

THE NEVER-ENDING NEWS

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Last letter a lemon. Sorry, no recalls. Picky clarifications and explanations have been called for. Quite uncalled for, I would say. Re: Merrill's ankle. The stainless steel screw is in to stay. (It is considered very fashionable.) If not, would I not have plainly said so? Re: feather duster. I used it with satisfying effect to remove two cobwebs. No, not upstairs. I am measurably all right there, with respect to what is left. Note: In humans,* brain cell loss is said to commence at age 18, but in the present instance not necessarily so. Seventeen was my hardest year but that doesn't mean things have been one bit easier since, which ought to tell you something, I do believe. It is common knowledge that "cob" in the above compound word comes from Old English "cobbe," spider, and there have been no cobs of the arachnid variety where you think, I am sure, and definitely not where I do, giving the lie to the spider tracks by my eyes which show up under magnification in some of my older pictures. Where said cobs had spun their webs was on a rafter and a lamp chain, high above my noggin. Brain bogglin' how "noggin" ex nihilo (out of nothing) conjures up from my mind French "tête": head. [The circumflex (^) indicates that anciently the "e" was followed by an "s."] From Latin "testa": pot. (In Spain "tiesto" is still a pot--of the garden variety, for flowers--while in Chile it's a bowl.) Imagine, just as we say "jughead" in English, the Gauls, way back, test-ed the limits of friendship in their own inimitable Gallic way. Rough re-creation and translation: "Can't you get that into your stupid pot!" (Of the chamber variety, we suppose.) Funny, isn't it, the root meaning of "noggin" is mug or cup (a teentsy one!), my dear mugheads? Re: microvafe. (Pardon my German accent.) Ach, du lieber Augustin, die ist sehr gefährlich! One time for Merrill I am toasting one toasted chees sandwich in it unt die Käse, da chees, ist boiling up like molten lafa. You must to be too carefulich! I am reading dat in da house da mostest accident ist for dis, unt mostest off all to die Kinder! Seriously, unaware that dangerously high temperatures can be generated, far too many kids in our country get seriously burned. So beware, take care! Achtung! Vorsicht! Gefahr! Attention! Watch it! Danger!

*In elite circles, inelegantly pronounced "In you mans"--ungrammatical, pre-tentious, sexist, provoking uncontrollable sniggers.

A mighty change. In Wallsburg, Horse Country U.S.A., typical masculine names are Buck, Denver, Clint, Shane, Cody... In the MTCs we teach that the first step in making contacts is "establecer una relación de confianza" (establish a relationship of trust). How can anyone with the name "Wendell" do that? "Call me Wint," I told my deacons quorum, and backed it up with my cowboy boots and hat. (What I lack is a big silver belt buckle. I feel so déclassé without one!) Having fully gained their confidence and attention (Of 12-year-olds?), I shared with them two mighty changes in my life. 1) The time I sassily talked back to my dear, wonderful mother, who sacrificed, ever, so much for me. Suddenly I had the sensation of standing outside myself, horrified and disgusted by what I was witnessing--like a quark which becomes a quark and an antiquark when bombarded by a powerful stream of electrons (figuratively, like powerful promptings of the Holy Ghost). I tell you, my feelings were very anti toward that quork, nork, or dork and, honest, I truly repented. 2) When my Mom washed my mouth out with Fels Naptha soap, yuck, over a bad word I had uttered. Sometimes there's talk that parents should wait for a "golden teaching moment" before attempting to modify their children's conduct. Florence's philosophy, in consonance with "Carpe diem" (Seize the day), was to seize the kid, sometimes literally, because she couldn't bear having her adorable boys not grow up to be

worthy disciples of Jesus. With Florence Angelica Tracy Hall, the immediate moment was always the golden moment. I shall be forever grateful to her for that. And as one result, I seldom say even "dang," and I hereby, by gum!... Er... Oh, my!... I hereby by... I hereby resolve to eliminate that. Of course Mom had a sense of humor and lots of patience and refrained from belaboring us for all our childish faults.

So, having laid the groundwork, I invited my dynamic deacons to tell the class about mighty changes in their young lives. Without a nanosecond's hesitation, our little neighbor Shane Richins, without one hair on his chin, let alone on his chest, piped up: "Puberty!" That caught me so unawares (At his age I'm sure that I'd never even heard the word puberty) that I laughed and laughed and am laughing now as I recall it.

Fending off the jackals. Have you seen the movies *The Gods Must Be Crazy I and Crazy II*? They convey profound concepts and lessons that may be missed amid the uproarious, hilariously comic situations. In II, a little native is being pursued by a jackal across the Kalihari Desert. His somewhat older sister has told him that jackals are afraid to attack prey of a certain height, which she indicates for him. In desperation, as the jackal is closing in, he grabs a chunk of wood and places it on his head. Whoof, just in time! I'll tell you no more, not wanting to spoil this terrific sequence for you in case you haven't seen it yet.

A couple of weeks ago I had to stop payment on a check because a salesman had so incredibly misrepresented the product he had sold to us. Never be misled by glossy brochures and fast sales talk. Actually, Merrill and I were both quite dubious and hesitated a long time before going through with the deal. But because sometimes I feel as old as my skin and it's a chore to run all over town comparing prices, we gave in. It was a water softener. With all the soft soap we got from that guy, why did we think we even needed one! When it was delivered, my heart sank through the garage's concrete floor. There was not a particle of gloss to it and it had only one stupid control. It was represented as being far superior to Sears' top of the line model, which is something else! The next day I saw the identical stripped-down apparatus at Craghead Plumbing for \$425 and we had paid \$1000, which, wow, included installation and a lifetime warranty, whatever that means. My life? I called to say I was returning the merchandise and got a lot of guff. So I loaded it in the pickup, put on my cowboy hat and boots, whereby I attain a stature only 18" less than Shawn Bradley, and took off for Orem. I stood tall, for me, and stood by my rights, and hardly had to say a word. Not a peep out of them. This was one sucker that turned out to have teeth. And ha, ha, ha! All the time I was laughing my head off inside (Whoops, be careful! Keep it and your hat on!) like a hyena. The same day we bought the most expensive Sears model for \$549, on sale at \$50 under the usual, and I had the pleasure of installing it myself, thus assuring that it would be done right. Ahem.

Bajando to the Bahamas (ba-han-do: going down). We were leery about something else, but Wendy and Sandy tried something similar, also Helen and Harvey. We have "won" a promotional trip to Orlando and a cruise to the Bahamas, 10 days in all. Round-trip airfare is the main cost to us and we have bought 8 senior citizen coupons (Delta), the minimum number allowed, which will get us there and back and permit us to visit Wendy and Sandy later this year. Woweel! Terrorists don't scare us. We got used to two bombs or so a week in Chile. Besides I was in combat in World War II. Oh, how I pity and mourn for the poor Iraqis. What I went through, though horrible, was nothing compared with today's hi-tech bombing and blasting. Dates: Feb.20-Mar.2. Salaam! Shalom! Peace! Love!

M + W