

TROUBLE ON THE HILL . . .

(Note: This was written by the Old Man on the Hill over a year and a half ago, but in some way became misplaced and is being published at this late date.)

By Charley Casner
Dear Elsie:

I thought I would write and let you know how Jack was getting along up here on Calamity Hill. I know you are anxious about him and, to tell the truth, I have been a bit uneasy about him myself for I know he misses you very much and I have been afraid his worries would get him down and discontented so I have been doing my best to cheer him up and get his mind off worrying about you. I know you would want me to do that and I think I have succeeded but doing so brought about other problems that will solve themselves in time—I hope.

You see, Ma went to Portland for a few days and left me and Jack alone on the farm, so there are two lonesome old bachelors up on The Hill. While Jack was bearing up bravely I could see that if something was not done he would be liable to hit the trail back to Medford so, in order to cheer him up, I prevailed on him to go down to a dance, given by "The Get Acquainted Club" in Vernonia. I also thought I might stand a bit of cheering up myself for, my own Squaw being gone, it would never do for both of us to let our grief for our absent loved ones get us down.

At the time it seemed a grand idea, but the way it turned out I somehow have my doubts. One thing sure, it took our minds off our present worries, but brought on other problems that were nearer and more pressing. The motivating spirit of "The Get Acquainted Club" was an auburn haired charmer named Mazie and in all fairness, I must say that this Mazie person was the consoiling little bundle of sweetness that ever made a person forget his troubles and sadness; one look at her symmetrical figure and creamy satin skin and one felt that life had not been in vain and one look from her limpid, blue eyes and one felt as though he had just quaffed a glass of rare old wine or had a shot of vitamin G-2.

Right away I could see that Jack was glad he had come and, I introduced him to this Mazie person, he wanted to fill out an application for membership in the club right now. But he is still mindful of his former obligations and told me that he was a bit forgetful and, if the need arose, I was to remind him that he was an engaged man; that was a good idea for he proved to be the most absent-minded person I ever knew. Mazie took him under her protective wing and proceeded to help him get acquainted and from then on he was the chief attraction and was always surrounded by a bevy of heart-warming trouble-forgetting charmers and appeared to be having the time of his life.

I broke through the circle now and then to remind him that he was an engaged man. He always seemed grateful and thanked me, so everything was all right. I was glad to see that he was forgetting his worry and sorrow over your absence and beginning to take a new interest in life.

He seemed to want to dance with Mazie most of the time and, while his terpsichorean efforts were not the most graceful he made up in vigor and determination what he lacked in artistry. About this time a big logger, who it appeared, was Mazie's escort to the dance, barged in and wanted to dance with Mazie himself; but he was told that Jack was a stranger and just getting acquainted and besides, the Good Book says "turneth not away the stranger, thou may be entertaining an angel unawares."

Being thus confronted with the scriptures, Mazie's escort was properly impressed and did not argue the question further, although I did hear him saying something about getting too blamed well acquainted "and besides, he don't look like no angel to me." Something in the way he said this made me think I had better remind Jack again that he was an engaged man, which I did and he thanked me so everything was alright again. But I was a bit apprehensive and was glad when the dance was over and we could go home.

It seems that it had been arranged for a select number of us to go to some club, partake of refreshments and get better acquainted. Mazie started off with Jack, but her logger friend came up and allowed as he was her escort for the evening that he would take her off Jack's hands. Things looked ominous for a minute, but Mazie was equal to the occasion—said she was so tired and weak after all the dancing that she would feel safer if she had a big, stalwart man on each side, so everything was all right again.

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It turned out to be a very delightful party, everyone had a good time although the coffee was not as good as Ma makes. Among the refreshments served was a kind of temperance drink called Mr. Thomas Collins. While perfectly harmless it seemed to have the quality of making one talkative and soon everyone was holding forth on their favorite topic. Mazie told how she would have been Apple Queen of Nehalem Valley only the judges were crooked or had been bought off. Her logger escort told how he climbed a fir tree three hundred feet tall and cut the top out of it. I wanted to tell how I won the checker player championship of Nebraska but no one would pay any attention to me.

They were all listening to Jack telling of his exploits up in the frozen North—how he pulled a polar bear out through a hole in the ice and then swung him around till the bear was so dizzy that he would not stand up and Jack then cut his head off and everyone had bear steak for dinner. Mazie said she just loved bear stories for they made her feel scared and shivery all over and when she was scared and shivery she liked to feel a strong, protecting arm around her. Jack obligingly supplied the strong, protecting arm. I overheard Mazie's logger friend saying something about how he also had a strong arm, but it was liable to be used for something besides protecting. The way he said it made me a bit apprehensive and I reminded Jack that he was an engaged man. But this time he did not thank me. In fact, he acted as though I was interfering.

