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DAD'S STORY

The first hundred years may be
the very worst part of one's life,
and, even before the passage of that
space of time there are a
lot of things that get forgotten,
not to mention the "Forgotten
Man" of the late lamented (by the
Republicans) presidential campaign.
The thing that bothers me just now
is that I have forgotten a certain
man's initials.

Get back to my story. The
G. H. & I was a name to conjure
with in the days of the eiganes,
the nannies, and the first decade
of the present century. During the
winter, however, there were many
times when the trains had much
difficulty in getting through the
snow. Floods or other terrestrial
disturbances had no terrors for the
dweller in the northern part of the
lower peninsula of Michigan, but
the snow! O gee gosh!

It must have been in the early
eighties that Mother took her trip
back to her old home. It was in
the winter, and returning from the
train that was to bear her east,
Father remarked that he had for-
gotten to tell Mother one thing,
that she should always ride in the
hind coach of the train for there
was less danger there. On our in-
quiry as to why there was less
danger in one coach than another
he went on to explain that rush-
ing ahead at such a tremendous
speed, the engine would be the
first to encounter difficulty—if a
bridge had some out of the engine
would light at the bottom of the
pile and each succeeding car would
pile on top of the heap until the
last car would have less distance
to fall. He went on to tell that in
running into an obstruction the
engine would always contact the
obstacle first and it would be most
affected while each car towards the
rear would be in less danger than
the preceding carriage. Probably that
train travelled as fast as 20 miles
per hour!

Railroad smash-ups have been
out of my line mostly. However,
when Mother was to return from
the east she was expected on a
train through Kingsley one evening.
The telegraph operator told us at
the depot that her train would not
get in until the next day. We went
home and then again to Kingsley
the next day. Finally an engine
with a snow plow came down the
track from the south, but it had
only the snow plow and a caboose.
It stopped at the Kingsley depot
and then attempted to go on to
Traverse City, the end of the line.
The clear track at the depot gave
the engine a chance to gather speed
and away they went probably some
250 yards to where the north end
of the switch was about there the
plow jumped the track, stuck its
nose down over a bank and practi-
cally stood on end. The engine
pushing it was so badly disabled
(I believe it was a broken con-
necting or possibly a tie rod) that
it could not proceed. The whole
population of the town were look-
ing at the wreck when a smoke
was reported to the south and we
ran back to the depot to meet the
train that was bringing Mother
from the east. With her came Uncle
Will Newcomb, Mother's young-
est sister's husband. I think he was
the first of Mother's relatives that
I had seen.

He had been injured, or had been
sick or something and was not
supposed to be able to do much
work. But he busied himself work-
ing on the house, which never has
been completely finished to this
day but into which our folks moved
when there was barely the sheath-
ing, the down stairs floor and the
shingles in place. Yes, it was sort
of cold to live in in the winter
but it was thought in those days
that exposure made one hardy and
healthy and tough.

One of the things that Uncle
Will built was a high chair for
my younger sister, Laura. He took
a board about a foot wide and
a little more than three feet long
and sewed a long "v-shaped" por-
tion out of one end so that he
had two left out of one end of
the board. Then he fitted the seat
by taking a short length of board
the same width of the first one
but short, maybe a foot long and
cutting the end on a miter, it
made a little greater than a right
angle with the solid end of the
longer board and a little less than
a right angle with the leg end of
the bigger board. Then two narrow
strips were nailed on the sides,
slanting backward from the front

The SNAPSHOT GUILD
THE "WHY" OF LENS STOPS



Two pictures, of the same subject and setting; one made with the lens wide open and the other with the lens drastically "stopped down." Note that there is no detail at all in the background of the snap made with wide open lens, while the other shows the distant bridge very well. If it's detail you want, cut down the lens opening!

PRACTICALLY all cameras, with
the exception of a few extremely
simple models, have some means of
varying the amount of light passing
through the lens. Why?

Well, why do you tend to squint
in bright sunlight? Simply because
there is so much light in the open
sun that, unless you squint, your
eyes cannot distinguish details; in
the dark your eyes distend in order
to take advantage of every available
ray of light.

Cameras and eyes are much alike.
Unless you control the amount of
light entering the camera lens, you
will almost certainly overexpose
shots made in bright daylight and
underexpose when the light is low.

Get out your camera and look at
its lens. If yours is a simple box cam-
era, you will find that the lens open-
ing, or diaphragm, has two possible
settings, one for average shots and
one for use when the light is very
brilliant. In certain other cameras
diaphragm settings are arbitrarily
numbered from 1 to 4, giving you
that many opportunities to adapt
your snapshotting to light condi-
tions.

