Humorous, educational, philosophical, sometimes tragic, this memoir traces the rise from the uncompromising life of a homesteader's son to the world of professor, and founder and CEO of the premier survey research company in America. Includes tales of Wyoming.

Out of Wyoming: a memoir

OUT OF WYOMING

• a memoir •

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GROWING UP IN WYOMING

· HORSE THIEVES ·

THE MORNING SUN WAS STILL WELL BELOW THE HORIZON when Deputy Sheriff Sam Porter quietly placed the members of his posse in the cottonwoods surrounding a campsite near the banks of the North Platte River. It was a chilly predawn morning, not surprising in that part of Wyoming in May. The campsite had been located at about midnight of the previous day. Porter thought it wise to wait for morning to make the arrest he thought would be forthcoming, so they waited in the dark for daylight. The members of the posse were Porter, William Delahoyd, John Norton, and Al Bryant (my father). They had finally found what they were seeking—a favorite black Percheron work mare belonging to Al had been stolen, and he was quite sure she was in that clearing.

Al and his wife, Pearl, were new homesteaders in the Hat Creek Valley, having occupied their homestead in April 1912, just a month

before the horse was stolen. They had heard a ruckus among the horses one night and assumed a passing wolf had stampeded them. But when daylight came, they saw that thieves had caused the commotion and that the mare was missing. Some of the other horses were severely cut up in the barbed wire in which they were enclosed—a temporary pen to be used until something better could be built.

The mare had been newly shod with heavy shoes having long caulks that penetrated the soil as she walked. Al and his brother John had followed the trail easily across the treeless and unclaimed land for about five or six miles in a westerly direction to where it entered a fenced pasture of a well-known rancher. By this time nightfall had overtaken the pursuers, so they spent the night with another homesteader and determined to continue the pursuit the next morning. When they went back to the gate through which the mare had been taken, Al recognized her tracks. Even though her front shoes had been removed, apparently in the hope her tracks would not be recognized, the rear hoofprints were still unmistakable. The trail first led west and then south toward the town of Lusk. It eventually bypassed Lusk on the east, whereupon Al sought the help of Deputy Sheriff Sam Porter.

There were few cars in that part of Wyoming in 1912, and Porter had one of them. He added Norton and Delahoyd to his posse. Al left his saddle horse with John, who dropped out of the search, and all the members of the posse rode in Porter's car in pursuit of the thieves. They could occasionally see the mare's tracks in the dirt road. Whenever they came to an intersection leading off the main road, Al would check the ground for tracks. If no tracks could be found, the presumption was that they were on the right trail. When they got to Torrington, they verified that the tracks led east toward Nebraska. Al set off on foot into the hills north of the Platte, and Norton and Delahoyd explored using the car.

Al found a boy who had seen a buggy with a black mare led alongside and another man on a horse accompanying the buggy. When Al rejoined the others, who also had found the trail again, they were certain they were close behind the culprits. They pushed on, and around midnight, near a dirt road leading from Henry, Nebraska, to Morrill, they found the camp. They settled in to wait.

As soon as he could see clearly in the early morning light, Sheriff Porter stepped from his hiding place and said in a loud voice, "Wake up, boys. You're under arrest for stealing horses!" Two men sat up from their bedrolls in shock and disbelief. They were George McFarland and Ed Campbell.

Campbell spoke for them, "You can't arrest us! You are from Wyoming, and we are in Nebraska!" It then became clear why they had pushed so hard the previous day to get across the state line, which was approximately three miles west of their campsite.

Then Porter said, "You are right, of course, but I am going back to the other side of the state line, and when these men (waving his arms to display his posse) bring you across by any means they choose, I'll arrest you. Think about it!" It didn't take Campbell long to decide that he might be better off in the sheriff's hands than in the posse's hands. After all, this was the West, where horse stealing was dealt with severely. They agreed to go over the line with him to be arrested. He lodged them in the local jail and the next day took them by train to the county seat at Douglas.

They were arraigned and tried in about three weeks—justice was meted out quickly at that place and time. McFarland got a light sentence in view of his youth and the fact that this was his first offense. Ed Campbell received a hard sentence because this wasn't the only

time he had been caught stealing. This should have been the end of the story, but unfortunately it wasn't.

Ed Campbell was a member of a gang of horse thieves, and that gang decided to get even with Al. One day in August of 1912, the same year of the arrest, Al was about two miles northwest of the homestead cutting hay in some of the badland draws. Pearl was picking sandcherries about the same distance to the southeast, along with other homesteaders' wives. John Bryant's wife and their son Wilbur saw four or five riders come out of a badland draw and ride toward Al's homestead. One was a woman riding a buckskin horse. In a few minutes the riders were seen galloping over the hill out of sight. In a short time a column of smoke rose above the house.

Al raced home, arriving before Pearl. At that point he did not know whether she was all right or whether she was under the ashes of the house. She soon arrived, however. In retrospect they felt it was fortunate that they were both away when the outlaws arrived.

They began to assess their losses. They had the clothes they were wearing, a set of harnesses that was on the team Al had been using, a few pieces of farm equipment far enough from the house to avoid the fire, and nothing else. Their house was still under construction using lumber hauled from Lusk—a long two-day's trip. It was a better house than the average homesteader's house, containing a kitchen, a living room, and a sleeping loft. They had not moved in yet, and the tent that was their temporary shelter sat beside the unfinished house. It too went up in the fire, along with pieces of furniture covered by a tarpaulin alongside. Pearl had worked in a general store in South Dakota between teaching assignments and had accumulated at a discount a number of nice things for her trousseau. This included a complete set of Haviland china and some fine linens. All was gone, except two china cups that

went through the fire unscathed. I remember her saying she had made a list of the things she needed. The first thing on the list was needles and thread. It wasn't the most important thing, of course, but it illustrated the meaning of losing *everything.*

The neighbors were wonderful, as people who themselves are hanging on by a thread can be. Someone gave a kettle, someone else a few dishes, or some bedding or a chair. There was nothing to hold the gifts, however. So the men went to the pines that outlined the crests of the surrounding hills and canyons and cut enough pine logs to construct a cabin about fourteen by sixteen feet in size. It took them three days to build the cabin and cover it with a dirt roof. The workmanship wasn't much, but at least it was a shelter. Al and Pearl added a small room to one end of the cabin two years later, and that is the only home they ever had. I have always regretted that Mother never had a matched set of dishes or silverware or a matched set of chairs, and that she had to cook on a wood-burning range and carry her water from the well in a bucket for the rest of her short life.

THE COURAGE OF THE homesteaders on the western plains can only be imagined by the folks who have been accustomed to life in the city, or even in the Midwest, where the land had been settled at an earlier date. First of all, there was the matter of personal safety. Working with cattle and horses, many of them wild as jackrabbits, led to the risk of injury. If any part of the body was broken or bleeding, it might have been considered worth the long trip to town to see the doctor. But generally if the injured person was mobile, he or she would tough it out. Women frequently had no prenatal care, and when a baby was due another homesteader's wife would be called in to serve as midwife. The children faced all kinds of dangers, such as rattlesnakes and hailstorms,

and they grew up facing the same dangers their fathers faced. The usual childhood diseases generally were overcome without professional medical care. Then there was the loneliness. In some ways this loneliness was a blessing because it led to bonding within the family.

Homesteading was a mixture of hard work, hope, and worry—and joy when things turned out right. The spring of every year led to hope that there would be enough rain for the crops, a hailstorm would not destroy everything, grasshoppers wouldn't eat the garden, and the Federal Land Bank would extend their loan for another year. Things seldom worked out that way. When they did, there was renewed interest in "proving up" and thus obtaining full title to the land. When disasters struck, losses were accepted silently, and hope abounded for the beginning of the next year. I have been thankful that my parents "stuck it out" since I believe that the experience has been useful to me in many ways. It taught me to make the best of any situation I encountered. It also taught me not to fret over things that were not under my control. And it taught me patience and the merits of hard work in achieving one's goals.

· THE HOMESTEADERS ·

THE DECADE 1910 TO 1920 WAS A TIME WHEN HOMESTEADING IN eastern Wyoming was at its peak. The area had been "settled" since the 1880s, and a large number of homestead claims had been filed prior to 1910. But most of those homesteads had been filed by ranchers, or by the employees of ranchers, in order to secure the streams and springs for the rancher's use in supporting his livestock on the open range. It was true that a few ranch hands homesteaded with the objective of starting

their own ranch. Some of these budding ranches were stocked by the branding of mavericks before the spring roundup. This practice was frowned upon by the large ranchers and sometimes led to a considerable amount of trouble on the range (for example, the Johnson County War of 1882). But the dirt farmers didn't start coming in large numbers until nearly 1910. And then they came with a rush.

My parents were among them, arriving in 1912 from eastern South Dakota where they had been married relatively late in life. The forbearers of both my parents had moved westward with the fringe of civilization, and their homesteading venture was a further extension of that impulse to push back the frontier. It was clear, however, that they had come to Wyoming to put down roots. Otherwise they would not have endured the hardships they suffered on their homestead.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for someone who has not faced the problem of creating a home on raw land to comprehend the magnitude of the difficulties involved. Assume that you have arrived in a town in Wyoming in an immigrant car, an invention of the railroads to help settle the land. The immigrant car is just a boxcar in which you, your wife (and kids if you have them), a coop of chickens, a couple of milk cows with their small calves, a saddle horse and four or five workhorses, along with assorted "goods," have traveled from the settled Midwest to the railroad town nearest the homestead. The immigrant car contains a few pieces of furniture, including a bed on which you have slept while in transit. There are also tools needed for building, fencing, and gardening, one or more wagons, and harnesses. And there are a few pieces of farm equipment, such as a plow, a disk, a harrow, and perhaps a cultivator. There is some feed for the livestock and perhaps some seed grain. All of this material and livestock has to be moved twenty-five miles to the homestead site, and you have to do it.

When you get to your land, which you have picked out in advance on an earlier trip, there is no growing thing higher than a sagebrush. This part of Wyoming is not known for its timber. There are badlands in view, however, and hills with a fringe of pines on their crests. There is no water on the homestead, but there is a spring on a government forty adjacent to the property. That will have to do for the present.

This is the scenario that faced my parents when they arrived in Wyoming in April 1912. As badly as they wanted to get started building their house, there were other needs that were more pressing. Although there were a few scattered homesteads, if their livestock were let out on the open range, they were likely to stray and be lost forever. Clearly, some fencing was necessary. There were canyons with some timber a mile or so away to provide fence posts, and barbed wire could be hauled from town. Since town was twenty-five miles away, one didn't go there with a team and wagon for nonessentials. But some things, like lumber for building the house and barbed wire, were important enough to justify the two-day trip. My parents had brought a tent with them to serve as temporary shelter until their house was built.

To add to their problems, a two-day blizzard hit—not an uncommon occurrence in April in Wyoming. The tent that served as their shelter was blown down on them during the night. There was nothing to do but stay under the collapsed tent, propping it up so they wouldn't smother. The next day Dad's brother John, who had an adjoining homestead, came to make sure they hadn't perished in the storm.

One of the highest-priority tasks was to plow some land for the vegetable garden. There wasn't any supermarket around the block, and any vegetables to eat during the summer and the following winter had to come from the land. Plowing wasn't a simple matter. A special plow had to be used which laid the sod over instead of lifting it. Such plows

usually had a heavy oak or ash beam to which the plow bottom was attached by a vertical steel plate. A sharpened vertical blade or a rolling cutter was attached to the underside of the beam just ahead of the plow to cut the sod as the plow nosed into it. And it took at least four or five horses to pull the plow through the heavy black-root sod. The plow was extremely heavy to handle, and plowing half an acre in a day would exhaust the horses and the farmer.

The work of preparing a garden had only begun when the sod was turned over. The sod was a tangled mass of black roots from the native grasses. Chopping it up with a disk and dragging it with a harrow created clods that were hard to work with in planting the garden seeds. It would be two or three years before the soil became easy to work. Often, the best thing to do was to let the slabs of sod turned over by the plow lie grass-side down for the first year, working the slabs just enough that garden seeds could be planted. Such things as squash, corn, and beans could be planted directly in the exposed slabs of sod. But for tomatoes and greens, as well as for root crops such as carrots, beets, and turnips, there was no alternative but to work up the sod so that it was more or less friable. For field crops, corn could be planted directly in the exposed sods. And grain, such as wheat and oats, could be broadcast on the exposed sods and disked slightly to cover the seeds. Grain and corn had to be planted to supply the cattle, chickens, and horses with the supplements they would need during the coming winter. So more plowed land than just a garden plot was needed. Working the land was a major task and had to be done before the planting season ended the first year.

Before the fire, my parents had constructed a house but had not yet occupied it. They continued to sleep in the tent, which was adjacent to the house. After the fire, they concentrated on making their

log cabin as livable as possible and growing things to tide them over the winter.

My brother, Charles, was born in the log cabin in 1913 and I two years later. Between his birth and mine my parents built a small one-room frame house near one end of the log cabin. Their plan was to build onto this structure as they could afford it and eventually to do away with the log house. But they could never afford any further building, so Dad connected the log cabin with the new room to make a two-room house. That is where we lived all of the time I was growing up. Whenever my parents considered building a house, there was always some other building that was needed on the homestead, such as a barn, a grain building, a hog house, and so on. My parents never got beyond the level of subsistence living. We never had running water, or electricity, or a telephone. By modern standards we were poverty stricken, but we didn't know it. And there were plenty of families in the community that were worse off.

MEMORIES OF · A COUNTRY CHILDHOOD ·

NO ONE CAN WRITE AN UNBIASED ACCOUNT OF ONE'S CHILDHOOD. Memories are selective, and we remember what we want to remember. Sometimes we remember those things that were pleasing, and sometimes we remember the things that were exceptionally unpleasant. We remember the rest only as background. But the background may be most important in conveying to the reader what life was like during the years in which rural America was developing. My childhood was

in no sense unusual, but it may be interesting to those who never had a chance to experience childhood without electricity, running water, radio, television, or telephone.

One recollection I have of my childhood is a feeling of peace and security. There were no nuclear bombs, and the door to our house was never locked. As a matter of fact, there was no lock. We felt secure in a sense that is entirely foreign to persons born in modern times. Partly, our sense of peace was attributable to the times. The "war to end all wars" was over, and I remember the soldiers coming home. Our family was untouched by the war, except for some minor inconveniences such as shortages of sugar and a few other commodities. My feeling of security was not necessarily a feeling that there were no dangers in life. After all, there were rattlesnakes, blizzards, hailstorms, runaway horses, wild cattle—in short, all the dangers of ranch life.

There was also a real worry that all of the members of my family shared. We had a mentally disturbed neighbor by the name of Charles Frederick who caused us a good bit of grief. He was a German sympathizer during the World War and attempted to conduct a one-man disruption of the community. He visited us one time and told Mother what a wonderful man the Kaiser was and how he (Frederick) and the other German-Americans were going to rise up and take over the West. Mother blew sky high and told him to get off the place and that if ever she saw him on our place again, she would shoot him. She always kept a 12-gauge shotgun behind the door to shoot hawks that were bothering the chickens, and he knew it. He stayed away. However, he shot one of Dad's cows, and Dad made him pay for it. There was bad blood between him and our family thereafter.

Eventually, Frederick was drafted into the Army and put on permanent KP. When he returned from the service, he went right back

to his devilment. He lived on rabbits and always carried a .22 rifle. We often saw him walking in circles talking to himself. He was a real threat to our family, and my parents used to worry when one of us would be late bringing in the milk cows from a distant pasture. He became so threatening that Dad carried a .44-caliber Colt pistol for a time.

Using a shotgun, Frederick eventually did shoot a neighbor by the name of Charles Zimmerman, who was crossing Frederick's land to gather firewood. Zimmerman's team of horses brought him to our place. He was lying in the wagon box badly wounded. Dad took him to town to the doctor. Zimmerman recovered and Frederick stood trial for the incident. The jury decided that he was mentally incompetent, and he spent the rest of his life in a mental hospital in Ohio where his mother lived. Thus ended the only real threat to my family's peace.

MOST OF MY PLEASANT memories of childhood are associated with summer. Like all kids, I looked forward to the end of the school year, which at that time was in early May. Ahead of me stretched almost four months during which it was a pleasure just to be alive. I always looked forward to going back to school in the fall, although I wouldn't have admitted it on pain of death. In modern parlance it was "cool" to hate school, and I wouldn't have wanted anyone to get the idea that I was any different from the other boys. Secretly, I think many had the same feelings I had. After all, school was an opportunity to play with a bunch of kids, and life got a little bit lonely on the farm with only my brother to keep me company.

There were responsibilities at home the year round and particularly in the summer. There were daily chores which included carrying in the water from the well, filling the wood box, feeding the chickens (or pigs or turkeys), milking cows (when I got a little older), cranking the cream

separator after the milking, and a hundred other responsibilities. I shared the chores with Charles, who was two years older than I. The chores weren't burdensome, and one, in particular, was one that Charles and I vied for. That was bringing in the milk cows for the evening milking. To accomplish this chore, one had to ride a horse and find the cows in the hills and badland draws of the ranch. This was not a simple task and might take anywhere from a half hour to an hour depending on whether or not the cows were hidden in a gully somewhere. Getting to ride a horse was an activity to be prized, and we usually took turns to avoid conflicts.

I can still remember the pleasure of those rides. In the early summer the chokecherries and wild roses were in bloom and filled the evening air with their perfume. In one canyon, a large owl could be depended on to swoop down over the saddle horse, causing him to jump sideways. Frequently we would see a coyote or a bobcat loping across the hills. Later in the summer when the chokecherries ripened, I would ride up to a bush and enjoy the bittersweet cherries to my heart's content. I doubt that I would be so fond of them now.

Childhood in the country before the days of television gave me a chance, indeed the necessity, to entertain myself. Charles and I had each other to play with, but there were times when it was great to be alone and to think my own thoughts. For example, there was cloud watching. To do it properly is an art. It is necessary to pick a spot on the sunny side of a slope, preferably when the grass is high enough that the wind blowing through it makes a gentle sound. It must always be done on one's back, and the pleasure is greatly enhanced by having one's dog at his side, just close enough to touch when one wants to. Cloud watching in an erect position is okay when necessary, but often degenerates into watching the cloud shadows race over the hills. That is

shadow watching, also good in its own right, but not as good as cloud watching. To watch clouds properly, you pick one out, give its shape a name, such as a sheep or a bear, and watch how it changes as it passes and disappears into the distance. Just looking up and looking at the mass of clouds is not cloud watching. There is no art to that. There are times, however, when cloud watching takes more attention to the task than one wants to put into it. One has to remain flexible, and if daydreaming seems more pleasant than cloud watching, it is okay to do it. Indeed, it is imperative to do it. Flexibility is the key word.

Watching ants is also an acceptable substitute for cloud watching. There was one colony of ants that had an enormous anthill fifty yards or more from a lone pine tree near the spring where my parents got their water when they first homesteaded. The ants traveled a road of their own making all the way to the tree to carry back small pieces of pitch—what for we never knew.

Looking for birds' nests in the tall grass was another activity at which Charles and I were very good. And watching a goose lay an egg was to see an amazing performance. Other joys included drinking from the end of the pipe as the water was pumped by the windmill, the water so cold it would hurt your teeth, or pumping water into an enameled cup that hung on the windmill tower and drinking it in great satisfying gulps. Or, milking the cow—the gentle one—and competing with Charles to see who could get up first in the morning—first one up got to milk the cow, until it became a chore and no longer fun. At the height of our competition, the poor cow lost a lot of sleep early in the morning!

Watching the clouds became much more serious when the angry thunderheads arose in the northwest—serious because even though we all hoped it would rain, we feared it might hail and wipe out the garden

and the crops. This seemed to happen about every third or fourth year. Usually the clouds passed with only a dust storm, but sometimes it did rain. And the joy of seeing it come down, leaving puddles to wade in afterward, was truly delightful. And there were days when it rained all day, a gentle, life-giving rain, and we enjoyed lying in bed listening to the rain on the roof—reading, napping, or just listening.

Hailstorms were dangerous. One time, Dad, Charles, and I had gone to Hat Creek in the spring wagon after the mail and groceries. As we were returning home, a storm came up suddenly out of the northwest, and it looked like hail. Dad whipped the horses into a run to try to beat the storm home. When we came to a gate, Dad would throw it open, jump into the spring wagon, and we would take off on the run again. It started to hail just as we got into our yard. Dad unhooked the traces and took the team to the barn. He didn't have time to take off the neckyoke. So when the horses went under the shed, one went on each side of a post, breaking the neckyoke. The shed had a sheet-metal roof, and the din of the hailstones on the roof was so loud that the horses couldn't stand it and ran out into the storm. They were overheated from running, and it is a wonder they didn't die from exposure. They both were pounded so by the hailstones that they couldn't bear the weight of the harness for several days. When the storm was over, there was a solid sheet of hailstones several inches thick on the ground. I remember that Dad's tracks appeared as clear spots on the ice when he came in from the barn. All of the crops, including the garden, were a total loss.

MY DISTINCT IMPRESSION IS that I was a lazy child and a dreamer. Always I wanted to do things I wasn't big enough to do and hated those things I was required to do. I'm ashamed to admit that many

times Charles had to do things that I should have done. He was the dependable one.

My desire to do things I wasn't old enough for sometimes got me into trouble. Once we found a rattlesnake in the garden near the house. Mother got her 12-gauge shotgun and was going to shoot it, but I begged to do it. She knew I was too small but finally relented, reluctantly. And I shot the snake, getting knocked flat by the recoil of the gun. I also wanted to drive horses before I was big enough. Dad was harrowing some newly plowed ground one time with a three-horse team. I begged to do it, so he let me try. An old bay mare, seeing me with the reins, took the bit in her teeth and headed for the barn. Dad had to come to my rescue, much to his amusement and my mortification.

