

## **THE TOWN OF MAN**

By: Thomas L. Cuni

Every childhood should have at least one good memory to last a lifetime. For the first, and as far as I know the only time the Northern Lights were visible in Man, West Virginia was on a night in early April 1958. It was a little past one o'clock in the morning when I awakened to the sound of voices in the street. When I joined the group of twenty or so people, my next door neighbor and best friend, Terry Green, greeted me with the news that there was a really big forest fire on the other side of Big Ugly Mountain. It was a cold night and the air was so clean and clear that the Milky Way deserved its name that night. The red glow to the northwest did look like a fire behind the mountain. When it happened the first time I did not understand what I was seeing. The red glow flashed to green and traveled across the night sky like folds in a flag. Someone in the crowd shouted that it was the Northern Lights. The light show lasted for the better part of an hour and then faded. Before I left to go back to bed, Terry told me that Harry Renter was looking for some help for a project he had planned for the weekend. I told Terry that I would go. As I went to sleep that night I began to think about the lie I would tell my mother on Friday.

Three hours after going to sleep I was up and on my way to the Smoke House Bar and Grill which was located on the main street of town. The bundles of morning papers from Charleston were usually dropped off at about five thirty each morning. Andy and Opal Collins who owned and operated the bar were busy fixing breakfasts and packing lunches for the men who were on the way to work the day shift in the coal mines strung along Buffalo and Huff Creeks. There was normally not a lot of conversation in the morning but the light show of the previous night produced some conversations that morning.

The men who wore jeans and heavy work shirts over long john underwear were the miners. The men wearing khaki work clothes were section bosses, electricians, engineers. Even at the age of twelve I was aware of the hierarchy of the work world. The explanations for the earlier events in the night sky ranged from the scientific, to the superstitious, to the religious. There seemed to be no consensus about the cause or the meaning of the event. It was many years later that I would recognize that the celestial event marked the beginning of one of the more interesting periods in my life.

My paper route took less than an hour on the days it did not snow. I delivered my papers on that Thursday and went to school as always. When Terry and I met up at lunch, he told me the details of Harry's latest plan. While deer hunting up on Rock House Hollow, Harry had come upon the drift mouth of an old mine. After removing the cinder blocks which sealed the drift mouth, he had discovered that there were still copper cables hanging from the roof of the mine. Copper was fetching a high price, and Harry wanted to cash in on this opportunity.

Terry and I would be the two younger members of the crew. Clinton Davis and Larry Browning were two years older. They would be the senior members of Harry's crew. Terry's younger brother, Howard, always needed money and he never turned down an opportunity to take my paper route. We planned to get him set for the Saturday and Sunday deliveries. We decided that it would be wise to tell our mother's the same lie since our mothers might talk to each other. After discussing and rejecting several stories, we decided to say that we wanted to work on our winter camping merit badge for scouts. I am not sure that our mothers approved of it, but Terry and I had regularly gone camping for two or three days at a time in the mountains which surrounded Man. I suspect that in the present time, parents who let children disappear for

several days into the woods would have substantial problems with social agencies. It was a very different time and a very different place when I was a child.

Our main problem was to hide the fact that our camping trip would involve Harry Renter. Most of the parents in the town did not want their sons around a man like Harry. He was a man who did not subscribe to the norms of small town West Virginia. Like many others in the region, Harry had accompanied the American Expedition Force to France to defeat the Germany Army in the Great War. Harry came back from that war and never worked at a regular job for the rest of his life.

I think it was probably his rejection of the accepted work ethic and the religious and social norms of the people who lived in the town and in the coal camps around the town that made him a bad influence in the eyes of our parents. Harry lived as he pleased. He fished and hunted, most often out of season. He seemed to regard laws as guidelines rather than real rules in his life. He taught several generations of boys the pleasure to be derived from jug fishing and trotline fishing. Both methods were unapproved by the Fish and Wildlife Department. Dynamite was another fishing method favored by Harry. Deer hunters, who obeyed the law, were only permitted to use shot guns with deer slug loads. Harry was of the mind that the government had spent a lot of time and money to teach him to shoot a 1903 Springfield bolt action rifle. He often said it would be a shame to waste all of that training. Hunting for squirrels with an antique over under .410 shotgun and .22 caliber rifle started well before, and lasted well after, the actual squirrel season. Harry explained to us that hunting seasons didn't stop him from needing food when he was hungry. It would be my guess that he probably regretted that his taste for opossum and raccoon meat didn't require the violation of at least one law to satisfy.

