



Troop 205

Campfire stories

Updated February 2007

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How to tell a story:

These are general guidelines to try. It will take some trial and error to find what works for you. I've seen things work great for someone, but I have been unable to make them work. I have been able to adapt them and make them work.

WHEN TO TELL STORIES

- Only do it at camp, and not all the time. It keeps them wanting more.
- Never repeat a story. Never read a story (exception: the diary story that was posted earlier- great idea!). [At Webelos Resident Camp, I saw a story read with very good results. It was Cub Scouts by Patrick F. McManus. This is an other case of what works for you.]
- Wait for it to be very dark and the campfire to be nothing but embers. Insist on complete silence. When the story is over end the campfire. Send the scouts to bed immediately (or after a quick mug up).
- Never tell them "it's just a story". If they ask if it's true, try lines like "What do you think?"

CHOOSING A STORY

- The story needs to fit both you and your audience. It should suit your personal style and outlook on life. If you aren't comfortable with a story or a set of funny lines, your material won't go over well as part of an entertaining speech.
- Consider the age of the audience. Are your listener's adults, teenagers or children? Different age groups prefer different types of stories.
- Consider the type of audience. Are your listeners boys, girls, men women?
- Consider the social and intellectual levels of your listeners. Generally, younger children enjoy stories with plot and action. Older children and adults like stories with more humor and interplay with characters. All ages enjoy rhythm and movement of event in stories. Stories should be well paced, with few slow and no dull spots.
- You also need to consider how your story will fit with other events. For example, if the story will be used at the beginning of a campfire, it should have a lot of excitement and energy. If the story will be used near the end, it should be quieter and more thoughtful.
- Stories are usually better told than acted out. If you act them out they become more of a skit. Gestures -- if they are natural -- add to the story.
- You may, on occasion, have to adapt your gestures to fit the size and nature of your audience. The larger the audience, the broader and slower your gestures should be. Young audiences are usually

attracted to a speaker who uses vigorous gestures, but older, more conservative groups may feel irritated or threatened by a speaker whose physical actions are too powerful.

TELLING THE STORY

- Consider the length of your story and appropriateness to the audience and occasion.
- You've got to avoid swearing and inappropriate topics. Event leaders **MUST** approve all stories in their entirety before they are presented at an event.
- Practice the story. Make sure you know the words and timing. Practice volume also!
- Introduce the story with the name of the story. State it clearly. Sometimes going right into the story even works better.
- Be conscious of your hands. **DO NOT** put them in your pockets or cross them on your chest.
- Volume is important. Many good stories were not successful because the teller could not be heard clearly.
- Your demeanor will carry over into the group. If you have no energy, your audience will not either. If you act like your not enjoying the story, the audience will not enjoy it.

WHY THE CHIPMUNK HAS BLACK STRIPES

Once upon a time, long ago, the animals had tribes and chiefs just like the people. Porcupine was the head chief of all the tribes because nothing could ever get near enough to hurt him.

One night, Porcupine sent out word calling all the animals together for a great council of the tribes. He had a very important matter for them to consider, he said. From far and wide, from treetops and holes in the ground, the animals came hurrying in answer to their chieftain's summons.

They built a great blazing council fire in the forest and seated themselves around in a big ring. Then Porcupine stood up to address them. His quills quivered and gleamed in the firelight, and for a minute or two, he did not speak. He looked very much worried indeed.

"I cannot decide," he said, finally. "I cannot decide whether or we shall have night or daylight all the time."

Well, that started a great commotion. Everyone had something different to say. Some wanted it daytime always and some wanted it night. They all talked at once, and they all talked very loud

so you could not hear what any of them were saying, except Bear. He rocked to and fro on his hind legs, trying to drown out the others by rumbling in a big deep voice, "Always night! Always night! Always night!"

A little chipmunk who had been sitting on the outskirts of the council became annoyed. Chipmunks hate to sit still for any time. "You can talk all you like," he shrilled out in his tiny squeaky voice. "You can talk all you like, but the light will come whether you want it or not. The light will come."

The other animals did not pay any attention to him but went on bawling and roaring and growling until they were hoarse. Chipmunk danced with excitement on the outskirts of the crowd shrieking, "The light will come! The light will come!"

And before they knew it, a faint flush had crept up the sky, and the golden disc of the sun rose above the tree-tops. Shafts of sunlight touched the tops of the open space where the council met. The fire looked weak and pale. It was daylight.

An astonished silence settled upon the gathered council of the animals. Could it be possible that it was daylight whether they wished it or not?

A shrill voice suddenly piped up from the edge of the assembly.

"What did I tell..."

"Grrrrr!"

Chipmunk was gone like a flash through the trees with Bear after him. Bear was clumsy and Chipmunk so quick that he slipped into a hold in a tree before Bear could catch him. But, just before he disappeared, Bear struck at him with his paw.

The black stripes that run down the chipmunk's sides today show where Bear's claws hit him long ago at the council when the animals tried to decide whether they should have darkness or daylight all the time.

HOW DOGS CAME TO THE INDIANS

Two Ojibwa Indians in a canoe had been blown far from shore by a great wind. They had gone far and were hungry and lost. They had little strength left to paddle, so they drifted before the wind. At last their canoe was blown onto a beach and they were glad, but not for long. Looking for the tracks of animals, they saw some huge footprints which they knew must be those of a giant. They were afraid and hid in the bushes. As they crouched low, a big arrow thudded into the ground close beside them. Then a huge giant came toward them. A caribou hung from his belt, but the man was so big that it looked like a rabbit. He told them that he did not hurt people and he like to be a friend to little people, who seemed to the giant to be so helpless.

He asked the two lost Indians to come home with him, and since they had no food and their weapons had been lost in the storm at sea, they were glad to go with him. An evil Windigo spirit came to the lodge of the giant and told the two men that the giant had other men hidden away in the forest because he like to eat them. The Windigo pretended to be a friend, but he was the one who wanted the men because he was an eater of people. The Windigo became very angry when the giant would not give him the two men, and finally the giant became angry too. He took a big stick and turned over a big bowl with it. A strange animal which the Indians had never seen before lay on the floor, looking up at them. It looked like a wolf to them, but the giant called the animal 'Dog.' The giant told him to kill the evil Windigo spirit. The beast sprang to its feet, shook himself, and started to grow, and grow, and grow. The more he shook himself, the more he grew and the fiercer he became. He sprang at the Windigo and killed him; then the dog grew smaller and smaller and crept under the bowl.

The giant saw that the Indians were much surprised and please with Dog and said that he would give it to them, though it was his pet. He told the men that he would command Dog to take them home. They had no idea how this could be done, though they had seen that the giant was a maker of magic, but they thanked the friendly giant for his great gift. The giant took the men and the dog to the seashore and gave the dog a command. At once it began to grow bigger and bigger, until it was nearly as big as a horse. The giant put the two men onto the back of the dog and told them to hold on very tightly. As Dog ran into the sea, he grew still bigger and when the water was deep enough he started to swim strongly away from the shore.

After a very long time, the two Ojibwa began to see a part of the seacoast which they knew, and soon the dog headed for shore. As he neared the beach, he became smaller and smaller so that the Indians had to swim for the last part of their journey. The dog left them close to their lodges and disappeared into the forest. When the men told their tribe of their

adventure, the people thought that the men were speaking falsely. "Show us even the little mystery animal, Dog, and we shall believe you," a chief said.

A few moons came and went and then, one morning while the tribe slept, the dog returned to the two men. It allowed them to pet it and took food from their hands. The tribe was very much surprised to see this new creature. It stayed with the tribe.

That, as the Indians tell, was how the first dog came to the earth.

-- An Ojibwa story, thanks to Harold Stein

HOW FIRE CAME TO THE SIX NATIONS

Often, around the fire in the long house of the Iroquois, during the Moon of the Long Nights, this tale is told.

Three Arrows was a boy of the Mohawk tribe. Although he had not yet seen fourteen winters he was already known among the Iroquois for his skill and daring. His arrows sped true to their mark. His name was given him when with three bone-tipped arrows he brought down three flying wild geese from the same flock. He could travel in the forest as softly as the south wind and he was a skillful hunter, but he never killed a bird or animal unless his clan needed food. He was well-versed in woodcraft, fleet of foot, and a clever wrestler. His people said, 'Soon he will be a chief like his father.' The sun shone strong in the heart of Three Arrows, because soon he would have to meet the test of strength and endurance through which the boys of his clan attained manhood. He had no fear of the outcome of the dream fast which was so soon to take. His father was a great chief and a good man, and the boy's life had been patterned after that of his father.

When the grass was knee-high, Three Arrows left his village with his father. They climbed to a sacred place in the mountains. They found a narrow cave at the back of a little plateau. Here Three Arrows decided to live for his few days of prayer and vigil. He was not permitted to eat anything during the days and nights of his dream fast. He had no weapons, and his only clothing was a breechclout and moccasins. His father left the boy with the promise that he would visit him each day that the ceremony lasted, at dawn.

Three Arrows prayed to the Great Spirit. He begged that soon his clan spirit would appear in a dream and tell him what his guardian animal or bird was to be. When he knew this, he would adopt that bird or animal as his special guardian for the rest of his life. When the dream came he would be free to return to his people, his dream fast successfully achieved.

For five suns Three Arrows spent his days and nights on the rocky plateau, only climbing down to the little spring for water after each sunset. His heart was filled with a dark cloud because that morning his father had sadly warned him that the next day, the sixth sun, he must return to his village even if no dream had come to him in the night. This meant returning to his people in disgrace without the chance of taking another dream fast.

That night Three Arrows, weak from hunger and weary from ceaseless watch, cried out to the Great Mystery. 'O Great Spirit, have pity on him who stands humbly before Thee. Let his clan spirit or a sign from beyond the thunderbird come to him before tomorrow's sunrise, if it be Thy will.' As he prayed, the wind suddenly veered from east to north. This cheered Three Arrows because the wind was now the wind of the great bear, and the bear

was the totem of his clan. When he entered the cavern he smelled for the first time the unmistakable odor of a bear: this was strong medicine. He crouched at the opening of the cave, too excited to lie down although his tired body craved rest. As he gazed out into the night he heard the rumble of thunder, saw the lightning flash, and felt the fierce breath of the wind from the north. Suddenly a vision came to him, and a gigantic bear stood beside him in the cave. Then Three Arrows heard it say, 'Listen well, Mohawk. Your clan spirit has heard your prayer. Tonight you will learn a great mystery which will bring help and gladness to all your people.' A terrible clash of thunder brought the dazed boy to his feet as the bear disappeared. He looked from the cave just as a streak of lightning flashed across the sky in the form of a blazing arrow. Was this the sign from the thunderbird ?

Suddenly the air was filled with a fearful sound. A shrill shrieking came from the ledge just above the cave. It sounded as though mountain lions fought in the storm; yet Three Arrows felt no fear as he climbed toward the ledge. As his keen eyes grew accustomed to the dim light he saw that the force of the wind was causing two young balsam trees to rub violently against each other. The strange noise was caused by friction, and as he listened and watched fear filled his heart, for, from where the two trees rubbed together a flash of lightning showed smoke. Fascinated, he watched until flickers of flames followed the smoke. He had never seen fire of any kind at close range nor had any of his people. He scrambled down to the cave and covered his eyes in dread of this strange magic. Then he smelt bear again and he thought of his vision, his clan spirit, the bear, and its message. This was the mystery which he was to reveal to his people. The blazing arrow in the sky was to be his totem, and his new name - Blazing Arrow.

At daybreak, Blazing Arrow climbed onto the ledge and broke two dried sticks from what remained of one of the balsams. He rubbed them violently together, but nothing happened. 'The magic is too powerful for me,' he thought. Then a picture of his clan and village formed in his mind, and he patiently rubbed the hot sticks together again. His will power took the place of his tired muscles. Soon a little wisp of smoke greeted his renewed efforts, then came a bright spark on one of the stick. Blazing Arrow waved it as he had seen the fiery arrow wave in the night sky. A resinous blister on the stick glowed, then flamed - fire had come to the Six Nations !

-- An Iroquois story, thanks to Harold Stein

TAIL OF FIRE

So long ago that the time could not be counted by suns or moons, a band of Cowichan Indians was drying deer meat in the sun. They spoke of how good it would be if they only had a small sun to warm them when the big sun left to let darkness come. They thought that they would never get that thing because what they wanted would take much power and magic, more than even their most powerful shamans had.

As the people wished and talked, a little bird chirped loudly close by. It flew close to the people and they saw that it was a beautiful brown bird with a bright red tail which seemed to flicker even when the bird sat still. The bird looked down on the Indians from a branch just over their heads.

'What do you want, little bird?' asked an old man who had power to speak with birds.

'Nothing do I wish, Wise One, but I bring you what you wish,' it replied. 'I have something which is called fire on my tail, which is hot like a small sun. It will comfort you when the winds of winter blow, cook your meat, and bring cheer when the sun has gone, but it must be earned. Tell your tribe to meet me here when the sun comes again and ask each one to bring a little dry branch with pitch pine on it.'

Before the people could ask why, the bird suddenly disappeared. 'We should obey the wishes of that bird,' the old man counseled. 'It may bring much good fortune to us.'

When the sun shone again, the people awaited the coming of the bird. Each carried a pine branch with pitch pine on it, as they had been told. A loud tweet made the people look upward. The brown bird sat on a branch above their heads, though nobody had seen it come. It asked in a language that all understood, 'Are you ready?'

They answered, 'Yes!'

'Then you must follow me, and the one who first catches up with me will be given fire, but only if the one who does so is one who does right, is patient, and tries hard without losing courage. Come!'

The bird flew off over rough ground and thick forest. The chase proved too hard for many and they gave up. Over fast-flowing streams and dangerous marshes and swamps, the bird flew. More and more of the people had neither the strength nor courage to keep on and they were forced to drop out of the chase. 'Too hard!' 'Too difficult!' 'Too dangerous!' they gasped as they fell on the ground to rest.

At last one young warrior got close enough to call to the bird, 'Give me of your fire, little bird. I have followed you far and well and I have done no wrong.'

'It is not as you say,' said the bird, flying higher and faster than before. 'You think only of yourself. That is bad. You shall not have my fire.'

A second young man caught up with the bird. 'Share your fire with me,' he called. 'I am a good man.'

'A good man does not take that which belongs to another,' the bird answered, flying faster and faster. Soon, seeing it was no longer followed, the bird flew to the ground and perched beside a woman who was nursing an old man who looked very sick. 'Bring a dry branch with pitch pine on it,' said the brown bird. 'Fire have I on my tail and you shall have it. It will keep your sick man warm and cook your food.'

The woman was afraid of a bird that could speak. When she found her voice, she said, 'You are good, little one, but I deserve not a magic gift. What I do, I do because it is right. The inner voice tells me that I must take care of one who is sick.'

'Much good I know you do,' said the bird, 'and it is greater good than that done by many people because the good you do, you think is only your duty. Come, bring a branch and take of my fire. You think first of others, so you may share the gift with them.'

The woman gladly brought a branch and lit it at the little fire which flickered on the bird's tail. Since that time, the Indians have had fire.

-- A Cowichan Story, thanks to Harold Stein

THE FIRST MOCCASINS

There was once a great chief of the Plains who had very tender feet. Other mighty chiefs laughed at him; little chiefs only smiled as he hobbled past; and though they did not dare to smile, the people of the tribe also enjoyed the big chief's discomfort. All of them were in the same canoe, having no horses and only bare feet, but luckily very few of them had tender feet. The unhappily medicine man who was advisor to the Chief-of-the-Tender-Feet was afraid and troubled. Each time he was called before the chief he was asked, 'What are you going to do about it?' The 'it' meant the chief's tender feet.

Forced by fear, the medicine man at last hit upon a plan. Though he knew that it was not the real answer to the chief's foot problem, nevertheless it was a good makeshift. The medicine man had some women of the tribe weave a long, narrow mat of reeds, and when the big chief had to go anywhere, four braves unrolled the mat in front of him so that he walked in comfort. One day, the braves were worn out from seeing that the chief's feet were not worn out. They carelessly unrolled the mat over a place where flint arrowheads had been chipped. The arrowheads had long ago taken flight, but the needle-sharp chips remained. When the big chief's tender feet were wounded by these chips, he uttered a series of whoops which made the nearby aspen tree leaves quiver so hard that they have been trembling ever since.

That night the poor medicine man was given an impossible task by the angry chief: 'Cover the whole earth with mats so thick that my feet will not suffer. If you fail, you will die when the moon is round.'

The frightened maker of magic crept back to his lodge. He did not wish to be put to death on the night of the full moon, but he could think of no way to avoid it. Suddenly he saw the hide of an elk which he had killed pegged to the ground, with two women busily scraping the hair from the hide, and an idea flashed into his groping mind. He sent out many hunters; many women were busy for many days; many braves with hunting knives cut, and women sewed with bone needles and rawhide sinews.

On the day before the moon was round, the medicine man went to the chief and told him that he had covered as much of the earth as was possible in so short a time. When the chief looked from the door of his lodge, he saw many paths of skin stretching as far as he could see. Long strips which could be moved from place to place connected the main leather paths. Even the chief thought that this time the magic of the medicine man had solved tenderfoot transportation for all time - but this was not to be !

One day, as the big chief was walking along one of his smooth, tough leather paths, he saw a pretty maiden of the tribe gliding ahead of him,

walking on the hard earth on one side of the chief's pathway. She glanced back when she heard the pitter-patter of his feet on the elk hide pathway and seemed to smile. The chief set off on the run to catch up with her, his eyes fixed on the back of She-Who-Smiled, and so his feet strayed from the narrow path and landed in a bunch of needle-sharp thorns! The girl ran for her life when she heard the hideous howls of the chief, and Indians in the distant village thought that they were being attacked by wildcats.

Two suns later, when the chief was calm enough to speak again, he had his medicine man brought before him and told the unhappy man that next day, when the sun was high, he would be sent with all speed to the land of shadows.

That night, the medicine man climbed to the top of a high hill in search of advice from friendly spirits on how to cover the entire earth with leather. He slept, and in a dream vision he was shown the answer to his problem. Amid vivid flashes of lightning, he tore down the steep hillside, howling louder than the big chief at times, as jagged rocks wounded his bare feet and legs. He did not stop until he was safely inside his lodge. He worked all night and until the warriors who were to send him on the shadow trail came for him, just before noon the next day. He was surrounded by the war-club armed guards. He was clutching close to his heart something tightly rolled in a piece of deerskin. His cheerful smile surprised those who saw him pass. 'Wah, he is brave!' said the men of the tribe. 'He is very brave!' said the women of the tribe.

The big chief was waiting just outside his lodge. He gave the guards swift, stern orders. Before the maker of magic could be led away, he asked leave to say a few words to the chief. 'Speak!' said the chief, sorry to lose a clever medicine man who was very good at most kinds of magic. Even the chief knew that covering the entire earth with leather was an impossible task.

The medicine man quickly knelt beside the chief, unrolled the two objects which he took from his bundle and slipped one of them on each foot of the chief. The chief seemed to be wearing a pair of bear's hairless feet, instead of bare feet, and he was puzzled at first as he looked at the elk hide handicraft of his medicine man. 'Big chief,' the medicine man exclaimed joyfully, 'I have found the way to cover the earth with leather! For you, O chief, from now on the earth will always be covered with leather.' And so it was. -- A Plains Indian story, thanks to Harold Stein

WHY THE MOUSE IS SO SILKY

One day, on his wanderings in the land of the Swampy Cree, Wesukechak, know as Bitter Spirit, saw a big, round stone lying beside the rocky path. Because Bitter Spirit could talk and understand the language of nature, he always spoke to the birds and beasts and many other things. Now he spoke to the stone. 'Can you run fast?' he asked.

'Oh, yes,' answered the stone. 'Once I get started, I can run very fast.'

'Good!' Bitter Spirit cried. "Then you must race me.'

'I will,' answered the stone, 'if you can push me to where I can start.'

With great difficulty, the maker of magic did so, and without waiting, the stone started to roll downhill, going faster and faster.

Wesukechak caught up with it almost at ground level and mocked it as he ran past. 'You are a turtle,' he laughed. 'You cannot travel fast.'

The stone was very angry but did not reply.

Bitter Spirit ran and ran until he was so tired that he fell down on his face and slept soundly. The stone caught up with him at last and rolled up his legs and then onto his back, where it was stopped by his shoulders. It could roll no further. Being a big and very heavy stone, it held Bitter Spirit on the ground so that he could not move. The maker of magic had awakened in pain when the stone rolled onto his legs but he could not escape in time. 'Roll off my back, stone,' he shouted angrily. 'You are heavy; I hurt, and I cannot move.'

'You mocked me when you passed me,' said the stone, 'but you see I have caught up with you. Now that I have stopped, I cannot move until someone sets me rolling again. I must stay here.'

For many, many moons, the stone rested on the back of Bitter Spirit and the maker of magic could not help himself to get free. At last, Thunder decided to send some of his bolts of lightning to smash the stone and set Bitter Spirit free.

'And so, O stone, you are punished for holding me here so long,' cried the wondermaker as he continued on his way.

His clothes had been torn and worn, so Bitter Spirit threw them into a bark lodge which he saw nearby, ordering that they be mended. They were thrown outside so quickly and had been so well repaired that Bitter Spirit cried out in surprise. 'Who are you in that lodge? Come out, so that I may

see and reward you.' The maker of magic was much surprised when he saw a lithe mouse creep out of the lodge. It was an ugly, fat, rough-haired little creature in those days, with a short, stubby nose.

Bitter Spirit picked the mouse up very gently and stroked its little blunt nose until it became pointed. 'Now you will be able to smell out your food better,' he said.

Next, he brushed and combed its rough hair with his fingers until the hairs of the little creature became soft as down and smooth as the fur of an otter. 'Now you will be able to run more easily into little holes in tree trunks when your enemies come,' Wesukechak said, and so it was.

To this day, the mouse is soft and furry and it sniffs daintily with its long nose.

-- Thanks to Harold Stein

WHY THE OPOSSUM'S TAIL IS BARE

It must be remembered that the animals which appear in Indian myths and legends are not the same as those which exist now. When the world began, animals were much bigger, stronger and cleverer than their present counterparts but, because of man's cruelty and aggression, these left the earth and took the rainbow path to Galunlati, the Sky Land, where they still remain. The animals which came after them - those we know today - are but poor, weak imitations of those first creatures.

In the beginning, before this happened, all living things - men, animals, plants and trees - spoke the same language and behaved in much the same way. Animals, like people, were organized into tribes. They had chiefs, lived in houses, held councils and ceremonies.

Many animals had characteristics which we would not recognize today. The rabbit, for example, was fierce, bold and cunning, and a great mischief maker. It was through Rabbit's tricks that

the deer lost his sharp wolf-like teeth, the buzzard his handsome topknot of feathers and the opossum his long, bushy tail.

Opossum was very proud of his tail which, in those days, was covered with thick black fur. He spent long hours cleaning and brushing it and composing songs about its beauty and vigor. Sometimes, when he walked through the village, he carried his tail erect, like a banner rippling in the breeze. At other times, he swept it low behind him, like a train. It was useful as well as beautiful, for when Opossum lay down to sleep, he tucked it under him to make a soft bed, and in cold weather he folded it over his body to keep himself warm.

Rabbit was very jealous of Opossum's tail. He, too, had once had a long bushy tail but, during the course of a fight with Bear, he had lost most of it and now had only a short fluffy tuft. The sight of Opossum strutting before the other animals and swirling his tail ostentatiously, filled Rabbit with rage and he made up his mind to play a trick on him at the first opportunity.

At this time, when the animals still lived harmoniously together, each had his appointed station and duty. Thus, Frog was leader in the council and Rabbit, because of his speed, was employed to carry messages and announcements to the others.

As was their custom from time to time, the animals decided to hold a great council to discuss important matters and Rabbit, as usual, was given the task of arranging the gathering and delivering the invitations. Councils were also occasions for feasting and dancing and Rabbit saw a way of bringing about Opossum's downfall.

When Rabbit arrived with the news of the meeting, Opossum was sitting by the door of his lodge engaged in his favorite occupation - grooming his tail.

'I come to call you to the great council tomorrow, brother Opossum,' said Rabbit. 'Will you attend and join in the dance ?'

'Only if I am given a special seat,' replied the conceited Opossum, carefully smoothing some untidy hairs at the tip of his tail. 'After all,' he went on, grinning maliciously at Rabbit, 'I have such a beautiful long tail that I ought to sit where everyone can see and admire it.'

Rabbit was almost beside himself with fury, but he pretended not to notice the jibe and said, 'But of course, brother Opossum! I will personally see to it that you have the best seat in the council lodge, and I will also send someone to dress your tail specially for the dance.'

Opossum was delighted by this suggestion and Rabbit left him singing the praises of his tail even more loudly than usual.

Next, Rabbit called on the cricket, whom Indians call the barber, because of his fame as an expert hair-cutter. Cricket listened with growing amazement as Rabbit recounted his conversation with Opossum. Like all the other animals, he found Opossum's vanity and arrogance very tiresome.

He began to protest, but Rabbit held up a paw and said, 'Wait a moment. I have a plan and I need your help. Listen...', and he dropped his voice as he told Cricket what he wanted him to do.

Early next morning Cricket presented himself at Opossum's door and said that he had been sent by Rabbit to prepare the famous tail for the council that evening. Opossum made himself comfortable on the floor and stretched out his tail. Cricket began to comb it gently.

'I will wrap this red cord round your tail as I comb it,' he explained, 'so that it will remain smooth and neat for the dance tonight.'

Opossum found Cricket's ministrations so soothing that he fell asleep, awakening just as Cricket was tying the final knot in the red cord which now completely swathed his tail.

'I will keep it bound up until the very last moment,' thought Opossum gleefully. 'How envious the others will be when I finally reveal it in all its beauty!'

That evening, his tail still tightly wrapped in the red cord, Opossum marched into the council lodge and was led to his special seat by a strangely obsequious Rabbit.

Soon it was time for the dancing to take place. The drums and rattles began to sound. Opossum stood up, loosened the cord from his tail and stepped proudly into the center of the dance floor. He began to sing.

'Look at my beautiful tail!' he sang as he circled the floor. 'See how it sweeps the ground!'

There was a great shout from the audience and some of the animals began to applaud. 'How they admire me!' thought Opossum and he continued dancing and singing loudly. 'See how my tail gleams in the firelight!'

Again everyone shouted and cheered. Opossum began to have just the merest suspicion that all was not quite as it should be. Was there possibly a hint of mockery in their voices ? He dismissed such an absurd idea and continued dancing.

'My tail is stronger than the eagle's, more lustrous than the raven's!'

At this the animals shrieked so loudly that Opossum stopped in his tracks and looked at them. To his astonishment and chagrin they were all convulsed with laughter, some leaning weakly on their neighbor's shoulders, others rolling on the ground in their mirth. Several were pointing at his tail.

Bewildered, Opossum looked down and saw to his horror that his tail, his beautiful, thick, glossy tail, was now balk and scaly like that of a lizard. Nothing remained of its former glory. While pretending to comb it, the wily Cricket had snipped off every single hair.

Opossum was so overcome with shame and confusion that he could not utter a sound. Instead he rolled over helplessly on his back, grimacing with embarrassment, just as opossums still do today, when taken by surprise.

