trust busting Sherman Antitrust Act.

Now, thanks to what is, in fact, an illegal merger of an elite Super-Pac controlled Congress; and “Candy Store” member only Clubs known as the SEC; FTC; FCC; FDA; BLM, I truly believe we are headed towards a treacherous, deep, dark, fiefdom of the three percent. Hitler’s favorite painting of himself was posing, horseback, as a victorious Knight punishing Stalin for breaking The National SOCIALIST German Workers’ Party [Nazi], and Stalin’s Union of Soviet SOCIALIST Republics [USSR]— Nonaggression Pact, was followed by “secret trade” agreements that fell apart when Germany decided it needed Romanian oil. No that is not fake news history. And it belongs here in that I entered into the Cold War on account of the US needing Uranium. And the only difference today is Rare Earths, which you will find about a little later, that is I know a thing or two about Strategic and Critical Metals, that to paraphrase gold, is where you find it.

The story of the “Moab Uranium Rush” truly belonged to 10,000 individuals living a dream of defending America, and going for wealth with a not very understandable “gray gold”. I really doubt another real gold rush will ever happen again, as the real struggle of the independent prospecting business has been overtaken by MBA’s who think they own the world through pretend figures, leveraged default credit swaps, and EFT

flash trades or a childish video game of day trading BitCoins that have no real wealth of the earth except through controlling— Land; planting an harvesting, gathering or fishing, falling trees to help provide shelter, or the mining of nepheline syenite FoamKrete™, explained in a following chapter.

The other growth industry, well established through the ages is for Countries with a richness of land taking on an almost Communistic control over the masses. My being so mad at 80 years old, after having helped win The Cold war in a USAF Recon-Intel with a one step above Top Secret security clearance, is understanding the history of “Land-Lords”. has something to with being a great-some-thing grandson of Celtic Sir Andrew Moray (ancient Murray as DNA has proven) as Protector of Scotland fighting in his elder years next to William Wallace at the Battle of Sterling Bridge in 1297, where the battle cry was FREEDOM from the two to three percent tyranny of the time by those who controlled the “royal counting-houses”, continuing to today.

Eventually, the clearances of freedom fighters exported to the colonies after we lost the Battle of Culloden — events that played such



This was “grubstaked” Steen’s Mi Vetia mill site was the crazy, rebel geologists built with US bonus money — not Wall Streets!

a big part in promulgating the US Constitution along with other Celts— was to hide from history that Scotland had a very secret source of gold, hidden away in a landscape that mimics my Alaska. Being the “Celtic Rabble” had a ken for knowing where to poach on what have become very protected salmon fishing streams some very large estates, was a reason thousands or more were exported to the colo-

nies as the Carolina's and Guantanamo Bay , and even more as common criminals to Australia. Which is perhaps the real reason Australia is second in gold production, following number one China, where Russia comes in third, before the declining United States in fourth place.

To prove my point, about secret “gold”, only one percent of “Scots” own over half of all Scotland's private land. And this Murray's direct line, with a working knowledge of the AU stuff, were cheated out of our discovery rights were sold off as a “Political Prisoners” at a slave market in the colonies as indentured servants to oversee, for seven long years, Africans whose sentence to death was “hard labor.”

US prospector-miners that survived their family's previous misfortunes of illegal confiscation of gold during the Great Depression and FDR's total closure of gold mining in WW2, by migrating from camp to camp came from every state, and many countries as Panama, Nigeria, Taiwan. Most drove in a continuation of a Grapes of Wrath migration. Many had fixed up the old family 30's to 50's car into a cross between a 60's hippie bus, and a 70's van. I remember a '38 Packard with plywood rear windows and a wood-burning stovepipe stuck through the roof. Also in my memory is a “woody” station wagon that had been modified by a master cabinetmaker. He was proud to show off the drawers he had built



into his “kitchen,” with separate compartments for sugar, salt, and beans.

I had a good look at the outfits of a few others by stopping at a spring that flowed down into a muddy Colorado River. As this was the only source of clean drinking water—other than a very busy filling station—the site

The spring had an ancient bulletin board, which dammit, did not survive!

became a home away from home for “prospectors” who had quit good paying jobs, left wife and kids, told-off parents, or dropped out of school to set off to make their fortune. It wasn’t, as in days of old, a tent city. Since everyone seemed to have a beat up car, it was more of a junk yard junction.

I was fortunate in that I had a job waiting. My father, Wm. B. Murray, was a mining lawyer. Perhaps “the” minerals and lands attorney of the West, Wm. B. had a reputation as a character, and for thinking up the dandiest loopholes in the Mining Law of 1872 in his constant struggle against the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, on behalf of the small mine operator operating under the, what some apparently some consider out of date— “Prudent Man Rule”.

Self-taught as a geologist/mining engineer, Dad also had a good understanding of both the supply, and the financial side of the economics of mining. He should have made his fortune many times over from mining. But, he never seemed to understand how, or even want to bill for his services or follow through on collections. When he died his accounts receivable file—the active ones—totaled over \$400,000. My inheritance was to be a Scottish frugal \$100, and a “little, or absent-minded, professor, Asberger’s legacy which has been his passing along knowledge through what is now being called a Celtic ancestral memory.

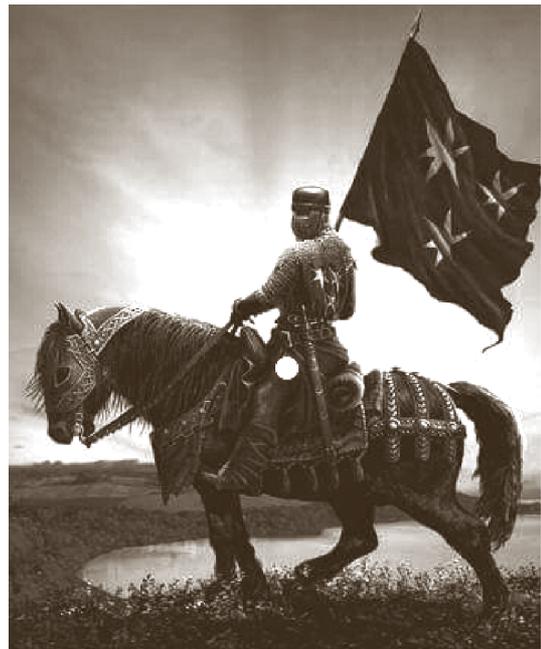
Which in a way explains a knowledge of how our relative Peter Hardiman Burnett, after leading the first wagon train to Oregon —and being appointed by cousin President Polk as the first magistrate of the Oregon supreme court— and quit to pioneered the Applegate Trail to the Yuba Bar in California, where after he was instrumental in promulgating what became the Mining Law of 1872, before becoming California’s First Governor. The fun part of this is documented in a University of Tennessee Press, *Wilderness Calling* where another cousin established the family that has been a pioneer, or involved with, every named trail in America from The Cumberland Gap; Natchez Trace; the Santa Fee; all three of the Texas stock drives; The Oregon Trail and Applegate to California; and climbing the Chilkoot Pass to float the Yukon to the Klondike.

My father “Wm. B.”, somehow skipped a generation for moving on following a wandering star. In his own words “weighed in at an eighth of a ton.” He also was a chain smoker, dribbling cigarette ashes down the front of an off-white shirt that habitually had the button, which should have been covering his belly, undone.

My younger sister used to joke that this was so he could photograph with a hidden camera (he was fascinated by gadgets) implanted in his navel. Consequentially, although Dad loved to get out into a mining district and break a few rocks, he wasn’t physically able to do so.

This was the reason I was in Moab. My parents had divorced when I was ten. I had stayed in contact with my father (who never really was a Dad in the context that my school friends understood) by working as an office boy after school —supposedly with a long-range intention of my following his footsteps in the practice of law. However, about this time I sold the first nature photograph I ever submitted to a magazine with 8x10 cardboard protection and a self-addressed and stamped return manila envelope that came back with a check enclosed. This was a total fluke I was to discover later in a media career. But when Wm. B. realized I meant it when I said I wanted to make a living as a freelance photographer, he started chipping away at me to become a geologist.

Why? Because before reading the law as our ancestral family tree was wont to do when not prospecting for gold in Scotland (true), was exported to a pre-Revolutionary War North Carolina gold find; and ironically a “Knox” (also a family name family tree name) Georgia Bauxite Deposit. Of course, there were three ancestors who were on



*My very Scottish something Great
Grandfather Sir Andrew de Moray*

the California Gold Rush where “ThePeople” formulated through hands on experience what was to become the Mining Law of 1872, and got my Great-Something Uncle elected into becoming California’s first Governor for standing up for Sutter’s rights of ownership of the discovery claims,

If you have never heard of “Celtic Genetic Memory” then please explain how Grandfather “Midis” MacAdam of the outlawed clan of Rob Roy McGregor, which invented Mac-Adam “asphalt” roads, was on the Klondike Stampede, where he arrived too late to stake the one claim allowed per man, at a time, and headed to Nome instead.

Old “Midas MacAdam” struck it rich on a Seward Peninsula stream that showed promise and stayed behind as his partner went to town to register their claim at the notorious land office at Nome, where it was “lost” in the recording process. So what else is new with the scandalous corruption of the Alaska Department of Land Management Mining Claims Division. Long story short, for now, until later in these memoirs.

I have to admit, since most of my magnificent salary of 25¢ an hour as a precocious office boy went to pay for skiing, or mountain climbing, every weekend, the adventure of being a free-born prospector had some appeal. One of Dad’s clients, an old, old man named Mr. Landau, loved to set me down in the waiting room of the office and spin tales of his climbing the Chilkoot Pass, building a boat at Lake Bennet, and doing a fair-to-middling bit of mining on a pup (a sourdough’s word for a small gulch) off Bonanza Creek. First time I met him he extended a big weathered paw with the offer, “Shake the hand that held the hand of Klondike Kate”!



Kate, if you have never heard of

Mr. Landau’s Klondike Kate

her, was the Queen of the Dance Hall Girls of the Yukon. She also was from Portland and had returned to the city of her birth when she retired, a very wealthy woman. I was present, at the big round Hotel Algonkian style table my father presided over at Mannings Coffee Cafeteria every day from eleven until two, when he wasn't in court, when Mr. Landau, a frequent lunchtime companion, looked up and shouted, "Kate?"

Truthfully I had the thought this old-timer had embellished his stories of the rush of '98, and the famous dance hall girl, just a bit. However, an old woman, wearing a necklace of nuggets, stopped and turned. She put a pair of glasses on, came to our table with a hand out, one finger pointing, and asked tentatively, "Henry?" Heady stuff for a young man who tried to make it home after work every night in time to catch the radio adventures of Sergeant Preston of the Yukon and his wonder dog King. And yes, I too can say I shook the hand of this gold rush legend.

Looking back, perhaps I should have spent more time listening to the stories that played at that round-table, instead of tuning in to a commercialized version of the same adventure. And, maybe I should have appreciated my dad more for what he was, instead of being embarrassed by the big napkin he was wont to tuck into his collar, no matter how fancy a restaurant, or how rustic the roadside diner.

