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In Praise of Simple Pleasures

by
Grampa Gray

More homespun
philosophy and
humorous verse
from
Grampa Gray, folk poet,
to the
Golden Generation

Another Family Friendly Book from the Family of Man Press

**IN PRAISE OF
SIMPLE PLEASURES**

More silliness for seniors

by

Grampa Gray

The Family of Man Press

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Dedication

To the idiosyncrasies
that define each one of us
and
to the joy and laughter
that only a genuine appreciation of
our own foibles can bring

- *August 1, 2003*

Preface

It's interesting to me how the Preface to a book is always written last - but then, as you'll see in the pages that follow, many strange things interest me.

This is a compilation of pieces from my syndicated and internet column (so forgive the occasional references to 'today', 'this morning', and the like). A few verses, which seemed to be favorites of the readers of my first book* are enclosed here, but mostly it is new.

I prefer the simple life and to write of simple things. Some times I tend to preach a little but that's a perk us old guys always reserves for ourselves. Mostly, I write to make fun and to remind us to slow down and enjoy life's simple pleasures.

With love and best wishes,

Grampa Gray

Simple Pleasures

My verses (I don't do them the honor of calling them poems. I wouldn't want them to get a false sense of identity.) tend to praise the simple pleasures of life. That's what sets the "folk poet" apart from the "real poet" (well, one of the things, at least). Where the real poet sees the beauty in beautiful things and expresses it with wonderful words and the facile flow of stylish, perfect meter, we tend to find (or create!) beauty in the ordinary and use most any legal or semi-legal means of getting it down on paper. And so it is that we are prone to write ODES – words of praise – to those often overlooked (though necessary and indispensable) aspects of our existence.

ODE TO THE FLOOR

How often do we praise our floors?
It's surely not enough.
I'll bet WE'D want kind words galore
If WE had it so rough.

All day it's tromped by sole and heel.
There's mud and grime and grit.
At night, with bare feet it must deal.
(One whiff of them - I'd quit!)

Those floors are there when drab or clean.
They're there when dry or wet.
They're never hateful, bad or mean
And NEVER get upset!

A floor has little fun, ya know.
While doors can swing and sway,
And windows up and down can go,
Where floors ARE they must STAY!

So, floor, though *Ode* is overdue,
To you this pledge I make.
Henceforth, I'll mop or vacuum you
BEFORE I need a rake!

Another thing you need to know about folk poets. Sometimes

we try to slip a sermon through, disguised as a semi-humorous verse.

SMILES AND FROWNS

A smile is, they say, no more
Than frown turned upside down.
As irony, the concept's borne
By sad-faced circus clown.

I know a guy. His name is Gene.
I've never seen him smile.
Perhaps he's sad or just plain mean.
(Or, simply has bad bile!)

To turn HIS frown, its oft been said,
Could only come about
If we would stand him on his head
(And then, I fear, he'd pout!)

The World becomes a pleasant place
Wherever smiles shine.
So, plant a grin upon your face.
May soon reflect in mine.

And then, sometimes, we're just plain daft!!!!

TOO BAD TO NAME # ONE

(As the name implies there must be more.)

To help girls don their pumps (too tight!)
He played trombone each morn.
Somehow it worked! Relieved their plight!!
(Was that the first "shoe horn?")

Surprises!

After I lost my wife - some years ago - I found I had been taking many things for granted. I also found that I had many things to learn if I was to continue enjoying the same creature comforts to which she had accustomed me. My misadventures during that process could fill a book (and probably will). One of the things that I just never questioned was that when I opened my sock drawer there would be clean socks there. I knew how that happened, of course, but I just never had to be bothered with the details. (Eventually I did learn how to wash socks, by the way but that's really not the point of all this.) One day it dawned on me that I probably should have been washing my sweaters – I wore one most every day. So, bolstered by my success with socks, I decided to take on the cardigans.

TRANSFORMATION

I got some special sweater soap.
(Detergent, I suppose.)
I read the label – got the dope
On washing wool and hose.

I set the temperature on cool.
Next poured some liquid in.
And then, with ready sudsy pool,
I slipped my sweater in.

On delicate, I set the knob.
Then flipped the switch to start.
The water swirled. The sweater bobbed.
It gladdened my old heart!

Before too long I heard that buzz
That signaled it was through.
I looked inside and there it was
Appearing as though new.
It was quite clean. A fresh, bright red.
I noticed on thing more.

When held it high above my head –
The arms both drug the floor!

Undaunted, I removed those sleeves.
Its purpose I'd reform.
Quite soon I had – would you believe –
An afghan, cozy warm!

I used that same process to wash a real afghan. It's now my favorite potholder. I'm baffled, but then many things about life mystify me and for that, I'm actually thankful. It gives me things to contemplate and I'm convinced that it's contemplation that keeps my gray matter working – like calisthenics for the brain.

I have always been an enthusiastic sort, I suppose. Whatever comes along, I tend to give it my all. – And each new day is no exception.

MORNING ENTHUSIASM !!!

It's FOUR a.m. Alarm goes off!
Another day is mine!
I wheeze a bit and then I cough.
On toast and fruit, I dine.

I'm always eager to arise!
My day, with care, I map!
By FIVE a.m. I realize
I'm ready for a nap!!

Progress?

I'm not against progress. Sometimes I'm against the way some folks define progress, but the real thing is fine with me. A trap, which I've found it's easy to fall into, is to assume just because it's new, it's progress. I have lots and lots to say on this topic so I just thought I should forewarn you.

Today I'm considering, not so much the worth of a new approach, as I am disconcerted that something I've been comfortable with – something I just expect will occur – has gone by the proverbial wayside.

THE 'CLUNK' FROM BALL ON BAT

A neighbor lad decided that
His game, I should attend.
So off we went, with ball and bat,
The afternoon to spend.

I thought back to MY baseball days
(A century ago!)
The "clunk" of bats. The double plays.
The shortstop's winning throw!

So, I was all prepared to hear
That "clunk" when ball met bat.
Instead, I heard a "clink" - quite queer.
I asked. "What gives with that?"

I was informed that bats, these days,
Are metal – no more wood.
Was disappointed that the sac-
red "clunk" was gone for good.

I realize that time moves on,
But, truly, my heart sunk,
To think those days of old were gone
When bats on balls went "clunk".
So, I drowned my sorrows by picking flowers

CONNECTION?

I looked into the pansy's face.
Its beauty was sublime.
And as I placed it in a vase,
I think it looked at mine.

Soon, I was feeling better. It led me to remember that there
ARE some universal truths, which never seem to change.

PERSPECTIVE?

The aardvark never tops our list
As cutest, cuddly, pet.
But Mother Aardvark thinks we've missed
The best SHE'S ever met!

TOO BAD TO NAME # 3

(This one works best when someone reads it to you.)

I know a cat that is replete
With odd genetic flaws.
Monthly, sprouts new hands and feet –
I'll bet that gives him pause.

Pointless Topics

I was, what you might have called, a pell-mell youngster. As a result, I was always and forever visiting Doc to get some new gash stitched up, or cinders removed from an embarrassing part of my anatomy. Rather than deaden the area, wise old Doc would engage me in conversation, which required that my full attention be directed to complex, if often pointless, topics. I awoke the other night with one such topic on my mind. If you had a glass of water, and each day you drank half of what was left, would it really last forever? It was kept in an evaporation-proof container. (Why do I think most of you have never lost sleep over that particular question?)
Last night I awoke constructing an . . .

ODE TO NOTHING

The HOLE is neither much maligned
Nor is it often praised.
When young, its worth, was on my mind
As into one I gazed.

A hole is nada, zilch – it's nil,
And yet, somehow, it's there!
They're just composed of nothing, still
I saw them everywhere!!

A donut couldn't be the same
Without its center hole.
And couldn't have a B-Ball game
Without a hole for goal.

Without some holes we couldn't breath
Nor could we see or hear.
We couldn't have a Christmas wreath
Nor drink the New years Cheer.

It's still a myst'ry, I'll admit,
How NOTHING does SO WELL.
(Like, some folks claim I have no wit.
And yet, this stuff sure sells!)

So, when your self esteem takes leave,
Your plans have hit some hitch,
You must remember, Friend, that ev-
En "nothings" have their nitch.

For no apparent reason, we will now leap from 'nothing'
to 'too much'.

EAT WELL!

Eat this, and that, and those, they say.
(AND such advice abounds!)
If ate a bit of each, each day -
I'd weight 500 pounds!

And then one more just for the heck of it!

TOO BAD TO NAME NUMBER TWO

The stone-age bench thought life quite bland.
Such boredom couldn't bear.
Took up guitar and joined a band.
Became first "Rockin' Chair."

I'm truly sorry about that. And, oh yes, about that half a
glass of water thing. It's my studied opinion that it would not
last forever. Eventually, the time would have to come when
there would be only one molecule of water left. Not being able
to split that and still have water, the game would be over.
(Perhaps you see it a different way.)

Never Done

If everything worked out according to plan life would be pretty dull, I suppose. The challenge comes in getting the plan to work – fixing it, remodeling it, redesigning it. When I was nine, my parents gave me permission to fix myself a room up in the attic. I was overjoyed! I drew up plans. I made out a budget. I secured material. I started to work. I lived in that room for the next seven years and you know what – it never quite got finished. I'd just about be there and I'd get some grand new idea. Like me, it was a work in progress. Had it ever become finished I'd have surely been disappointed. For me, the fun is in the doing, not in the having.

FINAGLING

When things don't fit exactly right,
Or need to fix some breaks,
Or faced with unfamiliar plight –
Finageling it takes!

When six, I broke a cotter key
That held the wheel on tight.
I used a safety pin, you see.
Finageling just right.

I asked her for an ice cream treat,
But Mom's "no" came full-blown.
So fell off curb (with tears, complete!)
Finageled me a cone!

The bike for sale was used, but fine.
I offered half his price.
He caved and soon that bike was mine.
Finageling, so nice!

Applied for job at grocery store.
“Experience?” Had none.
Sweet-talked his wife. Began at four.
Finageling well done.

I loved my Ginny girl, you see,
But feared a “No” I’d get,
So, got HER to propose to ME!
Finageling? You bet!

And now as I draft ‘almost rhymes’
With ‘almost meter’, here,
I pass them off as verse sublime!
Finageling, I fear!

I know ‘Finagling’ has just three
Small syllables within,
But in this piece, need four, you see –
Fin-a-gel-ing agin!

Finagling not only occurs with words and ideas but it also
works on our minds. What we think we hear may not be what
was meant.

THE FARMER’S PLIGHT

Was talking to this farmer guy -
He said his corn was bad.
I asked if it was going to die.
He said he wished it had.

I thought his answer rather odd,
But figured he should know.
Turned out ‘twas not his corn in sod,
But corn upon his toe.

A Little Fear's Okay

By the time I was twelve, I enjoyed the shadows parading across my walls at night. They would become characters in stories I would spin. At five, however, it had been an entirely different story. If you've ever been in the position of trying to convince a youngster that a monster was actually a shadow or a branch brushing the roof, you understand. It wasn't that I didn't believe my Dad – I had never known him to lie to me. It was just that I did have to wonder how he could be so fully misinformed about the nightlife going on beneath my bed. To truly understand another's fear, I suppose we need to have one or two of our own.

A LITTLE FEAR IS NOT ALL BAD

“A little fear is not all bad”
My Dad would reassure,
As trembling in my boots I had
Some Ogres to endure.

If fear is all this great, I thought,
And if it will enhance
My character, (as told) it ought
Not make me wet my pants!

I banished scary monsters that
Once lived beneath my bed,
By sleeping on the floor – on mat –
“Quite clever,” Daddy said.

I figured they had moved into
My closet – locked quite tight.
At least, in there, were out of view,
Reducing nighttime fright.

So, I decided (when still small)
If scared MY son would be,
MY nighttime terrors I'd recall
And let him sleep with me!

But when I came to be a Dad,
And, Son, his fears revealed?
"A little fear is not all bad,"
Became the phrase I'd wield!

I realized that if I had
Not faced those fears head on,
That, as a 30 year old Dad,
They STILL might not be gone!

I've noticed that as folks grow older their boogie men are less often monsters and more often those little irritations that seem to develop a life of their own and just won't go away. (I'm not referring to one's *children* – well not consciously, at least.)

A PEBBLE IN MY SOLE/SOUL

While walking yesterday, I got
A BOULDER in my shoe.
Well, actually, of course, was not
A boulder – can't fool you.

'Twas just a pebble – all quite wee,
But still and all, it put
A terribly painful hurt on me.
I thought 'twould kill my foot!

Some things in life are like that stone –
Just tiny, non-events
Until we let them get all blown
Beyond what's common sense.

So, when life's pebbles make me pout,
I take my shoe off and
Pretend to dump the villains out –
Then life, once more, is Grand!

Okay, now, pay CLOSE attention or this one will escape
you. If you forgot your Ginkgo Biloba this morning you may
want to just skip on ahead.

MISSING

The goose down, bedtime, head support
Was missing from its place.
So, Perry Mason went to court.
'Twas called, "The Pillow Case."

KIPLING

When teacher asked 'bout Kipling, got
Not one young hand to stir.
At last, one boy said, "We do not
Know how to kipple, Sir."

Facts?

I read a lot. I'm considering stopping that. One month you read that eggs should be banished from diets throughout the planet. The next, they're good for you. I recently consulted three medical tables showing how much I should weigh for my height. They all told me something different. (You know which one I chose to believe, of course!) Wine is bad for your heart. Wine is good for your heart. Coffee is a no no. Coffee will keep you from getting some awful condition. It's enough to make a grown grampa gray. (That would be an intentional pun if anyone is interested.)

REDEMPTION OR DECEPTION?

I truly am appreciative
Of new technologies.
This era, grand, in which I live,
Seems eager, me, to please.

The chlorine in my water kills
Those bad bacteria,
And fluoride, like some magic pills,
Quells tooth hysteria.

But, recently, I've learned that these
Two chemicals may harm
My skin and brain (perhaps my knees!).
That caused me great alarm!

Motivated by that news
I searched the web to see
If I could find some helpful clues
To solve this irony.

One filter for the chlorine and
A fluoride tank, quite small,
Were all my problems would demand.
Quite soon they were installed.

At last, of chemicals, I'm free,
Though feel I've been deceived.
Those dangers weren't explained to me.
'Bout that, I'm still quite peeved!!

I'll be some soothed, though, if I find
This, too, works in reverse,
And that the fat on which I've dined
WON'T land me in the hearse!!

Some (well, many actually) say my sense of humor is often a bit OFF the wall. I'm never quite sure what that means. Perhaps that it doesn't qualify as graffiti? (Not being ON the wall, you see.) I wonder, though, would that be because it's too good or too bad? (As if to offer proof, he plunges ahead.)

DINNER WARE

The older clerk in dinnerware
Stood grouching 'bout a plate.
I'll give her this. She seemed to care,
On what her clients ate.

"Perhaps it could be fixed," – her wish –
"Some glue put underneath."
Turned out 'twas not about a dish,
But 'bout her store bought teeth!

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Last name was 'Nomer'. Went by 'Sal'.
Had never snagged a groom.
At funeral, preacher called her 'Val'.
Misnomer, I presume.

Should that last one escape you, count your blessings and just move on.

Unusual Heros

There are so many unsung heroes. It's truly hard to know where to begin when saluting them. The farmer who grew the corn, the guy who made it into Cornflakes, the driver who delivered it to the store, the stock boy who put it on the shelf in the middle of the night, the clerk who rang it up for me, the folks who let me make my living writing this stuff so I could purchase it – the list goes on and on. I figure somewhere along the line, somebody probably said thanks to all those folks. That leaves all those *non-folks* for me to worry about. (Did I hear you say, "Oh, Oh!")

ODE TO THE MANHOLE COVER

(Also known as 'Old M.C.')

Those manhole covers just abound.
They're on most every street.
I've noticed they are always round.
With no one, they compete.

There are no younger covers that
Are out to take their hole,
And never heard a cover fret
'Bout downsizing, you know.

Their one responsibility
Is just that hole to fill.
Since that's their sole ability
They really fit the bill.

Each day they're trampled by the herd
Of people who pass by.
Fast cars! Big trucks! But still no word
Of malice from those guys.

When to be tromped on, seems MY lot,
I think about M.C.
Like him, most days, this life I've got
Just suits me to a tee!

On some occasions, though, when things appear to be taking a turn I'm not real happy about, I find that it is RFT (reality fudging time!). So long as I know I'm doing it, I reckon I haven't yet slipped over the edge. (Though that, too, might be interesting!)

CHARTS!

Doc said, "You weigh too much! You'll die!"
"It's not good for your heart."
And though I trusted him, still I
Consulted height/weight chart.

I studied those directions well.
They said to find my height
Then find my age and it would tell
The weight for me that's right.

BY 30 POUNDS THAT CHART MISLED!!
So tried the other way.
According to my **WEIGHT** it said
I should be six feet eight.

And so, you see my problem. Right?
It's **NOT** my weight but how
I merely suffer from **LESS** height
Than I'm in need of now!

Back to those manhole covers. I once asked a street guy why they are always round. He said if they were any other shape they'd be able to fall in if they got tipped up on edge. Round can't do that. A pretty clever fella, that manhole cover inventor.

Pet Peeves

I spent a good deal of time as a boy wondering why grown-ups were so dumb. Not unintelligent dumb, just plain old common sense dumb. On a rainy day I'd ask them what color the sky was and they'd say blue. (Never once saw one look up to check.) I asked why they spent so much time digging out the beautiful little dandelions. They said because they'd take over the world. (Sure would be terrible to have a beautiful world!) Why couldn't I swim at the gravel pit? It's too deep! (I only ever used the top few feet of water when I swam. How deep it was didn't seem relevant.) So, you'll forgive me if from time to time I go on about the older generation.

MUD PUDDLES

“What's that?” I'm sure I asked when young,
“A mud puddle, my Son.”
And though I probably held my tongue,
The matter was not done.

I saw no mud at all in it!
'Twas filled with water, clear.
The cats and dogs all drank from it.
Misnomer, I did fear.

I asked old Doc and then the mayor
What THEY saw in that hole.
No better, though, with them did fare –
From both, “It's mud,” was told.

I wondered how such smart old guys
Could really think 'twas mud.
In their defense, perhaps old eyes
Saw everything as crud!

I hoped when I got old and gray,
An open mind I'd keep
'Bout things thought true from yesterday -
New data I would seek.

So, now that I AM old and gray,
And walk when rain is through,
I thank those puddles 'long my way
While "truths" from youth, review!

As long as I'm on my soapbox today, I suppose you can put up with one more pet peeve. Maybe that's the wrong term. I just get fed up with people who sit on their duffs and complain that the world is going to the dogs. (Especially my peers!)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Deedle, deedle dumpling. My son Dan.
He stole a pig and away he ran.
When I was young he'd a got a swat!
But these days? Four to six he got!

Deedle, deedle, dumpling. My son Joe.
Oughta be some other way to go.
Instead of locking kids in jail
Perhaps should study why they fail.

It's not a very pleasant verse.
But can't sit by while things get worse.
Each week if we'd all volunteer
Could share our wisdom, love and cheer.

Deedle, deedle, dumpling. New friend Roy.
He fills my life with hope and joy.
Has stopped his stealing recently.
'Cause, says he WANTS to be like ME!

A person can get too serious I suppose. How about a little relief?

HENNY PENNY?

The sky is falling! The sky is falling!
So run, now, for your life!
I told them, "Just a minute!
Have to first, check with my wife!"

