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We're Back

Last year at this time, what I thought would be the last *AAPA Miscellany* was added to the AAPA website. Since then, I have received several contributions, so I decided to give the publication another chance. This time it will be on no regular schedule: whenever I have enough for an issue, I'll publish one. I invite all members, especially those whose primary interest in being in the American Amateur Press Association is writing, to send me manuscripts, photos, drawings, whatever can be reproduced graphically at the e-mail indicated above.

And what does this return of *Miscellany* have to offer? Two of the essays take us to New Mexico: Peter Schaub focuses on the basilica in Santa Fe, with a nod to Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Sandra Gurev tells us about the Conversos, Jews who converted to Christianity in Spain, many of whom immigrated to the Spanish colony in what is now New Mexico. Carl Kremer introduces us to some of the "wildlife" he observes around his favorite spot in his barn here in Callaway County, Missouri. And from the heights of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, George Chapman sends a story about a man and his haircuts.

Kent Clair Chamberlain and I offer some poems. And Chloe Adams shows us the many faces of Jasper the Wonder Horse.

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SANTA FE – *The Cathedral Basilica*

Peter Schaub



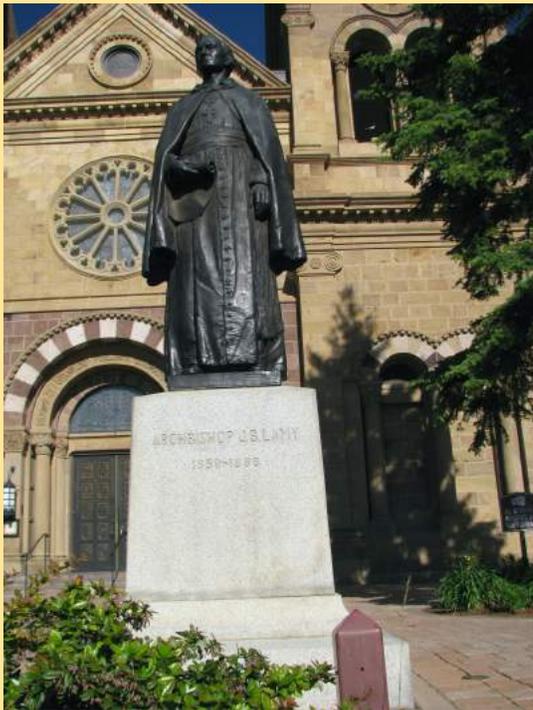
WHEN I READ WILLA CATHER'S NOVEL *Death Comes for the Archbishop* years ago, I was moved by the saga of people who were creating new lives for themselves and actively participating in building a society on the frontier. Published in 1927, this is a fictionalized story of the historical Father John Lamy, sent by Rome in 1850 as the first bishop of the Santa Fe diocese. I found the book to be uplifting because the protagonists persist by strength of spirit. Connie and I recently returned from a visit to Santa Fe, during which I re-read the novel.

Cather's fictional Bishop Jean Marie Latour is a Frenchman sent to Santa Fe to organize the mission churches of the Southwest and bring organization and authority to the diocese. He brings along his friend from seminary days, Father Joseph Vaillant who has been with him in missionary work in Ohio. It is by their determination, humility, and compassion for their people that they find fulfillment of their lives in what is today

New Mexico. Together, Latour, the conscientious but aloof administrator, and Vaillant, the compassionate, involved priest, represent the personalities and skills necessary to successfully build the church organization and draw its congregants.

A bit of historical background here. The Spanish *conquistadors* explored western North America from Mexico in the 1500s as far north and east as central Kansas. Following them into the territories that became Arizona and New Mexico were Franciscan friars. The priests built missions, forced the Indians into Catholic practices, and established a social order that subverted the native cultures. Spanish control of the region and religion persisted until 1821 when Mexico achieved independence. The Mexican Empire extended northward into what is now Utah and Colorado, and the Spanish mission churches came under the authority of prelates far away in Mexico. At that time, the Santa Fe Trail opened up trade and immigration. As a result of the War with Mexico in 1846, the American government annexed territories that today include the southwestern states. The churches that were previously under the Mexican Bishop of Durango were then formed into the new American diocese of Santa Fe. Father Lamy was sent from his work in Cincinnati to claim this bishopric. With the history of Spanish repression and what must have been lax control by remote Mexican administrators, he