Harry lived in an unpainted pine board house with a tar paper roof south of the town. The piece of ground on which he had built his two room house was accessible by a foot path that followed the river for a quarter of a mile beyond the last of the houses in the town. He kept a garden behind his house, and he cut the grass on the other three sides with a sickle. The house was set high enough above the river that it did not flood. There was an outhouse behind the garden and a spring not too far up the hill. The white washed stones which outlined the path from the boundary of his property to his front porch gave the place a vaguely military look. The three outfits that Harry wore in rotation were matching khaki pants and shirts which he folded and pressed under the mattress of his bed. He washed his clothes in a Number 3 wash tub set atop two cinder blocks. A small fire beneath the tub heated the water in which he boiled his dirty clothes while stirring them with a canoe paddle until they were clean. Harry lived a pretty self-sufficient life on the modest disability payments he received from the Veterans Administration, supplemented by hunting, fishing, and occasionally liberating tangible personal property from the C & O Railroad Company or one of the local coal companies.

Compared to some of the other citizens, Harry was generally regarded as more eccentric than crazy. Because there was no money to provide institutional care for people with mental and emotional problems, the town had a full cast of interesting characters. While growing up, it did not occur to me that there was anything out of the ordinary in having people who would in other places be considered mentally disturbed participating in the daily life of the town. Reading Winesburg Ohio by Sherwood Anderson in a college freshman English class was truly my first hint that I may not have grown up in an ordinary town. Unlike the fictional Winesburg and the very real town of Man apparently most places did not favor having crazy people wandering the streets of the community. The list of characters in Man was a long one. A few examples follow.

The brothers, Ed and El, lived in the sawmill camp where Huff Creek met the Guyandotte River. Of the two, Ed was the less mentally impaired. Ed could be called upon to remove his brother from town when it happened that El was unable to control the urge to open his fly and expose himself to the good ladies of the town. El had, by trial and error, worked out that the most strategic spot in town for his favorite activity was by the one lane bridge which linked Man to South Man. Women drivers had to wait for the bridge to clear of traffic before crossing which allowed El the time needed to open his fly and call their attention to his display. Generally the situation was managed without the assistance of the town's policeman. Only a few phone calls were normally needed to locate Ed. He would quickly arrive at the scene of the crime with a switch in hand. El would trot up the C & O tracks with his brother applying the switch to his back and arms. Such an application of corporal punishment generally produced a month or two pause in El's favorite past time.

The absence of all of her teeth made Minnie Dew appear to be older than her actual years. She was extremely thin and favored clothing that was too big for her small frame. Minnie received Social Security Disability which she supplemented with the money she earned from a few very drunk Saturday night customers of the beer joint at Sandlick Creek. During the weekdays she appeared to entertain herself by walking around town and talking to anyone who was not quick enough to cross the street before she passed them. The topic of her talk was often her past involuntary trips to the mental health hospital in Spencer. According to Minnie the food was pretty good at the hospital but the shock treatments were hell.

My father always referred to Andy Belcher as the Water Commissioner. When there was a problem with the water or the sewer lines, Andy would be temporarily employed by the town to dig up and repair the problem pipe. Andy favored tan work pants and shirts which he

generally wore until the material was black with dirt and sweat. The Mormon couple who owned the town's only laundry and dry cleaning business would from time to time provide Andy with a set of clean clothes that had gone unclaimed by a customer. When not employed by the town's administration, Andy's main activity was to hitchhike to the state capital, Charleston. No one knew what he actually did in Charleston, but very few citizens of the area made the mistake of giving him a ride more than once. His body odor was strong enough to make any driver roll the car window down on the coldest day of the year. Andy had also perfected the two question technique of augmenting his supply of cigarettes. After a nauseous driver lit a cigarette (probably in the vain hope of covering the smell of his passenger) Andy would ask if he might borrow one. Once Andy had the cigarette pack in his hand; he would politely ask if the driver had another pack. The wrong answer was yes. A "yes" was followed by Andy saying "well you won't mind if I keep this one then will you?"

There seemed to be just enough traffic on the winding two lane Route 10 to provide Andy with a steady supply of one time rides to Charleston. A local saying was that "Andy stepped over the mountain" on his trips to and from the state capital. Any number of people would swear that they had passed Andy hitchhiking on the road to Charleston and next see him hitching back to Man when they arrived at Charleston. I have always been of the opinion that a driver who picked up Andy would prefer to risk a speeding ticket rather than keeping Andy in the car one more minute than was absolutely necessary.