His interpretation of Kipling poem *If*, where a line went, "Walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch", came into my life as a Prospector (and very Scottish distant cousin named George Morrison; I still have his wooden handle pick) who had a tale of "hello-ing the camp"; and then being invited for coffee from a boiling graniteware pot missing a lid—that had been replaced by a dry cow chip. This mining mentor of mine explained the social protocols of campfire courtesy as part of the Code of the West was praising a cook with wordy flattery as; "This coffee has the delicate flavor of BS, which I hereby proclaim as being 'Good to the last drop'!"

Wm. B. was born out of time and place. He should have been a crony of the Deadwood mining engineer Hurst who built a family fortune on owning a grubstake five percent of what became the Homestake; or one

of the “silver senators” of the 1880s. At least he had one of the attributes of someone born and raised in a time before radio, and television. He could tell a spellbinding story. No wonder I have a fascination with the “real” Old West.

Two favorites of my dad’s collection of campfire stories were the tale about Union and Dixie Creeks, in Oregon, where gold panners escaping the Civil War, come Saturday night, would sneak over the divide to take pot shots at each other, more or less in the spirit of fans supporting their favorite team. And, the one about a female stage driver in Harney County. Seemed this ugly as sin gal, who stunk twice as bad, had a habit of stopping her rig out on an alkali flat when a single male happened to be the only passenger. The young man was given the choice—put out with a little loving, or walk! Never happen? That’s what I thought until I met Hyder Hanna, but that story also comes later.

It didn’t surprise me when I received a pocket-sized Geiger counter (that looked exactly like a Walkman stereo player of a later day) for



my sixteenth birthday, as tales of Charlie Steen had begun to creep into my Dad’s round-table repertoire. What I didn’t expect was the announcement to all that I was headed down to Moab, Utah, on the

Colorado Plateau for a “summer vacation” vacation to become a minor miner. Mr. Landeau asked me if I was planning on traveling via Harney County.

Anyhow, this is how it happened that I was to report to the office of American LeDuc Exploration for employment as a “prospector.” Excuse me, doing a magazine editors “three dot verification check” before publishing, is I just found the correct name corporate name. The reason I am not worried about being sued for liable by principles still living, or companies with a speaker conference-call room full of lawyers, is I just found a file where American LeDuc at that times was in trouble with the SEC.

Anyhow, my problem then, was the office was closed; nobody was there. I returned to the spring, and as the other “miners” lifted the hood of my car to work on the engine. I really didn’t know what I was doing, but this act of manhood was one I didn’t want to be left out of.

Actually, I did have a reason. Shortly after plunking down my life savings (I also had a morning paper route that included Fred Meyer) on my 1947 Ford 6 cylinder coupe I had purchased from my father on monthly payments. The first time I drove up to Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood (instead of hitchhiking to go skiing) the radiator had boiled over. Someone convinced me that the leak could be plugged by mixing a little oatmeal into the antifreeze. Well, cleaning the damn stuff out had turned into a recurring project, and I decided to flush the cooling system once again.

No sooner than it was drained, I met a girl whose first words were to invite me to a party. I just stood in the line-up at the spring standpipe with my mouth open. I had a “steady” girlfriend back in Portland. I fully intend to say, “No thank you,” but the words just wouldn’t come out.

This gal was one of those females who had a face that would have been considered cute if it hadn’t been so chubby. She also had been robbed of the only advantage an overweight girl has; her breasts were small when measured against the budging dimples of elbows and knees. Looking closer, I could see a mustache growing through the smudges on her face that definitely was not makeup. She did, however, have a seductive voice, and, somewhere, somehow, somebody had convinced this girl she was a “princess.” She acted accordingly, which made it hard for me to turn her down.

I was saved from my “courtship” embarrassment by the arrival of a pick-up full of older people (at least 19 or 20 years old). The driver shouted, “Mona, come on, Steen’s giving a party for the whole town!”

Well, of course, that made the difference. I could envision myself telling my father, “Shake the hand that shook the hand of Charlie Steen.” Truthfully, any other decision would have been hazardous. Mona drug me into the back of the truck. I don’t know to this day why Mona singled

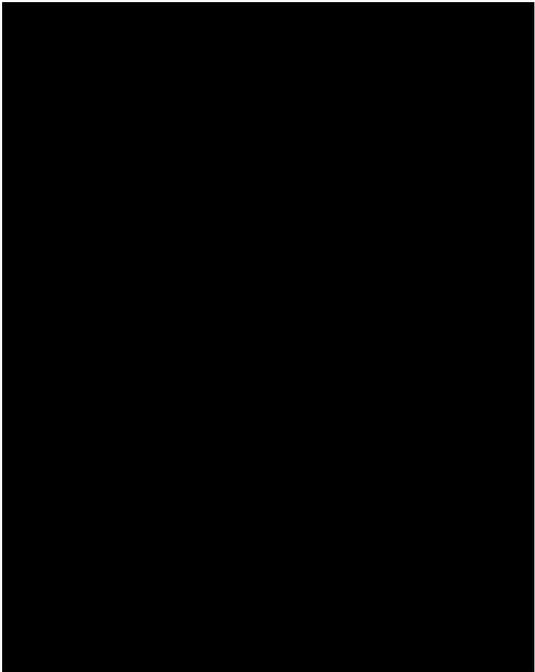
me out from a crowd of available men and boys. She, being the only female around was desirable and welcomed; I, presumed to be her boyfriend, was tolerably accepted.

Never did meet Steen, or his mother, who according to local folklore took her weekly allowance from a dutiful son in silver dollars, chartered a plane to fly to Vegas, to see how long it would take to lose \$2,000. But, I'm glad I tagged along for the experience.

The whole town had turned out for a free beer, pop, and barbecue. Steen had built himself a sprawling ranch style home on a bench halfway up the side of a canyon wall. I suppose the view took in a generous section of the Colorado River. I don't remember.

There were so many pickups parked along the access road that I and my friends had to walk from the bottom towards the noise of a couple of western bands twanging away at their loudest, in those days before electric guitars. Took us a good two hours to make it to the top for along the way, as an aid to weary travelers, there were 55-gallon gas drums, opened at the top, and filled with ice and bottled beer.

This climb was my first steps down-wards into a life of debauchery and sin. At Mona's command, I borrowed a church key (this was an opener was called in the days before the twist top bottle cap had been invented) and started chugalugging. After a few of these rest stops, I didn't seem to mind her grabbing my hand, leading the way.



Having left a girl in Portland, where less than a week ago both of us had promised to be faithful and true, wasn't the only reason I was a bit shy. Mona, if figured, could have had a nickname as "Moldy the Hun," or something like that. Years

later, when I heard an Alaskan pipeliner ask a female member of his crew what she was going to do when the project was finished, and she had to go back to being ugly, I thought of Mona. She wasn't very bright, either. After three tries telling her that my name was "Barry," I settled for being "Burt," for the rest of the summer.

The mind does wondrous things to protect itself. This female was the only one around. If she remembers me as "Burt," that is all right with me! In a reverse on the excuse of drinking to try and forget a lost love, I think I drank too much trying to forget the whole "love" thing as it was happening.

I do remember going roller-skating the next day. Being this was Moab, don't picture a traditional roller rink in the mind. Some entrepreneur with a load of two by fours had built himself what today would be called a patio deck. He rented miscellaneous sizes of clamp-on skates in various states of repair, and the music was provided by a salvaged car radio. Of course, the songs, or commercial, or news, didn't always fit the rhythm of a bunch of cowboys, miners, and Indians trying to keep moving when others were grabbing for something to hold onto.

Complicating everyone's sense of balance was the problem of turning a corner. The fir studs had been set as close as possible, but not being tongue and groove, there was a beveled gap between each board. A skater could get a pretty good run going lengthways, which helped crossing to the other side without catching a wheel in a crack and falling forward. Unfortunately, speed also accented the bone-jarring motion, which was sort of like trying to drive a flat tire across railroad tracks.

I am not noted for being a roller skater. I was good enough, however, to keep out of the "snake pit," which totally impressed Mona. She bit the dust—literally—any number of times, in the pit just off the end of the platform. So many tried to get going fast enough to make the corner and found themselves locked into a straight forward movement that the owner had given up trying to keep the safety rail repaired.

Besides, watching someone disappear into the hole that had been dug in the dirt by flailing hands and legs was more exciting than skating.

Some even laid bets as to how a hapless skater would land. Round Mona just rolled. I also remember that when she brushed herself off that she looked cleaner than when we first met.



Leave it to Moab to replace the skating rink with a mountain bike lift. And FWD Jeep tours, and Colorado River rafting.

this position would leave me hobbling today, but I was young and dumb. I had recently spent the night in this same car with three buddies on a ski weekend, sleeping, more or less setting upright in our mummy bags, so having the whole back seat was the height of luxury.

This also turned out to be a good way to be at work on time, for I was awakened by a gruff looking old man (all of 40 years at least), dressed in green from head to foot, rapping my feet with the handle of a rock hammer.

“You Murray?”

“Yes.”

“I’m your boss. Let’s move it.”

After a couple of days being escorted about Moab by Mona, I decided I could best try reporting for work by camping on the doorstep of the office. I had tried laying a sleeping bag on the ground in Junkyard City and was forced, one night, to tell a startled man to “Piss off elsewhere,” as his aim hadn’t been that good.

I parked my car on the street near the storefront grandly identified with gold leaf on the frosted glass as the air-conditioned Moab office of American LeDuc. I climbed into the back seat of my Ford coupe, pushed the driver’s seat forward, and slept with my feet elevated, sticking halfway out the window. No doubt

I also found the reason why there had never seemed to be anybody at this address. In a town where every available basement room, or garage, had been rented for whatever the market would bring—plenty—the company maintained an air-conditioned office that was only used as a place for the crew to meet every morning? When I learned that we wouldn't be setting up a camp in the mountains, I offered my services as a night watchman (without additional compensation) to protect the valuable papers and maps stored here, but was informed that was an “improper” suggestion—for whom, I never found out. Perhaps the reason was that whenever investors visited, a temporary “sexretary” was banging away on a typewriter, that went ding, ring a ding, far too fast.



*As my “good pay” in 1955 was \$2 per hour
this bargain was almost twice
one days’ pay*

I also knew from books and movies that teasing the youngest or newest member of any organization was a harmless form of initiation. What I didn't understand, until my life experience was more rounded to understand Dr. Sheldon Cooper (a fictional hero of the Asperger's Syndrome who won a Nobel Prize), was that this so-called crew of five (not counting the boss, who rarely was present) happened to be the sorriest excuses of human intelligence ever assembled in one place. Not knowing any different at the time, I tried hard to go along; to be accepted. To walk the accepted protocol line.

Being that we commuted from town, instead of setting up a base camp, the company had rented a Jeep pickup. Which meant three rode up-front, three in back. As our day-to-day destination varied, but always included a bone-crunching hour or so in four-wheel drive, someone had

wired a two by six plank so that members with the least seniority could set with their backs against the cab. Thus I had a backward view of where we were headed.

On one of the tracks we regularly took after leaving the highway, there was a particularly nasty scrub cedar branch that overhung the trail, just about pickup cab height. Apparently, the boys in back had found out the hard way that an unsuspecting victim, standing to take a break from being bounced on the butt, about here would unexpectedly be swept away, feet kicking, hanging in mid-air on a stout limb as the truck went on without him.

