
Country Philosopher

My Spring has sprung

When I was a young man there was only one thing that I was absolutely sure of. I would never deteriorate physically.

I knew that time took its toll. I understood death, aging, and decay. It's just that I was so terribly strong and beautifully healthy.

I watched my grandfather striving to read a newspaper through glasses as thick as a plank of wood. I stood amazed as my father walked 50 yards and stood panting as if his lungs would burst. I saw fat on my Uncle Charlie so thick that he needed help getting out of his rocking chair. I watched my neighbor, Mr. Denton, as his hair turned silvery gray and I was astonished when Mr. Watts lost all his teeth.

It would not, could not, happen to me.

I played football, baseball, basketball, and ran track. I was fair at tennis, bowling and volleyball. I would hunt from sunup to sundown; climbing mountains, fording streams, and pushing through undergrowth as thick as a jungle.

My eyes were the eyes of a hawk. I could see great distances, and I remember how amazed my elders were

when I could pick out some object on a distant mountain. My hair was very red, and very thick, and my teeth were hard and sound and snow white.

During 14 months in New Guinea during World War Two I lived a most spartan existence. I ate badly and went for days without sleep. I covered terrain so terribly dense that even your imagination couldn't picture it. And yet my youthful, strong body carried me through every hardship.

I could climb to the very top branches of an oak tree and could run through the meadows like the wind. I could row a boat for ten miles and fell a tree with strong, strong strokes of my axe. I could stand in front of a mirror and feel pride when I looked at my wide shoulders, flat stomach, and bulging muscles.

The slow eroding of the human body was something that overtook every man on the face of this earth. I understood this. I knew that man could never continue to age and retain the vitality, spirit, and physical strength of youth.

But I knew, without a doubt, that I would remain perfect forever.

Well, I just finished taking a shower. We have this full-length mirror in the

bathroom and I made the mistake of glancing at myself. What I saw could have very easily appeared in a Vincent Price horror film.

We will start at the top. My red hair has changed into a kind of bilious brown. It is not very thick anymore. In fact, there are vast areas where there is no hair at all.

My teeth are all my own but there aren't many left. About the only things my teeth are capable of slaying are lemon meringue pie and whipped cream. They are no longer snowy white but due to constant cigarette smoking they are now a colorful blend of brown, black, and gray.

There is nothing particularly motheaten about my shoulders but then we drop down to the stomach. Have you ever seen a bloated whale? Well, I haven't either, but I imagine my stomach would be a close resemblance. I honestly haven't seen my toes for over 20 years.

The varicose veins in my legs resemble a road map. They streak and run, like spider webs, from my hip to my ankle. My feet have corns so large that I remove them with a sickle.

My lungs protest each time I take a breath. I cannot generate even the



smallest amount of wind and I am totally fatigued after brushing my teeth.

My strength has evaporated. I find it very difficult to pick up a Q-tip and I need 16 people to help me out of bed each morning.

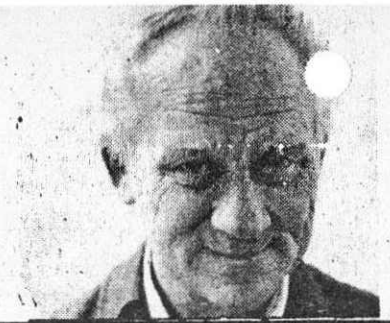
I look back on my youth and I almost cry. It is a wonder how a man can accept this gigantic, colossal deterioration. But I finally found the secret that allows men to continue almost as if nothing had happened. How a man can progress with the same confidence and zest he knew when he was young.

You see, man has a built-in ingredient that forever hides the gray, the fat, and the weakness. The ingredient that makes him quite sure (no matter what he looks like) that women find him irresistible.

That ingredient is the male ego. And Lordy...I'm so glad I have one.

Let's Nudge the Sludge

BY AMOS ARTHUR HOLMES



There are bright people, intelligent people, smart people, crafty people, wise people, brilliant people, sly people, and clever people. But today we are going to talk about cunning people.

