

WEST O' KANSAS CITY

Poems by Marvin Hass



Illustrations by Paul Kethley

www.paulkethley.com/

Copyright 2006-2007 marvin@marvinhass.com

Introduction

West O' Kansas City is a collection of poetry that tracks the development of the west from Lewis & Clark to the present day rancher.

Work the trap line with "Lucky Larsen", mine for Black Hills Gold with "Crazy Ed", push cattle up the Goodnight Loving Trail with "Delbert McCreedy, share a pipe in the camp of the Arapaho, feel the wind around the "Prairie Church", be saddened by the sale of the "Ol' Slash J", celebrate the "Anniversary of Liz & Jake" and take your gal on a "Buggy Ride."

These are just some of the folks that make the West come alive somewhere...West O' Kansas City.

Marvin Hass

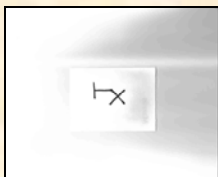


Table of Contents

THE EARLY WEST

“Lucky” Larsen

Big Bad Jim

KINNIKINNICK

Delbert McCreedy

The Artist

Eustus Hays

SETTLING THE WEST

Movin’ West

Somethin’

Elmore Sims

Cowboy’s Halloween

CHANGING WEST

The Devil’s Wishing Well

The Golden Pony

Prairie Church

SLASH “J”

COWBOYS & RANCHERS

Looking Glass

Feet

Problem

The WHAT-CHI-MA-CALL IT

The Anniversary

Buggy Ride

THE EARLY WEST

“Lucky” Larsen

They called him “Lucky” Larsen
Was half swede, half wolverine.
Strangest man I ever met
looked hungry and down right mean.

You could smell him ‘fore you saw him
That’s the fact of it, for truth.
Cheyenne, it was, that took his hair
but they left him with one tooth.

Took the toes right off his left foot
Ham-strung the other knee.
He walked with a limp and a jerky roll
Like a ship in a stormy sea.

Carried them toes in his possibles bag
Ate what the coyotes would refuse.
You never stayed long in his camp
Felt the next meal might be you.

The talk was that he had twelve wives
Lucky liked ‘em plump and slow.
When a wife would get to sassy
In his trapper’s pot she’d go.

Ranged from Bent’s Fort up to
Deadwood
Any place where the winds blew fair.
He mainly trapped the northern
streams
Wintered with a grizzly bear.



www.paulkethley.com/

Rode a spavined mule from an old pack
train
was bad tempered with just one ear.
Led a mousey colored camel
That he used to pack his gear.

One story is, he struck it rich
Down on a Black Hills claim.
Cleaned up nice and got gold teeth
Tried Denver in search of fame.

Others say he’s up there still
Somewhere on a northern stream.
Trailin’ close behind them coyotes
Late at night you’ll hear him scream.

A man I know will swear an oath,
saw Lucky eat his own right heel.
This would justify the screamin’
As he carved for his next meal.

You can take this with a grain of salt
But I’d bet my string of horses.
Lucky Larsen was the only man
to every eat himself in courses.

Big Bad Jim

You might put on an act, but it's always
a fact,
A sparrow can't change to a hawk.
The young five-and-dimer, becomes an
Ol' timer
It's all hoorah brag with big talk.

It's not 'bout the boys, makin' all the
noise
But the few that are honest and true.
No need to be proud, to play to the
crowd,
We can all spot a blow-hard clear
through.

Comes along that gray day, when it's
your turn to pay,
It's put up your poke or leave town.
The talkin's all through, now it's just up
to you
Will you still get back up when you're
down.

My dear friend was Jim, bet my whole
life on him,
He saved me when others stood by.
We didn't know then, not the why nor
the when,
But a future of fortune we'd find.

It was silver not gold, all the eye could
behold,
Lady Luck danced our way in that mine.
Jim named her Sweet Sal, to remember
a gal,
he favored back in forty nine.

In the bar late one night, it all wasn't
right,
When McFee came in from the rain,
"The drinks are on me, and rich I will
be,
For the Sweet Sally D. is my claim."

'They're jumpers them two, Crazy Ed
and Jim too,
took all that was legally mine."
He pointed to Jim, gave him a mean
grin,
Said, "he's a thief of the very worst
kind."

Big Jim dropped his chaw, then made a
clean draw,
McFee was unarmed so some tell,
Nasty Ned had a knife, which stole Jim's
good life,
As Ned was sent packing for hell.