-- A Cherokee story, thanks to Harold Stein

RABBIT SHOOTS THE SUN

It was the height of summer, the time of year called Hadotso, the Great Heat. All day long, from a blue and cloudless sky, the blazing sun beat down upon the earth. No rain had fallen for many days and there was not the slightest breath of wind to cool the stifling air. Everything was hot and dry. Even the rose-red cliffs of the canyons and mesas seemed to take on a more brilliant color than before.

The animals drooped with misery. They were parched and hungry, for it was too hot to hunt for food and, panting heavily, they sought what shade they could under the rocks and bushes.

Rabbit was the unhappiest of all. Twice that day the shimmering heat had tempted him across the baked earth towards visions of water and cool, shady trees. He had exhausted himself in his desperate attempts to reach them, only to find the mirages dissolve before him, receding further and further into the distance.

Now, tired and wretched, he dragged himself into the shadow of an overhanging rock and crouched there listlessly. His soft fur was caked with the red dust of the desert. His head swam and his eyes ached from the sun's glare.

'Why does it have to be so hot?' he groaned. 'What have we done to deserve such torment?' He squinted up at the sun and shouted furiously, 'Go away! You are making everything too hot!'

Sun took no notice at all and continued to pour down his fiery beams, forcing Rabbit to retreat once more into the shade of the rock. 'Sun needs to be taught a lesson,' grumbled Rabbit. 'I have a good mind to go and fight him. If he refuses to stop shining, I will kill him!'

His determination to punish Sun made him forget his weariness and, in spite of the oppressive heat, he set off at a run towards the eastern edge of the world where the Sun came up each morning.

As he ran, he practiced with his bow and arrows and, to make himself brave and strong, he fought with everything which crossed his path. He fought with the gophers and the lizards. He hurled his throwing stick at beetles, ants and dragonflies. He shot at the yucca and the giant cactus. He became a very fierce rabbit indeed.

By the time he reached the edge of the world, Sun had left the sky and was nowhere to be seen.

'The coward!' sneered Rabbit. 'He is afraid to fight, but he will not escape me so easily,' and he settled to wait behind a clump of bushes.

In those days, Sun did not appear slowly as he does now. Instead he rushed up over the horizon and into the heavens with one mighty bound. Rabbit knew that he would have to act quickly in order to ambush him and he fixed his eyes intently on the spot where the Sun usually appeared.

Sun, however, had heard all Rabbit's threats and had watched him fighting. He knew that he was lying in wait among the bushes. He was not at all afraid of this puny creature and he thought that he might have some amusement at his expense.

He rolled some distance away from his usual place and swept up into the sky before Rabbit knew what was happening. By the time Rabbit had gathered his startled wits and released his bowstring, Sun was already high above him and out of range.

Rabbit stamped and shouted with rage and vexation. Sun laughed and laughed and shone even more fiercely than before.

Although almost dead from heat, Rabbit would not give up. Next morning he tried again, but this time Sun came up in a different place and evaded him once more.

Day after day the same thing happened. Sometimes Sun sprang up on Rabbit's right, sometimes on his left and sometimes straight in front of him, but always where Rabbit least expected him.

One morning, however, Sun grew careless. He rose more leisurely than usual, and this time, Rabbit was ready. Swiftly he drew his bow. His arrow whizzed through the air and buried itself deep in Sun's side.

Rabbit was jubilant! At last he had shot his enemy! Wild with joy, he leaped up and down. He rolled on the ground, hugging himself. He turned somersaults. He looked at Sun again - and stopped short.

Where his arrow had pierced Sun, there was a gaping wound and, from that wound, there gushed a stream of liquid fire. Suddenly it seemed as if the whole world had been set ablaze. Flames shot up and rushed towards Rabbit, crackling and roaring.

Rabbit paused not a moment longer. He took to his heels in panic and ran as fast as he could away from the fire. He spied a lone cottonwood tree and scuttled towards it.

'Everything is burning!' he cried. 'Will you shelter me?'

The cottonwood shook its slender branches mournfully. 'What can I do?' it asked. 'I will be burned to the ground.'

Rabbit ran on. Behind him, the flames were coming closer. He could feel their breath on his back. A greasewood tree lay in his path.

'Hide me! Hide me!' Rabbit gasped. 'The fire is coming.'

'I cannot help you,' answered the greasewood tree. 'I will be burned up roots and branches.'

Terrified and almost out of breath, Rabbit continued to run, but his strength was failing. He could feel the fire licking at his heels and his fur was beginning to singe. Suddenly he heard a voice calling to him.

'Quickly, come under me! The fire will pass over me so swiftly that it will only scorch my top.'

It was the voice of a small green bush with flowers like bunches of cotton capping its thin branches. Gratefully, Rabbit dived below it and lay there quivering, his eyes tightly shut, his ears flat against his body.

With a thunderous roar, the sheet of flame leaped overhead. The little bush crackled and sizzled. Then, gradually, the noise receded and everything grew quiet once more.

Rabbit raised his head cautiously and looked around. Everywhere the earth lay black and smoking, but the fire had passed on. He was safe!

The little bush which had sheltered him was no longer green. Burned and scorched by the fire, it had turned a golden yellow. People now call it the desert yellow brush, for, although it first grows green, it always turns yellow when it feels the heat of the sun.

Rabbit never recovered from his fright. To this day, he bears brown spots where the fire scorched the back of his neck. He is no longer fierce and quarrelsome, but runs and hides at the slightest noise.

As for Sun, he too was never quite the same. He now makes himself so bright that no one can look at him long enough to sight an arrow and he always peers very warily over the horizon before he brings his full body into view.

-- A Hopi story

SPIRIT ANIMAL

As scouts we often visit the woods, but don't really spend a lot of time in the wilderness, especially not alone. One often wonders what it would be like to spend long periods of time alone in the woods. Could you cope?

Our native Indians believe that one advantage to spending time alone in the wilderness, is that you might meet your spirit animal. They believe that everyone has their own specific spirit animal, and to meet your spirit animal is to make your life more complete. An Indian might be canoeing alone across a lake, when he spies a bear on the shore. And as the bear looks into his eyes, he'll just know, that that's his spirit animal. Of course you can only meet your spirit animal when you're alone.

One kind of white man often spends a lot of time in the bush, and that's a trapper. It's a very lonely existence, spending weeks on the trap lines, as you go from lake to lake, trail to trail, collecting furs. They tell the story of one particular trapper who worked in the Haliburton area. One evening he was sitting near his campfire enjoying his coffee just after sundown. He'd had a good day, a lot of good furs, and now he was almost ready for bed. He stared into the embers of the campfire as it slowly faded away, thinking of how bright the fire was and how it always made the surrounding area look so very dark.

He thought he saw something at the edge of the fire.... No it was nothing. Then he saw it again. At the edge of the firelight was a raccoon, sitting very still and staring at him. "That's odd", he thought, "this isn't how raccoons normally act." He hissed at the raccoon, but it wouldn't go away. So he ignored it for a little while, expecting it would move on. After a few minutes he glanced back, and the raccoon was still there staring at him with those eerie animal eyes. This time he picked up a rock and threw it at the raccoon. "WHAT!?!", he thought, "I could have sworn I hit that coon!", but the rock seemed to have passed through the animal.

The trapper was now getting very nervous. He completely ignored the spot where the raccoon had been (or maybe still was). He put out the fire, and headed in darkness for his tent, the half full moon in the clear sky illuminating the way. "A good night's sleep and everything will be fine in the morning", he thought. Something caught his eye and his head jerked sharply to the right. There it was on the side of path: the raccoon, sitting still and staring at the trapper. He ignored it and quickly turned away. BUT there it was on his left now. He hurried on to the tent now, only a few yards away, looking only at his feet. As he reached the tent he glanced up. THERE IT WAS. the raccoon sitting between him and his tent!

About three weeks later they found him running through the woods, nearly naked and his body had been heavily bruised and torn. He'd been living like

a wild savage, eating dirt or leaves, even worse than most animals. Although he spent the next twenty years in an insane asylum, he never regained the use of his mind. Some say he just snapped after spending too much time alone, especially in the woods..... Some think he met his spirit animal.

-- Thanks to Blair Madore, University of Waterloo, Canada

THE INDIAN & THE SNAKE

As a young boy, often times, Indians are sent away, in search of a vision. This was the case of this one particular young Indian boy. He started to go up to the top of the mountain in search of his vision ... And as he climbed up the mountain, the air got cooler and cooler ... And he came upon a snake laying in the path. The snake was shivering, and said to the young Indian boy. "Please help me ... I can't move, I am so cold that I can no longer make it any further down the mountain." The young Indian boy said to the snake "No way! You're a snake, if I pick you up, you'll bite me!" The snake replied ... "No, no I won't, I promise I won't bite you if you'll only pick me up and help get me down the mountain..." So the young Indian boy picked up the snake, put him in his shirt, continued climbing to the top of the mountain in search of his vision ... When he got back down to the bottom of the mountain, he reached in, took out the snake, and the snake bit this young Indian boy. The boy replied to the snake "Hey! You bit me, you said that if I'd help you out, that you wouldn't bite me!" the snake replied to the young Indian boy ... "But you knew what I was when you picked me up!"

-- Thanks to Brad George, SM BSA Troop #23 OKC/OKLA

WHY THE WEASEL IS NERVOUS

The weasel, Sihkooseu, once played a bad trick on the Bitter Spirit, Wesukechak. That is why they are not friends.

The important chief Bright Nose, Wastasekoot, of the Swampy Cree tribe, had a lovely daughter who was admired by many chiefs who wished to marry her. Though she loved one of the chiefs, her father decided to hold a council and the first chief to guess her secret name could marry her. She agreed because she thought that the only one who knew her name was the one she loved.

Bitter Spirit decided to enter the contest with everyone else. Since he did not know her name, he made a plan to discover it. He went to the old net maker, the spider, and asked him to call on the girl and, by some trick, discover her name. Spider agreed. He climbed a tall tree, spun a long thread, and floated on it until he neared the camp of the chief with the beautiful daughter. Then he floated down onto the top of the chief's wigwam, peeped down, and saw the father and daughter talking about the contest, and heard the chief whisper to his daughter, 'Nobody will ever guess that your secret name is For-ever-and-ever.' In this way, the Spider discovered her name. He was very pleased with himself at learning this so soon, and set off to tell his friend.

Spider walked many days through the forest because there was no suitable flying wind. He began to worry that he would arrive back too late. Then he saw the weasel and begged his help. He asked Weasel to hurry and tell Bitter Spirit the girl's secret name and Weasel agreed. But as Weasel started running, he began to think things over and decided to use the information for himself instead of telling it to Bitter Spirit as he had promised. The more he thought about this, the more he liked the idea.

Weasel went to the chief's camp when the guessing contest was being held. One by one, the guessers failed. Since the girl's suitor knew her secret name, he felt safe and did not go early, so Weasel was there before him. When Weasel's turn came, he told the chief that the girl's name was For-ever-and-ever. The chief was amazed and the daughter fainted. Being honorable, the chief accepted Weasel as his son-in-law-to-be and set the date for the marriage. Weasel was very happy, so happy that he forgot about his mean trick.

The spider finally reached home and asked Bitter Spirit when his wedding was to take place. Bitter Spirit replied that he did not go to the council, since he did not have the name in time, but he had heard that Weasel had won the girl.

Spider was very angry and told Bitter Spirit what really had happened. Bitter Spirit became very angry and told the girl's father about it. Then the chief became angry with Spider for

listening and with Weasel for his trick. He decided that they were all at fault and his daughter could choose for herself. The happy girl did so.

Weasel heard that he was to be punished, so he ran away. He ran and ran. Even today, he stops and listens and trembles, as though Bitter Spirit is still chasing him.

-- A Swampy Cree story, thanks to Harold Stein

THE GREAT FLOOD

Long before missionaries ever arrived in the New World, the Indians had ancient legends of a great flood, similar to that of Noah. This is the one the Cowichan tell.

In ancient times, there were so many people in the land that they lived everywhere. Soon hunting became bad and food scarce, so that the people quarreled over hunting territories.

Even in those days, the people were skilled in making fine canoes and paddles from cedars, and clothing and baskets from their bark. In dreams their wise old men could see the future, and there came a time when they all had similar bad dreams that kept coming to them over and over again. The dreams warned of a great flood. This troubled the wise men who told each other about their dreams. They found that they all had dreamed that rain fell for such a long time, or that the river rose, causing a great flood so that all of the people were drowned. They were much afraid and called a council to hear their dreams and decide what should be done. One said that they should build a great raft by tying many canoes together. Some of the people agreed, but others laughed at the old men and their dreams.

The people who believed in the dreams worked hard building the raft. It took many moons of hard work, lashing huge cedar log canoes together with strong ropes of cedar bark. When it was completed, they tied the raft with a great rope of cedar bark to the top of Mount Cowichan by passing one end of the rope through the center of a huge stone which can still be seen there.

During the time the people were working on the raft, those who did not believe in the dreams were idle and still laughed, but they did admire the fine, solid raft when it was at last finished and floated in Cowichan Bay.

Soon after the raft was ready, huge raindrops started falling, rivers overflowed, and the valleys were flooded. Although people climbed Mount Cowichan to avoid the great flood, it too was soon under water. But those who had believed the dreams took food to the raft and they and their families climbed into it as the waters rose. They lived on the raft many days and could see nothing but water. Even the mountain tops had disappeared beneath the flood. The people became much afraid when their canoes began to flood and they prayed for help. Nothing happened for a long time; then the rain stopped.

The waters began to go down after a time, and finally the raft was grounded on top of Mount Cowichan. The huge stone anchor and heavy rope had held it safe. As the water gradually sank lower and lower, the people could see their lands, but their homes had all been swept away. The valleys and

forests had been destroyed. The people went back to their old land and started to rebuild their homes.

After a long time the number of people increased, until once again the land was filled and the people started to quarrel again. This time they separated into tribes and clans, all going to different places. The storytellers say this is how people spread all over the earth.

-- A Salish story, thanks to Harold Stein

THE ORIGIN OF THE WINDS

Long ago, when the world was still quite new, there were no winds at all, neither the gentle breeze of summer nor the fierce winter gale. Everything was perfectly still. Nothing disturbed the marsh grass on the shore and, when snow fell, it fell straight to earth instead of blowing and swirling into drifts as it does now.

At that time, in a village near the mouth of the Yukon River, there lived a couple who had no children. This made them very sad. Often the woman would sigh and say, 'How happy we would be if only we had a child!'

Her husband would sigh too and answer, 'Yes, if we had a son, I would teach him to stalk bears and seals over the ice-floes, and to make traps and snares. What will become of us in our old age with no one to provide for us ? Who will give festivals for our souls when we are dead ?'

These thoughts troubled them deeply and on many a long winter evening they sat in the flickering firelight, imagining how different life might be if they had a child.

One night the woman had a strange dream, in which she saw a sled pulled by three dogs, one brown, one white and one black, draw up outside her door. The driver leaned from his seat and beckoned her. 'Come,' he said. 'Sit here by me. I will take you on a journey.'

Wondering and fearful, the woman did as she was told. No sooner had she seated herself than the driver cracked his whip and the sled rose high into the air. Through the night-black sky they flew, faster and faster, past stars sparkling like hoar-frost. The woman was no longer afraid for she knew that this must be Igaluk, the Moon Spirit, who often comes to comfort those in distress.

Suddenly the sled stopped and the panting dogs lay down to rest. On all sides, as far as the eye could see, lay a great plain of smooth ice, the glittering expanse broken only by one small stunted tree.

Igaluk pointed and said, 'You who so desire a child, look at that tree over there. Make a doll from its trunk and you will find happiness.'

Before she could learn more, the woman awoke. So vivid was her dream that she at once roused her husband. She told him what she had seen and begged him to find the tree.

The man rubbed the sleep from his eyes. 'What would be the point?' he grumbled. 'It would only be a doll, not a real child.' But the woman

persisted and finally, for the sake of peace, the man shouldered his axe and set out to look for the tree.

At the edge of the village where the snow lay thick and untrodden, he saw a bright path stretching far into the distance. It was now full day, yet the path shone like moonlight and the man knew that this was the direction which he must take.

For many hours he journeyed along the path of light until at last, on the horizon, he saw something shining very brightly. As he came nearer he saw that it was the tree of which his wife had spoken. The man cut it down with his axe and carried it home.

That evening, while he carved the figure of a small boy from some of the wood, his wife made a little suit of sealskin and, when the doll was finished, she dressed it and set it in the place of honor on the bench opposite the door. From the remaining wood the man carved a set of toy dishes and some tiny weapons, a spear and a knife, tipped with bone. His wife filled the dishes with food and water and set them before the doll.

Before going to bed, the couple sat and gazed at the doll. Although it was no more than six inches high, it was very lifelike, with eyes made from tiny chips of ivory.

'I cannot think why we have gone to all this trouble,' said the man gloomily. 'We are no better off than before.'

'Perhaps not,' replied his wife, 'but at least it will give us some amusement and something to talk about.'

During the night the woman awoke suddenly. Close at hand she heard several low whistles. She shook her husband and said, 'Did you hear that? It was the doll!'

They jumped up and, by the glow of their hastily lit lamp, they saw that the doll had eaten the food and drunk the water. They saw it breathe and its eyes move. The woman picked it up in her arms and hugged it.

They played with the doll for some time until it grew sleepy. Then they carefully returned it to the bench and went back to bed, delighted with their new toy.

In the morning, however, when they awoke, the doll had gone. Rushing outside, they saw its footprints leading away through the village. They followed as fast as they could, but at the edge of the village the tracks

stopped and there was no trace of the doll. Sadly the couple returned home.

Although they did not know it, the doll was traveling along the path of light which the man had taken the day before. On and on he went until he came to the eastern edge of day where the sky comes down to meet the earth and walls in the light.

Looking up, the doll saw a hole in the sky wall, covered over with a piece of skin. The cover was bulging inwards, as if there was some powerful force on the other side. The doll was curious and, drawing his knife, he slashed the cords holding the cover in place and pulled it aside.

At once a great wind rushed in, carrying birds and animals with it. The doll peered through the hole and saw the Sky Land on the other side, looking just like earth, with mountains, trees and rivers.

When he felt that the wind had blown long enough, the doll drew the skin cover back over the hole, saying sternly, 'Wind, sometimes blow hard, sometimes soft, and sometimes not at all.' Then he went on his way.

When he came to the south, he saw another piece of skin covering an opening in the sky wall and bulging as before. Again the doll drew his knife and this time a warmer wind blew in, bringing more animals, trees and bushes. After a time the doll closed up the opening with the same words as before and passed on towards the west.

There he found yet another opening like the others, but this time, as soon as the cords were cut, the wind blew in a heavy rainstorm with waves and spray from the great ocean on the other side. The doll hastened to cover up the hole and instructed this wind as he had one the others.

When he came to the north, the cold was so intense that he hesitated for some time before he dared to open the hole in the sky there. When he finally did so, a fierce blast whistled in, with great masses of snow and ice, so that the doll was at once frozen to the marrow and he closed that opening very quickly indeed.

Admonishing the wind as before, the doll now turned his steps inwards, away from the sky wall and traveled on until he came to the very center of the earth's plain. There he saw the sky arching overhead like a huge tent, supported on a framework of tall slender poles. Satisfied that he had now traveled the whole world over, the doll decided to return to the village from which he started.

His foster-parents greeted him with great joy, for they feared that he had gone forever. The doll told them and all the people of the village about his travels and how he had let the winds into the world. Everyone was pleased for with the wind came good hunting. The winds brought the birds of the air and the land animals, and they stirred up the sea currents so that seals and walrus could be found all along the coast.

Because he had brought good fortune as the Moon Spirit had predicted, the doll was honored in special festivals afterwards. Shamans made dolls like him to help them in their magic and parents also made dolls for their children, knowing that they bring happiness to those who care for them.

-- Alaskan Eskimo legend, thanks to Harold Stein

RABBIT AND THE MOON MAN

Long ago, Rabbit was a great hunter. He lived with his grandmother in a lodge which stood deep in the Micmac forest. It was winter and Rabbit set traps and laid snares to catch game for food. He caught many small animals and birds, until one day he discovered that some mysterious being was robbing his traps. Rabbit and his grandmother became hungry. Though he visited his traps very early each morning, he always found them empty.

At first Rabbit thought that the robber might be a cunning wolverine, until one morning he found long, narrow footprints alongside his trap line. It was, he thought, the tracks of the robber, but they looked like moonbeams. Each morning Rabbit rose earlier and earlier, but the being of the long foot was always ahead of him and always his traps were empty.

Rabbit made a trap from a bowstring with the loop so cleverly fastened that he felt certain that he would catch the robber when it came. He took one end of the thong with him and hid himself behind a clump of bushes from which he could watch his snare. It was bright moonlight while he waited, but suddenly it became very dark as the moon disappeared. A few stars were still shining and there were no clouds in the sky, so Rabbit wondered what had happened to the moon.

Someone or something came stealthily through the trees and then Rabbit was almost blinded by a flash of bright, white light which went straight to his trap line and shone through the snare which he had set. Quick as a lightning flash, Rabbit jerked the bowstring and tightened the noose. There was a sound of struggling and the light lurched from side to side. Rabbit knew by the tugging on his string that he had caught the robber. He fastened the bowstring to a nearby sapling to hold the loop tight.

Rabbit raced back to tell his grandmother, who was a wise old woman, what had happened. She told him that he must return at once and see who or what he had caught. Rabbit, who was very frightened, wanted to wait for daylight but his grandmother said that might be too late, so he returned to his trap line.

When he came near his traps, Rabbit saw that the bright light was still there. It was so bright that it hurt his eyes. He bathed them in the icy water of a nearby brook, but still they smarted. He made big snowballs and threw them at the light, in the hope of putting it out. As they went close to the light, he heard them sizzle and saw them melt. Next, Rabbit scooped up great paw-fuls of soft clay from the stream and made many big clay balls. He was a good shot and threw the balls with all of his force at the dancing white light. He heard them strike hard and then his prisoner shouted.

Then a strange, quivering voice asked why he had been snared and demanded that he be set free at once, because he was the man in the moon and he must be home before dawn came. His face had been spotted with clay and, when Rabbit went closer, the moon man saw him and threatened to kill him and all of his tribe if he were not released at once.

Rabbit was so terrified that he raced back to tell his grandmother about his strange captive. She too was much afraid and told Rabbit to return and release the thief immediately. Rabbit went back, and his voice shook with fear as he told the man in the moon that he would be released if he promised never to rob the snares again. To make doubly sure, Rabbit asked him to promise that he would never return to ear, and the moon man swore that he would never do so. Rabbit could hardly see in the dazzling light, but at last he managed to gnaw through the bowstring with his teeth and the man in the moon soon disappeared in the sky, leaving a bright trail of light behind him.

Rabbit had been nearly blinded by the great light and his shoulders were badly scorched. Even today, rabbits blink as

though light is too strong for their eyes; their eyelids are pink, and their eyes water if they look at a bright light. Their lips quiver, telling of Rabbit's terror.

The man in the moon has never returned to earth. When he lights the world, one can still see the marks of the clay which Rabbit threw on his face. Sometimes he disappears for a few nights, when he is trying to rub the marks of the clay balls from his face. Then the world is dark; but when the man in the moon appears again, one can see that he has never been able to clean the clay marks from his shining face.

-- Thanks to Jim Speirs

HONEYED WORDS CAN'T SWEETEN EVIL

Big Blue Heron was standing in the marsh looking at his reflection in the water. He raised his black-crested head to listen.

Two little White Weasels had come along to the river. They were mother and son. When they saw Blue Heron, they stopped to look.

'What a beautiful big bird-person!' said the son.

'He is called Blue Heron. He carries his head high!'

'Yes, Mother, he is tall as a tree. Were I so tall, I could carry you across this swift river.'

Blue Heron was pleased to hear himself so praised. He liked to hear other say that he was big.

He bent down low and spoke to the two. 'I will help you go across. Come down to where you see that old tree lying in the stream. I will lie down in the water at the end and put my bill deep into the bank on the other side. You two run across the tree. Then use my body as a bridge and you will get to the other side.'

They all went to the old tree lying in the water. Blue Heron lay down in the water at the end and stuck his bill deep into the bank on the other side. Mother and son White Weasel ran lightly and quickly across the log, over Blue Heron, and were safe and dry on the other side. They thanked Blue Heron and said they would tell all the persons in the woods how fine Blue Heron was. Then they went on their way.

Old Wolf had been standing on the riverbank watching how the weasels had gotten across.

'What a fine way it would be for me to cross the river. I am old and my bones ache.'

When Blue Heron came back to the marsh, Wolf said to him, 'Now I know why you Blue Herons are in the marsh - so you can be a bridge for persons to cross the river. I want to go across, but I am old and my bones hurt. Lie down in the water for me so I can cross.'

Blue Heron was angry. He didn't like being called a bridge. Old Wolf saw he had spoken foolish words and decided to use honeyed words.

'You are big and strong, Blue Heron, and that is why your body is such a fine bridge. You could carry me across like a feather.'

Blue Heron smiled at Wolf and said, 'Old Wolf, get on my back and I'll carry you across.

Wolf grinned from ear to ear thinking how easily he had tricked Blue Heron.

He jumped on the bird's back and Heron went into the rushing river. When he got to the middle, he stopped.

'Friend Wolf,' said Blue Heron, 'you made a mistake. I am not strong enough to carry you across. For that you need two herons. I can carry you only halfway. Now you must get another heron to carry you the rest of the way.'

He gave his body a strong twist and Wolf fell into the water.

'You wait here, Wolf, for another heron to come and carry you to the other side.' Then he flew into the marsh.

The water ran swiftly. No heron came, so where did Wolf go ? To the bottom of the river...

Since that day, no wolf has ever trusted a heron.

-- Algonquin Legend, thanks to Jim Speirs

THE GREAT FATHER MOSQUITO

One time there lived a giant Mosquito. He was bigger than a bear and more terrifying. When he flew through the air, the Sun couldn't be seen and it became dark as night. The zooming of his wings was wilder than a storm. And when he was hungry, he would fly into a camp and carry off an Indian or two and pick their bones clean.

Again and again the Tuscarora tried to destroy the wild beast but their arrows fell off him like dew drops off a leaf. They did not know what to do. So the chief and the medicine men in the tribe ordered a big meeting to pray to the Great Father in Heaven to take pity on them and help them destroy the monster Mosquito. They burned great fires and they sang, and they danced and they prayed.

The Great Father in Heaven, the Sky Holder, heard their loud cry for help and decided to come to their rescue. He came down from the sky, looking for the monster to do battle with him and destroy him.

The great Mosquito heard this and he knew he could not beat the Sky Holder, so he decided to run away. He flew and he flew and he flew so fast no one could see him. He was faster than lightning. The only sound was the wild zooming of his wings through the air. But Sky Holder was after him just as fast.

The giant monster flew around lakes, over rivers and over mountains toward the East. Sky Holder kept after him, never tiring.

When Sun was going down in a red mist at the end of the sky, the great monster came to the large lakes of the East. He turned to look and saw the Great Father was coming nearer.

Swiftly and wildly, at the speed of eagles, the monster flew toward the Salt Lake and there the Sky Holder reached him. The battle was short and the monster Mosquito was destroyed. His blood splattered and flew in all directions. And... a strange thing happened. From the blood were born small mosquitoes with sharp stingers.