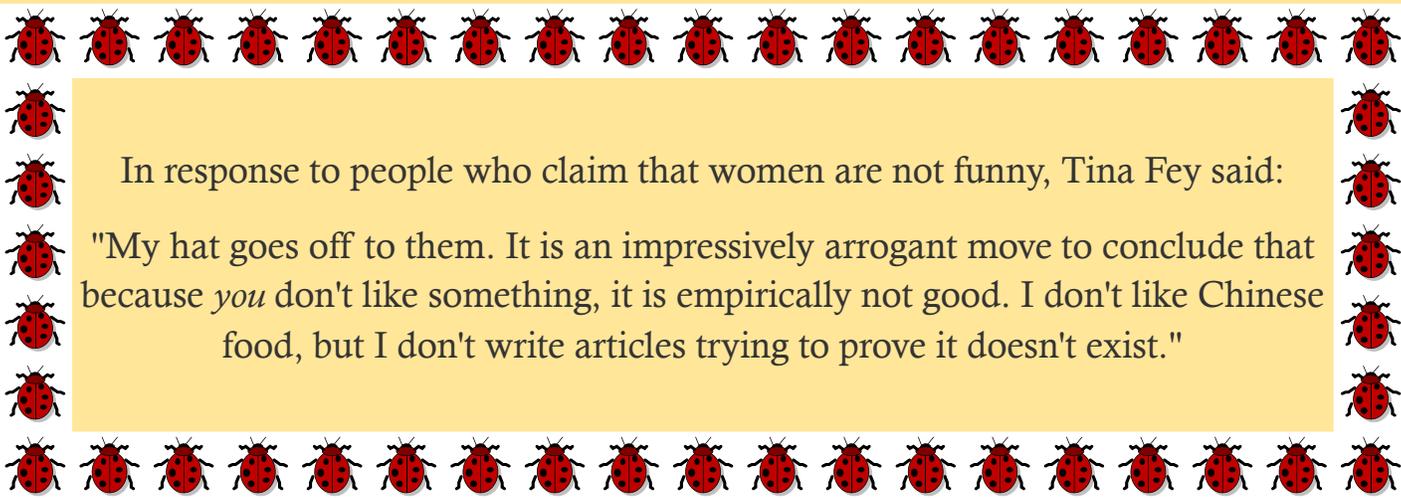


surely faced a daunting task to make the Catholic faith relevant. His adventure must have been a step of faith into the unknown, much like Willa Cather wrote it in her novel.

Today, the Santa Fe community of 70 thousand souls is an oasis, an art and history center in a very barren Southwest. We arrived by “luxury motor coach” but still followed the old Santa Fe Trail, climbing the hill just outside of town, and then descending into the plaza, the terminus of that pioneer trail. Built in the traditional Spanish form, the plaza is bounded by the government house on one side and the cathedral on the other. The first building on the cathedral site was an adobe church. Bishop, later Archbishop Lamy made it a part of his life’s work to build the French-Romanesque cathedral. In Willa Cather’s story, construction of the cathedral parallels and symbolizes Archbishop Latour’s work of bringing structure to the disparate local parishes. The historical Lamy dedicated the unfinished work in 1886, before he passed away in 1888. The cathedral was consecrated in 1896, but its twin towers are truncated, never fully completed. Perhaps this is apropos of the work of missionaries, never completed until the second coming.

The cathedral has been through several renovations, and has been elevated to the status of basilica. The most recent renovation in 1986 returned its decoration to an ornate replica of the original. Its decoration is also symbolic of its history. The 1884 French stained glass windows depict traditional images of the apostles. Below them on the walls are paintings depicting the Stations of the Cross, done in 1997 by a local artist in a primitive New Mexico style.