I should have suspected something was amiss when the two older men (all of 18 years old, let's call one Heckle, the other Jeckle) riding with me (and kidding me about my breakfast of a quickly purchased can of cold beans, a cornerstone of what was to become my standard diet; and a cookbook title of Anything But Beans, later in my life) declared they were tired, and lay down in the pickup bed to take a nap (on, of course, my "knapsack) just as the driver seemed to speed up.

In this part of America, there is a continuing debate as to whether it was better to slow down on a washed-out dirt road, crawling in and out of a hole, or to go fast enough to skim across the humps. Either way, this ride was rough enough that I couldn't see the point of laying down to be tossed about like a rag doll. In fact, I found it funny that these two seemed to be taking such a beating. I started to laugh, which made them giggle, which led to my not quite understanding when they began to shout, "Look, look!" while pointing ahead.

By the time I deciphered, "Bear," instead of Barry, and quite naturally stood to take a look, the branch already was scraping across the cab at twenty miles per hour. The only part of me exposed was my cap, and as this was whisked away. To avoid being hit, or ending up hanging from the tree (which was their intention) I fell backward, right on one of my "buddies." For me, it was a rather soft landing.

Not wanting to lose my hat (one I wish I still had in my collection as it was part of a German Africa Corps uniform) I yelled at the top of my

lungs, “Whoa.” With this, the others in the front seat must have thought Heckle and Jeckle had really scored big. Three faces appeared in the rear window, laughing, which meant that the driver wasn’t exactly looking where we were going. We hit a boulder and came to a screeching stop. Heckle, who had been raising to sit on the seat once again, was thrown forward. His head hit the cab hard enough to put a dish-shaped dent in the metal.

Coming back from retrieving my hat I realized that Jeckle, who still was having trouble catching his breath from me landing on him, wasn’t the only casualty of this prank. The driver was standing outside the truck, holding his wrist where an out of control steering wheel had whacked it proper. He was



joined in his misery by the middle front seat passenger bent over, waddling funny. This fellow had goosed himself on the floor-mounted gearshift. The other passenger was still trying to put out the fire started when his cigarette had dropped down an open shirtfront.

I, the object of this initiation, actually had been the only one to escape injury. Quick like, I faked a bum leg. Dragging a boot through the dust as I walked, I yelled out, “Damn. Son of a Bitch. What bear?” This, of course, gave them the laugh they had tried so hard for. When I joined in, supposedly laughing at myself, I was accepted. Fellow crew members, I want you to know—I’m still laughing.

No matter the consequences, the “let’s get so and so” attitude seemed to be this particular crew’s reason for living. The best way for “Burt” to survive was to try to blend into the background, and accept whatever happened with a grin.

The explanation on how they had come to call me “Burt” happened my second day of work, driving “home” to the office. The driver had honked the horn a couple times, which seemed to be a standard signal that a female was in sight, which meant we were obligated to drool and yell crude comments to the hapless victim. It was Mona. Jeckle made the comment based — I have to admit was a half-truth— that she seemed to be crossing the road as if a herd of cattle, all by herself. She saw me, a skunk, trying to hide by turning tail. Too late! Pointing a finger Mona yelled, “Burt, I want my panties back.”

This for the whole town to hear. With my red face, it was easy figuring out who “Burt” was, and my “friends” made the most of Mona’s not so feminine words left floating in the air as we drove past, “Goddamn, I’m going to kick your butt!”

This was the topic of conversation all through next week. The consensus of opinion had it that I was using her underwear as a tent. She was also referred to as my “Summer Woman.” Familiar with the Northwest logger preferring an overly large woman as a bed partner to keep him warm; i.e. a “Winter Woman”, I had to ask the obvious. The answer was a gal just like Mona, large enough to provide shade.

The fact that I had any sort of girlfriend in this male-only environment added to my standing, but it was fortunate that I really didn’t care what was said about her looks, cleanliness, or morals. I had witnessed the anguish of a clean-cut Mormon boy, who make the mistake of talking about the sweetheart he had left at home, being asked, by a fellow crew member, if he would find this sweet young thing the same upon his return, as when he left.

“She had better be,” the boy answered with a righteous-sounding trust. “Freshly f-----, huh?” came the setup answer.

I, on the other hand, due to the fact that all the pristine Mormon girls of the town had been locked up, or sent to spend the summer with distant relatives, could banter back, “Hey, if you are cowboy enough to ride that, want me to introduce you?”

Truth be known I tried all summer to duck out of my strange re-

lationship with Mona. Sometimes I just didn't try too hard. Especially after I waited in the long General Delivery line at the post office for an hour only to receive a "Dear Barry" letter mailed a day after I had left. She didn't agree that she should take a bus to meet me in Salt Lake to drive back home via Yellowstone National Park to help me take another photo for sale with my new miniature Speed Graphic camera that could handle a professional color sized film. Women! They sometimes do not understand business. I, in turn, took a long time learning that our whole relationship had been built upon deception, from both. But, then with my retroactive conscience clear of the girl back in Portland, nothing was holding me back from joining in the fun of being a good old American boy. Yessir!

Anyhow, back to that first day. Good clean red-blooded teenage fun and games all taken care of, we got back in the Jeep and climbed ever upward through the brown scrub cedar canyons, extended, as if fingers, from a tabletop plateau that well could have been the back of a hand. Once on top, in this country, the temperature cooled to a pleasant breeze rustling through the shimmering leaves of green and white aspen.

Unfortunately, the company I worked for was into buying already staked uranium claims. Since most uranium deposits had been found as layers exposed in a canyon wall, most of the claims we were sent to verify were located on the hot and dangerous hillsides. We were supposed to find the claim monuments, make sure the paper notices matched what had been purchased, attach a new container and to mark everything well with yellow spray paint.



Perhaps I should ex-

Ancient tree; ages old sculptured rock

plain about a Mineral Entry. The practice, which became law in 1872, stipulated that any citizen of the United States over the age of 21, upon discovering a reason to believe that public land, such as US National Forest or BLM acreage open to mineral entry, might contain valuable metals, then this person was allowed to stake a 20 acre mining claim, giving him certain mineral rights under the land, unless disproven by the government not to have value.

Just how all this is accomplished varies from state to state, 19 total. Including Florida beaches, but not Texas, which was admitted into the Union with all its lands intact. Which meant that even after the Civil War the US was forced to buy the land that makes up Big Bend National Park.

Basically, the rules are that the four corners of a claim 600 by 1500 feet, be marked by a post, or rock monument, four foot high and that the Location Notice attached gives a reference as to the direction and distance of some known point as shown on a map.

Today, what with a change in federal regulations brought about in 1979, there is a central registry. The claimant must supply a little more detail as to the location than “approximately 25 miles SW of Moab.” Some of the claims we were sent to verify were this vague.

It really became a detective story, following clues, trying to find a beginning point. In theory, once that was located this, we should have, by following a compass bearing and pacing, had a chance of finding the next corner, or monument, and the discovery post.

This morning our starting point was supposed to be marked by a prominent cedar, and every damn cedar tree in sight was prominent. The method this crew used was to drive to the top of a ridge—if at all possible—allegedly containing the blocks of claims, spread out in a long line within sight of each other, and then work their way downhill to be met by the pickup again at the bottom.

In the mountains outside Moab, this seemed to be a hit or miss way to do the job, but the crew had a method in their madness. They usually found plenty of corner markers, and occasionally a Location Notice stuffed into a Prince Albert tobacco can tucked away in the rocks of a

monument, or nailed to a blazed tree. Problem was that these papers, or corner markers, usually had another name on them than the one we were searching for.

The explanation for this was that it was possible to stand on a street corner in Moab and sell a quitclaim deed to just about any courthouse filed “valid” claim. Over-staking and claim jumping were rampant. Someone in the county recorder’s office (where the old saying, “Doing a land office business,” took on real meaning) added up the total acreage of these new mining claims —located who knew where?— and found that this little section of the state had been spoken for by various individuals to a total of eight times the size of Utah.

American LeDuc bought any number of these “street corner” claims without any verification of worth other than what was written on a piece of paper that had the county recorder’s stamp. As mentioned, our job was to find the original location notice upon the ground and replace it with a photostatic copy of the “official” document.

It didn’t take me long to figure out that this crew was adding to the confusion of the situation. Whenever anybody found a post where the original paper was unreadable or missing—well this just had to be the one we were looking for. If the pattern of adjoining claims didn’t make sense, they argued that locator’s compass must have been a little bit off. It took me a while longer to work out how Heckle and Jeckle were so successful in returning with the “old” notices that did not have a recorder’s stamp. These snakes had bought a pad of blank claim notices, and filled in the necessary



Reasonable ground to traverse if one kept an eye-out for rattle snakes!

misinformation information themselves as proof of a job well done.

I had passed the test, on the way up, of being a “real guy,” but by that afternoon this bunch wasn’t certain they wanted me around anymore. I was astounded that nobody seemed to be able to read a topographic map. Much of my youth (age twelve to sixteen) had been spent out of doors climbing, ski touring, or backpacking the Mt. Margaret wilderness around Mt. St. Helens, sometimes without adults along in our party, occasionally solo, and thanks to my ability of reading a topo, I had always been able to find my way home. The lines representing intervals in altitude (either 40, or 100 feet) somehow popped out for me, showing an almost three-dimensional shape of a particular ridge or canyon. I could tell the steepness of a hillside, or cliff, by how close these contour lines were together. A summit of a hill was a closed circle. A creek was characterized as a “V” with a line down the middle.

Anyhow, since nobody seemed interested, I took over the map reading, and began to annoy everyone by saying once too often, “Nope, it’s supposed to be on that slope over there,” which invariably happened to be steeper, brushier, and further from the pickup point at the bottom than the hillside they wanted to search.



So I really wasn’t too surprised, towards the end of one day, when I was assigned to the far left end of a downhill sweep, and my guide-on partner 600 feet to the right, disappeared. I

called out a few times, and climbing up a tree for a better look and caught the rest of the crew sneaking back to the Jeep. I was being ditched to spend a night siwashing it as best I could.

Unbelievable? Nope. This was just another variation on the infamous “Snipe Hunt.” In this so-called joke the victim is promised that if he holds a gunny sack (that’s what a burlap bag is called in my part of the country) and whistles, the others will drive a tasty bird into the trap. All it takes is patience. The end result usually depends on how dumb the dummy is, or how stupid the perpetrators happen to be. Worse case would be the tenderfoot spending a night alone lost in the woods.

Occasionally the tables could be turned by the “hunter” sneaking back into camp after dark where he would slip into his bedroll, while the “beaters”—getting worried—were out looking for the victim.

I chose a variation on this, as I knew these fellows wouldn’t come looking for me until the morning. After studying the map I decided the only possible route out for the Jeep was to cross a dry wash the other side of the ridge we were supposed to search. I made the traverse at a run and dammed if I didn’t come across the location monuments I had been assigned to re-paper all in a row. Even taking the time to mark these properly I was able to make it (breathing just a bit on the heavy side) to the point where the driver would have to slow and shift into compound low. Taking a laying position, head resting on my daypack, with my hat over my eyes, I pretended to wake up when the crew showed up. Waving the collected claim papers I asked innocently, “Got all of them. How did you guys do?”