Later on, harrowing became a regular job for Charles and me, and the miles we walked through the soft earth with the dust swirling around us quickly took the glamour out of the job. We worked out a system though. We would get a book to read—I remember *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* in particular—and one of us would sit at the end of the field and read while the other trudged after the harrow for a certain number of rounds. Then we would trade off.

Another job I wanted to do was to plow. My uncle, Bird Bryant, took pity on me and let me handle the plow while he drove the team to prepare the garden for planting. I was all over the furrow and the surrounding landscape! Sometimes I was skimming the top of the ground, and sometimes I would get the plow so deep it would stall the horses. Anyway, I was mighty proud of my job, awful as it was.

The very first saddle horse that Charles and I could call our own was an old spotted mare that was a cross between an Indian pony and an Arabian. Her name was Dolly, and we would fight over the privilege of riding her after the cows—bareback since we had no saddle. The old

gal was headstrong and no child's pony at all, but we got along with her the best we could. When we tried to bridle her, she would raise her head so high that we couldn't reach her. So one time we ran her into the barn, and when she put her head into the manger to eat, we put a rope over her neck and tied it to the manger. We thought we had her, but she reared up and pulled the manger apart!

AFTER HAVING HAD SURGERY on my nose to correct a deviated septum and for removal of polyps several times, I have little sense of smell. But I remember the smells of childhood as though I experienced them yesterday, such smells as freshly baked bread, a newly opened box of apples, the cellar with the potatoes and root crops in it, the smell of rain in the dust, of cows walking home to be milked, of corn in bloom, of curing hay, of fresh-cut grain, of a stock-watering dam—yes, and the stronger smells of the barn on a winter's night, of the outhouse on a hot summer's day, and of the chicken house, which I hated. It is amazing how vividly one can remember exactly an odor when the sights and sounds associated with it have long since dropped from memory.

There were times as a child when I wanted things desperately that the family couldn't afford. I wanted a pony to ride. Montgomery Ward advertised a pony in their catalog, and it looked just right. It was spotted and came complete with saddle, bridle, and all of the trappings. I spent hours looking at it and imagining what it would be like to have such a wonderful thing. But, of course, it never occurred to me that such a thing could ever happen—and it never did. My father eventually acquired the cantankerous spotted half-Arabian mare for Charles and me both to ride. The Crinklaw boys, with whom we spent a lot of time, had two part-Shetland ponies. Both boys had saddles and were the focus of a lot of envy on my part. A saddle was my greatest wish.

I never had one. Dad had an old A-fork saddle, double rigged with no skirts or fenders. When I got old enough to learn how to cure rawhide so that it was semi-flexible, I put rawhide skirts and fenders on Dad's saddle. I used it for the rest of the time that I was on the ranch, except when I could borrow my uncle's saddle, which was usually occupied by Charles. I don't think any boy could ever have wished more strongly than I for anything than I wished for a saddle. Even today, when I go into a "tack shop" I look longingly at the saddles, and I haven't ridden a horse for over fifty years.

Mostly, however, my wants were well provided for by my parents, and I have never felt that I was deprived in any major way by their poor economic circumstances. My childhood presented me with a wonderful opportunity to enjoy nature and to think about the future, that is, to dream about it and to fantasize to my heart's content. But childhood must eventually come to an end, and when it did for me, I was ready to move on to something else.

· COUNTRY SCHOOLS ·

THE COUNTRY SCHOOL GAVE THE KIDS WHO GREW UP IN THE MOST rural parts of the nation their first opportunity to view the world as something other than what they could observe within their horizon. The view of the world they received was the view obtained from books or the one seen through the eyes of their teacher. The latter was the most important. I was fortunate to have had mostly good teachers, most of whom knew considerably more than the students they were teaching.

My family spent the winter of 1919-20 in Florida (see *Glimpses of a Wider World,* below). During that school year I was four years old and Charles was six. My parents did not enroll him in the first grade in Florida since he would have had to enroll late and leave early. So we were both ready for school in the fall of 1920. By that time, I was five and Charles was seven.

During the summer of 1919 the school board built a one-room schoolhouse about three-quarters of a mile west of our home, just halfway between the Camerys and us. Mrs. Camery taught the school in 1919-20 while we were in Florida, and it became known as the Camery School. Mrs. Camery had previously taught school in her home to kids who traveled some considerable distance to attend. But the Camerys moved to South Dakota in 1920, leaving the new school without a teacher and its enrollment cut approximately in half. Mother applied for the job in the new school and got it—there weren't many candidates. She had taught for twelve years in South Dakota and Missouri before her marriage. Although not well educated by modern standards, she had attended enough teacher institutes and done enough study on her own that she was well qualified. There was no country school anywhere near our home prior to about 1914, and she had taught the local kids without pay in her one-room log homestead house during the school year 1912-13. Largely at her insistence, the school board had built a schoolhouse about three miles south of our home. It became known as the Howell School since it was built on the Howell homestead.

During the year that Mother taught the Camery School, she had five pupils—two Giedd children, Ted Bryant (a cousin of ours), and Charles and me. It wasn't an unusual country school at that time. Distances between homesteads were considerable, and all of the kids within walking distance of the schools (a couple of miles) made up

relatively small enrollments. Typically, such a school would be taught by someone just out of high school with a summer session of teacher institute or, at most, a year of teacher training. When I graduated from high school, some of my peers became teachers in country schools. We were lucky to have had an experienced and relatively well-educated teacher.

We walked to school with Mother every morning, sometimes in pretty bad weather. She would start a fire and have the place warmed up by the time the rest of the kids arrived. The dog (Turk by name) always went with us, but he was sent home as soon as school started. He would always return in time to walk home with us. He was very protective of us, and we felt good about having him around because of the rattlesnakes and range cattle. One evening when we were on the way home, two coyotes ran out of a draw ahead of us. Turk chased them over the hill, not realizing that three more coyotes were behind him and chasing him. We thought it would be all over with him when they all came together somewhere over the hill, but he soon came home none the worse for wear. He must have been either a savage fighter or a world-class diplomat.

The Camery School had been built to serve the needs of the families in our immediate neighborhood, a need which was evidenced by the school that Mrs. Camery taught in her own home. The second, and last, year that the Camery School was used was the year that Mother taught there, 1920-21. After that, the Hat Creek schools were consolidated. Our little schoolhouse and another of the same size were placed side by side near the Hat Creek Post Office. They were covered by a common roof, making a two-room school in which two teachers worked, one for grades one through four, and the other for grades five through eight. The consolidation of the schools required that bus drivers be used to

transport the kids. They always were contractors who obtained their bus routes by competitive bidding. They were "bus" drivers in name only because the typical bus was a Model T Ford. Our driver got a Model TT Ford truck chassis and built a box on it with a rear entrance for the kids and a window next to the cab so he could see what was going on in the back. If we kids got too rowdy, he would stop the bus and explain the error of our ways to us. The bus was heated by a kerosene stove, which was fastened to the floor so that it wouldn't tip over—less attention was paid to safety than is current today.

The newly consolidated schoolhouse wasn't quite ready for the school opening in the fall of 1921, so all of the kids were crowded into the Howell School for a month or so. After that, our use of the new school building didn't last long—it was maliciously burned during the summer after it was built. During the succeeding year while another schoolhouse was being built, the entire consolidated school was moved to an abandoned log house. It was not first-class housing for a school. The mud chinking between the logs had disappeared, and we could see daylight through the cracks between the logs. It wasn't bad in September and October, or during April and May. But it was another matter to try to keep it warm during the worst winter months.

The new schoolhouse was built on the ashes of the one that burned and was occupied by teachers and students in the fall of 1924. It was built on the same plan as the old schoolhouse—two rooms divided by folding doors with a hallway across the front, which gave access to the two rooms and provided a place to hang coats. A rule we had to follow was that our lunch buckets (usually tobacco boxes converted to this use) had to be put in the hallway and not in the classroom. This was not a good idea when the temperature got really cold, and often we had frozen lunches. That wasn't bad for sandwiches, but it wasn't great

when we had to eat frozen fruit or had to throw away a glass jar of milk that had frozen and burst open.

GETTING TO AND FROM school posed a greater challenge than conquering the assignments after we got there. During our first-grade year we had walked to school, but thereafter we rode the "bus." It snowed a lot in Wyoming during those years in the 1920s. And, as is usual in Wyoming, the wind blew, forming drifts across the road on the lee side of every hill. All but the smallest kids boarded the bus in the morning during snowy weather with a shovel in hand.

There were two ways to approach a snowdrift. One way was to hit it hell bent. If the car made it through, all was well. If it made it part way, there was trouble—the car frequently would be suspended in the snow, with all four wheels off the ground. The only cure then was to dig it out, including digging the snow from beneath the car. We had a driver for much of the time who always took the "hell for leather" approach and often created a problem in getting the car out of the predicament.

The second approach was to ease into the drift so that one could back out and try again. When the car had gone as far as it could go, the kids manned their shovels and cleared a path. It seemed a much more sensible approach to me but lacked the thrill of topping a hill at thirty miles per hour and plowing into a drift that completely obscured vision for a few seconds.

The trails through a road that had been cleared one day often filled with drifting snow overnight, and the next day they were more difficult than ever to clear. When this happened for a few days in a row, the driver would take to the hills, leaving the county road and trying to find a trail from ridge to ridge where the wind had blown the snow free. This

was fine, but occasionally he needed to go from Ridge A to Ridge B through a swale that was well filled with snow. Some shoveling was still necessary. One day in early spring we set a record when we arrived just as school was letting out at the end of the day. Fortunately, the road stayed open for the next day.

When the roads became completely blocked, the driver took us to school in a bobsled. My father had a good one and usually let the driver use it. Also, it often happened that the driver would contract the route temporarily to someone with more or better horses than his own. This was fine, but the horses plodded slowly through the deep snow. And we had to leave before sunup in order to have a chance to cover the seven miles in time for the opening of school at nine o'clock. We also got home an hour or so after dark, and often it was bitterly cold—so cold that we walked (or ran) most of the way to keep warm.

In spite of the handicaps thrown in our way getting to school, we apparently learned something and didn't seem to be behind the "town kids" when it was time to go to high school. As a matter of fact, we all took the same state examinations at the end of the year, and when I finished the eighth grade, I got a book of poems from the county superintendent of education for being in Rank I in the state examinations. It was a good way to finish grade school.

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· A HELPING HAND ·

THERE WAS AN UNWRITTEN CODE AMONG THE SETTLERS OF THE West that people in need of help were to be helped, regardless of who they were or the inconvenience it might require. This code was widely adhered to by homesteaders, ranchers, and itinerant cowboys, and even sometimes by persons who normally were considered to be at or beyond the fringe of the law. It was a good thing. It is what made life tolerable in an uncompromising environment.

Consider a simple thing such as food and lodging. If night overtook a traveling family twenty or thirty miles from the nearest town with a snowstorm beginning to wind into high gear, they were expected to go to the nearest homesteader or rancher. They were made welcome, fed and, somehow or other, bedded down, often on the kitchen floor. My parents told of one night during a storm when they had eleven strangers stay in their little two-room homestead house, which may have had, at best, three hundred square feet of floor space. They used all of their blankets and kept a fire going all night, and they managed to feed everyone as well. This must have taken some doing, since they barely had enough dishes to feed themselves.

There were always itinerant cowboys riding through the countryside in search of work or just out to explore the region. When one would arrive at our place around dinnertime (the noon meal), he would water his horse at the tank by the windmill, lead him to the barn and give him a forkful of hay, and come to the house for dinner. Mother often said that she seldom knew how many people would be at the

dinner table until they sat down. But they were all welcome. It was just another example of the help-the-needy code.

Occasionally, the itinerant guest would see some small chore that he could do, and which he would do willingly, such as getting a pail of water from the well, or chopping some wood for the fire, or helping Dad with something he was doing. On one occasion, Dad was attempting to break a horse and not having much luck at it. His problem was that he couldn't catch the horse. He was in a pole corral with the horse and was trying to front-foot the horse, that is, to cast a loop around his front feet. Then he was planning to throw the horse in order to get a halter on him and a heavy rope around his neck so that he could tie him to a stout post to begin the training session. Dad was not handy with a lariat, having been born and raised on an Iowa farm, and was getting nowhere when a cowboy rode up. The cowboy got off his horse and, without saying a word, climbed over the corral fence and took Dad's lariat. He neatly caught the horse by the front feet, threw him, pounced on his head and tied the lariat into a halter, let the horse up, and tied him to a stout pitch post. The job was done in minutes. The cowboy never gave his name, or said much of anything, and he left right after dinner. But he had provided a service that was invaluable to Dad.

Our house had two rooms—the original room about twelve by sixteen feet constructed of logs, and a frame add-on that was at most ten by twelve feet. We usually used the smaller room for sleeping. There was room for two beds, a heating stove, a chest of drawers—nothing else. The larger room had a wood-burning kitchen range, a washstand, a table and chairs, Mother's sewing machine, a portable kitchen cabinet, a couple of trunks used for storage, and little else. Sometimes our parents moved their bed into the larger room and put the sewing machine in the

smaller room. Any guest, such as Uncle Bird, had to use a metal cot in whichever room was the least crowded.

One winter morning, well before daylight, we had all been sleeping in the smaller room when we heard someone starting a fire in the kitchen range in the next room. Then we smelled home-cured bacon frying in the pan and listened to a good bit of other activity in the kitchen. We thought nothing of it, assuming that it was Uncle Bird. He had a habit of living with us for a while, then leaving for an extended time, and showing up at strange hours. Pretty soon we heard a cheery voice calling us to breakfast. We knew then that it wasn't Uncle Bird, who seldom said anything, and when he did it was said in a whisper. It was in fact a bachelor homesteader neighbor whose homestead was about six miles north of ours. He had been walking to town and had stopped at our place to get warm and have breakfast. He must have left his home in the middle of the night, because he had walked through heavy snow for about six miles by the time he got to our place. We didn't know him well, but he knew he would be welcome.

His breakfast was good, with home-cured pork, fresh eggs, and pancakes. As we came into the kitchen, he learned that we were all sick with terrible colds, bordering on the flu. He decided to stay and help with the chores.

He was a very nervous person—in fact *hyper* would best describe him. He could hardly complete a sentence without switching to another topic, and he had a trembling in his hands that bordered on palsy. But he was all heart. He fed the chickens, watered them, and gathered the eggs. But it seems that upon entering the chicken house with his sun goggles on, he realized he must take them off. So he did and hung them on a nail by the door, where we found them the next day. He milked the cows and fed them as well. When he washed his hands before fixing

breakfast, he stuffed the towel in his hip pocket, apparently not realizing what he had done. When he sat on the milk stool, he must have become aware of the lump in his pocket. So he took the towel out and hung it on a nail, and there it hung until we found it the next day also.

He filled the water buckets and the wood box and left, again on foot, to walk the seven miles to the Hat Creek Store where he hoped to catch a ride to Lusk. His help permitted us to recover for a day before facing the daily chores again. We never saw him again. Like many bachelors of the day, he just drifted away.

· GLIMPSES OF A WIDER WORLD ·

THE WORLD I SAW AS A CHILD WAS A NARROW WORLD IDENTIFIED by the boundaries within which I lived. It consisted of the homestead, school, an occasional trip to town, and not much else. No television, no telephone, no daily paper, although we got a radio when I was about twelve years old. My teacher at the Hat Creek School was a link to the outside world, and when that teacher was Cleo Steffen, it was a valuable link. She established a rule that when a student completed his homework, he or she could take a volume of the *Book of Knowledge* from the bookshelf and read it. My homework was never very challenging, so I spent many hours reading about the world I had never seen.

As limited as my experience with the outside world was, it was far wider than that of most of my peers. My parents took two trips when I was a child. They spent a winter in Florida when I was four years old and a summer in Washington State when I was eight. The winter in Florida occurred because my father suffered dreadfully from

sciatica, or rheumatism as my parents referred to it. He was in agony throughout most of the winter months. My mother had spent part of a winter in Florida in 1911 with her cousins, and she felt that the warmer climate might help my father. I'm sure that she also wanted to relive the experience of wintering in Florida, and who could blame her? My parents raised a good crop of grain in 1919, and with their savings from the sale of butter and eggs, they figured that they could finance the trip.

My mother's first cousin Dora Mercer, along with her husband, Rob, and their son, Morgan, came to our homestead in August on their way to Florida. I still marvel at the adventure they must have had crossing the country from the state of Washington to Florida, with only sketchy road maps and the poor roads that were the standard at that time. One of my earliest recollections was of their visit and the excitement associated with the plan to meet them again in Florida. We had located someone to stay on our place through the winter, and we left in October after the crops were in.

We went by train—there was no other way since we did not own an automobile. It was my first train ride and was fantastically exciting. The dining car was particularly interesting to me, and I remember well my first experience eating cornflakes for breakfast. Usually, on the homestead, we had oatmeal and ham or bacon, eggs, and potatoes. But the cornflakes were new to me, and I thought they were great. It also was my first experience seeing a black person (our waiter), and my mother shushed me when I whispered to her that his hands were dirty.

In Florida we stayed in a small house on some property owned by Dora's brothers, the Shulls. Our address was Dania, a few miles from Ft. Lauderdale on the coastal highway. Next to our house and facing

the coastal highway was a packing plant used for boxing cabbages and tomatoes for shipment to northern markets. There were three main houses facing the highway on the Shulls' property, backed by a large barn. And behind that there was a banana patch near the living quarters of the field hands, who mostly came from Nassau for the busy winter season. Down a slight slope from the housing area were the fields on the flat land that lay next to the bay, which connected with the ocean. Every field was surrounded by a ditch, which filled during high tide and drained when the tide went out, so that the fields appeared to be a giant checkerboard. Crabs lived in the ditches and caused considerable damage to the crops. Keeping them killed off was a constant problem.

The Shulls had extensive acreage planted to cabbage and tomatoes, and they asked my father to supervise the tending of the fields. In addition, my father planted one square to cabbage that was his, in his own right. I never knew the financial arrangement with the Shulls, but I remember my father saying that he made enough money from his cabbage to pay for the trip to Florida.

All of the field hands were black, and both men and women worked. My father was a great success as a supervisor. Since he treated the hands as he would have treated anyone else, he was much respected and admired. The prevailing attitude of the landed gentry there gave me my first taste of prejudice. There were no black people in Niobrara County, Wyoming, where we had our homestead, and the association with them in Florida was a new experience for me.

Morgan and I were four years old and Charles six at the time, and the three of us played together. Our best friend was a black lad, Cedric, whose mother did housework for the Shulls. Cedric was eleven years old and occasionally worked in the fields for seventy-five cents per day.

Sometimes he would buy some candy and share it with us, for which we were very grateful. Candy was scarce anyway since sugar was still rationed in the aftermath of the World War.

It never occurred to us that because Cedric was black he was somehow different from us. Actually, we knew he was different, but that was because he had six fingers on each hand, the sixth one being little more than an appendage on the side of his hand. We were envious of this peculiar characteristic and, like all small boys in the presence of an older boy, looked up to him with admiration and loyalty. Looking back, it has occurred to me that children associated in the way we were that winter could never grow up prejudiced.

Our mother found some difficulties in our relationship with Cedric. If we were eating dinner and Cedric whistled from somewhere in the palmettos, we were through eating in a flash and on our way to meet him, regardless of whether or not we had actually finished our meal. There was also the time when Cedric captured a turtle (called a gopher locally) and proposed that we cook it and eat it. We were all for it, so we watched him butcher it (an experience in itself). He got a tomato can and filled it partly full of water, chucked the edible parts into it, and built a fire in the palmettos. And we sat around waiting for it to cook. About that time our mother hadn't seen us for a while and came looking for us. When she found us and took us home without the turtle feast, we set up a wailing that could have been heard miles away in Ft. Lauderdale.

Morgan's father, Rob, had a big touring car that he had driven across country from Washington to Florida. Occasionally, we would go with the Mercers for a drive into Dania in the evenings to have ice cream. Cedric would always know of the expedition and, unknown to us kids, would lie down in the space between the front fender and the radiator hood on the driver's side of the car. When we got to Dania, Rob would

drive past the ice cream store and around a couple of blocks. When he came past the ice cream store again, Cedric would burst out the door with an ice cream cone for himself and three more for us kids. It was a while before we discovered how he did it.

One evening there was a party at the Mercers'. Among the guests was a man by the name of Fox, who lived across the highway not far from us. He was a small man and started teasing Cedric, who didn't like it at all. Everyone was embarrassed, but no one did anything about it. Suddenly, Fox grabbed Cedric and wrestled him to the floor. But Cedric had a pocketknife, which he managed to open, and took a slice out of Fox's finger. Fox was outraged by the incident, but the other adults told him that he was lucky to have gotten off that easily and was not to blame Cedric since he, Fox, started the incident.

Even though I was only four years old when I was in Florida, I remember the trip well. I can draw a map of the area that might be incorrect in terms of dimensions, but would be accurate in the placement of buildings, fields, and other landmarks in relation to each other. My mind is still full of images of St. Augustine, the ocean beach, the alligator that my father shot on a boat trip into the Everglades, a fishing trip on the ocean, the mangrove swamp, and the colorful Seminole Indians in Ft. Lauderdale. Perhaps the experiences were so far from what I was accustomed to in the dry hills of Wyoming that the trip left indelible marks on my mind.

My father had an opportunity to buy the land across the road from the house in which we lived for about $2,500. He didn't do so for a variety of reasons I suppose, including his reluctance to go into debt. The same land sold a year later for $75,000 and is now in the center of Hollywood. The Shulls became real estate developers and made a lot of money, which they lost when the Florida bubble burst and a hurricane

washed away much of their holdings. Perhaps the return to the dry hills of Wyoming wasn't such a bad idea after all.