The best known system of dia-
phragm control is the "f" system,
used on more advanced cameras. In
this system "f" represents the ratio
between the lens opening and the
distance from the lens to the film.
When some one says that he took a
picture at f11, he means that his
lens was adjusted so that its open-
ing was 1/11th of the lens-to-film dis-

tance. Obviously f11 is a smaller
opening than f.8.3 or f.4.5. Some
cameras have extremely "fast"
lenses, with f.1 or f.2 ratings, but
you're perfectly well off with a lens
rated at f.6.3. And there are many
other lenses that are entirely satis-
factory for snapshotting despite
their low "f" classification.

Familiarize yourself with the var-
ious openings ("lens stops," if you
want to be technical about it). Many
cameras have built-in exposure
guides which indicate the proper
opening for various light conditions.
But you will almost automatically
set your lens properly if you let your
eyes be your guide. If you find your-
self squinting, stop the lens down;
if your eyes open wide, without a
sensation of glare, use a larger stop.

Stopping down a lens has another
consequence. It increases the sharp-
ness of the image and deepens the
field of focus. But, you say, how can
I do this if the light isn't very bright?
Simply by increasing the time of the
exposure.

It is the canny juggling of lens
openings and exposure times that
marks the experienced snapshotter.
But don't let it bother you, if it
seems a little confusing. Set your
camera at about f.8 and 1/25th—
and blaze away. Chances are you'll
get the picture, and that is the im-
portant thing. If you're using modern
film, it will automatically take care
of a lot of variation from scientific
accuracy in exposure. Happy hunt-
ing!

JOHN VAN GUILDER

side of the seat in such a fashion
that the legs crossed about half
way up to the stat from the floor,
the two narrow strips forming the
back chair legs and the two legs
at the end of the wide board
forming the front legs of the chair.
This made a very serviceable high
chair and was in the family many
years.

I could go on and tell you of
many other conveniences and things
Uncle Will fixed for Mother and
us kids but I have made such a
bundle of telling you of such a
simple thing as that high chair
that I just haven't the heart to
inflict any more exposition on my
readers at this time. In passing
I'll just mention a clothes horse,
an ironing board, numerous shelves
put up in different parts of the
house, fitting and hanging the
stairway and other doors, making
a wooden sink and a wood box. I
could go on just enumerating the
things that Uncle Will's, to us,
magic hands, conjured from the
plain boards that lay profusely a-
round the place, great wide, cork
pine, 20 to 30 inches wide and
wider, but like Bridget and the
elephant, "You wouldn't believe it
if I told you."

It was the dead of winter when
he came. It was spring when he
left, but he only stayed to see us
get the sap buckets out and dis-
tributed before taking the train
"back to York state." Though he
just made that short stay with us,
and I never saw him again, I'll
never forget him nor the many
things he did to help us. A gentle-
man and Christian if ever there
was one though I never heard that
he belonged to any church. His

sons are now living in southern
California, but I never saw any of
the three.

I have seen his wife, Mother's
youngest own sister, several times,
but neither her features nor her
behaviour made any such an im-
pression on me. Uncle Will would
sit by the hour with us youngsters
and spin yards and yards of yarns
of rogues and knaves, of thieves
and pirates, of robbers and demons
until the cat creeping sily across
the bedroom after we went reluc-
tantly to bed would cause the cold
shivers to run up and down where
our spine should have been.

Orin, John, and Will were Old
Frank's sons. Orin in some way got
a deed to the northwest quarter of
Old Frank's homestead and built
him a little story and a half cot-
tage of the regulation size, 16 feet
by 24. But he did not live there
and a family by the name of Lav-
ender moved in. Will, Mary, and
their two sons Ed and Frank.
These boys lived only half a mile
away and were the nearest to
being playmates for me that I
ever had. For several years we
were quite inseparable though I
went to the Blackman school and
they to the Matchett school be-
cause we lived, I on the one side
and the others on the other side
of the town line between Paradise
and Mayfield townships.

One incident stands out in my
mind just now. They all were to
our place for supper. Mother was
a good cook and usually had en-
ough to go around or cookies or
fried cakes or pie or perhaps she
would open up a jug of fruit when
company happened in. Put this time
the visitors had come in late in
the afternoon and though I never

knew whether they intended to stay
for supper or not when they came,
they were urged to stay and as it
was only half a mile to their home
they could do their chores after
eating at our home. It was rain-
ing, too, and that perhaps had
some influence on their decision to
stay.

