

# Winding Trails: by Al Hobart

Thursday, June 15, 1967  
Illinois Valley News

## Farewell to Beartrap

It's a sad commentary on our madly ballyhooded peerless social structure that justice can be distorted, law and order perverted, and plans for a rosy future ripped asunder by the adept manipulation and transference of those pretty little oblongs of green paper.

To my shame I must confess I myself have been a willing, if hesitantly so, party to this deplorable disintegration. I was only recently trapped into selling an old friend down the river; when my palm was crossed with a piece of that deliciously evil green wampum (one that bore a suitable number on its four corners), my supposedly sturdy character buckled, and I let the man drive away with one of my most treasured possessions—my old bear trap.

That big old steel trap, a family heirloom that had been in my private possession for nearly 40 years, was more than a friend. When times were tough it stood by me through thick and thin, doing its mute share to make my drab life more bright and my belt less tight. In its irresistible iron embrace it has held more than 20 bears securely, while nearby I stood whetting a keen edge on my hunting knife, and otherwise preparing for the macabre chore at hand.

Yet, after all those years of unflinching service, when the man waved that green frog-skin under my greedy nose I heartlessly betrayed my rusty old friend, and tried not to watch when the man triumphantly bore the reluctant big trap from its cozy corner in the garage and dumped it with a rattle of despair into the back of his pickup.

True, I had no further use for the old trap. It had lain idle in its out-of-the-way corner for a number of years, and there it would no doubt have remained, as I don't intend to ever trap another bear.

Still, I feel I have committed an act of gross treachery in letting the old trap go. To me there seemed to be an aura of cheerful comradeship enveloping the big iron hulk, due, of course, to the many trail trips we have had together, on trails that wound off into the mountains in all directions.

With my 25-lb. load of trap, cable, clamps, and other paraphernalia in my big trapping packsack I have many times climbed my way back into the wooded hills to a likely spot and there made my set, sometimes as far away as 5 miles or more from home, from the head of Packer's Gulch to distant Dunn Creek Swamp, and high up on Crazy Ridge.

The thrills I enjoyed in those past years of bear trapping were so great that even now I savor their memory with shamefaced delectation. But those happy days are gone, replaced by ones that are still more satisfying,

if not quite so richly spiced with those heart-quickenings of sudden discovery, as when I met my captive face to face and realized my advantage over this great wild creature, so many times more powerful than I—even though I had to stoop to such a cowardly means of bringing about his downfall.

I guess the abrasion of time has worn away a lot of my bloodthirstiness. The eroding acid of old age seeping into my bones has softened me up to the point where I feel a touch of sadness at the necessity of having to crack a flea; and while grinding a cockroach under my heel I feel constrained to offer him my sincerest apology.

The old beartrap, of course, can't really care; and the feeling of friendship that has always seemed to exist between us has been, in reality, strictly one-sided. Still, I had to overcome a feeling of guilt when I allowed it to be taken away; and when the man with the pickup drove down the lane, I felt like shouting after him to bring back my old beartrap and take back the evil piece of green paper that had tempted me beyond my weak power of resistance.

But, stoicism triumphing over sentimentality, I impatiently brushed away something that was tickling my cheek, hurried back into the cabin and, with sudden eagerness, and renewed confidence—thanks to my old beartrap—began scanning once more the magic pages of that new sporting goods catalog.

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# The Archive Zone:

by Hillary Mohr from the Illinois Valley News archives

What happens when you take an isolated area, add a little "crazy" with a dash of "what the heck"? You get small valley crime of all kinds at any time, and every now and then it's not a crime, just plain bazaar. Now that we have your attention, please enjoy a chuckle with this week's Police Blotter Archive Zone. The Date: February 2, 2011. Location: Cave Junction and the Illinois Valley.

### Friday, Jan. 21

\*Deputy assistance was requested to reconnect power in the 5000 block of Westside Road when someone threatened to shoot the Pacific Power technician if he came back to his property.

### Sunday, Jan. 23

\*One neighbor is digging a ditch to stop a right-of-way in the 6000 block of Upper Deer Creek Road, while the other is filling the ditches back in again.

### Monday, Jan. 24

\*It was highly unusual for the woman to have a full drink on her coffee table outside not answer the door, so her visitor requested a welfare check. When the woman at the Secret Trailer Park was re-contacted, she explained that she was napping and didn't hear anyone knock on the door the first time. \*They weren't "smoking in the boys room," but two

female students said they found marijuana in bathroom and were smoking in a shed on Illinois Valley High School property. \*A woman left her green Dodge Caravan running as she ran inside the video store; when she came out her car was missing, and there was another green vehicle matching hers sitting in the parking lot. Sure enough, a few minutes later her van came back the driver just realized he took off with the wrong vehicle.

### Tuesday, Jan. 25

\*At first the woman in 27000 block of Redwood Hwy. thought it was a bear making strange noises, knocking on her window, and running across her porch. Since then she has found beer cans, yogurt containers, salsa and chip bags and believes there may be transients on her 16 acres, and is requesting extra patrol. \*A man in a red king-cab truck was punching another man over a parking lot space on S. Redwood Hwy. \*"This isn't your bathroom," the bold grandmother yelled at the tall, thin, intoxicated man with long, white hair in a ponytail, wearing a white cowboy hat and light tan jacket while urinating in an alley on S. Redwood Hwy. When she hollered at him an hour later for the same thing, he took off running. \*A small amount of marijuana was found during a traffic stop on Redwood Hwy. at Gold Canyon Drive. The marijuana, which the driver denied was there, was destroyed on scene.

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