YAWN! YAWN!

The Loafers Club lolled on the stoop.
All fun stuff they ignored.
They called the leader of their group.
"The Chairman of the Bored."

(I know. More relief than you wanted!!)

Certainties

I've been thinking about the deepest mysteries of life this morning. Have you noticed how uncomfortable some folks become when there isn't an immediate answer to a question, or an obvious solution to a problem? Often, it seems, they'd rather hitch onto most any answer, however far fetched, than to continue feeling anxious over not knowing. I'm lucky, I guess, because I have always been absolutely fascinated by the unknown. Instead of a chill, it gives me a thrill – something new and mysterious out there to contemplate! I realize this isn't everybody's cup of tea. In fact, you may well prefer facts, truth and certainty yourself. That's fine, but today, just humor me, okay?

THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

Now, which came first, do YOU believe,
The egg or chick full grown?
Became, when younger, my pet peeve –
Would not leave me alone!

This controversy – eons old –
Just seems to never end.
Proponents argue, loud and bold!
Their point of view, defend.

It's like so many times, I 'spose,
When we can't understand.
Folks choose up sides 'cause, goodness knows,
SOME answer we DEMAND!

I've long been fascinated, friends,
By how most folks have felt
That we must choose from just TWO ends
For problems we are dealt.

“Two sides to every issue,” we
Have heard since time began.
Perhaps, to search for TEN would be
A more productive plan.

Now, though the question did seem moot,
My being I immersed
And solved this chicken-egg dispute –
Found eggplant had come first!!!

Speaking of disputes, I have had a running dispute for
sixty plus years and only recently have I determined a
solution.

COB WEBS

I was intrigued, when very young
How cob webs came to be.
In nearly every corner hung
A lacy web to see.

One day I'd watch Mom clean each room,
But next day when I'd look,
Those webs she'd taken with her broom,
Were back in every nook.

So, I began a house-wide quest
(Turned into quite a job!)
To find his most elusive guest –
That omnipresent cob.

I figured cobs must be real small –
Invisible, perhaps.
I'd capture them for once and all
By setting cob-tight traps.

I placed my traps beneath the chairs
And on piano top.
I put them almost everywhere –
Those cobs I'd surely stop.

Next morning when I checked to see
How many I had caught,
The traps were empty – Goodness Me!
A mystery, I thought!

I asked around, but no one knew
Just how a cob appeared.
It stumped my Dad and Grampa, too.
“I’ll never know,” I feared.

Those cobs and I fought sixty years.
I blitzed them with my mop,
Bombarded them with nasty jeers.
Those cobs, though, would not stop!

I’ve mellowed now ‘gainst my pet peeve.
Those corners THEY can own,
If they will just agree to leave
My rocking chair alone!

Wonders?

A child's mind is wonderful. It never feels compelled to be tied to where it actually is at the moment. Atop the picnic table, one can be climbing the World's tallest mountain. Underneath that table – in the biggest, darkest, cave imaginable. Turn it upside down and you're a pirate on a tall-masted sailing ship, seeking adventure and buried treasure on a desert island. Somewhere along the way, so many folks seem to lose that ability to let their imaginations soar with the wind. I sincerely urge any of you in that predicament, to try it again! Sometimes great adventures just come knocking at your door.

ONCE UPON A TIME . . .

Though started like most other days,
All that was soon to change.
When e'er recalled, I'm still amazed!
Events were very strange!!

A little box came in the mail.
A jar inside – quite large,
Containing pills I'd bought on sale.
(I'd used my Master Charge!)

“A Wonder Pill,” the label read.
Take four each day and you
Will find you have a clearer head,
And energy, brand new!

I gulped them down and sure enough,
I started feeling strong.
I gardened, did all kinds of stuff!
Had pep that whole day long.

It seemed I didn't have a care.
And mirror did reveal
That I was sporting darker hair.
Those pills were quite a deal.

'Twas great, the energy I'd found!
I felt like newborn pup!
Then, soon, I heard this ringing sound!
Alarm clock! I woke up!!

From kids minds to kids tummies.

CAR SICK

I always had mixed feelings 'bout
Long car trips, when a boy.
I liked them, but there'd be no doubt,
That brown bag I'd employ!

It seemed that it was worse for me
When reading or in back.
Ten miles down the road I'd be
A reachin' for that sack!

Then Mamma came upon a cure
That queasy feeling zaps.
I don't know why, but worked for sure,
She fed me ginger snaps!

It's true! I'd eat some 'fore we'd go,
A few along the way,
And I'd become a trav'ling pro –
Could ride all night and day.

Now, even yet, when on long trips
There, looking at the maps,
And feel my stomach start those flips,
I reach for ginger snaps.

Unfortunately it also
Does work the other way.
When home, and eat one snap or so –
I'm carsick rest the day!!

Memories

I so often see things that remind me of other, seemingly unrelated things. Television has become a great source for such inspiration. Saturday mornings, little blue men remind me of race relations. Ads for indestructible knives remind me of adolescent boldness paled by old age. Well, you get the idea. Hardly any commercial escapes my twisted view of reality. I see passion in oven cleaners, hope in ads from real estate brokers, and the futility of bickering in political spots. I particularly find the animated commercials a bountiful source for such comparisons. For example do you remember . . .

THOSE SCRUBBING BUBBLES

I love that Scrubbing Bubble ad.
What happy little guys!
They work so hard! Are never sad!
His very best, each tries!

You talk about enjoying work –
They grin from ear to ear!
No dirty scum they'll leave to lurk.
A spotless tub. No fear!

Then once their job is done, with glee,
They hustle down the drain,
So proud, content, fulfilled, you see,
You'll not hear one complain.

I hope, when "down that drain" I go,
That, like those bubbles, I,
Will, too, be proud, because I'll know,
I gave LIFE my best try!!

Speaking of one thing reminding me of other unrelated things, here's one of my all time favorites.

SISSIES!

They're sissies – all these boys today!
They've never chopped the wood,
Or used the fork to pitch the hay
Or in the corner, stood!

They're sissies – all these boys today!
D'you think they'll read a book?
They'd rather hang with friend and play –
At girlie pictures, look!

They're sissies – all these boys today!
Allowances doled out.
And when they work, they'll want the pay
Of well-trained men, no doubt!

They're sissies – all these boys today!
You think they'll walk to school?
They'll take your ride, but seldom say
A thank you - that's not cool.

They're sissies – all these boys today!
And soon THEY'LL run the show!
If that's not scary folks, I'd say
“What is, I do not know!”

There's something you should understand
- This verse, just read by you –
Well, it was written* by my Grand-
Pa, back in 1902!!

(* paraphrased here, of course.)

Differences of Opinion

Have you noticed how exactly the same phrase can mean quite different things on different occasions, or when said to different people? “How interesting!” “Is that so?” ”That’s really hard to believe!” “I’d love to, but ...,” “If only I had known.” Well, I’m sure you get the drift of what I’m thinking, here. When said to me, I may now interpret some of those phrases somewhat differently than I did back in my younger, more vigorous years. It’s fun to pull the leg of those who spew those less than sincere platitudes.

LOOKIN’ GREAT!

You’re really lookin’ great, my friend,
We say to babies new.
And mean they’re cute from end to end,
As slobber there on you!

You’re really lookin’ great, my friend,
To ten year old we say,
As o’er the fence that ball he sends,
And wins the game that day.

You’re really lookin’ great, my friend,
We say to scout at door,
As in her uniform she vends
Those cookies – “Please buy more!”

You’re really lookin’ great, my friends,
On prom night, couple’s told.
We snap their picture, then we send
Them off to boogie bold!

You’re really lookin’ great, my friends,
We tell new bride and mate,
No need on that day to pretend,
Their beauty radiates!

You're really lookin' great, my friend,
Folks say to me today.
"Well thanks! Sure hope so," I contend,
"Took years to get this way!!!"

When I was young, I determined that some of the things
I thought looked great, the grown ups didn't see in that same
way.

THE DANDELION FUSS

The dandelion was to me
A plant quite marvelous!
I did not understand, you see,
The Dandelion Fuss!

Each Spring the grown-ups in my life
Waged war against these plants.
They'd arm themselves with hoe and knife
To quell my friend's advance.

I s'posed adults just didn't stop
To see how great they look
As Summer's magic rug atop
The hill above the brook.

In Spring they cloaked that hill in green.
Then soon with yellow hue,
And later, fluffy clouds were seen
As seeds, they'd puff for you.

I loved Mom's dandelion greens.
Made salads quite delish!
With dressing, radishes and beans,
A very tasty dish!

But still, they whacked each blossom down
And dug up every root.
Left yards with small, round patches – brown –
A very strange dispute.

While watching grown-ups senselessly
This futile cause pursue,
It suddenly came clear to me,
Adults do dumb things, too!!!

Speaking of dumb things adults do (well, one really old
adult, at least) . . .

A TRUE HANDICAP

The golf ball veered to garden – thick.
He had no wedge in grip.
So, used a tater on a stick.
The first ‘potato chip’!!!

CITIES

I love large cities, - think they’re great -
The smells, the crowds, the din -
They help me to appreciate
The small towns where I’ve been!

Admonitions

"Keep your shoulder to the wheel."
"Stand straight and tall and proud."
"Hunker down when, beat, you feel."
"Keep head up in the clouds."

To do them all at once is not
An admonition, fair!
'Twould seem a chiropractic plot
So spines will need their care.

I'm a firm believer that a positive mental attitude makes all the difference in the quality of one's life. It's not the possessions, nor the people, nor the place, nor the time. It's how you choose to think about these things. One can think himself into despair or elation, loneliness or friendship, consternation or comfort. I opt for elation, friendship and comfort - how about you! Oh, I know that losses occur, and pains creep in and skills falter, but that's just the way it is, so why lose heart? We have to roll with the punches, pick ourselves up by the bootstraps, hunker down, and use any other trite, little axiom that may help.

IT'S JUST A STATE OF MIND!

When feared those Trolls beneath my bed,
And Monsters - every kind,
"Lay back, relax," my Daddy said,
"It's just a state of mind!"

When six, was asked to speak a verse,
Was scared! At first declined!
But could do well if I'd rehearse -
It's just a state of mind!

At sixteen, had my first BIG date.
We'd dance and then we'd dine.
No worry! Knew it would be great!
It`s just a state of mind!

Then came that first big interview.
A super job to find!
They liked me, as I knew they'd do!
It's just a state of mind!

Was wed. Had fam'ly. Life was swell -
Youth's worries left behind.
By then, I knew I'd do quite well!
`Twas just a state of mind!

When can't remember, now, you see,
I still can use that line,
In truth, my failing memory -
It's just a state of mind!!!

A POTPOURRI OF BUMPER STICKERS

The bumper sticker, folks, which I
Find pleases my old soul
Announces that their kid (with pride!)
Is on the honor roll!

The one that bothers me the most
Condonos a violent goal.
"My kid can beat up yours," it boasts
"If he's on honor roll."

And then there is one at which I can't help but chuckle
even though its tone reflects the violent side of our culture.

The hill was steep. On truck ahead
The message was foreboding.
Its time-worn bumper sticker read,
"Keep Honking! I'm reloading!!!"

Influences

The old country doctor in the small town where I grew up was one of four men who had a major impact on me as a child. He was very bright, very gruff (on the outside) and very pessimistic. My Dad was a pussy cat and the world's original optimist. Parson was an absolutist – he knew the Truth and would see no other. Arnie was a gentle, wise, uneducated mountain man who had more common sense than all if it you can find today in the Senate and House combined. Mom was a good balance for me – a realist, I suppose. They all colored my outlook on living and people and even . . . Pencils!

THE DARKER SIDE OF PENCILS

The pencil, yellow, thin and sleek
A friend to one and all.
The first thing that we writers seek
When inspirations call.

You'll find them at the telephone,
The calendar and desk.
Some stand in holders. Some lay prone.
They wait for your request.

The pencil is ubiquitous!
You see them every day.
(Except at moments when you must
Obtain one right away.)

My pencils have a darker side.
They're pessimists, you see.
That red eraser, worn in pride,
EXPECTS mistakes from me.

Compare the pencil with the pen,
Whose optimistic take
Assumes great skill of us, my friend.
It ne'er expects mistakes.

I wonder, when I shun the pen,
And to the pencil flee,
If that, perhaps, suggest that THEN
The pessimist is ME!

I think this next one shows how well I have been able to combine the optimist and pessimist within myself. (Then again, it just may be a lame way of trying to tie things together!)

BISCUITS AND JELLY

I know that jam and jelly treats
Are really not the same,
But how they're different truly beats
Me. (Isn't that a shame?)

And then there's biscuit, bun and roll.
Again, I'm mystified.
Enough to aggravate one's soul.
Severely shake one's pride.

It's just expected that I'LL be
Quite able to define
Such subtle nuances, you see.
My worth is on the line!!!

So when at meals fresh bread I want
- A biscuit? Roll? A bun? –
I've found that just to point and grunt
Will usually get me one!!

WARTS ARE BEAUTIFUL?

I saw a toad the other day –
Each wart a work of art,
At least that's what his Mom would say.
Mom's view kids with their heart.

The Search

Charged up the hill. Was breathing fast!
The roses smelled quite swell!
But on my way back down - as passed,
No longer could them smell.

As I'd come back (it dawned on me)
Was whistling a tune.
So, learned this lesson, don't you see,
Can't smell and whistle, too.

This truth I've gleaned from near and far:
When joy may seem elusive,
Your search may be for things that are
Quite mutually exclusive!!!

Sometimes it seems that we will just never be able to reach our goals. We try one approach and then another. When the answer finally comes, I'm often amazed at how I could have ever missed it. My first baby-sitting job, at thirteen, was with a three year old new to our small community. He and I really hadn't spent any time together, so I was unprepared for his `elusive' speech pattern. All evening he tugged on my shirttail asking for "A dink ardy and a tantitich." I plied him with popcorn, an apple, lemonade and peppermint candy - all of which he readily accepted - but continued his original cryptic request. When his parents came home they translated for me. The lad had been requesting "a drink of water and a sandwich." It immediately made sense. I'd be ready next time. Nest time, however, his request was for "A balo and a tuticonner." I guess you just can't expect to win them all. (No, not even his parents could figure that one! I have this image of him, as a grown man, roaming the streets in search of his balo and tuticonner. I certainly hope he finds it.)

INKWELLS

When I was back in school, there on
Each desk and ink well came.
These days, I hear, they, re mostly gone.
I think that's just a shame.

Though in my day there was no ink
In inkwells, they were fine
For keeping all those things you'd think
You just might need sometime.

A place to keep a penny, bright,
A jellybean or two.
(Those, had to hide from teacher's sight,
Or'd be the hall, for you!)

On Friday afternoons we would
Clean out our desks each week.
Not ink wells, thought, "Teach" understood -
They're private - she'd not peek!

I miss that inkwell at this stage
Of life, and that's no bunk.
`Cause boys, no matter what their age,
Still have their private junk!

Misunderstanding

A very wise teacher once cautioned me never to assume that what I meant by a given word, would, in fact, be the exact, same thing another person meant by that very same word. We each have at least slightly different definitions that may, on occasion, make communication challenging, if not impossible. A case in point!

BEAUTIFUL BOOKS

I've always treasured books, my friend,
So, when I had a son,
That same esteem I tried to send
To him, and thought it done.

I taught him books were beautiful.
His books he did adore!
So why then, did this prank, he pull,
That day when he was four?

'Twas Father's Day, I do recall.
I sat to read my book.
I found all pages, crayon-adorned.
Had son's artistic look.

What could have prompted this display?
Perhaps some unmet need?
It must have taken half a day
To do this terrible deed!

I called him in! He had that look –
Expectancy, full blown!
“We need to talk about this book,”
I said, in solemn tone.

He climbed into my lap, just full
Of smiles, then did say,
“I tried to make it beautiful
For you on Father’s Day!!

He kissed my cheek and hugged me tight.
“D’you like my present, Dad?”
“It’s Great! The colors are so bright!
Such beauty! Thank you, lad!”

I had some misunderstandings of my own when I was his
age.

LINT

This ‘lint thing’ used to puzzle me.
It really wasn’t fair!
I tried to figure out, you see,
Why lint was everywhere!

I understood that lint was white
And it was found on clothes.
And when that lint came into sight,
With Mom, it came to blows!

When after washing clothes all clean
And drying them outside,
My Mom became a lint machine,
From her, it could not hide.

She picked it off and blew it off.
With masking tape, attacked!
To her, your hat, one had to doff.
Mom’s method was exact!

She used that same approach each week.
Results, though, ne'er improved.
Why didn't she, NEW methods seek
When failures, old one proved?

Now something odd was going 'round.
Mom WAS too smart for this!
The answer, even I had found.
How had Mom gone amiss?

I figured lint must soil quick –
Mom washed it weekly, see.
But lint, from clothes, she'd need not pick,
If washed them sep'rately!!

I wasn't always the understanding father I wish I had
been.

GROW UP!

One day I'd had it with my son!
I flew into a rage!
"Seems all you ever want is fun.
Grow up and act your age!"

"Life's tough out there, Son, don't you see?
Where is your spunk and drive?"
He had the nerve to say to me,
"But Dad, I'm only five!"

Little Frustrations

I just installed a new kind of showerhead. It's a water filter and showerhead all in one little unit that must not extend more than four inches from the pipe. Will wonders never cease? I'm not a giant of a man but seldom does the height of a showerhead seem high enough for me. Now at last I'm set. And just as remarkable, it came in a box that I could actually open without machete or blowtorch.

I think it's these *little* frustrations - not the big ones - that get a guy down. I suppose that's because the big ones we take steps to handle - we solve them, or change something, or we get a new whatever it is. With the little ones, though, it's just easier to live with them. I think it takes a toll on us. So, today, I'm waxing poetic about the showerhead and the box - certainly unsung heroes in our hectic age.

ODE (ALMOST) TO THE SHOWER HEAD

The shower head - a grand device.
It takes a simple stream
Of water and divides it nice
Into a bather's dream.

A hundred tiny streams appear,
So gentle, warm and soft,
Providing elegance - quite sheer!
To it, our hats are doffed.

If empty plastic head that rains
Can thus, become a star,
I wonder why MY head with brains
Has left me here at par!!!

ODE TO THE BOX

Consider, friend, the lowly box.
It does its job so well,
As carries crystal, cups and clocks,
It's praises, I must tell!

Consider, friend, the lowly box.
Can be both large and small.
Can carry single pair of sox
Or statue, wide and talk.

Consider, friend, the lowly box.
Can carry many things,
From locks to frocks and even rocks –
What e'er you need, it brings.

Consider, friend, the lowly box.
I got one wrapped with flair!
Inside, I found no hocks or woks.
Bore nothing save some air.

THAT box and I, I must agree,
Are much alike. (Do Tell?)
Because the both of us, you see,
Do *nothing very* well!!!

It has taken a good deal of courage and just the right time
to release this next verse from its folder. This, I am afraid, is
that time.

IT IS A SCANDAL!

It's disconcerting I must say
To have to buy that SHAMpoo.
I'd think them smart enough today
To manufacture REALpoo!!

Go Forth and Have A Ball!!!

I have two rollicking, inherently hilarious topics on my mind today- disappointment and hatred. (I'll bet that alerts your funny bone!)