No sooner were they born than they attacked Sky Holder without fear. They stung him so hard he was sorry for what he had done, but he could not undo it. These small mosquitoes with the sharp stingers multiplied a thousand fold.

It happened long ago, but to this day we have thousands of mosquitoes with sharp stingers.

-- Tuscarora Legend, thanks to Jim Speirs

THE ESKIMO INDIAN AND HIS FOX WIFE

Far up in the cold North, where winds blow sharply and snow falls thickly, an Indian hunter lived all alone. His only friends were Sun, Wind, Snow and Stars.

When he got up in the morning, he had to prepare his own food and clean his house. When he came home, he had to scrape his own skin- clothing and his skin-boots and hand them out to dry. And he had to do his own cooking and washing. It was not an easy life for him.

One day, when daylight was sinking into darkness, he came home and stopped at his door. To his great surprise, everything was in order as it had never been before. The earthen floor was swept and the food in the pot was steaming hot and ready to eat. Everything was in order as if a good wife had done it.

Who had done it ? He looked all over - everywhere - inside and outside. There was no one around. He ate the good food and lay down to sleep, wondering who had done this good deed for him.

The next morning he went out to hunt as he always did, and when he came home... he found his home all in fine order again, and his food was ready for him - just as the day before. His skin- clothing was scraped and his boots were hanging up to dry. Again he looked and looked to find who was so kind to him, but he couldn't find tracks anywhere. He just couldn't understand it.

Day after day the hunter found his house and clothes cared for. Then he said to himself, "I must find out who does all these things for me. Only a good wife would do it and I have no wife. Who can it be? I must find the person."

Next morning he went out hunting as he always did, but he only went a little distance and then turned back and hid near the house to watch.

Pretty soon a sleek fox with a long red tail came loping along. It ran right up to the house and went in.

"That fox is going into my house to steal my food," the Indian said to himself.

He crept up to his house and looked in, ready to slay the fox. But when he saw what was there, he stopped in great surprise.

Right in the middle of the room there was a beautiful girl, dressed in the finest skin-clothes he had ever seen. And on the wall he saw hanging... the skin of a fox!

"Who are you?" the Indian cried. "What are you doing here? Why do you clean my house? Did you cook my food? Is it you who cleaned my skins and boots ?"

"Yes, I have cleaned this house and cooked your food. I have scraped these skins and dried your boots. I have done what I do well," the beautiful girl said. "Now you see how life can be made easier. I hope you are please. I do what I can do well. Then I feel happy and proud."

"I am pleased," said the hunter. "Will you stay with me all the time? I would be proud to share this life and my home with you. Then I too could do what I do well."

"Very well, I will stay. But you must promise never to complain about me, or to ask from where I came."

The hunter promised. From then on, they were happy to be together as husband and wife. He did the hunting while she prepared the skins and took care of their home.

Everything was fine. They were good and hard workers.

One day, the man smelled a strange, musky odor that he did not like.

"Woman," the man said, "there is a strange, musky odor in the house since you have come here. You must have brought it with you."

"Yes, it came with me, and it is a good smell."

"Where have you brought it from?" asked the hunter.

"You have broken the promises you made! You said you would not complain about me. And you promised not to ask from where I came. Now I must leave you."

The woman threw away her skin-dress and put on her fox skin that had been hanging on the wall. Then she slipped out of the house as a fox.

From that time on, the man lived alone. He had to do everything himself, just as before the Fox Woman had come to him. And she never returned.

-- Labrador Eskimo Legend, thanks to Jim Speirs

THE LOON

The Indians in the Pacific Northwest traveled mainly by water, because the forest were so thick it was difficult to travel by land. This story tells how they were able to find their way back to shore.

One day, a little girl went deep into the forest. She walked until she found a family of loons. She stopped and played with the loons. In fact, she stayed for several days, becoming good friends with the loons. They taught her many things. But, soon, she new it was time to return to her family, so she said good bye and returned to her village.

In time, this little girl grew to be a Mother and then Grandmother. One day she was out in a canoe with her two Grandchildren. All of the sudden the fog rolled in. [pause] They couldn't see the shore. [pause] They heard a splashing off in the distance. [pause] The children thought it was a sea monster. [pause] But, the Grandmother new it was something far worse. [pause] It was hunters from a tribe farther north. If they captured them, they would take them as slaves. The children would never see their family or village again.

The Grandmother told the children to get down in the canoe and be quiet. The other canoe passed by them with out seeing them. The children were still hiding in the bottom of the canoe. But, how would they find their way back to the village? [pause] How would the avoid the hunters in the other canoe?

The Grandmother started to sing. This was a strange song. The Grandmother sung often, and the children new all of her songs. They thought. The children looked up. Where their Grandmother had been sitting, there was a giant loon. It spread its wings and flew out of the canoe. It circled the canoe and then flew off. The children watched it fly off into the fog. Soon, the loon returned and circled again. When it left, this time, the children followed it. It lead them safely back to their village. For you see, only the loon has eyes that can see though the fog.

When the Grandmother was a girl, playing with the loons, they thought her a song. If see ever sang that song, [pause] she would change into a loon [pause] FOREVER. So when the Indians were canoeing in the fog, they always listen for Grandmother loon to guide them back to shore.

-- Thanks to Chief Lalooska, recorded from memory by Rick Clements

THE RAVEN

Long ago, near the beginning of the world. Gray Eagle was the guardian of the sun and moon and stars, of fresh water, and of fire. Gray Eagle hated people so much that he kept these things hidden. People lived in darkness, without fire and without fresh water.

Gray Eagle had a beautiful daughter, and Raven fell in love with her. At that time Raven was a handsome young man. He changed himself into a snow-white bird, and as a snow-white bird he pleased Gray Eagle's daughter. She invited him to her father's lodge.

When Raven saw the sun and the moon and the stars and fresh water hanging on the sides of Eagle's lodge, he knew what he had to do. He waited for his chance to seize them when no one was watching.

He stole all of them, and a brand of fire also, and he flew out of the lodge through the smoke hole.

As soon as Raven got outside, he hung the sun up in the sky. It made so much light that he was able to fly far out to an island in the middle of the ocean. When the sun set, he fastened the moon up in the sky and hung the stars around in different places. By this new light he kept on flying, carrying with him the fresh water and the brand of fire he had stolen.

He flew back over land. When he had reached the right place, he dropped all the water he had stolen. It fell to the ground and there became the source of all the fresh-water streams and lakes in the world.

Then Raven flew on, holding the brand of fire in his bill. The smoke from the fire blew back over his white feathers and make them black. When his bill began to burn, he had to drop the firebrand. It struck the rocks and went into the rocks. That is why, if you strike two stones together, fire will drop out.

Raven's feathers never became white again after they were blackened by the smoke from the firebrand. That is why Raven is now a black bird.

-- This story is from a tribe in the Puget Sound area recorded in Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest

HE WHO FOLLOWS ME

This is a ghost story I taped from an old-time radio program. I didn't tape the credits, but I know the name of it is He Who Follows Me, adapted for radio by Richard Thorn. I find an old diary at a flea market for about fifty cents, and copied the story down into it. I then take it to camp with my troop and tell them it is the diary of my late great Uncle Bill. Then, I simply start reading it too them. Granted, much of this is too detailed to be part of someone's REAL diary, but the Scouts are wrapped up in the story too much to notice.

March 3, 1938

Today, Helen and I came across one of the delightful old southern mansions. We decided to stop and make a study of the place. Helen was especially interested in taking some color pictures to illustrate our lecture series in the fall.

Although no one was home, we felt than no one would mind us taking a look around the place. We both felt it a shame that the owners let the place rundown. It was probably beautiful in its day. It could still be renovated, but not without a lot of money being spent.

After some shots of the house from the front and side, I noticed a building in back of the house. No one was to stop us, so we moved back there to take a look. The grounds of the back was more shabby than the front, but seeing how much needed done, it would be impossible without major construction work. Part of the mansion was still livable, though not very secure.

The building we were nearing didn't seem so worn down. It was in remarkably fine condition. It was built a lot later than the house was, I estimated it as no more than twenty years old. It was made of stone, gray stone. Somebody probably had lived in the old house not too long ago, and during that time constructed this building. But we both still felt it a shame that they let what must have been a wonderful place rundown like this.

We both stopped in front of the stone building. Helen made the observation that it didn't have any windows, something I had noticed too. I told her it was probably used for storage. It was then that Helen pointed to the broken padlock on the door. Our curiosity getting the best of us, we decided to check inside, to make sure everything was all right.

The massive heavy iron door swung open reluctantly. We stepped inside. Although there were no windows, light entered the structure through a skylight in the ceiling. The cold, damp musty air chilled our bones. Helen looked around the room, and laid her eyes on a large stone block in the

middle of the floor, right where the light was coming down from the skylight. This was not a storehouse by any stretch of the imagination. This was a mausoleum, and the stone case on the floor was a sarcophagus, a stone coffin. There was nothing else in there, but Helen, and I to an extent, felt crowded.

Helen wanted to get a picture of the sarcophagus, with the light laying over. We didn't think there was enough light for our camera, but we decided to try.

After the first shot, we heard movement outside and a man yell to us. I explained that we saw that the lock was broken and decided to explore. He told us that he wasn't mad, but that we still shouldn't of came in here, because "he" wouldn't like it. When I pressed the man to tell me who "he" was, he answered "the thing that sleeps in that stone coffin."

"This man must be crazy," I thought. He asked us why we didn't pay attention to the warning. Not knowing what he meant, he took us outside and showed us the writing above the door. "IF YOU ENTER HERE, INTO THE REALM OF DEATH, I SHALL FOLLOW YOU, AND BRING HIM WITH ME." He said it was a shame that we didn't see it, because we didn't know what we were getting ourselves into.

I once again apologized and told him we didn't want any legal trouble. He said we were already in enough trouble, none of it being legal, because it didn't matter to "him." This time, Helen asked about "him," and the man went into his story. "They called him Mr. Thomas when he was livin'. They call him The Dead that Walks now that he's dead. He cam to get that name because people around he 'as seen 'em, at night. He is dead, but they did see him walkin'. I know, cause I seen him myself." "I know you ain't believin' what I'm tellin' ya. I don't care what you believe. But you listen to what I'm sayin' now. If I was you I'd get as far away from this place as I could. Not just this place, but this town, this part of the country."

I didn't understand the urgency, so the man continued with the story, hoping to convince us.

"Old Thomas came from some place in Europe. I say "Old," but he really wasn't old. Just seemed that way. He bought the house and grounds here and had them cleaned up, till the place looked like it was brand new. Then he started buildin' this here buildin'."

"There was something funny 'bout Thomas; somethin' in his eyes. Made ya frightened of him. His eyes, they looked like the eyes of a dead man."

"He never acted like anyone I ever knew. He was always talking about death, always tellin' me how he could come back after death. I was the caretaker then, just like I am now."

"After this building was completed, I use to watch him at night. He'd come out here. It seemed as though he was in some sort of trance. He'd stay out here for hours. And when he'd come back to the house his eyes would glisten and shine, so you couldn't hardly look at him."

"A week before he died, he told me that as long as I live, I was to take care of this place. 'Cause if I didn't he'd come back an kill me. Then he died. Just like that. He was put in here, in that coffin."

"One night, about two months later when the moon was full, I heard a noise. And when I had come out to look I saw the door to this place open, and him come out. I could hear his footsteps, something queer and draggin'-like. Then he turned around, and I could see his face in the moonlight: pale and pasty. Sick lookin'. Those eyes of his seemed like to burning coals of fire."

"He seemed to be lookin' at me. I heard him say, 'They have disturbed me, and the moon has awakened me. I shall follow them.' That's what he said. I heard him just as straight as your hearin' me. And then, he vanished into the night."

"Towards morning, I heard his footsteps again. I heard that big iron door closin'. And I knew he was back."

"The next day I heard Ralph Cummins died the night before, screaming something about not meanin' to go into the mausoleum. I knew who killed him."

"This has happened again and again for the last ten years since he's been dead. Folks around hear say he'll follow you around wherever you go if you come inside here."

"Why haven't you been killed?" I asked, thinking I have caught him in his lie.

"Cause he needs me, Hee hee. He ain't gonna kill me. But if I was you, I get out of this part of the country."

March 3, Later.

I sit here and write these words. It is late and the moon has risen full in the sky. Helen is standing by the window looking out.

For some reason, I am frightened. Yet I know that a few months from now I will laugh at the memory of my fright. However, in the morning, I do believe that we will leave this place. Helen is glad. She doesn't not believe the caretaker's story, but she is concerned, just as I.

March 3, Still Later.

When I joined Helen at the window, a husky man appeared on the street below. He looked up at us.

The thing I noticed first was his face. Pale and pasty looking. Helen was startled by his eyes -- two bright coals of fire, just as the caretaker had described.

The man down in the street, whomever he was, left after about ten minutes. He has given us quite a fright. If I had felt any doubts as to whether we should leave this place they have all been dispelled now. I don't know what to believe.

Helen has just gone to bed. I think I shall do the same.

March 4, 1938.

Upon settling down to sleep last night, we heard footsteps coming from the room above us. I called down to the desk clerk, who only told us that the room above ours was unoccupied.

We left the hotel a short time after hearing the steps. We went immediately to our car and drove all night and all day.

We are stopping now in a motel almost one-thousand miles away. It is reassuring to know that he cannot possibly follow us.

I am very tired. I will go to bed and get an early start in the morning.

March 5, 1938.

Last night was not very comforting either. We heard the same footsteps outside our room, and Helen saw the man's face at the window.

This morning when I went into pay the bill, the man who owns the motel said that a strange pasty-faced man had been in earlier and told him to tell me that he would follow me.

March 11, 1938.

It is impossible to get any material together that will help me in my work. Everywhere we go, he's there also.

March 16, 1938.

The clerk told us this guy had said it was Ok for us to go ahead because he was going to follow us.

March 22, 1938.

He left a message with the lady at the desk lady telling us that he would be in touch.

April 7, 1938.

He left another message at the desk. The manager had the nerve to ask me if he was a friend of ours.

April 18, 1938.

Another disturbing night without sleep. More footsteps from the hall outside.

April 29, 1938.

Expecting it when we went to check out this morning, I asked the clerk if there were any messages. The clerk said a husky man in a white suit came by and said he'd follow us.

May 15, 1938.

I don't know what to do anymore. We cannot stop for the night without him showing up. The only sleep we get anymore is in the car while on the road.

May 30, 1938.

Helen and I argued again today. Since we've been on the run, that seems to be all that we can do. She suggested we go home. I fear that he will stalk us there, too. She felt it was the only place left to turn. I didn't know what to do or say, so we left for home.

June 23, 1938.

We arrived home this evening. I called Gary as soon as we got home. He said he'd be out within the hour to see us.

June 24, 1938.

Gary wasn't able to help us in any way. I did not really expecting any help. I was hoping he would be able to offer some concrete suggestion as to what to do. However, last night was the first night in months that we haven't been aware of his presence.

Maybe Helen is right. Perhaps he won't follow us here.

July 3, 1938.

We have not seen, nor heard, anything unusual since we first came home. I feel as a man might feel who has been given a new lease on life.

July 10, 1938.

Still nothing.

August 19, 1938.

For the past two months, a feeling of peace and security has enveloped the house. Helen and I have been able to go around with no sense of danger or dread. But last night that feeling was shattered...

[At this point I tell them a clipping from the newspaper was inserted into the diary. It was a clipping of a funeral notice for my Great Aunt Helen. It was, of course, too old and fragile to bring on the camp out. (WINK WINK.)]

According to one of their family friends (Gary?) my Great Uncle Bill went upstairs to investigate some footsteps, leaving my Great Aunt Helen downstairs alone.

When he got to the room that the noise came from, he found it empty. Going back downstairs, he found Helen, dead, with her eyes wide open.]

August 23, 1938.

I sit here in the empty house, writing this. I know that Thomas will come for me too. I write this in the hope that someone will find it. Read it. And maybe understand my death.

It is lonely here. Yet, suddenly I feel as if I am not alone. Someone is hear with me.

He is here, in this room with me. I am afraid to turn to meet him. Those eyes of his burning in to me. Yet, I must. I pray that someone reads this. Perhaps he will

[The August 23 entry was the last he ever made. I simply close the diary and let the scouts wonder. I simply tell them that my Uncle Bill was found just like my aunt. The coroner could not determine a cause of death, but our family knows what killed him -- The Dead that Walks. --

THE CREMATION OF SAM MCGEE

by Robert Service

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold,
And the Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold.
The northern lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was the night on the marge of Lake LaBarge
I cremated Sam McGee.

Now, Sam McGee was from Tennessee
Where the cotton blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the south to roam
'Round the pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land of gold
Seemed to hold him like a spell,
Though he'd often say, in his homely way,
He'd sooner live in hell.

On a Christmas day we were mushing our way
Over the Dawson Trail.
Talk of your cold--through the parka's fold
It stabbed like a driven nail.
If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes froze
'Till sometimes we couldn't see.
It wasn't much fun, but the only one
To whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night as we lay packed tight
In our robes beneath the snow,
And the dogs were fed, and the stars o'erhead
Were dancing heel and toe,
He turned to me, and "Cap", says he,
"I'll cash in this trip, I guess,
And if I do, I'm asking that you
Won't refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low I couldn't say no,
And he says with a sort of moan,
"It's the cursed cold, and it's got right hold
'Till I'm chilled clean through to the bone.
Yet 'ta'int being dead, it's my awful dread
Of the icy grave that pains,

**So I want you to swear that, foul or fair,
You'll cremate my last remains."**

**A pal's last need is a thing to heed,
And I swore that I would not fail.
We started on at the streak of dawn,
But, God, he looked ghastly pale.
He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved all day
Of his home in Tennessee,
And before nightfall, a corpse was all
That was left of Sam McGee.**

**There wasn't a breath in that land of death
As I hurried, horror driven,
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid
Because of a promise given.
It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seemed to say,
"You may tax your brawn and brains,
But you promised true, and it's up to you
To cremate those last remains."**

**Now, a promise made is a debt unpaid,
And the trail has its own stern code.
In the days to come, 'though my lips were dumb,
In my heart, how I cursed the load.
In the long, long night by the lone firelight
While the huskies 'round in a ring
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows
Oh, God, how I loathed the thing.**

**And every day that quiet clay
Seemed to heavy and heavier grow.
And on I went, though the dogs were spent
And the grub was getting low.
The trail was bad, and I felt half mad,
But I swore I would not give in,
And often I'd sing to the hateful thing,
And it hearkened with a grin.**

**'Till I came to the marge of Lake LaBarge,
And a derelict there lay.
It was jammed in the ice, and I saw in a trice
It was called the "Alice May".
I looked at it, and I thought a bit,
And I looked at my frozen chum,**

Then, "Here", said I, with a sudden cry,
"Is my crematorium."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor
And lit the boiler fire.

Some coal I found that was lying around
And heaped the fuel higher.
The flames just soared, and the furnace roared,
Such a blaze you seldom see.
Then I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal
And I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like
To hear him sizzle so.

And the heavens scowled, and the huskies howled,
And the wind began to blow.
It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled
Down my cheek, and I don't know why,
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak
Went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow
I wrestled with gristly fear.

But the stars came out, and they danced about
'Ere again I ventured near.
I was sick with dread, but I bravely said,
"I'll just take a peek inside.
I guess he's cooked, and it's time I looked",
And the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking calm and cool
In the heart of the furnace roar.

He wore a smile you could see a mile,
And he said, "Please close that door.
It's fine in here, but I greatly fear
You'll let in the cold and storm.
Since I left Plumbtree down in Tennessee
It's the first time I've been warm."

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold,
And the Arctic trails have their secret tales

**That would make your blood run cold.
The northern lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was the night on the marge of Lake LaBarge
I cremated Sam McGee.**

THE WITCH OF COOS

Robert Frost

I staid the night for shelter at a farm Behind the mountain, with a mother and son, Two old-believers. They did all the talking.

MOTHER. Folks think a witch who has familiar spirits She could call up to pass a winter evening, But won't, should be burned at the stake or something. Summoning spirits isn't "Button, button, Who's got the button," I would have them know.

SON. Mother can make a common table rear And kick with two legs like an army mule.

MOTHER. And when I've done it, what good have I done? Rather than tip a table for you, let me Tell you what Ralle the Sioux Control once told me. He said the dead had souls, but when I asked him How could that be--I thought the dead were souls, He broke my trance. Don't that make you suspicious That there's something the dead are keeping back? Yes, there's something the dead are keeping back.

SON. You wouldn't want to tell him what we have UP attic, mother?

MOTHER. Bones--a skeleton.

SON. But the headboard of mother's bed is pushed Against the attic door: the door is nailed. It's harmless. Mother hears it in the night Halting perplexed behind the barrier Of door and headboard. Where it wants to get is back into the cellar where it came from.

MOTHER. We'll never let them, will we, son! We'll never!

SON. It left the cellar forty years ago And carried itself like a pile of dishes Up one flight from the cellar to the kitchen, Another from the kitchen to the bedroom, Another from the bedroom to the attic, Right past both father and mother, and neither stopped it. Father had gone upstairs; mother was downstairs. I was a baby: I don't know where I was.

MOTHER. The only fault my husband found with me-- I went to sleep before I went to bed, Especially in winter when the bed Might just as well be ice and the clothes snow. The night the bones came up the cellar-stairs Toffile had gone to bed alone and left me, But left an open door to cool the room off So as to sort of turn me out of it. I was just coming to myself enough To wonder where the cold was coming from, When I heard Toffile upstairs in the bedroom And thought I heard him downstairs in the cellar. The board we had laid down to walk dry-shod on When there was water in the cellar in spring Struck the hard cellar bottom. And then someone Began the stairs,

tow footsteps for each step, The way a man with one leg and a crutch, Or a little child, comes up. It wasn't Toffile: It wasn't anyone who could be there. The bulkhead double-doors were double-locked And swollen tight and buried under snow. The cellar windows were banked up with sawdust And swollen tight and buried under snow. It was the bones. I knew them--and good reason. My first impulse was to get to the knob And hold the door. But the bones didn't try The door; they halted helpless on the landing, Waiting for things to happen in their favor. The faintest restless rustling ran all through them. I never could have done the thing I did If the wish hadn't been too strong in me To see how they were mounted for this walk. I had a vision of them put together Not like a man, but like a chandelier. So suddenly I flung the door wide on him. A moment he stood balancing with emotion, And all but lost himself. (A tongue of fire Flashed out and licked along his upper teeth. Smoke rolled inside the sockets of his eyes.) Then he came at me with one hand outstretched, The way he did in life once; but this time I struck the hand off brittle on the floor, And fell back from him on the floor myself. The finger-pieces slid in all directions. (Where did I see one of those pieces lately? Hand me my button-box-it must be there.) I sat up on the floor and shouted, "Toffile, It's coming up to you." It had its choice Of the door to the cellar or the hall. It took the hall door for the novelty, And set off briskly for so slow a thing, Still going every which way in the joints, though, So that it looked like lightning or a scribble, From the slap I had just now given its hand. I listened till it almost climbed the stairs From the hall to the only finished bedroom, Before I got up to do anything; Then ran and shouted, "Shut the bedroom door, Toffile, for my sake!" "Company?" he said, "Don't make me get up; I'm too warm in bed." So lying forward weakly on the handrail I pushed myself upstairs, and in the light (The kitchen had been dark) I had to own I could see nothing. "Toffile, I don't see it. It's with us in the room though. It's the bones." "What bones?" "The cellar bones--out of the grave." That made him throw his bare legs out of bed And sit up by me and take hold of me. I wanted to put out the light and see If I could see it, or else mow the room, With our arms at the level of our knees, And bring the chalk-pile down. "I'll tell you what-- It's looking for another door to try. The uncommonly deep snow has made him think Of his old song, The Wild Colonial Boy, He always used to sing along the tote-road. He's after an open door to get out- doors. Let's trap him with an open door up attic." Toffile agreed to that, and sure enough, Almost the moment he was given an opening, The steps began to climb the attic stairs. I heard them. Toffile didn't seem to hear them. "Quick!" I slammed to the door and held the knob. "Toffile, get nails." I made him nail the door shut, And push the headboard of the bed against it. Then we asked was there anything Up attic that we'd ever want again. The attic was less to us than the cellar. If the bones liked the attic, let them have it. Let them stay in the attic. When they sometimes Come down the stairs at night and stand perplexed Behind the door and headboard of the bed, Brushing their chalky skull with chalky fingers, With sounds like the dry rattling of a

shutter, That's what I sit up in the dark to say-- To no one any more since Toffile died. Let them stay in the attic since they went there. I promised Toffile to be cruel to them For helping them to be cruel once to him.

SON. We think they had a grave down in the cellar.

MOTHER. We know they had a grave down in the cellar.

SON. We never could find out whose bones they were.

MOTHER. Yes, we could too, son. Tell the truth for once. They were a man's his father killed for me. I mean a man he killed instead of me. The least I could do was to help dig their grave. We were about it one night in the cellar. Son knows the story: but 'twas not for him To tell the truth, suppose the time had come. Son looks surprised to see me end a lie We'd kept all these years between ourselves So as to have it ready for outsiders. But tonight I don't care enough to lie-- I don't remember why I ever cared. Toffile, if he were here, I don't believe Could tell you why he ever cared himself. . .

She hadn't found the finger-bone she wanted Among the buttons poured out in her lap. I verified the name next morning: Toffile. The rural letter-box said Toffile Lajway.

WHITE EYES

In fact, there's a Boy Scout camp not far from where this occurred.

The San Bernardino Mountains contains a lot of wilderness regions which saw substantial activity about 100 years ago. Here, miners and loggers worked to bring materials down to the Los Angeles basin. But, like most industries of that time, there was a high profit motive, and workers lives were not as important as they were now.

One day, a mine tunnel collapsed, trapping a number of men within. They were able to survive, after a fashion, by drinking water which seeped into the tunnels, eating rats, mushrooms, and their dead co-workers. They worked from within to dig themselves out, confident that on the other side, others were digging from the outside in. Well, maybe not that confident, since the mining company was not known for its compassion.

Well, it took them a while, but they finally managed to dig themselves out. Then, the formerly trapped miners found two surprises. First, since they had lived in darkness for a long period of time, they could no longer stand the sunlight, and their eyes were pure white---no color except for their pupils, which were dilated. Second, not one man had lifted a shovel to dig them out.

They then made a pact, these men, to take revenge on those who had abandoned them. Soon after, mysterious instances of men being killed in the mountains occurred. These men were usually found mauled, bloody and torn. Close examination showed the teeth marks on them were from human teeth. One man was even beaten by his arm which had been torn off at the shoulder.

Soon thereafter, the mining company went out of business: No one was willing to work in those mountains, and even groups of men at night were at risk. Rumor had it that the White-Eyes were out for blood.

Now, since this happened about 100 years ago, and since only men were working in the mines, there should be no more White-Eyes around. So, we're safe---or are we? Several years ago, a hiker was found mauled on the trail, with human teeth marks.

Embellish the story as you wish! You may even want to adapt it to your locale. But beware---when I told this story to a group of campers at summer camp once, some boys (in my troop, first timers, and other troops there) were scared out of their wits, especially since it occurred so close to where they were at.

