

OLD SOURDOUGH TELLS OF EARLY DAY PROFANITY

Applegate Prospector-Poet Recalls Iron Horseshoe Filings Were Pioneer Cure for Rheumatism

By J. C. REYNOLDS

As I stated once before, the prospector and his jassack and the lure of the gold, or other valuable metals he found, was the primary cause of the great west being settled as quickly as it was. But I venture to say that the three most important items in the settling of this vast domain, were Colt's six-shooters, hay-wire and profanity. Hay-wire was used for every purpose imaginable. Men even used it to tie their shoes with when they could get nothing else. Even if a person was filthy with money, he would often be in places where he couldn't buy as common an article as a pair of socks. And as to profanity, it was the only language understood by horses, mules, burros or cattle. With a played-out herd of cattle, or a burro train nearly dead on their feet from fatigue, or a team of mules stuck in a mud-hole, nothing would put some pep into them and wake 'em up as a cracking volley of cuss words. Nothing so eased men's pent-up feelings as a good round oath. When danger or tribulation threatened, they did not resort to prayer. They swore. I was in the west a good many years before I heard any praying done, except by Indians and Mexicans praying for rain, which, by the way, they seldom got.

The snake god of the Hopi Indians sometimes bestowed rain in answer to their supplications, but I never knew of the Mexicans getting any. The Hopi medicine men were cute enough to wait until they were sure that rain was about due. Then they would pull off the big snake dance and sometimes it would start raining before the dance was over. Westerners didn't waste any of their valuable time in praying. Not in those days anyway. They were far too practical for anything like that. They figured that not more than one prayer in a thousand was ever answered and they could get a better break bucking the roulette wheels, where there were only about 33 chances against them winning. I have often heard them say that if there were anything in praying, nobody would need to be hungry or hard up. One would only have to pray to get anything he wanted. The west's slogan at that time was "root, little hog, or die." And anyone who was too lazy to root passed out of the picture sooner or later.

Probably a good half of the men one met in the west those days were confirmed infidels. Whether there are any of that belief living today, I could not say. All I know is that for over 30 years, in all the knocking around that I have done, I have not happened to meet one of them. That old stuff is "out" anyway. Nobody these days is so densely ignorant that they imagine any business, large or small, can be run without a head to it. Neither could this universe function without the aid of a Supreme Intelligence. For the benefit of those who discourse so wisely concerning infidels, agnostics and atheists and expose their ignorance by putting them all in the same class, allow me to state there is a world of difference between them, as anyone familiar with the subject knows.

It is true that churches sprang up here and there throughout the west as early as during the first part of the eighties and without a doubt there was much praying done by the members of those various denominations, but the men who settled the country, rid it of outlaws, subdued the Indian tribes, established outposts along the frontiers and faced fearlessly every danger the new land could produce, were not praying men. They had confidence in their own ability to survive without help from any source. And history will bear me out in this assertion.

Around the campfires of an evening I have often heard this subject discussed. It was a favorite saying of my boss that praying was just a lazy man's attempt to get something for nothing. And never, even in the face of the most deadly peril to himself or his herds, have I ever known him to do anything but swear that we would get through all right in spite of hell and high water.

Many times have I heard the remark passed that "people had been praying, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' for 1900 years, but that up to date no bread had been received from that source, so what was the use?" For myself, I had been religiously raised and used to pray for what I wanted.

But, in the course of time, realizing that it wasn't getting me anything and that I was simply one of the little hogs who must root or die, I discontinued the practice. I have nothing against any person who is either prayerful or profane, unless they overdo the matter to a point which becomes obnoxious to others. Either of the two, in my opinion, is simply an expression, a blowing off of steam as one might put it, which relieves pent-up feelings in the system. Though I can assure you that if you desire anything particularly, the quickest way to get it is to work for it with all your might

Miner Retrieves White to See if Pale Paper Pleases Subscribers

Some folks, who like legibility in its most undefiled state, have reported that every time they try to read the pink sheet they see red or, in less caustic words, they believe white paper would make the Jacksonville Minner easier to read. So The Minner this week is trying out a noble experiment, and climbing out of the red at one swell foop, er, fell swoop.