Recently, I gave a program to a group of octogenarians at a retirement home. I had dinner with them first and there was time to mingle and listen. I was taken by the two overriding concerns I heard. So many seemed disappointed in some way about the course their lives had taken. They were the hand wingers in the group. Another sector was concerned about the increase in hate and hate groups they had witnessed during the past twenty years and felt helpless to do anything about the situation. For the disappointed group I had some advice. For the hate-concerned group, I could mostly just agree and commiserate.

THE ROBIN IS MY TEACHER

I watched a robin hard at work
On scrawny worm, one day.
She tugged and pulled and gave a jerk!
But still it got away.

Undaunted, that young robin dared
To find another spot –
A juicy worm lay sunning there,
A breakfast, grand, soon got!

Disappointments – safe to say –
Are disappointing times.
Or is it, maybe, just the way
We choose to view those signs?

When things don't turn out as we planned
The END may NOT be near.
Perhaps, it's just a chance, quite grand,
For some new course to steer.

The one, who mopes around, I've seen,
When some chance slips away,
Becomes a "pity-me-machine"
Which keeps success at bay.

Since DIS-appointments (when allowed)
Depress us one and all,
Think "RE-appointment" clear and loud!
Go forth and have a ball!

I guess I'm saying we can either define something as a disappointment OR as a sign along our path that says its time to try something new or different or even to go after the old goal in some new way. I have had the good fortune to grow to be an old man, so, along the way *you know* everything *hasn't* turned out as I had thought or even hoped, it would. Now, I find myself utilizing the Internet (a concept that was fully unfathomable in my youth) in my attempt to spread some cheer throughout my world (a new approach to a life-long goal).

On the other topic I don't have the answer – only a caution. To fight hate by hating those who hate is undoubtedly NOT the way to fix things.

A HISTORY LESSON

I noticed, when was still quite young,
That folks all filled with hate,
Our history books ne'er list among
The figures, truly great.

I guessed those haters couldn't read
Or surely, they'd have seen,
That those committing hate-filled deeds
Are held in LOW esteem.

We have some faults – this human race.
A number seem innate.
But some take teaching to embrace –
The worst of these is hate.

Sometimes it's not enough to give
Our love to hate-filled guys,
But seeing the alternative –
Believe we need to try.

Robins and history, of course, are not our only teachers.
Personal experience is probably the most interesting. And
most interesting of all is how our perspectives can change over
the years.

STAIR CLIMBING

To climb those stairs was fun for me!
As lad, ne'er got my fill!
Decided though, just recently,
All stairs should go downhill!!

TOO BAD TO NAME # 123

The Hangman didn't have a dime -
Must get his ropes for less.
So braided strips from New York Times -
T'was `noose paper', I guess.

I Color What I See

It occurs to me that I have sounded a lot like a preacher this week. (That trend seems to continue today!) I spent some time talking with kids in a juvenile detention center this week (I go as frequently as my schedule allows – Perhaps *their* needs should dictate *my* schedule. Hmmm. I'll have to think about that.). Anyway, we were talking about how dangerous it is to assume that people mean exactly the same thing when they use the same word. We all bring shades of differences to our vocabularies. It was like a light went on for them. Story after story poured forth about misunderstandings they had experienced and how they immediately related to this concept. It was a good day – especially for one old Grampa.

HOLEY WALLS

The last few years, I've chosen to
Obey the roamer's call.
Where e'er I've lived, I've found a few
Small nail holes in the wall.

A friend of mine gets all upset
When unfilled holes she sees.
But over that, I'll never fret –
The moment I will seize.

Sometimes they form a picture there.
Perhaps a cat or pup.
They always have a tale to share.
(If not, I make one up!)

In one place, holes were everywhere
And when friends would stop in
I'd ask them what they saw up there.
Most times it made me grin!

A lad of five would see a trike –
A clergyman, St. Jude.
The fishermen a bass or pike.
Teen boys would see a nude!

It came to me that when we view
A person, place, or mood
That's unfamiliar, blurred or new,
Our passions may intrude.

Perhaps that may explain for me,
While others cringe and mope
About the terr'ble World THEY see,
I see grand love and hope!

It's long been said that truth is in the eye of the beholder.
I guess whoever coined that phrase was pretty wise. Like
everyone else, what I see out there in the world is significantly
influenced by my philosophy of life. Mine is a simple one.

JOY

For some, joy's an elusive thing.
For me, it's always here.
When I awake each morning
My mission's all quite clear.

I do those things I need to do.
I help a friend each day.
I spend time learning something new.
And then, find time to play.

It's really quite a simple plan.
Has served me since a boy.
When followed, every night I can
Drift of, engulfed in JOY!

This seems the appropriate spot into which I should slot the following little ditty.

“BECOME A PARSON, SON”

“When you’re grown up,” the preacher’d say,
“Become a Parson, Son.
“You’ve got the verve. You know the way.
“You’ll get this good job done!”

So, gave some thought to preaching, then.
Respect would sure be earned!
But, I was drawn more to the pen.
To preach – my stomach turned!

I’d have to tell bad folks they’d go
Below. – Inflict MY view!
Just couldn’t preach at folks, you know!
(Though, some folks say I do!!!)

Too Bad To Name # 129

(I know. It seems like *l o t s* more than 129)

The Whirling Dervish went to Med
School and got his degree.
He then did PR for Mayor Redd.
True, "Spin Doctor", you see!

Old and Young

Old and young. Young and old. I have often wondered at what point you move from one to the other. Oh, it's not so hard to pinpoint that within a few years when it comes to the body, but the mind, that's a whole different thing. It is my fervent belief that, barring physiological problems, one never has to grow old in mind – not in the truly important aspects at least. When I poke fun at the aging process, it's either to legitimize it or to minimize it.

GOLDEN OLDIE

My radio gave me the clue.
I'm old, I must admit!
Their Golden Oldie was so NEW,
I'd NEVER heard of it!!!!

OVER THE HILL?

When folks mature to my age,
We're o're the hill, some say.
I'd rather think it's just a stage
When calmer games I play.

I really don't feel old, but still,
I hasten to admit,
It's better to be O'ER the hill,
Than to be UNDER it!!

The next one is back by popular demand. (I suppose that demonstrates the high-class readers that I have.)

SPITTING

Boy! How I used to love to spit
When five or six or so,
And I must say, was good at it
As Little Spitters go.

I spat again the other day.
'Twas great! It really flew!
I hit that target straight away!
(My dentures hit it, too!)

LACE

When I was just a little guy
I met a woman – OLD!
I asked if she was soon to die.
“Hush up!” by Mom, was told.

It seemed a thousand wrinkles wound
Their way around her face.
To me great beauty did abound –
It looked like finest lace.

I told her of her beauty and
She whispered quietly,
“Let’s keep that mum or else a band
Of beaus might pester me!”

When I remember her, today,
I always think of lace
And of the way she made her way
Through life with pride and grace.

I yearned for when THAT old I’d be
And I’d be blessed with lace.
I’m old. No lace. I have, you see,
A beard to grace my face.

SKIPPING!

When young, I skipped to school each day.
I skipped to candy store.
I was a skipping pro, I'd say.
I'd skip, then skip some more!

Though old, my skipping days aren't through
-Not finished or complete –
When pretty girls come into view,
My old heart skips a beat!

THE PUNSTER'S DEMISE

Would not be hanged - the thief who punned -
If would but stop those jokes.
No rope could find - the judge was stunned.
A major problem, folks!

On hearing problem, robber pled,
"Just one more pun I've got.
No noose is good noose," punster said.
Judge SHOT him on the spot.

Perspective

One of the grand advantages of being older, is the vast perspective that it gives us. As I was growing up I suppose I “invented” ten dozen things that had already been invented, but I didn’t know that, of course. I didn’t have the built in history – the perspective. Perhaps that is the greatest gift we have to offer the younger generations. It becomes a thin line to walk, however. Revealing too much may quell a youngster’s spirit and drive. Saying too little may cause unnecessary heartache. With the kids, I’m very careful about such things but with YOU, I pull out all the stops!

THE CASE FOR THOSE HEFTY TELEPHONES OF OLD

I’ve watched as telephone, from crank
To digital, evolved.
But if, with you, I may be frank,
Few problems that has solved.

I’m really still in favor of
The wooden phones we had
With two black ringers up above
And room for writing pad.

It prob’bly weighed some twenty pounds
With black appointments, all.
A hefty ear piece for the sounds
And crank to start the call.

The mouthpiece was adjustable
Turned up if you were tall.
With ease, though, it was movable –
Came down if you were small.

But, best of all, that telephone
Was happy just to stay
All by itself, at home alone
When I would go away!

It's ringing didn't bother me
When I went for a walk
And never interrupted, see,
When friends and I would talk.

And when I'd miss a call or two
While I was on the roam
D'you know what folks would REALLY do?
They'd call when I got home!!!

No answering machines to hear.
No ringing at café.
D'you see, now, why I lead the cheer
For phones of yesterday?

Sometimes I keep my tongue in cheek so long folks think
I'm a tobacco chewer. However, speaking of perspective (as
I think I was), there are some situations from one's past that
tend to continue to haunt you no matter what!

SOME THINGS DIE HARD

When I was young a hat was NOT
Worn inside by a guy
And woe to me if I forgot.
Harsh "words" Mom would apply!

These days, that rule, most guys reject.
For me, though, it's not dead.
When I forget, I still expect
A whop 'long side my head!

Middle Ground

Today's a mixture of serious and pure fun. I'll bet you've noticed how folks seem to fall into two categories. One seems to think everything is fun and games, has difficulty taking anything seriously, and in general is hard to live with. The other seems to think everything is bleakly serious, has difficulty seeing the humor in the world and in themselves, and is generally hard to live with. Hmm! If that were true, we'd all be hard to live with. Perhaps we are or perhaps there is a middle ground – folks who size up situations for what they are and act with seriousness or humor as the circumstance dictates. Appropriate reaction both in quality and quantity allows - I believe - the most satisfactory human relationships. I would only add that it seems to me that the person who can't enjoy his own foibles is doomed to a very sad life – especially as we grow older.

TRUTH?

The sun will set. The sun will rise.
A truth since man's first days.
Until that Galileo guy,
Disruptive questions raised!

He said the Sun , not Earth, stood still.
“High heresy,” they said!
They locked him in his tower, ‘til
The old guy was most dead.

The lesson here, I do believe:
“Must keep an open mind.”
(Unless one thinks that we should leave
Distasteful truths behind.)

Sometimes, of course, it's hard to know what's true and what's not. You'll be pleased (and perhaps relieved) to know that the next verse veritably oozes with truth (at least for me).

HOT BUTTERED TOAST!

Of all the treats I had when small
The one I liked the most
Was not a pop or cone stacked tall –
It was hot buttered toast!

It warmed the coldest of the morns,
And brightened gloomy days.
It dissipated fear of storms
And kept the tears away.

‘Twas firm enough to dip into
My cocoa hot and sweet
A truly luscious taste treat, you
Would never, elsewhere, meet.

When old St. Peter asks if I
Have questions for my host,
There’ll be but ONE from THIS old guy!
“D’you serve hot buttered toast?”

"Bridges"

One of the nice things about being fifteen (at least the way I remember it) was that pure silliness with absolutely no connection to reality could occupy my friends and me for hours on end. We'd giggle, we'd laugh, we'd roll on the ground. And when it was all over, we'd start up again. I'm happy that I haven't lost that ability to enjoy pure silliness just for silliness sake. (If you've been reading me long, you're not surprised by that, I'm sure.) Other than experiencing some difficulty picking myself up off the ground these days, I still do love those times. This, I'm afraid, is one of "those times."

BURNING BRIDGES

Was mad! And I would run away
To join ol' Dan'l Boone!!!
My Dad just had one thing to say:
"Don't burn your bridge too soon!"

The cabby sold his car and sought
Employment on the moon.
Rejected as an astronaut,
He'd burned his bridge too soon!

Sam hated job - a soda jerk,
So quit that gig in June.
The foll'wing May, still out of work,
He'd burned his bridge too soon!

The desert man tossed damp canteen
When there, across the dune,
Mirage of water he had seen.
He'd burned his bridge too soon!

Joe thought the gas was safely off -
As soared in his balloon.
So, lit his pipe. Was blown aloft!
He'd burned his bridge too soon!

The singing banker quit his job.
Grand songs he'd go and croon.
He sang so bad, got egged by mob.
He'd burned his bridge too soon!

Max sold his icebox late in May.
His fridge came early June.
The `lectric bill he couldn't pay.
He'd burned his bridge too soon!

The cowboy was called to the street
For showdown at high noon!
Had traded gun for stagecoach seat.
He'd burned his bridge too soon!

My Dad had been extremely wise.
Advice had been a boon.
`Bout my career with rhymes, surmised,
"Don't burn your bridge too soon!!!"

If all of that was silly, this one is probably just in bad taste. It does, however, represent a "bridge" of a kind, I suppose.

ODE TO THE TOILET SEAT

The toilet seat has hole just right.
Support where needed most.
Without it, contemplate our plight.
Too much of it, can't boast!

Though, name of its inventor, ev-
Er lost, please understand,
His deed is well remembered, ev-
`Ry time we use the can!

And then there is that necessary bridge between the upper
and lower leg. This one is, perhaps, neither silly nor in bad
taste. It's more likely just a groaner.

BEWARE!

My mother warned to stay away
From knees. This was her point:
"You'll get in trouble there," she'd say.
"It's just a low down joint."

Common Sense: Where has it gone!

I suppose the theme of today's column might be called "common sense." Seems to me that if we just had a little more of it we wouldn't have nearly the number of social concerns we have today. (Maybe, "Grampa's Soapbox" would be a better theme title.)

LEAD SOLDIERS

I got "lead soldier" kit from store.
`Twas really quite a deal.
We'd melt the lead and then we'd pour
It into molds of steel.

When cool, we'd paint them red and green.
I'd put all twelve, in line.
They were the finest I had seen
And best of all, were mine!

Well, almost mine, I guess should say.
TWO dozen should have had.
I thought they all were lost, one day.
But found them with my DAD!

Today that toy could not endure.
The courts would be appalled!
They'd say, "Too dangerous," and I'm sure
`Twould promptly be recalled.

But in my day, of course, I'd not
Get near it without Dad.
He taught me safety skills and lots
Of great times we two had.

Protective laws are fine, my friend,
And, please, don't take offense,
But miss those days when we'd depend
On plain old common sense!

The minister at the church in which I grew up had
uncommon, common sense. He shared some with me on the
day I was married.

WEDDING DAY ADVICE

The preacher looked me in the eye
"One Rule!" he said, "Take note."
"To keep our the marriage happy, I
Must never rock the boat."

"When the mood of your new wife
Is bad or sad," (I quote)
"It's not the end of your sweet life,
If you'll not rock the boat."

"When you aren't sure about her mood,
The sages all have wrote,
You'd get along quite well if you'd
Just never rock the boat!"

"And fin'ly, when her mood is great -
And on you she does dote.
Enjoy that moment with your mate,
But, still, don't rock the boat!!

Perspective

The strangest man I've ever met
Just told ME I looked strange.
But that's okay. Shan't make me fret.
Quite clearly, HE'S deranged!!!

Webster's Dictionary provides two definitions for 'cute'. The first is: "attractive; pretty." The second: "clever; shrewd." When using the term 'cute' to describe brand new little animals, I believe BOTH meanings are intended. Brand new babies, - crying, wrinkled, bald, blind – are hardly what I'd call pretty or attractive. My, though, how they cleverly work their way into one's heart with nudges, licks, whimpers, and nestling up close against you. I doubt, of course, if any of that is an intended shrewdness, but old Mother Nature sure has a way of providing, doesn't she!?

PUPPY CUTE!

There are NEW puppies on my walk,
So very cute and small.
Each morning as I pass, we talk
'Bout weather, life and all.

The one is brown, the other white.
Such energy they show!
They lick and nuzzle – never fight.
Just loving ways they know.

Reminds me of my childhood days.
Few fears or thoughts of harm.
Just wondrous days, all filled with play.
At night, Mom's loving arms.

There's nothing like a puppy's "cute."
Exuberance abounds!
Decked out in fluffy, soft new suit.
Delightful yelping sounds.

Today, to them, I told THIS rule:
"Your 'cute' WON'T always be,
In fact, it won't be long 'til you'll
Look old and plain like me."

"But that's OK. Don't fret, young pals,
'Cause when you're old and weak,
You'll know, when winks you get from gals,
It's YOU, not LOOKS, they seek!"

TO BAD TO NAME # 126

The small red berry glowed quite grand.
A bright light it did send.
Made me conclude that it was an
Electric Current, friend.

Inconsideration

It was a disappointment! The farmers had said that if Daylight Savings Time was initiated they would plow up the golf course. It was initiated. I spent the better part of that day at the golf course waiting for the big event. It didn't take place. I was very young and really had not taken sides on the issue myself though Pop had strong inclinations to side with the farmers. I figured an extra hour of daylight would give me just that much more time to find lost balls and make a few more dimes than usual. Well, my golf ball rescuing days have passed and I seem to have gradually slipped into the "farmer camp" on the controversy.

A RELATIVE CONCEPT

Sometimes my titles don't reflect
(Say certain readers, wise!)
The content one's led to expect.
It's true! Read on!! Surprise!!!

That daylight savings time's a pain
For morning guys, I'll state.
My biorhythms it does drain!
It discombobulates!

The name, itself, is just a lie.
It doesn't save the light,
Just steals it from us morning guys
To keep the evenings bright.

It was invented, friends, no joke,
By carousing, late-night set,
Who've never known a sunrise, folks.
How inconsiderate!

The summer sun should rise at five.
That, DST does nix!
Someway those night owls connived
To make it wait 'til six.

In winter, have ONE coffee, straight,
While watch the sun emerge.
Down twelve in summer while I wait -
Develop Caffeine nerves!

`Bout DST, one thing I'll keep.
In it, one joy IS hid.
In summer, I can drift to sleep
To sounds of playing kids!

It has occurred to me that I am not the only being on
Earth that has experienced the vicious and insidious malady I
call "DST Discombobulation".

IT DAWNED ON ME . . .

Asleep by dark. Awake with sun.
My way since early age.
(That fact's not meant to being you fun,
But just to set the stage.)

The neighbor man installed a light
Between his place and mine.
I thought it strange - stayed OFF at night.
I'd seldom see it shine.

I asked and he explained this way:
"It's motion sensitive,
And only lights when something strays
Too close to where I live."

The paperboy now comes at four.
Light's on. Birds chirp awake.
He leaves. Light's off. Birds sleep some more
Until the real dawn breaks.

I am amused to think that I
By light do stop and start.
But hope that only proves that I'm
A songbird in my heart!

And speaking of light . . .

MY PILOT LIGHT

"It's Spring. I'll turn your pilot out,"
The Gas Man said one time.
Was I relieved when I found out
He meant the *stove's* - not *mine!!!*

Advice

As a youngster, I was one of the fortunate ones, I suppose. I had many options open to me in terms of my future profession. I found that the folks in my small town were always ready with advice for me on that topic. I listened and often was more than a little amused. I wondered if they took advice as well as they handed it out. I wondered if they ever actually sought advice. I wondered how they reacted to unsolicited advice. Eventually I chose a line of work all by myself. Interestingly, it was mostly about giving advice.

ADVICE COMES CHEAP

Down through the years one thing's the same -
Advice has come quite cheap.
From old to young - an age-old game.
Advice, my friend, comes cheap!

"Become a Lamplighter, my son,
Need light while sun's asleep.
You work at night. Save days for fun."
Advice, my friend, comes cheap.