A week later, after watching every move, thinking ahead before making any statement, pretending to “go along,” I welcomed a new member to the crew with the relieved feeling that now this fellow was to be the goat. It seemed a bit strange that he asked to be picked up outside of the only motel in town, an establishment rapidly growing wealthy by charging more for a single bed for a night than two days pay. And when this pudgy little kid opened his mouth to answer the question about where he was staying (“With friends.”) I recognized the diphthongs of an Ivy League education. Oh boy.

The others took the accent as an indication that this fellow was, in the slang of the day for a homosexual, a fruit. When he answered the next

query by stating, “New York,” I knew he was doomed.

The buzzards started circling shortly after we had made the traditional stop at a little county store to buy my breakfast can of beans—I had gotten into the habit of carrying about a spoon and a P-51 can opener one found in a war surplus store box of “C” rations. In a brilliant flash of sardonic wit (they all thought) Heckle purchased a pack of Juicy Fruit (wink, wink) gum. If the fresh meat of our crew had caught on to the homosexual slur connection, it wasn’t revealed. He refused an offered stick with a wave of his hand as if was dismissing an overzealous servant.

I tried to ease the suffering this boy seemed to be experiencing—judging from the totally dejected look on his face—by asking a few inane questions and pointing out sights that might be of interest. But, by the time we got to the “hanging tree” I had given up. Heckle gave me a one eyebrow cocked squinty-eyed stare that said, “Don’t interfere.” I decided that if this new kid wanted to be a snot that was his problem. I moved to the back of the truck and lay with my arms spread across the back of the tailgate, to watch the show.

This time the perpetrators had mutually decided to sit on the plank, with the victim between, and duck at the crucial moment. As the truck speeded up, both yelled, “Bear,” before scrunching down. And the kid (I have to admit it really was nice calling someone else that), well he just sat there, looking backward, staring at nothing. Maybe he didn’t understand “Bear,” or maybe he was smart enough to know that they lived at higher altitudes in Utah, or maybe he wasn’t the slightest bit interested in wild animals. Whatever, the branch whacked him on the back of the head with such resounding thunk, that I knew I had company.

Have to hand it to that “New York Kid”, for when he came too, after fifteen minutes of cold compresses, he just looked at Heckle and Jeckle with pure murder in his eyes. That put a chill to any further conversation or kidding, supposedly just for the “sport” of it? When we arrived at the starting point this fellow took the compass handed to him, the papers and paint, and started off downhill without any comment.

That was the last we ever saw of him. He wasn’t at the truck at lunch-

time. It was well after dinner, and almost dark when it was decided to get help in making a search. I must admit I sort of obliquely added to the growing concern. I pointed out that if he had died on account of complications from the concussion, we possibly could be charged with manslaughter. “Damn,” I cussed in a squeaky voice, “I’m too young to go to prison. I’m sure Mona won’t wait over five years for me to get out. No sir!”

By the time we reached Moab, headed for the sheriff’s office, I got to the part where I suggested we “stick together”, back to back in the big house, as Juicy Fruit chewing fags just loved to rape good looking young men. Yes, Sir! Heckle and Jeckle started to cry, so I suggested we stop at the motel and see if they could tell us anything about this kid.



My hunch was correct. The night desk clerk told us he was revealed as the son of the president of American LeDuc Petroleum Company’s, whose future quickly came into doubt when a Wall Street con man took over control of marketing by using my photographs.

“In the three years after Birrell became president of American LeDuc Petroleum in 1954, the company issued six million new shares of common stock,” explains SEC prosecutor Arthur L. Liman in his 1998 book, *Lawyer: A Life of Counsel and Controversy*.

And with exaggerated claims in his promotions — something I as a high ranking Boy Scout working on a Geology Merit Badge — had unwaveringly been involved in involved in help Birrell selling illegal shares, “using a boiler-room telephone and mail campaign run by a New York brokerage firm, J.A. Winston & Company”. Something that hap-

pened years later, to my glee, in Idaho where I was summoned to testify before a Grand Jury to explain how greed for gold overrides corporate good sense and propaganda.

Birrell, who would spend several years in Brazil as a fugitive, also falsified details about wells reportedly drilled in Cuba. He went overseas to avoid prosecution by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

“In one year, from August 1955 —when the company stiffed me on my last paycheck, and the return of my press camera quality negatives--- to August 1956, Birrell and J.A. Winston sold 3.5 million shares of American LeDuc Petroleum at an average price of \$1.05 per share. Three months later, the price dropped to about 50 cents a share. By July 1961, “the stock was trading for about eight cents a share and was overpriced at that,” Liman states. With an indictment returned on July 20, 1951, Birrell and his co-conspirators faced a possible sentence of 55 years and a \$60,000 fine. My first “pump and dump”!

Although they were found guilty, government prosecutors decided not to pursue the case, which was dismissed. The stock has collectible value only. I guess a 60+ year old payment to make up my withheld paycheck, with accrued interest, is just a funny idea. American LeDuc ended up in a private energy company, just as my Wayne Mansfield issued Petroleum stock disappeared into Mansfield Energy without any trace.



This really was my introduction to Mining Business 101 where a lone prospector quickly learns to survive through the ups and downs of the illegal merger of big government and big business that has taken such a toll on the Mining Law of 1872 “Prudent Man!”

The “hanging tree”

victim was Son of Drew Birrell, New York city big financier, President of the Canadian Energy company pretending to be American, had been sent out West to work his way up the corporate ladder. Nope, Master Birrell wasn't in his room—he had checked out just in time to catch a plane to Salt Lake City.

Two days later the boss was the one to wake me. He told me there wasn't any hurry, as it would take a while to put together a new crew, being I was the only one that hadn't been fired. I caught all of this with a mind cluttered with dream-befuddled pictures of me driving past that girl in Portland, with an even prettier girl sitting beside me in my MG sport car I was sending my home to my mother to save so I could deal with cash — and it took a few minutes to sink in. I enjoyed a delicious laugh.

It wasn't the last laugh, though. In the telling of my dad everything that had happened that summer, I mentioned the hanging tree, and Master Birrell. He got mad at me for not protecting and befriending what could have been a very powerful connection in the money markets of New York. Didn't I realize, he went on and on, that mining was a capital-intensive industry and the most important prospects of all were the prospective investor, etc?

Consequently, it tickled me, a few months later, to shove a newspaper article across his desk that told about financier Drew Birrell absconding with all the funds of several corporations. I was also very pleased to hear that the “hanging tree” had been added to my father's collection of stories. It was published at the roundtable where Oregon's Senator Wayne Morse (D+R), one of two votes against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. He had been a bon mot one-liner partner since I had asked him as a little professor, “Sir, since you have named your bulls after fellow Senators, as Everett Dirksen; may we expect the same honor for your cows, as Margaret Chase Smith?”

The new crew was a definite improvement over the old as I had a say in who was hired on. The “Kid” had been promoted to “Field Manager,” with a 10¢ per hour raise. Whether this was happenstance, or because I

could read a map, or because I had not joined in the harassing of Birrell, or on account of my family connections, I never found out.

My choice from the applicants was a little black-haired, Sicilian blooded, 45 years old, miner out of Price, Utah, named Giuseppe Marrotti. With a fake mispronounced name like that, and for other reasons I was to discover later, everyone called him “Gyp.” On paper, I was his boss, but before long we were partners in the truest sense of the old Western meaning, concerning petty larceny.

It still seems a bit strange to me that the eldest of the crew, and the youngest, became pals. Especially since Gyp had a son my age that drove down now and then from Price in a chopped and channeled (remember those?) 49 Merc to bum a few bucks off old dad. Whenever he was around seemed to be the only time Gyp didn’t have a goofy little smile on his face.

Without trying to be funny, or witty, this little man totally cracked me up. I had heard wild tales about my maternal grandfather, a Swiss immigrant with a built-in zany sense of fun Italian humor. Maybe Gyp filled a need in me for a granddad, or a father, to be truthful, that was a little bit more into the business of living. Perhaps, in return, I was a replacement for a son who hadn’t lived up to expectations.

Whatever, Gyp found it hilarious that I happened to be his boss. He convinced me that according to Old World custom (“You mean Italy?” “No, Price.”) I was supposed to buy him a beer upon my promotion. I was all for it, having recently acquired the taste, but being that this was the time of my life when if I wanted to buy anything stronger than Seven-Up, the procedure was to wait outside a market until a sympathetic soul, for a price, would purchase a six-pack on account of the fact that I “had left my driver’s license at home,” I suggested this might be difficult.

“You’re a boss aren’t you?” Gyp answered. “Lead us into the tavern.”

Dammed if we didn’t elbow our way through the crowd and belly up to the only bar in town. Gyp seemed to know everyone, including the barkeep, who he told with a flip of his thumb, “My boss here is buying me a beer.”

“What’ll you have, Boss,” the character wearing dance hall girl gar-

ters on his sleeves asked me?

“What do you have?” I answered back in a lower voice than normal, fully expecting him to say, Grape Nehi.

“Coors, Coors, and Coors.”

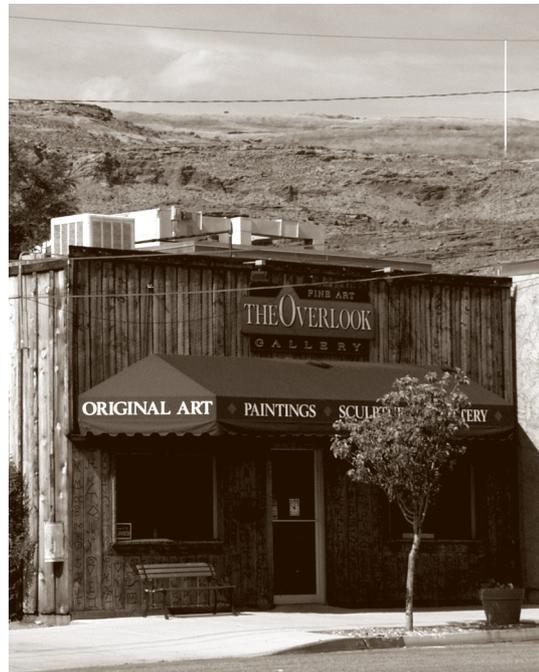
“Well then, it’s settled, my good man. We will have a Coors.”

The upshot of this evening was that I was a little on the upset side the next morning. That first Coors tasted so good going down (I cannot bring myself to drink it today) I offered to buy another.

“Nawh, save your money Boss.” Gyp told me, “All I needed was a place at the bar. The next ones are on me,” he added, plopping a quarter on the mahogany.

I don’t remember how many Coors that 25¢ purchased before the evening was out, but I do know it wasn’t left as a tip. Gyp had painstakingly sawed the coin in two and split those pieces as if a pie. Then it was all glued back together on a piece of a thin condom so the whole thing could be folded up and slipped down the neck of an empty beer bottle on an impossible wager.