OUR SECOND MAJOR TRIP was to Vancouver, Washington, the summer I was eight years old. We stayed with the Mercers, which permitted Charles and me to renew our acquaintance with our second cousin Morgan. His father, Rob, was a dentist, and Mother seized this opportunity to have some work done on her teeth.

The Mercers lived outside the incorporated limits of Vancouver and raised silver foxes. From their place it was a short walk through a piece of undeveloped forest to a small stream that had a few brook trout in it. We boys occasionally caught one, though it was never over six inches in length. But we loved it. The things I remember include the enormous trees, the plentiful fruit, the Columbia River, the hikes through the woods, and riding Morgan's new bicycle (which I bashed up pretty badly). Again, the contrast with Wyoming was dramatic.

Life was hard back on the homestead, where my parents never had any of the modern conveniences. I have always admired them, however, for taking those two trips when the easier thing for them to do would have been just to stay at home. The trips were certainly important to the education of Charles and me and gave us brief glimpses of the world beyond Hat Creek.

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· GOING TO TOWN ·

MY PARENTS DID NOT HAVE AN AUTOMOBILE UNTIL THE SUMMER of 1924. Prior to that time the trip to town was an event, not just something one did on the spur of the moment. The trip was made often, however, since my parents sold cream, eggs, and butter, and those commodities couldn't be stored for long periods of time on the homestead, particularly since we had no electricity and hence no refrigeration. We did have a root cellar, however, that was quite cool. It was an effective place to keep such commodities until they could be taken to town and sold. More properly, they were "traded" for staples such as flour, salt, coffee, dried fruit, and all of the other food stuffs that couldn't be produced on the homestead, as well as clothing, axle grease, kerosene for the lamps, and other things necessary to keep the farm going.

The cream, eggs, and butter were sold to the Snyder Mercantile Company in Lusk, and, rather than cash, credit was given on my father's account at the store. The groceries and other items he bought were charged to his account. If his account built up a positive balance, he would take cash for the farm produce. Negative balances were settled in the fall when livestock or grain was sold. It was an effective way of operating and minimized the need for hard cash. The cream was sent on the Northwestern Railroad to Chadron, Nebraska, where it was churned. Later, after the Kilmer Creamery was established in Lusk, the cream was sold directly to the creamery and was paid for by check.

We sold cream in ten-gallon cans. It took a few days to fill a can with cream, which was about 35 percent butterfat. The butterfat content

was measured by the buyer, and the value of the can of cream was computed by multiplying the weight of the cream by the percentage butterfat times the price per pound. All cream was sold as sour cream; the days of sweet cream butter came later. But that didn't mean that one could keep the sour cream indefinitely. About two weeks in the root cellar was the limit, so that set a limit on the spacing of the trips to town.

In the winter my mother frequently churned the cream into butter and sold it in that form, since the price was higher for a pound of butter than for the somewhat less than a pound of butterfat that went into it. In the summer she was often much too busy to spend the amount of time it took to prepare the butter for sale. Charles and I frequently did the churning. We had what was called a barrel churn, which consisted of an oaken keg that had a capacity of five or six gallons and which was tumbled end over end by turning a crank. The keg was suspended on metal pins between two uprights. The metal pins formed the axle for the tumbling motion. The lid had a rubber seal and a screw clamp that kept it from leaking as it tumbled.

About two or three gallons of cream were put in the churn, so that as it tumbled it made a substantial splash at each end of the churn. The temperature of the cream was critical to the amount of time it took for the butter to "come." If the cream was too warm or too cold, one could crank for a long time before the butter came. Charles and I found that we could hold a book in one hand and turn the crank with the other. And, even though the circle made by the crank handle was so large that a certain amount of head bobbing was inevitable, it still was a way of making a tedious chore tolerable. There were times, however, when the book became so interesting that the cranking became slower and

slower, and maybe even stopped, until a sharp reminder from Mother started things going again.

The work had only begun when the butterfat coagulated into large chunks and separated from the buttermilk in the churn. The buttermilk was poured off and saved to be drunk or used for baking, and the butter was put into a large wooden bowl. There it was worked back and forth with a wooden paddle to remove additional buttermilk. Some salt was worked into it at the same time, and coloring was added if the butter was too pale. Finally, the butter was molded into one-pound blocks and wrapped in butter paper. That is the form in which it was sold to the store. Women took a good deal of pride in their butter, and the merchants learned that some was better than others and tended to sell the best to their favorite customers. The characteristics that distinguished among the different butters were the color, how much salt had been used, whether all of the buttermilk had been worked out, how carefully it was wrapped, and how sour the cream had been.

There were two reasons why we tended to sell butter only in the fall and winter months. One was that Mother did not have the time to spend on it in the busy spring and summer months. The other was that it was difficult to keep butter from melting, at least from sagging, on the trip to town in the warm months.

Most trips to town were made in a spring wagon, which was just a light-weight wagon with springs under it, being midway in size between a buggy and a standard wagon. It was heavy enough to carry a substantial load and was always pulled by a team of horses, while a buggy was often light enough to be pulled by a single horse. We never had a buggy, since the spring wagon, being multipurpose, was much more practical for a farmer than a buggy.

There was a time when my Uncle Bird lived on the Hughes place, a homestead near ours, and had a 1914 Model T Ford. When he went to town, he usually stopped and either took our cream and eggs to town or took one or the other of my parents with him. He also frequently brought our mail from the Hat Creek Post Office during the summer, when school wasn't in session. (When school was in session, the mail was retrieved from the post office by Charles or me during the noon recess or by the bus driver, who also had to get his mail there. The post office was about a mile from the school, so by hurrying, we could go and return during the one-hour noon recess.) The trip to the post office during the summer was usually made about once a week and took about an hour in each direction in the spring wagon. Some groceries and other essential items were almost always purchased on such a trip and were charged to Dad's account. When the account was settled, the storekeeper, Andrew Falconer, would give Dad a cigar and a small box of stick candy "for the wife and kids." Those were great days! Hat Creek was on the way to Lusk, so whenever we went to town we almost always stopped at the Hat Creek Store and Post Office.

SELDOM DID BOTH PARENTS go to Lusk at the same time. And seldom did we kids get to go before we got an automobile. But occasionally we would get the chance to go with our mother, usually in the summer, and usually it was combined with an overnight stay at the Hunter ranch just beyond Lusk to visit our grandmother. A typical trip might proceed as follows.

Anticipation for the trip builds for several days, and on the day of the trip, we are up and dressed shortly after daylight. After an early breakfast, Dad harnesses the horses, hitches them to the spring wagon, and loads the cans of cream and the crates of eggs (twelve dozen or

twenty-four dozen eggs to a crate). He also puts a big forkful of hay in the box of the spring wagon. Mother puts in a water jug, a lunch box, and the clothes we are to wear in town, and we are ready to go by sunup. The early departure is important so that the eggs and cream won't get too warm on the trip.

Mother lifts the reins and speaks to the horses, and we are on our way! As soon as we are out of the yard, she slaps the horses with the reins and they break into a trot. She doesn't want to waste any more of the morning's cool than necessary. The team is composed of Chub, a bay Morgan mare, and Biddy, a black Percheron mare. Biddy is the one that was stolen and whose recovery by my father angered the rest of the gang of horse thieves and motivated them to burn our home. She is larger than Chub and they don't seem well matched, but Chub is strong and able to trot forever, it seems. They are both gentle and make an ideal team for the trip.

We travel three miles south, three and a half miles west, and another mile south to get to Hat Creek. Mother lets the horses walk up the hills, but on the level she keeps them on the trot most of the time. The road is just a trail road for the first few miles, and as we approach Hat Creek it turns into a graded road. There is no surfacing, so the rate of travel is substantially reduced if the ground is wet. But now the ground is dry, and the horses' hooves stir up some dust as they trot along.

We cross Sage Creek a hundred yards or so south of the Hat Creek Post Office and travel in a southwestward direction for four or five miles to the scrub pines marking the beginning of the Hat Creek Breaks. The three- or four-mile trip to the top of the Breaks is interesting since there are unusual rock formations and pine trees. There is only a single pine tree on our homestead, so trees of any kind are a novelty to us. Charles and I want to climb the rocks along the way, but there is no time for

that. We convince Mother that we need a rest stop in the trees, however. A strong breeze has come up, and we enjoy the sound of the wind in the pines and the smell of the pines in the warm sunshine. From where we stop along the road, we can look back across the Hat Creek Valley and can see the darkened spot below the crest of the Seaman Hills that marks the location of our home.

For one stretch of the road, there is a cut bank on the left side and a sharp drop off into a gully on the right. Mother hopes that a car won't pass us on this stretch since the horses, although gentle, get nervous when they hear a car approaching from the rear and can't see it because of their blinders. Fortunately, no car passes us until we get to the top of this grade.

Near the top of the Breaks, the road runs along the old Cheyenne to Deadwood stage and wagon road, and we can see where the iron tires on the wagon wheels and the iron shoes of the horses have cut clearly visible ruts into the sandstone. (They can still be seen, but more than one hundred years of erosion have dimmed them considerably.) We talk about what it must have been like to travel that road. A little farther on we pass a big sandstone rock where pioneers carved their initials and brands. (That, too, is still there, and the names, although somewhat blurred by time, can still be read.)

It takes a long time to get to the top of the Breaks because the horses have been walking for most of the distance. When we get to the top, Mother hurries them up again. The sun has now been up for about three hours, and the horses are beginning to sweat. It is evident that it is going to be a hot day, and we are still over an hour from town.

Boredom sets in. The land is mostly level or rolling all of the way into Lusk. The excitement of seeing Hat Creek and going through the Breaks is over, and the early hour of our departure is beginning to take

its toll. We meet another team and buggy going the other direction. We don't know the folks, but they speak to us as we pass. We see a couple of cars on the road. We don't know them either.

Charles and I quarrel about who is going to get to sit on the seat with Mother and who must ride on the hay in the back. Mother settles the argument by making us both ride in the back. We find that is what we want to do anyway because of the companionship. But there isn't much to do. I start counting the turns of the wheel next to me. Then I try guessing how many turns will be required to reach some spot I can see ahead. Then the wheel runs through a pile of fresh horse manure, and some sticks to the metal tire. How many turns will be required before it disappears? I start counting, but long before it happens I have dozed off. Boring! We boys rouse ourselves and remember the lunch box. We claim to be famished and each eat a sandwich—a thick slice of meat on homemade bread well spread with homemade butter. We drink from the water jug and are satisfied again.

When we approach Lusk, we try to be first to see the town. Approaching from the northeast as we do, the first thing we see is the hill on which the water tank is located. The rest of the town seems to rise up as we approach. The courthouse and the red brick schoolhouse are landmarks we watch for. Then there is the shell of the Ranger Hotel, a building that was begun during the oil boom in the 1920s. (It would not be completed until twenty years or so later, and it is still the only three-story building in town.)

About this time Mother has us change clothes so we will look presentable in town. During this process Charles gets to hold the reins while Mother gets things organized. This puts my nose out of joint, but Charles is two years older than I, and my complaints are ignored.

Finally, we actually get to town, entering from the east on Third Street over the bridge crossing the Niobrara River, past the pens where Mr. DeCastro keeps his hogs so they can wallow in the mud of the river. (Unless you are from Wyoming, you wouldn't recognize it as a river since no water flows throughout most of its length.)

When we get to Main Street, we drive straight to the Snyder Mercantile Company, where the cream and eggs are unloaded at the back of the store. Mother drives the team a block down Main Street to where a cottonwood tree grows in front of the Henry Hotel. With luck, she can drive under the tree and let the horses stand in the shade rather than in the hot sun. Today we are in luck. She drives under the tree, unhitches the horses, and leads them to the watering trough on the sidewalk in front of Snyder's. They drink thirstily after their long drive. She then ties them to the spring wagon where they can reach the hay that has been brought along. She has some shopping to do along Main Street that terminates at Snyder's. We boys tag along. She visits with almost everyone she meets. At least it seems so to us. One can take only so much of "My, haven't the boys grown," before getting tired of it. Mother, of course, hasn't seen anyone but the family for several weeks and is hungry to visit with other women. They discuss their gardens, their chickens, the weather, and a hundred other things that aren't of interest to us.

When we get back to Snyder's, the cream has been tested, and Mother picks up the slip showing the balance credited to our account. She buys some groceries and a few items of clothing. Snyder's has a dry goods department in the same building with the grocery store. Mother has a list of groceries she needs, so she tells the clerk what she wants. He writes the items on a sales ticket and retrieves them from shelves behind the counter. She gets a copy of the sales ticket, and a copy is

kept by the store for record-keeping purposes. (Self-service grocery shopping was still a generation away.)

By now the team has rested. If we weren't going on to the Hunter ranch, Mother would start back home. But we are going to visit Grandma, who lives about five miles southeast of Lusk. This part of the trip is really exciting since we are the only grandchildren and are well looked after by Grandma, Uncle Charley, Aunt Ida, and Aunt Olive. Mother hitches the team to the spring wagon, and we drive to the southeast edge of Lusk where we take off across the pastures on a trail road.

The trail goes through a pasture with heavy sagebrush, and there are a few gates to be opened. Again, Charles drives through while mother opens the gates—there isn't any justice! Along the way a badger appears in the trail ahead of the horses. The badger is on the fight and hisses at the horses. They are afraid to proceed, so Mother hands the reins to Charles and gets out with the buggy whip. The badger suddenly decides he wants to be somewhere else. We arrive at the Hunter ranch in mid afternoon and occupy ourselves with all types of things at which young boys are so adept. The next day we return to Hat Creek. It has been a great trip. We start planning for the next one.

Looking back on it, I wonder why it was such a great thing to go to town. Apparently the break in the monotony of life on the homestead and the opportunity to see and experience other things made the trip worthwhile for us.

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· MOTHER KNOWS BEST ·

OUR TWO-ROOM HOMESTEAD HOUSE WAS WARMED ENTIRELY BY a wood-burning heating stove in the room where we slept and a wood-burning kitchen range in the room that served as kitchen, living room, and any other kind of room, on demand. Our only wood available was jack pine or yellow pine, and it took a lot of it to keep our home warm during the winter months. The woodpile was the focus of a lot of activity—sawing pine logs into blocks with a two-man crosscut saw, splitting the blocks, chopping small limbs into stove wood lengths, preparing kindling, gathering chips for starting fires, and so on. Bringing the wood in from the hills to the woodpile was always an adventure for Charles and me. We helped with the sawing as soon as we were old enough to pull our end of the crosscut saw. And we helped to chop off the limbs and gather and load the smaller pieces into the sled or wagon. We thought it was great fun, particularly when the weather was nice. It was almost like a picnic and, in fact, sometimes Mother came along. We would have a fire, and she would cook bacon and eggs and make coffee.

The problem was that occasionally we would run low on wood before winter was over, and the weather was not always favorable for bringing in a new load. On one occasion Dad decided to go after wood on a Saturday, and Charles and I, being home from school, wanted to go along. Mother didn't think it was a good idea. About eight inches of snow covered the ground, it was cloudy, and the temperature was hovering near zero. A breeze was blowing from the northwest, not

enough to drift the new snow but strong enough to make the windchill well below zero.

In spite of Mother's counsel, we raised such a fuss that she decided to let us go along. Dad didn't say much. He never did. He was a great one to let his kids learn from experience. Anyway, Mother bundled us up in warm clothes, and we took off in the bobsled with Dad.

The dead tree Dad had in mind was in the bottom of a canyon about a mile north of the house. But to get there, we had to face into the northwest wind for over a mile to reach the bottom of the canyon and then to travel east to where the dead tree was located. Before we reached the canyon, we realized that the weather was considerably colder than we had anticipated, but we weren't about to complain—not yet. When we reached the dead tree, we found that it was sheltered from the wind, and, being active as we were in cutting the wood, we seemed quite comfortable. As a matter of fact it was almost too comfortable, and we began to sweat in our heavy clothing.

By the time we got the wood loaded, it was becoming dusk. The load was heavy, and the horses moved slowly in pulling the sled out of the canyon. By this time the cold had begun to penetrate our clothing, and our feet were beginning to feel numb. Before we got halfway home, Charles and I were in tears. It was too cold for us to sit on the load of wood, so we trudged behind the sled in the snow. We had reached the point where the increased circulation due to our exertion had no effect on the chill, particularly in our feet. I don't ever remember being so cold before or since.

When we finally arrived at the house, we ran in, took off our overshoes, shoes, and socks, and warmed our feet at the kitchen range. Mother checked to make sure we hadn't actually frozen anything important, and she let us warm up without saying much.

I would like to be able to say that we learned something from the experience, but I doubt that we did.

· THE CIRCUS ·

WHEN I WAS A KID, AN OCCASIONAL CIRCUS WOULD COME TO THE town of Lusk. The town was considerably off the beaten path taken by most major circuses, so the ones that came were generally just on the fringe of staying alive. They often had an elephant, perhaps a couple of cats, and the usual complement of strong men, bearded ladies, trapeze artists, and so on. Everything they had could be put on a few trucks when they moved from town to town. The local weekly paper announced their arrival, often sponsored by the Lion's Club, or some other collection of businessmen. After all, their primary purpose, as far as the sponsors were determined, was to bring people to town and, hopefully, into the business establishments. In reality, associated with the show there were usually gambling games, which may have taken considerably more money out of the town than was brought in by the increased business for the townspeople. The circus followers generally were considered to be unethical, if not downright evil, and people tended to lock their doors and watch their daughters when the circus was in town.

Sometime in the early 1930s a real circus came to Wyoming. The papers announced that the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus would be in Cheyenne on a given day during the summer. This was clearly an event not to be missed, and people came from great distances to see it.

Charles and I were delighted when our two maiden aunts, the Hunter sisters, invited us to go with them to see the circus. Cheyenne was 150 miles away, but that didn't seem like a handicap. We just left home early enough to get there in time to see the morning parade. It was sensational.

At that time, the combined Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was all horse drawn, and the personnel and equipage were carried on five long trains. According to the hooplas given out by the circus, there were twenty elephants, two hundred show horses, four hundred workhorses to pull the wagons and raise the tents, and enough lions and tigers to fill a number of zoos. There had to be at least one thousand personnel. Even allowing for overestimates, it is impossible to describe the circus in anything but superlatives.

The workhorses were of special interest to Charles and me. We had never seen such animals. They were mostly Percherons—grays, blacks, and bays—but there were also lots of Clydesdales and Belgians. All were matched by color and hitched in four- or six-horse strings. The Budweiser Clydesdales would have fitted right in. It was obvious the drivers took good care of their horses. We saw one driver feeding his horses bananas while they were standing idle waiting for another assignment.

The two hundred show horses were used in the rings for acrobatic riding and similar assignments. The tents that sheltered the horses from the sun and possible storms stretched for hundreds of yards.

The circus performance was spectacular. Five rings were in operation constantly. A large circus band played almost continuously, and something was going on all the time in each ring while high wire and trapeze acts were being performed overhead. It was impossible for any one person to see anything but a small fraction of the entertainment.

The enormity of the show was overwhelming, and it seemed a shame that so many of the acts were "wasted" because we couldn't comprehend everything at once.

Financially, the stop in Cheyenne must have been a disaster. Even though the big top was filled to overflowing, the gate receipts couldn't have paid more than a small fraction of the costs of the stop. I have never understood how it came about, but I have been forever grateful that I got to see the show.

Shortly thereafter, the circus became mechanized, and the circus wagons became a thing of the past, along with the strings of beautiful workhorses. A final blow was dealt to the atmosphere of the circus when the big top disappeared. A circus held in an armory just isn't the same as one held under the big top. Ah, well! That's progress.

· 4-H CLUBS ·

IN THE MIDDLE 1920s NIOBRARA COUNTY WAS FULL OF HOMESTEADERS who had come, for the most part, from the Midwest and were accustomed to farming. Fortunately, the weather in the teens and twenties favored them. It rained frequently on what was essentially semi-arid land. Little did they suspect that what they were observing wasn't the norm and that there were dry times ahead.

During that time the county had an overly aggressive county agent who sponsored many farm-related (as opposed to ranch-related) 4-H clubs. He asked my father, who was generally more successful at farming than almost anyone else, to become the leader of a corn club. Dad consented since he had two boys of the right age to participate.

The very thought of a corn club in the dry-land farming sections of Wyoming would bring a gale of laughter from the rural folks in the area now. But it wasn't so at that time. The agent also formed pig clubs (Charles and I belonged for a year), dairy clubs, and similar clubs that were consistent with the operations of a family farm.

Charles and I staked out an acre each on some of Dad's best farmland, hand picked our seed, and had Dad plant it for us. The rain gods and frost gods were with us. It neither froze in the late spring nor in the early fall before the corn reached maturity, and it rained but didn't hail. We cultivated our corn frequently with a one-horse cultivator, which was dragged between the rows by a gentle workhorse on whose back one of us was perched while the other wrestled the handles of the cultivator. We pulled every weed out that the cultivator didn't get, and our corn was a showpiece.

Our yield was sensational, somewhere between fifty and sixty bushels per acre, which stacked up well against yields in the Corn Belt before the days of hybrids and high-efficiency fertilizer. The other boys in the club all raised some corn, but they didn't have anywhere near our success.

Fortunately, we didn't let it go to our heads and become corn farmers. We also resisted the impulse to be hog farmers. Charles and I were some of the youngest members of the pig club, others being the three Percival boys and two Christian boys. We usually met at the Percival home, since Mr. Percival was the club leader. After one meeting the Percival boys decided to have a little fun and corralled a bunch of unbroken horses. Some of the boys would perch on the fence of the round corral while others started the horses circling around the inside perimeter of the corral. When a horse went close to the fence, one of the boys would jump on him bareback, grab a handful of the horse's

mane, and try to ride him, almost always unsuccessfully. Charles and I did not participate, a decision that said a great deal for our common sense, particularly since we were the "little" kids.