The basilica is open to the public, so I spent time inside, admiring. Then, sitting in a pew, I felt a very distinct sense of reverence and peace. A protestant of Reformed theology, I am usually uneasy in a Catholic church where I see the veneration of Mary and the saints. Yet here, in the cathedral in Santa Fe, I did not feel uneasy. Perhaps I was feeling what Willa Cather wrote about: the dedication of Archbishop Latour and Father Vaillant to their faith, servants of their belief ministering compassionately to the needs of ordinary people living simple lives. These fictional folks needed ministers who would personify faith in God and give them spiritual guidance. Like real people, they had a need for spiritual satisfaction and for belonging in a community with a purpose beyond the day-to-day. With these needs unmet, people are inherently disoriented and incomplete. I honor the real Archbishop Lamy’s work, and the persistence of a denomination in meeting human needs.



In response to people who claim that women are not funny, Tina Fey said:
"My hat goes off to them. It is an impressively arrogant move to conclude that because *you* don't like something, it is empirically not good. I don't like Chinese food, but I don't write articles trying to prove it doesn't exist."



Jasper Takes a Selfie

Converso: A Personal Story

Sandra Gurev

Recently my husband Jerry and I paid homage to the 9,000 Americans who were part of the D-Day invasion buried at the American military cemetery in Colleviller-sur-Mer Omaha Beach. As we stood on the top of a hill overlooking the white headstones and the English Channel beyond, we were overcome with sadness, surging patriotism, and pride in the very young men who had valiantly sacrificed their lives for our freedom.

After a brief ceremony, we were handed long-stemmed roses which we were encouraged to place on graves. As we meandered through a small portion of the cemetery, I came across a headstone that piqued my curiosity and gave me reason to linger for several minutes by the grave. The name "Chaim Isaacson" was etched on a grave along with his birth date and state of residence: New Mexico. Chaim was nineteen when he died. His headstone was in the shape of a cross, not a Star of David, in spite of his Sephardic surname.

Sephardic Jews came primarily from Spain and Portugal and lived in cities such as Toledo in relative harmony with their Moorish and Christian neighbors prior to the Spanish Inquisition.

Chaim Isaacson's headstone resonated with me as I recalled a long ago memory. I had attended a program at the Jewish community center in Rochester, New York, about twenty-five years ago. The guest speaker was an acclaimed clay sculptor from Taos, New Mexico. He spoke about his terra cotta figurines and the significance his art had for him. His work was on display at the community center art gallery.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to remember the artist's name, nor have I been able to locate him on Google. However, his story remains sharp in my memory. To simplify my story, I will give the artist a possible surname, "Fernandez," the surname of a reddish-blond haired friend whose Jewish ancestors were from Spain centuries ago.

The artist spun a riveting tale that evening. He said he was eating lunch at a deli in Santa Fe, New Mexico, when an inquisitive reporter from the New York based *Village Voice* walked over to his table and said, "You ordered the deluxe burger but said 'hold the cheese.' Why?"

Fernandez, who strangely enough was not irritated by the stranger's bold question, replied, "Oh, I don't know. Our family doesn't eat burgers with cheese." The reporter's heart began to race as he considered that he may possibly have stumbled on a "Converso." His mission was to go to Taos and learn what he could about alleged Conversos in that area. He shared his assignment with Fernandez who was unfamiliar with this hypothesis.

Conversos were people who lived in Iberia during the inquisition and were forced to convert to Christianity or be burned at the stake. Some Jews fled to other countries such as Holland, Argentina, Mexico, and New Mexico in the New World. Others who were unable to flee were converted but continued to secretly practice some Jewish rituals and holidays in spite of the danger of discovery.

Anne Cardoza has written on her web site (sefarad.org) that, as an American Converso, She remembers being told by her parents that she was not to display any Jewish practice or mannerism to strangers. Anne remembers going to mass at the local church with her mother. For generations the only way the family preserved their religion was by an agreed-upon family code. They were never to take communion, always silently say, "Adonai" for the word "god" when they crossed themselves. They were instructed to light Sabbath candles in a room where no one could see light escaping, lest someone spread a rumor that they were Jews. I have only recently learned that Jews continued to be persecuted in Spain for hundreds of years and the freedom to worship openly has been legal only since 1968.