"Go forth! Sell buggy whips, young man -
Great riches you will reap.
Or sell, to churches, cardboard fans."
Advice, my friend, comes cheap.

"A Livery Stable you should buy.
A place your sons can keep.
Or horse shoeing - Good trade to ply."
Advice, my friend, comes cheap.

"Become a cobbler - fix those shoes.
Or lucky, chimney sweep.
Perhaps a milk route you should choose."
Advice, my friend, comes cheap.

"Sell wringers for the wash machine.
Their stock just took a leap!
The best investment I have seen."
Advice, my friend, comes cheap.

More recently: "Sell eight-tracks, boy,
Or hippie books - so deep!
Or hula hoops or pet rock toy."
Advice, my friend, comes cheap.

"Machines that type. Machines that add.
Or `Slinkies that can creep.
Sell lava lamps or mood rings, lad.
Advice, my friend, comes cheap.

Today it's the computer, that
"They" tout as final leap.
Or helping folks lose excess fat.
Advice, my friend, is cheap.

That fat, a pill will soon decrease.
Computers, with a beep,
Will fix themselves slick as you please.
Advice, my friend, is cheap.

Those smart computers, I believe,
A gadget, will create,
That soon will give themselves the heave.
(Note: MY advice is Great!!)

Even though my professional life has pretty well run its course, now, I find that I still can't get away from advice givers.

Folk Poet

Recently, after attending my program, an older woman came up to me and asked, "What are you, anyway? I enjoyed your show, but I've certainly never heard poetry like yours before. You seem to be a cross between a philosopher and a street rapper." I've been trying to figure out what I am for years, and after only ninety minutes she had me pegged, dead center!

FOLK POETRY

(and those who commit it!)

Now, poets come in two main breeds,
The Regular and Folk.
I'll try to separate their deeds -
We're different, no joke!

The Poet, Regular, does see
Grand Beauty in those things
In which most people do agree
Grand beauty truly rings.

They write of sunrise, sea and love,
Of rainbow and balloon.
They tend to call the pigeon, 'dove',
Won't mention pig or loon.

The Poet, Folk, prefers to seek
His beauty in the street.
So HOPE he sees where things seem bleak,
What's COMMON, he things neat!!

He calls a pigeon, 'pigeon', friends.
In aging finds a grin.
And though sometimes the truth he bends,
He writes of where you've been.

Let's try this still another way -
He sees the beauty in
The way things really are each day -
Flat tire, spill, or grin!!

So, when of "Purple Majesty"
You hear from this old guy,
Instead of Mountains, it will be
About my first black eye!!!

Since I offer myself as a Folk Poet, my readers
generously forgive imperfections in meter, in `almost rhymes',
and in words fabricated on the spot to fill some immediate
need.

CONTRACTION CONTRAPTION

`Twas, and s'pose, and `twould and `bout
Are real good friends of mine.
Without them, many folks do doubt
That I could write a rhyme.

D'ya s'pose they're right `bout that, my friend?
But, p'rhaps `tis just a tease
That this ol' job of mine would end
Without "contractioneese."

When syllables I need to save
They've helped me out quite grand.
I s'pose `twill read, there, o'er my grave,
""Tis dead. G'bye ol' man."

Gung Who?

When I was a young man I suppose I would have been characterized as the `gung ho' type. I'd see a wrong and I'd charge in to set things right. I'd see a kid who needed a place to live and I'd bring him home until things worked out for him. But as I matured, I charged in less and thought things through more. It's not that one is better than the other I suppose. Young people do better at charging in and mature people do better at formulating a plan. When I was young, I was too inexperienced to formulate a reasonable plan. Charging in provided the experiences on which I would later base my game plans. I'm glad my charging-in days are behind me now. (I doubt if I'd make it up that first hill.) All this is leading up to the fact that now, in my mature, more centered, years I have left all that exuberant, exaggerated behavior to the young. The titles of my verses certainly bear out my calm, deliberate, rational demeanor.

NEVER, EVER, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES WHATSOEVER, TRUST A HEADLINE!!!!!!

A headline used to be a brief
About what would be read.
But read, today, what's underneath -
You'll see! You've been misled.

"The Star Used Needles Every Night,"
The headline, bold, did say.
Turned out had diabetic plight.
Used insulin each day.

One stated: "Mr. Block Beats Son."
Enough to cause distress!
Once read, when all was said and done -
He'd beaten him at chess.

It said: "Sam Smith Gets Third Degree."
I wondered what he'd done!
It seemed he'd stayed in college, see,
And Ph.D. he'd won.

"A Lady Of The Evening," read
The headline `bout Miss Stark.
She'd joined the Park Patrol, it said,
And just worked after dark.

"Marines Are On The Take," A slur?
Again those headline plots?
Turned out the boys in crew cuts were
Collecting toys for tots!

So see, those headlines no more serve
To help you sort things through.
Instead, they're there to strike a nerve
And flat out hoodwink you.

Upon reflection, s'pose I should
Tone down this poem's name.
`Cause if I don't, it seems I would
Be playing that same game.

How `bout: "Some Headlines May Sometimes
Mislead A Little Bit?"
That's forthright, honest (fits my rhymes) -
Guess I can live with it!

It seems to me that maturity is often defined more by
what we DON'T do, rather than what we DO do.

ODE TO THE PARK BENCH

The Park Bench - what a pleasant guy!
He holds me safe and sound,
And listens quietly as I
My verses, there, expound.

I've learned a lot from Bench, my friend:
To always give support,
And faithfully my ear to lend,
But never to exhort!

When folks express how low they feel
Or ask for help, I'm nice
But mum, because I've learned they real-
Ly don't want my advice.

Since we've been talking about trust (well, sort of, at least) . .

.

DON'T TRUST THAT BARN DOOR SAYING!

It's said, once horse is stolen, `tis
No help to lock the door.
They stole Old Paint, so Jed left his
Ajar - They stole four more.

It's Fine To Be All Wet!

A long-faced neighbor boy, ten or so, recently confided to me, "Everything I do is wrong. I mess up more than anybody I know." My response to him was, "*Ah! Excellent!*" It was met with furrowed brow and a somewhat sarcastic, "Are you weird, or what? I tried to explain how I view my own mistakes. That often, it's only by being willing to make errors that we can begin sorting through all the possible choices on the way to finding the correct path or answer. I showed him the box of rejection slips I have received from publishers over the years. "Where would I be if I'd have just given up after the first one (or fifty)?" He began remembering about learning to skate and mastering the multiplication tables. We swapped more personal foibles, giggled together about them, and both grew to understand life a bit better that afternoon.

AH! EXCELLENT!

I'll bet you've noticed how some folks
Miss life's best lessons - all.
Can't see their own mistakes as jokes,
But just things they appall.

Now, personally, I enjoy
My errors, everyone!
You see, each error I employ
To bring new smarts and fun!

Mistakes are merely sign posts set
Along life`s paths and streets,
That say, "Nice try, and please don`t fret,
But this try met defeat."

"Let's try again some other way.
You've just learned something fine.
About what NOT to try today,
So celebrate that find!"

Has anybody ever told you that you were `all wet'? I suppose it's happened to most of us.

**A CIRCUITOUS AND SOMEWHAT DISJOINTED
TREATISE ON DAMPNES.**

I noticed when was still quite small
That when someone would get
His facts confused or from truth fall
They'd say he was `all wet'.

I bought that steamer from TV.
Shirt wrinkles it would zap!
But once clothes dried, again you'd see
Those wrinkles all came back.

The girl in pool looked twenty-eight,
Her skin was smooth - did shine!
Guess she'd used steamer on her face.
When dried, looked 99!

The moral of these ramb'ling's not
To steamer on shelf, set,
But rather, when you're old it's not
So bad to be all wet!

Traces of the Past

It seems like I'm on a looking back kick this week. I was fortunate to have grown up in a very small town where the people had very big hearts. Memories fade, you know. It helps to have something that saves them for you. I have my diaries and from time to time I get them out, but, frankly, that's a hassle. Thanks to my mother, I have a far more convenient and ever-present road back to those days.

BRAIDED RUGS

A braided rug's a marv'lous thing
Reclines there on the floor.
It warms the toes `gainst winter's sting.
Bright colors flow - galore!

My mother worked on one for years.
It seemed `twas never done.
Each night she worked - through smiles or tears -
Both therapy and fun!

`Twas mostly made of wool from pants -
The one's too old to wear.
ME, wear OLD pants `ROUND her? No chance!
She'd likely striped me bare!!

She gathered pants at rummage sale.
Collected day and night.
`Twas quipped, if at our house and male,
Should grip your pants quite tight!

Some nights she's spread the big rug out.
With care a strip I'd choose.
She'd always have a tale about
The man whose pants she'd used.

That rug now graces my cold floor.
Such mem'ries do abound!
It's now a precious book of lore
About my boyhood town!

There are, of course, other ways of telling stories that are important to us.

A POTPOURRI OF BUMPER STICKERS

The bumper sticker, folks, which I
Find pleases my old soul
Announces that their kid (with pride!)
Is on the honor roll!

The one that bothers me the most
Condones a violent goal.
"My kid can beat up yours," it boasts
"If he's on honor roll."

And then there is one at which I can't help but chuckle
even though its tone reflects the violent side of our culture.

The hill was steep. On truck ahead
The message was foreboding.
Its time-worn bumper sticker read,
"Keep Honking! I'm reloading!!"

Looking Back

I seem to spend a lot of time looking back on my life. Do you? Oh, it's not that I'm not into the here and now and even planning for tomorrow most of the time, but it seems the older I grow the more time I spend thinking about the old days. Actually I guess a better term for them would be the 'young days', wouldn't it. Interesting. Thinking of the past in that way suddenly makes me feel less old. Well, what do you know!

WINTER BOOTS

I loved my winter boots, when young.
Came half way to my knee.
With buckles and a splash-proof tongue
They fit me to a tee.

Well, "fit me," isn't true, you see,
Mine had to last TWO years.
The first, they'd be too large for me.
The next, too small, I fear!

In fact, the only time they real-
ly fit was in July
Of that first year, when they would feel
Exactly right - no lie!

I'm sure my neighbors had to muse
(Though, kindly, they stayed mute.)
When to the fireworks I'd choose
To wear my winter boots!

And then there are some things that passed into memory
land more recently.

ODE TO WHITEOUT

That whiteout is the greatest stuff.
You type it wrong and poof!
Apply that liquid - just enough,
And no one sees your goof!

For many years I did depend
On whiteout to repair
Each error that I made, my friend.
Thought nothing could compare.

Not only did it work quite well
(That whiteout friend of mine)
I thought it had a pleasant smell
(Might even say, sublime!)

I got a laptop, recently.
I must admit it's great!
It does my work efficiently -
In most ways, it's first rate.

With "word-check" errors are no more.
I miss that "white-out" break.
So, sometimes take it from the drawer
And sniff for old time sake!

A SHORT STORY?

The Native built a one-floor hut.
Stood in all its glory!
His wife asked for an upstairs, but
That's another story!!

(I heard that groan! Grampa has big ears!)

For Richer or For Poorer

Growing up I seldom thought of myself as poor. Oh, I knew we didn't have many frills, and that I couldn't have brand new things. But, shucks, that way I got to make them for myself. What could be more fun and stimulating than that? It gave my creative juices an early start for which I'm ever appreciative. When I wanted something `new', I'd scrounge the parts and build it. When something needed inventing, I'd use what I could find to fashion the parts required for that project. Still, today, I'd rather contrive a gadget myself than go buy it. I suppose all that was `recycling'. We called it `making do'.

RECYCLING?

My socks, I darn. My shoes, resole.
I use things, plastic, less.
For bass and rainbow trout I troll -
Recycling? I guess!

As Bach'lor, once again, these days,
My paper cups - Oh, yes -
Use each ten time `fore thrown away -
Recycling? I guess!

I cut the sleeves off winter shirt,
So cool, in spring, can dress.
I pot my plants in compost dirt -
Recycling? I guess!

Mown grass, quite lazily I'd let
Just lay, I must confess.
Today, for that, high praise, I get!
Recycling? I guess!

I wrap the coffee grounds, each day
In newspapers - a mess!
For years I've done it. Now they say -
"Recycling, I guess!"

When young, I was a Student, grand!
With Fatherhood, then, blessed!
A Grampa Poet, now's the plan!
Recycling, I guess!!!

MY GARDENS OF EDEN

Adam and Eve both had it made
In garden lush and green.
No reason there to be afraid
No ills or sadness seen.

There's been a hot discussion `bout
Just what might have gone wrong.
But ne'er the less, were soon tossed out.
(`Tis told in verse and song.)

I won't dispute that Bible tale
(And this I add with care)
Where e'er I go I never fail
To find MY Eden there.

The story is about (to me)
Contentment, plain and pure.
With selfish feelings, seems to me,
Mankind just can't endure.

I'm thankful for whatever's mine
(It's more than it might be!)
I concentrate on all that's fine.
For me, that's life's grand key!

Interaction Styles (Sounds *boring* to me.)

I have an acquaintance with whom I sometimes have breakfast at a small, local, cafe. When I walk in I'm greeted with hugs and handshakes and a chorus of "morning Grampa" from across the room. My friend is ignored. It's not that he's ugly or mean. It's not that he doesn't talk with the others. I've decided it's the coffee - well, sort of.

He and I have very different approaches to the empty coffee cup. I always leave just a little in the bottom so, if the overworked waitress is a bit tardy with her refill, she won't feel bad that I had to wait. If she says, "Whoops! Looks like I'm behind you this morning," I respond with, "Looks to me like you got here just in time."

My friend seems to take some twisted pleasure in gulping that first cup quickly so he can snap his finger at the waitress, point to his empty mug and infer by word and manner that she has been derelict in her duty.

Lots of folks seem to go through life like my friend - putting others down in order to feel powerful or important themselves. I have to wonder how they explain the fact that others ignore or avoid them. Perhaps it's a vicious cycle. The man inflicts his put down, the others avoid him, he then feels compelled to put them down even more so he'll be noticed, the others try harder to ignore him, and so on through his life. It's hard to know who to feel sorriest for - those on whom he inflicts his pain or the poor, misdirected fellow, himself.

I give the waitress a lot of credit. If I'd have been in her place, after about the third or fourth morning, my friend just might have found his crotch scalded with hot coffee.

ODE TO THE COFFEE CUP

Behold the loyal coffee cup!
Complaints you'll never hear,
While sitting empty or filled up,
Dependable, it's clear!

So patiently will wait on shelf,
And pleased to hold your brew,
Will never sneak a sip, itself,
Just holds it there for you!

I'm grateful that that cup, though small,
Each day provides the zest
That helps these bones stand straight and tall,
And helps me meet life's test!

So, coffee cup, companion dear,
Though seldom tell you, friend,
Without caffeine you bring, I fear
On worse things I'd depend!!

THAT ELUSIVE `ORANGE' RHYME?

"They" say there is no rhyme for orange.
But, some don't think that's true!
I heard that from a mom or eng-
ineer. S'pose that will do?

Time and Space

THE SIGHT SITE

The savvy young optometrist
Used website - very wise.
He put his cures there on a list -
The first site for sore eyes!!!

The Internet is playing havoc with my concepts of geography, time and space (and, as that verse may indicate, other things as well!). Historically it seems to have been a continuing problem for man as methods of communication and transportation became faster. The ancient Chinese map-makers collapsed time and space into one concept. On their maps, the distance between points represented not how far it was but how long it took to walk from place to place. Rough terrain was represented by more space while flat, easy, terrain took up less.

With the advent of a variety of modes of transportation moving at various speeds, that concept had to give way to distance on a map representing actual distance in the real world. More recently, airline maps simply ignore geography. Continental outlines and country boundaries don't exist - they only need to locate the airport cities as spots on a grid-laced globe.

Electronic communication is changing everything again. When I zap my column out each morning (well, morning at my place) across the Internet, thousands and thousands of places around the world receive it almost instantaneously. In terms of the old Chinese maps, I suppose the entire world would be represented by a single narrow, vertical line. We can "get" anywhere in less than a second. My! My!

It gets more befuddling for me. When, lets say, it is four a.m. at my place - the time I usually transmit the column - it's some other time at 90% of the places I'm sending it to. In fact, my today is actually both yesterday and tomorrow for some of

them, and yet it is all occurring at the same instant. Wow!

Before long I fully expect to be receiving, on Tuesday, a reply dated Monday, from something I had not Emailed until Wednesday. If I could just scan myself into my column, I do believe (if I planned the sending, forwarding, and receiving properly) I could become twenty years younger in less than a week.

THE GUARANTEE

When I was young, a guarantee
Meant it would always work -
Last forever, always be
Just fine, no flaw or quirk!

These days the guarantee has changed.
It covers everything
Except parts prone to break - so strange!
It has that Con Man ring!

I bought an iron recently.
Its guarantee did say,
"Be known to all, this warranty,
Expired yesterday!"

The Little Pleasures

P\$YCHOTHERAPY - the modern ver\$ion

"Must shrink your head," said counselor.
His voice was cool and calm.
Seems he had stock - this psych-feller -
In "tinyhats.com"

Sometimes it takes me a while, but eventually I do catch on. Every morning I follow the same path to my mailbox. Recently, I had the good fortune to find a dime, a nickel and a penny along the way. I picked them up and slipped them into my pocket savoring my find. Lo and behold, the next day I found another dime and another penny. The third day it was again all three. It continued all week. I figured at that rate, I'd soon be able to float the price of a cup of coffee at Rick's Cafe.

After the seventh straight day of such grand luck, I figured it was time to count my booty. It reached in to my pocket and, much to my surprise, found four interesting tidbits - one penny, one nickel, one dime and one small hole in the bottom of my pocket. Seems each day I had been finding the same coins that I had unknowingly lost the day before.

It occurred to me that if someone harbored the need to impress others by the size of his income he could arrange to lose a one hundred-dollar bill each day and then find it the next. Just considering the good-fortune side of that equation he could proudly claim an extra \$36,500 a year in income. He could quietly take the same amount in losses on his income tax and no one would be the wiser. Just think how impressive he'd appear if he lost a thousand-dollar bill every day! (Do they make such things?)

My choice was to skip the subterfuge and just sew up the hole. In some ways, I wish I hadn't discovered the truth. There was a grand excitement in my life that week as I set out each morning wondering if good fortune was going to shine on me again. AH! Little Pleasures!!

INSIDIOUS INTERNET

Computers there! Computers here!
They run my life today.
And when I'm dead and gone I fear
They'll still run me some way.

When written, my obit, has been,
`Twill read (I raise my palm!)
"Old Grampa Gray was buried in
The Shady Rest dot com!

MY MEMORY'S SHOT

These days there seems to be a shot
For every malady.
On Monday past, flu shot, I got
Pneumonia's next, for me.

It seems to me, for goodness sake,
It`s high time there should be
Some Shot Inventor who could make
A Memory Shot for Me.

Several of you have suggested my over-all stability might
be improved by shock treatment. (So far, only one prefers that
I obtain a full and complete lobotomy!)

Enjoy the Ride!

CHARITY

If I were a philanthropist
Where would my money go?
Some bakers would be on my list
`Cause, gee, they "knead the dough"!

Last evening I noticed several spots on my kitchen floor. Apparently, I had dripped some liquid while carrying something across the room. I got out my trusty sponge and soon had it cleaned up. It made me wonder about the life cycle of a spot. (Something that I'm sure has also kept you awake many a night.)