The Lord did provide, up on the Divide,
I buried big Jim near The Sal,
As the sun kissed the peaks, felt tears on
my cheeks,
Big Jim was my pardner and pal.

I worked the Sal D., she did right by me,
made me richer than a man has a right.
It was frittered away, on sweet vices
they say,
cards, whiskey and ladies of the night."

Then I heard Jim real clear, a voice in
my ear,
"Ed, you'll find the Big Shiney again.
You ain't got a pot, but one thing that
you've got,
Is the touch for the strike 'round the
bend."

I was born for the search, not to pray in
a church,
with the pious rich liars and wives.
They hated Big Jim, felt both me and
him,
Were sinners with dark sinful lives.

When I make the next strike,
somewhere up the pike,
I'll send that dear church a smart sum.
Ask a sermon for Jim, and his favorite
hymn,
if they choke on the words they can
hum.

They'll wring hands and sigh, but soon
justify,
his praises but yet keep their pride.
They'll claim on that night, Jim saw the
light,
course the Lord cast my sad soul aside.

Those church folks are right, I ain't
turned from a fight,
My candle of light flickers dim.
When I hear that great call, the Lord
says, "That's all."
I know I'll be up there with Jim.

Those pious church folks, pokin' fun with
their jokes,
Will gasp and stare in pure shock.
For at that bright Gate, St. Peter says,
"Wait."
'cause Big Jim tends the key that lock.

So I'll pack my crazy mule, a wall-eyed,
one eared fool,
Sing a song and give the folks a toothless
grin.

I'll strike it rich no doubt, and when this
life plays out,
Rich and poor will sing together 'round
the bend.

Hey, we all will sing together and be
friends.

KINNIKINNICK

I packed my bowl with kinnikinnick
 leaned back on a willow rest.
The spirits danced within the smoke,
 thought back to my early west.

Elbow grease and axel grease,
freighted whiskey by the barrel.
Ran a jerkline out of Santa Fe
 even hauled the jackass mail.

Mustanged in the Missouri Breaks,
river sniped on the gold dust trail.
Scouted some for the Ol' U. P.
Grabbed the Wild West by the tail.

Hunted buffalo with Cody,
 saw the people torn apart.
Oh...the west she sure is changing,
 feels like winter in my heart.

Now, it's summer on the prairie,
 I'm with friends, the Arapaho.
Us old ones smoke Kinnikinnick
and share the west we still love so.

Delbert McCreedy

We were trailin' steers to Denver,
bedded down near Trinidad,
us boys raced in to see the sights
spurred our mounts for all they had.

Ol' Delbert liked rye whiskey
and he wore a toothy grin,
came a-whoopin' in the Lucky Spur
...then came back outside again.

Comin' out was a Texas drover
Ridin' a big stout dapple gray.
Ol' Del went down a kickin'
and shortly...passed away.

We nailed him in a new pine box
with knot holes here and there,
in case Ol' Del came back around
and thought he might need air.

When all the words were said and done,
the clods made a deadly sound.
Right then came a-yellin' and a-cussin'
from that grave down in the ground.

We fished Del out and clean him up
had clods from boots to chin.
His forehead wore that half moon brand
that the drover stove plumb in.

We found that Texas yahoo
"Yes," he'd replace Del's old John B.
So we wondered into the Mercantile
"A black beaver is what we'd like to
see."

"Seven and a quarter," Del yells out.
"That been my size for years."
When the dry goods feller slipped it on,
it covered Del's big ears.



www.paulkethley.com/

We pondered where them brains had
gone
when Slim explained with grace,
"I reckon Del just passed 'em through,
quite natural...in his case."

Yes, we got the herd to Denver
Ol' Delbert made it too.
Still had a love for whiskey
But swingin' doors, he'd not pass
through.

If you think it brought him temperance
Well that's where you'd be wrong.
He'd just mosey to the side door
And ease in with his hogleg drawn.

They hung Del up in Cheyenne.
Shot a Wyoming citizen dead.
Guess that feller made some comment
about that brand on Del's forehead.

We buried Del a second time.
This was his true amen.
It's hard to see a good man pass
And say goodbye to a hard-luck friend.

“Lord...here lies Delbert McCreedy
and ornery cuss it’s true.
If heaven’s got Texans and swingin’
doors
There’s a favor we beg of you.

Let Ol’ Del come around the back
and bring him in real slow,
or he’ll tighten like a fiddle string
since his head now’s a quarter low

The Artist

They threw him off the west bound mail.
He was drunk as an English Earl.
He staggered in to Peabody
Thought he'd give the town a whirl.