People generally provide strong support for the 4-H clubs, the townspeople through their generous bidding for the livestock raised by the kids, and the ranchers through producing calves available for the kids to raise. For a time (and maybe the practice has survived to this day) ranchers would donate calves at the county fair for the "catch-a-calf" contest. A limited number of calves would be released in a pen, and unlimited numbers of boys and girls would try to catch them. Those succeeding could keep the calf for their project. It was a rough-and-tumble affair.

My dear aunts, the Hunter sisters, ran their own ranch at the time and were repeatedly asked to donate a calf. They demurred on the grounds that the sport was too rough for the girls, and for the little boys, who had to compete on equal ground with the big boys. They offered to give a calf that would be allocated to a girl or a boy on the basis of a lottery. The idea didn't catch on, largely because of the sport derived by the crowd in watching the kids scramble after the calves. This was the sore spot for the Hunter sisters, the fact that the crowd would be amused by the bumps, bruises, and scratches inflicted on the kids. They viewed it in the same light as a dogfight for the amusement of the crowd.

Today's 4-H clubs still form an important part of rural life in Wyoming, as in most Western states. But they have branched out to include saddle horses, rabbits, chickens, and all sorts of things that aren't a routine part of ranch living. Livestock clubs are still at the top of the heap, however, in the ranching country, and this isn't surprising. Sewing clubs were an important part of growing up for the farm girls. They may still be, but the girls now participate heavily in the livestock

clubs, something that they didn't do earlier. When I was a member of a 4-H club, the concept of equal opportunity for women and girls hadn't yet surfaced, although many girls and women participated in farming activities.

County and state fairs provide opportunities for 4-H club members to show their livestock and other products to the public, and to compete with one another in a wholesome and nonviolent manner. That seems to be a good thing.

· HIGH SCHOOL ·

CHARLES AND I FINISHED THE EIGHTH GRADE IN 1928. FINISHING the eighth grade marked the termination of formal education for a substantial portion of the population in the 1920s, so some considerable ceremony was associated with the graduation exercises. All schools in the county participated in the graduation exercises, which were held in the movie theater in Lusk. There was music, and there were speeches, and the whole bit—no caps and gowns, however.

There was little question about whether Charles and I would go to high school. Mother, having been a teacher, saw to it that we went. And Dad supported her. Only the details had to be worked out. It turned out that one of the teachers hired to teach the Hat Creek School was Ann Pfister, a well-qualified teacher. She had been prevailed upon by the parents of the four graduating eighth graders to teach the ninth grade as well as grades five through eight, in which there were about a dozen children. It must have been an enormous task for her, but she did the job and did it well. She taught us English, Latin, algebra, and

history. She was paid something extra for teaching the ninth grade, but it couldn't have been enough for the amount of work involved. Can you imagine asking a teacher in today's world to carry that kind of load?

Having one year of high school at Hat Creek was just barely possible, but two years would have been impossible. As a matter of fact, the ninth grade was never taught again at Hat Creek after Ann Pfister taught the four of us boys. It was clear that if we were to continue our high school education, it would have to be done in the Lusk High School. A common solution at that time was for the mother of the family to move to Lusk for the winter, taking her entire brood with her, and then to return to the ranch or homestead in the spring. This was a holdover from the days when there were few country schools. But the character of the population changed with the coming of the homesteaders. People were poorer, and the homestead mothers had many duties on the farm that made it infeasible for them to be away during the winter months. Our mother raised turkeys, made butter to sell, and helped Dad with the care of the cattle. The homestead couldn't have been viable without her. Dad couldn't drive us daily either. It would have been too costly. Also, Dad didn't have the time, and then there was the matter of the bad roads. The obvious solution was for Charles and me to move to town.

If our parents hadn't been poor, this would have been a simple matter. They could simply have found a decent boarding house for us, and that would have ended the matter. But they didn't have that much money, so we had to find an alternative. It was decided that we should batch. After some searching, they found a place for rent. It was the only structure on the block that is now the city park. It formerly had been a two-car garage, the house associated with it having been sold and moved away. It was just barely livable, but it was cheap, eight dollars a month, if I remember correctly. It wasn't worth that.

It was a frame structure, and the two garage doors had been nailed shut. A pine floor had been installed over the dirt on the garage floor and a partition erected to separate the two stalls of the garage. The exterior walls were covered on the outside with siding, which was in poor shape with plenty of cracks to let in the daylight. The inside of the studding was covered with narrow ceiling boards, also in poor shape. When the cracks on the outside matched the cracks on the inside, we could see daylight through the walls since there was no insulation between the studding. Water was supplied through a bicycle tire (a substitute for a garden hose), which came up through the floor from a freeze-proof, garden-type shutoff. There were no plumbing fixtures, not even a kitchen sink. The outhouse was in the back adjoining the woodshed. There was no electricity, so we used a kerosene lamp to study by. We used only one half of the garage, since we had a hard enough time trying to keep that small space warm. We brought in an old wood-burning cookstove from home, along with an iron bedstead, a table, and a couple of chairs, and we made some cupboards out of crates. It was modest to say the least. We had no telephone, no radio, no phonograph—if we wanted music, we could sing or whistle.

My father bought a Model A Ford sedan in 1927 but kept the old Model T touring car. During the summer of 1929 Charles and I converted it to a pickup by cutting the body in two using a hammer and chisel. We replaced the back end of the car with a wooden box. It wasn't much for beauty, but it was highly utilitarian and served us nicely to haul our stove and other "furniture" to town. We both were driving by that time—I was fourteen and Charles was sixteen—but there were no drivers' licenses in Wyoming until the 1940s. Anyone who had the courage could drive.

We went home on most weekends. Either our parents picked us up on Friday or Saturday and returned us on Sunday, or we drove the Model T to town so we would have it to drive home at the end of the week. When the weather was bad, we didn't go home. Instead, sometimes we worked or sometimes went to the Hunter ranch to see our grandmother, Uncle Charley, Aunt Ida, and Aunt Olive. It was about a four-mile walk across the pastures. One time it was bitterly cold on Sunday with a crust of about eight inches of snow. Uncle Charley took us part way to town in a sled, and we walked the rest of the way. I got a large blister on my ankle from the frostbite.

The early fall of 1929 was great, the weather being as good as it gets in Wyoming. And we began to feel that we had a great place to live. But Lusk is not in the tropics, and as the days shortened we began to be aware of the cold. In the middle of the winter, we would build a hot fire in the cookstove and go to bed. By morning there would sometimes be an inch of ice on the water bucket. By the time we got up and built a fire and cooked our breakfast, the room was beginning to feel reasonably comfortable, just in time for us to leave for school. We had an hour for lunch and used it all to walk home, start another fire, cook something, and return to class. After school we worked for the Midwest Hardware Company until closing time (usually 6 P.M. except during the Christmas rush). Again, we had to build yet another fire and cook something, look at our books, and go to bed. It seemed that we spent our lives starting fires and warming up the place. I have a distinct memory of being cold a good share of the time.

The job at Midwest Hardware was a wonderful thing. George Gibson was the owner, and when my parents asked him whether he could use our services, he said that he could but that twenty cents per hour was all that he could pay. I was fourteen years old and Charles was

sixteen, and that may have been all we were worth, but we worked hard. We unpacked things, stocked shelves, cleaned out the basement to the store, and painted the rough stone walls. We also stamped and mailed the monthly invoices. At that time George was the local mortician, so we washed and vacuumed the hearse. Also, after hours some of the local moonshiners would come to the back door of the store, and we would carry out and load their vehicles with whiskey bottles they had bought from the hardware store. Occasionally, Mrs. Gibson would have us help her wash windows, beat rugs, and do other cleaning and painting jobs around her house.

With the food we brought in from home (bread, canned and preserved meats and vegetables), we could just about make our own way with the income we got from our job. One time, however, Mr. Gibson had given us a check for five dollars and some cents, which we cashed at the drugstore. The wind was blowing with gale force as it sometimes does in eastern Wyoming, and Charles, who had cashed the check, started out through the door without first pocketing the money. The wind caught the five-dollar bill, and it took off for Nebraska. We were heartsick because there went twenty-five hours of work. Other than this disaster, things went rather smoothly.

The schoolwork was easy—it tends to be that way when the teacher is desperately trying to stay ahead of the class in the textbook. Not all the teachers were that ineffective, however, but we weren't pushed. Since Charles and I were from the country, we were automatically enrolled in vocational agriculture. The school got federal funds for this vocational program, so we had to take the course. They weren't about to lose their federal funds because some country kid thought he should take advanced algebra instead of vocational agriculture. We had to endure the voc ag course work for three years.

The real problem with voc ag was that it took so much time—about three hours every day. There just weren't enough hours in the day to get in the courses we needed, even without a study hall. In fairness, I must say that the shop work I took as a junior and senior taught me how to work with tools, and that has given me great pleasure throughout my life.

The sophomore year of voc ag was a farce, however. Our teacher didn't know which end of a saw to take hold of, and I think he would have been hard pressed to tell a cow from a pig. He had no control over his students, and we did just about whatever we pleased. He was the football coach as well, and, needless to say, Lusk High School didn't win many games that season. He was gone one time with the football team, and we were left to do whatever we wanted to do in the shop. The boys wrecked the place. At the end of the shop period, doors were off their hinges, tools were scattered, some of the workbenches were broken, and the shop looked as though it had been the scene of a battle. In a sense it had. I, being a chicken, was more of an observer than a participant in the wreckage. The next Monday we went on as before. As far as I know, no one got punished.

OUR NEIGHBORS MR. AND MRS. HIMES moved to Lusk so that their son Delbert could attend the tenth grade. By around the end of March, however, they were ready to move back to their homestead. This would have left Delbert alone in their house in town. I don't know who suggested it, but Charles and I moved in with Delbert and spent the rest of the school year there. This was luxury to which we were unaccustomed. It was a real house, with indoor plumbing, a kitchen, and a bedroom in which to sleep. We couldn't believe our good fortune. Delbert was a speed-reader and would read a book every night.

I have never known anyone else with his reading speed. Charles and I continued to work for George Gibson, and the rest of the school term passed quickly.

The summer of 1930 saw us back on the farm. Our parents made arrangements with Mr. and Mrs. Himes and Mr. and Mrs. DeGering for us to batch with their sons Delbert and Milton for the coming school year. They rented a small house across the street from the high school, and we were reasonably comfortable there. At least we had electricity and water—no refrigeration, however. We kept our milk and other spoilables in a kind of pit under the house, with access to it from inside the house. The only problem with it was that the neighbor's cat would get into it and destroy things. The neighbor, Curly Hopkins, had milk goats that he would stake out in our backyard. They were smelly and something of a nuisance. Between problems with them and the cat, we were not very kindly disposed toward Curly. In the spring some boys were visiting us, and one of them yelled to Curly, "Curly, we just killed your cat!" We hadn't, of course, but Curly went to the justice of the peace, who called us in and recommended rather strongly that we leave Curly alone. We did.

A COUPLE OF SIGNIFICANT events occurred in the Lusk High School during our junior year. One was the erection of a new high school building on the grounds that are now occupied by the Lusk Grade School. We moved out of the red brick building (now the Elk's hall) with no misgivings. The new high school had adequate space for the voc ag shop. This time we had a no-nonsense teacher by the name of Bill Harkin who was a master with tools, and we learned a great deal from him. He also began training the livestock and crop judging teams, which competed successfully in various meets.

The other notable event was social. Our class, with some forty-eight students, was the largest class to graduate from Lusk High School until that time, and we put on the first junior prom. We decorated the gym with pine trees we cut in the Hat Creek Breaks. The theme of the prom was the Arctic, complete with northern lights and other suitable decorations. Delbert, being something of a genius with electricity, built a mechanism that switched the various colored "northern lights" on and off. My date (my first) was a sophomore girl, the sister of a good friend.

The summer of 1931, following our junior year, was dry and there were few crops to harvest. The Great Depression was beginning in earnest, and life on the farm was hard. By the beginning of our senior year, Delbert's parents had moved to Lusk permanently, so he was no longer available to batch with Milton, Charles, and me. A junior, also from the Hat Creek community, took Delbert's place to batch with us.

I REMEMBER MY SENIOR year as a real drag. The only course in which I had much interest was a course in physics. Delbert, being interested in the world of physics, enjoyed the course also. (It seems that he figures heavily in this tale, but he was one of the few interesting people around.) He found a large electrical generator from a truck, which, when cleaned up, repaired, and fitted with a wind wheel, would produce an electric charge. He mounted it on the roof of the school building, and when the wind was blowing hard, as it usually was in Wyoming, it would produce quite a spark. One time when the class wasn't in session, Delbert wired the chairs on the girls' side of the room. The next morning the wind was blowing hard when the class was called to order. Delbert connected the output of the generator to the wires, and the girls leaped to their feet as

one person. It was certainly an act of sexual harassment, but it wasn't considered offensive at the time.

Delbert didn't get around to college for some time, and when he did he took no interest in the nontechnical components of education. He studied, on his own, how radios worked and set up a radio repair shop in Lusk. It was marginally successful, considering the bad state of the economy. Eventually he found himself in the regular Army, by way of service in the National Guard, and made a successful career in the Signal Corps.

A number of the high school boys served in the National Guard in Lusk and earned a few dollars in weekly training and attendance at the National Guard camp for a couple of weeks in the summer. The local guard was a cavalry detachment, and the boys had a wild time with the remounts that were furnished to them to ride during their summer camp. Charles and Milton were both in the National Guard, but I couldn't join because of a heart murmur. This also kept me out of athletics, and a boy who didn't enroll for some kind of sports was considered not to amount to much. I was glad when high school was finally over.

I did enjoy some aspects of high school, though. I was in two plays as a junior and one as a senior. I'm sorry to say that I wasn't very good in either one. The Lusk High School also organized a band during my junior year. The leader of the band was a man by the name of Sutton. He had his own dance band, which played at the junior prom. He was a "music man" in the same way that Preston Foster was in the movie *The Music Man.* I'm sure he got a cut of the sales of the band instruments. But he did well with our high school band, and we played and marched in the parades of the Central Wyoming Fair, the Wyoming State Fair, and the Goshen County Fair. I played the clarinet—not well,

but passably. Band practice continued throughout the summer after our junior year and again after we graduated in 1932.

Senior events that are normally associated with high school graduation were severely restricted. There were no class rings and no yearbooks. The class did decide to wear caps and gowns. It was a mistake because the $2.50 rentals were hard to come by. Mrs. Percival, who had two girls graduating, was heard to say that she had to sell 50 dozen eggs just to rent her girls' caps and gowns. I was valedictorian but didn't give a speech, for which I was duly thankful. I was so shy and introverted that I would surely have messed it up. I received a tuition-free scholarship to the University of Wyoming, but there was little talk of going to college among the students. Times were so hard that going on to school seemed an unreal possibility. Over half the students in the class were from ranches and homesteads. Most of us just went back home and helped our parents. In essence, our lives were put on hold.

I couldn't help feeling that I hadn't received much of an education in high school. (A few years later I found out just how bad it had been when I finally went on to college.) Some of the high school teachers were inept, and the selection of courses was minimal. About this time my mother became seriously ill with cancer of the breast, there wasn't enough rainfall to grow crops, and there seemed to be nothing on the horizon that would permit me to go to college. I began to feel trapped by circumstances beyond my control.

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· HITCH-HIKING ·

DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION YOUNG MEN TOOK TO THE highways as hitchhikers. Few, or no, jobs were available, but there were always rumors of jobs some place else—in California, or Oregon, or the oil fields of Oklahoma. The only way to get to the site of the (usually mythical) jobs was to hitchhike. There were a few bad incidents in which hitchhikers robbed drivers of vehicles and cash, but by and large the system worked smoothly. There was genuine sympathy for those less fortunate, and there was little harm in offering a ride to someone going your way.

One summer when I was out of high school, out of a job, and generally out of luck, my Aunt Ida Hunter wanted to go to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for a checkup following her mastectomy a few years earlier. She drove out to the hay field where I was working and asked me whether I would drive her to Rochester. She was driving a brand new Plymouth, and my answer was as quick and as positive as if she had asked me whether I wanted a million dollars.

We left the next day and stayed overnight with a cousin of hers in Alpena, South Dakota. Alpena had been the hometown to a thriving farming community at an earlier time, and by the middle 1930s it was beginning to show the decay typical of so many small towns in the Great Plains. Now, it is hardly a spot on the map.

The trip across South Dakota was slow. It rained most of the way, and the graveled surface of the roads was beginning to give way. A young woman who was a relative of our hostess in Alpena was planning to make the trip in her car from Alpena to Rapid City the following

day. Aunt Ida suggested that I drive the young woman to Rapid City, assuring me that she (Aunt Ida) could easily drive the rest of the way to Rochester on the improved roads in that area. I agreed, and the next day we slogged through the rain and mud back to Rapid City. By this time the roads were in terrible shape.

I stayed overnight in Rapid City and next morning faced the problem of getting back to Wyoming. I had never hitchhiked, but I thought this might be a good time to try. I walked out of Rapid City, headed south, and tried to thumb a ride. The rain had stopped, but the sky was heavily overcast with some fog and a light mist. Several cars zoomed by, and I was getting discouraged when a flatbed truck stopped. Three men filled the cab already, but I was invited to sit on the flat bed with my back to the cab. It was a better deal than any I had so far, so I got on board.

I rode in the back of the truck from Rapid City to Custer through some of the prettiest parts of the Black Hills. Even with the mist and fog and the chill, it was a beautiful ride. But Custer was the destination of the truck, and I was still a long way from home. I hit the road again leading south out of Custer. After about an hour of trying to thumb a ride without success, I felt a cold rain begin in earnest, and I wasn't dressed for it. I walked back to Custer and inquired at the depot concerning the train schedule. There was a train out that evening for Crawford, Nebraska. I knew that if I got that far I could take the Northwestern train from there to Lusk, where I could call my uncle to come and get me.

I spent the afternoon in the depot watching the rain, drying out, and being bored. In the evening I took the train. There was only one passenger car behind a couple of baggage cars being pulled by a steam locomotive. The passenger car was old—probably about vintage 1890.

At one end was a massive coal-burning heater, and the car was lighted by kerosene lamps. I had the feeling of having stepped into the previous century. There were few other passengers aboard.

The train seemed to stop at every crossroads as it wound its way through the hills. We traveled all night going from Custer to Crawford. There I got a ticket for the afternoon train to Lusk and arrived none the worse for wear. Thus ended my hitchhiking career, and I decided thereafter that if I couldn't buy a ticket on a bus or on a train, I simply wouldn't go.

· THE WASTED YEARS ·

"GETTING AHEAD" WAS A PHRASE I HEARD MANY TIMES WHEN I was a boy—not so often from my father because he seldom said much, but quite often from my mother. To understand what it meant, one must understand something of the economic and social plight of the homesteader. Homesteaders fell into three classes. One was the rancher, or more often an employee of his, who filed on a piece of a creek bottom or a meadow to secure the rancher's control over a larger domain. If the filing was done by an employee, it was understood that the land would be resold to the rancher at a predetermined price. Actually, many such homesteads were proved up by having the rancher pay $1.50 per acre, which reduced the length of time required for obtaining the patent on the land from five years to three.

The second class of homesteader was the single person, either male or female, who responded to the siren call for land ownership by filing on a homestead with the intention of proving up and then selling the

land to someone else. Their hope was, of course, that the land would become valuable and they could turn a profit.

The third class of homesteader was the family man who had plans to build a family, and who filed on a 320-acre plot with the idea that he could make a home. Often, he would have had experience as a tenant farmer. Or he may have been a member of a large family and knew that the home farm couldn't be divided in enough ways to provide a place for him to maintain his own family.

In the first case, above, the homesteader was at no risk. He had to sleep on his homestead the required number of months out of the homesteading years, but he worked for the rancher, and the requirement for living on the land was often winked at. In the second case, the homesteader risked only his or her own time. Many of these homesteaders were unemployed men or women.

But the third class of homesteaders risked all on the venture. They had no job to return to. Failing on the homestead meant starting all over, usually as a laborer or some other low-skilled occupation; many did not have much education. My father fell into this category. Although my mother had been a schoolteacher and was relatively well educated for the time, my father had the equivalent of a fourth-grade education and knew no skill other than farming. He had been a corn farmer in Iowa and eastern South Dakota and assumed that he could do the same on the rich land of eastern Wyoming. But the short growing seasons, the lack of rain, interspersed with hailstorms, and the problems of working the native sod conspired against him. Added to this was the burning of their homestead house and essentially all of their belongings by horse thieves. Still they didn't give up. I think my father would have given up the homestead and moved westward again to Idaho, where there were flowing streams and timbered mountains. My mother's

parents had moved to Wyoming by that time, and she wanted to stick it out. Dad went along with that solution, largely because he had no viable alternative.

MY PARENTS PROBABLY HAD a greater effect on my attitudes, beliefs, and objectives than is typical of more modern times. Other than my teacher and an occasional neighbor, there were almost no other adults in my life. I realize now how great that was, but it didn't seem so at the time.

My father and mother were born in Iowa, he near Des Moines and she in Northwestern Iowa. Both came from pioneer stock. Two of my great, great, great grandfathers on my mother's side and one on my father's side fought in the Revolutionary War. All of my parents' ancestors, and hence my own, were in this country before 1800, so my roots in America are deep.

Ancestors on both sides of my family moved west with the fringe of settlement and thus accumulated neither fame nor fortune. My father's maternal grandparents moved to Iowa when Des Moines was just a tent city occupied by the troops whose job it was to keep the settlers out of Indian lands. This, of course, was a futile effort because Iowa was in the middle of what became known as the Corn Belt, in some of the richest farmland in the world. The welfare of the Native Americans who had occupied the land for centuries would inevitably give way to the rush of settlement. My parents' move to a homestead in Wyoming, after their marriage in South Dakota, was simply an extension of the pioneers' desire to push the frontier westward.