The bartender was in on the gag. When whoever it was that had lost a bet to buy beer for everyone wasn’t satisfied in just hearing the coin clink when the bottle was shaken at his loss and wanted a better look, perhaps by breaking the brown amber glass container over Gyp’s head, the bartender would step in as referee. He would bust the bottle into a pail full of broken glass and fish out a perfectly valid quarter. Once the coin had been inspected by all, with the final one being Gyp’s conspirator, the “alt finance” quarter was returned and my pal was set to do



Now an art gallery. I wonder if they ever hung a truly original as Gyp?

the trick once again, for slightly higher stakes.

This bar bet was just one of many. I wish I could remember the bit about the matches and bottle cap. My all-time favorite in gullibility was done with a dollar bill. After a mark had lost a couple times on the funny quarter, Gyp would switch by saying, “OK. One last chance to get even. You got a dollar bill?”

“Sure do.”

“Good. Don’t let me see it, but take it out of your wallet, and keep George’s picture towards you. Don’t let me see, got that?”

“Yup.”

“Now fold it in half with the crease going right through George’s nose. Hold it up, but don’t let me see.”

“Right.”

“Now study the serial numbers. I’ll bet you beers all around that I can tell you the last three numbers and the letter.”

“You’re on,” the loser would bite, not realizing that in his efforts to hide the folded half high enough so that Gyp couldn’t see, he had already exposed upside down a duplicate set of numbers on the other side.

With this scam, it was easy to figure out what had happened, but as the whole bar was looking forward to a free brew there wasn’t much a loser could do except join in the laughter.

As the evening got a bit fuzzy I seem to remember lifting my head out of the puddle of beer on the bar now and then to laugh when others got burned, in more ways than one, playing Gyp’s match trick, but I have no recollection how I ended up tucked away in my car-bed. That’s what I mean about partners. When you fell flat on your face in the mud of life, they are there to pick you up.

Gyp also covered for me the next day when some very important visitors (i.e.: investors) showed up for a tour of operations. The morning started rather badly for me. At our traditional stop at the store, I took the crews advice to buy lots and lots of canned tomato juice.

This seemed to help a little bit. However one of the very important visitors, who seemed to be impressed with my quiet spoken and sober demeanor, was smoking a terrible smelling cigar. I pointed at the map spread out on the hood of the Jeep and then stepped back, waving my arms as if identifying the same feature upon the ground, but really trying to dissipate the smoke. Unfortunately, this fellow was hard of hearing and he followed, cigar and all.

Maybe since this fellow was from Back East, he didn't realize he was invading my territory. Most Sons of the Golden West carry on a conservation at least three feet apart. Anything closer than this is an invasion of personal space. Those that live in crowded cities —probably so they can be heard above the unending background noise— tend to get in close, face to face. Anyhow, when my churning stomach reacted to the cigar smoke, this investor got the message, and moved back. Vomiting straight tomato juice, it looked as if I was hemorrhaging gallons of blood.

My partner stepped in to turn this potentially disastrous situation about by exclaiming, "I told him to take the day off and fight that flu bug off, but does he listen to me? No, he didn't want to let the crew down!" —or words to that effect. I didn't hear the rest of my partner's con, having been directed to lay down in the shade of a tree, but it must have been a dazzling doozy. Gyp even got me another 10¢ promotion. His financial finder's fee was to be paid in beer.

Before the due diligence investors left, I was told that they were impressed with my professional attitude and dedication and that it was the time the company found something a bit more important for me to do. I had come a long way from being a kid! Whoever wrote the musical that International Widgets was the place to succeed in business without really trying, had the name of the company wrong.

Gyp and I were assigned our own Jeep pickup. Our first job was to haul a load of dynamite to a mine site in Colorado. I was moving up in this world. At age 16, I was given an expense account.

We had five days, including the weekend, at time-and-a-half, to complete this task. Money in our pocket for meals meant I was able to break

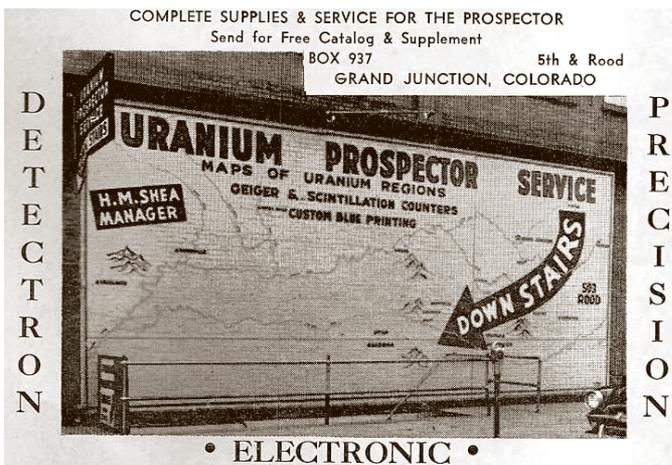
the monotony of buying dinner, day after day, which consisted of breakfast sausage, eggs, and pancakes. This “balanced diet” happened to be the cheapest item on any menu in town. A hard-working couple from Texas that had come to Moab to mine the miners owned the cafe. Those who could afford it had spread the word that the “Texas Tee-Bone Platter,” at this dinner was the best meal available in Moab.

Gyp and I started the trip by ordering a “TBP Special,” and had the receipt made out in the name of a cafe 99 miles up the road. I remember that steak very well. It was one of those monsters that hung over the edge of a platter back in the days before computerized feed lot baby beef replaced the grass-fed, four-year-old range steer. They were tough; people with false teeth found the meat hard to chew. But, oh, what flavor! Which was accented by the knowledge that this was, in Gyp’s words, “fiddle beef.” I learned the importance of having an expense account from a master fiddler, better than an Arthur Anderson CPA.

This meal set the pattern for the whole trip. At the junction where we should have turned east to Grand Junction, Colorado, to buy prospecting equipment, we tanked up with gas, with a reserve in cans, and continued north to Price, Utah. Gyp was homesick. He had been worried how his sainted Italian immigrant mother had been getting along; as well he should, being that she only knew three words in English, “No good bum!”

A mere wisp of a woman dressed all in black, I was struck with the volume her voice could produce. She must have been all lungs, for from

the moment we set down at the table for some of the best spaghetti I have ever tasted, she started in ranting and raving. All of this was in Italian, so the only way I could tell what was happening was the occasional, “No good bum,” apparently directed at Gyp, who would hang his



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head in shame, or at Gyp's son, who drove up to this small coal company shotgun house, stuck his head in the door, and left without saying a word. When both Mama and son said, "No good bum," in unison, I knew they were talking about the grandson.

Me, however, well, I was a "Bella Bambino!" Granny started patting my hand, then my arm, and finally the top of my head. Without trying this summer I had become very popular with chubby girls, New York investors, and Italian grandmothers. When she realized I had finished my water she got up from the table to get a very special decanter of red wine. What a treat this would be, she seemed to be saying, as my glass was filled.

I won another point or two by standing with a movie version of "Grazia" to my hostess and lifted the glass of what I anticipated to be a taste treat of good old homemade vino, something my Swiss grandfather had been noted for. The raspberry was on me, for the red liquid turned out to be raspberry Kool-Aid.

I never did learn what the dinner time argument was about. It's wasn't that I had shown up unannounced. Gyp got up from the table, said, "Let's go," and I ended up as a rope in a human tug of war. Granny grabbed my hand, apparently telling me to sleep on the couch. Gyp had a grip on my shirt as he headed for the door. He won.

We took off, my following directions to "turn right," and "left," right through the middle of town with a load of dynamite in back, to arrive at one of the sleaziest hotels I had ever seen. As lodging was not, for some reason — perhaps so we would guard a scarce dynamite shipment 24-hours a day?— allowed on our expense account, I did mention to Gyp that at least the place looked affordable. "Not to worry, Boss. This ones is really on me " he answered, out of character.

I also thought it a bit odd that the night clerk was a bleach blond floozy, dressed in a tattered peignoir set, but what the heck, I was tired, and gratefully followed her to my room. This turned out to be little more than a mattress and box springs, propped up on cement building blocks, covered with one of those bedspreads that had rows of little tufted balls. It was sort of pink and worn so badly that half the decorations were little

more than threads. I ripped back the cover to jump into the first sheets I would have slept in for in a month, and there wasn't any. Or, blankets! Well, since I didn't have my toothbrush either, I rolled up in what there was, and soon was fast asleep.

Not for long. The door slammed open. There was the night clerk with a tin bowl of water. This was understandable, as there didn't seem to be any washbasin in the room. That wasn't too surprising. I had spent nights in little hotels in remote places in the West before where even the bridal suite was furnished with a china bowl and pitcher—and the bathroom was a two-story outhouse connected by a walkway from the upstairs hall. What was unusual was that this gal was no longer wearing her peignoir. Except for a pair of shoes she was completely naked!

I began to catch on after standing to attention at her barked command, and this "older woman" began to wash my private parts with Lysol laden warm water. Yes, sir, what a partner I had!

I wasn't quite as grateful a very short time later when, after thanking her, I rolled over to go back to sleep.

"Hey, what do you think \$4 buys in this place anyhow," she said while tossing my clothes out into the hallway.

Gyp and I spent the night under the trap covering ten cases of dynamite. I forced myself to stay awake until he had flipped his go-to-sleep cigarette far away from the truck.

We didn't make it back to Moab until the following Wednesday. Our expense account was exhausted (how unfair) by such things as spark plugs, purchased one place, a rotor cap in another, and ignition wires in a third.

After the Jeep had bucked to a halt just after climbing up and over the break of a plateau, a semi-truck suddenly appeared in the rear view mirror. I jumped out the passenger door and started running for tall timber—visible on the horizon twenty miles away. I doubt even that would have been far enough if the truck driver hadn't swerved, just in time, to avoid connecting with our cargo in a very big way.

I returned to find my partner oblivious to how close the jackknifing, swaying trailer had come to giving our stubborn little Jeep a push to get it started. He was stomping on the gas peddle with an angry foot. A home rolled Bull Durham cigarette bobbed as this one-time Catholic alter boy mouthed his favorite Utah style blasphemes, “Start, you Mormon made -----!”

It was up to me to supply the push needed to get rolling down the next grade, and a hesitant start by jamming the gears into a do or die four-wheel high. This took two hours. And, the last of the water we were carrying in those ubiquitous canvas water bags everyone in this country hung on an outside mirror so that the breeze, when driving, cooled the saturated cloth by convection. The major problem with this system was the truck had to be running for cooling to work!

The sun got so hot that the agony added to the misery of this situation was that touching the sheet metal of the Jeep was the equivalent of reaching for a coffee pot on a stove, without a holder.

I expressed an opinion to Gyp that possibly we were being punished by the Great Prospector in the Sky for fiddling on our expense account; sort of getting a preview of what was in store for us. He proved me wrong when turning in the truck to the rental agency for repairs, or at least made his point that we just part of an orchestra of violin players. They were happy to reimburse us “our” out of pocket money—which meant another Texas T-Bone Platter before our expenses were turned in, along with the receipts for the parts we had already been reimbursed for—as this outfit just passed everything on, at cost plus markup. Gyp also suggested, after we had reported back to the “Big Boss” at the fancy dude ranch where he was staying, complete with swimming pool and chuck wagon style dining, that since the company was also paying for this unearned luxury what we had finagled was less than nothing I was learning that the mining business investor’s money was sometimes considered as “free”.