At the supper the usual good
things were placed on the table,
and I noticed that neither Frank
nor Ed took any of the cake or
pie. I wondered at the time why
for I knew they liked good things
to eat and I sort of noticed their
mother look at them meaningly,
but duncie that I was, I never tum-
bled. Glad to get a piece of pie
or a fried cake, I took them when
the dish was passed. I noticed Fa-
ther's look when I took the second
fried cake but did not think much
of it. Then it fell to me to carry
the lantern to light our visitors
home. I have almost forgotten but
I think that Alma went along. We
lighted the Lavenders home all
right and without mishap. But the
happenings started when we got
home. That is they started on me.
There had not been enough pieces
of pie nor enough fried cakes to
go around and I had taken a sec-
ond helping when our little neigh-
bors had gone without having cor-
rectly interpreted the glances of
their parents. Wo unto me. And did
they "proceed" to give me a lesson
in manners! Father hadn't even
gone out to do the nightly chores,
but sat there near the table wait-
ing my return. I can't tell all the
information I received but part of
it included a statement of my par-
ents' humiliation. And was my face
red? I'll bet you could have read
things on other parts of my anat-
omy for a spell following that in-
cident.

Frank died soon after that oc-
currence. Some sort of fever took
him, probably typhoid for that was
ever present in that vicinity. But
he was my playmate, and friend,
and there I met Death face to
face for the first time. I had been
to funerals lots of times. There
being no undertakers in that early
day, father often acted as pall
bearer and mother sat up with the
corpse frequently. Ed Wall always
took charge of direction of the
burial; it seemed that he must have
been experienced when coming in-
to that country, but I never knew.
I can't remember what Frank's
coffin looked like, nor where he
was buried, but I can remember
being surprised crying several times
immediately following the funeral,
and having my ingenuity taxed to
the limit to find some excuse of
why there were tears in my eyes.
I believe the reason that I remem-
ber nothing of the funeral in that
his disease was pronounced conta-
gious and that there was no pub-
lic funeral.

"Oh, call my brother back to me,
I cannot play alone;
The summer comes with flower
and bee,

Where is my brother gone?"
Many a night I repeated that
couplet, from my school reader at
the time, when getting into my
bed, and then I would cry until
I fell asleep. But boylike, I never
expressed my grief nor do I be-
lieve that to this day that any
of my people know of my loneli-
ness and suffering.

Will Lavender had made a mini-
ature ox yoke for each of his
boys to use on their pair of calves.
Following Frank's death his father
gave me his yoke and the times
that I had with it beggar de-
scription. I do not remember what
became of Frank's yoke of calves
but Eddie still had his and he and
I had many lively times together
until it became quite the fashion
in that part for every boy to yoke
up a pair of calves and take trips
around the country with them. We
never got more than five or six
miles away from home with our
teams for we were required to be
at home every night, or at least
not allowed to stay out with our
miniature oxen when on a trip
with them.

The yoke Mr. Lavender gave me
was of cedar and very light so
that calves of various sizes could
be used to hitch up and drive.
One time I got a bawky calf hitch-
ed up with one that would go a-
long all right. He lay down in the

road right in front of Jim Wise's
place and the best efforts of us
boys could not budge him. Jim
stood in his yard and watched us
for a time and then came out and
proffered his assistance. "Do you
want me to get him up for you?"
he inquired.

Being assured that we wanted
nothing else but, he got a sack that
was partly filled with hay, which
we had used as a seat cushion,
and placing it in front of the
steer's eyes where the bawky fellow
lay in the road, Jim held it close
so that the steer could not see for
a time, it seemed minutes to us
but perhaps it might not have been
many seconds. Then directing one
of us boys to hold the sack tight
until he gave the directions, and
to do what he said, Jim got down
on his hands and knees and di-
rected the steer's head to be turned
to face towards him. Then he held
the boy to jerk the bag away from
in front of the steer's eyes. The
animal's eyes opened with a sort
of dazed look, then as soon as the
steer seemed to be able to recog-
nize objects, Jim gave a leap on
all fours right at the steer's head.
Did that fellow forget all about
refusing to go? I'll say he did,
and down the road we went, I
holding onto the rope around the
horns of the other steer, Ed Lav-
ender astraddle of the beam on the
sled, and Jed Wheat, who had come
to play with us rolling off in front
of the sled beam and getting ban-
ged up quite considerably and Will
and Johnnie Taylor laughing fit to split
their sides!

Jim kneeling down in the snow,
the boys standing around waiting,
from the withdrawing of the blindfold
before the steer's eyes, Lav-
ender sitting astride that sled beam
with a scared look in his eyes,

Jed Wheat tumbling in front of
the beam and having the sled run
over him, and the way that steer
took his mate and me down the
road towards home form a picture
that will remain in my memory
until this old head rests beneath
the sod.

Jed's foot was hurt in the melee
but otherwise there was no harm
done and that steer never bawked
again for me, although I drove him
about until Father sold him for
beef the next fall.

What surprised me, though, in
regard to him was that Father,
though not an ox teamster, could
make that yoke of steers snake a
log that they could not, or would
not, for me. But that happened
while clearing land, and is another
story.

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AFTER THE HONEYMOON



By Geoff Hayes