

Bittersweet
by
Oden Walker

More than a year ago when I was writing "When We Were Young" I promised the readers to write an article about stuttering. I was anxious to get it out, but I was suffering under the illusion that it would be funny. There is nothing funny about being a stutterer, but a sense of humor is a subject that I can remember I stuttered, I was much worse years ago. I searched around in memory for what started me off, when I was a little chap thunder, guns, or anything that made a loud noise would frighten me, but about the time that I began to talk my Dad went up in the church to view a corpse. Let me tell you a dead person was a horrible thing to look upon in those days, there was no such thing as embalming. Well, this thing scared the living daylight out of me, I screamed so loud that Dad had to take me out of the church. I was 14 years of age and then I did on a dare from the other kids. This must have been the start.

Nowadays when parents have a stuttering child they usually cure him in the formative years by applying psychology and understanding. Mama cured one of my older brothers by slapping him in the mouth when he started stuttering, but that was not for me, I was sheltered, if anyone bothered me they might get "snatched bald-headed" and Mama would storm, "Leave the child alone."

If a kid isn't stopped early in life, it becomes a habit, and habits are hard to do anything with. You know there is nothing wrong

with anything wrong with the mind, except this nervous symptom—ordination between the mind and the vocal organs, after so long a time a vicious circle is formed—stuttering, fear of stuttering, and stuttering. Same old thing over and over.

Since earliest childhood I could sing without stuttering, no wonder music has meant so much to me, for years it was the only vocal pleasure I had. Not all stutterers can sing, but most of them can try without any impediment. A number of things enter into this—the most important is rhythm, knowing in advance what you are going to say, and keeping the lungs filled with air (some stutterers can recite poetry) then there is a psychological element—you just know you are singing and not trying to talk.

There have been hundreds of cures invented, few of which are any good. I only bit once—a corollary that guy prescribed I might as well have been dead, everything from cold showers to auto-suggestion. I met a fellow once that had tried every cure that I had ever heard of—he still stuttered. The real cure is obvious, good health helps, but one has to break down the vicious circle. Get rid of the fear, and so on. I will tell you about that later. I heard of one guy that could talk to the dog until he addressed him as "Mr. Dog," then he would be beset with his impediment. Another fellow could do all right if he was one, or more steps above the one he was talking to. Yes, a stutterer is as full of ideas as a dog is full of fleas. I am going to try to tell a few of the ups and downs of one. It might run into several issues, and probably will be boring.

As I have told you I was a spoiled brat, and a dauncy one, the folks thought that I would never make the grade at first. I was allowed to sleep as long as I liked in the morning, and was exempt from most of the chores when I was little. Dad brought me loads of candy when he came in from the lumber camps (I guess he thought I might as well die well sweetened), Mama gave me periodical doses of worm medicine, which I usually stole out and buried in the chimney corner. There was generally some teamsters and sawmill hands boarding at the house and I would follow them around and learn profanity and sex stories. Those men would tease me to hear me stutter, they thought it was amusing. I grew to hate some of them.

The first one that ever tried to help me was Dr. Terrell, he was a wonderful man, and the older people are still grieving about losing him in the flu epidemic of 1918. I know very well that he saved my mother's life one time. I had been to guide him to a mountain cabin far up on the Big Branch. He had tended the patient, and we were returning. We got on the subject of stuttering, and he suggested that I secretly keep time with my finger as I tried to talk. Basically this was sound advice, but I was too far gone.

I guess that I was eight years old before I was made to go to school, and then cousin Della Burnette (Mrs. Earl Hurst) promised to give me special attention. Such things as having the rest of the class read and recite in concert with me, and let me do my other exercises written instead of oral. I must have been more than 12 years of age before I went to an

other teacher, when she missed teaching a term I simply laid out of school that year. No wonder I love and revere Mrs. Hurst, if it hadn't been for her, you surely would not be reading this or any other of my tales, for I most likely couldn't read or write.

My circle of intimate friends at school was small, I soon discovered the boys that wouldn't poke fun at me, or tease me. Of course, Cousin Della would have "tanned their hides" if she had caught them at it, but I knew better than to be a "squealer," the whole school would have been against me then.

(Continued next week)

—Total value of North Carolina's farm land and buildings on March 1, 1952 was \$2,355,000,000.

Warriors Upset Barnardsville

The Swannanoa Warriors upset the highly regarded Barnardsville five in the Buncombe county tournament last Saturday night, 37-32, while the Swannanoa girls bowed out of the picture by losing, 51 to 21, to Valley Springs. The Warriors will meet the Valley Springs boys tonight (Thursday) in the final game of the quarter finals.

The Warriors jumped off to an early lead over the confident Barnardsville lads and were never behind thereafter. It was one of the major upsets of the tournament. Swannanoa is hoping to keep the win streak going at the expense of Valley Springs tonight.

STUDENTS PRESENTED IN MUSIC RECITAL

Mrs. A.W. McDougle presented a group of students in a recital, Sunday, March 8, at her home. After a program, which centered around the more popular pieces of music, the group joined in singing.

Nana Owenby, Nonie Greene, and Marie Bengé served as hostesses for the occasion, with Nonie acting as program chairman.

Those participating in the program were: Steve Kaplan, Eva Smith, Julia Catson, Barbara Nesbitt, Donna Dotson, Marie Bengé, Mary Catherine Woodcock, Frances Kaplan, Carolyn Smith, Ann Woodcock, Dianne Nesbitt, Betty Jean Shook, Nonie Green, Ruth McDougle, and Mrs. McDougle.

BENNY MILTON OBSERVES BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY

Benny Milton celebrated his fourth birthday Thursday afternoon, March 5, with a party at the home of his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Milton. Games were played and hats and balloons were given to each small guest as a favor.

Birthday cake and ice cream were served to Tommy Simpson, Joan Hemphill, Shelia McIntyre and Clifford Milton. Mothers present were Mrs. R. A. Simpson, Mrs. Joe Hemphill, Mrs. Tommy Milton and Mrs. Jack Milton.

SOUTHERN BELL FREE TOLL PLAN APPROVED

Press reports from Raleigh say that Southern Bell Telephone company has been authorized by the state utilities commission to extend local call privileges between Black Mountain and Asheville exchanges.

The free toll plan was voted on in the Black Mountain-Swannanoa community some time ago

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and approved by a majority of telephone subscribers. Final plans of the changeover have not been announced by telephone officials.

—The minimum level of price support for 1953-crop upland cotton, basis of 7/8 inch Middling, is 30.8 cents per pound.

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Self-Rising FARMER BOY or **GOLDEN CRUST FLOUR** . . . 25 Lbs. **\$1.50**

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Green No. 303 Can **BEANS** . . . 4 cans **55¢**

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