Provided, that is, the expense looked good on paper. An example: a week later on special assignment, six of us had piled into the Jeep to investigate two claims the company had purchased near the Colorado bor-

der. We started this three-day excursion on a Friday, already into overtime. But, our report “wrote up good” in that, by golly, were planning on roughing it, as prospectors should rightly be, sleeping on the ground.

I, grabbing the preferences of rank, enjoyed a leisurely snooze stretched out on a bed of sleeping bags in the back of the Jeep. Gyp, enjoying his perk of being the boss’s partner, opened the first case of beer. We stopped once so I could photograph a cliff face of ancient Indian petroglyphs, and for Gyp to open more beer. A few miles further I called a halt to grab representative samples of the sandstone layers called the Morrison, the Shinarup, and the Chinale, all of which were host material for Carnotite, the uranium ore that was the object of this paid holiday. And years later had something of importance to do with the industrial mineral of Nepheline Syenite. Gyp opened more beer.

We also stopped, with a whoop, a holler, and beer belch, at a lonely rock and cedar cabin to ask directions. We were saving boring highway miles cutting through on dirt roads what was being developed as Canyonlands National Park. The fellow that came to the door didn’t seem to care for miners too much, but he was polite and helpful. Years later, reading a book named *Desert Solitaire*, I found a not too flattering description on my crew as a typical example of miners exploiting of the serenity of nature.



Unfortunately, I have to agree with the author’s assessment. But, what the hell, I needed the money. I had two women to support. Mona had the roller-skating habit, bad. I had been sending Navajo turquoise jewelry to that girl in Portland in hopes she would start writing to me again. I should have kept the earrings I was buying

for \$2 a set. Since this girl was mad at me, and dumber than a box of rocks, she threw my peace offerings in the trash. A collector appraised the only piece that survived in the 1970s, as being worth \$450.

I should have tried to explain to Edward Abbey, “Hey, I tried to get them to hold the noise down.” And, that I too appreciated and respected the serenity of the outdoors, for years later he and I were to share the pages of an “outdoor” issue of Life Magazine (September 3, 1971). His piece was to be an exposé of the National Park Service. Mine was the account of my family’s horseback trek of 2,500 miles from Mexico to Canada, exploring what was to become the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

Anyhow, we continued on into this wilderness. The outcome of all this effort and expense was that it took the crew—all on time and a half—exactly twenty-three minutes to complete our task. At that, we were one man short.

Around our campfire, the first evening, in befitting the country, the scare stories were not of bears, but rattlesnakes. Gyp started it all out with a supposed conversation he had with a dump truck driver at the Steen operation. This tale told of a nest of diamondbacks that had hibernated in a den all balled up to avoid freezing. This part was believable in that snakes are cold-blooded critters and they must protect themselves from extreme heat or cold. The story continued: “Well sir, a front end loader was scooping dirt into my friend’s truck, which happened to be an old International. You know, the type where the front window could be cranked open at the bottom. Being that it was the first heat of spring, the bottom was open, as were the side wind-wings.

Well sir, somehow the loader scooped up this ball of hibernating snakes and transferred them, intact, to the top of the load. Well sir, no sooner than the driver moved on out of the shade, the sun warmed those snakes, and they began to move. Like crawling down that open windshield. My friend slammed the brakes on—he was going to run for it—but that brought other snakes down the side, sort of heading for the wind-wings. Being that none of the window cranks in this cab seemed to work without two hands tugging away, the driver found the faster he went,

the safer he was. The force of the wind kept the granddaddy of them all pinned against the glass. He tried using the windshield wiper, but that just seemed to annoy one big old boy staring in through the glass, inches from the driver's face.

Well sir, by the time the truck hit the paved road leading into Moab, dropping a snake or two every mile, the driver had gained control of the windows. He figured the only passenger left was the one making faces at him. So he pulled into a service station and asked an astounded pump jock—from the safety of a buttoned-up cab, of course- if, 'Hey, would you wash my window for me?'"

According to Gyp, the driver, who had become something of a local legend for being a Mr. Cool, confessed one evening at the bar that what he had intended was the attendant use a hose to see if it was possible to blast that snake off the truck. And, he really didn't realize that the majority of his hitchhiking passengers had been waiting for the truck to make a stop before dropping off.

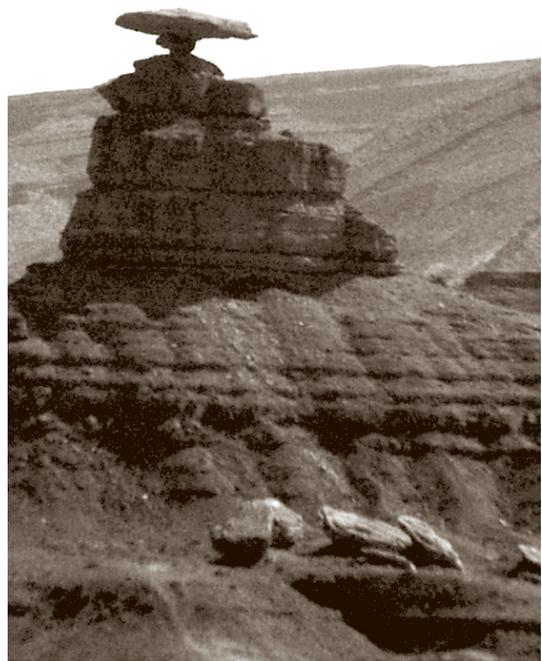
Unfortunately, this was the to point where a half-way believable event with the smoothness of movie segways into being embellished tall tail. Seems that Main Street was ankle deep in snakes for weeks following and people got a big chuckle carrying Prince Albert cans half filled with pebbles to shake at friends to give them a little wake-me-up.



That was a difficult story to top. One kid came up with an old saw about the boot that killed. I had heard this one before but listened attentively to see which variation ended the chain of events.

Seems that a rancher / prospector / flatland tourist was a bit worried about snakes. He, there-

fore, bought himself a pair of cowboy/knee high engineer / Abercrombie & Fitch snake proof boots. Trouble was that though the leather was thick enough to stop the ordinary diamondback fang, the victim stepped on the biggest damn snake in the whole State of Utah/the Rocky Mountains/the West. In the struggle that ensued the man had escaped injury —he thought— but a fang, loaded with venom broke off in the stitching just where the boot was attached to the heel. That evening, preparing for bed, thankful to have escaped the trauma of snake-bite, the fellow didn't pay to much attention when his skin was pricked while pulling his boots off. He must have thought it was a loose nail poking up from the sole. Consequently, he went to sleep, without a worry, never to wake.



A Korean-American Geologist friend of mine, who also told a 'tall tale', used to suggest that this formation honored all the Chinese miners and railroad workers who helped build Western America by inventing chop suey restaurants.

From there on the boots get passed down from father to son, etc., blah-blah-blah, with each suffering a mysterious death while sleeping as the fang only struck when the boot was removed at the end of a day. The version being told ended with a parson dying while kneeling to pray. Apparently, the angle was just right when he set back on his heels to sing out, with arms outstretched, "Oh God."

In the silence that greeted that ending, I had to add, "That's it? You mean you didn't hear that the minister's wife was a Goodwill Store volunteer. After burying her husband she donated all of his clothing to the cause. The next fellow to try those boots on died there and then. Seems the poison had concentrated over the year's to become more deadly, and

the angle of the fang had shifted. After a full dozen had died with that boot on, the Sheriff decided to investigate. He stuck his hand down the boot and was saying, 'Feels like a rattler's fang,' when he collapsed.

Knowing the cause now the Deputy ordered the thing burned at the town dump. Most of the town turned out to watch the smoke curl up towards heaven when a shifting breeze pushed it their way. Twelve people died of rattler inhalation. Some reporter was able to calculate that the grand total of the boot that kills was 29 souls—sorry, wrong word to use there—may they rest in peace.”

Gyp poked at the fire a bit and picked up the topic again with another account of a fellow who was camping out in the desert, sleeping on the ground, just as we were about to do. He happened to wake in the middle of the night. There in the moonlight, he could just make out the shape of a five-foot-long rattler, coiled up for warmth on his chest.

Fortunately, this fellow was an old timer and he was prepared. An old Indian had taught him, even though he couldn't abide tobacco, to take a chew just before going to sleep, tucking the cud into a cheek, ready for action.

“Snakes plum hate tobacco juice,” Gyp solemnly told us as he pulled out his Bull Durham. His friend's life had been saved—Gyp claimed—on account of an accurately placed goober that had driven the creature away, blinded. With that, he opened the cloth bag of Bull Durham tobacco, pretended to take a mouthful, and passed it on.

The reason we were one man short the next day when it came time to search for claim monuments was that one of the “kids” —not me— was so sure a snake was going to get him he would not set foot outside of the truck. And, being that he was not accustomed to any sort of evil living (drinking, women, smoking) swallowing a mouthful of Bull had made him deadly sick.

I, of course, thanks to “Papa” Gyp, had developed a tolerance to Bull Durham. This symbol of the Old West has mainly been replaced by Copenhagen snuff in cowhands, loggers, and prospectors pockets, which I think, having experienced both, is a dubious improvement. The ‘Bull’

was considered to be floor sweepings, fingernail clippings, or worse, and it was so foul tasting it was hard to develop a habit. The attraction, besides only costing a nickel a bag, complete with cigarette papers, was the skill that it took to roll your own.

There is a reason why chewing tobacco, and rolling your own, was a preference in the woods and on the range. Store bought smokes, besides being expensive, burn down to the very end, whereas the roll your own variety went out without careful attention it will fall apart. Thus if you happened to drop a tailor-made butt off of a horse, you stood a good chance of starting a range fire. The real Marlboro Man smoked Bull.

That was in the days before the Marlboro Man, but I, a young fool, just had to give rolling a try. My first attempts turned out just like a camel. They had a hump in the middle. When I had got the roll down, but not the packing, Gyp would try to get me laughing just to see the loose, fine chopped, dry tobacco shoot out as if I was blowing out a straw.

Unfortunately, I mastered the art. Gyp took advantage of this one evening at the bar when nobody would bite on any of his tricks. I had reached for the Bull tab on the end of the drawstring hanging out of my shirt pocket, and was lighting up when some dude remarked, “Hey, this kid rolls a pretty good cigarette.”

“Well, hell yes.” Gyp jumped right in, grabbing my Bull sack for all to see. “Little Boss here can roll a cig with only two fingers!”

The mark tried to visualize how this could be possible, but could not get away from using his thumb.