Both of my parents migrated from Iowa to South Dakota, he to farm and she to teach school. They found each other somewhat later in life than was customary at that time. They married when my father

was almost thirty-six years old and my mother was thirty-two. In remembering my mother I must look backward nearly seventy years—over forty for my father. The memories are filled with gratitude for what they taught me and the sacrifices they made to keep my brother and me clothed, healthy, and headed in the right direction.

My father was a silent man who kept his thoughts to himself and usually only spoke when he had something to say. There is something to be said for that philosophy. It wasn't that he was unfriendly—he would converse freely when he felt he had something worthwhile to say. He had many friends in the community, and his sense of humor was readily apparent in his conversations with friends and neighbors. Most of all, he was a workingman and felt that when adversity struck, as it often did, he could make things right if he could just work harder. He never spoke a harsh word to Charles and me, and he adored my mother. That's not all that bad.

Dad only had about a fourth- or fifth-grade education, having gone through the "fifth reader" in school, but he read newspapers and news magazines all his life and was well informed concerning national and world events. He chewed tobacco and in many other ways was an unpolished person. He was slow to anger, but when he got mad he got very mad, particularly if someone had questioned his integrity.

It would be virtually impossible to enumerate all of the things I learned from my father. Among them, however, were the importance of work, tolerance, resilience in the face of adversity, and respect for women. When Mother died, he faced loneliness and dangers alone, staying on the ranch by himself so that Charles and I could go to college. I didn't realize how much I loved him for it until he neared the end of his life.

My mother was the driver in the family. She loved her boys and was much concerned that we learned our lessons. But she was undemonstrative in showing that love. For example, she would never give one of us a hug "just for the heck of it." It wasn't that she was uncaring toward us. She indeed cared for us a great deal, but she didn't exude the warmth that some mothers do. She never lost sight of her objective to send forth her boys into the world, educated, well mannered, honest, and ambitious. She taught school for twelve years prior to her marriage and had traveled widely, having been to Florida, Colorado, California, Oregon, and nearly all of the Midwestern states. She helped Charles and me grasp the reality of a much wider world than just life on the homestead. I hope that when she finally lost her life to cancer in 1934, she realized that she had done as much for us as she could have under the circumstances. It was not until well after her death that we really began to appreciate her.

MY PARENTS WORKED VERY hard to get ahead. Their sources of income were the sale of butter, cream, eggs, and occasional garden stuff, plus the annual sales of livestock. My father thought raising registered Duroc Jersey hogs would be a profitable venture. It was for a time until it became obvious that the corn crop was too uncertain to provide the feed needed to fatten them properly. Then my parents went into the turkey business, which also was profitable for a time until the Depression began to cut into the demand for turkeys for holiday dining. Gradually it dawned on my father that Wyoming was a state in which cattle raising was the key to economic survival. He began to accumulate land from homesteaders who had gone bankrupt and left the area. Much of this land was acquired for the taxes that were owed on it, and for some of the land he assumed the Federal Land Bank loans against it. The years 1932 and

1933 were part of the transition period from farming to ranching. It was a time when we began to refer to our home place as a ranch rather than a homestead.

This was the background that gave meaning to the term "getting ahead." It meant getting an education for my brother and me, trying various ways to gain a little money from the farm, and improving living conditions above the edge of poverty in which we existed. It was a driving force for my mother and was frequently referred to by her in sentences that began, "You won't get ahead unless …" or "If you are going to get ahead you must … ." She wanted her boys to enjoy a better life than had been meted out to her and my father. Unfortunately, she did not live long enough to see it happen.

The two years my brother and I were out of high school were clearly a time when we weren't getting ahead. It was like treading water while ahead of us stretched the vast river of life. Under the circumstances I don't think we could have done anything about it. It was just an interlude in the long struggle to get ahead.

THE BAD TIMES FOR my family got worse. My mother developed cancer of the breast some time during the period I was in high school. She didn't say much about it but frequently saw a local doctor, who treated her with various things that didn't work. Cancer was not really understood at that time by rural doctors. And the necessity to have surgery or radiation therapy was often ignored by rural women, although Mother's sister had a radical mastectomy at the Mayo Clinic in 1929. It was highly successful for her, and she lived to be 102 years old. But she had more resources than Mother did, and Mother kept delaying, mostly for economic reasons. Finally, in the early spring of 1933, my father and I took Mother to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where

she had a mastectomy. My brother, Chuck, stayed at home to look after the cattle. I stayed with Mother during her long recovery and radiation therapy while my father went home to help Chuck on the ranch. (Chuck was the name that he acquired sometime after high school and is the name used in the remainder of this book.)

While I was with Mother in Rochester, an acquaintance we had made during her treatment sessions died. He was an elderly man, and his daughter became Mother's friend. His body was prepared for burial at a funeral parlor in Rochester, and Mother said I should go there and see his body in the casket. As she put it, she didn't want to be the first dead person I ever saw. That left little doubt that she was not optimistic about her chances of survival. As it turned out, she *was* the next person I saw in a casket.

Her healing was slow and painful. There were no antibiotics in 1933, and serious surgery was always accompanied by infection which seriously delayed healing. After a few weeks she had healed enough to go home, so I took her home on the train, although she still had drainage tubes in her incision. She gradually returned to almost normal, but in about ten months it was obvious she had serious problems. She went this time to Alliance, Nebraska, where the surgeons removed a part of her bladder that was cancerous. She had only partially recovered from that episode when she had to return again to Alliance in May 1934, and it was found that her liver was involved. She didn't last long after that.

I have difficulty recalling Mother during that period. I guess that I was so conscious of her suffering that my brain has drawn a curtain across my memory. I know that she was with us at home, and I remember the principal events we participated in as a family, but I just can't see her in my mind's eye, with one exception. That exception was

one time when I came into the house and saw that she was crying. She quickly dried her eyes and went about her work as though nothing had happened. What she needed at that time was a demonstration of love and understanding, and I should have taken her in my arms and told her that I loved her. But I didn't, although I was hurting terribly. And I have regretted it ever since. She taught me to be undemonstrative, and I also learned the same lesson by observing my father. Too bad. I never had another opportunity to tell her how much she meant to me, but I think she understood.

ALTHOUGH CHUCK AND I didn't "get ahead" economically or educationally during the two years we were out of school, we worked hard at various things on the ranch. Unfortunately those things didn't bring in any money, or at least not much. The dry cycle of weather began in 1931 and became progressively worse in 1932, 1933, and 1934. Dad had invested in a tractor and related tractor-drawn equipment in 1928, borrowing the money to do so by mortgaging his cattle. He raised a good crop of flaxseed the first year and a smaller crop the second year, and not much of anything after that although he kept trying. He had, by this time, given up trying to grow corn and was concentrating on growing oats for cattle feed and winter wheat as a cash crop. The late fall and early spring rains were sometimes sufficient to grow a crop of winter wheat. But the oats, being planted in the spring, withered and dried up when the hot, dry summer winds began to blow. As the oats dried up, the Russian thistles took over. They could survive a severe drought, staying almost dormant until the faintest shower would cause them to spring to life again. During these years we would usually cut the oats for hay with a mowing machine, but the bulk we raked up and put in the stack was much more thistles than oats.

We hauled tractor fuel from the Mule Creek oil field in 55-gallon steel drums. The Mule Creek field had oil-bearing sands only a few hundred feet below the surface. A small refinery was established there that made two grades of distillate. The basic grade was sold for five cents per gallon and the better grade for seven cents per gallon. Our tractor didn't operate well on the lower grade, so we mostly bought the seven-cent grade. Eventually, we couldn't afford even that price for tractor fuel and began using horses to do most of the farming, except for the plowing.

We had plenty of horses, but they were wild and unbroken. They grazed in the Seaman Hills on land that was unfenced, having mostly been homesteaded and abandoned. There was also some government land that had never been homesteaded. We would get the horses in once or twice per year to brand and castrate the colts and to pick out one or two to break. Mostly this was done on a neighbor's place because he had a sturdy round corral. It became obvious to us that if we were to do much with our wild bunch of horses, we needed a round corral, so we decided to build one.

The principle of a round corral was that if you got your wild bunch in the corral and started them going round and round, you could pick out the one you wanted and rope him. If you were good at it, you could catch both front feet in the loop and throw him. Then, by sitting on his neck and holding his muzzle aloft, you could prevent him from getting up while you did all kinds of unpleasant things to him, such as hog tie him, put a halter and strong rope on him by which he could be tied up—even put a harness on him, if necessary. If you tried to do the same thing in a rectangular corral, all of the horses would bunch up in a corner, and the one you wanted always, it seemed, would have his head in the corner. It just wouldn't work.

To make our corral, we found some strong pitch posts on a piece of government land, on a steep slope about 250 feet down from the rim of the remotest part of the East Seaman Hills. The logs had been missed by the homesteaders in their search for posts or, more likely, it had been considered too much of a chore to get them out. They had to be snaked to the top at the end of a long cable to which a team of horses was hitched. It was indeed exhausting work, but it was enjoyable for us because it was so different from the routine to which we were accustomed.

The poles for the corral were made from reasonably straight pines that we found in our hills. They had to be peeled so they would dry and cure before rotting. That, too, was a hard job and a tedious one. In addition to the round corral, we built a rectangular corral into which the horses could be driven before cutting a small number of them into the round corral. We spent much of the winter collecting the materials, and as soon as the ground thawed in the spring, we completed the construction. The corral fence had to be high enough so that a panic-stricken horse couldn't claw his way over the top, and we figured that seven feet would be about right. The posts also had to be high enough so that when a bronco was tied to one and pulled back with all his strength, which always happened, he would be pulling with his neck on a level with his withers. If he was tied too low, he could have damaged himself critically.

A year or so before we built the corral, our wild bunch of horses was stolen from the Seaman Hills. Fortunately, the sheriff found and arrested the culprits. We got our horses back, at least most of them. We also got back one young gelding with a brand on his jaw that didn't match any of the brands in the Wyoming brand book. We kept him because we didn't know what else to do with him. Chuck claimed him and named him Buck. I claimed a beautiful chestnut sorrel filly that

was the granddaughter of the first horse Chuck and I were permitted to ride. I called "my" filly Blaze because of her blazed face.

We used our round corral to capture our special saddle horses and, after halter breaking them, turned them over to Roger Percival to break to the saddle. He was glad to do it for about ten dollars apiece. Better that he should be thrown on the frozen ground than one of us. My filly did just that to him several times. When he returned the horses to us, they could be ridden with only minor risk that they would buck, but they took a lot of additional training to be very useful for working cattle.

We broke a number of workhorses to be used in the fields, and these became very important to us a couple of years later when equine encephalitis swept through the county, killing a good share of the working stock.

During those two years we were out of school, we spent a lot of time in the saddle—moving cattle from one pasture to another, hunting strays, chasing other people's strays out of our pastures, trailing cattle to the railroad, riding a trapline, and riding for other ranchers. It was enjoyable for the most part, but there were some tough days. We helped a neighbor by the name of Olinger gather his cattle and take them to his home ranch one late fall day when it was snowing. Actually the day started out with rain that gradually turned to snow after we were thoroughly wet. We got $1.50 each for our day's work and 75 cents for our horses and were delighted to get it. Cash was almost impossible to come by.

Not long ago I was asked whether I enjoyed riding horses. I answered that I had ridden hundreds of miles, but never for pleasure. It wasn't that riding wasn't enjoyable—it was, but there was always a reason for riding that was associated with work.

Somehow the time passed more quickly than one can imagine. There wasn't much to do in the way of entertainment nor any money with which to do it. Chuck worked part of the time for our aunts and uncle, the Hunters, who needed the extra hand. I always stayed at home and fed cattle in the winter and put up hay in the summers. During both winters I ran a trapline that took me almost a full day to ride. Now and then I would catch a coyote, and occasionally a badger. Coyote pelts were worth between two and five dollars, and a badger might be worth as much as ten dollars. I didn't enjoy trapping and hated to see the animals suffer, but there wasn't any other way to get a little spending money.

AFTER MOTHER'S SURGERY in May 1934 when she was discovered to have cancer of the liver, the doctors sent her home to spend her final days. Dad arranged for a practical nurse by the name of Jane Pfister to stay with us and care for Mother. When Mother's pain became unbearable, Jane would give her an injection of morphine. Her condition deteriorated quickly, and on July 11, I had harnessed a team to the mowing machine and started to the field when Dad intercepted me and said, "We won't go to the field today." Mother died that afternoon. Her sister Myrtle (better known to us as Ida) was with us and drove to the nearest telephone to notify the undertaker to come get Mother's body.

Thus ended Mother's long struggle to "get ahead" against the odds. She never made it, but I know her children led better lives because of her driving energy and desire to get ahead. It is such a shame she could not have enjoyed more of the comforts of life.

THE YEAR 1934 WAS a disaster in a number of ways. There wasn't enough rain to cause the grass to green up in the spring, except in the draws where snow had lain. The cattle lost weight, and gradually the

springs, which we spent our days digging out to supply the cattle with water, dried up. The railroads refused to transport cattle to markets in Omaha and Sioux City unless the freight was paid in advance, because those markets were glutted with cattle that wouldn't bring enough money to pay the railroad freight bill. To make matters worse, the dry spring weather was conducive to the health of the young grasshoppers. Ordinarily, many drown or chill to death during a typical year's spring weather, but they all lived in 1934. There were billions of them to eat the grass right down to the roots, so the cattle had to subsist on coarser plants, which soon disappeared too.

The federal government finally intervened with a cattle-buying program. And there was no alternative to the government's terms but to watch the cattle die on the range for want of feed and water. Government buyers would look the cattle over and decide which ones were worth shipping to central processing facilities to be canned and distributed to feed the poor in the big cities. For those judged worth shipping, the buyers would offer twenty dollars for cows and eight dollars for calves, take it or leave it. Then there were the cows they considered too far gone to be recovered. Owners were reimbursed eight dollars for these cows and four dollars for the calves. They were killed right on the ranch. The buyers, who weren't very good shots, killed about twenty cows in our corral. It sometimes took them two to four shots to bring the animal down. It was tough to watch the slaughter.

When they left, we dragged the carcasses away from the house to where the prevailing winds wouldn't carry the scent back to the house, and we let them rot in a big stinking pile. It was our responsibility to get the rest of the cattle, the government's cattle as they were at that time, to the railroad for shipping. It took about thirty hours in the saddle for Chuck and me to get them there, counting the time it took to collect

them from the hills. We had sold all of our cattle to the government buyers except fifteen heifer calves, which we had kept to start our herd over again. The total amount we received for all of our cattle was just enough to pay off the mortgage against them.

The hospital and doctor bills had grown due to Mother's long illness, and they couldn't be paid because Dad's resources had been reduced to almost zero by the sale of the cattle to the government. It would not be until after WWII, long after we were obligated to do so, that Chuck and I would be able to accumulate enough resources to pay Mother's medical bills. But we did so and were pleased to be able to do it.

CHUCK AND I WERE at a turning point in our lives. With the death of Mother there was little to hold us to the ranch, except our concern for Dad. With the sale of the cattle, there was hardly enough work on the ranch to keep Dad occupied, let alone enough work for him and two grown boys. It clearly was a time for us to move on.

A cousin of Mother's came to her funeral. He served as a country doctor in South Dakota for over fifty years and was past middle age at the time of Mother's death. After the funeral he told Mother's two sisters, Myrtle and Olive, that they should see that Chuck and I got further education. They agreed to help us to the extent that they could. This was a deciding factor in our decision to go to college. We planned to go to the University of Wyoming. I had a tuition scholarship I had never used, and that was further motivation to give it a try.

It may seem odd that we considered times too hard in 1932 to go on to college and then in 1934 when our resources were reduced to almost zero, we decided to go. But the National Youth Administration (NYA) had been formed, and much of its focus was aimed at getting

young people into colleges and universities and out of the supply of the unemployed. We could have joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, but that seemed to lead to nothing. We needed to become educated. We didn't know exactly what that meant, but it was obvious to us that even in the Great Depression those who had college degrees were more often employed than those who didn't.

Anyway, we wanted to give it a try and wanted our friend, Milton DeGering, with whom we had batched during the last two years in high school, to go with us. He was reluctant because of the expenses involved. His mother wanted him to go and considered the resources available to the whole family. Milton had a loving sister, Virginia, who finally was able to help him. She had graduated from high school in 1933 and had attended a teacher-training program at Chadron State College in Nebraska during the school year 1933-34. This qualified her to teach school, and she had found a job teaching in the Hat Creek community. Her wages were forty-five dollars per month, out of which she had to pay fifteen dollars for her room and board, but she believed she could have a few dollars left over to help Milton through his first year in college. Milton realized she was offering him an opportunity to go to school that might slip away forever, so he reluctantly agreed to join Chuck and me. This lovely, selfless girl later became my wife.

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RAMBLINGS

· A RIDE TO REMEMBER ·

ABOUT ALL ONE CAN SAY FOR CHICKENS AND HOGS IS that, properly prepared, both make fine eating. Neither species has much personality, although pigs are now being used as pets—house pets at that. It's true that the ones used as pets are a particularly small breed of pig, but even so I can't imagine cleaning up after one. Maybe they can be paper-trained. Somehow it doesn't seem the same as cleaning up after a puppy.

As for chickens, would you want one as a house pet? Don't laugh—it's been done. When I first moved to Washington, D.C., I lived in a boarding house in northwest Washington that was practically surrounded by large apartment buildings. Every morning, weather permitting, I would see a lady taking her chicken for a walk. She had a leash around the hen's wings and would let her scratch for bugs and pick up scraps of food around the park benches and under the bushes along the walkways. The hen looked like a first-class barred rock hen, and I suppose she laid an egg almost every day. Not such a bad idea, maybe,

to have a source of the daily fresh egg. Better to have a productive pet than, say, a cat that only consumes and gives very little, including love, in return. But I stray from my story.

When I was quite young, we had both chickens and pigs on the farm. Eventually we got rid of both in favor of turkeys, but that wasn't any bargain either. Every evening about sundown Mother would feed the chickens. She would go to the grain bin and scoop up a pan full of wheat and then call the chickens. "Chick, chick, chick, chickee!" Why she called them I'll never know, because as soon as they heard the door to the grain bin open, she would be knee deep in chickens. It was part of the routine, I suppose. The squawking was enough to wake the dead, and the more she hollered, the louder it got. When there was an absolute frenzy of flying feathers, she would scatter the wheat on the ground, and the chickens would begin picking it up. Peace would descend on the barnyard, and it would be time to gather the eggs and do other daily chores.

One evening a sow (for the benefit of city folks, a sow is an adult female hog) had gotten out of the pen and was wandering about the premises when she was attracted by the hullabaloo at the granary and the prospect of grain. She came moseying by to see whether she could participate in the feeding. She was a registered Duroc Jersey hog and she was BIG, well over six feet from snout to tail.

We had a dog at the time that took very seriously his responsibilities to maintain order around the barnyard. He saw clearly that it was a violation of the orderly functioning of a barnyard to have a sow wandering loose. And to have that sow feeding with the chickens was just too much. He took a couple of nips at the heels of the sow, which did a great deal of good in quickening her pace. In fact, she shifted to high gear immediately and focused entirely on what was going on at

her rear. She was in such a hurry that she would have run right over a cut bank if one had been there. There was no cut bank, but there was Mother, who tried to get out of the sow's way but wasn't quick enough. The sow ran right between Mother's legs, catching her snout on Mother's dress hem on the way through. The impact and the speed of the charge caused Mother to fall forward onto the back of the hog, face down. By this time the dog was completely overcome by the lack of order and increased the severity of his attack on the hindquarters of the hog. The sow, not being able to see where she was going, ran in a circle, and Mother clutched at the only handhold she could find, which was the tail of the hog. For some reason she couldn't explain, she hung onto the pan of grain she had in her other hand, spreading wheat in a circle as she went. After about a 270-degree arc she rolled off, the dog pursued the sow out of the area, and things returned to normal.

The sow was returned to her pen, the dog considered it a fine day's work, and Mother had a good laugh at her own expense. There may be a moral to this story, but I can't find it, unless one can conclude that chickens, dogs, and hogs may serve as good pets, but the mix of chickens, hogs, and dogs won't work.

· A BROKEN-DOWN BUS ·

MANY HOMESTEADERS MOVED OUT OF THE HAT CREEK VALLEY during the hard times of the Great Depression, but one family moved in. The father was a harness maker by trade and a bronc stomper for fun. At about this time, we had to break a number of new horses to

replace those lost to sleeping sickness. Our new neighbor proved very useful for that purpose.

Some people have a special talent for communicating with horses. He did. He could take the wildest bronc and in a matter of hours have him responding to his commands. He was also very good at catching a wild one with his rope. From him I learned how to tie a hackamore out of the lariat, which served very well until a halter could be substituted.

A few years after he and his family moved to Hat Creek, I was traveling by bus from Laramie to Lusk. After taking a Greyhound bus from Laramie to Cheyenne, I caught the Black Hills bus. (The Black Hills bus line ran from Cheyenne—by way of Lusk—to Rapid City, following the general route of the Cheyenne to Deadwood stage line of an earlier day.) Doris DeGering was traveling with me to Lusk to attend the funeral of her cousin Kenneth, a high school lad who, had he lived, would have become my brother-in-law.

Riding the Black Hills bus in those days was considerably different from riding the large motorized coaches that crisscross the country today. The Black Hills buses appeared to have been rescued from their final trip to the junkyard and put back in service for one more trip. Somehow there was always one more trip.