In the case of "my" particular spots, they had obviously been liquid in the beginning, probably belonging to a pool in some container - most likely the "juice" in which tuna is packed. As it spilled it separated into individual drops and fell to the floor where it became a momentary splash before settling into a tiny wet puddle. At some point as it dried its puddleness ceased and it was transformed into a spot - dry, dirty and distinct against the tile floor.

I suppose those spots weren't hurting anything except, perhaps, my sense of cleanliness. As I began mopping them, they each had a brief existence as a smudge, then a streak. Presently, they disappeared from view, becoming part of the dirty water that I pressed out of the sponge and sent on its way down the drain.

I had to wonder which of its several forms it liked the best. The cozy relationship with others of its kind in the can. The drop, rushing at ever increasing speed toward the floor (what a rush that must have been!). The playful splash, momentarily separating into a zillion smaller parts only to come back together as a gently mounded puddle unable to move and alone from its kind. The dry spot that stood out with distinction from the floor below. The form-changing streak,

mimicking the fanciful image in the sideshow mirror; or, the re-hydrated liquid, meeting - there in the drain - other former spots that had gone before it?

If I were it, I think I'd like the dropping part best. It's a lot like the life I am living - hurtling through my life cycle toward some more or less unknown destination, with much excitement - a new rush every day - and I suppose, some trepidation about becoming a useless puddle or bothersome spot. I decided long ago that I'd make the most of this one chance I have to hurtle through time and space. I, for one, intend to enjoy the ride!

In my attempt to prolong and improve the quality of my ride, I submit this.

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THOSE GENES!

I'm told, tomatoes that we buy
Now have a human gene.
And so I asked the gene guy why?
"Gives longest shelf life seen."

I feel (when eat tomatoes, friend)
Like cannibals of old
And all so grocery stores can vend
Tomatoes far too old!

Now, if that human gene (no lie!)
Extends shelf life, who knows,
Perhaps the smart thing is to buy
Myself a double dose!!!

**I'm on my soapbox today
(so you may just want to skip to the verses.)**

PAWNS

I choose to be amused. I could easily be irked or outraged, but that would raise my blood pressure and acidify my stomach. It's the banks and phone companies. My withdrawals from the bank are posted to (from) my account before I leave the building. It sometimes takes three days for my deposits to get posted. I asked why. The teller explained the computer software couldn't post any faster. That of course makes absolutely no sense, unless, of course, their software is too busy investing my deposit for the bank so it can begin drawing interest for itself immediately. It seems to me they are just using my money free of charge for three days. It's one of those grossly unfair things in life about which we pawns can do nothing.

Some time ago, I received a notice from the Phone Company stating that one of their fees had been found to be illegal so it was being removed from the bill. (That sounded good!) It amounted to about \$2.50 a month. On the very next line, it announced their service fee had just been raised by \$2.50 a month. A PAWN, I tell you!!

I don't dwell on those dastardly deeds because – although they represent the most reprehensible side of the human experience, I'm all quite helpless. I have to have a bank. I have to have a phone. So, I focus instead on those things in my life that I can control – expensive or inexpensive treats, a one or a two hour walk in the morning, how I'll apportion my charity budget for the month – things like that.

Life flows more comfortably if we just remove the word "fair" from our vocabulary. I change what I can change. I control what I can control. I feel sorry for the poor souls who choose to take advantage of my helplessness (and I suppose I feel smugly superior to them because I choose not to do the same!)

Spending my life deliberately trying to be a 'good egg,
reminds me . . .

BROWN EGGS
(from "Ham")

An egg's an egg I always thought
But then one day, when five,
A dozen BROWN eggs mother bought.
My goodness, sakes, alive!!

I tried to wash them off, at first.
I scrubbed with mom's best soap.
And then to make the matter worse,
My friend called me a dope!

I watched Mom crack them open and
Was much relieved to see
The usual colors in the pan –
They looked like whites to me.

They tasted fine. Were every bit
As good as white ones but,
One disappointment must admit –
I'd hoped they'd be choc'late!

THE YOLKS ON ME!

Some experts say those eggs I eat
Will harm my heart and veins.
But, others say they are a treat
That helps our weary brains.

The heart won't work without a brain
Nor brain without a heart.
Presents, for me, dilemma plain –
With neither dare I part.

With heart, like veg'table could live
But that would never do.
Without a brain could never give
Strange rhymes each day to you.

ADDENDUM (One year after publishing the verse above.)

From 'fans' those eggs pour in for me.
This doubt forms in my head:
"D'you 'spose they want MORE rhymes from me
Or want to see me dead?"

ONE SHARP QUESTION
(almost a limerick)

This problem I saw as a lad.
Asked Dad `bout the question I had,
As he sharpened the knife
For my mother, his wife,
"What sharpens the sharpener, Dad?"

Inkblots?

MY WEEKEND PROJECT

New ceiling trim I'd make, you see.
Tried hard but just the same
I measured wrong repeatedly -
Became a picture frame.

As you see, I have a wonderful new picture frame and better yet, I still have a project for next weekend! Life is good. Some might look upon my weekend folly as an unpleasant disaster. As I grew up I had two wonderful models in my home who helped me understand that if you always did the very best with what you had, you couldn't ask for much more.

Come to think of it, it gets even better. A new frame calls for a new picture. I'll get out my paints as soon as I'm finished chatting with you. I've been wanting to capture a magnificent old, gnarled tree across the street.

It fascinates me, how we bring our childhood with us into adulthood. For most of us, I suppose that's great. For some, probably not. At least we all have the grand opportunity to help the next generations learn how to deal with the lemons, which they may be dealt.

OFFERING AID

Philanthropist's cash had worn thin.
Gave yellow fruit, instead.
Explained his plan with this strange spin:
" 'Tis Lemon Aid," he said.

ALTERNATIVES

He said the inkblot looked to him
Just like a big, black smear.
Imaginations, when that dim,
Are scary things, I fear.

Without imagination, he
Was quite enslaved by things
Which he could feel and hear and see -
His mind could not sprout wings.

He could not see the sheep with fleece
As golden as the sun,
Nor could he see a world at peace
The time when love had won.

Alternatives are only born
From minds that scorn the ink
And minds like that are only worn
By those set free to think.

Teach compassion, hope and love,
And help us to be kind,
Allow unfettered searching of
Those inkblots in our mind.

GEE! I couldn't get off my soapbox today. Promise
more Silliness next time.

Silliness!

I'm never sick - well, mostly never. So, when I do succumb, I am a most impatient patient. This past week I've had a bout of something-or-other. It made me reconsider the entire concept of being ill.

THE OTHER SIDE OF SICK

I used to hate, this being ill.
I'd fight it all the way!
I'd down most any kind of pill.
In bed, I'd never stay.

Some say that sickness is a state
That builds up in one's mind.
If so, my mind just sneezed - first rate!
(And then, I think it whined!)

Another way to look at this
Is just to be quite pleased!
Accept the flowers, cards and kiss -
MAY help your pain be eased.

Remember THIS while on the mend
`Tis GOOD your SICK in bed!
`Cause other side of sick, my friend,
Is stone cold, laid out, dead!!!

I've had a rash of Email (some of it does
itch a bit!) requesting more "groaners".
It goes to show the high class readership I
attract. I think my recent fever may have
"helped" produce these.

NOAH

"What's Noah doing?" she did say
To Ark-man's wife one day.
"Oh, he's just putting things away
For a rainy day."

TO BAD TO NAME NUMBER ONE HUNDRED FOUR

Bored orthopedist said, "I don't
Have any case to take."
Went to ER and asked them, "Won't
You please give me a break?"

TO ERR IS . . .

At typing, I am not real fine.
Those typos, problems pose.
So got a self-correcting kind.
"A type-righter, d'you s'pose?"

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

They moved from Hong Kong - Lin and Lays
To Greenland - nearly froze.
They seemed confused by western ways
"Dis-oriented, s'pose!"

I'll plead FEVER in any court in the land. No jury will
convict me!

Substance and Sanity

Recently, I was chatting with a restaurant owner. The conversation turned to profit margins. He revealed he makes nearly 30 times his cost on soft drinks from his fountain. A ten-cup pot of coffee costs a quarter and earns him eight dollars - that's 32 times his cost. The water bottler sitting at the next table (not to be outdone) confessed (or boasted) that a two-gallon container of water costs him about a dime and he sells it for \$4.50 - 45 times his cost.

It appears to me that the less substance there is in a product, the higher the price consumers are willing to pay. I began wondering - Since my column is FREE, does that infer it is just brimming over with substance? I Think I'm going to believe that (And, then, as if to immediately disprove his conclusion, the old man offers the following . . .)

A GROANER

The captured Jail Guard helped foe sort
Which inmates to set free.
He was arrested for CONSort-
Ing with the enemy.

(Will the old guy never learn?)

PAIRS: A PARABLE

Though scissors are ONE thing - that's all -
The plural verb we use
And trousers, pants and shorts we call
A pair when they're NOT twos.

TWO `scis', two `trou', two `pant', two `short'?
No pairs that I can see.
What's that? You now wish to abort
This pair-a-*bull* from me?

SANITY

My grade school teachers said they were
Convinced I'd be a bum.
Miss Zeer told Dad that she was sure
To no good end I'd come.

"It isn't hat he lacks the smarts
But things he says are weird!
Quite frequently his mind departs
From all that's real," she feared.

Perhaps, I've proved them right, in time.
Each morn my wits take flight
To help me form an odd-ball rhyme.
(Though, think I'm sane by night!)

I'm pleased and proud to have the soul
Of strange old rhyming knave.
Though I'm quite sure Miss Zeer is roll-
Ing over in her grave.

To live life as myself's a must,
I don't apologize.
I like to think that I am just
A SANE guy in disguise!

Fine Print

Have you noticed how inconsiderate payment forms are? I'm speaking of those from credit cards, utility companies and so on. The amount due and the due date are spelled out in large, bold type at the top. I can't miss that part and I do appreciate it. But, just try and determine to whom payment is to be made. I've found it's often toward the bottom in a single line of the tiniest possible type size.

As if making it small isn't punishment enough, they use italics which further muddies it up for those of us of the *trifocal generation*. The address on the envelope seldom is the same as the "pay to" name, so that's no help. I have considered filling in the information on my check in equally tiny lettering to make a point (my notes regarding the matter have gone unnoticed).

Two problems there: First, the unfortunate employee who would have to read it shouldn't be punished for the company's lack of consideration. Second, there's no way I could print that small myself. Though it griped me greatly because I felt I shouldn't have to do it, I made a large print list for myself. I felt rather smug about having "beaten" them. The taste of victory didn't last long. The next month I received a notice that my card account had been purchased by a different bank and so, I begin the search all over. Guess I should be content in the realization that I can still cope and adjust to such things (and that modern technology has provide me the magnifying glass).

In a related matter . . .

STUBS

I wonder who invented them?"
Those stubs are everywhere.
I'm usually not quick to condemn
But stubs, we must repair!!

They have that note that says, "Tear here,"
With dotted line (a plot!).
The perforations will appear
An inch ABOVE those dots.

A grand dilemma then sets in -
D'you tear, or cut on line?
I send the whole darn form back in
(And then, to you, I whine!)

Perhaps it's all just a part of getting old. There may
be a remedy for that, I hear.

PANELING

"Get paneling," the ad did say.
"The look will be quite fine.
Remodels things in just one day.
Will cover mars and grime!"

If paneling can really bring
Such changes, with such haste,
D'you s'pose I should get paneling
To cover my old face?

Metaphores?

FORKS

Do forks have prongs or are they tines?
I've found that it depends,
On whether IN or OUT one dines.
IN, prongs! OUT, tines! THE end!!!

A college professor once referred to my verses as an endless, tedious, string of metaphors. (He is also the one who thought animal farm was really about a farm, and called Jack Benny and Johnny Carson boorish bores - I felt I was in good company!) How dare he use the word "string" to describe my verses!

At any rate, it made me take a look at my material. Upon reflection, my metaphors do often seem more like meta-threes or even meta-twos. To some they may be tedious - if one gets bored hearing about the positive potential of mankind and envisioning the World as good rather than evil.

A college student who had an assignment to analyze and critique my writing once wrote asking me to explain my philosophy of life as exemplified in my verses. I responded with what I thought was an accurate, succinct, statement. She wore back informing me I was wrong. Her conclusion was quite different. That was fine with me. Perhaps I don't write in metaphors at all. Perhaps I write in inkblots - even better!

INK BLOT TEST?

Sam saw the sun break through at dawn.
Ann saw a bride in white.
I saw a poke-a-dotted fawn.
(They're wrong, of course. I'm Right!)

ODE TO FOUNDATIONS

When friends drop by, they often say
"I love your cabin, Gramps."
They complement my window - bay -
My door, my rug, my lamps.

They nod as look at roof - it's red.
Approve of logs, you know.
But never ever is it said
"Foundation's great, below!"

Foundation sits there, year by year.
A base so strong and fine.
It's made of stones I found right here
Each set, one at a time.

I've noticed that foundations last
Through several homes, sometimes.
(When fire or a wind-blown blast
To house has been unkind.)

When good foundations, children get,
It seems to me that they
Handle well, what e'er they've met
Along life's wondrous way.

A good foundation stands the tests
Of time - both good and bad.
It helps us revel in the best -
Accept or change what's sad.

To my foundations let me say
I treasure both of you.
The Mom's and Pop's from yesterday,
Now, rock and mortar, too!

The Rituals of Life

THE DAY OLD SHELF

That second day shelf at the store -
Temptation, plain and bold!
I need one item - then buy four!
Who cares if they're day-old!

Can't figure why FRESH goods folks seek
When, least for me, it's true,
MY bread has been at home a week,
So, Day Old stuff seems NEW!

The rituals of life - of one's culture, really, I suppose. We learn them well and we succeed. We fail to learn them and we falter or fail. We learn to play ball or to sew or cook. We learn to date and eventually marry. As our parents before us, we have and raise a family. We gladly work to support them. For some, then, comes retirement - for others, at least, a somewhat slower pace. Perhaps grandparenthood arrives! As oldsters, we are both often revered and yet relegated to the role of cultural curiosities. The rituals of life - Like dances played out across the time and space of our days.

THE DANCES OF OUR LIVES

When small, I loved to dance with Mom.
She'd go where e'er I'd lead!
For sure, my moves were never calm!
The dance, my spirit, freed!

At birthday party - nine years old -
A girl asked me to dance.
No way a silly girl, I'd hold!
I ran away, first chance!!

At thirteen was all legs and arms,
Though dancing did enjoy.
Each girl I'd hold, I'd somehow harm!
Was called, "The Lead Foot Boy!"

By sixteen, dancing was my life!
It made me feel so great!
Alleviated teen-day strife -
Just loved a dancing date!

My wife and I danced every night,
There in our cozy place.
We'd twirl and dip, first left then right.
The years, some slowed our pace.

Last week, at mixer - young with old -
Seems something went amiss!
"You slow dance well, Sir," I was told.
(But, I'd just done the twist!)

TOO BAD TO NAME # 136

His kid looked up to Father Roll.
(Was browned and plump - well done!)
He strived to be a great (his goal)
Roll Model for his son.

I Was Amazed

I WAS AMAZED! - perhaps flabbergasted better describes my reaction. I seldom watch TV - life offers so many interesting things to try out (and there's so little time) that I can't imagine spending my years watching the tube -

When I do watch, it's most likely PBS. That brings me back to my opening statement. Last evening, I turned on PBS hoping to slip the music from the Lawrence Welk show into the background as I put the finishing touches on a small sculpture I've been working on. The surprise was that I had actually tuned in on that ONE week each year when they were NOT in the middle of a "quarterly" fund-raiser.

It posed several dilemmas for me. I depend on those pledge breaks to provide bathroom breaks. Before I realized it was an evening of regular programming, I nearly wet my pants. Long ago I decided PBS stood for "Pledge Break System."

I hope you understand this is mostly tongue in cheek. I appreciate their offerings and regularly support the local PBS stations. I do have this suggestion, however. Why not announce ahead of telethon week that for every \$10,000 (or whatever) raised AHEAD of time, one day will be removed from the length of the telethon? The way most of us despise those weeks, I'd think most folks would be highly motivated to mail in a check post haste.

Do you suppose that I, too, could turn a profit if I'd offer NOT to send my column to folks who'd send me in a check? HMMMMM!

How what follows has to do with any of that beats me!

SMELLS

Aromas, smells and odors are
All pretty much alike.
Aromas, best. Smells, just par.
With odors less well liked.

At least those were the categories I used as a boy.
I made a list of the top four
Grand "smells" that brought me joy.

The smell of rubbing alcohol
Was number four for me.
Vanilla extract won the call
-Aroma number three.

Now, number two was hard to beat!
Its praises often said.
It happened when my nose would meet
The smell of fresh baked bread!

But best of all occurred back then
As I'd wake from my nap -
The smell of my dear mama when
I cuddled in her lap!

AUNT ROSE

Aunt Rose once told me that I should
Not bathe too often or
I'd likely shrivel up, which would
Be bad for me at four.

"It smells as pretty as a posy,"
The words some bard once chose.
Seemed obvious to me that he
Had never smelled Aunt Rose!

Changing Times

ARTIFICIAL PLANTS

"A rose is a rose," it has been said,
But that was long ago.
These days they don't come from a bed
But from Hong Kong, you know.

I'm irked `bout man-made plants they sell -
Pretend as Nature's art -
But irks me MORE that I can't tell
The fake and real apart!!!

It appears to me that like today's plants ,some people also are artificial. I mean the personality or the "self" they possess. When it's a put-on to impress me, I'm irked, not impressed - and it's really not hard to tell, is it? When, on the other hand, it is "artificial" just because the person has not been able to find the "self" that he or she wants or needs, - the one that truly fits and feels comfortable - then I feel so sorry for them - wish I could help. I do what I can.

THE OVERHAUL

"Accept yourself just as you are!"
Was told at seventeen.
But saw myself WAY under par.
Advice? Worst I had seen!

That "self" back then - the one `twas me -
The one o'er which I wept,
Was filled with guilt, uncertainty -
One no one that should "accept."

So, set some goals. I framed a plan.
I asked for help from friend.
I soon became my biggest fan!
Acceptance, in the end.

So, my advice to one and all
Is if your do dislike
The self you have, then overhaul -
I'm sure there's ONE you'll like!!

ODE TO THE STRAW

Those straws are marv'lous little things.
You pucker, suck and then
Quite soon to you, your drink it brings -
On straws you can depend!

The law of gravity, defies -
That empty tube so lean.
It always works. There's no surprise.
Of "Table Tools," the Dean!

It works on drinks both thin and thick
Without or with the fizz,
And lets you suck both slow and quick.
Remarkable, it is!

Dependable, I strive to be.
My models are the straws.
So, `fore I sip, I make (you see),
A quiet, rev'rent, pause!!

May you never sip thoughtlessly again!!!

Stop Fretting!

SILVER LINING

The scen'ry is quite pretty near
The stockyard where I hike.
Its odor tends to make me veer
Toward other paths I like.

But, when awoken with a cold,
Great joy I feel that day,
Because I know my morning holds
A walk `long stockyard way!!

Some say it is Pollyanna. I don't think so. I believe in making the best of what I've been dealt. That doesn't mean I can't work to change those things I can and want to change. But life is certainly more pleasant when one stops fretting over losses or "spilled milk" and gets on with the process of living.

FALLEN LEAVES AND MEMORIES

I saw a leaf the other day
Reclining on the street.
A twinge of sorrow, felt, must say.
Looked lonely - incomplete.

I wondered if it missed those leaves
Still high up in the tree.
I wondered if for him they grieve,
Or gladdened that he's free.