-- Thanks to Mas Sayano Assistant Scoutmaster, Los Angeles Area Council

WRAP WRAP WRAP

Like many of you, I was brought up with the ghost story by the campfire. We waited anxiously to hear another _good one_. (I must say that this was before such movies as Freddie came on -- Movies weren't that bold yet.)

Being on the other end of the campfire, I find myself mixed. When a SM must stay up all night with a new scout because the story was _too real_ puts it in a different light. Now, don't get me wrong. Out of the two troops that I've been associated with, both _love_ the ghost stories.

However, we have adopted a philosophy in telling the stories. When the audience is populated with young scouts, we add parts to the story that break the mood somewhat, yet still give the thrill that the scouts seek. Then as the Scouts mature, work them into the good wall hangers.

As an example, I've enclosed a story that I've had good results with in many groups. I'll just hit the highlights here, then expand a little at the end.

----- story -----

A Troop sets camp in a secluded area by a lake in the mountains. Just at the edge of the clearing stands an old trapper's cabin. As all SM's do at the campfire, this SM tells the following tale:

Many years ago this land was sacred hunting ground for the (pick your tribe) Indians in this area. The game in this field was always plentiful -- until the white man came and built that cabin. The tribe elders were enraged at this encroachment, and sent their best warriors to oust the intruder.

The leader of the raiding party had seen this intruder, and knew him to be an old man with little spirit, so instead of harming him, they decided to scare him out. The Indian crept up to the house and gently _wrapped_ on the wall.

This attracted the attention of the home owner, but finding nothing there, he went back to his work. Again the Indian _wrapped_ on the wall. This cat and mouse game went on for the majority of the night. The white man was becoming afraid of this mystery noise, so he reached for the shotgun he kept over the mantle. The next time the Indian _wrapped_, the man was prepared and decapitated the Indian with a single shot. The tribe elders, on seeing how easily the white man conquered their best, banned all people from setting foot in their sacred hunting ground. To insure this, the medicine man called on the spirit of the be-headed warrior to guard the land. It is said that on dark rainy nights, the warrior can still be heard prowling around the old home.

Once the story was told, the SM bade the boys good night and all turned in.

As can happen on spring nights, a thunder cloud began to build and soon the campers found themselves in a wind that was taking the tents away, and drenching them with cold ice water. The leaders decided that the safest thing would be to seek shelter in the old house. The boys eagerly moved into the old house, except for the troop cook -- he was thinking of that old Indian and really didn't want any part of the house. So, just in case he took two of his biggest pans with him for protection.

The storm raged on, but the boys had settled down inside the cabin. Suddenly, a faint noise could be heard, *_wrap, wrap, wrap_*. Most of the boys didn't hear it, but the cook heard it well. Soon all the scouts were up listening to the *_wrap, wrap, wrap_*. The SM went over to the side where it appeared to be coming from and the noise stopped. (A number of cycles here to build up the suspense. However, the cook was given pans for a reason -- he's the skittish one of the group and is liable to swing at anything.) The noise has grown in volume and intensity, and the SM has realized that he must go outside and fix whatever is loose on the house. He takes the senior scouts with him, which unfortunately is the cook. (Suspenseful) they walk around the house and find that the *_wrapping_* noise is coming from a hole in the stone fireplace. The SM carefully inserts his hand into the hole and removes a roll of wrapping paper going *_wrap, wrap, wrap_*.

-end of story-

Now to expand on the concept. 1. The corny ending will take the stress off of the story, helping reinforce the thought that it is not real. Besides a laugh is a good thing to create at a campfire. 2. The whole story can be spiced up to make it as thrilling as you want. It won't take too much imagination and a little acting to keep them on the edge of their seats. 3. The cook is a pressure release in the story. He is very high strung and can swing at anything from his own shadow to the scoutmaster. Use him in humorous ways to take the edge off of the story as you go. 4. Taylor the story to your group. If your group is young and gullible, use the cook a little more. If they are seasoned campers, pour on the suspense. We usually find a good mix works wonders. Keep in mind that young boys/girls can fix their minds on something like this very easily and they will not sleep in the wood, especially new Scouts.

You'll know you did well when you hear that catch phrase *_wrap, wrap, wrap_* echo around the camp for the next few days.

A NIGHT NEAR THE TOOTH

I didn't EXACTLY stay on the Tooth of Time. We were running late when we stopped Shafer's Peak and the danger of walking fast down the narrow trail with sheer drops on each side in the falling darkness finally overcame us. We set up a dining fly in a wide spot and placed our packs (with little food) away from us. Some settled under the fly, and some under the stars.

Our scoutmaster and a couple of the boys took a miniature radio out to an overlook for a bit of news. It was to be an eventful night! One of the boys was prone to nose bleeding but had not had problems ... until now. In a fainting sway he nearly pitched over the side. Instead he body checked our small scoutmaster. With a yell that summoned two of us by name but in a tone that revealed the emergency, we jumped from our sleeping bags and (almost) streaked over to carry the boy back to his bag. He was fine.

As we slept, a deer or two came silently through our "camp" pausing astride one camper who awoke and missed seeing the stars! The sure footed animal moved on without incident (unlike burros near water!). We were sleeping peacefully despite a rising wind in the early morning darkness.

The wind had loosened a corner of our fly and it was flapping in the breeze. About that time, two hikers bound for sunrise on the tooth, heard the flapping and thought the shadows contained a hungry bear. As is procedure, they drew out their mess kits and clanged the pieces in a horrible racket to scare the bear! Our scoutmaster came out of his MUMMY bag without unzipping it! It scared US silly! We all thought we had a bear in our midst!

We were all a bit anxious about not making our designated camp but it simply was unsafe. Still, this story is repeated around our campfire with each new batch of scouts in our troop. OH, and we did get to see sunrise over the tooth!

-- Thanks to Andy Webb

CAMPFIRES

**From A Fine And Pleasant Misery
by Patrick F. McManus**

The campfire was of two basic kinds: the Smudge and the Inferno.

The Smudge was what you used when you were desperately in need of heat. By hovering over the Smudge the camper could usually manage to thaw ice from his hands before being kippered to death. The Inferno was what you always used for cooking. Experts on camp cooking claimed you were supposed to cook over something called "a bed of glowing coals." The "bed of glowing coals" was a fiction concocted by experts on camp cooking. As a result, the camp cook was frequently pictured, by artists who should have known better, as a tranquil man hunkered down by a bed of glowing coals, turning plump trout in the frying pan with the blade of his knife. In reality, the camp cook is a wildly distraught individual who charged through waves of heat and speared savagely with a long sharp stick a burning hunk of meat he had tossed on the grill from twenty feet away. Meat roasted over an Inferno was either raw or extra well done. The cook, if he was lucky, came out medium rare.

SECURITY GUYS

Two summers ago, when I was deputy director of the CIA, a friend and I traversed the Olympic Mountain Range in Washington State, hiking 70 miles north to south. Snow in August, ice axes in hand, fording rivers with ropes and in the swift current nearly being carried downstream pack and all; watching with middle-aged sadistic pleasure as my much younger security escorts struggle up the trail.

Or the summer before, canoeing 50 mile long Ross Lake in Washington near the Canadian border in over-loaded canoes in a driving wind and rainstorm, foot high swells threatening to capsize us, wondering if we'd escape with our lives.

Then having the security guys, also struggling, paddle up alongside to report that they had a radio call from Washington ... and "?could I get to a secure telephone?" This when I thought I might never even see the shore again.

But this message gave me a determination to survive ... if only to get pack to Washington and find out who had placed that call.

-- Part of a story by Robert Gates, in Scouting Magazine

THE BALLAD OF JOHNNY O'DELL

**Wild are the tales of the Pony Express
And most of them are true if I don't miss my guess.
But wildest of all tales that they tell
Is that of fearless young Johnny O'Dell.**

**Johnny was little, but he was a man
Whom none could outride, outshoot or outplan.
Ride, he could ride anything that could run
And could outdo any man with a gun.**

**Back in those days there were men in the West
And Johnny O'Dell was as good as the best.
Only the bravest could carry the mail
Through terrible dangers that haunted the trail.**

**Dangers there were on the night I describe,
For Johnny encountered an Indian tribe.
Blackie, his horse, gave a new burst of speed.
No Indian pinto could equal that steed.**

**Bullets and arrows whizzed over his head
As into the foe and right through them he sped.
Outlaws had raided the station ahead
The horses were stolen, his partner was dead.**

**Onward went Johnny over the trail.
For such was the life when you carry the mail
Rivers they forded for bridges there were none
While crossing one stream he was stopped by a gun.**

**"Halt!" cried a man on the bank of the creek-
As together they fired by the light of the sun.
Still lay the stranger whom Johnny had met,
For all that I know he is lying there yet.**

**Onward went Johnny into the West,
As a spot of crimson appeared on his vest.
Together they continued their hazardous ride,
The powerful horse with the brave man astride.**

**Into the town of Red Gulch did they go,
As blotches of blood marked their way through the snow.
This was the end of the perilous trail
Through bullets, and arrows; through blizzards and hail.**

**Johnny dismounted and cried with a wail,
"Oh, Darn it all, I've forgotten the mail!"**

IF ONLY ...

Won Lee was a stone cutter who lived in ancient China. He cut large stones and he cut small stones. He made them into ornaments for gardens. Some he cut to build houses. He was proud of his work, but sometimes he would think, "If only I had more money" or "If only I had less work."

One day, Won Lee was walking home from work. The sun was very hot and he was tired, so he sat down at the side of the road. He felt the heat of the sun and thought, "It's the sun that gives us the daylight, the warmth to grow our crops. Surely the sun must be the most powerful of all things."

Won Lee said quietly to himself, "God, if only I could be the sun. I would love to feel what it is like to be the most powerful, the greatest of all things."

God answered Won Lee. "You may become the sun." He said. And Won Lee became the sun. He felt wonderful; so strong and powerful. He shone down on the world far below.

After a few days, a puffy white cloud appeared in the sky. It drifted about and, when it came near Won Lee, it blotted out his rays and cast a shadow on the world. Won Lee was sad. Surely this cloud was more powerful than he ? "If only I were the cloud. That would make me the greatest of all things," he said.

God heard, and again He answered: "Won Lee, you may become the cloud." So Won Lee floated about the sky feeling very grand.

One day, Won Lee saw a great black cloud coming his way. Soon it surrounded him, and he saw the black cloud dripping droplets of water. The drops fell on the earth and made a mighty river.

Won Lee thought that this black cloud must be very powerful to swallow up a cloud and turn itself into a river, so he said, "If only I were the river. How mighty I would be. Then I would be truly happy."

Again God heard and answered: "Okay. You may be the river."

So Won Lee flowed along, feeling the mighty rush of water. Then he came to a bend in the river. There was a great boulder jutting out into the river. The great boulder held the river, swirling it back on itself.

Won Lee thought, "The rock ! The rock ! At last I have found the mightiest of all things. If this rock can hold back the raging river, then it is the greatest. If only I were this great big rock, I would be happy."

So God made Won Lee into the boulder and he stood there, holding back the water and feeling very great and happy. Then, one day, along came a man who cut a large piece off the boulder. Won Lee was sad. No longer was he the greatest if this man could come along and cut him up.

"If only I could be the man who cut up the stone, I would surely be the greatest," Won Lee thought.

And God said to Won Lee: "But you are the Stone Cutter!"

-- Australian Scout magazine

WINTER CUB STORY

During our 1991 (Feb) winter camp, I was called to tell a story during campfire. The weather outside was bitterly cold (-25 Celsius) and the wind was howling. I hadn't given a story much thought, because I usually have one tucked away in the back of my mind for all occasions. This time I was stumped. After a couple milliseconds, the brain kicked in and the light went on. We were inside the main cabin for an indoor fire. I turned the lights down low, leaving only a small spotlight on the Wolf's head above the fireplace. I got a chair, turned it around & sat down on it backwards. The atmosphere was somber, and quiet. You could hear the wind howling outside.

-- Start of Story

Years ago, right here at this camp, a Cub pack, much like ours came out for the weekend. As with most every pack, there's always one Cub, who's much better than everyone else in his camping skills. This Pack had an exceptional Cub, who everyone looked up to, to help them out if they were having any problems. This Cub could walk farther than anyone else, catch bigger fish, make a better snow-fort to sleep in, start a fire with one match every time, could snowshoe faster than the leaders, and many more skills. Everyone would ask him for help, because he was so good. The leaders relayed on him to help teach all the Cub skills, and he did it with a smile on his face. Everyone liked him because he was so friendly.

Saturday night, he and a few of his friends decided to sleep outside in a snow fort. The Cub helped everyone to get settled, before turning in himself. The Camp Chief came out to check on them periodically, so no one would get cold. In the middle of the night, the Cub was awoken by the call to nature. He woke up a couple of his buddies to go with him, as he knew that no one should go anywhere without a buddy. His friends told him that since he was the best Cub in the pack, and knew so much, that there was no chance for something to go wrong. You all know, that flattery is great for one's ego, and this Cub was no different. He got dressed and ventured outside to one of the biffies, to complete his task.

After he had done, he got dressed again, and started back to his snow fort. But when he opened the door to the biffie, he saw that a storm had moved in. He started to return to his fort, but the tracks he had left had been blown over by the storm. He tried to find his way back, but the wind was driving the snow in his eyes and he couldn't see anything. He walked as fast as he could to where he thought the fort was, but he couldn't find it. He walked, and stumbled in the storm for what seemed a long time, when he realized he was in trouble. He remembered the first rule when lost in the winter: stop and build a fire. He found a spot to dig out a cave in a snow bank, and crawled in. He had an emergency kit with him, and quickly had a fire going.

The next morning, everyone awoke to find a clean, crisp layer of white snow had covered the camp. It didn't take long for the Cub's friends to realized that he was missing, and they ran to tell the rest of the camp. Everyone got dressed in their warmest clothes and quickly started a search party. They scoured the entire camp for hours, but couldn't find the Lost Cub. For the rest of the day, everyone searched for him. They called the police to help, but still couldn't find him. For days, search parties combed the area looking for the Cub, but he was never found.

It was a sad year for that Cub Pack. They had lost a great friend. In the Spring, they gathered again at the camp to search for the Cub's remains. Again, everyone searched everywhere, but couldn't find him.

I often walk through these woods at night, and often think about the Lost Cub. It's been said that if you are walking alone through these woods at night, you may feel a cold draft shiver down your back. It maybe the Lost Cub reminding you to get a BUDDY!

-- End of Story

I've told this story a couple other times, and have gotten the same reaction; sadness & remorse from all. It's really helped to emphasize the "buddy system" in our Pack. I still get questions from older Cubs - Was that story real? I never answer.

-- Thanks to Randy Carnduff

THE RABBI & THE SOAP MAKER

A Rabbi and a soap maker were walking along and the soap maker questioned the Rabbi by asking, "What good is religion? There's been religion for a long time, but people are still bad to each other"

The Rabbi was silent until they saw a boy who was dirty from playing in the street. The Rabbi asked the soap maker, "What good is soap? We've had soap for many, many years and people still get dirty"

The soap maker protested the comparison and insisted that the soap had to be used in order to keep people clean. "Exactly my point", said the Rabbi. "Religion", he said, "has to be applied in order to do anybody any good."

THE KOOLAMUNGA TEST

Long ago, somewhere in Africa, a little place called Koolamunga had a Scout troop but no Cub Pack. When the missionary, John Cristy, sent out word that he was going to start a pack, all the boys who were too young to be Scouts rushed over to join.

John looked out at rows and rows of faces - black, white, brown, yellow, and some so dirty you couldn't tell. It was impossible to start a pack with 40 or 50 Cubs ! "You can't be a Cub until you are eight," he said, "so would everybody younger please go home."

Nobody left. The six and seven-year-olds stood as tall as they could and tried to look tough. John realized he would have to sort them out some other way. So he told them the Cub Law. And then he said, "Next week, we will have an obstacle race. You can all come, but I shall start the pack with the 12 boys who do their best to keep the Law during the race."

A big crowd gathered on race day. The Scouts came along to help John pick his 12 Cubs. John designed an obstacle course so tough that it automatically eliminated the boys who were too young. The others had to run half a kilometer downhill to the river through prickles and a mangrove swamp with knee-deep mud. Then they had to swim across the river. On the other side, they had to climb a steep bank, go along the top, cross over the river again by a fallen tree bridge, and finally climb 300 m up the hill to the finish.

"This is not a race," John told them. "It's a test to see who can really do his best to keep the Cub Law." And he was already sorting them out. Some jabbered away and didn't listen to the rules. One put his foot over the starting line. "Ready, steady, GO!" John shouted, and off they went.

Very soon, some of them were yelling and swearing at the prickles. In the swamp, some gave up, pretending they were hurt. One boy thought he would be clever and sneak along the bank instead of swimming across the river.

A small boy caught his foot in a floating branch and thought it was a crocodile. John didn't blame him for yelling, but noticed a red-headed boy swim back to pull the branch free. Then he saw a white hand shoot out and duck a black head. That settled the white boy's chances, but the black face came up smiling and the boy swam on without complaint. On the tree bridge, there was a good deal of bumping, some by mistake and some by mistake-on- purpose.

Only 20 boys finished the race, and the first 12 home were sure they would be chosen. But the Scouts put aside those who had cheated or taken short

cuts, those who had pretended to be hurt, and those who had sworn or lost their temper.

John chose only boys who had done their best to keep the Cub Law. There were 11 of them. For the 12th, he chose a boy named Peter who was watching but hadn't taken part in the race. John knew his mother was ill. She'd asked Peter to look after the younger children to make sure they didn't fall into the river, and he did it without a grumble.

And who do you think he asked to be his sixers ? He chose the red-haired boy who had turned back to help with the crocodile that wasn't a crocodile, and the black boy who came up smiling after being ducked.

And that's how the 1st Koolamunga Pack began. If you'd been there, would you have been one of the 12 chosen ?

-- Leader Magazine, January, 1989

THE FARMER

There was this farmer who had many fields. And throughout all his fields, he worked very very hard at keeping all the animals away, and as such, out of his crops that he worked very very hard to plant.

And ... He was successful in keeping all the animals out. No birds, no deer, NOTHING got through all his wire fences and traps that he had set out to keep the animals out.

As time went on, this farmer got more and more lonely. So lonely as a matter of fact, that one day, he went out into his fields, held his arms out wide and called to all of the animals to come. He stood there all day and night with his arms out wide, calling to all the animals, but you know what, none of the animals came ... No, not one. ... And what was the reason none came?

All of the animals were afraid of the farmers ... new scarecrow out in the field.

-- Thanks to Brad George

WEBELOS

Hear now the Webelos legend; The tale of the Webelos tribe; The tale of Akela its Chieftain.

'Hoo', called the owl in the darkness and Mowglie, the Indian boy Lay in his tipi and listened to the rustle of trees in the night.

'Boom' went the deep muffled beat of the great ceremonial drum; the braves of the tribe were convening, He wished he could answer that call.

Quick, like the flight of an arrow; Quiet, in the hush of the night; Before a great fire ring they gathered Awaiting Akela their Chief.

Here in the great council ring fire On top of the cliff there they met. Here often they come for decisions Here, too, the Great Spirit they sought.

Here they sought help from the Spirit On hunt or on warpath; in peace. Here they met their Chief Akela; Awaited his final decrees.

Now with the 'boom' of the big drum All was quiet, the night was quiet still. The great ceremonial fire, when lighted, illuminated the hill

The tom-toms began, set the rhythm, Akela stepped into the Ring. First low and slow, then ... like thunder... The beat as he danced near the fire.

Dancing with grace, full of gesture, In costume he told of his life. He told of the strength of his father, The powerful 'Arrow of Light'

'Kind Eyes' his mother, taught those things that only a mother can know. He once save her life with his arrow; His father helped fashion his bow.

The tom-toms beat on and his dance Told of trips to the forest, where wolf Taught him the ways of the wild life of the ground, of the tracks, ways to food.

Through dancing and gesture he told how he next faced the Bear and learned The meaning of Courage; and then He became a young Scout on the trail.

Akela, the Wise, closed his dance. By sign and by gesture he told How the Tribe can be strong only when The boys of the Tribe are quite strong.

He said this, 'The future is hidden But if we are strong and are brave, If we can teach our boys to be square, Our tribe will continue to be strong.'

"Let us name our tribe for the Bobcat, The Wolf and the Bear and the Scout, The Webelos Tribe we'll be called and The strongest of all we will be."

Akela thus ended his dance The beat of the tom-tom was stilled. In silence the warriors stood, Then gave the great guttural "HOW"!

The fire burned low, all was still. No sound broke the hush on the hill, Save the crackle of embers and all The mysterious half- noises of night.

The braves raised their right hand toward heaven. "Living Circle" was formed with their left. The Webelos pledge was then given; "To live and help live" was their pledge.

This, then, is the Webelos legend. This, then, is the reason they're strong. They honor the pledge which they make; "To live and help live" is their goal.

-- Arranged from the prose by Milton Klint, Salina, Kansas

Dogs in the Wild West

One hot and dry day in the Wild West, this dog walks into a saloon and says, "Gimme a beer". Evidently this type of thing wasn't too rare 'round those parts because the bartender said, "I'm sorry, but we don't serve dogs here." The dog then took out a silver dollar, dropped it on the bar, and said, "Look, I got money, and I want a beer." This scene had the potential to get ugly. The bartender, getting a little irate, said one more time, "We do not serve dogs here. Please leave." The dog growled, so the bartender pulled out a gun and shot the dog in the foot! The dog yelped, and ran out the door.

The next day, the swinging bar doors were tossed open and in walks the dog that had been in the saloon the day before. He was dressed all in black. A black cowboy hat, a black vest, three black cowboy boots and one black bandage. The dog looks around, waits for the talking to quiet down, and says, "I'm lookin' fer the man who shot my paw."

-- Thanks to Steve Poggio

The Very Special Bus

There once was this man who was looking for a job. He applied for a bus driver's job at the county board of education. The head of the school board granted him an interview. During the interview the man was told there was only one bus driver job left, the one that drove the special education bus. The man said he would take the job but the school official asked that he look at the bus first. They went outside down a row of yellow school buses and at the end was a small van with Sesame Street characters painted all over it. The man was a little reluctant at first but the official told him all the kids would be at the bus stops and all he had to do was pick them up in the morning and take them home in the evening. The man needed the job badly so he took it.

The first day on the job he comes to the bus stop and there is a little girl standing there who is very fat. She gets on the bus and the driver says, "Hi! What's your name?" The girl replies, "My name is Patty" and takes a seat. He comes to the next stop and there is another little girl there who is fatter than the first. She gets on the bus and the driver asks, "What your name?". She says "My name is Patty" then takes a seat by the first girl.

At the next stop there is a little boy standing there. When he gets on the bus he says, "Hi I'm Ross and I'm special." At the next stop there is another little boy standing there and when asked his name he says, "Hi I'm Lester Cheatum". Lester takes the seat behind the driver, pulls off his shoes. He starts picking the loose skin on his bunions and throwing it at the driver. This being the last stop, the driver takes the group of special kids to school.

This same scene happens every day for a week. On Friday the driver goes into the superintendent's office and says, "I quit! I can't take it anymore!"

When asked why the driver says, "Every day it's the same thing! Two obese Patty's, special Ross, Lester Cheatum picking bunions on a Sesame Street bus".

-- Thanks to John Sugg

Dances with Cucumbers

May 5, 1863 -- Here on the frontier, I sometimes wonder if the ancients were right. With no other friendly face within 150 miles, it seems as if I have fallen off the edge of the Earth.

I spend my time now reading what books I have and cultivating my patch of cucumbers (which I brought back from the Holy Land, cf. Prince of Thieves). The "purpose" of this fort, to hold back the Indians, has fallen away with my civilized veneer.

May 7, 1863 -- This morning I had an interesting and silent encounter. One of the tribe of Indians nearby watched me perform my morning tasks and then left without a word. I am excited by the prospect of contact with the natives of the area.

May 20, 1863 -- I have finally convinced the Indians to parlay with me. I taught them the word for "fort", feeling that it would be simple enough for them to learn. They in turn taught me the Indian word "tintonka", apparently a small but tough, powerfully merchandised horseless carriage of metal construction. I envy these people their simplicity.

June 7, 1863 -- Today I visited the Indians' village. It is on one of the many flat-topped plateaus in the area. As the decline of the buffalo proceeds, so too does this Indian tribe face decline. I will try to teach them agriculture. They have also told me their name for themselves. It is "Anasazi"... which apparently means "people called Anasazi" in their language. I am called by them "Stinchapecsal" which means "he who should bathe more regularly".

July 8, 1863 -- A rude awakening. The Indians are fully aware of agriculture and in fact have nothing to do with the buffalo (what kind of nomadic tribe would build a village on a mesa ?); unfortunately, they are suffering a drought. Knowing a remedy, I have told them to dig a ditch from the nearby stream up the mountainside to their mesa-top fields. In the meantime, I am pickling my cucumbers.

July 20, 1863 -- The drought is desperate, but the ditch is finished and my pickles are ready. I am lining the ditch with pickles. The Anasazi are doubtful, but I have promised them results in the morning.

July 21, 1863 -- Success! The stream has been diverted and now flows up the mountainside to the Anasazi fields. Amazed by this seeming magic, I told them that it was simply a well-known fact in my world. After all, everyone knows that "dill waters run steep".

Thanks to Steven Andrew Wolfman

The Bush Pilot

A British bush pilot is flying on a job through the Australian outback when he encounters engine problems and is forced to make a crash landing. He survives, but is found unconscious and is taken to a local mission hospital which is run by the Sisters of Mercy. Upon awakening, he is greeted by the mother superior who advises him where he is and asks if there is anything he wants. He replies, "I am a bit thirsty...could I have a cup of tea?" to which the mother superior says, "I'm terribly sorry, but our supply truck is late and we are out of regular tea. However, we do have a sort of native drink that is brewed from koala hides." the pilot thinks awhile and replies, "Well, I just have to have my cuppa...you can bring me that, thanks."

The nun leaves and returns in a few minutes with a steaming cup. The pilot takes the cup gratefully, but upon taking a sip, instantly gags and spits it out. "This tea is filled with hair!", he exclaims disgustedly.

"Oh, I'm dreadfully sorry!" The nun replies, "I forgot to tell you: The koala tea of mercy is not strained!"

-- Thanks to Bill Snedden

Buford at the Bank

Buford, a fairly handsome Southern Bullfrog, hops into a bank lobby one day, brief case neatly tucked under his right foreleg. Buford hops up to the first open teller window and sits down in front of a teller, Miss Mary Greene. He announces, "I need a loan."

Miss Greene, not wanting to look too uncool with this frog talking to her, pauses only briefly to reflect on this situation, then says, "Well, the Everglades Savings and Loan doesn't usually give loans to amphibians." Quickly opening the brief case, Buford produces construction permits and blueprints. Showing them to Miss Greene, he says, "But I need a loan. You see I have this construction project in mind. Down in the swamp, we need affordable housing for all my in-laws and out-laws. I have the permits. Freddy, an architect newt friend of mine has drawn up the plans. Everything is approved and in order. So you see, all I need is the financing."

For Miss Greene, this is getting stranger by the moment. It isn't enough that there is this talking frog only inches in front of her, but now he is talking about plans, permits and a newt architect. Just before she loses it completely, Miss Greene blurts out, "I can't help you. You must see our loan officer, Miss Black. Wait here for a moment and I'll get her."