“Ok,” it was stipulated to end the argument, “He rolls a cigarette, that can be smoked for at least three minutes, only using two fingers, no thumb,

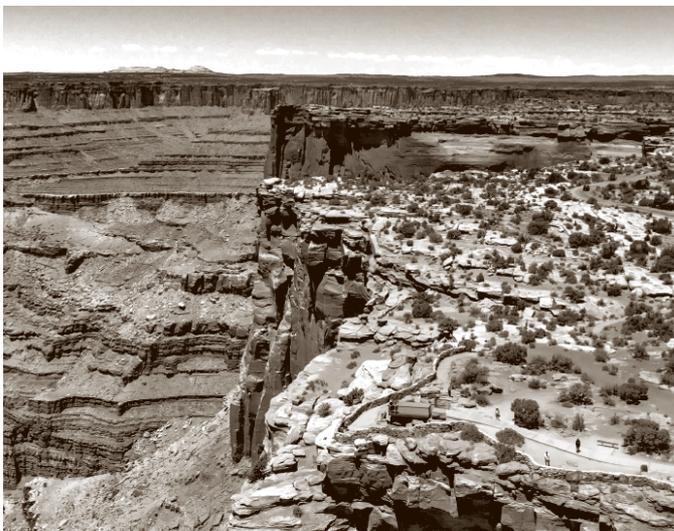


nothing else, and the bet is beer all around.”

“Yup,” my partner agreed as he passed a fresh factory made Lucky Strike to me under the table, “Show him how Boss man.”

With that little gag, it was just as well that we left town now and then on jobs that kept us out of mischief. My written report of the last expedition with a full crew was well-received, and as I must have suggested that two men could have done the job as well as six. Gyp and I were picked to head to Dead Horse Point overlooking mighty Colorado. Problem was that the rental agency, who promised to fix the Jeep just didn't seem to have the time to do it right. I took a look at the topographics of this area and contracted with the company to rent my Ford coupe, at the same rate they were paying for the truck.

The first two days were a breeze, literally, as the winds across the flat plateau kept everything comfortable. We set up camp one night in what is now a Utah State Park overlook, where I could lay on my sleeping bag and frame a miniature Grand Canyon between my bare feet. It certainly was an interesting picture —that is if one excluded toes— what with the ever-changing shades of red and brown as the sun set over the sandstone cliffs. At times the desert could be so incredibly awe-inspiring it almost made me want to burst out into a chorus of *America The Beautiful* because she is. Gyp's comment on this same scene was, “Go to sleep.”



And, at times the desert could be incredibly cruel. We awoke hot. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, which meant no refreshing wind. What was worse, we had been hitting out water supply rather hard, so breakfast was a rather dismal affair of peanut butter and crackers (Gyp's equivalent

of my cold beans) washed down by a rationed three mouthfuls each of life-sustaining H₂O.

Fighting a sun that just seemed to get closer instead of raising, we rushed through the last of our assignment to head back for town. Being that the only thought worth thinking about was ice cold beer, I decided, in the breath of one moment, to take a shortcut across the barren plateau, instead of backtracking twenty-five miles north to the paved highway. The trail that seemed to run straight for the horizon was on the map. And, I could see old fwd tire tracks in the sand, proving the way was passable.

For those who have never experienced the Great American Desert, and have a mental image of a sea of sculptured flowing sand, let me explain that the desert is a desert on account of the fact that there isn't too much water about. Mostly the landscape is rock, pebbles, gravel, dirt, and sand. Not dunes. In fact, in all my travels through the West, I have only run into half a dozen Hollywood style sand dunes. Which is exactly what I did, this day, traveling at 40 miles per hour. This forward motion carried my two-wheel drive Ford, about forty feet, before everything ground to a halt.

At first, it was very, very funny. Gyp reasoned that since the highway department sanded roads in the winter for traction, then what we should do was shovel snow under the wheels. Taking a cue from this silly suggestion I did try some of the driving tricks I had learned on the way to skiing. Nothing worked. The narrow tires dug their own hole, leaving us so high centered I didn't have to step down when going out the door.

It probably was no later than nine in the morning when we got stuck. By noon we had to take drastic steps about our lack of water. Fortunately, I hadn't been able to afford to fill my radiator with antifreeze/coolant, which is a poison. The rusty spring water, complete with floating bits of the residual oatmeal was absolutely delicious.

At two o'clock, after trying a Spanish windless (a rope attached to a strong point, and twisted, twisted, twisted) where all we succeed in doing was to uproot sage bushes, I suggested jacking the car up and sticking the sagebrush under the rear wheels.

By four o'clock we had advanced backward, four feet. Knowing we were going to have to walk through the night, and maybe the next, I lost my temper just as Gyp had finished jacking the rear-end up for one more try. I kicked a tire as hard as I could, and watched, with devil's eyes, as the sonabitchen car toppled sideways. "At least," I said to Gyp, when he complained about work gone for nothing, "we are out of the hole."



Yeah! We truly were. We had actually made two feet sideways. A survey of the area found 30 feet to the north, a bit of ground with a crust that took a stamped boot heel to crush.

Moving thirty feet sideways took jacking the car 30 times (two feet at a time for the front, two feet for the rear) and pushing. It was crazy, watching the car fall off the jack, sideways, landing with a bounce, but there wasn't time to laugh. We had to make it out before dark, or spend the night.

I would need to be able to see the best route, which we had marked with paper flags, out of this trap. I took the camp equipment, rock samples, etc, out of the trunk to save extra (so not to break through the crust once I did get moving), and flattened the tires a bit by letting the air out. This was going to be an all or nothing, do or die try.

Taking a deep breath and never letting it go, I eased the clutch out. I guess I ran right through a couple clumps of sagebrush. It was getting dark, and I drove with the door open so as to look back and see that the drive wheels weren't spinning. I didn't care that the branches were scratching the car and me as long as I was moving forward.

Yeah. My Coors tasted g-o-o-o-d that night. Fellow at the tavern asked how come we came back so late. "Oh, we were just star gazing

around at Dead Horse Point.” Years later I happened across a *Reader’s Digest* article about a family that perished at Dead Horse Point under very similar circumstances.

Shortly after this incident, Gyp and I got stuck again at the 11,000 foot level on Mount Peele. We had the Jeep, once again, complete with a box of dynamite, and caps, and fuse that Gyp had kept just in case it came in handy.

I have to admit that playing with the ultimate Fourth of July firecracker was a thrill. I learned how to cut the fuse into “minutes,” how to crimp the cap on same, and how to lace that through a stick. It also was a lesson in force, for in ways dynamite was rather like money—a portable concentration of power that could be used effectively, or wasted to the winds. Rather than try and push a problem boulder out of our way, we would blast it. This took packing the dynamite into a crevice, or a covering of mud, as the blast, unless restrained was upwards.

Anything that got in our way, or created a problem was soon disposed of. The “hanging tree” a problem? Poof, and it was gone. I did draw the line at fishing! Supposedly throwing a half stick into a pool of a trout stream was better than setting up an old fashioned crank telephone to create an electric current in the current.

Such was Gyp; forty-five years old going on seventeen. Problem was, I had been doing a lot of growing up this summer and was passing him by in the maturity department. The use of dynamite for fishing was the point of discussion this morning which happened to be the beginning of the end of our partnership.

I wasn’t happy with Gyp’s driving. He was more or less making road as we went, by knocking down young aspen trees. I asked if we couldn’t just drive around. I suggested we park the rig and walk. I loved those trees. I loved the breeze rustling through the leaves, making them “quake.” Aspen seemed to be the only cool thing in this land of fire and brimstone.

On the way up this rough trail, we had passed a packer leading a string of twelve mules, complete with bells and well-thrown diamonds over neat and tidy manty and panniers. It was a sight out of the Old West,

and it hurt to see the look on this old-timers face as he pulled his skittery string off to one side as we bucked and bounced and banged our way past.

I waved, as was the custom in this country when meeting someone off of the main highway. The further in, the more fingers one used. A well-traveled dirt road only required pointing with one finger that sort of said, "Hey." On a track where it was unusual to meet anybody, this was changed to a whole palm extended that said, "Howdy!" The stonewall reply I got from this old wrangler was an all too clear. "Well, hell, there goes a way of life." I understood this sadness. Gyp didn't.

I must have opened my mouth once too often. Gyp took his frustrations, seriously. A six-inch aspen, which just happened to get in our way, also proved temperamental. It fought being pushed. Gyp took a second run to get the "Mormon made -----" to budge, and suddenly the truck



started rising. As the front wheels started chewing the air as Gyp floor boarded the gas peddle. When the back wheels started floating, the engine raced on in a shriek, and we ended up bouncing up and down as if on a diving board.

Me: "Let's walk around?" Gyp: "Hell no!"

Experimentation showed that the tried and true trick of jacking the truck, and pushing it off, could very well have ended up with the top-heavy Jeep laying on its side.

I figured Gyp had caused this problem, let Gyp solve the same. Again, the Spanish windless did not work. The rope kept breaking. My suggestion that the best way to finish the job of laying the tree down was to use

an ax was met with a number of criticisms. First, and foremost, was that laying under the truck it was impossible to take a full swing. There was only room for tiny little hatchet hacks that weren't very effective. The second, also quite true, was that when the Jeep did fall off of its tenuous perch it was quite likely that the person underneath would be trapped and crushed.

However, Gyp did work at hacking our way free, cursing all the while. After what seemed an unusually long rest break his feet, all that was visible started twitching. I thought he was having a heart attack. No, it was something worse—a bright idea!

When after crawling out, whistling, and Gyp started threading cap and fuse through a bundle of dynamite, I had to ask:

Answer? "I'm going to blow that Mormon Made Mother----ing tree all to smithereens."

"Let me get this straight. You are going to explode three sticks of dynamite less than a foot and half away from the gas tank?"

"Make it one stick."

"Make it none!"

"Who says?"

"I says."

It had to happen one day, I guess, but pulling rank was the end of me being called "Little Boss." From this point on It was a sullen "Yes Sir."

On the way back to town—after getting the Jeep free by a combination of building a ramp, and leverage—I stopped by the dude ranch to report to my boss. Found him at the pool working on an ice-cold pitcher half full of some sort of rum punch. From past experience, I knew this meant I had a 50-50 chance that he would be a playing the role of "dynamic executive." Not wanting to talk about the Gyp situation, I asked instead for a transfer to some other operation, explaining that I had hoped the summer would be a learning experience, and I was stagnating.

Dammed if I didn't get another raise. The next day I started work

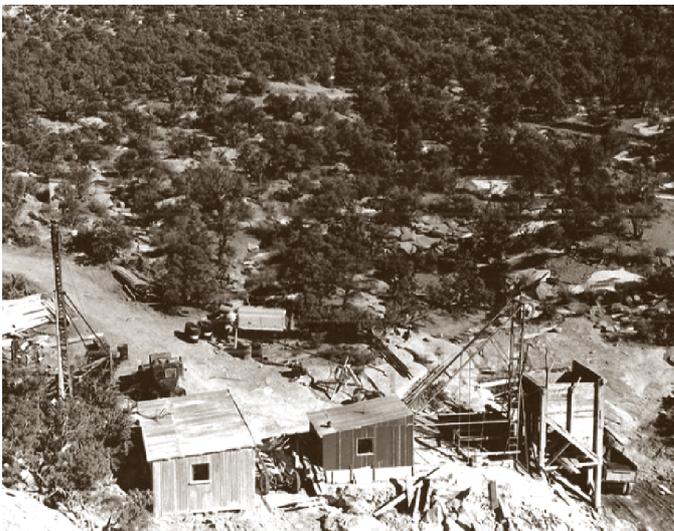
as a helper on a rotary drill rig. The downside of this promotion was a demotion to being “the Kid” once again.