All things must end sometimes but we were sorry when it was time for the party to break up. Mazie was escorted home with Jack on one side and her logger friend on the other. After the good-bys had been said Jack and I started to hunt for our car, but we couldn't find it. Either we had forgotten where we had left it or the place had been changed or something. Anyhow we finally gave up and started to walk home. Jack seemed to be happy and was singing something about building a nest somewhere out West and sitting in it and watch the world go by. But I did not feel like singing. My old, rheumatic legs were bothering me and before we came to Calamity Hill they gave out and I could go no farther. I told Jack to go on and leave me there, that he was a young man and had his life before him while my sands of life were nearly run out anyhow.

He refused and said: "never let it be said that Jack Young deserted a pal in time of stress or danger," that he would carry me on his back—even as Aeneas bore old Anchises from the burning walls of Troy, so would he carry me to the top of Calamity Hill. I was very much touched by such a noble gesture of devotion and told him so.

I got on his back and started off up the hill, but after a few steps, he put me down again—said that I was too heavy, that he couldn't understand how an old bundle of bones like I was could weigh so much; that I must run at least 24 ounces to the pound. I resented being referred to as "an old bundle of bones" and told him that I had lots of meat on my bones, good meat too. I would make as good steaks as he would, probably better.

He finally said he would go back to town and find a taxi, or something to take us home. That was the last I saw of him till the next day. I was still sitting beside the road when Otto Myers came by in his car. Mr. Myers works in the night shift at the mill and gets off work about three or four o'clock and was on his way home; he took me on up the hill and let me off at our place.

I was still sleeping the sleep of the just when Jack came home. He woke me up and told me if I should see a big logger coming up the road with a peavy on his shoulder that I was to tell him that he (Jack) had gone to Medford and would not be back for a long time. Just why he wanted me to say that I don't know, but I have long since learned not to ask too many questions. If this logger shows up, I suppose I will do as Jack says for he is really a grand guy and I like him.

Nevertheless it will be a severe strain on my conscience to say that Jack has gone to Medford while all the time I know he is out back in the woods somewhere. You see, Elsie, veracity is one of my outstanding virtues. I am known all up and down the Nehalem valley as "truthful Charley." Consequently you can understand my reluctance to do or say anything that would jeopardize my standing in the community. So you can see I am laying quite a sacrifice on the altar of friendship.

Anyhow that is the way things stack up at the present writing. I think I have succeeded in getting Jack's mind off worrying about your absence, at least for the present. Besides, from all indications, he seems to have other problems on his mind that may keep him occupied for the time being. Meanwhile you have no need to worry about Jack, I will take good care of him.

(Second Note: Charley wrote the note at the beginning of this column and what he says is a lot of hot air! He didn't misplace it as he says. He just wanted to write another column for The Eagle so used the note as an excuse to get it published. Ed.)

Three Home from College Studies

BIRKENFELD — Home from college for the holidays were Giorgianna and Norman Mills and John Berg.

Russell Stuve and Beverly Closser spent Christmas with Russell's mother in Dallas.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Turner stopped in Birkenfeld Saturday for a short visit with friends and relatives.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Jensen and family had Christmas dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Elliott and family.

Kathryn Elliott spent Christmas day at home. She returned to Portland in the evening. Ann Wilburn of Portland accompanied her home.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Banzer spent Saturday evening with Mr. and Mrs. Claude Johnson.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Wallace of Woodburn are the parents of a 9-pound, 14-ounce boy born December 23. They named him Charles Neal. Mrs. Wallace was formerly Beverly Winslow.

Hospital Stay Ends, Improvement Said Slow

BIRKENFELD — Fred White is home again from the hospital. Reports are he is improving slowly.

Mr. and Mrs. Randy Gabrielson and Jimmy spent the week end with Mrs. Adah Hoberg.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Jensen and family spent Sunday in Tigard with relatives.

Claude Johnson called on Guy Bellingham Friday evening.

Donald DeRosia stopped in Birkenfeld Friday enroute to Astoria. He runs a filling station in Newport.

Out-of-State Families Visit

MIST — Mr. and Mrs. Chet Clenderian and four children drove up from California Sunday, a week ago and visited with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Wikstrom, for nearly a week. They are moving from California to Salem.

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Son at Home For Holidays

RIVERVIEW — Mr. and Mrs. Louis Serafin and children of Warren and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Serafin and children visited at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Glen Hawkins.

Christmas visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Peachey were George Peachey of San Francisco and Mr. and Mrs. Carson Strong and children of Aberdeen, Washington.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Olin of K-iso spent the week end at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. F. R. Olin.

Mrs. Artie Buckner spent Christmas day with her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Bond, at Forest Grove.

Miss Betty Jane Snook arrived Tuesday from Los Angeles to spend the holidays at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Snook.

Christmas guests at the Ed Buckner home were Howard Run-

dell of North Bend, Mr. and Mrs. Everett Rundell and Mr. and Mrs. Emery George of Portland and Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Rundell.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Huntley went to Portland Monday for a check up on his arm and to visit a few days at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald McCool.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Huntley, son Bob, daughter Betty, and Mrs. J. F. Breedin and daughters spent Christmas day at the home of Nate Huntley and his sister, Mrs. Mary Teel, at McMinnville.

Mr. and Mrs. Phil Andregg of Salem spent the week end at the home of her brother and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Mitchell.

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