Miss Greene is gone for a while. After several minutes of animated conversation at the other side of the bank she returns with the loan officer. "Hello, I'm Miss Patricia Black, the Loan Officer here. How can I help you?" Well, Buford goes through his speech once again, tells her about the plans and permits, about the housing and his friend Freddy the newt architect. Thinking she could put an end to this foolishness quickly, Miss Black asks, "What do you have to put up for collateral for a loan? You must have something of value to mortgage against a loan like this."

Buford digs into his brief case once more. "I have this!" he exclaims as he draws forth a crystal trinket on a silver chain. "I can't give you a loan based on this THING," Miss Black says, pointing at Buford's treasure. Buford begs. He pleads. Finally, Buford demands to see the bank manager. Miss Greene, the teller, leaves for a moment to get the bank manager. Another animated conversation ensues at the other side of the bank. The manager comes over and asks "What's the problem, Miss Black?" "Well, Mr. Brown..." and the Loan Manager explains that the frog wants to take out a loan, to construct housing in the swamp for his in-laws and out-laws and he has plans and permits, but all he has is this trinket as collateral. The manager bemused by this whole situation, takes the trinket in hand, examines it carefully, then hands it back to Buford saying, "It's a knick knack, Patty Black. Give the frog a loan."

-- Thanks to Kevin Doyle , and elaborated by Gary Hendra

Let's try that one again...

A frog walks/hops into a bank, and asks to see someone about applying for a loan.

"Oh, Mr. Paddywack will be glad to help you," says the teller, looking down at the frog rather dubiously. "Just have a seat at that desk over there, and he'll be right with you."

So the frog sits down, and presently, the loan officer comes over. "Good day, sir, how may I help you?" he says, raising an eyebrow.

"I need a loan," says the frog, "I want to do some rennovations on my lillypond."

"Well..." says the loan officer, "we are not in the practice of approving loans for amphibians..." he said condescendingly, looking over the rims of his hornrimmed glasses.

"But why not?" exclaims the frog, "I've got an excellent credit record! I've never been late on my visa payment!"

The loan officer sighs. "Sir, I'm afraid we would need some type of collateral, and I'm-"

"But I've got it!" exclaims the frog. "I've got an extensive collection of hummels I can use as collateral-"

"I'm sorry," cuts in the loan officer, "but I don't think we'll be able to help you," he begins, but just then his supervisor comes up behind the desk.

"What seems to be the problem?" he says to the loan officer.

"Uh, um, Sir, this fro- um, gentleman, wanted to obtain a loan," says the loan officer, "but I've been trying to tell him that we can't-"

"I've got a hummel as collateral!" the frog breaks in.

"What in the world is a hummel???" says the loan officer condescendingly.

The supervisor looks exasperated. "It's a nick-nack, Paddywack! Give the frog a loan!"

-- Thanks to the Giant Panda, Tony Quon

Soviet Ingenuity

So the Soviets got sick of buying wheat from the Americans and began to spend millions on research into grains. Finally U.S. intelligence found out that the Soviet scientists had developed a new grain that yielded twice the harvest of conventional wheat and grew in half the time. Several agents died before it was discovered that the new grain was called "Krilk". The CIA was panicked! Without the Soviet dependency on American grains the security of the West could be forever compromised.

Congress quickly convened and appropriated several hundred million dollars for the CIA to send up spy satellites over Russia to learn the secrets of Krilk. Finally, after several years, the satellites began to send back images of the factory deep in the Soviet Union that was processing the Krilk. The CIA sent in over a hundred agents. None returned. The process remained a secret. The satellites were next to useless because they could only see the outside of the building, not the actual milling of the harvests. Finally the Soviet Ambassador in Washington sent a message to the President of the U.S. to let him know that all further attempts to learn the secrets would be futile.

The message read...."You are wasting your money. Everyone knows that it's no use spying over milled Krilk!"

-- Thanks to Steve Poggio

A Long Way to Go...

It came to pass that a very poor peasant was down to his last meal.

Deciding he could no longer live in squalor, he decide to sell the only thing he owned... his talking mule. This was no ordinary Francis type of talking mule, this one could tell jokes and sing and keep the local townspeople very happy. With much regret, the peasant sets off to the big city to sell his mule.

He sets up on a street corner and the mule draws an immediate crowd. The mule is so funny that the crowds can't remain standing because they're laughing so hard. Finally, a man comes up to the peasant and says "I'm a talent scout for The Tonight Show. I MUST have your mule for our show." Unfortunately, the talent scout had just been pickpocketed, and had lost his wallet. The only thing of value he had was a subway token. He convinced the peasant to trade the mule for the "Magic Token of Good Fortune" and secured the mule.

On the way home, the peasant realized that he had been taken, and he was broken hearted. He used his subway token to get him to the edge of the city. When he put the token in the slot, alarms went off and he was notified that he was the 1 billionth rider of the subway, and that he just won 50 million dollars.

Meanwhile, the Mule was so funny that he took over Jay's job, and eventually put Dave, Conan, John and every other late nighter out of business. The Morale of the story: A Mule that is funny is soon bartered.

-- Thanks to David Stribling

The King's Throne

In the deep forests of equatorial Africa, two rival tribes were constantly trying to outdo each other. Since they shared a common hunting area, one might set up fake prey decoys in order to have the other waste their time in useless locations while the first would then be able to hunt the better area with out having to worry about having their catch stolen at the last minute. At other times, they might kidnap a member of the rival tribe, and paint embarrassing pictures on the captive's body before releasing him(her) back to his own tribe.

The two tribes were mostly non-violent, choosing to avoid war, although skirmishes did result when one side or the other was seen as crossing the line past acceptable competition. On such occasions the two tribal Kings would meet to personally resolve the matter and even administer discipline if required.

On one occasion, a group of warriors of one tribe stole the throne of the other tribe's King. Although this throne was big and heavy, they dragged it through the forest to their own village and displayed it in the tribal gathering structure where the village held its ceremonial meetings and celebrations. The local King was very pleased with the prank, but was jealous of his rival having a bigger and better throne than he did. He knew that if the throne was not returned in a couple of days, the rival King would visit to retrieve the throne and demand the guilty parties be punished. On the other hand, he wanted to keep the throne for himself. The council agreed that the throne could be hidden in the rafters of their ceremonial house until the other tribe gave up looking for it; leaving the local King to claim it as his own in time. To celebrate this great achievement and their clever plan, a party was thrown in the ceremonial house that evening. While the party was in progress in the building, the heavy weight of the throne stowed in the rafters caused the whole edifice to collapse injuring many of the tribesmen inside. The rival King arrived and uncovered the whole plan, prompting him to remove the throne and to discipline the local King for participating in the theft.

The moral of the story is that people who live in grass houses, shouldn't stow thrones.

-- Thanks to Elmer Thiessen

Roy Rogers and the Cougar

There was this western town whose ranchers were being bothered by a cougar. This cougar had attacked the ranchers livestock on many occasions. The ranchers in this town hired the famous Roy Rogers to lead a posse to track down this cougar and kill him.

Roy lead this posse wearing his brand new alligator skin boots. he had just acquired them as was very proud of the way they looked.

After tracking the cougar for a number of days, they finally came upon him. Roy took a shot but missed, letting the cougar get away. That night the posse set up camp. While everyone was sleeping, the cougar attacked the campsite, but was chased off without anyone getting hurt. Unfortunately in the foray, the cat did destroy Roy alligator skin boots.

Roy was very upset about losing his new boots. He rode back to town (which was painful without boots), got an old pair of boots, and went out after the cougar by himself. After a few days of tracking, he caught up with the cougar. He picked up his rifle, aimed, and with one shot, killed the cougar.

He placed the cougar on the back of the horse and rode back to town with it. As the ranchers in town saw the carcass on the back of the horse they came out and cheered Roy's success. As he rode up in front of the hotel, surrounded by cheering ranchers and townfolk, Dale Evans came out of the hotel and asked, "Pardon me, Roy, is that the cat that chewed your new shoes?"

-- Thanks to Marc W. Solomon

The Chicken in the Library

A librarian is working away at her desk when she notices that a chicken has come into the library and is patiently waiting in front of the desk. When the chicken sees that it has the librarian's attention, it squawks, "Book, book, book, BOOK!"

The librarian complies, putting a couple of books down in front of the chicken. The chicken quickly grabs them and disappears.

The next day, the librarian is again disturbed by the same chicken, who puts the previous day's pile of books down on the desk and again squawks, "Book, book, book, BOOK!"

The librarian shakes her head, wondering what the chicken is doing with these books, but eventually finds some more books for the chicken. The chicken disappears.

The next day, the librarian is once again disturbed by the chicken, who squawks (in a rather irritated fashion, it seems), "Book, book, book, BOOK!" By now, the librarian's curiosity has gotten the better of her, so she gets a pile of books for the chicken, and follows the bird when it leaves the library. She follows it through the parking lot, down the street for several blocks, and finally into a large park. The chicken disappears into a small grove of trees, and the librarian follows. On the other side of the trees is a small marsh. The chicken has stopped on the side of the marsh. The librarian, now really curious, hurries over and sees that there is a small frog next to the chicken, examining each book, one at a time. The librarian comes within earshot just in time to hear the frog saying, "Read it, read it, read it..."

-- Thanks to Tony Quon

The Page

Once upon a time there was a large and prosperous Kingdom run by a wise and powerful King. Then disaster struck in the form of a strange plague, which caused people to sicken and die horribly within a few weeks. The population of the Kingdom was declining rapidly. All the physicians in the land were called to the Kingdom, but none of them had any idea of what to do about this new disease.

The oldest of the physicians said that he had once heard that many years ago, when his grandfather was a boy, the Kingdom had been struck by just such a mysterious sickness. The pestilence had been ended with a magic potion prepared by an old sorceress. It was said that she was still alive, but her home was in the middle of the Dark Forest.

"The Dark Forest!" everyone gasped. They all knew that the Dark Forest was the most dangerous place in the region. Perhaps the most dangerous place in the entire world, for in the Dark Forest lived the Yellow Fingers, which grabbed any traveler who entered and would squeeze him to death. But no one could come up with another plan to save the Kingdom, so it was decided that someone had to defy the Yellow Fingers and find the ancient sorceress in the middle of the Dark Forest.

The King called his bravest Knight and explained the situation. Without hesitation, the brave Knight marched off into the forest ... and was never heard from again.

The King then called his second bravest Knight. The second bravest Knight hesitated for a moment before going into the fatal forest. But once he went in ... and was never heard from again.

So the King called his third and fourth bravest Knights, who took a bit more persuading. None of them ever returned from the forest. Finally the remaining Knights, who were not very brave at all, went into hiding.

The King was reduced to a state of despair. Then one of the King's young pages, came to him and offered to go into the Dark Forest and get the magic potion from the old sorceress.

The King was touched by the boy's foolish bravery, but he said, "Don't you realize that the Dark Forest is the home of the Yellow Fingers, and that many of my bravest Knights have perished there?"

The boy said that he knew all about it, but he was still quite sure that he would be able to accomplish his mission. In the end the King reluctantly

agreed to let the page go. He was so desperate that he didn't know what else to do.

The Page walked off into the Dark Forest, and the King confidently expected never to see him again. Therefore the King was not merely surprised but very nearly hysterical with joy when, two days later, the Page came walking out of the Dark Forest clutching the formula for the magic potion that would save the Kingdom.

"How did you do it?" cried the King

The page just smiled, and said, "From now on let your Pages do the walking through the Yellow Fingers."

-- Thanks to Merl Whitebook, Troop 1, Tulsa, Okla

A Tale of Two Pets

I remember it was about that time that Jim Sloane used to work in our Finance Branch. Now that was a character. He was, in my opinion, an unusual individual who was interested in some rather exotic subjects. The most unusual thing about him was his pet, (rumoured to have been captured somewhere in Africa) which reminded me of a piece of granite with eyes, which he called Teddy. Teddy typically just sat there, doing nothing, but sometimes it lifted a lower edge and sucked in powdered sugar. That was all it ate. No one ever saw it move, but every once in a while it wasn't where people thought it was. There was a theory that it moved when no one was looking.

Bob Laverty, a Management Services employee, constantly ridiculed poor Teddy, saying mean and nasty things about it. Laverty's pet looked like an iguana, and to me, at least, was the ugliest looking thing that you would ever want to see. He called this 'iguana' by the unlikely name of Dolly.

Well, one day Sloane had had enough of these comments, and challenged Laverty to a race. His Teddy against Laverty's Dolly. And to make things a bit more interesting, he suggested a rather hefty wager on the outcome, which Laverty quickly agreed to. Soon everyone got into the act. Every one of them bet on Dolly. At least it moved. Sloane covered it all. He'd been saving his salary for some time (for some exotic project, no doubt) and put every penny of it on Teddy.

The race course was set in the basement garage. At one end, two bowls were set out, one with powdered sugar for Teddy, and another with ground meat for Dolly. Dolly started off at once and began moving along the floor slowly toward the meat. All in attendance cheered it on.

Teddy just sat there without budging.

"Sugar, Teddy. Sugar." said Sloane, pointing. Teddy did not move. It looked more like a rock than ever, but Sloane did not seem concerned.

Finally, when Dolly had 'ran' half-way across the garage, Sloane said casually to Teddy, "If you don't get out there, Teddy, I'm going to get a hammer and chip you into pebbles."

That was when people realized how truly different Teddy was. Sloane had no sooner made his threat when Teddy just disappeared from it's place and re-appeared smack on top of the sugar.

Sloane won, of course, and he counted his winnings slowly and luxuriously.

Laverty said bitterly, "You knew the damn thing would do that."

"No, I didn't," said Sloane, "but I knew he would win. It was a sure thing."

"How come ?", said Laverty.

"It's an old saying everyone knows. Sloane's Teddy wins the race."

--Thanks to Jim Speirs

Freddy Fish

Freddy Fish and Sam Clam were the best of friends, and did everything together. One day, though, both perished in a freak mishap. Freddy Fish went to heaven, and immediately looked around for his best friend. Not finding him, he asked St. Peter where Sam was.

"Sorry, he didn't make it in."

"You mean he's down there?" asked Freddy.

"Yes."

"Well, I want to go see him!"

"This is highly unorthodox," said St. Peter. "I'll ask the big guy."

Moments later St. Peter returned and said:

"You can go, but you can only stay for one hour."

"Great!" said Freddy, and grabbed his harp before anyone changed their minds. He went to the elevator, and went down.

When the elevator doors opened, Freddy saw a huge sign:

SAM'S DISCOTHEQUE

He went in, and discovered that it was run by his old friend. They sat down and reminisced about old times, and had a few drinks. Time flew by, and when Freddy noticed his watch, he saw that he had fifteen seconds left to return. He jumped out of his chair, yelled a goodbye to Sam Clam, and raced to the elevator.

The elevator doors opened in heaven with only one second to spare. St. Peter was standing there with a stopwatch.

"You just barely made it," said St. Peter.

"I know," panted Freddy, out of breath. "But I have to go back there!"

"What do you mean!?! " asked an incredulous St. Peter.

So Freddy Fish says (* groan *): "I left my harp in Sam Clam's Disco!"

-- Thanks to "The Giant Panda - B.J.O.D. Owner / Moderator"

A Hard Day's Knight

Many years ago a traveler came to the ancient land of Day. As he traveled through the country side he saw many fields and pastures. The people working the land all appeared to be peasants, living in abject poverty. However all he passed seemed to be in good spirits. Asking a peasant how he could be so happy while living in such an impoverished state the man told him that this land was ruled by a huge, intelligent and benevolent bear called King Mu. He continued to inform the traveler that while he was poor now he could, when he thought he was ready, participate in a kind of rite of passage and become a knight.

Asking what was involved in this rite the peasant replied, "You know the usual stuff, drinking till dawn, reciting sports scores from five years past, telling tall tales about women he had never met, discussing the advantages of the designated hitter rule, and many other things of similar difficulty." The traveler agreed that would be a grueling test indeed. "Tell me peasant, what are the rewards for passing such a test?" asked the traveler.

"Why, sir, when you are made a knight you receive all the goodies. You get things like a Royal Express card. No limit on those things you know sir. You can move to a nice Condo on the beach, and maybe even get a trophy wife to replace the one you got now."

"Amazing!", said the traveler, "This I would have to see to believe."

"There's a test going on now in the capital." said the peasant.

So the traveler moved on down the road to the capital to see for himself if all was as the peasant had said. Passing through the gates and into the beautiful capital city he saw that the Festival of Testing was indeed in progress. In the center of the town, on a raised ornate throne sat King Mu, who was indeed a bear and looked that if he stood, would be at least twelve feet tall. Moving through the crowd the traveler saw three men standing before the throne. Two of the men looked to be in fine shape, clear of eye, with their collars buttoned down and wearing a neck scarf in a power color. Both had at some point in the competition won the honorary Rolex sun dial, which they wore on their wrists. The third man however, looked horrible. His eyes were blood shot, and as he stood holding his head, he looked like he was not to steady on his feet.

Rising from his throne the king approached the two men and placing a huge paw on each of their shoulders the king announced, " These two men I make knights and grant unto them all the privileges they deserve." Turning to the third man the king said, "This man did not however pass the test." With that he raised a paw and much to the traveler's horror struck the man down, killing him on the spot. At that point a king's aide brought forth

a great shaggy dog , at least four foot at the shoulder, and presented it to the grief stricken family. Turing in shock and confusion, the traveler asked the man standing next to explain what had just transpired.

"Why, everyone knows," said the man, "there's nothing better, after a bad Day's knight, than the dog of the bear the hit you."

-- Thanks to Hugh & Terry Fitler

The Monks Tale

Three friars were banished from their monastery for various rule violations, so they decided to start a business together. They traveled around until they found a town that they liked, and opened up a plant shop. Their floral business was soon thriving.

One day, a woman was shopping at the friar's store, and while she was strolling down an aisle with her toddler, a large plant reached out, grabbed the child, and ate it. Needless to say, the woman was quite upset at the loss of her child. However, the friars refused to believe that one of their plants could have done such a thing. The woman told all of her friends about the incident, and soon everyone in the town was in an uproar. They decided to kick the friars out of town. Every person in the town, except for a man named Hugh, gathered outside of the friars shop, shouting, waving sticks, and demanding that they leave. But the friars said "No. We're not leaving". So the townspeople gave up and went home.

Well, a couple weeks later, another woman was walking through the friar's shop, looking at plants with her baby, when a plant grabbed her child and ate it. She ran through the streets screaming that a plant had swallowed her baby. The townspeople were outraged, and again gathered outside the floral shop (except for Hugh), waving torches, and demanding that the friars leave town at once. But the friars said, "No way." and all the people gave up and went home.

A few days later, yet another woman dared to take her child into the floral shop. She held her infant tightly in her arms, but it was no use. A large ficus wrestled the child from her arms, and ate it.

When the townspeople heard of this, they were extremely upset. They again gathered outside the friar's store (except for Hugh), yelling and threatening bodily harm to the friars if they didn't leave town. But the friars said, "We're staying". So, the citizens gave up and began to go home. Just then, Hugh showed up. He walked up to the friars, and said, "Get out of town, now!". The friars immediately packed up all their belongings and fled that very day, never to be heard from again.

The moral of this story is: Only Hugh can prevent florist friars.

-- Thanks to Hugh B. Fitler

The Rabbi's Tale

There was once a rabbi who undertook a missionary-style trip to a South American rain forest country. He was to spend a year with a very primitive, remote tribe known only as the Trids. The rabbi knew that the only way to gain their acceptance would be to adopt all of their many tribal customs, such as dress, diet, studying their beliefs and so on. Much of this was difficult to learn for the city-born rabbi, but as the months progressed he grew in the many ways of the Trids.

One day, returning from an extended walk in the rain forest, the rabbi entered the tribal village to find the entire Trid tribe lined up side by side in the village commons area. Behind this line walked the tribal chief. One by one he would stop behind each tribe member and deliver a swift kick to the rear end. This, thought the rabbi as he watched, is one of the strangest rituals I've seen yet. But he knew that he must participate if he wished to win their confidence. Solemnly he took his place at the end of the line. The chief reached the end of the line and was just about to deliver the kick when suddenly he realized that it was the rabbi before him.

"I cannot do this thing", said the chief firmly. The rabbi was shocked. Wasn't he yet accepted by the tribe?

"Why not?" he asked.

The chief replied, "Silly rabbi! Kicks are for Trids!"

-- Thanks to Hugh & Terry Fitler

Alexander's Dilemma

The armies of Alexander the Great were greatly feared in their day, but there was one problem that they had that almost defeated them. Alexander could not get his people to staff meetings on time. He always held the meetings at 6:00PM each day after the day's battle was done, but frequently his generals either forgot or let the time slip up on them and missed the staff meeting. This angered Alexander very much, to say the least!

So he called in his research guys and set up a project to come up with a method of determining the time at 6:00PM each day. There were no clocks in those days, at least none that could be carried around. (The smallest was a giant water clock) "Find a way my staff can determine the hour of the day, or at least when it gets to be 6 o'clock!", he said, "Cost is no object."

A study was instituted and, with several brain-storming sessions, came up with the following idea. In a land some distance away, there grew a bush whose berries contained a type of dye that changed color at 6 each evening. They found that by dyeing strips of cloth and issuing them to the generals, they could see when it was 6 by the color change, and could get to the meetings on time. Needless to say this pleased Alexander very much.

It was then turned over to the marketing group to come up with a name of this new invention as Alexander saw definite market potential in the strips. "It can be worn on the wrist and can be easily watched for the color change", said one junior executive. "I therefore propose to call it the wrist watch." This name was immediately hooted down as being too bland and obvious. Another man suggested it be worn in the navel and could be observed by looking down, therefore it should be called the Navel Observatory. This idea was rejected out of hand as being too weird and too technical sounding for the general public.

Finally the senior vice president, who up to now had been silent, spoke and rendered his decision. "We shall call it a Timeband, and in honor of the Great Alexander, it shall be known as 'Alexander's Rag Timeband!'

-- Thanks to Hugh & Terry Fidler

The Poor Little Dutch Boy

Life was desperate in rural Holland. As far as he could remember, the poor little dutch boy could remember nothing but hardships. Food was scarce, his father was abusive, and there was nothing to do after school but chores. Every day was another hardship. The boy loved to dive from the windmill into the canal, but his father hated to find that he had skipped out on his chores. Whenever he returned, his father would beat him. However, if he didn't skip out, his fater would find a reason to beat him anyhow. Life was nothing but hardships, except for the secret escapes to practice diving from the windmill.

Eventually the boy, now in his late teens, heard of a great contest in far-away Atlanta. The best divers in the world, along with the best of everything else would meet to decide who was REALLY the best. It would be the perfect escape from the hardships of his mundane life.

He runs away from home, sneaks aboard a freighter in Rotterdam and waits. No good. Of course, he is discovered. Beaten by the crew, bloody, he is sent home to his unimpressed father, who finds new hardships for him to endure.

A better storyteller than I could tell you of his next four or five attempts to get to the Atlanta games, each of which failed, yielding nothing but ever more painful hardships. The poor little dutch boy stoicly endured each of them, perservering and enduring.

Eventually, he stows away in a cruise liner heading for the USA. He isn't found until four days out at sea. The captain has the discretion of calling for a chopper to take him back to the Netherlands, or to let him continue the trip and let immigration in Atlanta deal with the problem. The captain listens to the boy describing how he's been doing difficult dives all his life, and how demonstrating the perfection he's developed to the rest of the world in Atlanta is his only chance to escape from the hardships of his normal life.

The captain decides to let the boy demonstrate his abilities. If the boy can execute a perfect dive from the top of the radar mast, he can continue to the Olympics. So, the radar is turned off, and the boy climbs the hundred feet to the top of the radar mast. He looks down.

He has never dived from a ship before. The gentle sway of the ship is magnified by the height of the radar mast. He didn't expect this. looking down, he sees ... pool, deck, sea, deck, pool, deck, sea, deck, pool... he jumps! ... and misses! He crashes right THROUGH the deck! Everyone runs for the stairs to see if he's OK. There's a splintered hole in the B deck. Even

the metal decks of the C, D, and E decks have been burst. They find the crumpled body crumpled against the very hull itself, and even that is dented.

Everyone is astonished when he sits up, dazed, but apparently unhurt. The captain, horrified and apologetic, rushes forward. "My goodness! I never should have asked you to try that! Are you OK? " The boy shakes his head and answers:

"That's OK. I'm used to it. I've been through many HARD SHIPS before."

-- Thanks to Greg Goss

The Escaped Panda

A panda bear escapes from the zoo and is forced to live on his own. It turns out that he really enjoys eating in nice restaurants, but of course being a panda with no job and no money he is unable to pay his bill. Being, also, an exceptionally intelligent panda he devises a scheme that lets him eat in any restaurant he wishes.

One day he decides to try a particularly nice restaurant but when he asks the maitre d' for a table he's told, "I've heard about you. You're the panda that never pays for his meal. We won't seat you here." So, the panda leaves the restaurant and sits on a bench across the street from the restaurant and contemplates his empty tummy.

Some while later the panda sees the maitre d' leave the restaurant. The panda goes back and asks the assistant maitre d' for a table, and is seated by the assistant who has never heard about the panda's tricks. The panda has a wonderful meal. (At this point you may "shaggy dog" this story as much as you like, or the audience will bear. Give details about the wonderful meal the panda enjoys)

Just as he finishes dessert the panda is approached by the maitre d' who has returned to discover the assistant maitre d's mistake. When the maitre d' demands payment the panda pulls a gun, shoots the maitre d' and starts to leave. The assistant maitre d' stops the panda and asks, "Where do you think you are going?"

"I'm leaving." "You can't leave!" "Sure I can." "No you can't!"

At which point the panda produces the encyclopedia volume "P", opens it and tells the assistant, "Read this."

The assistant maitre d' reads aloud: "Panda, an animal indigenous to China that EATS, SHOTS and LEAVES."

-- Thanks to Dan O'Canna Lexington, Kentucky

The Big Headache

There once was a man who decided he had to visit Australia once in his life. He read up on everything he could find, visited all the Australian web sites on the Internet and saved his money so he could make this once in a lifetime vacation.

The day finally came when it all came together and he was ready to leave. He boarded the plane and some hours later stepped off the plane at Sidney International. Australia at last!

Unfortunately, on his first day sightseeing, he began to get a bad headache. Thinking it was probably just jet lag he took two aspirin and continued his tour. The headache didn't go away, however, so he asked the tour guide where was the best place to go for treatment. "Sir, you'll want to go to the emergency room at the Mercy Hospital", the guide told him, "Its not far from here."

At the hospital, the doctor suggested he stay there overnight for observation and he agreed. He was assigned a room and a nun who was a nurse came in to see him. When he told her about his headache, she asked him if he had tried their Koala tea. "Its made from the fur of the Koala bear and has great healing properties", she said. He said he was willing to try anything at that point and asked that she bring him a cup.

Presently, the nun came back in with a cup of liquid. He looked in the cup and saw it had a mass of hair in the bottom. Feeling rather nauseous, he said he didn't believe he could drink the tea with all that hair in the cup. "Couldn't you strain it out or something", he asked.

The nun was indignant. She said, "Sir, I'll have you know the Koala tea of Mercy is not strained!"

- Thanks to Hugh & Terry Fidler

The Rope

I was Abilene's sheriff. I think I was the youngest sheriff in the territories. One afternoon, while I was playing 5-card stud in my favorite saloon, I happened to glance out towards the street.