He liked it so he wintered there
a three room shack was his abode.
Come spring the owner made a call
asking for what he now was owed.

The feller said he figured that
but his money all was spent.
"However Sir, I've left you art,
as pay in lieu of rent."

This landlord into the parlor gazed
The north wall had come alive
With a western scene so real and true
Texas drovers on a cattle drive.

The herd was nearing Ellsworth
Where they'd ship from the railroad pens.
It was signed down in the bottom right
Fredrick R. to all his friends.

The owner hoped for cold hard cash
but he guessed the art would do.
"Mister, you ain't somebody famous,
should I be knowin' you?"

They put him on the Denver Mail
Still two sheets to the wind.
He took his stand in the dining car
As he declared to foe or friend.

"My title is Fredrick Remington
I'm sure you've heard the name.
I 'm headed out to Denver,
paint the west before it's tame."

Oh, paint the west, he surely did,
from bronc buster to the cavalry.
Ol' Fredrick had a western soul
And left trains quite gracefully.

Eustus Hays

It was gettin' on toward closin' time
In the Circle Dot that night.
The finest place in Plentywood
had a French chandelier for light.

The wind blew hard from the Northwest
A November blizzard was movin' in.
I sat with my thoughts at a table
Thinkin' how sad my life had been.

There weren't many left for company
The town drunk hugged the stove in
sleep.
A bone picker dozed there with him.
His odor'd make a buzzard weep.

Two cowhands from the Bar T stood
Arguein' as to which one was a liar.
Whiskey Red the barkeep grinned.
Guess I rounded out this choir.

A mouse that lived in a cigar box,
Up behind the pickled egg jar,
Had roused himself to have a snack
From the cheese that sat on the bar.

The door swings wide and there he
stands
A giant filled the space.
The snow blew in around him
He just smiled and eyed the place.

One cowhand says,"close the door,
You born in a barn or what."
He was dead before he closed his mouth
A bullet slammed his life's book shut.

It was clear that the man was serious.
We carefully listened to what he said.
"I'm lookin' for Mr. Eustus Hays,
he's wanted alive or dead."

He takes one smell of the picker
And he heads for the bar and Red.
"You heard of Hays, the rotten scum,
There's a bounty on his head."

Ol' Whiskey Red nearly lost his teeth.
He coughed as his face turnin' blue.
Don't know any feller name of Eustus
"And Sir, I wouldn't lie to you."

This hunter nods and turns to go,
drives his rifle in Red's sad face.
Shatters Red's twice broken nose
And removed it with out a trace.

Now he's comin' to my table.
"Goodbye Ma" this is my end.
He levers in another shell
Says,"Same question to you friend."

I swallowed my chaw and was chokin'
When he toppled like a tree bein' felled.
The Bar T hand had pole axed him
With a poker that the drunk had held.

The mouse that ate the bar cheese
stood silent at what he saw.
It took awhile to take it in
Us live ones were all in awe.

The hand says,"Who is this Eustus?"
"Well, it's a down right mystery."
But deep in side I thanked my stars
Cause, ol' Eustus Hays,...that's me.

SETTLING THE WEST

Movin' West

Do you feel it Hannah, do you?
Oh my, it's pullin' me.
There's land if you can get there
And Hannah, it's plumb free!

"Opportunity of a life time"
Says it all right here in print.
A hundred sixty acres, why
That's four times what we now rent.

There's credit there to help you
Given new folks a nice grub stake
Says a man can make it big out there
Don't that just make you ache?

Says the weather's good for growin'
And the winters ain't that tough.
They're plannin' towns and a railroad
Plus churches, schools and such.

Says some have turned up fortunes,
Listen...will you listen now
gold on the bottom o' them prairie
roots
When they set it to the plow.

Emmigrants , well...sure there is
Some Dutchmen and them Swedes
But I've heard tell there real nice folks
Good neighbors when you have needs.

My thought is this, are you listenin'?
We'll try it for a time...a year
Then if we're not real satisfied
We'll bring that fortune right back here.

I know about the rollin' stone
But...there's riches to be made.
Most folks just want to hold you back
Keep you workin' as their slave.

Let's just pack up what we got
Stake our claim out in the west.
Raise our family proper style
Make our fortune with the rest.

Somehin'

Ain't he somethin', ain't he somethin'
Was all that she could say.
As they trotted out the pony
That her daddy bought that day.

Ain't love somethin', ain't love somethin'
As she danced across the hall.
I think he really loves me Ma
And Mama...that ain't all.

