

Truckin' School

Dan Evans, March 1978

It was a half-passed two on a Sunday afternoon. I and Mabel was sittin' in front of the idiot tube watchin' one of them Japanese outer space flicks on channel eleven, drinkin' grape soda from the can and rubbin' our toes on the crackled plastic upholstery of our hide-a-bed, when this feller named Mister Rosco come on the T.V. and started talkin' 'bout how I could be makin' twenty thousand dollars a year as a professional truck driver.

He was standin' there real extinguished like in one of them twenty-nine dollar suits like they got down at the departmental store in Clifford Falls and sayin' how I could be drivin' a big rig just like this after only three days at the Truckin' University in Seattle. Then they showed a movin' picture of one of them big semi-trucks with the chromed mud flaps, glow in the dark tires and seventeen foot long C.B. antennas. Then Mister Rosco said to dial 800-T-R-U-C-K-I-N and ask for Jim Bob. "Now back to our movie."

While I was contemplatin' twenty thousand dollars a year and early kidney failure, Mabel was chewin' on her nails and spittin' the re-mains out all over the genuine linoleum floor that had seen better days cause the folks that lived in the trailer before us had one of them ugly little wiener dogs that wasn't too house broke.

I said to Mabel, "Mabel, you think I outta call that Mister Rosco feller and see what the grit you gotta do to sign up for that there truckin' university?"

I no sooner finished with my question when Mabel let out a scream and a belch (the belch was caused by the grape soda) cause some fereigner from outer space had swallowed up of them Geisha-Geisha girls right there on the T.V.

Well, I give up on Mabel and started huntin' for the telephone. I knowed right from the start that it weren't gonna be easy findin' it, partly cause I wasn't even sure we had one. But, I begun to paw around anyway, under empty shoe boxes and hair curlers, a stack of old Montgomery Ward sale catalogs, a broken record player and more hair curlers, through a collection of Zane Grey paperbacks, under the bed and through the closet, trippin' over hair curlers every foot of the way. My patience was 'bout all withered away and I was growin' tired of yankin' my trowsers up all the time cause I hadn't bothered to attach my suspenders, when I stepped onto a finger nail that sorta stuck into my right heel and felt like I'd got run through by a field of thistle thorns.

I was hobblin' around on my one good leg, tryin' to keep from collapsin' on my electric train and attemptin' to pull the finger nail outta my right foot when the rabbit's ears that Mabel was usin' to hang out her underwear to dry – cause we'd run outta dimes for the dryer at the laundromat – fell off the T.V. and into the goldfish bowl. I stumbled on over to the fish bowl to rescue the fish, but every thing was under control; they wasn't even paying attention to the rabbit's ears; they was layin' on their sides at the top of the water like they'd been doin' for days.

Well, I managed to get the finger nail dug outta my foot, the rabbit's ears back on the T.V. and I was about to reach for my suspenders when I begun to suspect that something was burnin'. In fact, I was awful suspect cause there was a little cloud of smoke hangin' in the air over near where the fish bowl was perched.

Mabel's gotta knack for followin' smoke to fire, so she got the jump on the situation right away. She went lickety-split directly to the souvenir oyster shell ashtray that was used to disguise the gouge in the coffee table which was caused when I was fixin' the water pump of my '56 Studebaker pickup, and discovered her underwear meltin' over a heap of smolderin' cigar ashes like a hunk of cheese on a hot spark plug. Mabel screamed again (no belch this time) and I run over fast as I could, squishing more finger nail remains into my bunions on the way and getting' tangled up in the cord to the telephone. Then I . . . the telephone?

Mabel, I found...I found the....the phone, Mabel; I found it!

I started tuggin' on the cord and all kinds of things started in to happening around the place. The screen door snapped its spring, a picture of my in-laws fell off the wall and into the bathtub where Mabel's greasy overalls was soakin', five years worth of the Farm Journal slid out from under the cook stove and the cork popped out of the Sky King sized waterbed.

Squattin' there in the middle of the floor in the midst and mist of disaster and a gushing Sky King sized waterbed, it come upon me that I didn't even recall why I had needed the telephone in the first place.

"Mabel, you best stop dog paddlin' around for that there cork and come back to the T.V.. They're fixin' to fire up the last half of that spacey movie."

It was a half-passed three on a Sunday afternoon. I and Mabel was sittin' in front of the idiot tube watchin' one of them Japanese outer space flicks on channel eleven, drinkin' orange sodas from a can and rubbin' our toes on the wet, crackled plastic upholstery of our hide-a-bed, when this feller named Mister Rosco come on the T.V. and started talkin' 'bout how Mabel my wife could be makin' twenty-five thousand dollars a year as a professional belly dancer. He was standin' there real extinguished like in one of them twenty-nine dollar suits like they got