A one-legged man who wore a cowboy hat was a frequent customer of the Smoke House and like most of its customers, he was allowed to run a tab which was kept on a large chalk board behind the bar. In addition to 3.2 percent beer, he had a fondness for the hotdogs which Andy served at the bar. I never learned his real name, but calling him "Hotdog" was a source of

entertainment for generations of teenage boys and for patrons of the bar made brave by their consumption of too many Pabst Blue Ribbon beers. At the low end of Hotdog's reaction scale was a string of fairly clever profane references to the speaker's parentage. The real prize was when Hotdog launched his crutch like a spear at the offender. I never heard that he actually hit his intended target, but after the throw, he would often chase his tormentor by hopping after him. The back door of the Smoke House was the favored avenue of escape.

The Sawmill Sisters were two other people whose real names are also not known to me. They lived at the sawmill camp on Huff Creek. Miners were generally paid every other Saturday in cash after deductions for their coal company house rent, their groceries purchased at the company store, their gasoline purchased at the company gas station, and the coal they used to heat their homes. If furniture had been purchased from the company furniture store, the installments payments were also deducted. For a sizeable minority of the miners the local beer halls beckoned on Saturday afternoons. The Sawmill Sisters generally visited the Guyan Grill on payday Saturdays. The two women were of indeterminate age and favored clothing fashions that were considerably more than a decade out of style. Both women had the high cheekbones and gaunt faces of the Scotch Irish who had originally settled the mountain hollows in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. They also fought much like their ancestors fought. When the two of them argued over the rights to the remaining resources of a drunken miner, it was usually a no holds barred brawl. Pool sticks, beer bottles, ashtrays, and anything else that was movable were their weapons of choice. From long experience it was known that it was not practical to try to break-up their disputes without considerable assistance. The accepted practice was for the bartender to enlist the help of a few of his less drunk customers to move the brawlers out onto the sidewalks of the town. The sisters generally concluded their contest before the town police officer arrived.

However on some occasions the lone law enforcement officer of the town had to lock the ladies up for a few hours in two of the three jail cells in the back of the city hall.

The Preacher was a man who supplemented his income as a minister of one of the dozens of small churches in the area by making porch swings. He frequently carried one of his large swings on his hip and walked around town until someone purchased it. He spoke very fast and for a very long time. I often suspected that most of his sales were the product of his customers' desire to get away from the torrent of words he could unleash.

Chick was a bowling pin shaped little man who wore coke bottle glasses and who had been the involuntarily guest of the State of West Virginia in its penitentiary on several occasions. His crimes were almost always related to theft or burglary. His most famous heist was the burglary of Crozer's Drug Store. After an unsuccessful attempt to open the small safe in which Dick Crozer kept his money, Chick manhandled the safe out the backdoor of the store. When the town policeman was alerted to the crime in progress, he used some first class police techniques and followed the tracks that the heavy safe made in the thin layer of asphalt covering the ally. When he realized that he was about to be apprehended, Chick moved to the other side of the safe and pushed it a few feet back toward the store. The town police officer rightly doubted Chick's story that he had run off the burglar and was in the process of pushing Dick's safe back to the store. Chick was absent for a couple of years but he eventually returned to resume life in the town.

Pop Bottle Bill's contribution to the well being of the town was his single minded dedication to collecting every pop bottle that was available. The nickel deposit on each bottle supplemented Bill's social security disability check. He had little to say to anyone. He lived alone in a little plank and lathe cabin at the junction of Riddle's Branch and the Guyandotte

River. No one knew his history beyond the ten years or so since he had appeared in town after the Second World War. There was a rumor that he had killed a man in a North Carolina bar, but the details of the story were, I think, more the product of too much low power beer than actual fact.

Within the context of the less than ordinary daily behavior of a significant portion of the town's citizens, Harry Renter earned his label of eccentric since he was clearly not crazy. Over time I gathered bits and pieces of Harry's history. It began with his return from the Great War. Harry was best known for spectacular drinking boasts which occurred only every few years and usually ended with an unsuccessful attempt to take his own life. His most famous attempt being the time he stood on the road which crosses Kelly Mountain and tried to throw a length of wire tied to rock over a low hanging high tension power line. He was too drunk to accomplish his objective. After each such episode, Harry would settle into a period of relative sobriety and return to what was the normal routine of his life.