I saw a rope ride into town.

Right away I knew it was trouble. Nobody likes ropes. This one had been riding all day. It looked as dry, and it probably smelled as bad, as the old straw broom that One-Eye Judd has been using in his stable for the last five years. The rope headed straight for the saloon where I was sitting, obviously hankering for good whiskey to wash away the trail dust. I could see how the rope moved like a cobra, maybe 30 feet coiled in the dust and ready to lash out. I checked my shootin' iron under the table, trying not to be obvious.

The rope used its "head" to push the saloon's swinging door open. It snaked its way across the floor to the bar, pulled itself up onto a stool and called for a drink. The bartender was a new fellow from Laramie. He glared at the rope and said, "Are you a rope?" When the rope answered, "Yes", the bartender said, "Get out. We don't serve ropes in here." When the rope didn't move, the bartender carefully reached over the bar, took hold of the rope's main coil with one hand, while holding its "head" in a death grip with the other hand, walked to the door, and threw all 35 feet of the noisome thing out onto the street.

A couple of the men smiled, but nothing else happened. I relaxed and picked up my cards again. Apparently there wasn't going to be trouble. But then I heard someone bellow, "That stinkin' rope is heading for the other saloon! Let's get him!"

I looked at my cards -- 4 jacks. Why does trouble always wait till I draw a winner? I hurried out into the street, just as the rope entered the other saloon. I could see how tired the rope was, really dragging itself. I felt sorry for the poor thing, but I didn't let the townfolk see this in my face. One man can't fight an entire town, if you take my meaning.

In less time than it takes to load a six-gun, the rope came flying out the saloon door and landed in a heap in the middle of the street. Well, it was a rope. What else did it expect?

I knew this affair wasn't over. So I stood in the shadows and waited. After a few minutes, I saw two other ropes slinking down the far side of the street. They crossed over and began to talk with the newcomer. I could hear most of what they said.

"What happened to you?" asked one of the local ropes.

The newcomer described what had happened in each saloon.

"Oh," said third rope, "obviously you don't know the trick. Watch me."

The third rope unravelled both of its ends until they looked like paint brushes. Then the rope looped and twisted itself into a tangled mess. I wondered how it could keep track of itself like that, or even know where its ends were; but it scooted handily across the street and under the swinging door of the nearest saloon and up onto a barstool inside. I was impressed. Can you slide 100 feet on your stomach with your arms and legs twisted together? I guess ropes have the instinct for it. I watched as the bartender approached and asked suspiciously, "Are you a rope?"

The rope replied, "Nope, I'm afraid not."

-- Thanks to Cathy Porter, NATIVE TEXAN, Webelos Den Leader, Pack 1087

The Doctor

A doctor was just starting out on his own, when he found that he just had too much work to do. Now this man was brilliant, and had particularly good people skills. Once he got a patient, they would just not see anyone else.

It seems that this man had been reading recently about the advances in cloning, and decided to have a clone made of himself to do his work.

For years it worked perfectly. His clone took care of all his patients, and he got to relax. However, the clone began to have some personality disorders. It would insult patients, and treat them very badly. It got so bad that business was suffering. The doctor decided that he just had to get rid of the clone or lose his business.

So.....one morning on their morning jog.... they jogged right over a bridge. The doctor pushed the clone over to his death.

The doctor again began seeing his old patients, and things were going exceptionally well, until a fisherman "caught" the dead clone body in the river. When the police found that the real doctor was still, in fact, alive, and that this was a clone, they didn't know just what to charge the doctor for doing wrong. After much deliberation, they decided to charge him for... Making an obscene clone fall.

-- Thanks to Cheryl Rogers

The Last Nun

Outside a small Macedonian village close to the border between Greece and strife-torn Yugoslavia, a lone Orthodox nun keeps quiet watch over a silent convent. She is the last caretaker of a site of significant historical developments spanning more than 2,000 years. When Sister Maria Cyrilla of the Order of the Perpetual Vigil dies, the convent of St. Elias will be closed by the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch of Macedonia. However, that isn't likely to happen soon, as Sister Maria, 53, enjoys excellent health. By her own estimate, she walks 10 miles daily about the grounds of the convent, land which once served as a base for the army of Attila the Hun.

In more ancient times, a Greek temple to Eros, the god of love, occupied the hilltop site. Historians say that Attila took over the old temple in 439 A.D. and used it as a base for his marauding army.

The Huns are believed to have first collected and then destroyed a large collection of Greek legal writs at the site. It is believed that Attila wanted to study the Greek legal system and had the writs and other documents brought to the temple. Scholars differ on why he had the valuable documents destroyed - either because he was barely literate and couldn't read or because they provided evidence of democratic government that did not square with his own notion of rule by an all-powerful tyrant.

When the Greek Church took over the site in the 15th Century and the convent was built, church leaders ordered the pagan statue of Eros destroyed, so another ancient Greek treasure was lost. Today, there is only the lone sister, watching over the old Hun base, amidst the strife of war-torn Yugoslavia, and when she is no longer, the story will be over.

That's how it ends: No Huns, no writs, no Eros, and nun left on base.

During the French Revolution

During the French Revolution, the "common people" were intent on ridding themselves of all vestiges of the Royalty and nobility. The Reign of Terror ensued and all nobility was hunted down. Some were allowed to leave the country, however most were executed at the guillotine. One nobleman in particular had sent his family into hiding in hopes of saving them. Soon he was caught. The crowd searched in vain for his family, but they were well hidden. Threats were made but he always replied, "I'll never tell!". Finally the crowd dragged him to the guillotine and offered to let he and his family leave the country if he would only disclose their location. Again he replied "I'll never tell!". They dragged him up onto the platform next to the horrible machine and asked him again. Still he replied "I'll never tell!". They laid his neck across the cutting board and asked him once more. Again he replied "I'll never tell!". They slowly hoisted the blade and again asked for the location of his family. Weakly he replied " I'll never tell". They waited to see if his resolve would fail, he remained silent. Just as the executioner pulled the release and the blade began to fall the Count called out "Wait, I'll tell, I'll t....."

The moral to this story, don't hatchet your Count before he chickens!

-- Thanks to Frank Brown, BrownF-CIC-TI@micmac.redstone.army.mil

Sir Lancelot's Mission

King Arthur sends Sir Lancelot out on an important mission to deliver a message to the king of Spain. It is a long distance, and Lancelot looks in the Kingdom for a good horse to take him there. His own horse is sick, and all he can find is an old mare, but, since he has to leave quickly, he takes the mare.

About 3 days out of the Kingdom, Lancelot realizes his mistake. The horse gets tired and appears to be going lame. He finally makes it to a small village and gets to the Inn. He goes up to the Innkeeper and explains his problem. That is, he needs a good horse so that he can fulfill his mission to deliver the message for the king. The Innkeeper replies that this is only a small village, and most of the horses around are not up to the task. He is welcome to look around, however, and if he can find anything, he is certainly welcome to it.

Lancelot looks around the village, and true as the Innkeeper has said, no good horse is to be found. As Lancelot is about to give up, he comes across a stable boy carting some feed. He asks the stable boy if there is any beast of burden in the village that he can use to fulfill his mission. The stable boy thinks for a minute, and starts to reply no, but then says, go see if Old Mange in the barn can help you.

Lancelot goes over to the barn expecting to find a horse. What he finds is a very large dog: almost as large as a pony. The dog is a mess, however. It is mangy, parts of its fur are falling off, and it is full of fleas. Lancelot is desperate at this point, and he looks it over carefully. It does, however, appear to be strong enough to take him to Spain (which is only 3 days away at this point).

Lancelot goes back to the Innkeeper, and acknowledges that he cannot find a horse in the village that he can use. He says, however that this dog, Old Mange, might be able to take him most (if not all) of the way to his destination. The Innkeeper hears this, stiffens up, and says : Sir. I wouldn't send a Knight out on a dog like that.

-- Thanks to Steve Jacobson, sajjac@winternet.com

Farmer Jones and the Big Quake

On a bright and sunny morning in May, Farmer Jones went out to plow his fields. He led old Bessie, his plow horse, out of the barn and hitched her up to the plow. The aroma of newly plowed earth wafted behind him as he produced a ruler straight furrow across the field. Suddenly his reverie was broken as a strong earthquake struck. As the ground shook beneath his feet, he fell to his knees. His plow fell over almost on top of him, as did old Bessie. But, beyond the fence in the next field, the bull remained standing.

Farmer Jones stood, dusted himself off, and grabbed the reins to right old Bessie. He pulled the plow upright, hitched up the horse again and began to plow. Shaken somewhat by the strange experience, the furrow began to zig a little from side to side as Bessie pulled the plow blade through the fertile ground. After only a few seconds a strong aftershock rolled through the farm. Again it was strong enough to knock Farmer Jones from his feet, topple his plow, and with a loud protest, drive old Bessie to the ground. This time the farmer looked back across the field toward the house and noticed that the goats and cows had fallen over, too But, beyond the fence in the next field, the bull remained standing.

Shaken and puzzled, Farmer Jones picked himself up and dusted off his overalls. Righting the horse and plow, he quieted old Bessie as best he could. She seemed more rattled by all this than he was. As strong as the two earthquakes were, Farmer Jones could not understand how the bull remained standing. So he started toward the other field to see if he could find out what was going on with the bull. As he crossed the field, and climbed through the fence into the field where the bull stood, a very strong aftershock struck -- much worse than either of the preceding earthquakes -- putting him on the ground flat on his face. Looking behind himself he saw Old Bessie and the plow had fallen down again. Down toward the house the goats and cows had fallen down again. In fact, this aftershock was so strong that the chickens had fallen over as well. The front porch on the farmhouse had crashed down and the walls looked as though they would not last much longer. But, only a few feet away from him, the bull remained standing.

He picked himself up, dusted off, and without bothering to right either horse or plow, marched toward the bull. Shaken to the core, puzzled and angry, Farmer Jones shouted, demanding to know why everything on the farm had been knocked over by the earthquakes and the bull had remained on his feet. Much to Farmer Jones' astonishment, the bull replied, "We bulls wobble, but we don't fall down!"

--Thanks to Kyna & Gary Hendra, hendra@macscouter.com

The Doctor's Drink

It seems there was a friendly little bar right next to a medical training hospital in the big city. Many of the doctors and nurses would stop in there on their way home, after long shifts in the hospital. One day, a local college student named Gina, intent on earning book money for the next term, came into the bar looking for a job as an evening bartender. As it happened, one of the bartenders had just quit, providing the needed open position. The owner was quite happy to give her the position and began her training that evening.

As she was being briefed about the "regulars", the subject of one of the more unusual doctors came up. Every day, at the end of his shift, one particular Doctor Avery came in for a rather unusual drink. He always ordered a Walnut Daiquiri. A Walnut Daiquiri is a strange drink -- not the kind of fruity drink one would expect. It was thought the good doctor must have invented it for himself, finding some special pleasure in the taste of walnuts.

A few days later Doctor Avery arrived just as the new bartender, Gina, was going on duty. When queried as to his desired libation, as expected, the doctor ordered a Walnut Daiquiri. The bar tender set about making the daiquiri, and discovered to her horror that there were no walnuts to be found. She quickly searched behind the bar, the refrigerators and in the back room. Nothing! She was in a fix -- she wanted to keep Doctor Avery as a good customer, and didn't want him to complain to her boss. Thinking quickly, she searched once again for something to substitute. Finding another nut ... figuring that this was a weird drink to begin with, and after a long day, the doctor wouldn't notice, anyway.

Setting the drink before the doctor, she could see a certain relief come over the him, as at the end of a hard day, he anticipated the refreshment that awaited him. The doctor raised the glass to his lips, took a big swallow, and coughing and sputtering, demanded to know if she were attempting to poison him. "Young lady, exactly WHAT is this you have just given me?" he demanded. Putting on her best innocent face, Gina the new bartender replied, "Well, that's a Hickory Daiquiri, Doc!"

--Thanks to Kyna & Gary Hendra, hendra@macscouter.com

Yes Men

OK, you know that in Hollywood, every movie producer has his "Yes Man" whose job is to follow the producer around and say, "Yes, CB", "Right, CB" and so on. Well, one of these Yes Men got depressed, so down in fact that he was unable to function. So he consulted a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist quickly determined the problem, and told the Yes Man that he just had to find a release for his negative feelings, and say "No."

"But if I said 'no' I'd get fired!" The yes man protested.

The psychiatrist said, "Oh, I don't mean on the job, I mean go out to the Grand Canyon and find a ledge off the trail, and there you can yell 'NO!' to your heart's content and no one will be the wiser."

Well, the Yes Man decided to try it. He went to the Grand Canyon and found a spot off the trail, and stood there and very timidly said, "no." It felt good, so he tried it a little louder, "No." Even better! soon he was shouting "NO, NO, NO, NO, NO!!!!" at the top of his lungs and feeling great.

He went back to work a changed man, and said "Yes!" with all the proper enthusiasm, because on the weekend he could escape to the Grand Canyon and say "NO!" Other Yes men decided to try this also, and soon every weekend the Grand Canyon was crammed with Yes Men shouting "NO!"

A new Yes Man came to Hollywood, and he too felt the need of such a release, but when he tried to find a ledge in the Grand Canyon, all of them seemed to be taken. He hunted and hunted, but everywhere he found was already taken by another Yes Man.

Finally he found a small ledge which had been overlooked because of its size. Thankfully he scurried out on it and stood there and said "No." It felt great! So he wound up and released an enormous "NO!" and in so doing lost his balance and fell to his death. Which just goes to prove that a little No Ledge can be a dangerous thing.

**-- Thanks to Hugh R Jochn and Steven Andrew Wolfman,
saw1@acpub.duke.edu**

Ft. Worth Zoo Finds Extraordinary Talent in Ordinary Gnu

Ft. Worth - The Ft. Worth Zoo today has an animal which may be the rival of Co-Co the gorilla. Maddie the Gnu was to be moved to her new home in the Zoo this morning, but until the Gnu's Pen could be readied, Richard Leak, the Zoo's African Fauna expert, advised leaving Maddie in the bathroom. The bathroom had been almost complete except for tiling the floor. This morning the floor was completely tiled.

Zoo officials insist that no one was in that bathroom all night except the wildebeast. If that is true, the Wildebeast managed to tile 350 sq. feet of public bathroom in one night.

"These animals have capabilities we simply cannot know," was Richard Leak's comment on the subject.

Leak also lent some insight on the circumstances of the animal's arrival: "[The Fort Worth Zoo] had recently been given a large donation to make 'real wildlife' accessible to the public, so I was asked to find ... perfectly average animals for the zoo. This was supposed to be an absolutely typical wildebeast."

The bathroom mentioned is a large public bathroom adjacent to the gnu's living area. The new marble tiling for which Maddie is purportedly responsible was described as "excellent, an incredible job" by the professional tiler who arrived today to do the job.

Both the new bathroom and the new animals are being funded by the same grant from Telco Corporation's president and CEO, Linda Skarst. Ms. Skarst is a wildlife activist and felt that exposure to real animals in their natural environments would encourage children to become comfortable with wild animals.

When asked if Maddie could still qualify as an average representative of her species after this incident, Ms. Skarst replied, "Oh, yes! This just proves that Maddie is ... a typical gnu and a tiler, too."

**-- Thanks to Hugh R Jochn and Steven Andrew Wolfman,
saw1@acpub.duke.edu**

Rabbi Liebner in the Valley of the Treads

On the topic of celestial guidance, Rabbi Liebner has something of an odd contribution...

The town of Treadville was small but prosperous and lay in a high valley surrounded by higher mountains. The Treads (for that is what they named themselves) were wealthy enough to love more than work and humble enough to make more than money. Little disturbed their peace until a late autumn night.

On that night, the Treads beheld a small but bright light gleaming from the top of a neighboring mountain. Curious in their ease, they soon decided to climb the mountain -- the highest of those around -- to discover the source of the light.

None arrived at the summit. At a point about halfway to the peak an extension of the mountain, seamless in the granite and shaped like an immense foot, lurched from the slope and hurled the luckless climbers from the slope. Strangely, few were harmed by the fall, but none reached the peak.

And so for years, decades, and then centuries the Treads wondered what could be the source of that radiant glow? Then, one day, one Rabbi Liebner entered the village and learned of the mystery of Tread Valley. The Rabbi was fascinated by the story and felt the touch of God in its weave. That night he watched the light and knew. He knew that he had been chosen to seek its source.

The Treads were not jealous of their mysteries; they invited the Rabbi to climb the peak the next day... and made all preparations for his inevitable fall. Thus, he set out.

That afternoon, Rabbi Liebner reached Foot's Fall, the point where the mountain made its wishes known..... and nothing happened. The Rabbi continued upwards to the cheers of the town; at sunset he reached the summit.

There, on the mountain's brow, he stumbled to a halt. Before him stood a brilliant temple bathed in celestial light, encircled by a holy sheen. Rabbi Liebner was awed. Finally, he summoned the strength to murmur a question and a prayer. "Oh Lord, thank you for this vision! But why have I been chosen to surmount this peak? Why not the good people of Treadville in the many years they have tried?"

And to his eternal joy, the Rabbi heard in a thunderous voice from heaven, "*Silly Rabbi, kicks are for Treads.*"

The Mosquito

The other night my wife yelled from the bathroom that there was a strange bug flying around in there. She had just started to get her bath and get ready for bed. Sometimes she likes to burn scented candles while relaxing and this was one of those times. I came in and spotted a mosquito that was flitting around the light. It had been trapped in a spider/cob web and was still dangling a pice of web from it's body. This is what made it look so strange. Anyhow, I picked up a slipper and started to swat the thing. Well I missed as usual and asked my wife to hand me the fly swatter. I made one more swipe then yelled "never mind." I had contacted on the last swing and knocked the mosquito into the candle flame. There was a puff of smoke and the candle went out. She asked if I got it. I picked up a pair of tweezers and lifted the dead bug out of the melted wax and candle wick. As I held it up I said "Yeah...I waxed the little sucker."

--Thanks to Randy Crowe

The Cowboy

A tall, weather-worn cowboy walked into a saloon and ordered a beer. The regulars quietly observed the drifter through half-closed eyelids. No one spoke, but they all noticed that the stranger's hat was made of brown wrapping paper. Less obvious was the fact that his shirt and vest were also made of paper. As were his chaps, pants and even his boots, including the paper spurs. Truth be told, even the saddle, blanket and bridle on his horse were made entirely of paper. The sheriff walks in and of course he arrests him immediately -- for rustling.

Frogs 'n Flies

It seems there were two frogs sitting on a lily pad, when all of a sudden, a fly came along. One frog put out his tongue, ate the fly, and started laughing hysterically. Soon the other frog joined in the laughter.

Later in the day, the other frog ate a fly and the two frogs burst out in laughter. As time went on, the frogs enjoyed the flies so much that the sight of a fly would cause them to double up with pleasure (if it's possible for frogs to double up!). But of course, the most pleasure came when the fly was actually eaten.

A third frog hopped up to the first two and asked what was so funny. The first frog answered "Time." "Huh?" asked the third frog. The second frog explained:

"Time's fun when your having flies."

-- Thanks to the Giant Panda

The Little People

An anthropology grad student discovered a remote tribe of very tiny people, only 6 inches tall, known as the Putz. Knowing that nobody would believe him otherwise, he decided to capture some of them and bring them home. So he put several of them in a shoe box and brought them back to the US.

When he got the building where he was to meet with his professor, he decided that the Putz needed some fresh air and sun (after being cooped up in a shoe box for several days) so he left them on the steps to bask in the sun. Wouldn't you know, shortly after he went in, there was a fire in the building, and the alarms went off. All the people came stomping out of the building and smashed all the Putz. Moral: Don't bask all your Putz in one exit.

-- Thanks to Grieg Olson

The Playground

190,000,000 years ago, at the beginning of the Jurassic period, cave children loved to hop onto the back of a friendly Stegosaurus, whose distinctive high-arched body reached twenty feet.

One day, to his parents' horror, a toddler leaped off a precipice, oblivious to the fact that, seconds before, the great beast below had lumbered off. "Poor kid," said his father, shaking his head, "he hasn't got a Steg to land on."

-- Thanks to Grieg Olson

The Safari

A Czechoslovakian hunter and his French partner were in the midst of a safari when they happened upon two hungry tigers, a fierce male and his mate. A furious battle ensued, in which the hunters were killed. After which, each tiger ate a hunter. Far off atop a hill, a sheppard had witnessed the whole battle. He ran home, grabbed his high powered assault rifle, and returned to blow the tigers away. After descending the hill, he first cut open the female tiger, discovering the remains of the Frenchman inside.

"That settles it," said the sheppard, "The Czech's in the male."

-- Thanks to Grieg Olson

The Hated Swami

A butcher got along great with everyone in the neighborhood except a mysterious Swami. They hated each other! One evening, the Swami's pregnant wife had intense cravings for liver, and the Swami had to go into his enemy's shop. "Give me a pound of liver," he said to the butcher's clerk. The butcher whispered to the clerk from the back of the shop, "Here's our chance to get that no-good bum." Pointing to the clerk's thumb, he said, "Weigh down upon the Swami's liver!!!"

-- Thanks to Grieg Olson

Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!

A king carried environmentalism too far when he prohibited hunting of any kind. Soon the realm was overrun with lions and tigers and bears.

"Oh My!" shouted the people. They revolted and threw the king out of the country. It was the first time the reign was called because of the game.

-- Thanks to Grieg Olson

The Revolting General

There was a Babylonian General who was declared a traitor for leading a revolt. He escaped one night and hid in an old Babylonian ziggurat, or temple, where he expected to find some of his associates.

He searched all over, but couldn't find them! So he figured he had better burn all the secret plans that were hidden in the ziggurat. As soon as the fire was going he threw in the first papers, and he was then promptly discovered and captured.

The moral of the story: WARNING! The searchin' General has determined that smoking ziggurats may be hazardous to your stealth!

-- Thanks to Grieg Olson

The Tale of Zelda and Oscar

The great German actress Zelda had done everything but for one thing; she'd never won an Academy Award. She was known for being terribly temperamental and choosy about her parts, but was also known to soften for the promise of the elusive award.

One day she was called by the great director, Meyer Schmidt, and asked to review a new script he had. She read the script and immediately rejected it. "Iss Nicht my type of script, Meyer, and I'll NOT do it."

"But HONEYKINS," he cried, "It's a WONDERFUL script."

"I didn't say it wasn't Vunderful or goot, but I'll not do it."

"But Sweetiekins, " Meyer continued, "with my direction and your acting and name, it will make us MILLIONS."

"More Geldt I don't need. Ich do nicht like the script."

"But, DARLING, don't you see, with my connections, I can almost GUARANTEE you an Academy Award with a good performance."

Zelda thought a moment then agreed and said: "Oh, I'd LUFF to be an Oscar Veener, Meyer ..."

-- Thanks to Grieg Olson

The Chess Players

There is the story of a group of chess enthusiasts, good friends all, who had a long day of chess matches. Late in the evening these friends went to the lobby of the large hotel where the matches were held, to talk talk a bit and rest. While their chat began quietly it gathered steam and got quite animated. They were telling each other of their successes of the day. One said he had won so many matches, another told of how he had beaten better players than himself. After a while of this, the hotel manager came over and summarily threw them all out, saying, "I can't abide chess nuts boasting in an open foyer".

--Thanks to John Baker

The Bank Robber

The financial situation had been very bad for several months. Because he was out of work and destitute, a young man decided to rob a bank. After days of observation, he chose a small satellite bank facility across the metropolitan area from where he was living. He spent several days planning every move. Late one dark moonless night he picked the lock on the rear door of the bank without difficulty.

He stealthily crept through the bank to the place where he knew the safe stood. Then his troubles began. While trying to pick the lock on the safe, he set off the burglar alarm, but his careful preparation paid off. He had brought along a furniture dolly. He quickly loaded the small safe onto the dolly and rolled it out to his van.

He drove to a friend's house and explained his problem. He asked if, in exchange for some of the loot, he might store the safe in the friend's garage for a few days. His friend assured him: "You can rest assured, your safe is secret with me!"

-- Thanks to Steve Poggio

The Lever

While hiking in the woods, Nate and Sam found this huge rock which had an old iron lever attached to it. Etched into the rock was the following inscription: "If this lever is pulled, the world will come to an end!" Nate wanted to pull the lever and see what would happen, but Sam, being a paranoid pessimist, greatly feared this! He said to Nate that if he tried to pull the lever, he'd shoot him! In a daring attempt, Nate lunged for the lever, and sure enough, Sam shot him! What is the moral of this story? Better Nate than lever!

-- Thanks to Jim Speirs

The History of the Light Bulb

When Thomas Edison invented the lightbulb, he had trouble selling it. People just didn't trust this "new" way of making light. In order to promote his idea he decided to go around the country installing lights in different towns in order to drum up publicity. While in Oklahoma, Edison stopped by an Indian reservation and offered to put lights in any building they wanted. After much thought the Indian chief decided that he wanted lights in his outhouse, so he could see what he was doing at night. This made him the first man to wire a head for a reservation!

-- Thanks to Jim Speirs

The Whooping Crane

The curator of the Madrid Zoo was particularly interested in endangered species. He was so interested that he had acquired, through legal and sometimes shady dealings, several endangered species for the zoo. The people that visited the zoo were all very intrigued by these animals. Through the curator's efforts, people were becoming much more interested in saving endangered species.

It came to pass that the curator read in the zoological trade journals that there were only 34 Whooping Cranes left in all the world. He was instantly determined that the Madrid Zoo must have at least one before the breed became extinct. By some bribery or other, a Whooping Crane was located and dispatched via air freight, destination the Madrid Zoo. Upon hearing the good news, the curator sent his Special Assistant In Charge of Endangered Species to the Madrid Airport to retrieve the Whooping Crane. Alas, when the bird arrived at the airport, it refused to leave the plane. No amount of coaxing with food would cause the Crane to leave the plane. And so, the broken-hearted Special Assistant In Charge of Endangered Species returned empty-handed to the Madrid Zoo and reported to the curator, "Cranes in Spain stay mainly on the plane."

-- Thanks to Steve Bushore, but I had to elaborate on it, it was too short.

John Tate's Compass

This all reminds me of the unfortunate story of the British entrepreneur John Tate and his compasses. Sometime back in the mid-1800s a small-time British manufacturer named John Tate decided to go into the business of making compasses. He set up a factory, installed the machinery, hired some workers, and began turning out his first compasses. He had just completed his first batch of 500 compasses when someone finally pointed out that he had forgotten to mark which end of the compass was north. The compasses worked fine; you just didn't know which way was north and which was south. Needless to say poor Mr. Tate's compasses didn't sell; Tate went bankrupt, the factory closed, and the workers were laid off. But his memory lives on, since that time any compass where you're not sure which end is north and which is south has been known as a 'Tate's compass'.

The moral of the story, of course, is that he who has a Tate's is lost.

-- Thanks to rec.sport.orienteeing (author unknown)

Just a Pain in the Neck

Once there was this Indian who found that every time he bent over to pick up the paddle for his canoe, he'd get this terrible crick in his back. He went to see the doctor the next time he was in town, and the doctor said, "If this happens to you again, simply grasp the paddle with both hands, shove the bottom of the paddle into the ground, and pull yourself up." The next day the Indian was reaching for the paddle when he once again got the crick in his back. Remembering what the doctor had told him, he grabbed the paddle and managed to slowly work his way up it. When at last he was able to stand up again, he was very surprised to find himself up a paddle without a crick.