Ain't birth somethin', ain't birth somethin'
With the new born at her breast.
Oh, he'll grow to be a leader.
Someone to tame this wild ol' west.

Ain't life somethin', ain't life somethin'
As she combed her grandchild's hair.
Some day you'll be a lady
And the fairest of the fair.

Ain't death somethin', ain't death somethin'
With her family at her bed.
I see the chariot comin' down.
She smiled and bowed her head.

Elmore Sims

Elmore Sims was a dry-goods man
Came west in eighty four.
Started with some rough cut pine
And built a general store.

Law and order were sorely lackin'
Rowdy types were thick as fleas,
So Elmore kept a scatter gun
To help set his mind at ease.

The Widow Hill was buyin' calico
When the door swung open wide.
Quincy "Digger" Cribbs lurched in
a drunken burro at his side.

"Strong drink is what I smell sir."
"Ma'am that's my Matilda's bane.
She has likin' fer rye whiskey
Or Indies rum from sugar cane."

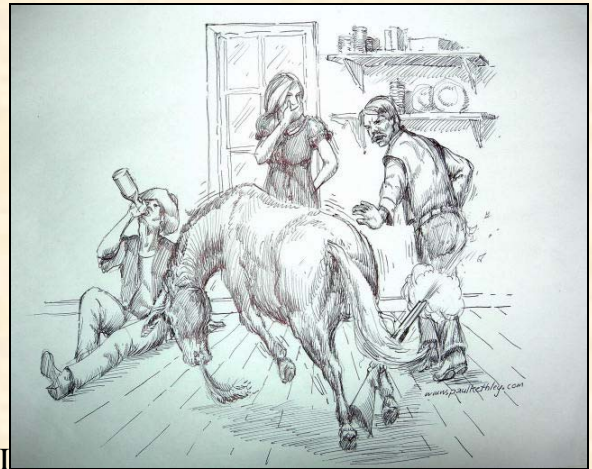
Matilda eyed the Widow's hem
And proceeded with a nip.
The Widow screamed & clutched her
knees
When her dress began to rip.

Elmore Sims sprang into action
He'd not used his gun before.
Matilda brayed as the widow reeled
Elmore's gun butt hit the floor.

It caught him in an awkward place
As buck shot filled the air.
Tore the backside of his britches
and exposed red underwear.

Cribbs and Matilda slinked on out
Like school boys on the run.
The call went out for Ol' Doc Wright
"Elmore's shot with his own gun."

They slung Sims 'cross a pickle barrel
Those britches Doc eased down.
When he deftly dropped the trap-door
The Widow gasped and hit the ground.



www.paulkethley.com/

He doused her with some smellin' salts
Pulled a cork on some "Rockin' Rye,"
As Doc shared a snort with Elmore
The Widow Hill said, "My...Oh my."

The town folk heard the ruckus
moved in close to gawk and stare.
The Widow held sweet Elmore's hand,
Infectious snickers filled the air.

Doc commenced to tweezen buckshot
Elmore puffed and gnashed his teeth.
When dignity was fully plucked
Ol' Doc splashed him under-neath.

Sim's lank body showed a lot of spark
Began to dance to an unseen band.
But fate had plans for matrimony,
As he asked for the Widow's hand.

There was a weddin' on that very night
Out front of the general store.
Matilda and that rascal Cribbs
Gently snored by the side door.

Should you wander into the
Mercantile
That scatter gun's still on display
On a beam behind the counter
With recollection of that day.

"This firearm was brought to bear,
mayhem threatened brass and bold.
A hero bared his dignity
A lady's honor to uphold."

Now Elmore walks with a side-ways gait
As he holds his new bride's hand.
"Digger" struck the mother lode, they say.
Oh the west...ain't it truly grand.

Cowboy's Halloween

My horse had thrown an off front shoe
as we lost the last day light.
The steady rain had turned to snow.
We needed shelter for the night.

Soon shown the glow from a miner's
shack
We came upon it through an aspen
grove.

I hello-ed the house as I tied Ol' Buck
...then gave another loud hello.

I knocked once and the door swung
wide

I stepped in with uneasy care.
The door blew shut like a beaver trap
and a moan came from off somewhere.

Cowboy coffee was a steaming hot.
The cook range was burning bright.
The harvest table was set for two
with a coal-oil lamp for light.

I poured a cup and pulled up a chair.
I must of dozed as the stove gave heat
when I awoke with a yell and a jump.
A bloody head lay at my feet.