The routine of Harry's life was very different from that of the folks who worked at regular jobs. He seemed always to have some new plan, usually to obtain food or money but sometimes it was just to have fun. There was a constantly renewed source of manpower for Harry's projects. Over time it had become something of a rite of passage for sixth or seventh grade boys to recruit each other to assist Harry with his almost always illegal enterprises. The expedition to recover copper with which I began this narrative was the first significant project in which Terry and I participated. In planning the job, Harry had decided that he would need a four man crew for the job. Copper is heavy and to get enough of it off the mountain to make the enterprise worthwhile Harry had decided he needed more than just Larry and Clinton hence Terry and I were recruited.

Looking back with the prospective of age and experience, I now can see Harry never really left his military experience behind. It was reflected in the way he planned his projects. It was reflected in his close cropped haircut, his clean, creased khaki work shirt and pants, his polished boots, and most of all his manner of talking to us. He was fond of calling us “men” which we, of course, liked.

The final planning session for the expedition was held after school on Thursday. Harry gave everyone a list of equipment and food to bring. Since Terry and I were the two newest recruits we had to bring the cooking pot and the frying pan. Everyone was to bring a canteen, a hard hat with a carbide lamp, a pair of wire cutters, and a burlap sack. The menu was pretty basic. Terry, Clinton, and I were to each bring cans of Spam. Harry and Larry would bring cans of bacon. The responsibility for the five pounds of flour, the ten pounds of corn meal, and the five pounds of pinto beans that Harry determined we would need, was divided among us.

Harry decided that we would not take our guns since we would want to carry as much copper as possible off the mountain. Terry and I were disappointed that we would not have our rifles but it was Harry’s expedition and we had to follow his rules. When I think about it now, it amazes me that I received my first rifle, a single shot, bolt action, .22 caliber, at the age of ten.

My dad often drove my friends and me five miles or so off the hard road on old mine or gas well roads and turned us loose with our camping gear and rifles. If for instance the drop off was on a Thursday, my dad might say that he would be back early on Sunday morning to pick us up to go to church. Turning unsupervised ten and eleven year old boys loose for several days in the woods with guns would, in the present time, probably warrant something more than a short stay in prison. It was indeed another time and another place.

To get away from home for the great copper raid, I did not have to work very hard to get my dad to agree. It was not the first of the month so he could get by without me in the grocery store on Saturday. The new minister at our church was not particularly popular with my father, so missing church on Sunday had increasingly become less of a barrier to my weekend plans. My mother on the other hand was pretty good at ferreting out the truth so I had to plan my lies pretty carefully. Terry's mother, Betty, was more trusting of her son, but she, like my mother, did not view Harry as a positive influence on young boys. Between us we fine tuned the camping merit badge story. It was not the best lie we had ever cooked up, but our mothers seemed to buy it.

After school on Friday, Terry and I rolled up our blankets and food in pieces of thin canvas to make a rucksack to wear across one shoulder. Terry tied an aluminum pot to the back of his rucksack and I tied a light frying pan with a piece of raw hide to the canvas belt with suspenders that I had purchased at an Army surplus store in Charleston. I only bruised the side of my leg a little bit with that arrangement. As planned, we met up with Harry and the other guys on the trail which followed the ridge of the mountain.

Before dark we set up a camp near a spring, not far from our destination. We ate our dinner of fried spam and corn bread. We filled Terry's pot with spring water to soak the pinto beans overnight for Saturday's dinner. Breakfast on Saturday was Johnny cakes and black coffee. Although he didn't believe in regular work, Harry did believe in starting what work he did do early. We left our camp after breakfast to go to work. The drift mouth of the mine was about half a mile further along the face of the mountain. If our mothers knew that we would be walking for the better part of a mile back into an old mine, I am pretty sure that all four boys would have suffered pretty severe beatings. However, absent a mining disaster that killed or

maimed us, there would be little chance that our mothers would find out and have to devote considerable energy to the task of beating us almost to death.

The work in the mine was not difficult. The seam of coal was nearly five feet thick so we could almost walk upright. Our carbide lamps projected bright white beams of light, and since we were not very deep into the mine, there was not a great risk that we would blow ourselves up by igniting the methane gas that collects in nearly all coal mines. The object of our work was the four strands of insulated copper wire that had once been used for communications and low voltage power in the mine. All of the lines outside the mine had been removed when the mine closed, but no one had bothered to go into the mine to retrieve what had been left there.