Our story returns to Mr. Fernandez. The reporter asked to visit him at his home in Taos to continue their conversation. He was able to do so two days later on a Sunday morning. Fernandez opened

his front door and invited his guest to enter. Upon re-entering his home, he touched his fingertips to the right side of the doorpost and brought his fingers to his lips. The reporter asked, "Why did you do that just now?" Once again he shrugged his shoulders in response and replied, "It's just something our family does. I've never given it any thought." Again the reporter believed he was on to something. He silently wondered if at one time centuries ago a mezuzah was mounted on the doorpost of his ancestors' homes. When a Jewish family moves into a new dwelling, it is customary to attach a mezuzah to their right doorpost. It is a small decorated case made of many possible different materials and contains a tiny rolled up parchment inscribed with Hebrew verses from the Torah beginning with the phrase, "Hear, o Israel the lord is our g-d, the lord is one." It fulfills the biblical commandment to inscribe the words of the Shema on the doorpost of your home (Deuteronomy 6.9.)

The *Village Voice* reporter probably drew in a sharp breath as he boldly told Fernandez that it may be possible that he had descended from Jews centuries ago. Fortunately, Fernandez had an easy-going personality and did not take offense. If anything, he felt curious about what this stranger had to say.

Fernandez, shaking his head said, "I think you are mistaken. Come with me. We will walk to the Catholic church my grandfather established many years ago. It is called Mt. Zion." "Won't we be disturbing the service?" the reporter asked. "No, he replied, for some odd reason our church has worship services on Saturdays. We always have," he said matter-of-factly. The reporter was blown away by this further revelation while building a case in his mind

Together they examined the cornerstone. In disbelief, Fernandez saw a tiny Star of David etched inside a rose. Unless the cornerstone was scrutinized or someone had knowledge of its presence, the Star of David was not evident.

At this point Fernandez didn't know what to think. Mostly he felt disbelief and concurred that there had to be an alternative explanation. Intrigued by his finding, he urged the reporter to follow him to the family cemetery which lay close to the church. He felt a rush of adrenaline as he approached the cemetery. He expected to see the names of family members, date of birth and death along with Christian crosses. He wanted the matter to be put to rest. Crosses were embedded in the headstone just as he expected it would be. However, upon closer examination, the two men found a minute Star of David embedded inside a rose on each family headstone! Fernandez exclaimed, "I feel like my world has been turned upside down."

That same day Fernandez questioned his mother about his findings. "Why was this knowledge hidden from me?" he asked accusingly. His mother denied having knowledge or suspicion of Jewish roots. She did say, however, "Speak to your grandmother. She might know something."

With growing urgency Fernandez visited his grandmother in a nursing facility. Her memory was still sharp, but a stroke had rendered her almost speechless. In spite of her impaired speech, she was able to confirm her grandson's suspicions. They were descendants of Spanish Jews. They were Conversos. Fernandez felt overcome by his grandmother's revelations. He had so many questions. Why hadn't he been told? How could his grandfather not have continued the link with their Jewish heritage that had existed since the 1400s? Fernandez did not share the responses to his questions that evening. I wonder if the extermination of millions of Jews in Europe during Hitler's reign of terror was the reason for allowing the family's secret to die. If not for the serendipitous meeting with the New York city reporter, it would have. Instead, Fernandez immersed himself in a study of the history of the Jewish people, attended synagogue, learned Hebrew and what it means to be a Jew. Eventually he studied with a rabbi and began the process of conversion to Judaism.

Today Fernandez remains a ceramic artist, but he has shifted his focus to Jewish motifs. His terra cotta figurines are short and rounded people engaged in celebration of the Sabbath, the rite of becoming bar or bat mitzvah, the Passover Seder, the menorah, a Jewish wedding, etc. I treasure this memory and I also occasionally wonder if Chaim Isaacson was a Converso or if a mistake was made on his headstone.



Jasper Has a Snack

The Right Seasoning

Kent Clair Chamberlain

April Haiku

Spring morning
Lights yellow dog-roses
Cheering on honeybees!

Static, cling to papers
While churning in washer,
Not precious clothing.

Sunrayed Autumn

Azure Light
Eases colder hours.

Why
Can't I
Move, to
Greet
Joyous day?

What
Years
Remain?