I did a dance & found the door
and pulled it open wide,
on the porch was the headless body
just standing right outside.

I recoiled, then spun to the right
guess my fear just saved my life.
A fearsome woman swung an axe
then ear-marked me with her knife.

The axe took off my left boot tip
and my big toe stayed right there.
I dived for the outside fast and low,
met the headless miner in mid air.

I hit the ground and ran for Buck
My senses were a spinning blur.
The old witch screamed as we rode by
So I gave her face my spur.

We limped on in to Tincup,
as the sun inched above the peak.
Tied up outside the blacksmith shop,
I was feeling cold and wet and weak.

The smithy was heating up the forge
'til the coals got a real nice glow.
I asked him where to get a meal
and a sawbones for my toe.

I questioned him when I settled up
about that shack on Middle Creek.
His face turned white, as he rolled his
eyes,
then he cleared his throat to speak.

"You must mean the Perkins' place,
now there's a terrible tale.
The Missus lopped off old Clyde's head,
then we hung her by the Tincup jail."

"It seems to happen on Halloween
when steady rain turns into snow.
She chops him up again, some say,
that place is haunted, don't you know."

Now my grand kids want the story,
on every rainy Halloween.
They scream and holler and hug me tight
When I tell them what I'd seen.

Call it vision, dream or fantasy
When October rain turns into snow,
I think about the Perkin's Place,
"It's haunted...don't you know."

CHANGING WEST

The Devil's Wishing Well

I saw the buzzards circling low
A burro was their bread.
Then I saw the crazy coot
That most folks called Old Zeb.

His life had been a quest for gold,
with a thirst for the wealth of kings.
Now Zeb was face down in the sand
in a death that the desert brings.

When I turned him up I saw the face
That had died in the searing sun.
His lips were black and his face was
raw
being scorched 'til the deed was done.

But then I heard a gasping sound
Old Zeb reached to pull me near.
"I found 'er son, I found 'er."
Is what he whispered in my ear.

"Take the north fork out of Hooker..."
And he fished inside his coat,
Out came a map that showed the way
And the proof in a rawhide poke.

"She's only just a sample son."
Then he coughed and gasped again.
I buried Zeb 'neath a creosote bush
Said, "So long Old Man...Amen."

I Stuffed the poke in my saddle bag
With the map to the bonaza find.
Was planing to head for the Spanish
peaks
But that poke teased my greedy mind.

Nuggets the size of pullet eggs
And more treasure...unless Zeb lied.
I checked my half full water bag
And studied that ancient guide.

"Why, this right here is Chimney Rock.
I don't think the climb's that tough."
The talking deep inside my head said,
"Son, ain't you got enough?"

Well sure, but since it's all this close
It's a worthwhile bet it seems.
So I looked west toward the Chimney Rock
And that treasure of Old Zeb's dreams.

My burro died an hour back
but the well is now in sight.
Oh yes...this is the riches well
it glows in the dawning light.

I wake with a man standing over me.
I tell the treasure tale again.
Now he's burying me by the creosote bush
Says, "So long Old Man...Amen."

He's laying out the searcher's map
then our spirits join as one.
My fate is sealed to search and find
and die where I've begun.

My quest in life is my demon still,
as I pray and beg and plead.
My prospects are the golden well,
my doom the miser's greed.

I'm sentenced to a special hell,
this eternal dead man's quest,
to search and find the mother lode
at the well that's further west.

If greed should over come you
and Midas gold is all you smell,
as you take no heed of warning,
drawn like a magnet to the well.

Take the north fork out of Hooker
you might find the Devil's well.
Dip your soul into the mother lode
and you've found your brand of hell.

The Golden Pony

It was snowin' when I saw him,
by the "Come To Jesus" sign.
He waved as I pulled up the truck.
"Get in friend, you'll be fine."

Old Timer, where you headed?
"I'm not certain that I know.
Plan to ride the Golden Pony
in the Good Lord's Wild West Show."

He settled back and talked and laughed.
Shared a life of tears and fun.
"I could tell ya 'bout my younger days
and them buckles that I won."

"Sure, I had a home and family
When I was in my prime.
Guess I slammed that..."I'm a leavin' door."
Once too many times."

"But...when ya come right down to it
I never caught the big brass ring.
That carrousel of luck we ride,
She always was a high tailed thing."

"I guess my life has been that way
Sewin' dust, expecting gold
Castin' leaves upon the water,
hopin' for the mother lode."