By early afternoon we were finished with the task of cutting lengths of wire and hauling them outside. We each dragged a bundle of wire back to the camp. After a lunch of fried bacon from a can and corn bread, Harry put us to work gathering firewood. Harry tended two fires which he fed with the wood we gathered. On the small fire he cooked the pot of pinto beans with several strip of bacon. On the larger fire, he burned away the insulation from the wire. In the late afternoon when the copper was cool, we used the flat ends of our axes to pound the wire into something resembling bricks.

Supper was a feast made delicious by the seasoning of good appetites. Pinto beans served with big slices of Spam and a huge piece of cornbread which we had baked in the skillet. After breakfast the next morning we set out for Harry's house with our burlap sacks of beaten copper bricks slung over our shoulders. I don't remember how much my share of the copper money was. I think it was less than five dollars. However, five dollars seemed like a fortune to me at the time.

Over the next two years, Terry and I provided the unskilled labor for many of Harry's projects. Trapping muskrats was not one of my favorite activities, but the pelts were valuable and provided Terry and me with some spending money from time to time.

Fishing did not generate income but because of the various illegal methods which Harry employed, it was fun. As I indicated earlier, the most satisfying means that Harry employed to get fish out of the river involved dynamite, as his way of encouraging the first fish to join us for dinner on the river bank. Jug fishing with gallon bleach bottles and trotline fishing were also effective but far far less satisfying than the a quarter of a stick of dynamite.

Our instruction in boating on the Guyandotte River began with lessons about borrowing flat bottom boats whose owners would not, according to Harry, need them at night. Harry was adapt at cutting the chain which secured the boats so that we could reattach the chain to the boat without disturbing the sturdy locks intended to prevent involuntary loans of the boats. We were always careful to return the loaned equipment. Harry seemed to want to preserve his reputation as being a nuisance rather than being labeled a thief for stealing people's property. Stealing from the railroad or a coal company was another matter.

Hunting rabbits and squirrels out of season was another steady source of meals for Harry and his helpers. I never cared for skinning animals but because I did not want to be a sissy, I had to overcome my reluctance. Shooting the critters never bothered me and in time I learned to be a pretty good shot since second shots were not very practical with a single shot rifle.

While most of Harry's projects involved money or food, he did, on occasion, plan a project that was just for fun. The beer can mortar which we built was one of the more spectacular of Harry's ideas. Under his supervision, we buried a three foot long clay sewer tile of the right caliber in the damp sand of the river bank. Harry arranged the angle of the pipe to

launch the projectable in the general direct of old man Johnson's warehouse which was across and up the river a little distance away. He made sure that we packed the wet sand tightly around the clay pipe so that it would contain the explosive force of the M-80 fireworks which we used as the propellant. Harry judged that we should limit our artillery experiment to six rounds. It happened that Harry had just finished draining the better part of six cans of Hudephohl beer while we dug and filled the hole which held our mortar tube. He did let Terry and I share a part of one of the beers to quench the thirsts created by our digging.

After practicing the routine until we had it down, Terry lit the fuses of the M-80's which Harry held and then dropped into the pipe. I dropped the water filled beer cans down the tube. Harry's calculation of the angle and direction of the pipe was nearly perfect. All six of the beer cans landed with satisfying thumps on the three-ply buildup roof of the warehouse. We prudently covered our weapon with sand and left the scene of the crime.

For me the mortar was nearly a perfect experience. My mother had not only forbidden me from associating with Harry but she had absolutely barred me from playing on the river bank. I'm fairly sure I would have been punished severely if my mother found out about the event. It would have been particularly grim if she had learned that I had consumed alcohol while violating two of her other rules. Had I known then what a trifecta was, I think I would have felt like I had won one that day.

Over the course of the summer and following school year, I had occasion to lie to my mother on quite a few occasions. The remarkable thing about it was that I did not get caught in my lies. I think that my father had a pretty good idea that I was up to no good but I now think he secretly approved of a childhood that was not free of adventure. I have never been sure if my mother suspected that Terry and I were up to no good, but I do know that she never had enough

evidence to prosecute me for my crimes. I think my mother hoped that I would be a good boy and eventually find religion. She tended to extend the benefit of a doubt throughout that period of my life while I was engaged in the most intense lying and deception. My own sons were disappointingly inept at lying, and they seemed to get caught with alarming regularity when they misbehaved as teenagers. I have concluded that it must have been Harry's fine example of planning and his skill at concealment which guided me through those years.