-- Thanks to Lorrill Buyens

Kids will be Kids

Mother Lion and Father Lion had gone off hunting, and had told their two children not to wander away. However, a couple of small gnus wandered by, and the baby lions could not resist the temptation to try out their own hunting skills. They ran out, chased after the gnus, killed them, and started eating them.

Just as the baby lions were reaching the end of their meal, the parents appeared in the distance. One of the baby lions turned to the other, and said:

"That is the end of the gnus. Here again are the head lions."

-- Thanks to the Giant Panda

Star Wars and Chinese Food

Remember Mark Hamill from Star Wars? He doesn't like to eat in Chinese restaurants. He likes the food fine, but has a lot of trouble using chopsticks. Just when he starts to get really frustrated, this voice whispers in his ear, "Use the Forks Luke."

-- Thanks to Rhudiprrt, Prince of Fur

The Pooped Ump

The recent lock-out of the Major League umpires was making them all grumpy. After a tough day of walking the picket lines, one umpire returned home to find that his young boy wanted to play with him. As the tired ump was sitting in his favorite easy chair, the lad kept trying to crawl onto his lap. The umpire snapped, yelled at the boy and boy ran away crying.

This proves the old adage: The Son Never Sits on the British Umpire.

-- Thanks to Td Striker

The Warship

A few years ago the nuclear aircraft carrier Enterprise was returning to its base at the Oakland-Alameda Naval Base when the ship's captain, misreading the tides, managed to run the carrier aground on the mudflats of San Francisco bay. True story. This event went down in history as being one of the finest examples of grounding the warship you walk on.

Dick Whittington's Cat

Dick Whittington was investigating warring factions of a Chinese secret society. Suddenly, his pet was taken hostage! When Dick reported the abduction to the police, the officers were unsympathetic. "What's the matter," they teased, "Tong got your cat?"

The Stamp Collector

Billy, a nine year old, took up the hobby of collecting stamps. He was very enthusiastic about it until one day his neighbours' kid saw his impressive collection and took up the hobby.

Billy complained to his Dad: "I don't want to collect stamps anymore! Andy has every stamp that I have!"

"Don't be stupid, son", his dad said. "Don't you know that imitation is the best form of philately."

-- Thanks to Murali

A Wildebeastly Problem

There was a small African tribe that had a terrible problem. Every morning a neighboring herd of Wildebeasts would stampede through the village, knocking down cooking pots, smashing water jugs and trampling the vegetable gardens. The Chief had tried everything, with no success. He built fences, but the Gnus ran right through them. He tried having his men scare the herd away but they always came back.

Finally, one morning the Chief woke up and didn't hear the thunder of hooves. He went out, and the Gnu herd was nowhere to be seen. They were gone at last! So, the Chief called all the people of the tribe together, and announced, "NO GNUS IS GOOD NEWS!"

Porpoises and Seagulls

Porpoises in Florida were observed to "age" at a much greater rate than porpoises in Carolina. Biologists noticed that gulls seemed to be associated with the porpoises in Carolina, so they captured a few to send to Florida. These scientists were arrested for transporting gulls across a border for immortal porpoises. Readers' Digest

-- Thanks to Bruce Friend

Ale's Well that Ends Well

Two workmen were sitting in a pub drinking and arguing about which pub they should visit next. "The Rose and Crown's the closest," said the first workman. "No, the Elephant and Castle is closer!" said the second workman. So they decided to go to the Elephant and Castle. On their way to the pub in question, a ferocious lion, which had escaped from the zoo, lunged at them, but was killed by anti-aircraft fire from a search plane overhead. Stepping over the beast's body, they went on to the Elephant and Castle, thereby proving that the shortest distance between two pints is a strafed lion.

-- Thanks to Bruce Friend

The Witchdoctor

A witch doctor kept the members of his tribe in virtual subjugation by means of powerful magic. Whenever one of the tribesmen tried to overthrow him, he would be turned into an apple! One night a group of tribesmen sneaked into his hut, opened his book of magic, learned the apple spell, and turned the witch doctor into an apple!

But the book warned that if the apple ever dried out and changed significantly in weight, it would turn back into the witch doctor, more powerful than ever! So every day the tribesmen placed the apple on a scale to make sure that its weight remained the same. Moral: A weigh a day keeps the doctor an apple.

The Gardeners Dilemma

In the wealthy suburbs of Palm Springs, a strange malady was striking the gardeners on the large estates. They were becoming very morose and depressed, and had to be hospitalized. The first signs of the disease were when they started complaining that the lawns were in terrible shape. A psychiatrist brought in to find out what was happening noticed that there were some gardeners who still remained cheerful and never developed the lawn-hating symptoms. The psychiatrist went over and over this group, trying to find out why they were immune and what they were doing differently. Finally, he noticed that the healthy gardeners always had garden twine in the wheelbarrow, whereas the sick gardeners carried the roll in their pockets. So then the cure was obvious: "Walk on, walk on, with rope in your cart, and you'll never knock a lawn."

A Lot of Bull

Once there was this cattle rancher who, after 3 years, finally found a buyer for his oldest steer Caesar. This new owner happened to be the rancher's closest neighbor, who lived on the other side of the river valley. "Men" the rancher said to his cowhands, "it's time to say our good-byes to this bull, and take him across the river". So the men roped Caesar, and walked him down to the river. They were about to put him on the boat to take him across, but the rancher's youngest nephew, who helped to raise Caesar, said, "Can we take him out for one last munch in his favorite meadow?", with a tear in his eye. The other hands said sure, and led him just off the riverbank for a snack. Well, with the day as nice as it was, all of the hands took a quick nap. 4 hours later, the rancher saw that the bull was still on his property and ran down into the valley. He shouted and cursed at the men to wake them up. Once everyone was standing, he said the beast should have been across long ago, "We've come to ferry Caesar, not to graze him!"

-- Thanks to Kermit

Sausage Puns

I heard about a horrible river dragon that lurked in the waters under the old London Bridge and destroyed passing boats, eating the crews and passengers. Finally, a group of brave knights lured it up onto the banks and, with great loss of life, managed to slay the horrible beast. While After the conquest, Sir Newt suggested that they grind up the foul beast and use it for food in the local orphanage to cut down on the wasteful cost of gruel. Thus Dicken's opening line..."It was the beast of Thames, it was the wurst of Thames."

A German farmer with relatives in the US sent them a package consisting of some pork sausages made from his old pig. When they complained that the package had not yet arrived, he wrote: "Cheer up. The wurst is yet to come."

The King's Gold

Once upon a time there was a king that lived at the bottom of a very tall hill. On top of the hill there was a pot of gold guarded by two golden fingers. One day the king ran out of gold. He thought it would be a good idea to take the gold from the top of the hill. It was a very dangerous job, so the king sent all of the knights in the castle. The knights rode up the hill. As soon as they reached the golden fingers, they died. The king was very sad, but he still needed the gold. The king decided to send the nobles. They rode to the top of the hill. As soon as they reached the golden fingers, they died. This made the king even sadder, but he still wanted the gold. The only people left in the castle were the pages who were training to be knights. The king really, really wanted the gold, so he decided to send the pages. They rode to the top of the hill. As soon as they went through the golden fingers, they got the pot of gold. They took the gold to the happy king. They all lived happily ever after. The MORAL TO THE STORY is: "Let your pages do the walking through the yellow fingers."

-- Thanks to Patricia Wooten

Mercy, Mercy

It seems that the Queen of England visited the city of Mercy Australia on the occasion of their centennial. During the celebration the Mayor offered the Queen a cup of their famous Koala Tea. Upon taking a sip, the Queen remarked " There is a hair in my tea" to which the Mayor replied " Yes - didn't you know? The Koala Tea of Mercy is not strained" !!

The Psychic

This psychic is jailed for false prophecies, but because he is only 4'7" tall and extremely slender, he is able to slip under the bars and make his escape. Newspaper headline the next day? "SMALL MEDIUM AT LARGE"

The psychic is really happy he escaped, and it back in business in a new location. This first customer, however is a plainclothesman who is looking for him. Before the psychic could do anything about it, the plainclothesman hit the psychic with his fist in order to subdue him. The plainclothesman was reprimanded for striking a happy medium.

-- Thanks to David W. Schermbrucker

The Watusi Chief

It was once the custom for Watusi chiefs to be inaugurated on wooden thrones. After the inauguration, the thrones were discarded. However, a certain tribesman, who had been elected chief several times, kept all his old thrones in the top part of his grass hut. One year, the weight of the thrones caused the hut to collapse, killing him. The moral being: He who lives in grass houses shouldn't stow thrones.

--- Thanks to Steve Poggio

Trouble on the Border

Have you heard the one about the tribe of Basques who lived in this valley? They heard that barbarian hoards were approaching, so they decided to lay a trap. They all waited in the hills at the entrance to the valley. When the barbarians passed by, they descended on them. Unfortunately, the barbarians had a lot more experience at warfare than the Basques did, and the Basques got slaughtered.

The moral: Don't put all your Basques in one exit. ---

-- Thanks to Steve Poggio

Down in the Sea

Fred Herring's best friend was Waylon Whale. They always played together. Their friendship was well known all over the ocean. One day Waylon decided that he would like to take a trip to the Gulf of California, but Fred, fearing earthquakes, decided not to go with him but to stay in Puget Sound.

A few weeks later in school, an angel fish class mate of Fred's asked "Do you know what Waylon Whale is doing down there in granola land (land of fruits, nuts, and flakes)?"

"No" replied Fred Herring, "I'm not my blubber's kipper."

-- Thanks to Steve Poggio

Lions and Seagulls

Dr. P. Lumb, quite proud of his academic degrees in genetics, physics, and marine biology. For the past several years, he has been working on a potion that eliminates the aging process. Before he tests it on a human subject, he chooses to test it on an animal with the mental capacities closest to a person, and so picks a dolphin. Within a week, he acquired three such animals.

His experiment is halted through many unforeseen conflicts. First, spies from a rival cosmetic company break into the premises, ransack the lab, and attempt to remove the vital vial of vim and vigor from the vault, but failed. The second problem occurred in solving the first. The doctor cheaply invests in a security system, the King of the Jungle, "Dan the Lion". The reason for this feline's discount was due to his very long cat-naps, which were 10 hours long. The doctor plopped the cat in front of the door and kept him there.

Lastly, the dolphins, after several treatments of the solution, communicated that they were having a craving for large sea birds. Lumb, feeling this was not something to be ignored, ventured into the night, captured some seagulls, and returned to the lab.

He opened the door, stepped over Dan, and suddenly the lights were flicked on by gun-totting police officers, brandishing their weapons toward Lumb. He was arrested for..."transporting gulls across staid lions for immortal porpoises."

-- Thanks to Kermit

--- lets try that one again

I had heard that a scientist was developing an anti-aging medicine derived from the pituitary gland of common seagulls. Because of the similarity in brain complexity, he was testing it on some dolphins that he kept in a swimming pool in his back yard. On the way home from a gull-collecting foray, the radio news announcer said that an old lion had escaped from the zoo. The lion was old and toothless, and did not really represent a threat, as it was probably just looking for a peaceful place to die. Citizens should be on the lookout but not be afraid. When the scientist got home, there one the porch was the lion. It had laid down on his porch and was sleeping peacefully. The scientist had to get his gulls to his dolphins immediately, so he gathered up the gulls, ran up the porch, jumped over the lion, and was arrested for transporting gulls across a stayed lion for immortal porpoises.

-- Thanks to Bruce Friend

A Ninth of Beethoven

A symphony was performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and things were getting a bit crazy. In the fourth movement, the lead violin player got some string and tied the conductor's music to the stand. Meanwhile, the basses had been sneaking shots of whiskey through the entire performance and were completely plastered by this point. The bass trombone player looks up from his latest issue of Field and Stream to ask his neighbor what in the world was going on. The guy turns to him and says "Well, it's the bottom of the ninth, the bases are loaded and the score is tied."

The Lady with the Emerald Ring

I heard this one while visting a place in England the previous summer, and it scared the living day lights out of me, only to prevail that I had a good laugh when they were done with the tale.

A man's wife became deathly ill the night before Christmas in 1798, he called for the doctor but by the time the doctor had arrived his wife had died, or so it seemed. Her husband was so grief stricken that he shut himself up on his own and didn't attend the funeral the following day. The servants of the house carried the rich woman's body to the Vicar who in a drunken stupor held the ceremony quickly. The veil was drawn across her face, the stone lid lowered and the iron grille locked.

When later that night the Clergy man fell to sleep he remembered the beautiful emerald ring the woman had been laid with on her finger. Wanting riches for himself and figuring no one would find out he went downstairs unlocked the lid open it and tried to pry off the ring, it wouldn't budge. He ran to his lab and brought back a file to cut off her finger with. He severed her finger and pulled the ring off, as he left he turned around to pick up the iron lid, and screamed at the top of his lungs, dropped the ring and ran, the woman had awakened and was moaning and holding her severed finger towards him with a smile displayed evenly across her face.

He ran with all his might upstairs where he hung himself from the rafters of his home. If only he knew that the woman had only to thank him for she had not died after all but had gone into a coma and the cutting of her finger restored her circulation waking her from it.

Wearing nothing but her fine silk dress she walked back to the home and knocked on the door and rang the bell to no avail. The servants had all gone to sleep for it was late christmas eve. She felt an urge and lifted a heavy stone, threw it at her husband's window, and waited. He came to the window with a sorrowful look on his face, and suddenly to her surprise he yelled, "Go away. Why must you torture me so. Don't you know my wife has just died. Let me mourn and do not bother me again."

With this he shut the window. He must not have realized it was his wife who had thrown the rock at him. She repeated this and he opened the window again, and she yelled to him, "I am no one but your so called dead wife. Now come down here and open this door, Henry Page, unless you'd like me to die a second time on our doorstep."

"You are a ghost then," he said to her.

She said, "No, for ghost's don't bleed. Now come down here before I catch my own death of cold."

The man with a joyous look on his face came down to meet his wife and took her inside where he called the doctor once more and told him the news. They both lived long lives and there first son was born the next year.

-- Thanks to Julia Dawn.

Step Drag

Here is another favorite story. Use names of DE's, Staff or Leaders to improve the story. Hope you like it.

IT WAS the hottest summer anyone could remember at Camp. It was between sessions: Three vans of older boy scouts had just left and the Cub Scouts were due in just two days. That left the Staff of five young camp staffers for a peaceful weekend.

Unknown to them, another bus - a gray prison bus - was winding along the road outside of the camp, transporting a single prisoner. The man was criminally insane, according to the tag on his prison uniform, and the two guards assigned to him believed it. He was very tall and strong, so his hands were manacled in huge handcuffs and his legs were hobbled close to each other with a chain. To keep him from running or kicking out at anyone, the Warden had added an old-fashioned ball and chain, which he'd found in a prison storeroom. That kind of thing hadn't been used since the 1920's. The chain was clamped to the maniac's right ankle, and the heavy iron ball was on the end of the four-foot chain.

The maniac was sitting quietly with his eyes closed, smiling that same simple smile he always smiled just to keep the guards wondering. Thinking that the maniac was asleep, the guards weren't being watchful enough. As the bus swerved on a tight mountain curve, one guard slid off the wooden bench and fell against the prisoner, who wasn't asleep at all. He quickly grabbed the guard by the neck with the short chain on his handcuffs.

While they struggled, the other guard got up and went after the maniac. The prisoner dropped the strangled guard and lunged at the other one. The guard tried to draw his pistol, but the maniac had picked up the iron ball and thrown it before the guard had so much as a chance.

The maniac found keys on the guard to remove the cuffs and the leg irons, but he could not find a key for the ball and chain. He picked up the iron ball again, smashed the wire glass window to the cab of the prison bus, and grabbed the driver by the throat. The bus swerved all over the road and finally crashed into the deep ditch beside the road, coming to rest against a large tree. The maniac was out!

Back at the Camp, the Staff had swum all afternoon and were now back in their tents on staff row, reading or listening to the radio. There wasn't a TV anywhere in the camp. The sun went down and the owls began to hoot scarily off in the distance. Suddenly someone screamed! Everyone came running out of their tents and met at the assembly ground.

Missy the swimming instructor was missing! The other four ran to her tent. The zipper was open and there was a pool of blood on the floor. The Staff gasped, then suddenly became very quiet.

"Ssshhh! whispered David. They all strained to listen. In the trees, somewhere nearby they could hear:

Step... Drag... step ... drag... step ... drag...

"Let split up and look for her!" said Tim. They all ran off in different directions into the dark woods. After a few minutes David yelled for everyone to come to him. It was hard to follow his voice in the underbrush; it was hard to believe that the woods in camp were so thick and impenetrable. Soon Tim and Chris found David staring up into a tree. There in the moonlight was Colin. He was hanging by his head in a fork of the tree branches; his neck must have broken.

Off to the south they could hear noises in the under-growth:

Step... Drag... step ... drag... step ... drag...

Tim climbed the tree and lowered the body to the others. The three of them carried the limp corpse back to the mess hall. Once inside, Tim hurried to lock all the doors with big wooden boards.

"You all stay here", he said, "and lock this door behind me. I've got to get to the office where the phone is."

The others objected, but Tim went out the front door and slipped off in the darkness. The others dropped the wooden bar back into its metal brackets, to prevent anyone from entering. After a few minutes the lights suddenly went out. The staff started to scream, but then they realized that whoever had cut the wires might not know where they were. They held their hands over their mouths and hid under the serving counter.

Suddenly, something rattled the front door. It must be the maniac! The Staff huddled together. Next they heard something outside the window just above them, something dragging along the ground, going:

Step... Drag... step ... drag... step ... drag...

The double doors rattled again. Tim whispered, "hey dudes, let me in!" The dragging sound was moving around the building going toward the back door. Tim gasped louder, "Let me in!"

David ran from the Counter to the door and lifted the bar. Tim darted into the mess hall like a scared cat.

Just as they got the double doors shut, the dragging sound came around to the front. Just as they dropped the wooden bar into its brackets, something huge and heavy hit the door, cracking the wood.

Tim and Chris ran across the room, tripping and stumbling over chairs in the dark.. The object hit the door again, and the wooden bar cracked with a loud noise. The two staffers looked under the serving counter. David wasn't there! They ran to the back door.

"The phone lines must have been cut whispered Tim. "The phone was dead". The heavy weight hit the front door again, breaking part of the door's upper half. Tim and Chris lifted the bar from the back door and swung it open. Another crash at the front door told then the doors were about to give. The two slipped into the tall pantry and closed the door.

Back in the mess hall, the double front doors gave way in a burst of splinters and broken boards. A deathly silence followed. The two staffers hardly dared to take a breath. Suddenly, they heard that sound out on the wooded floor:

Step... Drag... step ... drag... step ... drag...

The sound stopped right outside the pantry door. Chris gasped. Tim cupped his hand over his mouth and the two held their breath. Tim was afraid the thing outside could hear his heart beating.

Suddenly there was a terrible scream outside the pantry.

It was David! He had moved to another hiding place, leaving Tim and Chris on their own. Now the thing, whatever it was had found him. There was another scream and the sound of something going out the back door.

Then everything was quiet as a graveyard.

The two waited all night, hardly breathing. The sun began to come up; they could see light coming in through the cracks of the wooden pantry. A morning dove was calling softly in the woods.

Then they heard a sound. Someone was coming in the front door. Slow footsteps crossed the floor, along with the sound of something dragging along the boards.

The sound came closer to the pantry.

CLOSER.

Suddenly it stopped, right in front of the pantry door as if someone was waiting.

Chris could not stand it anymore. He screamed.

The Pantry door swung open, and there standing over them was a tall, muscular form, lit from behind. The man bent over.

He took off his wide-brimmed hat and show them his badge. "I'm the Sheriff", he said, dropping the heavy bag of weapons and bulletproof vest he had been dragging.

"THANK GOD YOU TWO ARE ALL RIGHT!"

**-- Thanks to Merl Whitebook, Troop 1, Indian Nations Council, Tulsa, Okla
USA**

The Mystery of the Mice Tower

**B.-P. Tells a Story
Lord Baden-Powell
The Leader, December 1978**

In the December 1932 issue of "The Scouter" (U.K.), the Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell, varied from his usual Scouting message to write the following ghost story. In the United Kingdom, ghost stories are very much a tradition at Christmas, hence such well-known ghostly tales as Dickens "A Christmas Carol". Meant to be read aloud, by flickering firelight, to the accompaniment of roasting chestnuts and steaming mugs of cocoa, you might like to incorporate this tradition into your own Christmas meeting with, perhaps, your boys bringing along their own favourite ghostly yarns to read aloud in the shadowy semi-darkness.

Regarding our Scouts Camping Ground at Kandersteg in Switzerland, many Scouts have been there, and many more will go there, to all of whom the Mice Tower in the Camp Ground will be known. Since this is our Christmas Number, I venture to give a story of the Mice Tower in place of my usual homily on Scouting.

I was trying to make out the meaning of the words 'Gott behuete dieses Hus und all da Gehen in und us', which were carved upon the beam above me, in the living-room in the timber-built house of the cure in Kippel. I had, in the course of a hike through Switzerland, wandered into the Loetschen Valley, a quaint backwater of civilisation which, until the railway tunnel pierced the surrounding mountains, had been cut off from the rest of the world except for a pass of 10,000 feet which was impassable for five months of the year. So the inhabitants were themselves quaint and original in their ways and customs.

When I came into the agglomeration of ancient brown wooden houses which, with wonderful picturesqueness and awful smells, constituted the village, I was surprised to find no one about; the whole place seemed deserted. At last I hit on an aged priest coming out of the church, and in reply to my question where were the inhabitants, he pointed to a notice pinned on what proved to be the mayor's house. This directed the families named in the margin, one and all, to go this week haymaking on the high meadows on the mountain. The various people concerned were not mentioned by name but, as the custom was, were indicated by their family totem signs. The old priest proved himself an interesting informant on this and many other points connected with the life and history of the valley. Finally he kindly asked me into his house to have a cup of coffee.

When, in the course of our talk, I told him I had just come from the neighbouring valley of Kandersteg, he grew quite excited and told me he

had only recently unearthed among the old church records a very interesting document relating to Kandersteg. It purported to be the statement of a dying man as taken down by a priest of that time, in the year 1638.

The place had derived its name from an unwelcome swarm of mice which infested it. So much was this the case that a haunch of beef which had been left in the tower one night was found next morning to have been entirely consumed by the mice. This suggested to the blood-thirsty tyrant the fiendish idea of hanging a victim in an extreme case in such a way that, when spread-eagled, one foot should remain on the ground. He argued that the mice would then attack the victim and gradually devour him from the foot upwards until death released him from his sufferings.

Another painful form of execution devised by Count Rollo was that of hanging his victim head downwards from a window in the tower until he died, and this punishment he had meted out on May 14th, 1631, to Johann Kostler. Young Albert Kostler, driven to fury by the death of his father, gathered together a number of young men of the valley, and they planned together to rid the community of this monster.

Unfortunately for them their plot was discovered before it was ripe, and Albert was waylaid by Rollo's myrmidons and carried off to the Mice Tower. It was after nightfall when he was brought in and Count Rollo was at supper with his companions. He joyously gave the word for the young man to be hanged forthwith head downwards from the window. Quickly the victim's feet were tied together with the end of a rope, which ran up over the end of a beam projecting out from the window, and he was slung out into the darkness to die a lingering death, while Rollo and his friends kept up a noisy carousal immediately above him.

For a few moments he hung like this while his executioners returned to their feast, and then with a sudden plunge he fell heavily to the ground. The rope had been partially gnawed through by the mice. Fortunately at that point the ground was covered by a thick growth of heath. For a few moments he lay practically stunned, but he was not materially hurt and, on coming to, he realised this, and having unfastened his bonds he made his way cautiously in the darkness out of the camp and into the rocky cliffs close by.

By good fortune he came across a small cave, into which he crept. He found that it receded a good way into the mountain-side, and he followed it up, crawling on his hands and knees, until he felt himself secure from pursuit. Here he lay down to rest by a small runnel of fresh water. Some time later--it may have been several hours--he was alarmed to hear voices of men evidently searching for him. This caused him to explore even

deeper into the recesses of the mountain, till he found himself out of reach of any sounds. Haunted, however, by the fear of re-capture, he continued to creep on and explore farther into the tunnel-like cave, in the hope that he might find another exit.

How long he struggled on he never knew; in the total darkness it might have been hours, it might and probably was days and nights. In the end, starving, weak and utterly worn out, when he had given up all hope, and had resigned himself to dying in peace rather than at the hands of torturers, he suddenly saw a faint gleam of light. Dragging himself onwards, he eventually emerged into what he afterwards discovered was the Loetschen Valley. Here he was found, and succored by friendly hands, and he finally made it his home.

Probably from fear that any report of his being still alive might leak out to the Kander Valley, he never confided to a soul his identity nor his story, until eventually, on his death-bed, he confessed it to the priest. He now lies in the third grave on the left as you enter the narrow churchyard overhanging the river valley at Kippel.

He asked me whether I had during my stay in the Kander Valley noticed, near the entrance to the tunnel, a small square tower. This, he said, was referred to in the document as "The Mice Tower". Certainly I had seen it, but had not paid it much attention on account of its insignificant appearance. But, muttering the old Swiss proverb "Little pigs nevertheless make good pork," he tottered off to the church to search the muniment chest for the paper. Meanwhile I waited, sipping my coffee and pondering on the inscription on the beam--"God protect this house and all who go in and out."

Presently he returned with the document and, deciphering with some difficulty the crabbed characters on the time-worn paper, he read to me the following grim story. I give merely the substance of it, omitting the lengthy if picturesque detail.

A note by the father-confessor explained it was the dying confession of a man who had come mysteriously to Kippel some years previously, and had established himself there as a recluse, living in a small hut high up on the mountain side. Being now about to meet his Maker, and no longer fearing the vengeance of man, he confessed that he was the only surviving son of Johann Kostler, a former well-to-do farmer in the valley of the Kander. (His chalet is still to be seen in Kandersteg today.)

While this man, Albert Kostler, was yet a young man, the notorious Count Rollo, known as "Rollo the Roisterer," was tyrant of the valley. The Count lived in the old castle of Tellesberg perched high upon a solitary crag

commanding the valley. From this fastness with his band of armed retainers he exacted from the inhabitants all that he wanted from time to time in the shape of food or money or cattle, etc. When his demands were not met with the promptitude desired, he inflicted imprisonment or torture or even death on the wretched peasant; so that the whole valley was terrorised.

The scene of these cruelties was usually the Mice Tower at the head of the valley, where his victims went through a form of mock trial before being condemned to the punishment which he amused himself in devising. The upper room of this tower was also the scene of wild orgies and carousals on the part of himself and his boon companions.

Count Rollo had some iron staples let into the outer wall of the Mice Tower, to which his victim was triced up by the wrist and ankles in a spread-eagle position, and exposed naked for hours to the blazing sun in the summer and to the freezing wind in the winter. (These staples can still be seen on the walls of this harmless-looking building.)

My host, having read the confession to me, went on to say that tradition maintains that Count Rollo the Roisterer, after a life of cruelty and debaucheries, came to a bad end--as bad men do.