My mind looked back upon my home
That day became my turn,
The difference, then, between "alone"
And "Lonely" had to learn.

Alone I was but lonely? No!
Have friends and memories.
I've things to do and love to sow.
No pity, if you please.

I'm sure those gone from me'd request
That I walk straight and tall
And that, with joy, I do my best
Each day to Have A Ball!

TOO BAD TO NAME #105

The dancer's buns were flat, not round.
No plight could be more drearier!
Her doctor's diagnosis found,
"Inferior Posterior!"

Me too, BUTT what else can I say?

EDUCATED, BUT . . .

"The SEATS of learning," they are termed -
Those Universities.
That Body Part seems right, I've learned -
(Known lot's of Ph.Ds!)

Now that I have alienated half my readers, I think it
might be a good time to leave you for today.

Changing Perspectives

HOLDING TEACHER'S HAND

In grade school, one thing was just grand
On field trips, then, for me.
I'd always get to hold the hand
Of teacher - constantly!

Sometimes, I'd tell her I would share
Her hand with other guys.
She'd smile down and pat my hair.
"Not now," Then, oft' heard sighs.

Well, that was fine with me because
I loved my teachers, dear.
But never knew just why I was
That privileged one, each year.

I understand now, why `twas done.
Was not `cause liked me best,
But was their way to handle one
Small, hyperactive Pest!

When I was ten, I had my first opportunity to attend a summer camp. It sat way back in a magnificent forest on the edge of a beautiful, deep blue lake. We slept in log cabins. Cooked over open fires. Built tree houses. It was great! I remember thinking, "Just ten guys doing the stuff guys like to do. Not an incomprehensible girl around! Why not just live here forever?"

When 16 I decided not to return to *Wilder Camp* - after all. Who wanted to be cooped up for six weeks with 9 other smelly guys and no mystifying females anywhere to be found. Incomprehensible? Mystifying? Will we guys EVER understand?

HATS AND BOYS AND GIRLS AND STUFF

Now, gals have always had to take
Much ribbing `bout their hats!
Too big! Too many! Goodness sake!
But folks, here are the facts!!

From time a boy first sits up straight,
Until he's ninety-nine,
His hats, to him, are sacred - Great!
To criticize - a crime!

Guys never wear them straight and trim
(Which women seem to hate!)
When young, one's Mom adjusts the brim.
When old, made right by mate!

About gal's hats, we guys just joke.
"Cause we CAN'T touch or grouch.
If we'd do that to womenfolk
We'd end up on the couch!

The male will never ask the way.
Same dress, two gals won't wear.
So, must, if jointly we're to play,
Find other things to share.

Dear folks, the moral here, you see,
Is, since in many ways,
The sexes never will agree -
To argue, never pays!

Homes and Houses

I remember what a revelation it was to me, when I first discovered the difference between the concepts of 'house' and 'home.' That a house was the structure and the home was the atmosphere, the feeling, the relationships that took place there. I felt great pride when I realized that although my money poor family lived in a ramshackle HOUSE, I was part of a rich and strong HOME!

I would never again see my parents, my possessions or myself, in the same way. I even felt compassion for that old house - it couldn't help what it was. Homes and houses. I think some folk still confuse the two - building monuments to stuff rather than building and reveling in warm, loving, family relationships.

HOUSE NUMBERS

The numbers on a house, I think,
Reveal a lot about
The folks who live there - form a link -
'Tween house and home. No doubt!

Those numbers painted bright and bold
Suggest a home of fun!
It welcomes all, both young and old.
Has room for everyone!

Those numbers, small and black, denote
A home with little flair.
They watch TV, they work and vote,
But risks, they seldom dare.

Some add to numbers, their last name -
A proud and open place!
It says, "We're here and glad you came.
Come meet us face to face!"

A few, NO numbers, have at all,
As if they just don't care,
Or have no friends to come to call -
A home so cold and bare.

Humungous numbers grace MY porch!
They're yellow, red and blue!
My name is there with lighted torch,
TO GLADLY WELCOME YOU!

GOD WAS PRETTY SMART!

When small, I thought it lucky that
God made legs grown-ups wore,
Just the length they'd need when sat
In chairs, so'd touch the floor.

GOD WAS PRETTY DUMB!

When young, must say, I was appalled
`Bout brushing teeth - a gyp!
No need, if God had just installed
Small hairs inside our lip!!!!

Winter Thoughts

Back in the old days, when I was growing up, natural disasters (acts of God, as we called them) made us all want to pull together - help one another in all possible ways - floods, fires, blizzards - made no difference. We would never have thought of profiting from such an occurrence. If anything, folks gave away those wares and services from which they usually gleaned their livelihood. Back then, other people were, ultimately, the most precious commodity we had. I sense that may be changing.

SHOVELING SNOW

I loved the snow, when just a lad.
It made the World so bight!
My friends and I were always glad
To shovel off that "white."

We'd work from daybreak doing walks,
`Till just too cold we got.
Then breaks, where oldsters lived. We'd talk -
They'd serve us cocoa, hot!

`Bout five AM I'd always start
At Dr. Connor's place,
So he could tend to cold and heart
`Case crises, some would face.

I'd move along to milkman Brown's.
Get Gramma Wilson's done.
`Fore long, I'd worked my way down town.
I'd helped, yet had such fun!!

The Townsfolk were appreciative,
Though `twas just understood
That, shov'ing time, each kid WOULD give.
It STILL made me feel good!

The times have changed, I am afraid!
When under snow, NOW stuck,
Some kids still come to offer aid,
But THEY want TWENTY bucks!!!!

Winter's here so recently I had my yearly flu shot. For some reason, it gave me more of the symptoms than it usually does. I felt pretty punk for several days. During that time I faithfully took extra vitamin C and large doses of Echinacea - well, I thought it was Echinacea. Turns out I was grabbing the Saw Palmetto instead. Bottom line is that although I continued to suffer the flue symptoms, I did so with what is probably the healthiest 70 year old prostate in the country!

In Winter I also tend to put on a few pounds.

TOO BAD TO NAME # 127

My trash compactor I did eye
When diet failed, you see.
I wondered if, in it, I'd lie,
It just might compact me?

Dieting

ALMIGHTY INCONSISTENCY

If God intended, THIN, we be,
You'd think that he'd have found
A way to make *taste* treats fat-free
Not other way around!!!

(Every time I criticize God, I get pounds of letters. When *will* you folks understand it's OK for me to poke fun at Myself!! - Woops! There comes another ten pounds. My poor old postman.)

Yes, I'm on a diet again!!! So, I began making a list of foods that are generally considered good for me AND which I also like. When I run across such a gem, I add it to my list. So far, after four weeks, here's my list: Apricots.

That's' it! But, I'm ever-hopeful that others may turn up. Sometime ago I saw a cartoon that holds special meaning for me. It depicted the aisles in a grocery store. Above them were two signs each carrying an arrow pointing to opposite parts of the store. One read, "Tastes bad but is good for you." The other: "Tastes good, but is bad for you." That seems to be my lot. I've decided horses have it made. Their entire range of dietary choices consists of grass, hay or oats. (Sounds a lot like something I had last evening at a local health food cafe.)

OLD WIVES TALE

The way to a man's heart, wives say,
Is through his stomach, and,
I think its true. Eat fat each day
And in your heart `twill land.

THIS DIETER'S DILEMMA

"When dieting," the doctor said,
"Must take this vitamin,
Or else, you'll end up sick in bed,
Be worse off than you've been."

I take that vitamin at lunch
But strange as it may sound,
Increased my appetite SO much,
I promptly gained twelve pounds!!!

DIETARY STRESS

Eliminated carbs (to lose) -
And can't have meat, says Doc -
'Bout only thing I've left to choose
Is water. What a shock!!

It seems that I AM losing weight
Though `slosh' when walk - feel weak.
There is one thing, though, that is great!
This diet's REALLY cheap.

Last night I dreamed of pie and cake
Of sundae - cherry red.
Then flood washed food away. I waked.
Had almost wet the bed!

When Pearly Gates come into view,
(Which may be soon, I fear!)
I'll question old St. Pete. "Sir, do
I have to diet here?"

`Cause if I do, I think I'll take
My chances down below.
The red-horned guy has promised CAKE,
And NO MORE H₂O!!"

Contemplation

TOO BAD TO NAME # 131

The 2 x 4 was happier
When he had been a tree.
Once sawed, this little piece of fir,
Became `board', don't you see!

I find that contemplating the unlikely, broadens my mental horizons and often provides some fantastic new appreciation or insight. As a boy, my parents and I played a game each evening at the conclusion of supper (that's `dinner' for you non-Midwesterners). We would each share a thought that we believed had probably never been thought before. Something about mine often sent my folks into rails of damp cheeked laughter. I chose to believe that was because MY thoughts were magnificently original though I never asked and they never offered.

We also played a game we called, "How would life change if . . ." Here's an example you can use to tickle your synapses today. "How would life change if suddenly spoons were outlawed and all existing spoons were confiscated?" Not into spoons? Then, try this one. "How would your life change if your ears and eyes changed places?" (If you actually spend more than ten minutes on either of these, I would guess your life has much in common with the little 2 X 4 mentioned above!)

WHEN, DID YOU SAY??

Subconsciously, I think that we
Resist this `Time Thing', folks.
From time-words we attempt to free
Ourselves - and that's no joke!

Instead of stating times exact.
We all use `fudge' words, see.
When we're asked, "when" - it is a fact -
We fudge quite shamelessly.

"See you later," "In a jiff," or
Sometimes, "After while."
And when we're putting off a chore -
Say, "Pretty soon," and smile.

And when we're pinned down by our mate,
THIS phrase we oft' regret,
We say as we sit there and wait,
"Be done first chance I get!"

I've found a really better way -
When putting off Job One -
Is to - quite honestly - just say,
"It probably WON'T get done!"

See you `next time' (unless, of course I find some way to
put it off!)

Planning

Last evening I was writing a piece for a `new' book I've been working on for forty years (well, on and off). I found myself writing this phrase: "WORRY focuses on experiencing the problem, whereas PLANNING focuses on finding the solution." Worry, in other words, cannot move us closer to a solution because it's just a matter of replaying - over and over - the nature of the problem or what its result `may' be. Worry is useless - I learned that as a youngster.

We were dirt poor - money-wise - but there was never a "worry word" spoken in our home. We were strictly into planning and trying and doing. It was down right exciting to have a new problem! We felt quite competent to meet the challenges because we had always met them in the past. My advice: Bury "Worry." Set "Planning" in the center of your mantel. Life immediately becomes less dreary and, in fact, absolutely wonder-filled!

MORNING FOG

A morning fog depresses some.
It closes down their view.
They see it as a shroud that comes
And turns their mood quite blue.

To me a fog brings pleasant rest
From all the din and do.
I see it as a cozy nest
Which frees my usual view.

When I can't see ten yards ahead
While on my morning walk,
I look at things quite close, instead
And with the robins talk.

I watch that silken wall recede
(A mystery, I confess!)
As I approach, seems forced to heed
Some power I possess.

I've found that I can step inside
The thickest fog I've seen
And as I take that final stride
The fog retreats the scene.

It seems to me that worries can
Be handled that same way.
Just step right in and build a plan
To solve them, now, today!

SHOPPING AND DIETING

"Before you've eaten, never shop!"
(At least that is the lore.)
Or else, as shopper, you won't stop

Until you've bought the store.

The worst time to decide - I've found -
To start your diet's when
You're full. No hunger pangs abound.
Resolve comes EASY, then!

No wonder, weight, I just can't lose.
At five a.m. I shop.
Then, while I munch, resolve anew
Some twenty pounds to drop!

Sock It To Me!

At Laundromat I lost (last week)
A sock - I felt quite blue.
This week things even turned more bleak -
I find that I lost two!

At this rate, by next month I'll be
A barefoot Grampa - sad.
But maybe not! Could paint my feet
And start new `Grampa fad'!

Disappointment is a strange concept. It can only exist if you let yourself focus on the end result. When you focus on the process and the fascinating adjustments needed along the way in order to approach some end result, then it's just plain exciting.

Fortunately, I learned this as a lad. I'd work at most any odd job to earn enough to make some purchase. The working had a purpose - I felt grand motivation to do well. Once the purchase had been made, however, I was (momentarily, at least) purposeless. It was a disagreeable state. (Right then and there, I vowed never to retire!)

Eventually, I learned to get along without the `purchase' as my motivator. What I enjoy most is the doing - so I just go out and `do' every day. I walk, I chat, I work, I write, I think, I laugh (a lot!) - I just DO. And life is wonderful!!!

"MY" INVENTIONS

When young, invented things - a bunch!
Each week did three or four.
Was always beaten to the punch -
I'd see them in a store.

The Frisbee! That was really mine.
The lid at painting chore.
But think it earned me one thin dime?
It beat me to the store.

And then there was the Chia Pet
(Well, almost) to adore!
A mossy rock on dresser set.
Soon saw them in a store.

A "glove" for steering wheel, when cold.
A tailless kite that soars.
A walking stick - `twas white, would fold!
They all were in those stores.

Invented `lectric phonograph,
A vacuum for the floors
And several things folks thought most daft.
Still, ALL were soon in stores.

By ten, I had become obsessed!
'Twas all out, total, war!
For ten more years became my quest:
That window in the store!

At twenty, I improved that thing
That gently closes doors.
My patent made me "Closer King"!
At last, MINE'S in the stores.

The moral to this story's been
When failed four score or more,
Hang in. You'll get YOUR day there in
The window of a store.

It's Hard To Plan

BARKS

There's bark from dog and bark from tree.
To see the kinship's tough.
There is this similarity -
They're both described as "ruff".

Most of my life, I have needed to be pretty well organized. I've kept calendars, lists and appointment books. It's nice that things are now beginning to calm down, so most of that is no longer needed. (Well, truthfully, I must admit, that if it weren't for my lists these days, I'd undoubtedly forget even such routine things as buttoning my fly, but THAT will be a topic for another day!)

Looking back, now, it seems that certain eras in my life were way over-planned. The interesting thing is, that so often, what was planned, and what really happened, just didn't much resemble each other.

IT'S HARD TO PLAN, YOU KNOW?

At five, I loved to build with tools -
Would be a building pro.
At six, they dragged me off to school -
It's hard to plan, you know?

At twelve, I KNEW girls were a pest.
But hormones then would grow.
By thirteen, LOVED them, must confess -
It's hard to plan, you know?

At twenty, LOVED my bachelor life -
On girls my pay I'd blow.
But, enter Ginny! Soon my wife -
It's hard to plan, you know?

We'd have six kids (or maybe eight)!
We'd help them learn and grow.
To have just one became our fate -
It's hard to plan, you know?

I never dreamed I'd live this long.
Still fit from head to toe!
I can't imagine what went "wrong" -
It's hard to plan, you know?

There is this rule of life - quite grand:
As down life's path we go,
The best that comes, is seldom planned -
Enjoy what comes, you know!!!

**WHO SAYS THERE'S
NOTHING YOU CAN COUNT ON ANYMORE!**

When thought, no new "Too Bad To Name"
Could be worse than the last,
A verse arrives that IS more lame
Than those sent in the past.

TOO BAD TO NAME # 131

The goose's beak was made of gold.
A man, that beak, would sell.
One hundred pennies got when sold.
A "dollar bill?" Do tell!

I'll Save The World!

As a boy, solving the World's problems seemed quite simple to me: "Neighbors should just help neighbors." * That done, everyone in the World would be cared for, everyone would have good friends, and folks would be so busy being helpful they would not have time to be mean or wage war. They'd also feel so good about themselves that they would have no reason to covet that which they didn't have. I was told it couldn't work. Let's see! Why was it, again, that it wouldn't work? Hmmmmm!

[* I wrote a book about it: *Everything I needed to know about saving the world I learned before I was ten.* ISBN: 1-885631-56-1]

DON'T SPEAK WHEN YOUR MOUTH IS FULL

My thoughts were really excellent.
Would probably save mankind.
So, felt obliged to get them sent,
Most usually, while I dined.

"Don't speak when mouth is full," was taught.
My choice was plain as day:
The World must do without my thoughts
Or, I must waste away.

I thought, solution, I had found.
Eat fast then speak - my ploy.
But I soon lost another round.
"Chew each bite well, my boy."

I felt Mom didn't comprehend
Just how important were
Those thoughts I had to share with friends.
Man's woes they'd surely cure!

However, every night as she
Would tuck me into bed
She'd listen quite attentively
To everything I said.

The truth on me one day did dawn!
Each night she'd learn from me,
So she could pass my insights on
Next day to all she'd see!!!

It wasn't so much - you see - that I was pathologically egocentric. I was just exuberantly and totally self-confident! (Basically, not a bad trait for a six year old!) I had other major concerns and insights as well . . .

NO MORE LITTERING

I solved this litter-thing when ten.
No wrappers would we drop
If made, so we could eat them, then
Most littering would stop!

(Of course you'd probably need a wrapper to cover the edible wrapper so it would stay clean!)

CHILDHOOD COMPASSION

Felt bad for JUNE bug, there, you know!
(And you may wonder why?)
No doubt, poor thing, was dull and slow -
I saw him in JULY!

TOO BAD TO NAME # 107

Incriminating photo had
Been planted so to blame
An innocent young caveman lad -
The first, true "Picture Frame."

(Groaning is good for the soul.)

Let's Ban Padlocks

Padlocks gripe me to death! Of course, hardly anything about that opening sentence is truly accurate. I'm still alive so I can't have been griped to death. And, it's not the padlock, itself, but what it represents that gripes me. Most of us would never, ever, think of taking something that didn't belong to us. So, for most of us, locks would not be necessary except, perhaps, to guard others against unsafe situations.

In the small town where I grew up, the only building there that was ever locked was the bank. My house didn't even have a lock on either door. The only grocery store closed at five pm, but if you needed something after hours you just went in, took it, and left your money on the counter, with a note.

The first time I actually saw a padlock in the flesh was when I was twelve. A new kid brought one to school expecting to put it on his locker. We had open shelves with our names written on labels to designate our spot. He was leery about our system. I was intrigued about his lock. The janitor agreed to drill a hole in the front of the shelf so the boy could hang his padlock there (my suggestion). He did. It looked ridiculous but made a point.

Some ten years later I revisited the school. The books were still neatly stacked on the open shelves. Still, nothing had been stolen. Still that padlock hung quietly in its hole, a tribute to something, I suppose - the honesty of the folks in that little community, perhaps, or, hopefully, to the grand possibility for integrity that dwells within the human spirit.

BIG BROTHER

Those cameras are most everywhere.
Security, their views.
Don't dare leave home with uncombed hair -
May be on evening news!!

DISCLAIMER

That word, `disclaimer', stops me cold.
It's news is NEVER good.
"We probably, really can't," we're told,
"Do what we claimed we could."

Perhaps, on headstone I should place
My own disclaimer, friend.
"I tried to save the human race.
My failure, won't defend."

TOO BAD TO NAME # 108

The Baker switched to macadam-
ias in wares, one day.
Because of that, quite rich became!
His "dough-nut" would you say?

Let's get the groaner out of the way first, today!!!

TO BAD TO NAME # 109

The nosey roof repairman did
Lean low so he could hear.
Roof edge gave way and down it slid -
Eaves-dropping, I do fear!