The bus we were on gave up the ghost and died south of Dry Rawhide Creek. The driver was able to nurse it off the road and into the sagebrush before its final spasm. He then hitchhiked to Lusk to get a truck to pull us there. That took two or three hours and gave the passengers plenty of time to make friends or enemies, or ignore their surroundings, according to their inclination.

In Torrington we had picked up a young couple that had just been married and were on their way to the Black Hills for their honeymoon.

She wore a pretty yellow dress with a corsage that was wilting rapidly, and he wore his Sunday's best in which he was obviously quite uncomfortable. Since neither of them showed any interest in making new friends, the rest of us moved to the front of the bus or went for a walk to leave them some small measure of privacy.

The day was unusually warm for early May, and I took a walk down a trail road through the sagebrush with a young lad of perhaps seventeen. The sky was as blue as only a Wyoming sky can be, with a few puffy white clouds near the horizon. There was no wind, the newly arrived birds were singing, it was warm enough that one could smell the sagebrush, and it was easy to forget the sad mission that was taking me to Lusk.

When we returned to the bus, the newlyweds didn't appear to want any company, so the young lad and I climbed to the top of the bus and sat among the baggage. From there we could view and enjoy the countryside. To the north of us, the few scraggly trees of Dry Rawhide crossed the highway at right angles, before joining the cottonwoods and willows along the main Rawhide Creek as it swept to the south on its way to join the Platte River. The trees were barren in early May, but the willows showed a faint coloring of green. Between us and the Rawhide was the wide sagebrush flat across which we had been walking earlier. Across the creek the land rose to the east in broken hills, and behind us were rolling hills, pockmarked with sand dunes and blowouts that are typical of the Dry Rawhide area. As with most of eastern Wyoming, the only visible trees were the cottonwoods and willows along the creek. There was not a building in sight, only a windmill on a rise to the south.

As strangers will often do when thrown together under unusual circumstances, the lad and I began to talk. He said he was on his way

to Hat Creek to visit his mother, who was one of the newcomers to the community. I said that I knew the family well, whereupon he confided that he was her son by a previous marriage and hadn't seen her since he was a little boy. His joyful anticipation of the reunion was dampened, he said, by his hatred of his stepfather, whom he held responsible for the breakup of his parents' marriage. It wasn't hard for me to believe that part of the story, because he had his stepfather's square face and distinctive features, the same hair color, and even the same catlike way of moving that made the father such a good man with horses. I regretted that I could not be present when they saw each other as father and son.

The bus driver finally returned aboard a truck. He and the truck driver coupled the bus to the truck by a log chain, and we were dragged into Lusk. That was my destination, so I never knew how the lovebirds got to the Black Hills to start their honeymoon, and I never saw the young man again.

THE COAL CHUTE
· AT LUSK ·

AT ONE TIME LUSK, WYOMING, HAD A COAL CHUTE FOR LOADING coal into the locomotive tenders. It was an imposing structure and dominated the skyline of the town. It was high enough that coal could be dropped from coal cars into bins that then could be opened in order to drop the coal into the locomotive tender. Since all the exchanges operated by gravity, the chute had to be almost fifty feet tall. No other structure in town was that high. The local paper, the *Converse County Herald,* reported the first use of the chute, including some problems

with it. I don't know exactly how the structure came to be built and first used—no one does anymore—but it might have happened as follows; the facts are real but the persons involved are fictitional.

For fifteen years the railroad had served the principal transportation needs of Lusk, but some additions to the service facilities were needed. A water tower had been constructed east of town next to the Niobrara River crossing, and a new ten-foot wooden windmill pumped the water out of the shallow well next to the riverbank up into the wooden tank. It often was said that the wind was one thing you could depend on in Lusk—it always blew. No need to worry about a shortage of water as long as there was water in the well. The wind would put it up into the tank.

There were also plans for a roundhouse east of town, with a "Y" for turning locomotives around. So Lusk would be able to do a significant amount of maintenance work on the locomotives used on the line, such things as repairs to the firebox and replacement of journals and bearings. Chadron would still be the place for heavy maintenance, but Lusk was looking forward to providing any additional services the railroad would require.

There was a problem, however. There was no coal chute at Lusk, so the locomotives would have to be refueled at Crawford, about forty miles to the east, or at Douglas or Casper, which were still farther away to the west. There was simply no way around it. Lusk needed a coal chute, and the leading citizens of the town persuaded the management of the railroad to build one. Hence the feverish construction activity during the summer of 1905.

There are easier places to build a coal chute than Lusk. In mountainous country it was common practice to put a coal chute on top of a cut bank below which the rail line ran. Then, by a bit of

engineering, a siding could be constructed to elevate the coal-laden cars high enough so that they could spill their loads into bins. The bins, in turn, were high enough that they could spill their coal into the tenders of the locomotives that passed below at grade level.

But there was no such convenient cut near Lusk. The land is somewhat rolling, but for the most part the rail line tended to follow the profile of the rolling hills. To find a suitable place for a coal chute that would take advantage of the geography would have taken the coal chute entirely away from Lusk. And that would have defeated the objective of the city fathers. The only solution was to build a structure high enough to put the coal into the locomotive tenders.

This was not a minor task. About fifteen feet of clearance was required to make sure that the locomotive could pass under the chute. Another eight feet or so was needed for the loading chute itself and the gates that made it work. Then the coal bins themselves had to be above that level, and the trestle from which the burden of the coal cars was dumped had to be still higher. And finally a roof was needed over the whole structure to protect it from the weather. Not least of all was the problem of building a trestle, beginning at ground level, up which the coal cars could be pushed by a locomotive. If it was too steep the drivers on the locomotive would spin, and no amount of sand that the engineer could feed onto the rails would give the locomotive traction enough to do its job.

The site chosen for the chute put the start of the trestle east of the depot just across Main Street, with the chute itself just far enough east of there that a locomotive could push the laden cars up the grade. Construction work began in May when ground was broken in a ceremony attended by the division superintendent of the railroad.

It is perhaps unnecessary to state that the structure dominated the skyline of Lusk, but it seems safe to say that the local residents hadn't realized just how high the coal chute would loom. Construction continued throughout the summer and was completed in September. Everyone was anxious to see the coal chute used. On a bright day in September, the division superintendent arrived for the dedication. Although there had been no notice in the local paper, word had gotten around about the big day. And in addition to a number of townsfolk who gathered to watch, there were folks from nearby ranches and homesteads, with saddle horses, and horses and buggies. It was clearly an event to attract notice.

Bill Jenks was the engineer chosen for the tryout. He and his fireman had arrived early and had spotted three carloads of coal on the siding leading to the coal chute. The plan was for the engine to push the cars up the trestle, so Bill's engine was facing the cars. He had cautioned the fireman to have plenty of steam because he didn't want any problem of losing power on the upgrade. Finally they were ready, and all they needed was the OK to go. A brakeman was spotted on the ground near the chute itself to signal Bill when to stop. There was no way he was going to ride the cars themselves up the slope.

When Bill got the word to start, he eased the Johnson bar forward, and the train began to move. The fireman shoveled in a few more loads of coal. He didn't need to, because the pressure was almost up to where it would open the safety valve anyway. But a little coal added greatly to the black smoke that rolled out over the crowd, and he was showing off. The lead car crossed Main Street and began to ascend the trestle smoothly. By the time the third car started to ascend, it was obvious that the load was heavier than had been anticipated. The drive wheels began to slip, and Bill fed some sand onto the track. He continued to

feed sand onto the track all the way up and was slipping badly when the first car entered the shed. As it leveled off, however, and was immediately followed by the second car, the drivers no longer slipped and the whole string seemed to leap forward. Bill shut off the power and applied the brake, but the momentum carried the train to the end of the chute and through the barrier. By this time all of the locomotive's wheels were sliding on the rails, and Bill was just able to stop the train before the second undercarriage of the lead car went over the brink. There he sat, with a carload of coal suspended thirty feet in the air and spilling coal onto the tracks, and looking at a set of wheels on the track below. It was clearly an embarrassment for the railroad, and the superintendent avoided the looks of the crowd of townsfolk, ranchers, and homesteaders enjoying the spectacle.

I don't know what Bill did afterwards, but he certainly could have been forgiven if he had gone across the street to the Northwestern Hotel and hoisted a few.

· BEDBUGS ·

THERE WAS A TIME DURING THE SETTLEMENT OF THE WEST WHEN people who hated to sleep alone needn't have worried—in many homestead houses they would have had plenty of nighttime company. Many, if not most, early ranch and homesteader houses were infested at one time or another with bedbugs. Most housewives waged a continuing war against the bugs, but some others didn't seem to care. Homesteader bachelors for the most part seemed to accept bedbugs as part of the conditions to be endured in proving up the homestead. Also, the ranch

bunkhouse was a prime breeding ground for the little pests, which were carried from ranch to ranch in the bedrolls of the ranch hands.

No home was immune to the risk of a bedbug infestation. By tradition, as well as by necessity, travelers caught in a storm were invited to stay the night—often more than one night. Also, it was common courtesy to offer food and lodging to travelers (usually lone riders) who were overtaken by darkness near the home. If they came from a heavily infested house, they carried bedbugs in their clothing, particularly if they slept in some of their daytime clothing, as many did. Thus, the most fastidious housekeeper could suddenly find herself faced with a rapidly growing and embarrassing population of nighttime pests.

The type of house construction made most houses a haven for bedbugs. The cracks between the boards, protected by tar paper, were an ideal place for them to hide. Also, the pine logs in a log house developed longitudinal or spiral cracks, which were great refuges. The problem was always how to get the bedbugs out.

There were essentially three strategies—offensive, defensive, and "forget it." The offensive strategy required resourcefulness and never-ending diligence. When the walls were made of logs, boiling water was sometimes poured into the cracks. It probably wasn't totally effective because some of the cracks would have extended upward from their opening instead of downward. Many log houses had dirt roofs on top of poles and closely spaced sticks, and the hot water treatment was of course completely ineffective in such cases.

Kerosene was a sure-fire treatment, and an oilcan with a narrow spout was an effective applicator. The smell of the kerosene was a drawback, but after a few days the smell went away. In any case, the smell of the kerosene was probably not much worse than the smell of the

bugs themselves. Various powders and sprays could be bought. Some were ineffective and all cost money—always a scarce commodity.

A successful offensive bedbug campaign required a comprehensive attack on bedding, mattresses, bedsteads, chests and dressers, as well as on the walls, floors, and ceilings of the house itself. The bedding and contents of drawers could be washed and the bedstead and furniture given the kerosene treatment, but the mattresses were another matter.

Few people actually had mattresses. Often, the substitute for a mattress in the winter was a feather bed. In summer it was a straw-filled bag made from bed ticking. The straw was frequently replaced as it became hard and lumpy, so the straw tick could be washed and filled with fresh straw. Feather beds were not so simple. They could be washed but took forever to dry. Usually, the seams were inspected for bugs and the feather bed was hung over the clothesline for treatment by the sun.

A single treatment for bugs never sufficed because some eggs always survived and, unless the treatment was repeated, another infestation occurred. Finally, at the end of the campaign, the housewife with a sigh of relief would await the next infestation, which was likely to occur when the next itinerant cowboy was given a place to sleep overnight.

The principal defensive strategy was to clean up the bed and attempt to keep the bugs out of it with the hope that eventually the pests in the walls, floor, and ceiling would die of starvation. To this end, the feet of the bedstead were sometimes set in tin cans with a little bit of kerosene in them. This strategy was equivalent to circling the wagons, but it seemed to work with some success. Good housekeepers, however, frowned on this strategy.

The pests finally disappeared with the coming of better houses, better insecticides, fewer itinerants, and a reduced number of occupied homestead houses and ranch bunkhouses, which meant fewer breeding grounds. It didn't happen, but I can easily imagine that there could have been a local holiday to celebrate the passing of the bedbug.

· A MATTER OF DEVOTION ·

ONE COLD BUT SUNNY DAY IN THE EARLY 1930s, I WAS DRIVING through South Dakota. A recent snowstorm had laid down about eight inches of new snow, but the highway had been plowed, and chains were unnecessary. At that time, nearly all of South Dakota's highways were graveled, and the snow on the road actually made the going easier than it would have been if it had been dry. There is nothing that can jar your spine like a dry, washboarded, graveled road in which the wind and traffic have worked the gravel into ridges.

I passed through a small town in that interminable area in central South Dakota west of the Missouri River where one rolling hill merges into another and where, outside of the town limits, there isn't a tree anywhere in view. One can find such towns throughout the Great Plains. They cling to existence even after the few business enterprises that were there in the beginning have disappeared. The houses remain, or at least some of them. They are used as residences for workers who commute to distant places to work on construction, or for old people who are living out their lives in the community in which they were born and lived through their productive years.

About half a mile beyond the town I passed through, there was a cemetery enclosed by a barbed-wire fence on a rounded hill that looked like every other hill as far as the eye could see. A few headstones were standing, some tilting at angles, which indicated that the cemetery hadn't been well maintained. A recently dug grave showed the brown earth in stark contrast to the otherwise unmarked whiteness of the recent snow. It was clear that digging the grave had been no easy chore because small frozen chunks of earth covered the grave, waiting for the spring thaw to melt the ice crystals that held them together.

Lying on the grave was a large brown dog. Why was that dog there? My imagination began to work. Was it possible that the owner of the dog was buried there? Perhaps the dog sensed the presence of his owner from the scent of the owner's clothes through the cheap casket that undoubtedly was used for the burial. Thus he might have followed the funeral procession to the graveyard. Dogs have uncanny ability to identify the slightest odors, as is evidenced by their use to locate illicit drugs in tightly closed containers.

Or perhaps the "owner" of the dog was a small boy who had romped over the hills with his pet. Maybe the boy became ill and the dog lay beside his master's bed through a long illness, which was terminated by death. It was a setting to which one could create a wide variety of stories.

My thoughts shifted to a dog that my brother, Charles, and I had when we were children. He was of no particular breed, or rather, he was of a great variety of breeds, and he had been acquired by my parents when Charles was two years old. Charles loved to wander away from home, a serious matter when one considered the rattlesnakes, cactus, and other hazards to a small boy's health. The dog was named Turk for no particular reason. His job was to protect Charles, and he took

his custodial responsibilities seriously. Charles never strayed again, although he tried. Turk would take the seat of Charles' pants in his mouth and sit down, which put a stop to the expedition forthwith.

Turk was useful in many ways. He kept the coyotes away from the chickens and kept the two of us boys away from danger as well. He also had a quality that we really appreciated. If Mother needed to chastise either of us with a willow switch, he would grab the switch in his mouth and not let go. Or if she tried to spank us with her hand, he would gently hold her hand in his mouth and not let go until she gave up the effort.

Eventually, he was run over by a Model T Ford, which broke his back. We fed him by placing a saucer of milk under his nose so he could lap up the milk. He gradually got better, although his back was so crooked that his back legs wouldn't track with his front legs. Even so, he was a better dog than most.

These thoughts circled around in my brain as I was driving the South Dakota roads and made me think that the "little boy" version of the story was the right one. These thoughts occupied my mind for many miles as I topped one interminable hill after another. It occurred to me that someone with a gifted pen could create a short story that ended there on that small patch of bare ground. I would try it, but fiction isn't something I do well. Someone like a Marie Sandoz or a Willa Cather could do it justice. It is sufficient for me just to think about it once in a while.

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· RATTLESNAKES ·

RATTLESNAKES DON'T RANK HIGH ON MY LIST OF DESIRABLE reptiles. To be more honest, I hate them. But it seems pointless to hate a living creature that has evolved over millions of years to take its place in the world's ecology. I'm sure that my attitude toward rattlesnakes is based on fear. Almost nothing can make the tingles run up my spine as effectively as being out on a dark night and hearing a rattlesnake near my feet. Jumping only runs the risk of landing on him or at least close enough to him to make him more excited than he already is. The best policy is to stand perfectly still—but that is easier to say than to do. The person who can stand perfectly still while listening to the rattle of a snake near his feet has nerves of steel. Mine turn to spaghetti.

What a rattlesnake can do to help the balance in nature that another snake with a better disposition can't do escapes me—unless the cardiac arrest that a rattlesnake can cause puts him in a unique position to thin out the human race. I do believe that a rattlesnake has a bad temper. Let me illustrate. When I was a young man working in the fields on the farm, I frequently encountered a rattler when I would pick up a bundle of grain or lift a forkful of hay that had been curing in the sun. Invariably, the snake would coil, start buzzing, and be on the fight. In fact, he would strike at anything that moved near him.

In contrast, on our little farm in Virginia, we had lots of snakes, mostly blacksnakes, but there were a few king snakes as well. Neither species is poisonous. The blacksnakes are especially gentle. One day I was working in the garage with the large door open behind me. I looked around, and there was a blacksnake about five feet long crawling in

through the open door. There was a pitchfork on the wall near me. I took it down, slipped it gently under the snake, and tossed him out the door. Before I could put the fork away, the snake had crawled back in the door and had approached within three feet of me. I tossed him out again. In he came again. This time I tossed him out, followed him, and tossed him again. He slithered right up to me, so I tossed him again and again, moving him away from the garage as I did so. Finally, when I got him about fifty feet from the garage, he slithered off into the grass.

A rattlesnake under similar circumstances would have been on the fight immediately, probably when I first slipped the fork under him. Why does he have such a nasty disposition? Is it because he is armed with poison fangs and the blacksnake isn't? Maybe the same principle carries over to humans who are armed to the teeth, or to nations. It causes one to wonder, doesn't it?

Recently, I saw a piece on television about a husband and wife who have made a lifetime hobby of protecting rattlesnakes. They even go out at night along the highways and move the snakes away from the pavement so they won't be run over. They are, of course, entitled to choose whatever friends they like and I'm sure would be upset to see me steer the car over a rattlesnake on the highway. But I have seen rattlesnakes under the worst of circumstances and can't imagine what the best of circumstances might be.

I'm not the only one whose reflexes get all tangled up when encountering a snake. One time, my wife, Ginny, and I were tramping in the desert in Arizona. We stopped to view the scenery, and I observed a bull snake (perfectly harmless) lying a few feet ahead of us. Ginny was also raised in snake country, and I knew what her reaction would be when she saw the snake. I took her gently by the elbow and told her that there was a snake ahead of us. Her reaction was instantaneous, as I

knew it would be. If I had been a tree, she would have been perched on its highest branch. When you have been taught from the time you are a toddler to "watch for snakes," your reaction quickens greatly.

Perhaps Ginny is doubly spooky because her grandfather was bitten by a rattler one day while he was picking cucumbers. The snake wasn't provoked. He just took a whack at anything that disturbed his protection from the hot sun. Bad temper, again. Her granddad was bitten on the finger and ran about a mile to the Verne Parker place while sucking on the wound. It was a foolish thing to do because it got his blood well stirred up, and the poison he ingested didn't do him any good either. The Parkers killed a chicken and thrust Granddad's hand inside it—a popular folk medicine of the time—and took him the thirty miles or so to town to the doctor. He was quite sick for a while, but he recovered. The small daughter of a friend of mine wasn't so lucky. She was bitten in the face and died.

During some years we saw a lot of snakes and during other years only a few. I never knew why the years varied so. We always killed any we could because they occasionally bit our cattle and horses. Cattle almost always died from a snakebite, but horses seldom did. One summer we killed fifty-two rattlers, which set an all-time record. This counted as only one the female that had a half dozen young inside her. Rattlesnakes are one of the few reptiles whose young are born rather than hatched.

During the drought and grasshopper years of the 1930s, about the only crop we could grow successfully was winter rye. We plowed the ground on a given year, kept it free from weeds, planted rye in the early fall, and harvested the crop the next year. In 1935 we got some late spring rains that produced an enormous crop. The grain wasn't worth much because of the Depression, so we stacked the rye bundles and let

the stacks stand until 1936 when we threshed them. In the interim, the mice found the stacks an ideal place in which to live and reproduce, and, of course, the snakes found the mice a great source of food. Okay, so rattlesnakes *do* eat mice, but so do other, more peaceable, members of the snake family.

The morning we were to start threshing the rye, I stepped across the drive belt from the tractor to the threshing machine onto a bundle of rye that had slid off the stack. The unmistakable buzz of a rattler told me there was a snake under there, and I set a new world record for the standing broad jump. There were, in fact, two rattlesnakes under the bundle. During the day we found six more in the stacks. What made it exciting was that the noise of the threshing machine made it impossible to hear the rattles. By the end of the day, the men on the threshing crew were a *very* alert bunch. There were also a number of bull snakes in the stacks, but we didn't count them. A bull snake has much the same coloring as a prairie rattler, but the pattern of mottling on his back is different. They can make your hair stand on end before you notice that they don't have rattles on the ends of their tails. Because of the noise of the machinery and the fact that most of the snakes, when first discovered, were partly hidden in the rye, the bull snakes contributed their part to the premature graying of the threshing crew.

An uncle of mine and his two sisters (all unmarried) had a large registered Hereford ranch. Summertime was haying time, and, since all of the machinery was pulled by horses, a large crew of hay hands was necessary. The crew slept in the bunkhouse, and I was there visiting one time. One of the young men by the name of Guy, on coming home from the hay field one evening, came across a large bull snake, which he caught and coiled up in a gallon pail. While everyone else was having supper, he took the snake out of the pail and put it in the bed of a boy

by the name of Glen. It was a cool evening, and the snake must have liked the warm bed because he stayed there. Word of the prank was passed around to the rest of the crew. When bedtime came, everyone sat around and talked, waiting for Glen to go to bed. He finally took his pants off and sat on his pillow and talked, endlessly, it seemed. Finally, however, he shoved his feet down under the covers onto the snake. He let out a yell that could have been heard in the next county and, leaping over the foot of his bed, disappeared through the door. Guy, meantime, retrieved the snake and pursued Glen around the yard in his shorts. He finally let Glen back in when the other fellows decided the fun had gone far enough.

