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Scene From Top O' The Hill

By: Jack Kelly

We finally got our stuff moved into the house on the Hill. The furniture we shipped down is crowding the basement a bit but, all in all, things are looking up. By that, I mean that I can sit down without Blanche mentioning a dozen or so things that she thinks need doing. She is finding all sorts of things as she unpacks. She even located the title to our car, which allowed us to get our North Carolina tag. For the past two weeks that gal vowed and declared that I had lost the title along with a bunch of other papers. Then, she found all the papers in a safe place where she had stuck them away, like any good sensible wife would have done with them. Since I have been married to her for twenty-eight years this coming June, I did not say, as might a less seasoned veteran, "I told you so" — no sir! I just let the matter slide.

The worst thing about this moving and remodeling mess is the way it cuts into my personal time for doing things. I scarcely have time to read my papers, mags, and pamphlets, let alone listen to the radio or look at t. v. I have kept up with things to the extent that I will make a bet that, if Senator McCarthy keeps making the showing he has started, LBJ will make an official Declaration of War over in the East because no War President gets turned out of Office.

That probably would account for Bobby Kennedy delaying his entrance upon the stage as well as Governor Rockefeller's utter refusal to get involved. Rocky still has a better chance for the Republican nomination than Bobby does for the Democratic one. Of course, both of those boys have so much money behind them that you have to wonder what they are scheming up. Either one of them could put any particular Primary in their hip pocket if they really wanted to cut loose and spend.

Governor Scranton waited too long to start against Goldwater and Bobby knows that so, I guess he knows what he is doing. Doubtless he feels the Republican nomination would not be worth much anyhow. Of course, there is always the chance that Rocky realizes that Nixon deserves the nomination. After all, Nixon has been Mr. Republican for the last few years, sort of like Taft was. Taft deserved it but the Convention gave it to Ike so the Party could win. Maybe that is Rocky's strategy. For sure, the Republicans want to go with a winner this time, and, from past performances, Dick Nixon is not a winner. At this point it seems hopeless that Nixon would trade for one of the big Cabinet jobs but, politics being what they are, he might. Then again, he might go off and

sulk if the Convention turns him down — become a forgotten man like Al Smith and J'm Farley.

Everything is not peaches and cream in the Democratic ranks either. There are so many dissident voices and dissenting viewpoints that anyone except Nixon might lead a Republican sweep. None of the big-shot Senators or Representatives seem to want to hitch their wagon to LBJ's coattail. The figures because Johnson will be our first "lame-duck" in that Office, when and if he gets elected. Congress will not have to care too much for his views and, conversely, LBJ will not have to wheedle or wheel and deal with Congress, he can take his case to the people and carve a niche in the History Book for himself. He will not have to worry about 1972 because the Constitution bars him from further service.

If he has another term, all he has to do is do the best he can for the good of all. It will be a new experience for all of us. No more reading of unholy alliances formed between various groups to get something done. The President can take the credit for all good and let Congress have the blame for the rest.

We will have to wait until July before we can guess with any certitude about the outcome of the November election because not until then will we know what horses are running. Since the Republicans meet first, they, to a degree, just might control the makeup of the Democratic ticket. They might cause LBJ to give Hubert the gate. As of now, the only person profiting appears to be George Wallace.

South Toe

P.T.A.

Elects Officers

The South Toe Elementary School P.T.A., met Monday night at 7:30 at the school.

This organization, which has been rather active, has big plans for the future, with a goal of 100% membership of all parents and teachers. Officers for 1968-69 were elected as follows: President, Claude Vess; Vice President, Mrs. Kore McWhirter; Treas., Mrs. Edith Laws; Secretary, Mrs. Spike Westall; Parliamentarian, Colonel Bennett; Teacher-Advisor, Boyd Deyton.

The next meeting will be April 15th, at which time the parents will present an "Easter Parade", wearing costumes made by themselves. Mrs. Nell Huskins will be in charge of the program.

RECOLLECTIONS

By: Mrs. Phyllis Downing

"RECOLLECTIONS" Concluded by Mrs. Phyllis Downing.

In the 4th. or 5th. grade I was neither late nor absent all year, and the strain was so great on my mother, because sick or well, rain or shine, I had to get to school, that the next year she saw to it that I was both late and absent in the beginning of the year.

Many things used to detain me on my way home from school.— Watching children skate by the dam where the ice was cleared, sliding down the big tin roof of Brown's Garage, sliding down hill, and many snow ball fights. Often it would be dark before I'd pass the last house on the way home, and I'd hear my mother's loud clear voice echoing back and forth thru the mountains,—"Phyllis! Phyllis!" Finally in desperation, because of the occasional "Lumber Jack" on his way into town or going back to work after a few drinks too many on the road—she told me about the "SIDE HILL GOUGERS" that came out after dark. They had two left legs, or was it two right legs? which were longer than the other side from walking along the side of the hills, and they ate up little girls. Spanking, no Saturday night movie (only night there was a movie in the winter), castor oil (usually a last resort) never really worked, but those Side Hill Gougers did.

One night it was getting dark and I was afraid to go home on the road, so decided to go on the lake which was against the rules, not that the ice wasn't thick enough, usually 2 feet or more, but often where it had been cut there would be only a thin layer, and sometimes air holes. As I walked home it was so cold the ice started cracking and it sounded like thunder racing toward me from one end of the lake to the other. My mother's call ½ mile away was more than welcome, and I don't remember staying out again after dark, not in mid-winter anyway.

I was known as a Tom Boy—and many a boy's mother called mine to complain that I had "Beaten Up" their little boy—even Chief Dennis' sons, our only real Indian family. As I look back maybe that is why I never had any dates for the proms at school, "Poor Ground Work."