"Ya can let me out right here son.
Where I'm headed...oh...I know.
Gotta ride the Golden Pony
In the Good Lord's Wild West Show."

It's hard to see an old man failin',
that's lost his family, lost his home.
I stuffed a twenty in his jeans.
He said, "Thank you kindly for the loan."

Heard they found him up in Last Chance
In an alley...the next day.
The snow had been his overcoat,
in the night he'd passed away.

Oh, he wasn't much to look at
Fact is...most folks looked away.
But I know he's on that Golden Horse
in heaven's Wild West Show today.

Prairie Church

It stands alone on the hill,
with prairie all around.
The windows now are boarded shut
loose shingles on the ground.

The cowmen that had built this church
have long since seen God's face.
No need to ring the Sunday's in
or sing "Amazing Grace.

The graves are lined out in neat rows,
in the fence on the northwest side.
A lot o' Nelson's buried here,
folks still recall with pride.

The gate that keeps the cattle out
no doubt has seen its best.
The line posts speak of prairie fire,
but the old Church stood that test.

When they built the church and
settled here,
all it took was a good man's word.
A lot of money made and lost
a handshake bought a herd.

Now beef is run on corporate spreads,
new fences strung real tight.
Double graze and triple stock,
the profit makes it right.

The prayer book is the ledger,
the good word now is gains.
No one to say, "Is this here right
or pull back on the reins."

We threw out our church values,
searching for the bottom line.
Denver lawyers and agreements
"Three copies will be fine."

Use up the grass and move on west,
there's money waiting there.
Don't worry about your neighbor none,
that's his own look-out to care.

I guess it shows I'm a getting old,
when I harp on all this change.
Thinking about the good-old-days,
when the Nelsons' rode this range.

I'm sure we told the Redman,
that change was here to stay.
He took a different view alright,
but change came anyway.

Well, if you got some time to spare
and you're heading out this way.
Stop by up at the Prairie Church,
it's real fine place to pray.

SLASH “J”

They sold ‘er out last Friday.
Everything went high they say.
All started by Ol’ C.J.’s Dad,
mighty fine spread in its day.

Sonny came in a foreign car,
wore an eastern lawyers face.
He won’t be runnin’ cows fer sure
plans to parcel out the place.

The Missus rode the front porch,
had a stroke a year ago.
Just sittin’ in a wheel chair,
watchin’ a life times work all go.

Sonny eased her in that fancy car
when they yelled “That’s the end-gate folks.”
He’s gonna put her in the old folks home,
but I don’t suppose she knows.

That stroke it took her speech and all,
Still...wasn’t hard to read her mind.
She’s is headin’ to an empty room,
time to leave her home behind.

The Realtor shut up the place,
put a lock on the Ol’ front gate.
Tacked a sign that read Acreages For Sale,
“Create Your Western Dream Estate.”

Yep...they sold ‘er out last Friday,
guess sixty years is quite a run.
C. J.’s dead...the Missus cries
and the Ol’ Slash J is done.

COWBOYS & RANCHERS

Looking Glass

I was passing by the looking glass
as I rose this early morn.
I saw an old man peakin' out
he sure looked lost and worn.

Course this lookin' glass is lying
The way they always do
There's a geezer lookin' back at me
but that reflection can't be true.

When had all that hair died out
my cheeks have turned to jowls
is this just one of nature's tricks
that comes from tendin' cows.

There's crows feet tracks around my
eyes
My nose is big...and red.
Appears there's hair that's taken root
in my ears as it left my head.

Yep...still got that toothy gap
it's only given to a few.
The ones ear-marked for greatness,
sure has helped me spit and chew.

My Adam's apple bobs & weaves
my chin has slipped a might,
seen turkey buzzards with more class
truth is...I look a sight.

Believe I got this figured
I can remedy my plight.
I won't shave for the next three months
and keep my hat drawn down real tight.

I'll stick my neck out in the wind
I'll change to a fancy chaw.
A wintergreen or some flavored skool
won't let this eat my craw.

I'm a handsome dude when I've a mind
believe I'll buy me a buckaroo rag.
I still might break a lady's heart,
'course...that might be mostly brag.

I'm doin' fine for my young age
why, I stand out in a crowd.
I ain't that geezer lookin' back
I'd still make my mother proud.

So, the next I see a lookin' glass
with some stranger hiddin' there
I know that yahoo...it ain't me,
but how'd he get my underwear.

Feet

I want to share a natural fact
And see if ya found this true.
Yer near the end of a late spring bath
ya take notice of part a you.