August Breezes

Cool wind, dispense this haze
Obscuring peak and path.
Clear my
Vision in this
New month seeking
Relief from Sonoran weather!

December Cold

Blue
Jet-streak morning.
High cloud.
Pine peaks still sleeping.
Crashing of garbage plastic
Wakes all snorers!

Natural Thoughts

Carl Kremer

From the balcony of my old gray barn you can observe, listen to, and learn from Nature--the calling of birds, from wrens and chickadees to hawks and owls. Behind the birdsong are more constant sounds, more distant, most not visible: summer insects, faint highway traffic, wind through trees. You pay more attention to the sounds of what is visible—look for and then at the bird whose call you just heard. You might look at the bird and listen to its song and move on to other observations, or you might study the bird, its moves, its interaction with other birds.

On a more intimate level, with flies, wasps, crickets, and mosquitoes, you can both study their make-up, movements, and what causes them, and learn their sounds. Spiders, ticks, and chiggers are mostly silent; most have good camouflage, some of vibrant colors, and they all pack fangs and venom. We all know someone who's been spider-bitten, usually multiple times.

Some small spiders make parachutes and fly; with scant, almost immeasurable brain power, they



let go their silken gliders and are yanked from the earth, into potentially lethal winds. Many flights last but seconds, landing inches from their launch sites. They might try again, or just settle close to the home place, build a web, find a lover (and maybe a postprandial dinner—on him), and spawn a big bunch of fast-producing, instinct-driven competition. Which is what those do who have longer, faster flights, snagging eventually on a leaf or twig, a weed, a building, a moving animal or machine, each with benefits and threats. If they can try again, they may or may not “slip the surly bonds of earth” by much, or die before or when they land. Most probably won't

live a year, though some spiders, with larger brains and builds, live longer.

How does the balloon spider sustain herself? Do those that get long flights get food in flight? How much does it take to produce that multi-purpose silk in such quantities? Some spiders recycle parts or all of their silk by ingesting from their mouth parts that they have shot out from their rears—what one-year-old infants often do. And like some adults too, to achieve and maintain digestive bacterial balance through a medical prescription for the ingestion of feces.

Humans are descendants of something, probably larger than an amoeba, which evolved to living first part-time, then ages later, as primitive land species. Now, eons later, we command the earth, and it took us only about 100,000 years or so to observe the movement of leaves, on and off the trees and recognize a principle of force and resistance, capitalize on it to create, invent airplanes and manned, controlled flying vehicles to inhabit a space station far from earth. We owe much to shit-eating spiders.

Flies evolved to controlled flight long before dinosaurs evolved, some into birds. They developed compound eyes, six legs, amazing wings on a very light, complex body, a modern digestive system and an amazing reproduction rate. They maximize the number of viable eggs practically anywhere on earth. Anywhere there is or shortly will be rot there are potential nests for millions of eggs, and if two make it, they are successful. As lords of the earth we promote a lot of waste and rot and growth, and maybe bigger brains to keep the fly species going, well adapted to almost any environment.

On the first warm day in late winter, nondescript, gray flies were eating and drinking my food



and beverage on the balcony. Some imbibed enough alcohol by weight comparison with me to be far over the safe limit or even conscious. One landed a few feet away, facing a tumbler upwind, containing a mashed slice of lime, remnant of a vodka tonic. Using his eyes, though outside his distinct range of clarity, and the delectable faint scent he detected, he vectored in the location, was headed back to the bar—focused on it. He cleaned his six legs, first scrubbing them on the weathered barn wood, then rubbing his forefeet together, tops, bottoms, sides, and even wiping his face as though he held a Handi-wipe, the while standing on four legs. His movements were so quick as to seem jerky, many times more speedy than any move we can make. His last was that of the human gesture of gleeful anticipation: hands forward, palms facing, rubbing and massaging them; had he lips, he'd have licked them.

Something tasty awaited, and he nor the other flies already there were too drunk to clean up before returning to this newly opened pub. Some might get lucky. Their kind surely does as they have for millenia. Most never had nor have access to alcohol, but it sometimes aids in the propagation of both our species.

What to Call It?