Walter Prather is cunning. No doubt about it. He had been picked out of a pool of cunning people to head the new WASHINGTON IS DISAPPEARING COMMITTEE. This committee would have the responsibility of removing the over two million tons of slop that accumulates on the streets of Washington, D.C. every single day. The problem seemed insurmountable.

"Gentlemen," he said to the other committee members, "We must find a way to dispose of this vast amount of slop. We must find some community within trucking distance of Washington that will take this vile accumulation off our hands. Are there any suggestions?"

Paul Daily stood up. Paul was almost as cunning as Mr. Prather.

"Sir, in the first place, if we wish to find a spot for disposal...an area that will accept our vile accumulation...then we must find another name for our product. We cannot approach people in Prince George's county and ask them to accept something we refer to as either vile accumulation or slop."

Mr. Prather nodded his head affirmatively. "Paul, that suggestion has merit. Maybe we can call it by some other name. Garbage has a nice ring to

it."

Wally Walton stood up. "Begging your pardon, sir, but garbage doesn't have a nice ring to it for some people. In fact, it doesn't have a nice ring to me. I would even find it objectionable if someone tried to give me something called trash or debris or waste or filth. But I thought of a name that sounds light and spiritual and uplifting. Why don't we call it SLUDGE?"

"Sludge," mused Mr. Prather, "By golly, Wally, I think you've hit on something. Now we must consider where we can unload our sludge. Any suggestions?"

Tim Bathinghouse stood up. "Sir, St. Mary's county is within trucking distance of Washington. It is a rural community composed of tobacco farmers and watermen. Those people haven't quite made it into this century and I think, if we make sludge appealing enough, they will accept all we can give them."

Mr. Prather nodded his head. "Gentlemen, St. Mary's county sounds like an ideal dumping ground for our vile accumulation...excuse me...for our sludge. I am going to send Paul down there tomorrow to talk to the county commissioners. Let's keep our fingers crossed."

The next day Paul kept an appointment with the St. Mary's county commissioners. He told them that

sludge was very hard to come by. Sludge was becoming as precious as diamonds. Everyone wanted sludge and...by damn...there just wasn't enough sludge to go around. He also mentioned the fact that sludge was good for tobacco, rejuvenated the sex drive, and if sludge got into the water it was good for fish and crabs. The commissioners were impressed. This was election year and it would be nice to do something for the farmers, watermen, and for those who needed rejuvenation. They told Paul Daily that they would take all the sludge he could give them.

When Paul got back to Washington he reported his success to Mr. Prather.

"Sir" he said, "St. Mary's county has 2 million square acres and we have 18 million tons of sludge. That means that when we deliver our sludge to St. Mary's county we will have covered every acre of that county to a depth of six feet."

"Paul," chuckled Mr. Prather, "You are very cunning."

The next day a St. Mary's countian is standing in his yard when sixteen huge trucks roll up to his property. The man is overcome by the odor coming from the trucks and calls out, "WHAT IN THE HELL ARE YOU HAULING? DEAD SKUNKS?"

The truck driver replies, "No sir, this stuff is called sludge. And if you think

the odor is bad now...just wait until the sun hits it."

The sludge has been dumped in the man's yard to a depth of six feet. Thank goodness the man is six foot seven inches tall and the sludge doesn't quite reach his nose. He hopes his wife can get home to save him but then he notices that the roads are covered with six feet of sludge and that nobody can possibly come to his rescue. The fields are covered with sludge and some of the sludge has fallen into the water. He notices that the sludge has killed his tobacco and that there are dead fish and crabs floating on top of the water. He remarks to himself that this stuff called sludge looks a hell of a lot like garbage. Isn't that an orange peeling to the right of his shoulder? And aren't they coffee grounds oozing against the side of his chin?

As he stands there wedged in by the sludge, and with the obnoxious odor becoming more intense, he thinks of the man responsible for this tragedy. The man who could take this vile accumulation from a locality where it wasn't wanted and deposit it in another locality where it wasn't wanted...well...that man had to be awfully damn intelligent. No! He had to be more than intelligent.

By golly...that man had to be cunning.