An interesting thing about the episode was that Glen might have whipped Guy in a fair fight. But he was so petrified by the snake that he was virtually helpless. Snakes can do that to you.

A horse having recovered from a snakebite becomes very spooky around them and will often mistake a coiled rope for a snake, sometimes with disastrous consequences. We had a rebellious coal-black horse that never acknowledged man to be his master. Every fall, after the haying season was over, we would turn him and others we didn't need out with the wild bunch. The next summer when we needed horses, we would corral the wild bunch, pick out the ones we needed, including a few that we had to break, and let the rest go. Most of the ones that had been worked the previous year would have to be roped the first time they were caught, but they gentled quickly and slipped easily back into their roles as workhorses. Not the big black, however. He would fight us every step of the way and had to be thrown to be harnessed the first time each year. After that we could harness him by tying him to a gentler horse and staying clear of his heels.

One early spring he was bitten by a rattlesnake, and his nose swelled up as big as a water bucket. He clearly couldn't be worked, so we turned him loose, and he gradually recovered from the bite. The next spring he was wilder than ever. We subdued him, however, and worked him successfully during the summer.

We were binding grain one time, pulling the grain binder with four horses hitched abreast. He was one of them. Around sundown we unhitched the horses, led them over to the wagon, and were in the process of unharnessing them when someone tossed a coiled lariat into the wagon box in front of old Black. To everyone else it was a rope, but to him it was a snake. He broke loose and took off across the flats, bucking and kicking at his partially loosened harness. When we finally caught him, the only part of the harness still on him was the collar—everything else had been torn off and scattered across the prairie. I couldn't help but think that his reaction was what mine might have been if someone had tossed a snake in front of me.

During the heart of the Depression and drought in the middle 1930s, a man in Lusk offered to buy rattlesnake oil at a dollar an ounce. Naturally, he became known as Rattlesnake Pete. Presumably the oil was to be used for some medicinal purpose. I never knew what.

We had rattlesnakes in plentiful quantities, and we had no money, so the situation seemed to have the potential for economic exploitation. The fat in a rattlesnake comes in long strings inside the body cavity. Each time we killed a snake, we opened him up and removed any fat we found and rendered it out. The word was that one could only use the heat of the sun to render the fat. To heat it above that temperature would ruin whatever it was in the fat that made it valuable. We carefully followed the instructions, pouring off the oil into a small vial. We didn't get much because it seemed that rattlesnakes suddenly became hard

to find. It's one of the immutable laws of nature that if you are up to your eyeballs in something that you would just as soon not have, and it suddenly becomes valuable, you can no longer find it. I think it is a corollary to the law that says you never have weeds until you try to grow a garden. I've often wondered what would happen if one tried to grow weeds. In any case, we didn't get rich in the snake oil business, but it did keep us entertained for a summer.

The design of a snake interests me. I don't mean the design of his markings, but his engineering design. Here is a creature that has no hands, no feet, no fins, no prehensile tail, and I suspect no brains, yet he seems to get along just fine. If one were to design a biological species that was bound to fail, I think he would design it like a snake. Yet snakes have been around for millions of years and will probably be around for millions more. And I predict that if there are still humans on the earth a million years from now, they will still come close to cardiac arrest when they see a snake. In the contest to see who out-survives the other, I'm betting on the snake.

TOBACCO
· AND LITTLE VARMINTS ·

EVERY FARMER IS FACED WITH A NEVER-ENDING BATTLE WITH little critters that suck the life out of the plants and animals on the farm. An assortment of sprays and poisons is used to keep these parasites at bay.

You can bet that the henhouse of the typical farm will be well populated with mites, which are nothing more or less than tiny lice

that live on the hens and in the wooden rails that make up the roost. When there are plenty of mites, it is customary to catch the hens and turn them upside down while holding on to their feet and to dust them with a powder for the purpose while they squawk and flap their wings. This will eliminate (or severely reduce) the mites on the hens. But the hens will get lousy again when they return to the henhouse unless it is treated too. We often painted the roosts and walls with kerosene, or with a mixture of lime and something else. The strong odor of the kerosene would gradually disappear. It was important to be careful when kerosene was used because it is very flammable. The mites were never bad enough that the henhouse had to be burned to get rid of them!

One year the turkeys we were raising didn't appear to be doing well. They ate enough, but they weren't putting on weight enough to be ready for the Thanksgiving market. We called a veterinarian who came and said that the turkeys had intestinal worms that were sapping their strength. He said that fortunately he had some capsules that would cure the problem, so we told him to go ahead. We caught each bird and poked a pill down its throat with our fingers. When we got about halfway through, we noticed that the turkeys we had treated had begun to wobble and have difficulty standing. We asked the vet about it, and he said not to worry, so we continued until all were treated. By this time about half of the turkeys were stretched out on the ground looking very dead. We thought we had killed our turkey crop!

The vet didn't seem worried, and in an hour or so the "dead" turkeys started stirring and getting on their feet. They were somewhat wobbly, but otherwise okay. We asked what was in the capsules, and he said it was tobacco dust; they were just sick from nicotine poisoning. That gave us an idea for the prevention of the problem in the future. We

bought tobacco dust in about five- or ten-pound bags and mixed a little of it with the turkey feed and never had the problem again.

One winter we had a white two-year-old steer that became infested with blue lice. A blue louse is about the size of the head of a match and gets its name from its color when it is engorged with blood. Our steer had great patches of lice on his neck and flanks where the lice were so dense that he looked blue and white spotted. He became so thin from the loss of blood that we were afraid we would lose him in a bad storm. One characteristic of blue lice is that when they attach themselves to the hide of an animal, they never let go. In that sense, they are like a tick. In the summertime when the sun is hot, they fall off, so one only has to worry about getting them off when the weather is cold.

We remembered the experience with the turkeys and the worms and decided to use tobacco dust on the steer. We steeped a bag of dust on the stove in a pan of water to get a brown liquid. One day when the weather was fairly mild, we took an old broom to use as a brush, roped the steer, tied him to a stout post, and scrubbed him with the tobacco liquid. By the time we were through with him, he could no longer stand up. He was one sick animal. We untied him and left him alone. In a couple of hours he was on his feet and looking fairly normal. He gained weight and by the time the grass greened up, he was as healthy as ever.

It was a graphic example of the effect of nicotine poisoning. I never learned to smoke, and maybe that experience helped me to make that decision.

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· SIMPLE PLEASURES ·

HAVING BEEN DENIED, BY VIRTUE OF HARD TIMES AND THE SLOW rate of penetration of the West by modern conveniences, I am acutely aware of the simple comforts we tend to take for granted. No one who has never carried wood and water for use in the house can possibly appreciate the convenience of hot and cold running water and a gas-fired furnace. And the simple act of turning on a light (and a good one at that) by the flick of a switch doesn't mean much to one who hasn't had the experience of filling kerosene lamps, cleaning their chimneys, and trimming their wicks to get a light no better than that of a 20-watt bulb. It is only when one has sat on a frosted bench with the temperature outside hovering at twenty below zero that the pleasure of having an indoor flush toilet causes him or her to glow with pleasure. A person doesn't really enjoy what he has unless he has done without it. It is as simple as that.

Take a simple thing like toilet paper. Although when I was young there was plenty of toilet paper in the stores, we never bought any. The nickel a roll that it cost could be used for plenty of better purposes. We had to make do with the Montgomery Ward catalog. But even that inconvenience paled into insignificance when, while riding through the badlands and other rough country, nature's call became urgent. When one's only alternatives are a branch of sagebrush, a small rock, a pinecone, or a piece of pine bark, it tends to make one consider the finer things of life.

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· THE MODEL T FORD ·

THE MODEL T FORD HAD AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE SETTLEMENT of the West. Not that it was unimportant elsewhere, but the distances were so great in the West that the increased mobility provided by the Ford was particularly remarkable. A rancher living on one of the creeks north of Pinedale, Wyoming, was over one hundred miles from the nearest railroad. The trip to civilization with a four-horse freight wagon took a week or more. Not often did such a rancher run to the store to buy a loaf of bread. It is true that small towns and country stores were developed to serve the local communities, but all of their supplies had to be freighted in by teams of horses or oxen. A low-cost vehicle that would permit the rancher to do in a half day what would otherwise have taken several days was an opportunity that demanded attention. The Model T's began to sell like hotcakes.

TWO THINGS WERE important in the quick acceptance of the Model T. One was that it was sturdy and would do the job expected of it, and the other was that it was low cost. There were many other automobiles available, some much more powerful and better built than the Model T. But they cost more, often well beyond the resources of the homesteader or struggling young rancher. The genius of Henry Ford in developing methods for mass-producing the Model T's is what made them affordable. Part of their low cost was attributable to their simplicity.

The Model T was strictly no-frills transportation. Until the early 1920s they had no battery, the spark being generated by a magneto

mounted on the flywheel at the rear of the engine and being fed to the plugs from a set of coils in a box under the dash. There were headlamps, but the taillight was a kerosene-burning lantern that had to be lighted with a match. There was no heater, and when the weather was below zero, Model T's were rough to ride in. There were side curtains that didn't fit well, and the windchill was severe when streaking down the road at about twenty miles an hour. Eventually, a windshield wiper was added, but it had to be operated by hand. The roads were universally muddy when it rained, and often the windshield had to be opened, allowing the rain and muddy water to come through unimpeded. The windshield itself was in two sections, in which the upper half could be opened by rotating it on the pins that held it in place on each side. In the winter the frost gathered on the inside of the glass, requiring much scraping in order to see at all.

Starting the Model T in the wintertime was not easy. When the cold caused the oil to thicken, it was difficult to crank the engine fast enough to create the spark necessary to ignite the gasoline in the combustion chambers. There were no multi-grade oils at that time. It was customary to drain the oil after every use and to heat it on the stove and pour it into the engine hot. The coolant was usually heated in the same way. Usually the coolant was plain water, so it had to be drained after each use to prevent freezing and bursting the radiator and the engine block. At a dance held in the winter, it was common to bring along quilts to cover the hoods of the cars and for the men to go out occasionally during the dance to start the engines and warm them up to prevent freezing.

Addition of a battery helped the starting problem some. A switch on the dash would permit the spark to come from the battery for starting, and after starting, it could be switched back to the magneto. It was

an improvement, but still it was a challenge to start a Ford when the weather was really cold.

Melvin Miller, who used his new Ford as a school bus for a time, was bedeviled with the problem of the water freezing in his cooling system. Like many others he tried mixing water with alcohol to avoid freezing, but that didn't work when the weather got really cold. Besides, the Ford didn't have a water pump. The water circulated through the radiator by boiling within the engine block, rising to cover the "plate" in the radiator, and then sinking to the bottom through the radiator coils. When the going got heavy, as it did frequently when there was heavy snow, alcohol would boil away. So he solved the problem, as many others did, by filling his radiator with kerosene, which, of course, didn't freeze. But kerosene is highly flammable, so one had to be careful not to get the engine too hot. One time Melvin was returning home from having delivered the kids to the school, cutting across the pastures where he could find areas that had blown almost free of snow. Occasionally, however, he got into heavy snow when he couldn't find a way around a draw where the snow had collected in drifts. He would use his shovel generously, but it was slow going, and the engine became overheated. He finally got into such heavy snow that he got hopelessly stuck and spent some time gunning his Ford forward and backward to try to clear a trail. Recognizing the hopelessness of his plight, he left the car and struck off on foot for his home, less than a mile away, to get a team of horses to pull the car out. He had only gone a few yards when he heard a roar and, looking back, saw his car go up in flames. So much for using kerosene as a coolant.

One of the exasperating things about using water as a coolant was that, even though warm water was used to start the car, it cooled very quickly, and there was danger that the radiator would freeze

before leaving the garage. It was common practice to place a piece of cardboard in front of the radiator until the car got warmed up or, if the weather was really cold, to leave it there all day. If not enough air came through the radiator core, the engine would boil excessively. If too much air came through, it would freeze. It took some experience to get it just right.

One could make quite a list of features that modern cars have that the Model T didn't have. Some of them were critical. It had no odometer and no speedometer. After all, you could see how fast you were going by simply observing how quickly the scenery changed. There was no temperature gauge, and likewise no oil gauge. Naturally, there was nothing to indicate anything about the electrical system since that system was driven from the magneto. The gasoline tank was under the front seat of the car. To fill it, everyone in the front seat had to get out. Then the front cushion was taken out to provide access to the tank. Some young cousins of mine visited us in Wyoming on their way to California. They were driving a Model T that they had decorated in various ways. On the side it said: "Henry Ford's assets over a billion dollars—mine sets over a gas tank."

The really unique feature of the Model T was its transmission. It differed from the usual transmissions of the day in that there were different sized gears that meshed to produce different gear ratios and hence different speeds. Without going into the mechanics of the Model T's transmission, there were three pedals and a hand brake that controlled it.

The accelerator lever was mounted under the right-hand side of the steering wheel. Pulling it down made the car go faster, and shoving it up caused the motor to idle. On the left-hand side of the steering column was the spark lever. It was used to vary the timing of the engine. When

shoved up, the spark was retarded so that the explosion occurred in the combustion chambers after the pistons had reached the top, and hence after their maximum compression. This is where the spark was set when cranking the engine with the hand crank below the radiator. If the spark was advanced, that is, if the lever was pulled down, the spark would occur just as or before the pistons reached the top, causing the engine to kick back, that is, to rotate backwards. If a kickback occurred when the driver had his hand firmly on the crank, it would toss him some little distance or, worse, break his grip on the crank and whack him on the wrist as it came around in the reverse direction. A number of broken wrists occurred in this way. An engine that had stalled on a hard pull was especially likely to kick, even though the spark had been retarded.

A choke wire was threaded from the carburetor through the radiator core. When it was pulled, the carburetor was in full choke position. When the engine first began to fire, one could open the choke by shoving the wire in the direction of the carburetor.

Every car developed its own idiosyncrasies—some were easy to start, some were hard, some took a lot of choking and some not much. Some would start better with the spark advanced just slightly, and others with that setting would kick like a mule.

My brother, Chuck, and I learned to drive the Ford within a couple of years after we got it, and I was driving it regularly by the time I was twelve years old. We thought our mother should learn to drive, and we were willing to teach her. In fact, we insisted on teaching her. We had two gardens, one close to the house and another about a quarter of a mile away. One day we were at the more distant garden and persuaded her to drive home after telling her more than she needed to know about how things on the car were operated. On the way home we had

to go through a barbed-wire gate, and as she approached the gate she depressed the clutch all of the way, putting the car into first gear. She ground her way through the gate shouting, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!" As driving instructors we were a failure. She never tried again.

THERE WAS A REASON that the gas tank was under the seat of the car. There was no fuel pump, so the gas was fed to the carburetor by gravity, and putting the tank under the seat was about as high as one could elevate it without making it visible. The system worked fine until one tried to drive up a long grade that was so steep that the carburetor was above the level of the gas in the tank. This problem occurred most often when the gas level in the tank was low. One way to solve the problem was to back up the hill. Another method that worked when it was difficult to turn the car around was to remove the seat cushion, blow air into the tank through the small hole in the gas cap, and plug the hole with a matchstick or other small piece of wood. With luck, this would create enough pressure and sustain it long enough to force gasoline into the carburetor until the top of the hill was reached.

The Model T had narrow, high-pressure tires, and they often went flat. Everyone carried a tire repair kit, which was often put to use. The tires were on clinch rims, so they had to be pried off with a set of tire irons. These irons and the jack and the lug wrench were the most used of the tools that accompanied the vehicle. The other tools were a "Ford wrench," which was a slimmed-down version of a monkey wrench, and a pair of pliers. It was said that you could repair almost anything that went wrong with a Ford with a pair of pliers and barbed wire.

Some of the things that made the Model T a good vehicle to introduce the automobile age were that it was inexpensive, it was

simple enough to be repairable on the farm by an unskilled person, and it was slow enough that unskilled drivers didn't kill off the population. Putting a middle-aged homesteader behind the wheel of a vehicle that didn't respond to "whoa" carried some risk with it. During the summer of 1924 when we got our Model T, I went with my father to Harrison, Nebraska, to visit his bank. After completing his business with the bank and buying a few groceries, Dad pulled up to a gas pump. This was the kind of pump in which the gasoline was raised by a hand pump into an overhead glass container, with marks on it to show how many gallons were withdrawn. The pump was under a roof that extended across the driveway, and Dad was going too fast when he pulled off the street. The Model T was hard to drive anyway, and Dad pushed the left hand pedal all the way down, putting the car in low gear. He ground his way into a concrete post that held up the roof yelling, "Whoa! Whoa!" He bent the front axle of the car and didn't do much other damage, since there was no bumper anyway. He got a blacksmith to straighten the axle and dab some black paint on it—thank God all Fords were black! We were soon on our way home. Dad never mentioned the incident at home. Since he didn't, I never did either.

MY FATHER BOUGHT a Model A Ford in 1927. It was a sedan (only a very few Model T's were sedans), and it had such things as a more powerful engine, balloon tires, and a standard transmission. The gas tank was positioned in front of the dashboard between the engine compartment and the inside of the automobile. This avoided the problem of stalling on hills since the tank was high enough to feed gasoline into the carburetor, regardless of the steepness of the road. There were no government regulations concerning safety. If there had

been, one can suspect that this positioning of the gas tank might not have been approved.

The Model A was eventually traded for a Ford V-8 in 1937 and that one for another in 1939, and so on.

REFLECTIONS ON THE · ADVANCE OF TECHNOLOGY ·

ON A TRIP TO SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, I GOT TO THINKING ABOUT science and technology. One has plenty of time to think on a flight that is nonstop from Los Angeles to Sydney. Here I was, flying at an altitude of over seven miles at the rate of just under six hundred miles per hour, in an aircraft that would hold about a fourth of the population of my hometown, Lusk, Wyoming. We were being guided by a navigation system that would bring us unerringly to our destination. I could make a telephone call from the aircraft if I wanted to. Arrangements for meeting the person in Australia I was to do business with had been made by transmission of a facsimile of handwritten notes back and forth that were transmitted in a few seconds by way of a satellite that was hanging above the Pacific. It wasn't going anywhere—it was just hanging there. Or rather, it wasn't going anywhere relative to the surface of the earth, but it was hurtling at a fantastic speed through space relative to any point in the solar system not tied to a specific location on the earth. Had we been on the ground, we could have watched programs beamed to us from that same overhead satellite, and if an important event happened anywhere in the world, we would not only have known about it in

a matter of minutes, but also would actually have been able to see what was going on at the site.

All of these things are taken as a matter of course by young persons born in the age of technology, but believe me they are marvels to someone who was born and raised in an environment without electricity, without a telephone, without running water, and with only horse-drawn vehicles for transportation. It isn't just that advancement in science has made such things possible. The real marvel to me is that technology has made it possible for such things to be experienced by the common man. Perhaps I am fortunate in having witnessed the introduction (or at least the common availability) of technological marvels. Having done so, I think I am not only more impressed by them, but I enjoy them more.

I was four years old when I saw my first airplane, and it created an image in my mind that is indelible. My family spent the winter of 1919-20 in Florida because of my father's health. It turned out to be a good deal for us economically, because his health was so much improved that he raised a field of cabbage there and sold it, making more than enough money to pay for the trip. But I stray from my point. We were swimming near Miami Beach, when an airplane appeared from the south at an altitude of not more than two hundred feet. We could see the pilot plainly since there was essentially no cockpit on the aircraft—just sticks and struts. The wings were, of course, covered with some kind of fabric. The pilot sat between the two wings on the left-hand side of the engine in something like a chair. There is almost an exact replica of the aircraft in the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

It is surprising that such a primitive aircraft should have been flown as late as 1920. After all, much more sophisticated airplanes had been used in World War I, and many were being used after the war in flying

circuses and in barnstorming around the country. I just had never seen one. I'm glad that the first one I saw was so primitive. It helps to put into perspective the progress that has been made since.

It was twenty-five years later that I took my first airplane ride, and that was on a military aircraft from Hamilton Field, California, to Hickam Field, Hawaii. It was an impressive ride for a first one—over twelve hours overnight, arriving in Hawaii in the early morning. The aircraft was a C-54, the top of the line operated by the Air Transport Command. Instead of the bucket seats along the walls that I became accustomed to in later flights around the Pacific, this plane had four seats across, with an aisle down the middle. It even had carpeting on the floor. It was first class all the way. All but about three or four of the passengers were Army nurses, returning to Okinawa from having accompanied wounded soldiers home on hospital aircraft.

It was a long way technologically from the first aircraft I had seen on the beach in Florida, but it was also a long way from the B-747 jet aircraft I was riding on my way to Australia when I started thinking about technological advancements. The casual attitude with which modern-day passengers undertake overseas flight contrasted sharply with the trepidation with which it was undertaken in 1945. Before embarking on the flight from Hamilton Field to Hickam Field, all passengers had to view a film on procedures for ditching at sea. Then they had to put on parachute harnesses (the parachutes were stowed under the seats) and finally, over everything else, their Mae West life preservers. As they filed on board, they were checked to see that everything was in order. In retrospect, it seems that such precautions were excessive, even in 1945. But during the course of the war in the Pacific, they probably saved some lives.

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THE TELEPHONE IS ANOTHER thing that we take for granted, but if one has grown up knowing that the only way to get a message to someone else is to travel there by foot, horseback, or wagon, the convenience of the telephone can be viewed in its true perspective. The nearest telephone to our ranch was at the Jacob Mill ranch, about four miles away as the crow flies (but nothing much else could get there in a straight line). That is where my father went in emergencies, such as the time he needed to talk to the doctor when Mother was desperately ill with pneumonia resulting from the flu epidemic in 1918. The snow was deep and he could only travel by horseback, leaving his sick wife and two small sons for the hours it took to make the trip. It would never have occurred to him not to make the trip, but I'm sure he would have been happy to have had the opportunity to pay an outrageous price for the convenience of a telephone at that time.