Look at that far end corner
somethin's movin' way down there.
Ya know it's part of yer body
But it's ugly...ya have ta stare.

Two naked feet have surfaced
Like muskrats up fer air
Their kinda long and boney
With protrusions here and there.

Ya pick one up fer a better look
But it don't help the seen.
That big toe's black from in the chutes
Them nails u'd turn ya green.

My feet resemble barrel staves
Believe I was meant to ski.
These fellers are size fourteen
Their twice the size of me.

Expect my growth was stunted
Back in my early years.
I was rightly planned fer seven feet
When ya check my feet an' ears.

So I crawl on out and leave some tracks
A wet trail on the bunk house floor.
Looks like the sign of a giant skunk
That's a makin' fer the door.

I share this observation
'bout yer lower extemities
don't look at 'em when yer naked
an' I'm not talkin' 'bout yer knees.

If the Lord meant feet fer lookin' at
There wouldn't be no boots an' socks
It's a warnin'to ya when ya bathe
Don't look down below yer hocks.

Problem

I'm concerned about this problem
that I feel I need to share.
This started out a'way last fall
And it deals with my loss o' hair.

If ya go to a certified real M.D.
With a problem like this, it's sure.
They'll charge ya fer some lame advice
That might...or might not cure.

When our Vet. was out a checkin' cows
I thought 'bout it once er twice.
When he was in behind the chute
I asked fer his sound advise.

Said, "Doc I got this problem
All my hair has left it's plain.
Do ya have some thoughts on what to
do
To restore my wavey main."

"Well, I've used some stuff on scabies
And the mange on an old range ewe.
It re-grewed hair as pure as silk
But could be side effects...it's true.

Doc prescribed some big green pills
"Take one in the mornin'...one at bed."
He put 'em all in an A.I. sleeve,
Plus some salve to rub my head.

Had my Lizzie do the rubbin'
She did it with care and speed.
She liked my head the way it was
Wondered why I felt this need.

Right now it's nearin' spring time
My baldhead's the color of chalk.
But my Lizzie's hands need shearin'
And she's bleatin' as she talks.

Now I've grown some hair I grant ya
It's come in real thick and red
The problem is it's on my feet
My hope was for my head.

The only advise I can give ya
If lack of hair won't let ya sleep.
Don't mess with veterinary rogainé.
Shearin' costs are mighty steep.

The WHAT-CHI-MA-CALL IT

I was checkin' cows on the calvin'
ground
When I pulled up the mare
And saw between some sage and snow
Some color lying fair

I rode up to this splash of joy
Upon the springtime scene
And saw it was a flower
Of violet, grey and green

I picked it for my Ruthie
Stuffed in my vest real deep
proceeded with my mornin' check
forgot this gift so sweet

When I got in that evening
Found that possie 'mongst my gear
gave it to my sweetheart Ruthie
"Here's a what-chi-ma-call it dear."

Gentle tears came to her eyes
Like it was a gift so rare
"That's a crocus you old rascal.
God's sign that spring is here."

She kissed me on my white forehead
Then each check in its turn
she wadded through my whiskers
and made my ol' lips burn

Next mornin' I was thinkin'
It just seemed only right
If I found a few more flowers
Considerin' late last night.

My Ruthie died last Tuesday
My life's been ripped away
My reason for existing
My will to face the day

Our undertaker ol' Bones Smith
Took me through the detail maze
of verses, songs, the dress, the stone
my mind was gone...a haze

When he got down to the flowers
"Did ya have somethin' in mind?"
"Give us them what-chi-ma-call its.
That'ed be just fine."

The Anniversary

Lizzie and me bin married
nigh on forty years.
She's kind to every livin' thing
There in laughter and in tears.

It happened in our bedroom
We was 'bout to go to sleep.
She says, "Jacob do you love me?"
"Ya know I do my sweet."

"Could we have a second weddin'?"
It would please me some, it's true.
To hear you say you love me...
and I say that I love you."

Well, I gulped real hard and paused a
mite
Said, "Dear, that sounds real sweet."
Ol' Liz she beamed from ear to ear
Then kissed me on each cheek.

Next mornin' she was on the phone
To plan the whole affair.
She says, "Ida, we was hopin'
You and Ben'd be with us there."

"What does Jacob think of this?
...he suggested it to me.
That man gets sweeter every year."
He said, "Let just have a spree."

This remarryin' was planned behind
our house
Neath the biggest cottonwood tree.
There was plans fer food and drink
and all
With the Parson, plus his fee.