CREATURE OF HABIT

My power went off last night at. So, I took my half-heated soup off the electric range and poured it into a plastic container. I'm a flexible guy. I would just adjust to the situation and microwave it - Daaaaa! It gets better (or worse). I noticed the neighbor's lights were on. Perhaps it was my circuit breaker, I thought, so I went to closet that houses my electrical box. I'd just turn on the closet light and take a look. I laughed 'til I cried.

All was not lost, however. I feasted on a Baby Ruth and the leavings in the bottom of a most-empty potato chip sack as I sat staring at the blank TV. (Yes, I had turned it on before sitting down!) Creatures of habit or perhaps, more appropriately, creatures of take-it-for-granted! Hope you enjoy your next outage as much as I did!

OUTAGES THROUGH THE AGES

When lights went out and I was five
I stuck quite close to Dad.
Though to be very brave, I'd strive,
The dark still scared this lad.

When ten, a blackout did demand
That pals and I must go
And scare the girls - all quite unplanned
(We `hated' girls, you know!)

By fifteen, blackouts I would plan
So female friends and I
Would have some kissing time, quite grand.
(`Twas not a backward guy!)

I love those blackouts now, you know.
Can't vacuum without `juice'.
Can't cook and holes in socks can't sew.
(My, what a GRAND EXCUSE!)

Suspicion

I've watched a few presidential commercials on TV. Aside from the fact that it is demeaning to our country - the way they hack at each other like ill-mannered preschoolers - it again raises the issue of suspicion and doubt in our culture. Two of the supposedly most qualified men to lead our country (and model for our children) both saying the other one is a liar, a cheat and grossly incompetent. I have to wonder if they are *both right!*

SUSPICION SHRINKS THE SOUL

I've always been an easy touch.
By kids and cons get caught.
I buy their cookies, cards and such -
The Brooklyn Bridge, one bought!

Some say that I'm too trusting, then
Some other say I'm daft!
I'd rather be them both, my friend
Than take the other path.

To live my life suspicious of
All those who come my way
Would just obstruct the joy and love
I try to spread each day.

So, I'd prefer to trust all who
I meet around each bend.
Though I'll be 'taken' by a few -
The rest I'll make my friend!!!!

TO BAD TO NAME # 110

A million Mums did cover her
When Cleopatra died.
No need for gauze or wax or myrrh.
Already mum-ified.

BIRTHDAY BOY

A birthday boy gave thanks one night,
By bed, on bended knee.
"The truck and glove were great, all right,
But best of all you see,
Was Daddy taking time tonight,
To come and BE with ME."

TO BAD TO NAME # 113

The thief did steal a hawk-like bird
Who's health was not the best.
When caught, admitted all (I've heard),
"Ill-eagle" act, confessed.

Presidential Inspirations

MISINFORMED?

Put down his BOX of peanuts by
The elephants - those hunks!
He thought nuts safe, `cause heard (no lie)
They always ate from TRUNKS!

Peanuts and elephants remind me of the GOP and that reminds me of the election again today. I once heard a commencement speaker say it was the dream of every American boy to grow up and become President. The sexist element of that 1940's comment aside, I doubt if there is really much truth to the rest of it. I certainly never wanted to be President, although along the way I have thought of a few things I would do if that job had been mine.

IF I'D BEEN PRESIDENT

If I'd been President at six
I'd stopped the war in France.
At ten, the law I'd neatly fix
So boys don't have to dance.

At fifteen, I'd have made it clear,
By proclaiming this:
"That every time a girl was near
All boys would get a kiss!"

At twenty-five would draft a plan
To cancel student's loans,
And stop the war in Vietnam,
And knight the Rolling Stones.

At forty, I'd have looked out for
The average Jane and Joe
And opened up the college door
So everyone could go.

At fifty, If I'd led our land,
The S.S. problem cured
And given homeless kids a hand -
Their future, thus, secured.

Today, if I were at the helm
With so much to be done,
I'm sure I'd feel quite overwhelmed
And wish I'd never run!

DAMP DATE

One date - no fun - as teenage boy.
Refused my kiss - incensed!
So cold, that on her face, the mois-
Ture from the air condensed!!!

Nuts!

TOO BAD TO NAME # 115

On leg joint, caveman *Ogg* drew spear
For all his tribe to see.
As '*Spear for hire*' had no peer.
(First knee-on sign? Could be!!)

I'm not a health nut! Please pardon that expression if you are one! (I have a way of just getting in deeper and deeper don't I?) At any rate, I walk every day. I take a variety of vitamins and supplements. I try to eat a well balanced diet. I tend to tip the scales a bit higher than the charts and Doc suggest is best. I suppose for me it comes down to a choice between life and living.

Chatting with a young jogger not long ago, I learned he hated to jog. He hated to eat his healthful' diet. He hated to work out at the gym four times a week. Those things took all of his 'spare' time. I asked why he chose to live a life style he obviously hated so. He looked surprised at my question, answering, "Well, I want to live as long as possible of course and these things give me the best shot at that." I refrained from pointing out the obvious. He had made the choice to live a lot of years being unhappy the whole way, rather than living a somewhat shorter time being happy the whole way. A choice between life and living, I guess. Aren't we a fascinating species?

DON'T!!!!

It seemed when small, I heard one word
A dozen times a day.
That word, to which I just referred,
Would just not go away!

In stores, when I would try to climb
Up on the counter top
So I could see to spend my dime,
A "DON'T" the clerk would drop.

Or when, with care, I'd choose a bean
And place it in my ear,
My Mom would give a harried scream,
"DON'T do that!" I would hear.

And when I'd borrow Mamma's knives
To sharpen sticks for swords,
Or go catch bees out by the hives,
"Please DON'T," was my reward.

These days, I LEAN on counter tops,
I KEEP bees, CARVE neat stuff.
The bean-in-ear deal, though, I stopped -
Just hearing's hard enough!

HALLOWEEN HAPPENING

On well, the Jack-o-lantern sat.
From mouth gushed water flow.
Astonished, I concluded that
`Twas "*pump* kin," don't you know.

Walking Through Life

HOW D'YOU DO!

When young, and folks would say to me,
"Hi! How you doin', lad?"
I'd answer them most truthfully -
"I'm fine," "I'm sick," "I'm sad."

In time, I realized that they
Were really not concerned
About my health, or of the way
The fates, on me, had turned.

Instead, by words like that they meant,
"I recognize you're here,
And need from you a message sent
That life is great - no fear!"

So now, when, "How d'you do?" folks say,
I smile deep inside -
Reply, "I'm great!" "A gorgeous day!"
- A fine, grand life, implied!

I've noticed three kinds of walkers during my morning constitutional (not including the rabbits and occasional armadillo). Some walkers look straight ahead. They seem to have purpose in their stride - their eye on some distant goal. Where they are, at the moment, doesn't seem to matter much. They keep to a quick pace. Others keep their heads down, watching the path directly in front of them, as if caught up in the moment - perhaps the safety-questions of the moment. Their pace may be fast or slow, apparently dependent on the condition of the surface at hand (or, at foot, I suppose!). Still others choose a moderate pace, glancing up and down, fore and aft, side to side. I assume they enjoy the event most of all, taking in all that the world has to offer at that place and

moment. They seem to walk in pairs and chat a lot. I have a theory that the blood pressure in this third group runs pretty normal. I doubt if that holds true for the others.

THE ROOSTER IN THE MORNING

At night, when small, and fears would grow
And sleep could not be mine,
At dawn, I'd hear the rooster crow,
And life, again, was fine!

I found that worries, fears and more
Would lessen some, you know,
If I'd lay still and listen for
That reassuring crow.

I'm not sure why it worked that way.
Perhaps `cause signaled dawn.
With dawn, of course, a safe new day -
The ghosts of night had gone.

And to this day when worries fill
A long and lonely night,
That early morning crowing still
Makes everything all right!

I wish you a rooster every morning!!

Absurdities!

(and *you* thought that should be the name of the book!)

A HALLOWEEN TALE

The OLD man's spouse on Halloween
Did change with groan and wail!
Long growth from lower back was seen.
(It's just an `Old Wives Tail')

As long as I've begun on an absurd note, why stop? (And how is this different from other days, you ask?) As a child, I concluded that clocks are strangely described devices. For many years, they only had two hands - one to tell the hour and one to tell the minute. The larger of these two is actually called the minute (long `u') hand. Later, a THIRD hand was added, although it was actually called the SECOND hand. I was also doubtful that the clocks worn on folks wrists ever really `watch' anything. The grandfather clock suggests the necessary existence of other generations of clocks - parents, children, etc.

And then, there's the sundial - not at all what its name implies. Once, on a dark and dreary day, I attempted to turn it to dial up some sun. It didn't happen. Stopwatches (like used at races) just can't be depended on to stop anything. In fact, when they are first clicked, everybody starts running like crazy! Fascinating stuff (if your given to considering the ridiculous as I am). I must close now - two large men in the white jackets have arrived for me. Before I leave for *Happy Hollow*, however, let me tell you about *Caveman OGG*.

TOO BAD TO NAME # 116

OGG blew his marijuana smoke
Right at the fichus tree
And it became, my friends - no joke -
First potted plant you see!

At this point, many would plead the fifth. I choose to plead the seventy-fifth (birthday, that is!).

OLD MAN?

When young, it made no sense when they
Would pat me on my can,
Shake their heads and, smiling, say,
"You're something else, old man."

`Twas when I stood upon my head,
Or up the ladder ran,
Or leapfrogged hydrants that they said,
"You're something else, old man!"

I wondered why they called me "old."
Would seem a better plan
To call me `young' or `brave' or `bold'.
Not, "Something else, old man!"

And, "Something else?" What did that mean?
I am just what I am.
I'm not a girl, a car, a bean!
Still, "Something else, old man!"

As years progressed, it dawned on me
That I'm a shameless ham!
Perhaps that's what they meant, you see,
By, "Something else, old man!"

When in the mirror, glance, today,
And see my face, quite tan,
With twinkle and a wink I say,
"You're something else, Old Man!"

Brain Power

IT WOULDN'T LET HIM GO !

I saw a child at play one day -
Three and a half, or so.
He tried to throw his gum away -
IT wouldn't let HIM go!

He shook his hand and jumped around -
He tried to blow it off!
Then drug his hand across the ground,
Paused long enough to cough.

He bellied down on rotting log
And caught an ant or two.
Then touched his playful little dog
There, chewing on his shoe.

As he reached out to pet his pup,
The doggy licked his hand.
The gum was quickly gobbled up.
They wrestled in the sand.

One wonders what was learned from this
By little boy at play.
Perhaps, there, from his puppies kiss,
He learned of love, that day.

Speaking of pups, I was talking to a 16-year-old recently about his new job at a fast food place. I asked what he did there. "I make fries." "Is that all?" "Yup. I put them down in the oil and that automatically sets a timer. When it rings, some gadget raises them up out of the vat. I wait while they drip - until it rings again - then I dump them onto the hot table and I salt them." "Doesn't that get boring?" "Sure, but that's how it's done. We all just have one job." It hardly qualified as a `job' to me. I'm sure a monkey of average intelligence could do it

well. I asked, "And why, again, did you take that job?" "The money and a reference for my next job." The money turned out to be two dollars over minimum. (I'm considering getting a herd of monkeys and leasing them out.) I can see the lad's reference. "Did part of the fry making process. Worked his way up to Monkey # Three."

THOSE DUMB YELLOW LINES

Those yellow lines in parking lots,
My dignity do mar.
They blatantly suggest I've not
Got sense to park a car.

Whatever did we do back when
Had graveled parking lots?
My goodness, folks, when I was ten
Could park without those `slots'.

To `dummy down's" the term they use
Its purpose seems to be
So folks will never have to choose
To use their brain, you see.

Those yellow lines - just one small part -
It's jobs at fast food stores,
Jobs in factories, super marts,
Most any men'al chore.

Where profit's bottom line, you'll see
This fact is very plain:
They stifle creativity
So profit king can reign.

A brain is like a muscle, friend,
Unchallenged, it will stall.
If `dummy down' all tasks, we'll end
Up with no brain at all!!!

Philosophizing

A philosophic rush has burst upon me this morning. I've been wondering, after all is said and done, just WHAT I will have left behind? I don't mean petty things like furniture, rings, and bank accounts. But what LEGACY, what message about life and living, about love and caring, will I have etched in some obvious and meaningful way? Oh, I'm not looking to have changed the World (I pretty well gave up on that by age sixty - but DO hope that somehow I have improved the lot of those who have come within my reach. Furniture, rings, and bank accounts! - they just don't mean much to the ages, do they?

LEGACY

A lofty Oak lived on my street -
It stood a hundred years!
Five generations it would greet.
Surveying joy and tears.

A climbing tree for lads of eight,
A kissing tree for teens,
A wondrous sight for me - That Great
Bouquet of limbs and greens.

When Spring unfolded, green and bright,
This year, that treasured tree,
No leaves would sprout. A sad, sad sight,
For lads, and teens, and me.

With axe and saw the trimmers came
And took away our friend.
And though the street can't look the same
Its presence does not end.

Its huge round stump, one cannot miss.
Lads climb it, with delight!
And still, I see young lovers kiss
While sitting there each night.

I hope that when I've gone away,
I'll leave a memory,
Which lingers on through love and play
As did that Grand Oak Tree!!!

HOME GROWN?

Sam wasn't happy with his house.
He did complain and moan!
One thing is sure `bout such a grouse -
Was certainly `home-groan.'

(Sorry! But mail runs 50 to 1 FOR more "Too bad to namers". Some say it reflects on the intellect of my readers. Other says it's about compassion for a doddering old man. I chose to believe it represents a kinship of some kind - *what* kind, I haven't a clue! Perhaps it merely reflects that we are all grown/groan up.)

Dubious Distinction

My son and I always had Sunday breakfast together at a restaurant - just the two of us. One morning an acquaintance sat down with us for a few minutes. My son began bragging about his father's (dubious) skill as a verse writer. "He can write a verse about anything. Just name something." The man looked into his water glass and said "Ice Cubes." Here is the result (less the original napkin).

ICE CUBES

The ice cube is a selfless thing,
An altruistic form
That gives its all in one cool fling
To chase away the warm.

Relieves the over-heated brow
And cools the tepid brew.
It ne'er expects to take a bow
Nor asks a "Thanks," from you.

Wish we'd all act as ice cubes do -
Just help for helping's sake.
If that one wish were to come true,
Just think the World we'd make!

Words are wonderful? Words are strange! Words have a way of taking on a life of their own. Many of us seem to overlook that. Rose one is not rose two is not rose three. And what is a synonym in one situation, just may not be a synonym in another.

**LARGE (or small) CHUNKS (or slivers)
OF MINERALS (or other stuff)**

A boulder from a pebble I
Can tell without a doubt,
But rocks from stones my mind defies -
That's hard to figure out.

Luckily this problem does-
n't surface every day.
In life, I'm seldom stumped because
That difference I can't say.

To say a guy had PEBBLES in
His head just wouldn't work.
"Pebbles and Roll" - that Elvis spin?
I'd sure be called a jerk!

To say the KO'ed man was knocked
`Rock cold', would not sound right
Or that the drunken bum was `rocked'
Would not describe his plight.

All this suggests that stones just may
Be happy, quiet things,
While rocks have mindless, active ways
Less thoughtfulness, they bring.

The stone's less active, quiet soul
Would rather be out fishin'.
The mindless rock, by any poll's,
A lot like politicians!

Gradin' on the Curve

CAFFEINATION DELIBERATION

When young I loved those cola drinks.
Then coffee as a teen.
But heard those rumors `bout some links
`Tween bad things and caffeine.

"It gives you pep," the ads read - bold!
"It's bad for you," Doc said!
And now, PREVENTS bad stuff, I'm told.
It spins my gray old head.

I use two scoops in coffee pot
And one is caffeine-free.
The other scoop I use is not,
It's half-and-half, you see.

A grand solution, `tis, I think.
To "caff" or not's, no plight,
`Cause half the coffee that I drink
Is BOUND to be just right!!

After my coffee, I go for a walk. On my walk this morning, I encountered three young rabbits and an armadillo. At five a.m. it's still dark in these parts. Along my way I visit a sprawling, wooded park, only sparsely lighted that time of day. That's where I mingled with the wild life. In the dark they seem to accept me as one of them - well the bunnies, anyway. The armadillo seems, how can I put this nicely - dumb, really, really dumb! He just ambles along straight ahead. If I'm in his path he's likely to run right into me. (We've `met' before!) So much for my theory that it's the smart species that survive. The rabbit's reaction, however, was somewhat of a surprise. After dawn, they usually stop what they are doing and sit very still until I pass or, if I come too close, they hop off into the

underbrush. This morning they went on nibbling the clover. I had to wonder how the little animals learn to react to what they encounter in their world. Do you suppose their parents assign homework? If all the young creatures are graded together 'on the curve', I'm sure they are thankful for the armadillo. I have the feeling that he anchors it fairly far below the others.

HOMEWORK

Not long ago, a youngster asked
Why homework was assigned.
It was a most unpleasant task
And he felt much maligned!

His query sent me drifting back
To when I asked that, too.
Why did those teachers try to pack
My evening hours, few?

I needed time to be a kid
To let off steam and play.
Ingenious ways, I found to rid
Me of that work each day.

"It fell into my fishies bowl."
"I lost it in my mush."
"I think, by gremlins, it got stole."
"An accidental flush!"

So what could I, of all folks say
To this perturbed young guy?
"Just try to turn it into play??"
(That line, he'd NEVER buy!

So, fin'ly said, "Life's not all fun.
There are some things each day,
Like it or not, just must be done,
Before we get to play."

Venting

May I vent in your direction today? There is a signon the desk of one of my acquaintances. It reads: "The man who dies with the most toys, wins." I shudder every time I read it. It suggests two things that turn me off. First, that the accumulation of stuff (toys) is the source of happiness, and Second, that it is all-important to win. I mentioned my problems with that saying to an economist-friend. He said that without that dual philosophy (accumulating stuff and needing to win) the world's economy would collapse. That's such a sad commentary on the state of the human spirit (I think).

What happened to the thrill of knowing you made somebody happy, of doing a kind act for someone, of living an honest and compassionate life? No stuff involved there! No competition for status there. Just pure, 100% happiness and contentment. Everyone `wins' and yet no one tries to. Stuff? Winning? Bothersome concepts!

I GOTTA WIN!

Lad said, "I gotta win the race."
I asked, "And why's that so?"
`Cause if I don't I just can't face
The guys and Dad, you know?

His worth, it seemed, depended on
His skill at running fast.
Without it, self-esteem was gone,
His status, he thought dashed.

It seems a shame he's unaware
That even if he'd lose,
He's worthy, loveable and rare.
No need to pay his dues.

I hope he learns that if he'll be
A good guy on life's tour,
He'll make the grade and certainly
Will `win', of that, I'm sure.

Though winning never was my quest,
The older that I get
It seems there's one thing I do best
- Just what, though, I forget!

(Oh yes! I remember. I do believe I am among the top
contenders for the "poorest short term memory" in the new
millennium.)

WINNING

I really never understood
This `winning' thing, you know.
I figured if I TRIED, `twas good.
No need to be a pro.

Some folks must prove their worth through wins,
Must come in first - be best.
It is the only time they grin -
When meddles grace their chest.

My sympathy those winners get.
They just don't understand.
When love yourself, no need to fret
You've WON and life is grand!

Don't get me wrong, to do our best
Is one fantastic trait.
I merely sound this caution, lest
A `win' with `worth' equate.

Well, now that I am old and gray
I'm smelling like a rose.
`Cause guess to live just one more day
Is `winning', don't you `spose?