The telephone lines that served the Hat Creek community at that time were cooperatives in which a few neighbors would organize the line, put up the wire and the poles, and connect to the Bell telephone system in Lusk. Costs of putting in the system were shared (as was the labor of setting posts and stringing wire), and the subscribers on the "line" paid a fee to defray costs. The central office at Lusk connected calls with the outside world. Calls from neighbor to neighbor on the same line did not go through the central office. Each subscriber had a coded ring, such as three long rings and a short ring, which notified the subscriber that a call was on the line for him or her. The rings were made by the calling party by holding down the receiver and turning a crank on the side of the telephone box—about three cranks for a "long" and half a crank for a "short." Reception wasn't always good, particularly when the dry cell batteries in the telephone box that powered the system got weak. Reception further deteriorated when people other than the called

party listened in to hear what was going on. This became a favorite pastime for some of the neighborhood women. I hasten to say I'm not picking on the women. They just were more often near the telephone while their husbands were doing outdoor things. In fairness, one can't fault them for it because it was about the only way they had of hearing any news.

If one wanted everyone on the line to listen, he rang a long series of short rings. When the subscribers lifted their receivers and listened, he would convey whatever message was on his mind, such as a prairie fire, a death in the neighborhood, or an announcement of a social function to which everyone was invited. Even though we had never had a telephone, I became aware of the basics of their operation. It wasn't until I started dating Virginia that I made much use of the telephone. Her folks had a telephone, and I, being in Lusk or at Hat Creek buying things for the ranch or getting the mail, would call her. I could hear the clicking noises as the receivers came down along the line, so I knew that anything I might say would be heard by a large portion of the community. It did have the advantage of causing telephone conversations to be rather circumspect.

When my brother and I went to live in Lusk to attend high school, we worked after school and evenings for George Gibson, owner of the Midwest Hardware Store. George was a creative merchandiser and always had some kind of promotion going. One time he got in a big shipment of bedsprings. Many country folks slept on straw ticks or feather beds supported on bedsprings; there were no box springs. The particular brand of bedsprings that George had plenty of was Red Rooster, and this gave him an idea.

George ran an outrageous ad in the local weekly paper about the merits of his bedsprings, an ad that came close to the bounds of

propriety in the views of some of the local matrons. Then he organized a contest. He put a big red rooster in the window of his hardware store and offered a prize for the person who could come the closest to guessing the number of kernels of corn the rooster would eat in a given period of time. This too was advertised in the paper. But George wanted to make sure that the country folks were aware of the contest, and this is where I came in. I was to call the telephone operator and ask her to ring each rural line with their community ring—a series of short rings. When a sufficient number of them got on the line, I was to say in a loud voice, "Watch for the red rooster" and then hang up. If I didn't hang up quickly enough, they would begin asking what I meant, and I was not to say. I hated the assignment with a passion. I felt certain that when each of them came into the store, they would recognize me as the idiot who had taken them away from doing something useful, just to tell them to watch for the red rooster. I was sure that the promotion would be a loser, but George sold all his bedsprings. It was my first and last experience with telephone promotions.

I WAS NINE YEARS OLD when my father bought his first Model T Ford. It is remarkable how our lives changed with that acquisition. But, strangely enough, the Model T raised transportation to a new plateau from which there has only been slight change since. Of course automobiles have become fancier, speedier, and more comfortable, but their basic concept hasn't changed much.

Trucks may be another matter. When I was small, machinery and equipment were hauled to the oil fields by trucks equipped with hard rubber tires and chain drives. When the roads were muddy, however, trucks were helpless, and horses were frequently used to haul supplies to drilling rigs—and often to haul the trucks out of the mud. A load of

a few tons was a big load for a truck of World War I vintage. And those trucks didn't have much in common with the behemoths that terrorize the highways today with loads of thirty tons or more hurtling down the highway at sixty or seventy miles per hour.

Although there have been improvements in the internal combustion engine, the big changes that have affected automobile and truck transportation have been the improvements in tires and highways. When we first got our car, we considered ourselves fortunate to make two or three trips to Lusk and back without having a flat tire. Now, one expects to drive hundreds of times that far without a flat.

THE COMPUTER CHIP impresses me more than any other technological advancement. That may be a consequence of having spent most of my life as a statistician and having observed how my professional world has changed as the speed and capacity of computers have increased. Mathematical problems I couldn't have dreamed of solving as a student are now commonplace and can be accomplished in fractions of a second. Electronic gadgets guide our airplanes, switch our telephone calls, feed motor fuel to our automobile engines, and make it possible for us to send out a space vehicle that shows us detailed pictures of distant planets. I enjoy the things that modern electronics technology gives me, but as far as understanding it is concerned, I'm still trying to understand the vacuum tube.

Speaking of vacuum tubes, I still recall what a marvel it was to be able to listen to a radio, which somehow transmitted speech and music across thousands of miles of nothing and reproduced it almost instantly. In eastern Wyoming where I grew up, radios reached us in the middle 1920s. Our country school had two classrooms and two teachers, and in their "teacherage" which stood near the schoolhouse, they had a radio.

On March 4, 1925, they brought their radio into the schoolhouse, separated the headset into two pieces so that two children could listen at one time, and let us listen to the inaugural address of Calvin Coolidge. I don't remember what old Cal said—not much, I suppose. His speeches tended to be short and to the point—but I remember the incident. As with all radios in the rural areas at that time, the radio set was small, but it was hooked up to an amazing set of batteries, including a six-volt wet storage battery and a half dozen other batteries of assorted sizes. (Another twenty-five years would pass before rural electrification became common in eastern Wyoming.)

At about that time radios started becoming more common. When a homesteader bought one, he was happy to share it and would invite neighbors to spend the evening listening to it, a tedious process with only a set of headphones. But "loud speakers" soon came onto the scene, and the host family and their guests could all enjoy listening to the radio. Reception was good in the clear Wyoming air in winter months and so bad in the summer that most radios weren't operated then. On a cold winter night it was relatively easy to pick up stations in New York, Winnipeg, Chicago, San Francisco, and Del Rio, Texas. The airwaves weren't cluttered with a lot of signals from competing stations. Also, the government hadn't put a lot of restrictions on the strength of the broadcast signals. One can't do as well now since there is much tighter control on broadcasting power.

It was an exciting time, and the rural families enjoyed the fellowship of experiencing this wonderful marvel together.

THINKING ABOUT TECHNOLOGY leads me to observe that we are increasingly dependent on each other. In pioneer days, people were dependent on each other for defense, for support in emergencies, for

mutual assistance with jobs too big to be done alone, and for social togetherness. But, for the most part, they raised their own food, cut their own fuel, made much of their own clothing, and were self supporting. Their reliance on each other was highly personalized. They could see and touch the persons who gave them assistance. Today, people do almost nothing for themselves. Their clothing is made by people from all over the world. Their food comes prepackaged, precooked, often frozen or dehydrated, and often would be totally unrecognizable by the farmer who produced its ingredients. Fuel comes through electrical wires or underground pipes. Water comes when a tap is turned. Almost no one carries it in a bucket from a well. If the furnace quits or the TV won't work, someone else fixes it. Defense is provided by a police force and a military establishment that the individual rarely sees. There is nothing personal about people's dependence, but the degree of dependence is staggering. It makes one wonder what would happen to the human race if suddenly some of the principal elements in the network were destroyed. Would the human race survive? I suppose so, but I think it would slide back a few pegs to where dependence would be more personal.

It is frightening to think how little we know about the construction, maintenance, supply, and servicing of the things that we use daily. The libraries are full of information about specific details of technology, but there is no place one can go to find out how to make a jet aircraft, or an automobile, or a computer. People don't ask for such information. It is stored in the minds of workers in bits and pieces. Each one knows a lot about a little, but no one knows how to put it all together. If a virus disabled every worker in the computer industry, it would be generations before we reached our present level of sophistication in that area.

Technology has some drawbacks. As one interested in history, I realize that we are losing the written connectives that portray our lives. If a person living in New York wants to communicate with Mama in California, the tendency is to pick up the telephone and talk. That is fine, but there is no record of the conversation, as there would have been if a letter had been written and responded to. Thus, there is no historical trail to follow. Perhaps this is not a serious drawback, but it could be important to those doing historical research in the future. After all, history is greatly enriched by understanding what was going on through the eyes of the "small people," those whose names never appear in headlines. I cite the number of excellent histories of the Civil War, which are based almost entirely on personal correspondence.

One can't predict where science and technology will lead us. Undoubtedly they will produce commodities and services that we aren't even aware that we need yet, but that will be commonplace and considered necessities in the future. In the meantime I will continue to tend my garden—something I understand and which (except for the introduction of plant genetics) hasn't changed dramatically over the years.

· TOM SUN ·

ONE COLD WINTER DAY, GINNY AND I WERE DRIVING FROM Laramie to Riverton, a trip we made often because my father lived there and was not in good health. We were perhaps ten miles north of Rawlins when we encountered an old man, dressed in heavy and well-worn clothing, standing on the shoulder of the road. About eight

or ten inches of snow covered the ground, and much of it was on the move before a brisk wind from the west. Huddled next to the man was a big shepherd dog. There wasn't another car in sight, nor any sign of habitation. Only one ranch was visible in good weather along a stretch of twenty miles or more, and, with the blowing snow, we couldn't have seen a ranch if it had been only a quarter of a mile from the road.

Naturally, as was and still is the custom in Wyoming, we stopped. The old man said he wanted a ride to the junction at Muddy Gap, about thirty miles away, so we rearranged the passengers in the car—my wife and the two kids took the back seat, and old whiskers got in front on the passenger side with the big dog between his knees. I couldn't imagine where he had come from, so I asked him how he came to be on the road in such miserable weather.

"Oh," he said, "I got my Cadillac stuck in the snow over there," waving in the general direction of the long ridge west of the highway, "and I walked out to the highway to catch a ride."

Well, I thought, maybe so, but there was so much snow on the ground that a Cadillac would have been hopelessly stuck a few yards of the road.

As he began to warm up, he became quite chatty, and he volunteered that his name was Tom Sun and he had various bands of sheep here and there in the general area. I wasn't familiar with that part of Wyoming, but I vaguely remembered that Tom Sun was an early-day rancher in the vicinity of the Sweetwater River. I didn't press him for additional information, since I was already getting more than I could conveniently swallow.

He began to talk about his dog and to brag about how his dog could chase antelope. As we approached Muddy Gap, the road became more sheltered, and we saw a herd of antelope on a hillside near the road.

"Stop the car," he said, "and I'll show you how the dog can chase antelope."

He started to open the door while I was driving at about fifty miles per hour. I slammed on the brakes, and we came to a stop on the shoulder of the road. By this time he was out of the car, telling his dog to go get 'em. The dog had far better sense than his master and took a halfhearted run at the antelope, which quickly disappeared over the hill. When the dog returned to the car, we reloaded and continued on our way to the junction at Muddy Gap. When we got there, the man asked to be let off at the combination general store, bar, filling station, and restaurant, which constitutes all of Muddy Gap, and we pursued our trip westward.

I looked up Tom Sun in a book about the history of Wyoming and found out that he was indeed a pioneer rancher in that area, but he had been dead for many years. Not believing in ghosts, I stopped at the Junction on the way back to Laramie a few days later and inquired about the old man.

The proprietor of the place said, "Oh, he's just an old sheepherder. Crazy as a bedbug, but harmless."

A Cadillac, indeed! I concluded that he must have bedded his sheep down somewhere and decided to leave the wagon for a trip to the Junction for a little companionship. He must have had his sheep in a sheltered spot where they were unlikely to stray, because most sheepherders take their responsibilities very seriously and will undergo extreme hardship to save their sheep in a storm. The drifting snow would not have qualified as a storm since the sun was shining above the sifting snow. His sheep were undoubtedly quite safe until he caught another ride back from the Junction. I wonder what alias he used for the return trip.

THE REAL TOM SUN was born Thomas de Beau Soleil in Vermont, the son of French-Canadian descendants. After his mother died when he was eleven years old, he ran away from home and had many difficulties as a youth. Mostly, he trapped beaver in western streams. Being impressed with the Sweetwater area, he established a ranch on that stream a short distance above Devil's Gate, a spectacular canyon that was cut by the river through the eastern tip of the Granite Mountains—a famous landmark on the Oregon Trail.

Tom, along with five others, was implicated in the hanging in 1889 of a man and woman whose primary misdeed was that they filed homestead claims, totaling 640 acres, on public domain land. That land was being used as part of the ranch of Albert Bothwell, another rancher. The homesteaders' presumed misdeeds (none of them substantiated) included stealing cattle, living together when not man and wife, and, on the part of the woman, prostitution. The hanged couple were James Averell and Ella Watson. The *Cheyenne Daily Star*, in reporting the hanging, confused the woman, Ella Watson, with a notorious woman in Bessemer (near Casper, Wyoming) by the name of Ellen Maxwell, known as Cattle Kate. Cattle Kate had a house of prostitution and was suspected of trading favors for unbranded calves, hence her popular name. The error in identification, having appeared in print, was picked up by all of the Wyoming papers, and all of the transgressions of Ellen Maxwell were laid at the door of Ella Watson. The details of the tragedy are given in George W. Hufsmith's *The Wyoming Lynching of Cattle Kate, 1889* [High Plains Press, Glendo, Wyoming, 1993].

In fairness to Tom Sun, there is evidence that he protested the hanging, but he presumably was overcome by the intensity of the wrath of the other parties. A grand jury was convened to determine whether the six implicated ranchers should be charged with the crime, but a witness

by the name of Frank Buchanan, who reportedly saw the crime being committed, fled the country prior to testifying. It was rumored that he had been bought off by the cattlemen. Thus, the grand jury felt that they could not indict the lynchers.

The incident was perhaps the worst black mark against the cattlemen of Wyoming, who had so much power that they ruled the courts and were at liberty to harass the homesteaders and sheep men at will. The severity of the crime exceeds even the Johnson County War of 1892—see A.S. Mercer's *The Banditti of the Plains* [The University of Oklahoma Press, 1954]. It may, in fact, have encouraged the members of the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association to take the excessive measures reported in that book.

Tom Sun continued to live in the Sweetwater Valley throughout his life, and his descendants still live on the home ranch. It appears that the old sheepherder, in choosing the name of Tom Sun as his alias, picked more than an ordinary person.

· SAM ·

SAM WAS A PIANO PLAYER. NOT THE KIND OF PIANO PLAYER THAT can bang out a few tunes at a party for people to sing to badly, but a graduate of the Julliard School—a pianist of the first order, who used S. Hurok to arrange his tours. But somehow he did not feel fulfilled. His reviews were good, but not sensational, and people did not stand in line to get tickets to his concerts. It bothered him that his audiences didn't share his enthusiasm in his ability to play flawlessly. It seemed to him

that they just didn't give a damn. He was a person who wanted to be appreciated, and it just wasn't happening—at least in his perception.

He wanted so desperately to perform that he contacted high school principals throughout the Midwest, offering to give free concerts. His credentials were such that the school administrators jumped at the chance to provide a first-class cultural experience to their students free of charge. This, of course, was not a good way to make a living. He began to rethink his career alternatives and decided that it might be wise to get a doctor's degree in educational administration to provide him with a steadier income.

That's when I met him. I was teaching a course in statistics and research methods for graduate students at the University of Wyoming. Although they came from a variety of fields, more education students took the course than students from any other field. I had designed the course and had gotten it approved by the curriculum committee. It was proving to be quite successful in the sense that what the students learned could be applied to their research projects and used in the preparation of their theses.

Sam was bright and had no difficulty with the subject matter. In addition, he was something of a wag and kept things lively in class with his comments on a variety of subjects. At the time, I was working on a draft of my book on statistical methods that eventually was published by McGraw-Hill. I used parts of the draft material to substitute for a textbook in class. Just as the bell rang to end the final day of class prior to the final examination, Sam leaped to his feet, shouted "Author! Author!" and led the class in cheers. It was a typical performance for him, to be the center of attention and the generator of friendly feelings in the classroom. His attitude was contagious, and never have I enjoyed a class more.

At about this time (1959) Carnegie-Mellon received a grant to do a one-month summer institute for faculty members of colleges of business administration. Participants would include accountants, business management faculty, and statisticians. The institute was to be held at Williams College in the Berkshires. It sounded so good that I applied and was accepted.

When Sam heard about it, and the fact that we were planning to visit New York on a weekend, he insisted that we stay at his apartment in Greenwich Village. We gratefully accepted his invitation. The day that we were to arrive in New York was determined, Sam told us where we could get a key to his apartment, and Ginny and I and our two kids left for Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

The institute was interesting. The objective was to examine how organizations form and how they change over time, and how leaders are chosen. A number of projects helped in conveying the principles involved. One class exercise really impressed me. Everyone completed a simple questionnaire concerning attitudes and values, and the scores were plotted on a chalkboard. There were three clusters. The management students were in one cluster, the accountants in another, and the statisticians in a cluster near the middle. There was almost no overlap. The teaching staff said that the test was based on one designed to screen for Nazis in Germany after World War II. They did not reveal which cluster would have been most likely to be Nazis.

On the weekend that we were to go to New York, we drove down Friday afternoon, arriving in the early evening. We got the key where Sam had directed us and went to his apartment. Everything was in order, including a large bouquet of fresh flowers. There were two grand pianos in the apartment, which was divided into two sections by a folding wall. There were telephones everywhere, including inside the clothes hamper

in the bathroom. The kids made a game out of finding all the telephones. We concluded that Sam didn't want to miss a possible engagement just because he had missed a telephone call.

On the table were four tickets to *My Fair Lady*. We parked the car where Sam had arranged a slot for us and prepared to enjoy the weekend. We enjoyed the theater enormously. Our tickets were in the center section of the orchestra, about four rows back. We were so close to the stage it seemed that Julie Andrews was singing directly to us.

Meantime, there was no sign of Sam. We never saw him at all while we were in New York. He had arranged everything to maximize our pleasure and then stepped out of the picture.

Sam didn't complete his program at Wyoming. Either he or the university decided that the program was not for him. The next time we saw Sam was a year or so later. We had been to Lusk to visit relatives and were driving into Cheyenne from the north. There was Sam, alongside the road thumbing a ride. Unfortunately, he was headed the wrong direction for us to give him a ride. We stopped to visit with him briefly. It was obvious that he was embarrassed to be hitchhiking. We offered to take him anywhere he wanted to go, but he declined. The wind was blowing hard, as it usually is in Cheyenne, and it was difficult to carry on a conversation.

In my mind I have an image of him, leaning against the wind, still searching for an audience that would appreciate his talent. We never saw him again. I wish this story had a happier ending.

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· THE GAME OF LIFE ·

DEATH SITS ON A ROCK ON A HILLSIDE ABOVE A BEAUTIFUL VALLEY. The valley is lined with wildflowers, birds, and trees, and a rippling stream runs through it under a blue sky with white fleecy clouds. It is beautiful, but it is Death's domain. Below him on the hillside is a hole into which people are dropped occasionally by him and who disappear permanently from the scene. He plays a game with them—a game that he never loses—he makes all the rules. The game is scored by the length of time the person can avoid being dropped into the hole. For every event in a person's life, Death shuffles a pack of cards and draws one. You either lose or get bypassed for another try at a later time. The risk of loss varies greatly from event to event, but only Death knows the true probabilities. Death is gleeful when the risk is high.

Everyone is required to play the game—there are no excuses—and eventually everyone loses. Death is neither fair nor impartial. He doesn't have to be. He may drop a newborn baby into the hole, or save the baby and drop the mother. He doesn't care. Someone may avoid him for over a hundred years, but eventually Death wins.

Some believe that when one goes into the hole, he or she follows one of two paths. One leads to everlasting pleasure and the other to never-ending agony. Others believe that bodies dropped into the hole emerge at some other time in perhaps another life form and that the cycle is repeated over and over until at last Nirvana (whatever that may be) is reached. Still others believe that nothing happens. Death doesn't care. His job is done when he tosses someone in the hole.

When I was born I was not well, and Death sat on his rock and smiled his macabre smile. But I survived the shuffle of the cards, and Death said, "Ah, well, I'll see him again." Life is hazardous for a child growing up on a ranch. Death shuffled his cards every time I had an encounter with snakes, wild cattle, and wilder horses. Each time, Death smiled and said, "Maybe next time." I didn't have typhoid fever or diphtheria but had nearly all the rest: whooping cough, chicken pox, measles (two kinds), scarlet fever, and mumps. Each time, Death shuffled his cards, but my card didn't come up. During my adult life Death shuffled his cards every time I drove a car, or flew in an airplane, or did anything else hazardous. Each time he smiled and said, "Not yet, but I'll get him later." When I joined the army, Death rubbed his hands and said, "Maybe now." But I never saw combat. Death sat on his rock and waited. He was jubilant when I had my heart surgery. He said, "It won't be long now." But when I survived he sat on his rock and said, "Soon."

Random chance in shuffling the cards has made it possible for me to avoid the inevitable longer than I had any right to expect. Logically, I should have been in the hole years ago. Members of my family, close friends and associates, and others I care about have preceded me. But here I am, still in the valley enjoying the flowers and the scenery, although I can no longer climb the slopes. I am grateful for every reprieve because I am enjoying it.

Sometimes I see Death looking at me as he shuffles the cards. What does he have in mind? Nothing good, I'll bet. When my card comes up I hope I can drop in gracefully and with as little fuss as possible. I can't cheat Death, but at least I can deprive him of the glee he would experience to see me dropping—kicking and screaming—into the hole.

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Humorous, educational, philosophical, sometimes tragic, this memoir traces the rise from the uncompromising life of a homesteader's son to the world of professor, and founder and CEO of the premier survey research company in America. Includes tales of Wyoming.

Out of Wyoming: a memoir