

## **Wilma's Birthday**

Dan Evans, August 1978

It was Wilma's birthday last Saturday night,  
And we was home with the kids watching Gomer Pyle.

The telephone rang, I raised the receiver,  
Then I said "speak up quick, it's time for Leave it to Beaver."

The voice traveling down the telephone line  
Sounded like a combination of Flipper and Andy Devine.

The caller said "Fred, this here is Marv.  
What y'all doin' in the old trailer park?"

I said "Marv, we're all just sittin' 'round in front of the T.V.,  
Armed with toothpicks and pickin' our teeth."

Then Marv said, "Fred, why don't you and Wilma  
Pile the kids in the truck and meet us in Yuma?"

By then Wilma was on the bedroom phone;  
She let out a shriek and I muffled a groan, then I said "why not?"

Marv suggested a place to rendezvous  
And we settled on the firehouse, not that I give a hoot.

We pulled up at the firehouse, right on schedule;  
At a quarter passed eight, "but where's Marvin and Ethel?"

An hour later, at nine fifteen,  
Marv and Ethel pulled up in a big limousine.

He honked the horn, the kids lit-off the truck,  
Then Ethel held up a sign that read "Happy Birthday Wil-ma."

Wilma leaked a tear, then ran to the car;  
And I stuffed into my pocket a half-eaten Hershey bar.

Now, I don't much care 'bout parties and such,  
So with this turn of events, I turned into a grump.

“The night is full of surprises,” Marv threatened,  
As we cruised up Main in the chauffeured Lincoln.

A few minutes later we pulled up to the curb  
Under a neon sign that caused my stomach to turn.

It read “Skate-a-rama, open every night,  
Proof of adequate insurance coverage is required.”

Wilma had been after me to take her skating for years,  
But I’d always found an excuse to hide my fears.

But, with the time now near for me to walk on wheels,  
I discovered that my biggest fear was rear ending my own heels.

Ethel and Wilma jumped out of the car,  
Assembling at the ticket window like feathers on tar.

Marv and me followed, he with a grin,  
While I faked a limp and a quivering chin.

When we got to the window, everyone was staring at me  
And said, “if you don’t skate, neither will we.”

During a moment of silence the kids commenced to pout;  
Wilma stared at her toes and the manager began to shout.

He said, “Either buy your tickets or get out of line;  
A crowd is forming so make up your mind.”

The pressure was on, so I gave a little nod;  
Marv layed down the cash and I started sweating in my socks.

A teenage girly with pimples on her face,  
Shoved my way a pair of ugly roller skates.

One was red, the other blue;  
Neither had laces and they smelled like a zoo.

I was the last of the group to mount my wheels,  
But the others hovered ‘round making sure my decision was real.

For the next ten minutes we put on quite a show;  
It looked like demolition derby in a tow away zone.

The kids taught me how to get up, I taught them how to fall down,  
And how to stop on a dime, if it's ten acres around.

Wilma grabbed my belt and Marv held my hand,  
And I'd just begun to blush when we collided with a litter can.

There were sparkles in my eyes as I swiveled upright,  
But I determined not to leave 'til I got it right.

As Marv backed away I heard him say with a chuckle,  
"You're on your own pal, don't bruise your knuckles."

I was alone on the floor in a jungle of ball bearings;  
My aches had pains and my bunions were complaining.

The Hershey in my pocket had turned to syrup  
And my ears were as red as overripe turnips.

I took a deep breath, dried my palms on my britches,  
Then took a daring step forward, burning all of my bridges.

The skaters all scrambled to clear me a path  
That I rolled through like a big blind bat.

I made the first turn, hitting the wall only twice,  
But on the straightaway that followed, my speed began to climb.

With the wind in my hair and a chill up my spine,  
I decided to make it look good with my pride on the line.

Instinct and fear told me to lean to the left,  
So I bended one knee and holded my breath.

When I opened my eyes I was startled to see,  
That I'd survived the second turn at near record speeds.

As I sped by Wilma, she looked frightened and worried,  
And Marv yelled "Hey, Pal, what's your hurry?"

The folks on the rink scampered out of my way,  
Like drops on the window on a rainy day.

I was catchin' on quickly and beginning to smile  
As I passed the place where I started, mile after mile.

I traded my skates for a pair that were quicker,  
Then passed a note to the organist to play a real kicker.

The spotlight danced on the rink in my path  
And everyone applauded, even my kids clapped.

At long about two, though, they turned the lights down,  
And I realized that I was the only one around.

I cut across the rink, hurdled the janitor's broom,  
Then rolled on over to the locker room.

Wilma and the kids were asleep on a bench,  
Ethel was juiced and Marv was a mess.

He had one foot in ice, the other in a splint,  
And his right eye was shadowed in a black and blue tint.

"What happened, Marv," I asked with a smile;  
He continued to stare at the ceiling tiles.

I unknotted my laces and tugged on my shoes,  
And then woke up my family from their bench warming snooze.

"I couldn't have enjoyed myself anymore,"  
I said to the group as we walked out the door.

Ethel burped, Marv struggled in pain;  
The kids stumbled blindly and Wilma yawned all the way.

When we reached the limmo, I helped everyone in  
Then told the chauffeur we'd just wait 'til the rink opened again.

In the blink of an eye I was in the street

Inhaling the exhaust of a big limousine.

And, as my friends, my kids and my wife sped away,  
They opened the windows and sang this refrain:

“Go roller skate in a Buffalo herd,  
Go roller skate in a Buffalo herd,  
Go roller skate in a Buffalo herd.....”