BR-R-R I shiver to remember the yearly race to see who would be the first one in swimming. When the dam was opened in the spring, and the ice started breaking up in April, or perhaps it was March, the river below the dam had pools in it. My cousin and I would hide our suits on the way to school, and often while there was still snow on the ground, and ice on the edges, we'd have the honor of being first in.

Waiting for the mail to be sorted in the village post office after school was fun—and warm—and there was lots of company and of course, Givens Drug Store—Soda Fountain, later called the Goodie Shop—was the gathering spot of the crowd, just as Pollard's Drug Store and the Drive In are in Burnsville.

I guess I gave my brother, who is 8 years older than I, a bad time as he would sort of have to watch over me a little, and I wasn't easy to watch over. I remember charging candy at

one of our local stores—Barkers or Hurley and Ryans, and tearing the slip into small pieces on the way home, thinking that was the end of that, and he would come along later, gather all the pieces and show them to mother.

My children have often said, "Mother, you must have been AWFUL when you were little. I guess I was, in my way, but I'm glad. People who are brought up the hard way seem to be able to take the hard knocks of life. I guess that is why I stand up for my rights now—and always will.

One night when it was very cold and clear, with a full moon and no wind, my mother was visiting a friend, Mrs. Scrafford, further up the road toward Inlet and Eagle Bay. She was a widow and lived all alone with about 20 cats. Later on I heard she and her four footed friends burned up in their house. However, on that night mother said I could walk up and meet her when she left Mrs. Scrafford's. So around eight o'clock she called and we both started walking, she downhill and I up hill, just like the road at Cattail, winding, steep and wooded, no houses. I had never done this alone before and because I was alone it was an experience I shall always remember.

It was so cold the trees snapped and cracked like guns, the moon was beautiful and there was a loud squeak in the snow with each step. It was very exciting and sort of "earie", and remembering the bears I was very happy about 15 minutes later to see mother in the distance, and to learn it was she and not a four legged creature.

It was also a great event when we were privileged to see the Northern Lights glowing and moving in the far north which was not too often. It was a little frightening and I am afraid I still do not understand them, but like the Southern Cross we used to watch in the Virgin Islands, "Breathtaking" and thrilling to behold.

Children are often afraid of thunder and lightning, but as you all know here in the Blue Ridge—if you haven't heard thunder in the Mountains—you don't know what it can be like.

Mother and Daddy would often get us up in the middle of the night and we'd stand on the front porch and watch the lightning. The whole sky would come to life—turning night into day, and the thunder echoed back and forth through the mountains. The world seemed to be coming to an end.

Well, this lovely memorable day is also coming to an end, the sun is going down, and although it is now 62 degrees there is a chill in the air and the silly little bugs flying around will have a short life, as it is supposed to go down to freezing again tonight.

It is time to go in, stoke my fires and wait for George who has gone to the Doctors, and then we can resume our running Rummy game. At home there is never any time for each other, or such silly relaxing things as a game of rummy by the fire. I wonder if I will ever bring a T. V. up here to camp? I doubt it. The radio works well and we have music all day.

It is also nearly time to face a problem. What shall I do with the tiny field mice living in my

desk drawer in our bedroom. My dog discovered them last night. They have a cozy little nest, all wooly, someone's sweater, no doubt and they just sat there and looked at me when I opened the drawer. I put some rice, cheese and raisins and apples in for them this morning. It's sad to think of the poison which will be put around later, but I suppose it is necessary.

I am thankful to be here, and thankful to Dr. Mack who chose this remote difficult spot in which to build so many years ago. I understand he did not even allow a bridge to be put over the big creek, and that everything, even the piano, was brought over on stepping stones and a high line and pulley.

On days like this, or sitting by the fire, I often feel he is pleased we love his cabin so much. As I am pleased and grateful I had the advantage of being born in equally beautiful surroundings. We who have known the severe winters and problems of "back country living", should be and can be the backbone and strength of the nation.

POSTSCRIPT: February 1968.

As I sit here in our nice old home in Coconut Grove with the Southeasterly breezes blowing off the bay, temperature 75, I rejoice at having finally finished copying my notes over from last fall. Speaking of temperatures we were talking to our Burnsville friend, Brooks Hensley, back in January, the 12th, and he said it was snowing and below freezing. The next night I called my brother, Ray, in Old Forge to wish him a happy birthday and he reported there was one or three feet of snow on the level, and the temperature— "oh it's around 48 degrees below zero"!!!!

I have decided to send one copy of my "RECOLLECTIONS" to The Yancey Record and one copy to the Adirondack Echo at Old Forge, thinking some of my old friends might enjoy reading it.

It also gives me great pleasure to pass the word to our friends in North Carolina, although I think most of them know by now, that since writing this last fall, we have decided to make Burnsville and Cattail Creek our permanent home. We will be, God willing, at the Bailey house on the square during the winter months and Cattail summers. Our old house, very much like our new one on the square, as much as we love it, is for sale. Plans are being made, I have about 45 cartons already packed and when we arrive next time it is for good.

Paddy, our 15-year-old, has a new horse. Burkie will be at the Parkway Playhouse again next summer and at a North Carolina College next fall.

We are filled with anticipation and enthusiasm and look forward to the day, around May first at the latest, when we head for Yancey County and Home.

Phyllis B. Downing
(Mrs. George Albro Downing)

The cardiovascular toll among adults aged below 65 has decreased about 15 per cent since the first Heart Fund Campaign in 1949, with your Heart Fund dollars speeding virtually every advance.