

H. Y. Belk

AND HIS NEWS OF NEBO VALLEY

Well, Christmas gone for this year. We start a New Year Sunday, 1950, half of the hundred years gone. We had two wars in the 50 years past. I wonder if we can do better in the 50 years to come? If the Truman bunch can get Joe Stalin to fight, we may look for the most deadly war mankind has yet known. Most of the folks who dislike Stalin only wish they were Stalin. Hitler may be in hiding in Russia, waiting for Joe to set off the fireworks. I can't believe that Jackass killed himself. He had too many good looking sisters hanging on to his shirt tail.

Never would there be another war fought if the few rulers of the nations would take the profit out of war. Then they tell we the people, that we are fighting for Liberty. Oh, for crying out loud! Its a lie. You can't shoot that kind of bull into my veins.



Now Mr. Truman has evolved a plan to force the Southern Democrats to swallow the Sons of Ham without salt or seasoning. The Dems kicked and snorted and gagged and even threatened to secede from the Party, but they have voted off and I predict that they will vote her straight when the time comes. Well, once again it reminds me that we are all for self and the devil for the rest of the bunch. When a man gets in office what makes him quit hand shaking and passing out cigars? To hell with you, I done got your vote.

I remember one time Pa made some apple cider so Ma could have vinegar to put on the vegetables when the preacher came for lunch. But what got away with me, the preacher always stayed for supper. I started to tell you about Pa's apple, cider. When Pa got the juice mashed out of the apples Pa, he bunged it up in a wooden keg. Locked it up. In a few days I could hear that stuff bubbling. It smelled good. Pa and Ma took off to town. I took off to the smoke house, drew the staple, took the bung out of the keg and pumped out one gallon of the juice. I drank most of the gallon. I never had felt so funny and good. When Pa and Ma got back from town it was snowing like devils and cats. Pa called to me to hitch out old Bill Joe and Buck from the buggy. I didn't give Pa no answer. I could not. I was sprawled out on the floor just like a dead man. Ma feared I'd had a stroke. Pa got his buggy whip, that woke me up. I knew hell was starting. When Pa looked at the smoke house, saw the key turned up, he whipped me like I was a bad boy. Now I've reformed. Pa loved I was hell on wheels way back when I was coming up.

When I was very young, not long after the Civil War, we lived in the country. Grandfather's old negro woman, after being freed as a slave, came to live with Pa and Ma. She did the cooking, washing and many other things. My grandfather owned 30 negroes when they were freed. They had a hard time finding places to go. The South was devastated and the white man, as well, was left in poverty. The old darkey lived all alone in one of daddy's log cabins, not fit for a human being to live in. That was in the winter of '81. It snowed all winter. Before one deep snow melted, another one fell on top. With sleet and snow, one morning again it was snowing. The Old darkey didn't come up to the house that morning as usual. So after noon, I can't say after dinner, I can't remember that we had dinner. If so, it was very scant. Anyway, Pa with me digging close behind in snow fork deep, when we reached the cabin, Pa dripping with sleet and snow, called to Aunt Sarah. No response. Pa pried the door open. After we saw no smoke curling out of the stick and mud chimney. It was dark in the one little room. Aunt Sarah was sprawled out on the floor, froze stiff as a board. That

night a few darkeys came to the cabin and set up with the corpse. Next day in a new slab coffin they put her under the ground. Pa and me went back to the house. That night I was very much excited, so much so, I went under the cover deep, head first, and had visions of the poor negro on the floor.

Preaching, like all other business, when the money stops rolling in the preacher quits calling up sinners. I once knew a great preacher. He got paid well by his church, but he was all the time driving over the country stopping at the best looking farm homes, picking up all kinds of commodities, mostly chickens. You know that is the most favorite dish. Well, if the chickens were not so plentiful, he'd take off to the smoke house and collect a nice ham. When he hit the country store, he went through everything. If he didn't find what he wanted he just left everything scattered around. He drove out to my place. We were very poor. He took in the situation. Saw no smoke house. Didn't find no chickens crowing around. We were in the field picking 8 cent cotton. When he saw it wouldn't do he cranked up his old mule and took off in his buggy to find better grazing. Its a darn fact, whether you care to agree with me or not, the preaching business is an imperfect as any other business. We have some God-fearing, God-loving preachers. We have others that would skin a flea for its tallow. We find bad with the good.

I haven't got any driver's license, but I'm not afraid of them boys that takes 'em in. Maybe they know I haven't got a rattle trap. When I go, I go on my feet what ma gave me, and not stop to see if I'm sober.

Looks like most everybody speeding. They must want to get there before the frolic starts. No sir, I don't keep step with the gang. I park my feet where I stop. My shoes are old and worn. My hat is gone to seed. My money won't spend. My marbles won't roll. I had no money to spend, that's why I have no marbles to roll.

One thing can be said of the girls of yesterday — they didn't smoke, and wear britches like a man—but you didn't see no legs. We didn't have much chance to court 'em. Ma and Pa was right there—til 9 p. m. If Ma didn't break up the frolic, Pa did. When Pa said, Young man, go home, the jig was up for that night.

I had most of my fun at sneezes. I'd slip my gal a pack of home made snuff, done up in a rag, fresh snuff, made last night. Sometimes I'd win out with my girl or some other boy didn't have some store snuff. One time the teacher caught me slipping snuff to a little red headed sister. He politely cranked me up on the floor, on one foot. He said, you're up for 30 minutes. That's why I didn't get no learning. You can't get no schooling standing up on one foot, cold and freezing too. That little old log house they called a school house wasn't as good as a bull pen. When

he let my off of that one foot standing, he sapped me with a switch, and said, Young man never bring any snuff in this school of learning. All the students were giggling at me, except the little red headed girl I gave the snuff to. She was weeping like her poor heart would break when school was out. I still remember that old rat of a teacher.

You can't say much harm about me. I wouldn't want you to say any thing good about me. I'm just an old corn bread loving country boy. Never got no schooling. Didn't have any books. What I got I had to get it off handed. Pa said I didn't want to learn, the old teacher said I was too lazy to learn. Three in one make a trio. Now I'm so lazy I can't learn. I eat plenty but I'm too lazy to digest it. My appetite is very good for an old country cornbread loving eater eating boy. Yes sir, I'm glad I'm not educated like a lot of the old timers going around cheating folks out of every damn thing.

I had a nice compliment the other day. It was a lady who up and said, she didn't believe everything she had heard on me. I told her the fact is, most of it is so. What is not so, is so and so, then why treat me like you do, do.

You never thought I'd be a poet. Now Christmas gone. With all your money spent. Now you begin to wonder. Where you went. And how you got in jail. And lived to see the jail. With all your pockets empty. And your head hitting the wall. It you recuperate. You'd do it over again. You got a thrill. But you had to pay the price. The judge got the fine.

P. S. Just to conclude, in time this scattering theme and no grammar in it you find. Just remember, no grammars were to be found. We came upon the scene of action before grammars were found. What is that anyway?

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