This crew lived on the job site so as to rack up as many hours as possible being that they were paid by the feet drilled each day. I was able to build a bigger paycheck to send home to my mother so she could stick it away in my bank account, but, for once, I earned every penny.

Water was the medium used to flush the cutting from the hole the drill bit carved down through the layers of sandstone. From the sludge that was collected, logged, bagged and tagged for analysis, our geologist supposedly was able to map what the mineral structure happened to be 400 feet below the surface. The inherent problem with this system was, as already mentioned; the desert is a desert on account of a lack of water. We had to haul ours by the tank truckload from a creek 12 miles away. Every drop was precious — and recycled.

What I remember best about this job was the panic attack the boss driller had whenever we hit a crack underground, and the water pump suddenly started making sounds of agony. Without the lubrication of the liquid sludge, the expensive drill bit could become permanently stuck, which would either require “fishing,” or even drilling a new hole to recover a lost bit.

Before all of our reserve supply of water was lost down this un-



derground crack, my responsibility was to grab 80-pound sacks of I know today, as drillers cement, rip the bags open, and pour the stuff down the holes as fast as possible. If that didn't work I would tear the paper sacks into strips and toss them in, along with anything else that happen to be laying

about. One time I sacrificed a rag that happened to be the driller's shirt, Bull Durham bag and all. Did the job, though.

By the weekend, after driving into Moab, I was so tired I wasn't even in the mood for a Coors. I took a bath in the muddy Colorado—it is debatable I was cleaner before entering the water!—and found some shade. Mona noticed my car among the bushes and found me stretched out, nude, on the sand, oblivious to the fact that my shade had moved on as the sun was setting.

The only way I could get rid of her was to go roller-skating. Fortunately, Gyp's son was in town. I agreed to his suggestion to drag Main Street in his Merc, provided Mona could come along. He seemed to like that. She, in turn, seemed to be impressed with his car.

What really capped the evening off was that the son had the same passions as his father. Yup, lost that gal for the lack of a case of dynamite. I left this party to find some matches and never returned. Who was I to interfere in the happiness of this perfectly matched couple?

Didn't sleep too well that night. Maybe it was because I had taken a nap a bit earlier. Maybe it was on account of the fact I had parked my forerunner of a motor home across from what seemed to be a very busy Sheriff's office, figuring it was the safest place in town. Nah, it must have been all the noise of "thunder" reverberating off the natural echo chambers in canyon walls, that broke through the chirping of crickets to rock the town, just as I dozed off once again safely parked with a backward "Sheriff's Office" reflecting in my window.

Figuring it was best I move on again, I drove out to the dude ranch.

"Yes sir. I have enjoyed working on the drill rig, but I still want to get underground. To learn. I want to understand what it is like to be a real miner." I was also beginning to realize that just as a young Birrell was sent to Moab to "start him from the ground up" my 10¢ per hour promotions might have not really earned?

"Kid," the big boss toasted me with his frosted glass, "we need people like you in America. Too many lazy God dammed liberals, pinkos, col-

lecting unemployment,” he said, as he waved me on, clear to Grand Junction, Colorado, to work at the only mining operation American LeDuc had going.

As per the norm for this company, I was supposed to meet my new boss at the fanciest hotel in town. I strolled in as if I owned the place. The desk clerk informed me that if I waited outside he would page my “party” for me. I said I would set in the lobby as I dusted off my jeans.

“Outside.”

“Ok, Ok, I’ll stand.”

Of course, my man didn’t show up for three days, and nobody had told me that the company had an office in town, complete with another cute secretary, where I could have found out what was happening. So, I slept in the hotel’s parking lot. When I was asked to move on—”This is private property”—I grabbed a spot for my Ford, curb side, right in front.

I was down to my last roll of nickels for the parking meter when the desk clerk stuck his head in the window past my feet sticking out, and stated, “I am pleased to inform you that Mr. Bigwig would very much enjoy it if you could join him for breakfast in the Montpelier Room.”

“Ah, yes, my good fellow,” I replied. “Would you care for a stick of Juicy Fruit?”



The reasons for being asked to breakfast were threefold. First, I was asked if I would take photographs of the mining operation. The year before I had started selling wildlife photographs to a national magazine who printed my long captions, so I had brazenly listed “professional photogra-

pher/writer” on my job application.

Looking for published credits to help my “media” career I mentioned that I had exposed a number of film packs with my miniature speed graphic (2 1/4 x 3 1/4) professional press camera. It was agreed, with a handshake, that for turning over my film for development, I was promised the company would supply me with a proof print, the negatives, and a little something extra when published. This is why I don’t have a single photo from this summer. All of my shots of the petroglyphs, Dead Horse Point (now a state park) sandstone arches, Gyp, Mona, and a historic Moab with roller-skating rink were lost forever.

Secondly, as I was to be the new man on the scene, Mr. Bigwig wanted me to “spy.” Must have been the photo connection that started him thinking this way. In the 50’s all spy thrillers involved a camera disguised as a pack of cigarettes, or watch. The company couldn’t quite figure out how the mining contractor they had hired on a cost-plus basis was walking away with so much money.

Request number three was to report back to him why the moral of the whole camp—both company men, and the contractor’s helpers—was so low.

Arriving at the site that afternoon, sitting on top of a load of mine timbers being delivered by a local lumberyard, I had a partial answer to the last question. There stood Heckle and Jeckle.

When it turned out that they were employed by the contractor, and were responsible for unloading the load of lumber I should have had an inkling of the reason for question number two. As it happened, I didn’t catch on until later that most of these timbers never made it underground. The scam was that the contractor ordered far more materials and supplies than needed at the moment, at cost plus 15 percent, and then sold the excess to his friends. Gyp would have loved this highly refined form of fiddling.

This practice of shorting the supplies also had an effect on morale, but it wasn’t the only reason tempers were short. I got quite an education here on how not to run a camp. The workers were divided between

company men, paid by the hour, and contractor's helpers, whose pay was based upon the number of feet drilled, blasted, and mucked each shift. Both were doing the same thing, at a different rate of pay. The contractors lived in an old army squad tent with a cook stove. The company men had a plywood bunkhouse, but nowhere to cook, except over an open fire.

I, the spy—and a “Kid” once again—tried to blend into the background. This was not to be. I was a company man. Worse, Heckle and Jeckle were convinced that I was the reason they had been fired, but couldn't make too big a noise about it as the corporation didn't know that they were indirectly back on the payroll.

And since I was trusted as a “Boy Scout” I had been given the authority to hold the head of a metal measuring tape taught for readings how far, officially for payment by the foot, we had progressed from a mark on the portal, to the hanging wall. This was when the situation turned a bit sneaky. Both “bosses” suggested that in the dark I could fudge a bit

A “joke” stick of dynamite turned up in our campfire. Fortunately, without a blasting cap to set it off, dynamite only burns. There wasn't any evidence that the culprits had been Heckle and Jeckle, but I got a bit of my own back the next day by accidentally tossing a shovel full of muck over my shoulder without looking.

Of course, that meant that I had better keep a watch over my other



shoulder, as working underground was dangerous enough— as we were a bit short of mine timbers. Except for this undeclared war, I loved the work, the carbide lamps we wore on a hard hat, the cool temperature—and I actually learned quite a bit.

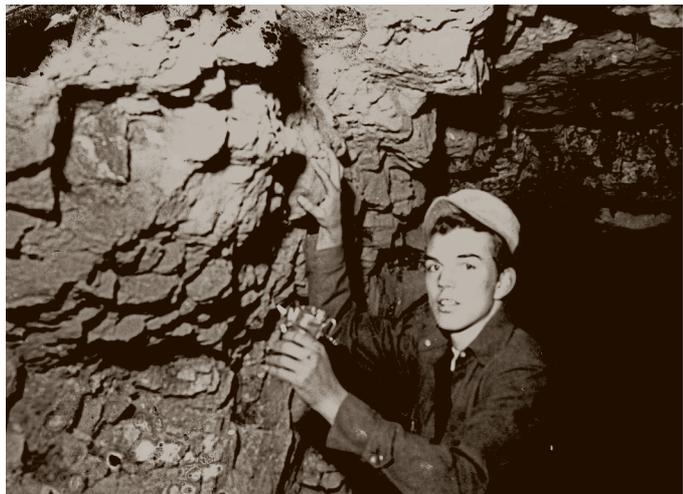
Example: the mine tunnel that ran straight

back into the mountain was called an adit. A tunnel is something that was open to the outside (had a portal) at both ends. We made footage along a drift, or up into a raise or stope, by drilling a series of holes (each with a specific name and purpose) with a jackleg drill driven by compressed air. These were loaded with dynamite and fired in sequence, with the last being the lifters. After the smoke cleared (and writing this I still can taste the moist, acid smell) the broken rock was mucked by shovel into a trammer, or ore cart, to be pushed on rails out to the dump.

Legally, I wasn't supposed to be working underground. I was a minor miner. And my career was suddenly brought to a halt a week before I was scheduled to leave for school, by a slide. Nobody was hurt, but I started asking questions, and adding up six by six timbers. When I pointedly asked the contractor what had happened to all the lumber I had ridden on from town, he asked my minor-miner age. The end result was that my final paycheck was somehow forfeited ??? to this Canadian company—a lesson in deception I should have paid attention to later in life. But, oh well, at the time I was ready to go home anyhow.

I realized it would take little time readjusting to being a teenager, again. But, unfortunately, having struggled so hard over the summer to be a grown-up, there was no going back. Part of my life had been lived, and nothing would ever be the same again.

Anticipating the purchase of my dream MG sports car, I sold the Ford in Grand Junction and hitchhiked home. My mother—bless her anyhow, but it did take me a long time to forgive—had turned my savings over to my ne'er-do-well older brother who had blown it all, unasked, on a '50 Ford convertible, his choice of a cool car. It was cool. The topped leaked. On my first



trip to the beach, showing off with school friends, the engine developed a clunk, and we had to hitchhike home. Two months later I sold the heap for a \$50 down payment. Then the car and buyer disappeared. Eventually, the Los Angeles Police Department sent me a letter suggesting I could pick up my wreck upon the payment of \$110 in storage fees.

Too late! I was in England by this time, a photographer in the U.S. Air Force. I had made up with the Portland girl but in doing so I forgot the Boy Scout motto of “Be Prepared” and became a father at age seventeen. I wasn’t a “kid” no more! To follow along this story line



As President Trump has allowed “radical right superpacs” using the name of their “God of great power” to rule over FCC, FTC, and the USDA and BLM mission statements by simply ignoring rule of law CFRs — lately the question from small magazine publishers has been, “who in government is abetting the censoring free speech editorials?”; and who in their collusion madness of their monopoly of church/government/business, is actually misdirecting e-Mail they do not like, or want the reading public to know.

To answer me, click on Charley Horses rump, and fill in the pop-up form “subject line” yourself, as last week I discovered my pre-addressing was only giving the bastards a key word to deflect by misdirection.

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When the final Chapter is ready for publishing
(hopefully with a happy ending) this completed memoir will
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