If you readers prefer your newspaper on white, tell us. If you miss the distinguishing crimson cast and believe the traditional tint should continue, tell us. No, this is no hokey to cover up a sudden shortage of pink paper, or an economy move, but merely a return to habitual newspaper practice of recognizing that the greatest contrast is obtained by printing a good black on a good white. See if you can note any difference or improvement in reading quality.

If you can, drop us a card and white it'll be from now on.

and, by the natural law of averages, it will come to you in time. As the French say, "everything comes to him who waits."

Speaking of socks reminds me that almost everybody learned to wear "California socks" sooner or later. These California socks consisted of a couple of squares cut or torn from a flour sack, 12 or 14 inches square. By setting the foot in the middle of one of them, it could be folded in such a way that it answered the purpose fine. It took some practice though to do such a good job on each one that it would remain in place through the day without wrinkling. A few attempts generally would result in a perfect fit.

As to underwear, we usually did without. Not because we didn't have the price, but for the reason that we couldn't get them for love or money. Brown overalls made of ducking and blanket-lined were much in vogue and helped to mitigate the absence of underwear. When we got soaked in a rain-storm or became drenched to the skin in crossing a river, we simply let our clothes dry on us, which was supposed to prevent rheumatism. There seemed to be only one kind of rheumatism those days that anyone knew anything about and when one got it, right away he took a file and filed an old horseshoe into shavings.

Then three times a day he would swallow a heaping teaspoonful of the filings before meals and presently the rheumatism would leave him. The uric acid in the stomach was supposed to absorb the iron filings immediately. I had no rheumatism myself, so did not try this remedy, but I have seen it done some hundreds of times. For toothache, the sufferer would take some carbolic acid (provided he could get it), put a few drops on some cotton batting torn from a quilt, and place it on the tooth. Generally some was spilled on the gums during the process, resulting in painful blisters.

In later years I suffered considerably from toothache myself when out in the wilderness away from any dentist. When a tooth got to cutting up too bad, I would tie a fine wire, or a very stout cord, tight around the offending member, attack a rope with a heavy boulder to it, and if it was an upper tooth, throw the boulder away as hard as I could. Something had to give and it always was the tooth. Once in Idaho when the snow was three feet deep and the nearest dentist was across the range, 25 miles distant, two of my lower teeth began hurting and caused me to do some serious thinking. Finally I bethought me of a large iron pulley which I attached with hay-wire to a stout branch on a convenient tree, ran my rope through that, and when I threw the boulder away the teeth came out in fine fashion, one by one. A fellow can do lots of things that way, if compelled to.

For a long time after I had reached the west the only fruit we had was dried currants, and they must have been raised in a very sandy country as they were about half sand. After getting as much of the sand out of them as possible we would stew them or, for a change, toss a handful into the dough when we were making bread, which was not a bad idea at all. But talk about sand in the craw, we all had plenty sand in our craws when we ate currants. Almost all our baking was done in dutch ovens and a lot of other cooking as well. Nothing is nicer than beans or venison cooked in a dutch oven under proper conditions. It is quite a trick to make a fire on the prairie out of bunch grass and sage brush in a high wind and cook a meal when your coals are being whipped in every direction. But I have done it many and many a time. I began to think I was the champion fire builder of the west at one time, by reason of acquiring the knack of making a fire anywhere, out of anything at all. But of course there were hundreds just as good as I was. Many a tasty meal have I eaten on the prairie when the only plates we had to lay our bread and meat on were clean flat buffalo chips. And many a family in early days on the prairie had no fuel at all except these same chips.

After dried currants, the next fruit we had, as I remember, was dried apples, of which we soon

tired, till we got hold of some that had been quartered, strung on strings and dried in the sun by the Mormon girls in Utah. They were sure fine. Next in line appeared dried blackberries and raspberries, of which we never seemed to get enough. Later came dried peaches, then dried apricots which surely were delicious, but very rich and, in time, we became fed up on them. We hailed evaporated pears with delight when they finally were introduced, and ate great quantities of them for a while. In time nearly all the dried fruits were displaced by canned goods. When I went to Canada dried figs had just come out and I was tickled stiff, as I was tremendously fond of figs in any shape. But everywhere I went those Canadians had figs three times a day, stewed for supper, run over for breakfast, and made into pies for dinner. I got so sick of figs that even today after 25 years I don't want to look at a fig.