As with the other volunteers in Harry's regiment of misadventurers, Terry and I eventually drifted away from Harry's influence. I am pretty sure that it was a growing interest in girls which promoted our exit from the world of petty theft and other misdemeanors.

The last of Harry's projects on which we labored was the construction of a carbide cannon on the hill above railroad turntable south of town. We pilfered a couple of bags of cement and we hauled some sand and gravel up from the river bank in five gallon buckets. Harry had us embed the end of a two inch iron pipe in enough concrete to contain the explosive force of the acetylene generated by combining an ounce of carbide and a cup of water. Under Harry's direction we performed the usual routine of practicing our respective parts in firing our new weapon. When he was satisfied that we knew our duties well enough, Harry set the planned assault on the C & O for a late afternoon on the following week. Each morning the steam engines would pull empty coal hoppers up Buffalo and Huff Creeks and in the late afternoon retrace their trips by pulling loaded cars out of the hollows. The engines backed out of the hollows to the turn table where the crews would turn the engine around to face forward for the remainder of the trip.

I'm not certain just what the C & O Railroad Company had ever done to Harry to earn his ire, but firing green paw paws at the engines seemed to answer some need that Harry harbored.

The cannon produced a satisfying loud report when Harry applied a glowing stick to the touch hole of our homemade cannon. We managed to get two shots off before the trainmen got back into the cab of their locomotive and moved away from the target area. Fortunately, neither of the men were hit, but we did manage to get two direct hits on the engine. The sheriff's deputies found and destroyed our fine piece of artillery the next day so we were not able to continue our assault on the railroad company. After that event, Harry moved on to the other worthy projects and Terry and I moved on to live the rest of our lives.

The end of the story came years later. The draft board for Logan County had a difficult time meeting its required quota of able bodied eighteen year olds to send off to the last war this country fought with draftees. A surprisingly large number of young men in the county had bad teeth or other disqualifying health issues related to poor diet and scarce medical and dental care. The quota for the draft board was set based on the number of eighteen year olds and not on the number of healthy eighteen year olds.

Terry and I were given a four year college deferment only so long as we made good grades and took full course loads. I was a year ahead of Terry but thanks to the very religious and caring men who ran the small college that Terry attended, he got to Vietnam before me. It seems that one of Terry's roommates stole a road sign to decorate the house in which Terry and three other boys lived. The kind and pious men who ran the school apparently determined that it would be best to expel the whole group to protect the rest of the student body from the bad influence of those evil boys. The administration of the school, of course, notified the draft boards of the expulsion of the students. Terry was killed in action two weeks after arriving in country in an ambush south of Phu Bai.

After being drafted, I went to Officer Candidate School. I arrived in Vietnam as a commissioned officer in the artillery. I credit my interest in math and having participated in Harry's experiments in large caliber homemade ordnance for my career path. Terry had died six months before I was sent to the war. My friend's death was very much on my mind. A few weeks after I had settled in as the forward artillery observer with an infantry company, I received a letter from my father. It was one of only two letters that my father ever wrote to me. The first had been when I was in college and he had learned that I had quit attending church. In the first letter he told me that he had considered getting me away from the influences of the godless professors who were ruining the youth of the country, but had then decided that I would have to find my own way concerning religion.

The second letter was to tell me that Harry was dead. On one of his drunken attempts on his own life, Harry had at last succeeded. In his letter, my father who was a veteran of World War II, said that he believed Harry was another casualty of the Great War. I am not sure that I remember exactly how I felt after reading the letter, but I do remember that it was raining that day.

There is a postscript to my story. My tenth grade biology teacher, who is now ninety-one years old called me a few months ago and told me that I had to come visit her. There is a new road between Man and the county seat. The new road required half dozen new bridges over the Guyandotte River. The bridges are each named for Logan County soldiers killed in this country's wars. On one of those bridges there is a sign with Terry's name on it.

Terry's mother is still alive so the sign is safe for awhile. When Betty leaves us, I plan to steal that sign and drive it to that school in Montana. I understand that nailing the sign up at the entrance of that school will be a futile gesture since everyone associated with the decision to

expel Terry is retired or dead. It is, however, something that I think Terry would appreciate. I am also pretty sure that Harry would like it too, if for no other reason than the act will involve breaking several laws.