"Jacob, what ya plan to wear
on this, our special day?"
well, I reckon some new Levis,
And my...then saw it didn't play.

The big day came as big days do.
I was trussed up like a goose.
Black coat and striped britches
That tie felt like a noose.

Lizzie and Ida looked mighty fine,
In petticoats and lace.
Handsome women, if I do say so
And that smile on Lizzie's face.

Ol' Ben cleaned up pretty fair
New jeans, and a quarter horse tie.
Old suit coat, shined up boots
The buckle from sixty five.

"Do ya want a shot a red-eye,
Like ya did the first go round?"
"Believe I'll wait til the kissin's through
and Lizzie's settled down."

Well, the Parson lined us out
Like fence posts on the flats.
Ida and Lizzie and me and Ben
With us boys in brand new hats.

The Parson greeted all the folks
Explained why we was there.
Began to read the good book
'bout the love that lovers share.

'Bout that time the wind kicked up
with gusts that bent the trees.
Folks started to hunt cover
As some chairs began to leave.

The Parson lost his hair piece
Took a swing around the group
Landed on the weddin' cake
Just like ya threw a loop.

I lost my hat with the second gust
Ben grabbed his 'fore it could fly.
The petticoats on them two gals
Rose up to meet the sky.

Ben gives out with a snicker
He's wearin' a side ways grin.
Says, "Them gals o'ours look purdy
good.
Stuck with us through thick and thin."

They got the Parson's hair back on
Had a frosted edge in white.
The ladies got them dresses down.
We said, "I do" just right.

Ol' Lizzie kissed me hard and long
Then we turned and waved to the crowd
There was shakin' hands and thank yous
All the neighbors yelled out loud.

That night, in bed, we discussed the day
Lizzie says "It went pretty fair."
"Yes ma'am it surely did." I says.
"Glad the Parson got his hair."

"Jacob you made me proud today."
"It's a honey mooners night."
I grinned and said, "Ain't that a fact."
Ol' Liz turned out the light.

Buggy Ride

I took my Liz on a buggy ride
It happen the end of May.
Was in between on seasons work
“Thought, why not take a day?”

‘Course I figured she would protest
“There’s work man, don’t you care?”
“No Sir,” she said, “I’ll fix a lunch,
Then wait...I’ll fix my hair.”

Well, I knew I’d hit the jackpot
When comments come that sweet.
So I hustled down to get them mares
And clean that buggy seat.

We kept ‘er in the ol’side shed
Weather tight and all.
Covered with an old grain tarp
pulled that buggy from its stall.

Them mares was mighty sassy
Their whole bodies come alive.
Just a dancin’ as I hit the seat
We come flyin’ up the drive.

I helped Ol’ Lizzie get on board
Said, “Ma,am ya swell my pride.”
Is yer man about...I’m hopin’ no
Like to take ya fer a ride.”

She smiles, then says, “You Ol’ galoot”
I winked with my one good eye.
Then off we tore on down the road.
Two lovers on the fly.

Drove on through them heifers
In that forty on the west.
I pointed out them new cross calves
“Believe this year’s are best.”

“Where we goin’ Jacob?”
Just like she didn’t know.
“We’re headed fer them cottonwoods.”
then I saw Ol’ Lizzie glow.



www.paulkethley.com/

“Jacob, that’s where you purposed.
I still recall your fear.”
“To me it’s been our special place.
It’s sacred to me dear.”

Had lunch on an Indian blanket
Stretched out an’ watched the sky.
One puffy cloud a floatin’ through
Then another came on by.

“Liz,...ya know I’d do this
when I was young...a sprout.
Lay right here and wonder some
How my life would all play out.”

“Maybe I’ve made a difference
One thing I know that’s true.
There wouldn’t be no mark at all
If it hadn’t been fer you.”

‘Bout the time ya think ya know ‘em,
they’ll put ya in yer place.
Ol’ Liz she starts a cryin’
Puts her hands across her face.

“Aw shucks Liz, I am sorry,
Thought this day would bring ya cheer.”
“It does,” she says, “I’m pleased...I’m
glad.”
Then she kissed me through a tear.

We were headin' fer the main road
Past Ol' Johnson's through the pines.

“Jacob could I drive the team?
Love to feel 'em through the lines.”

“Well, these mares are mighty firey
but, I've got a thought we'll try.
I'll put my arms around ya dear,
Just in case they wanna fly.”

So...if yer life has hit some mud
Dark days is all ya see.
Take yer gal on a buggy ride
Did wonders fer Liz an' me.