In writing these sketches of the west in early days, I trust I have said nothing to give offense to readers who hold a different belief from what I do. I only ask them to concede to me the same right to my personal beliefs that I do to them. I was asked to write these little stories of frontier life and they seem to have met with the approval of the majority of the readers of The Jacksonville Minner, as well as of editors in other sections of the country, some of my stuff being copied by papers as far away as Texas.

I am simply retelling the events of these early years as true to facts as possible and some of them are not so pleasant as might be desired by those who have no idea of what the real frontier actually consisted. Many old-timers read my stuff, and if it didn't ring true to them, they would catch me up on it pdq.

There are plenty of old-timers who have seen more action along the frontier than I have, but it seems to be difficult to get them to talk of it, let alone write of it. Others whose stories would be full of interest have no talent for writing. Many others who have been in the west much longer than myself have lived their lives principally in some certain section and have not cared to travel all over the west like I have done. My yen for traveling around has brought me into every state in the great west and those who like to read of the real doings of early days will doubtless find much of interest in my humble descriptions of western life at that time. And for those whose sensibilities may possibly be shocked by the revelation of what actually occurred in those days, I would suggest that the bookstores are full of pleasing fiction which might suit them a whole lot better. But I am not writing fiction, so I have to tell it as I saw it.

Applegater Byrnes Up Few Topics in Open Letter to the Editor

To the Editor: We just fished some dead yellow jackets out of the mulligan, put out some more ant paste and swept the dust off the kitchen table, and in between this and other things, were tempted to sharpen up the old pencil, and submit a little copy.

There is only one thing I don't like about The Minner: There is not enough of it. If we could induce our Applegate editor to occasionally take a long journey ala Robert Ruhl, we would put the pink sheet on the map. Those were right smart jokes Miss Pool picked up in the webfoot metropolis and we laughed a heap. Being able to see, and take a joke, is what makes America grate—on other nations.

When our neighbors over across the Atlantic refused to pay their war debts we just laughed and that made 'em madder than ever. I have a suspicion The Minner was ably represented at the writers' convention, and those "arrived authors" didn't put anything over on our editor.

What has become of all our old

contributors? They must be hibernating or out making a grub stake. R. Clay Chappell may have been hired to go east and give the GOP elephant a fresh coat of paint. We have enjoyed J. C. Reynolds' vivid sketches of the old west and hope they will continue. When the baseball season is over, we hope Brother Hall will gather up some more poetryprose and Verneshanglephotos. For a long time the American people have been in a muddle—huddle, we should have said—and things are going to start moving pretty soon. Smart editors will play a great part in moulding public opinion and shaping the destinies of nations.

The story of gold, and of the settling of the west, will never be fully told, and around old Jacksonville, historic town of that historic past, there still lingers a glamour and romance. The Minner seems to have captured this spirit, and fused the present with the past. Copies of The Minner radiate all over the coast and to distant parts of the country, being eagerly read by friends and relatives far removed from here.

If that professor guy who is going to give all the old people a pension of \$200 a month would just cut it down to \$100, we would not get all fatigued handling the money.

Someone has been raising the question about giving this country back to the Indians. We don't doubt there would be some people willing, if they were given a first mortgage and eight per cent interest.

It took a long line of governors to get this state \$50,000,000 in debt, and it looks like it might take a lot of them to get it out, so while we have a lot of candidates, what say if we elect the whole bunch and have it over with.

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S. C. PETERS (D.M.D.)
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This is all we are going to trust to Editor Hall's blue eagle-crane, we mean crayon.—JOHN BYRNE.

The prospectors of this section having used up all the patches they could get hold of, in repairing their rags, are now laying plans for organizing a nudist colony. Charcoal is plentiful in this vicinity and a coat of charcoal rubbed on the body gives the appearance of dark, tight-fitting clothes—at a distance.

Placer mining is almost exactly like the dairy business, except that in a dairy the cream has to be skimmed off the top, while in a placer mine the gold has to be skimmed off the bottom.

The scrap between Tom Blank and Johnnie Doe, Tuesday morning of last week, might have turned out differently if Johnnie hadn't have led with his chin and hit Tom such a wallop on the fist.

Paul Smart had some Pierce-Arrow glands put in his model T

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Solomon once made the remark that "gold is where you find it," but old Doc MacDougal, who has mined all his life and is consequently a couple of notches wiser than Solomon in that respect, says "gold also is in a lot of places where you don't find it."

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