The story went that he was investigating the Blausee, or Blue Lake, which lies below his castle, when a sudden rise of the water from melting snow in the mountains forced him to try to cross the lake on a fallen tree. In doing so he slipped and his foot became entangled and held, as by a vice, among the branches. The water, rising gradually higher and higher, submerged him inch by inch; and though his screams attracted his followers they were unable to do anything to save him before he was finally submerged and drowned. My friend had not himself been to the Blausee, but he maintained that on particularly clear days Rollo's skeleton can still be seen among the trees at the bottom of that wonderful blue lake.

He also added that it is widely believed that between the hours of twelve and one in the morning, on September 13th every year, his ghost may be seen gliding round the Mice Tower, wringing his hands in an agony of remorse--or it may not.

Note. - The probability is that Count Rollo's Ghost will NOT be seen because there never was a Swiss proverb that "Little pigs nevertheless make good pork," nor was there an Albert Kostler, nor even a Count Rollo the Roisterer, though there IS the Mice Tower and the Blausee! So, I'm sorry, but the whole yarn is a fake. B.-P.

Skeleton Lady

This story begins not too long ago and not far away. Just to the north of here there is a country where it is Winter for 7 long months of the year. Now this particular Winter had gone on much longer than usual and the people were beginning to run out of food and firewood. Inside one small house right out in the barren snowlands an old lady was beginning to get anxious. (Now you have to put on old lady and old man voices, get anxious and rub your hands a lot as if cold). "oh, my husband I am so cold and hungry. Look at me my hands are blue! I am going to die I am sure of it."

"Don't worry my darling, Winter will be over soon, we will have food again" But the old lady looked very ill and continued to get anxious. Eventually the old man agreed, "Very well my darling I will go and search for food. But before I go you must promise me one thing. You must not use the last two logs we have for the fire, we will need them to cook the food on when I return"

"Okay, okay I agree just go, please find food"

With that the old man went out in search of food.

Time passed and the old man did not return, the fire was beginning to get lower and lower.

"Where is he. I'm hungry! I'm freezing! I am sure I will die" (rub hands a lot) Then the old lady had an idea. "If I put just one of the logs on the fire he will be back soon and then we will still have one to cook the food with. Yes, yes that's what I'll do."

The old lady picked up one log and placed it on the fire. (act this out, as you place log on fire make whooshing sound). "Oh that's much better, I'm so warm, he'll be back with food soon". (smile a lot).

The old lady forgot how hungry she was as she sat close to the warm fire. But more time passed and still her husband did not return. It was beginning to get dusk outside and again the fire was getting lower and lower.

"Where is he? He must have found food and eaten it. I am going to be left here to freeze!" (lots of rubbing and groaning)

Then the old lady had another idea.

"He must be back soon. If I put the last log on the fire it will be hot and ready to cook on when he returns". With that the old lady put the last log on the fire. (make whooshing sound and cries of happiness)

But more time passed and the old man was not back. The last log began to burn lower and lower until all that was left was a tiny flicker. (complain a lot and move in close to imaginary fire).

The old lady got closer and closer to the fire. Then suddenly "Ouch" she burnt herself on it and began to bleed. She placed the finger in her mouth to lick it (make this action)

"MMMMh this tastes good." Then the old lady began to chew (make chewing action up hand). "Mmmm so good." And chew, up her arm, and around her body (act all this out - lots of chewing and mmhging noises) until all that was left was a skeleton.

"Mmhh that was so good, I feel much better but I'm still hungry." Just at that moment she heard a rustling outside and the door opened. In came her husband with 2 rabbits in his hand (mime this).

"Look my wife I found foood-----"

The old lady ran towards him and grabbed the rabbits (mime this). Mmmh these are good. MMhh MMhh (mime chewing rabbits) My husband I've just realized how meaty you are. Come here I want to eat you. I want Meat!"

With that the old man burst out the door and ran into the frozen wastelands as fast as he could. Behind him the old lady was running. "I want meat, I'm going to eat you." Luckily the old man could run fast and began to escape his wife. he ran further and further into the snow. In the distance was the sound of the old lady.

"I want meat. I'm going to eat you!" (each time you do this grab the arm of a member of the audience and fake chew it - you should be on your feet all the time now and miming the running actions.)

Suddenly the old man came to the edge of a huge gorge that went as far as he could see that way (look) and as far as he could see that way (look). There was no way across and coming closer was the sound of the old lady.

"I want meat. I'm going to eat you" (attack audience again)

Then the old man noticed a small wooden cottage. he ran to it and banged on the door. The door opened on a chain and a woman could be seen inside. "Yes. How can I help you."

**"It's my wife. she's gone crazy she's going to eat me" (act very panicked)
"Very well I will help you but first you must bring me a bucket of water."
"What, she's going to eat me and you want water?"**

"Yes"

"Okay, okay"

The old man searched around and found a bucket to get some water from the well. he took it to the woman who pulled out a ladle from her pocket and dipped it into the water. (mime all this out).

"AAhh yes. Very good. Now I will help you"

In the distance the sound of the skeleton lady was very close "I want meat. I'm going to eat you!" (attack audience)

The woman stood on the edge of the gorge and stamped her feet into the ground. Then she reached out and stretched (say this word long and slowly as you stretch out) to the other side and grabbed onto a tree. "Now you may cross."

The old man walked carefully across the lady's back (mime this) and reached the other side. Then the woman let go and PING went right back to the other side. She returned to her house.

Just then the skeleton lady arrived at the gorge. "I will get you my husband. I will eat you. I want Meat!"

She banged on the door of the house. "Yes. Can I help you?"

"You are too skinny to eat. You will help me cross the gorge."

"Very well I will help you but first you must bring me a drink of water."

"Help me now or I'll eat you anyway."

"Okay, Okay."

With that the woman stood on the side of the gorge and stamped her feet into the ground. She stretched across and grabbed onto the tree. The old woman began to run across.

"I want meat. I will eat you."

When she was halfway across the woman let go and PING went back to the start.

**" I want meaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa....." (fade off and then crash to ground)
CRASH**

The skeleton lady fell to ground and shattered to a million pieces.

(Say next part of story very slowly and quietly)

Now I said that I said that this happened not too long ago and not too far away. It is said that there is a little bit of magic in each piece of the skeleton lady's bone and that one day they will join together and come in search of "MEAT" (jump and attack audience then end"

The Bronze Rat

A tourist wanders into a back-alley antique shop in San Francisco's Chinatown. Picking through the objects on display he discovers a detailed, life-sized bronze sculpture of a rat. The sculpture is so interesting and unique that he picks it up and asks the shop owner what it costs.

"Twelve dollars for the rat, sir," says the shop owner, "and a thousand dollars more for the story behind it."

"You can keep the story, old man," he replies, "but I'll take the rat."

The transaction complete, the tourist leaves the store with the bronze rat under his arm. As he crosses the street in front of the store, two live rats emerge from a sewer drain and fall into step behind him. Nervously looking over his shoulder, he begins to walk faster, but every time he passes another sewer drain, more rats come out and follow him. By the time he's walked two blocks, at least a hundred rats are at his heels, and people begin to point and shout. He walks even faster, and soon breaks into a trot as multitudes of rats swarm from sewers, basements, vacant lots, and abandoned cars. Rats by the thousands are at his heels, and as he sees the waterfront at the bottom of the hill, he panics and starts to run full tilt.

No matter how fast he runs, the rats keep up, squealing hideously, now not just thousands but millions, so that by the time he comes rushing up to the water's edge a trail of rats twelve city blocks long is behind him. Making a mighty leap, he jumps up onto a light post, grasping it with one arm while he hurls the bronze rat into San Francisco Bay with the other, as far as he can heave it. Pulling his legs up and clinging to the light post, he watches in amazement as the seething tide of rats surges over the breakwater into the sea, where they drown.

Shaken and mumbling, he makes his way back to the antique shop.

"Ah, so you've come back for the rest of the story," says the owner.

"No," says the tourist, "I was wondering if you have a bronze lawyer."

-- Source unknown

Home Alone

I hate to admit it, but this happened to me way back in 1980--

A few years after graduating from college, I returned to my folks' home to retrieve a considerable number of storage boxes that I had left with them. These boxes were filled with books, course notes, old homework projects, etc that I had kept. I decided to weed through them and eliminate as much junk as I could.

Not having the heart to dump all that hard work into the garbage, I decided to grab a six-pack, settle down in front of the downstairs fire place and ceremoniously burn four years worth of college memorabilia. I managed to get through about five of the 15 or so boxes piled around me when I realized I could not possibly sort through each box page-by-page. In the interest of time, I decided to do a cursory scan of the contents to determine if anything 'jumped out' as worth saving. Well, box number six appeared to be loaded with Psychology and Logic 101 junk so I took the short cut and tossed the whole box on the funeral pyre before me.

I popped open beer number four and watched the box smolder. Raising the can, I gave one last salute to those two unmemorable courses as the box erupted into a roaring inferno.

The papers were consumed rapidly.

So were the ancient contents of the dresser drawer that I had hastily dropped into the bottom of that box when packing two years earlier. Dang, I had forgotten all about that stuff. The toothbrush and hairbrush went up rather well.....also that packet of disposable plastic razors, dental floss and contact lens case and a bunch of junk I don't even remember. Of course, I didn't even know that stuff was going up in smoke as I sat there. Just chugged the beer and watched. It burned great...right down to that full can of deodorant that was in there with it all.

I had gotten about half the beer down when that deodorant can finally decided it had had enough. What happened next I can only compare to the scene from "2001" where that Dave Bowman guy is falling through all those lights with that look on his face. I heard a BOOM so loud that my brain only registered it as a high-pitched squeal. The contents of the fireplace right down to the last ash were propelled out with such velocity that all I could see were a multitude of bright streaks emanating from a point about three feet in front of me (ala 2001). Big blue shock wave knocked me back. Spill the beer? You bet. Caught me off guard? He-- yes. Felt like I jumped on a live grenade? Guess so. One second I was watching that inferno burn from the outside, the next second I was watching it from the inside.

The human brain reverts to 'primordial slime' mode when thrown into a situation like this. All higher-order functions vaporize. Guess it's all those endorphins and endomorphines hitting it at once. It took a couple of seconds to get the 'reasoning' capability of my brain back on-line. I jumped up, looked at my hands and feet, touched my face and realized

that I was indeed intact. Holy Cow, I was completely untouched. Not even a soot mark on me. Although I might possibly qualify as a human cannon ball, there would be no Richard Pryor imitation tonight, folks.

I looked through the thick smoke toward the fireplace. What WAS a 6-inch deep accumulation of one winter's ashes was now squeaky clean. Blasted it right out. All those burning embers were now sitting on the deep-pile carpet behind me. ALL over the room. I grabbed the little shovel from the fireplace set and scooped as fast as I could. As soon as I filled the shovel, I'd run to the fireplace, empty it and run back. Some embers were 30 feet down the hall. I guess I set the Guinness World Record for "Hot ember pickup with a little shovel" in those next few minutes. I did manage to avoid setting my folks' house on fire, and the carpet only had one or two real serious melted spots on it. I DID find the deodorant can too- it had left the fireplace at some ungodly serious velocity, hit the wall at the far end of the room and come to rest directly behind where I was sitting. Dang thing was split wide open along the weld and peeled back almost flat. Burned black, too. Looked like reentry junk.

After I got the Fire Marshal Bill stuff under control, I grabbed beer number five, popped the top and thought about how I was gonna get the remaining mess cleaned up. Close examination revealed that everything was coated with a heavy layer of ash. Heck, a vacuum cleaner will get this stuff up no problem.

Gee, how lucky could I be? I didn't get decapitated, the house is still on its foundation, I got a GREAT story for the grandkids and the cleanup is gonna be a cinch. I grabbed my mom's upright out of the closet and started to work.

Ever have one of those split-seconds of consciousness when you realize you survived something really bad but you sense that it's not quite over yet? Well, I never have, but I wish I had felt that way at this point. Would have clued me in as to what was about to happen.

There I was, sucking up ashes with an upright vacuum. Too bad not all of them were cold. That upright vacuum swallowed ONE LITTLE ITTY BITTY HOT EMBER that was sitting there on the carpet. It flew right up inside it and sat on that big ol' pile of carpet lint way up in that bag. Heck, that bag hadn't been emptied in a long time. And all that air rushing in there made that little bitty hot ember REAL happy. Next thing I know, the side of that vacuum is glowing red hot. By the time I figured out what was happening, there was a two foot flame blowing out a hole in the side. It really looked and sounded sorta pretty, like a fighter jet on full afterburner. Diamond shock pattern and all.

Again, my brain reverted to primordial slime mode. All higher-order functions ceased and all I remember thinking was "T-h-r-o-w v-a-c-u-u-m".

I pitched it as hard as I could towards the open basement door, hoping it would make it to the patio outside. The distance was about 20 feet. In slow-motion it looked like one of those old NASA films where the rocket goes psycho right off the launch pad. There it

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was, sailing brush end first with a nice slow roll...fire belching out the side. As the umbilical pulled out of the wall, the flame settled into a long trail of sparks. The vehicle had plenty of initial velocity and it looked like a good downrange trajectory.....right up to the point it passed through the plate glass window to the right side of the door.

Yep, I swear this happened as written.

-- Thanks to IslandFlyr

Nuclear Picnic by Dave Barry

The Boston Globe Magazine, June 25, 1995

Today's culinary topic is: how to light a charcoal fire. Everybody loves a backyard barbecue. For some reason, food just seems to taste better when it has been cooked outdoors, where flies can lay eggs on it. But there's nothing worse than trying to set fire to a pile of balky charcoal.

The average back-yard chef, wishing to cook hamburgers, tries to ignite the charcoal via the squirt, light, and wait method, wherein you squirt lighter fluid on a pile of briquettes, light the pile, then wait until they have turned a uniform gray color. When I say "they have turned a uniform gray color," I am referring to the hamburgers. The briquettes will remain as cold and lifeless as Leonard Nimoy. The backyard chef will keep this up - squirting, lighting, waiting; squirting, lighting, waiting - until the bacterial level in the side dishes has reached the point where the potato salad rises up from its bowl, Bloblike, and attempts to mate with the corn. This is the signal that it's time to order Chinese food.

The problem is that modern charcoal, manufactured under strict consumer- safety guidelines, is one of the least-flammable substances on Earth. On more than one occasion, quick-thinking individuals have extinguished a raging house fire by throwing charcoal on it. Your backyard chef would be just as successful trying to ignite a pile of rocks.

Is there a solution? Yes. There happens to be a technique that is guaranteed to get your charcoal burning very, very quickly, although you should not attempt this technique unless you meet the following criterion: You are a complete idiot.

I found out about this technique from alert reader George Rasko, who sent me a letter describing something he came across on the World Wide Web, a computer network that you should definitely learn more about, because as you read these words, your 11-year-old is downloading pornography from it.

By hooking into the World Wide Web, you can look at a variety of electronic "pages," consisting of documents, pictures, and videos created by people all over the world. One of these is a guy named (really) George Goble, a computer person in the Purdue University engineering department. Each year, Goble and a bunch of other engineers hold a picnic in West Lafayette, Indiana, at which they cook hamburgers on a big grill. Being engineers, they began looking for practical ways to speed up the charcoal-lighting process.

"We started by blowing the charcoal with a hair dryer," Goble told me in a telephone interview. "Then we figured out that it would light faster if we used a vacuum cleaner."

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If you know anything about (1) engineers and (2) guys in general, you know what happened: The purpose of the charcoal-lighting shifted from cooking hamburgers to seeing how fast they could light the charcoal.

From the vacuum cleaner, they escalated to using a propane torch, then an acetylene torch. Then Goble started using compressed pure oxygen, which caused the charcoal to burn much faster, because as you recall from chemistry class, fire is essentially the rapid combination of oxygen with the cosine to form the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (or something along those lines).

By this point, Goble was getting pretty good times. But in the world of competitive charcoal-lighting, "pretty good" does not cut the mustard. Thus, Goble hit upon the idea of using - get ready - liquid oxygen. This is the form of oxygen used in rocket engines; it's 295 degrees below zero and 600 times as dense as regular oxygen. In terms of releasing energy, pouring liquid oxygen on charcoal is the equivalent of throwing a live squirrel into a room containing 50 million Labrador retrievers. On Goble's World Wide Web page (the address is <http://ghg.ecn.purdue.edu/>), you can see actual photographs and a video of Goble using a bucket attached to a 10-foot-long wooden handle to dump 3 gallons of liquid oxygen (not sold in stores) onto a grill containing 60 pounds of charcoal and a lit cigarette for ignition. What follows is the most impressive charcoal-lighting I have ever seen, featuring a large fireball that, according to Goble, reached 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The charcoal was ready for cooking in - this has to be a world record - 3 seconds.

There's also a photo of what happened when Goble used the same technique on a flimsy \$2.88 discount-store grill. All that's left is a circle of charcoal with a few shreds of metal in it. "Basically, the grill vaporized," said Goble. "We were thinking of returning it to the store for a refund."

Looking at Goble's video and photos, I became, as an American, all choked up with gratitude at the fact that I do not live anywhere near the engineers' picnic site. But also, I was proud of my country for producing guys who can be ready to barbecue in less time than it takes for guys in less-advanced nations, such as France, to spit.

Will the 3-second barrier ever be broken? Will engineers come up with a new, more powerful charcoal-lighting technology? It's something for all of us to ponder this summer as we sit outside, chewing our hamburgers, every now and then glancing in the direction of West Lafayette, Indiana, looking for a mushroom cloud.

-- Thanks to Jim Hall

A Porker in the Family

This tall tale was told to me by my father, who happens to be a veterinarian. It works particularly well when told by him in the first person.

* * *

I (a young veterinarian student) had been asked to make the rounds of the local farms one week in the absence of my boss, Dr. Johnson. Most of the week was uneventful; the usual horse vaccinations, sprained dog paws, and sick cows. However, when I got to the MacPherson farm, I saw something extraordinary.

While I was talking to farmer MacPherson, a pig came ambling around the corner of the barn. What was extraordinary about it was that the pig had three artificial legs!

I asked farmer MacPherson about this curious animal. Why would anybody give a pig even one artificial leg, much less three?

"Wal," he drawled, "that there ain't no ordinary pig. Let me tell you -- one day ah was out baling some hay, and I hopped off'n the tractor to check the tire, which was kinda wobbly. Wouldn't'cha know it, the tractor started to roll of its own accord, and trapped me right there under the wheel. Just then old Pinky -- the pig, that is -- wandered by and saw whut'd happen, and skeedadled back to the house and fastened his teeth on my wife's dress, and wouldn't let go until he dragged her out to where I was layin', and then she got the tractor off me. That's one smart pig -- better'n Lassie, I'd say."

I was quite impressed. I new pigs were pretty intelligent, but I had never heard of a pig doing anything like that. "That's amazing," I said, "But that still doesn't explain the artificial limbs."

"Wal, lemme tell ya about another time," MacPherson said. "Mah son was down at the swimmin' hole yonder a couple summers ago, and he hit his head on a big log out in the middle of the water. He was about to go down for the third time, when ol' Pinky jumped into the water, swam out to him, grabbed him by the shorts with the teeth, and drug 'im coughin' an' splutterin' up onto shore. Saved mah son's life, that pig did."

"Incredible!" I exclaimed. "Most pigs can't even swim! But the artificial legs...?"

"Wal, last year the old farmhouse burned down," the farmer continued. "Like as not we all would have been cinders, but for that little porker. We was all asleep when the fire started, but ol' Pinky ran squealing 'round the house 'til we all woke up, and went and dragged my youngest daughter from her bedroom just seconds 'fore the roof collapsed."

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"That's one special pig," I admitted, "But please, tell me, why does Pinky have three artificial legs?"

"Wal," said farmer MacPherson, "A pig like that's just too good to eat all at once."

-- Thanks to Jeff Benjamin, benji@hpfcbg.fc.hp.com, of Fat Wanda's Brewery & Recording

Just a Hike in the Woods

A guy's going on a hiking vacation through the mountains Out West. Before setting off into the boonies, he stops into a small general store to get some supplies.

After picking out the rest of his provisions, he asks the old store owner, "Say, Mister, I'm going hiking up in the mountains, and I was wondering; do you have any bears around here?"

"Yup," replies the owner.

"What kind?" asks the hiker.

"Well, we got black bears and we got grizzlies," he replies.

"I see," says the hiker. "Do you have any of those bear bells?"

"What do you mean?" asks the store owner.

"You know," replies the hiker, "those little tinkle-bells that people wear in bear country to warn the bears that they are coming, so they don't surprise the bears and get attacked."

"Oh yeah," replies the owner. "They're over there," he says, pointing to a shelf on the other side of the store. The hiker selects a couple of the bells and takes them to the counter to pay for them.

"Tell me something, Mister," the hiker inquires, "how can you tell when you're in bear territory, anyway?"

"By the scat," the old fellow replies, ringing up the hiker's purchases.

"Well, um, how can I tell if it's grizzly territory or black bear territory?" the hiker asks.

"By the scat," the store owner replies.

"Well, what's the difference?" asks the hiker. "I mean, what's different between grizzly scat and black bear scat?"

"The stuff that's in it," replies the store owner.

Getting a little frustrated, the hiker asks, "OK, so what's in grizzly bear scat that isn't in black bear scat?" he asks, an impatient tone in his voice.

"Bear bells," replies the old man as he hands the hiker his purchases.

Troop 205 Campfire Stories

-- Thanks to Mike Berryhill, berryhill.mike@smtpgateway.centigram.com, Troop 92, Milpitas, CA

Save the Baby

[The following story is told much better in person, using appropriate physical gestures, than can be described in text; but I'll try. I will also admit that although the story has no sexual overtones, female Scouters invariably do not find it as amusing as male Scouters do, --- but the Cubs themselves always love it.]

In a large city apartment block, fire broke out. Fire fighters arrived on the scene only to find that a lady resident holding her small baby was stranded on an 18th floor balcony overlooking the alley at the rear of the building far above the height any rescue ladder might reach. All fire escape exits are indoors and filled with smoke or fire. There are at least twenty stories above the stranded woman and other tall apartment blocks just across the alley making the use of a helicopter rescue impossible. The fire is spreading rapidly. There is not enough time to stretch a rope from the apartment block across the alley. The only escape possible was to find a rope to lower herself, but with no rope available and a baby in tow, that option was not available. The firemen set up a rescue net below the balcony and shouted for the woman to "Jump".

"But the baby will be killed", shouted the frightened woman.

"Throw the baby and we will catch it.", shouted the firemen, "and then jump yourself."

"No, I'll miss and the baby will die.", screamed the panicking mother.

Just then a tall young man stepped out on a balcony one floor down in an apartment block across the alley. "Throw me the baby.", he shouted at the mother.

"No, you will not catch him and he will die.", screamed the woman. By now the fire is starting to come out the patio door on to the balcony where the woman is standing.

"Lady, I'm Jerry Rice of the San Francisco 49ers. I've never dropped a crucial pass in my life. Please, we don't have time to argue. Throw me the baby and then jump yourself." said the young man on the opposite balcony.

"Oh Jerry, you are my hero. My husband and I will find the TV channel showing every game you play. We have never missed one of your games. Thank goodness you have arrived. I know you will catch my baby and save his life." With that she throws the baby with what looks like a two handed lateral across the alley to the football player and leaps safely to the net below.

The football player catches the baby making one of those over the shoulder sensational receptions and the crowd below goes nuts cheering.

At that point, in a moment of excitement imagining he has just made another game winning touchdown, the football player spikes his new catch to the ground and shouts, "Yesssssss."

Troop 205 Campfire Stories

[And now you understand why mothers seem to have no sense of humour on this one. Standing in front of your audience making numerous arm and body motions can greatly help the story. Virtually the entire last paragraph can shortened to: And he went "Yesssss" (while you make the spiking motion with your arm).]

-- Thanks to Elmer Thiessen, elmer_thiessen@MINDLINK.BC.CA

Why Cats Always Land on Their Feet

Long ago there was a King with a beautiful daughter. He was very fond of her and tried to make her life as happy as she made his. She loved cats and there were several kinds of beautiful cats brought as gifts from all over the world. There were Siamese cats from Siam, Russian blue point cats from Russia and many, many others. Since they had no way of spaying cats in this long ago age, there was soon a problem with the numerous cats running around the Castle. Before long there were so many cats that the King's guards came complaining that they could not walk their posts without tripping over them. They wanted to kill most of the cats, but the King would not hear of it because his daughter would be horrified. The King told his guards that they must find a humane way of ridding the castle of the cats or get used to marching around them. The guards talked among themselves and tried a few ideas, and this is how the first catapult was invented. Soon, whenever the Princess was not looking, a dozen or so cats would be flung over the castle walls. Now the castle walls were high, but not so high that all of the cats perished, just the ones that landed badly. Thus through the process of natural selection evolved in cats the ability to always land on their feet.

-- Thanks to David Handley

The Dark-sucker Theory

For years, it has been believed that electric bulbs emit light, but recent information has proven otherwise. Electric bulbs don't emit light; they suck dark. Thus, we call these bulbs Dark-Suckers.

The Dark-Sucker Theory and the existence of dark-suckers prove that dark has mass and is heavier than light.

First, the basis of the Dark-Sucker Theory is that electric bulbs suck dark. For example, take the Dark-Sucker in the room you are in. There is much less dark right next to it than there is elsewhere. The larger the Dark-Sucker, the greater its capacity to suck dark. Dark-Suckers in the parking lot have a much greater capacity to suck dark than the ones in this room.

As it is with all things, Dark-Suckers don't last forever. Once they are full of dark, they can no longer suck. This is proven by the dark spot on a full Dark-Sucker.

A candle is a primitive Dark-Sucker. A new candle has a white wick. You can see that after the first use, the wick turns black, representing all the dark that has been sucked into it. If you put a pencil next to the wick of an operating candle, it will turn black. This is because it got in the way of the dark flowing into the candle. One of the disadvantages of these primitive Dark-Suckers is their limited range.

There are also portable Dark-Suckers. In these, the bulbs can't handle all the dark by themselves and must be aided by a Dark Storage Unit. When the Dark Storage Unit is full, it must be either emptied or replaced before the portable Dark-Sucker can operate again.

Dark has mass. When dark goes into a Dark-Sucker, friction from the mass generates heat. Thus, it is not wise to touch an operating Dark-Sucker. Candles present a special problem as the mass must travel into a solid wick instead of through clear glass. This generates a great amount of heat and therefore it's not wise to touch an operating candle-type Dark-Sucker.

Also, dark is heavier than light. If you were to swim just below the surface of the lake, you would see a lot of light. If you were to slowly swim deeper and deeper, you would notice it getting darker and darker. When you get really deep, you would be in total darkness. This is because the heavier dark sinks to the bottom of the lake and the lighter light floats at the top. This is why it is called light.

Finally, we must prove that dark is faster than light. If you were to stand in a lit room in front of a closed, dark closet, and slowly opened the closet door, you would see the light slowly enter the closet. But since dark is so fast, you would not be able to see the dark leave the closet.

Troop 205 Campfire Stories

Next time you see what is called an electric bulb, remember that it is really a Dark-Sucker.

-- Thanks to Russ Jones, Scoutmaster, Troop 575 & National Jamboree Troop 1636, South Plains Council, Lubbock, Texas