Age by any other name . . .

BENDING OVER

When young, I'd not think twice about
Just bending over, then.
But now, that `journey' stays in doubt
'Til I'm up straight again!

I started musing, yesterday -
"What if I dropped a dime?
Would I bend down or let it stay?"
I thought a long, long time.

Since bending now seems quite a chore,
I'd prob'ly just pretend
I didn't see it there, though for
A QUARTER, I might bend!!!

AGE is such an undependable thing! It changes every year. You've probably noticed that, too. I never can remember how old I am. That malady seemed to slip into my being somewhere between forty and fifty. It's not that I regret growing older - I enjoy that, actually. I think it's more that my age is simply what it is and that's that. It seems fairly meaningless. I have today and that's wonderful! And, I'd have today whether my age this morning said I was ten years younger or ten years older. Age just doesn't matter to me. I seldom think about it and wouldn't be writing about it this morning if a youngster hadn't recently asked me: "Are you an old, old man?" I answered, "Yes," not thinking it appropriate to go into the fact that we are all several ages - one of body and one of spirit. I'm 18 inside my head. I suppose that's not entirely true either. I'm a "wise and careful 18" inside my head. That probably takes much of the excitement out of being 18, doesn't it?

AGE

When small, two ages I did know -
Were either young, like me,
Or old likes Dad and Uncle Joe.
No subtle shades, you see.

By six, the `halves' became impor-
Tant to my friends and me.
Six and a half - a WHOLE lot more
That six could ever be.

By teenage years your girl must be
No older than the boy.
So had to choose them carefully
(Or else, some fib, employ.)

Then 21 became the age
Which all guys did desire.
Finally legal, wise and sage,
We'd set the world on fire!

By 50, sixty-five looked great.
Retirement the goal.
My wife and I could hardly wait
Have time to walk and bowl.

Now old, two ages do I know -
Are either old like me
Or young like Mickey, Beth and Joe -
They tell me they are three!

The Three Second Rule

TOOOO BAD TO NAME # 114

On outing to a farm, a guy,
In pasture, did repose.
He smoked some pot (I do not lie!)
A field `trip', I suppose.

(The groans delight my soul!)

As a lad, I devised a three second rule - if an edible substance (cookie, cracker, mashed potatoes) fell to the floor, and if I could retrieve it before I counted to three, it would be safe to eat provided I blew on its underside with all of my considerable lung power. I figured that within those three seconds few germs would find it and none of those that did would have a chance to burrow deep enough inside to escape my blowing them to kingdom come. Therefore, it would be safe to eat.

I once performed my TSP (Three Second Process) on a cookie Pop had dropped. I then handed it back to him. He declined the offer saying I had just blown it full of germs from my mouth. I had to wonder. If my mouth was already full of germs, why were the adults so concerned about my getting more off the floor? Grown-ups!! (And wouldn't you know - eventually I became one. Shudder, shudder!!! Ugh, Ugh!!!)

GERMS

When small, it seemed, that big bad germs
Were present everywhere -
On fingers, sleeves and woolly worms -
In sneeze out in the air!

It really aggravated me
That everything that's fun
Was filled with germs I could not see -
Off limits, they'd become.

Mom wouldn't let me chew used gum
Or share a lollipop!
I couldn't even suck my thumb
Or she'd be yelling, "Stop!"

She'd even make me wash my hands
When they looked clean to me.
It's tough to grow up with demands
Like those, don't you agree?

In time, I gave in anyway.
I'd bathe and wash my face,
Rinse my hands off after play
And help clean up the place.

In high school, looked through microscopes
So knew germs did exist.
But `bout them, never worried, folks,
When sweetheart's lips I kissed!

Hugs and Stuff

HORMONES REVISITED!

Some time ago, I went to work
Down at a Dairy Queen
And I became a soda jerk -
The oldest ever seen.

I work with guys - all in their teens -
They share about their dates,
And point out girls in skin-tight jeans -
Strange feelings that creates!

Perplexed, seems I'm back at that stage
Where teen-girls turn my head.
I think I've traced it to contag-
ious hormones teen-boys spread !!!

Although these feelings have been swell,
I hope they soon recant,
'Cause if they don't, I'm here to tell,
I'll need a heart transplant!!!

I come from a family of huggers. Mom gave everyone a hug whether they wanted one or not. Pop was a bit more selective, but hugged easily. I'd hug anything I could reach - neck, waist, leg, arm, boots. I've always enjoyed kids. During my young adult years, I'd always reach down and pick up or hug any child that came within a hug's length. Then, somewhere along the line - during the '70's as I remember - hugs from adults to kids became no nos. I understand the reasons but, still, it gripes me. Here I have these two really great hugging arms, and there are thousands of kids in my city who really need hugs, but I can't feel free to do it. It gripes me, I tell you. It's been many years since I visited the small town where I grew up. I have

to wonder if they still hug freely there. I'm going to choose to believe that they do!

HUGS

The value of a hug, it's true,
Depends upon its source.
Some hugs say, "Dear, I do love you!"
And some just, "Hi," of course.

My brother's hugs were over-done,
And few and far between.
He'd squeeze me from behind, for fun.
I thought he'd burst my spleen

My teacher's hug was always nice.
Up close, she smelled so great!
For THAT hug, I would pay the price -
My comrades tease, the fate!

My Daddy's hugs were wonderful,
Though never lasted long.
A moment close, then `way he'd pull -
So tender, yet so strong!

Now, Mom would hold her hug all day
If I would just stand still.
No time for that, `cause had to play.
Of hugs, soon got my fill!

Then, when a teen, I hugged a LOT,
Way out behind the shed.
It made my breathing rapid! Got
Quite hot - turned rosy red!!

When wed, I thought the hugging done
Was THE best ever had!
Was wrong. THE best came from my son,
When just a tiny lad!!

Common Stuff

JUDGES DILEMMA

An English teacher had become
A judge with twisted mission.
Before her stood convicted bum.
Was named Al Preposition.

To jail, this con, judge would not send.
Threw out the deposition.
She said a sentence could not end
With A. Preposition.

One of my early Grampa Gray books was titled, "In Praise of the Common Place." I suppose my `stuff' hasn't moved far beyond that concept to this moment. That's a conscious effort on my part. I'm given to contemplating what many people take for granted - sidewalks, windmills, and the inventor of the paperclip get high marks from me, as do the guys who thought up such things as keys, belts (the leather, not liquid, variety), combs, erasers, and Frank and Earnest. I'm also a great fan of the absurd! That rests my mind from reality. (Though during this election campaign, I'm entirely sure of that, either.)

ODE TO GUTTERS AND CURBS

The gutters of the World have got
A rap, most undeserved.
`Twould seem to be a viscous plot -
That reputation served.

It faithfully accumulates
The twigs, the trash, the leaves -
(Most all the filth the World creates)
Such eyesores it relieves.

At times, when full and overworked
It sighs in sad dismay.
(Sometimes, I think, it's downright irked
`Bout stuff we toss away!)

Regardless, though, will hold it there
Until the rain comes down,
Then sends it down the drain - how swell!
Clean streets, again, abound.

When in the gutter; Feeling pain;
Despairing or Perturbed;
Avoid that sad plunge down the drain
And mount the nearest curb!

TOO BAD TO NAME # 118

When carpenter ascended throne
On sales, he levied fee.
No coin he'd take. Just brads, alone.
Thus, Sales Tacks, came to be.

Just for fun

TOO BAD TO NAME # 120

One ambulance did specialize
In sore toes - that was all.
They called that van - (I don't tell lies),
A Toe Truck, I recall.

I'm NOT writing about the election today. It's probably the only column in America that isn't. My solution for the alleviation of the accompanying anxiety, anger or disbelief is pure old, 100%, absurdity. (Of course, that's my solution to most problems.) I guess I haven't been able to keep that really well hidden from you readers. Not long ago I received the following email: "I do assume they require you to return to the `home' every evening, don't they?" What fun!!!

THE "UMP" WORDS

Hump and lump and bump and clump all
Rhyme together fine.
It's int'resting their meanings fall
Within one "bulging" line.

They are protrusions, every one,
And here's another - stump.
Invert protrusion, just for fun,
And you might have a slump.

I've seen some humps at city dump,
And sump's just humpsidedown.
Most "umps" are called to mind by frump,
`Bout that would never clown!

Though most my readers do adore
Such stuff, there is one grump,
Who's threatened me to stop it, or
He'll come and kick my rump!

(Speaking of protrusions!!)

THE WORLD OF CRUMBS

The `kin' in `napkin' makes me think
(In itself a wonder!)
That somehow there must be a link
`Tween them and short-term slumber.

THIS link, I found: The napkin, grand,
From **FACE**, **REMOVES** the crumbs,
While **NAPS** refresh us so we can
Go forth and **FACE** the **CRUMBS**.

(It's just so hard to know who the crumbs really are
today, isn't it?)

Good Looks

PREPOSITIONS

Those prepositions must not go
At sentence end. That's pat!
But current usage, that foregoes.
So, where should they be at?

There's ONE rule that's quite certain, though
Break it - you'll do penance!
"Never, ever end a prepo-
sition with a sentence."

(If that one makes ANY sense to you, whatsoever, I
certainly would NEVER admit it!)

Beautiful. Handsome. Good Looking. I've always been
fascinated by those concepts. What percent of our population
would you say look that way - 5 percent? 7 percent? At most,
10 percent? I have to wonder why most folks want to look
like that tiny minority group. Why do you suppose 'average'
isn't how we want to look? Let's face it (no pun intended -
well, ok, it was!) average includes the huge majority of us.
Those that
deviate significantly from the norm are often referred to as
freaks! Gee! I'm certainly glad that I don't belong to that
freakish-looking, handsome minority! (Isn't 'fuzzy logic'
grand!!)

SENIOR PICTURES

The proofs arrived. Things were abuzz.
Six poses had been snapped.
To choose just one I soon found was
To make me feel quite trapped.

Mom like the one which she thought made
Me look quite debonair.
I thought it was too stiff and staid.
(Had perfectly combed hair!)

Dad chose the one he said made me
Look strong and masculine.
I had to wonder, then, if he
Thought me too weak or thin.

My girlfriend liked the handsome one.
(The profile WAS fine!)
But truly, folks, I thought that none
Of those were worth a dime.

I thought my Senior Picture should
At least RESEMBLE me!
So, picked the one that I thought would
Reflect the truth, you see.

My hair stood up. My ears stuck out.
The smile - ear to ear.
To me, it looked like ME. No doubt!
My Senior Picture, dear!

(By graduation day, my hair had begun staying in place
and my ears had retracted to a respectable position along side
my temples. I had learned to contain my smile, somewhat. To
this day, however, I choose to remember myself as I appeared
in that yearbook picture.)

LOOKS?

"Are you real old?" the young lad said,
As dined on shake and fries.
"I'm still quite young inside my head.
These looks? A fine disguise!!"

TOO BAD TO NAME # 117

Sir Galahad rode through the dark.
He could not see to fight.
Put candle on his head and Hark!
Become the first knight light!!!

Remember that saying, " ____ is the spice of life?" I can't for the life of me remember what goes in that blank. That's one of the perks of being forgetful - I get to make up stuff when I forget. This morning I decided I'd fill that space with "absurdity" - "*Absurdity is the spice of life.*" Seems fine to me.

YOU'RE NOT HERE!

(And I will prove it!!)

"Kid, I can prove that you're not here,"
The wise man said to me.
It sounded very strange to hear,
But urged him on. I'd see.

"Are you in New York City, friend?"
I had to tell him, "No."
Perhaps you find you're in south Bend."
Again said, "No, you know.

"Are you in London or Madrid,
Or on the desert, vast?"
I told him, "No! I'm just a kid!"
Was losing patience fast!

"If you're in none of those fine spots,
Then, somewhere else, you be,
And if you're somewhere else, you're not
Beside me HERE, you see!"

As silly as that riddle was
I've put it to good use.
Must really thank that sage because
It's now my golden goose!

Today, when with a boring guy
I think - with all my might -
"I'm Not in Spain. Elsewhere am I."
It zaps him out of sight.

Now I remember! "VARIETY" - that's what they say is
the spice of life. Make that "Absurd Variety" and Grampa
Gray just might be the condiment of choice.

Make It Last !

That tailor was quite mean and rude.
A bad guy, don't you know -
So all the children called that dude,
A mean old sew and sew!

I woke up in a pleasantly nostalgic frame of mind this morning. Ever notice how some things seem to last far too long - headaches, that wait in the principal's office, pregnancies, dental appointments. Other things, though, just never seem to last long enough. For instance, I never did find an all-day sucker that lasted all day (or even all hour, for that matter!) Birthday parties? Prom night? Both were over far too soon. A triple-dipper ice cream cone! That one date I finally got with the school's most popular girl! I was well aware that these things were passing too quickly. Other things, however, passed by without so much as a whisper.

MAKE IT LAST

When, on occasion, I'd procure
A milk shake - `twas such fun!
From Mom, these words, though, I'd endure,
"Please, make it last, my son!"

Allowance came on Saturday -
When week was almost done.
Each time could count on Dad to say,
"Please, make it last, my son."

When there, with girl friend, after date,
I'd get a kiss - just one!
Then, by myself, I would relate
"Please!! Make it last, my son!!!!"

I had a son. Enjoyed him so!
We'd talk, and play, and run.
His time with us too soon would go.
"Please, make it last, my son!"

When Grandson seeks from you, the truth,
Don't speak of malt, soon done,
But speak of that grand gift of youth.
"Please, make it last, my son!"

Well, here I am now, old and gray,
But life, not yet, is done!
Of golden years, sure Dad would say.
"Please, make them last, my son!!!"

TOO BAD TO NAME # 118

It made folks fat - shock therapies.
Gave Edison a fright.
So, he removed the calories,
`Twas called, "electric lite."

On Hold !

When I was about three and a half, my goldfish died. My parents and I had an appropriately solemn ceremony around the bathroom stool and, after having been reassured he would go to heaven, I bravely flushed him out of site. Several weeks later (I am told), my Sunday School teacher asked us how people got to heaven. I had THAT answer nailed, so I volunteered. "They get flushed down the toilet." When I returned to Sunday School, four weeks later (after serving my month-long suspension for irreverent behavior), the kids were still giggling about it. By the time I was six, I had ingeniously shifted my nickname from `Flush' to `Flash' so it all worked out fine in the end. (You may call me Grampa `The Flash' Gray if you like!)

I'M ON HOLD, AGAIN!

Each time I call a business, I
Am told to wait, and then,
While background music plays, I sigh -
Seems I'm on hold, again.

"Your call's important to us, see,
Please stay on line 'til when
A representative is free."
Yup! I'm on hold again.

When voice on line says, "You are next,"
I calmly count to ten.
An hour later I feel vexed.
I'm still on hold again!

If someone ever answers, I
Will probably have to stall
And hem and haw with, "Please stand buy,
Forgot why I did call!!

These days, when meet a lady, new -
I feel some distant yen,
But can't recall what I should do?
Guess, I'm on hold, again!

Time and Stuff

CONSERVATION REVELATION

He had solution - slow boy Ken.
To save `lectricity.
"Only plug the clocks in when
You read the time, you see!"

Time is a strange thing. Man invented it and then promptly became its slave. A friend of mine has each month planned out to the minute - every single day. She rushes here. She rushes there. And, while she's here, she's watching her watch to make sure she leaves in time to get to her next `there'. My blood pressure rises just writing about it. Obviously, for some, at least, slavery is NOT a thing of the past. Worst of all, I suppose, most of these modern day slaves don't even realize their plight. Perhaps ignorance IS bliss. I truly doubt that. Well, must stop now. It's TIME for a verse (woops!!)

REVAMPING THE CLOCK

If I'd designed the clock face it
Would look quite different, friend.
I'd change it NOT a little bit -
Would set a WHOLE NEW trend.

Instead of twelve divisions (that
Are really twenty four)
I'd go to work and cut the fat -
There'd be six marks - no more.

One by which we'd all arise.
Mid-morn would get one, too.
One at noon for lunch is wise.
Another about two.

At supper time there'd be a mark
(That meal I like the best!)
One more when all of us would park
Our tired bones and rest.

Those hours, minutes, seconds, too,
Would be things of the past
`Twould simplify our lives, and you
Could all relax at last.

I wonder just how life would be
According to that way?
It would be GRAND, I know - You see,
It is MY way, today!

MY COMPUTER FEUD!

Don't get me wrong. Computers are
A wonder without end!
Those `prompts' they send, though, often mar
My gray, old, ego, friend.

I LIKE the one about delete.
"You sure you want this done?"
But am offended when I meet
"That move was really dumb!"

When shut down, most, politely say,
"You now may turn me off."
Mine shudders, shows THIS screen, as prays:
"Thank God, you turned me off!"

It seems I need one which (I guess)
Can, MY mind comprehend.
So, when I err in my request,
"Twill DO as I INTEND!!

I Wish You Rainbows

December first. For me it is the official beginning of the wonder-filled, beautiful, winter holiday season. In light of that today, I'll write about three of the things that remind me of the beauty that surrounds me - my coffee pot, garbage bags, and (even) rainbows.

THE POT I GOT IS SHOT!

I have a coffee urn that drips
Each time I try to pour.
Seems even when quite slow it tips
Still spills some on the floor.

Folks tell me to get rid of it -
To send it dump-ward quick.
They say my codling is a bit
Too close to being `sick'.

I s'pose the best solution might
Just be to throw it out,
But treating it that way's not right
With it's `pour-challenged' spout.

It is a special urn to me.
It needs my patient care.
So, I just pour quite slow, you see,
(Though DO it with GREAT flair!)

That urn and I do share a style -
Imperfect, slow and plump -
I hope if THAT'S discovered, I'LL
Not end up at the dump!!

ODE TO THE GARBAGE BAG

This morning, garbage bags abound
Along the city streets.
They set so quiet - not a sound -
Seem sad and blue complete.

They hold their cargo patiently
Until the big trucks come
And then are tossed (not carefully!).
Their work, at last, is done.

I have this fantasy (I know,
You're not surprised at that!)
About the dumps where they all go
Once they've been crushed quite flat.

I see them look around 'til they're
Quite sure the men drove `way,
And then they party hardy there,
Until the break of day.

It is the greatest feeling when
You've wondered for so long
If your are just a misfit, then,
To find where you belong!!

So, as I pass each bag I stare
At him and pat his `head'.
And I've been heard to say, "Psst! There
Are better times ahead."

Those bags will truly get, I'm told,
The last laugh on us, folks,
`Cause when we're gone and growing mold,
THEY'LL still be here, no joke!

RAINBOWS

The rainbow I remember best?
`Twas first one I had seen.
It arched in splendor toward the West,
Like Peacock on the preen.

With red and orange hues on top
They touched the sky - still gray,
One could not tell where red did stop
And orange came to play.

The same, it seemed, `tween green and blue
With indigo did blend,
And then, my fav'rite - violet - hue,
A misty base would lend.

Each drop, that afternoon, that fell
Reflected colors, bright!
As if that rainbow shared its wealth
To paint for me that sight.

My Mother said that when we shared,
We're at our best as men.
I figured, then, THAT rainbow cared,
And to me, love, did send.

Each time the rainbows reappear
My vow, I do renew,
To paint my World with joy and cheer,
For all mankind to view.

(Perhaps if all of us would wear,
A tiny rainbow pin,
We'd be reminded, then, to share,
And all Mankind would win!)

*I wish you a life time of Rainbows.
With love and best wishes
Grampa Gray*