Clarence Wolfshohl

Lately, a group of dogs
has marked our neighborhood
as its territory, and I'm struck
that all the terms don't fit them.
That is, a name for them collectively.

"Group" is too generic
for these gangly guys.
They are big dogs, some sort
of Lab mixes that will grow
thick and heavy in a year or so,
the kind that will bowl
you over when they nudge
your leg. But now they are lean
and leggy like boys whose jeans
don't cover their ankles
they are growing so fast
and the parents don't want
to buy new pants till the schoolyear.

“Pack” is a word we may use,
but that makes them sound
predatory. They may be, their prey
being fun, but I met them on our gravel
road one day and could see
at a hundred paces they were not
viscous but more like junior high boys
with a ball and bat headed for
a vacant lot for a get-up game,
bumping into one another and jumping
up to touch low branches on overhanging
trees. They couldn’t walk straight
with their tails wagging so fast and hard
to throw them off balance,
so they stumbled in joyous dance
toward me and presented their broad
heads for me to scratch—of course,
jostling one another for favored spot—
and licking my hands with their huge,
lolling, slobbering tongues, their eyes
sparkling the kinship of life.

“Gang” doesn’t fit either, They aren’t
so organized but are thrown together
by the chance of geography and spare time,
perhaps just glad a toy poodle doesn’t live
around here to take command
in little dogs’ way of compensation.

They are just a bunch of guys
hanging out, a “guy” of teenage
dogs alive and free
on a brilliant blue Saturday.



The Barber Shop: The Haircut

George Chapman

Ever since he was a small boy, the hair cutting experience had been a traumatic event. It all started with the first haircut. His mother had taken him to the local barber, Frenchie, to get the long golden locks removed—it was a trauma for her and thus became one for him. The memory of the specific event is long gone, if it were ever really there. Like so many childhood happenings that get told about repeatedly over the years, it could be that he had no memory of it, just a memory of being told about it.

Frenchie and later Frenchie's son continued to cut his hair throughout childhood and through the college years. The barber shop was a typical one out of the thirties. A couple of chairs, Oster of course, a lot of lined up bottles with labels reading Bay Rum and other unknown substances, and on the wall opposite, a tiny cash register that rang up a maximum of a dollar or so. After all, haircuts for kids were only 35 cents and adults 50 cents. If you spent a buck you got the bay rum and a lot of other stuff too.

In one corner was an alcove with a couple of pin ball machines and always on the counter there were punch boards; an invitation to win undreamed of prizes. The chairs for waiting customers were Spartan and the magazine collection a much thumbed through stack of stale *Field and Stream*, *Police Gazette*, and maybe a *Life Magazine* or two. There was also an old chair used for shoe shines. You know the type: up on a stand and with brass foot topped columns.

His mother always said he was a grouch after getting his hair cut. Perhaps she didn't recognize the curmudgeonly aspects of his personality.

It had been years since that comfortable barber shop scene was repeated. Over the years an every two week haircut was replaced by infrequent visits to the barber, more often than not because of a lack of desire to see the insides of another "hair salon," which seemed to be the primary place you can get haircuts anymore.

The skills of the barbers, or really hairdressers, just didn't seem to satisfy anymore. Oh, there were still a few real barbers around, but as soon as one was found, they seemed to retire. It was that way with Jim, who had a shop at the edge of the Acme State campus. He did OK on the haircut but sold out to a tough middle aged woman whose main experience was cutting hair for recruits at a nearby Army camp. From then on to a series of younger women who claimed to be able to cut men's hair.

And no matter how many times he told them how he wanted it cut, these girls never seemed to get it right. Not wanting to hurt feelings, he always nodded approvingly when shown the results in the mirror, but he wasn't really satisfied.



Then one day, on an excursion to nearby River City, he spotted a barber pole, rotating, in front of what might just be an old fashioned barber shop. A three month's growth prompted him to go in. Well, it was old fashioned. No pin ball machines or punchboards, but there was the shoe shine stand. Only this one was complete with a wizened African-American, who looked like he hadn't shined a shoe in ten years. The stand was cluttered with Wal-Mart bags, ap-

parently filled with garbage or items to be recycled.

There were three barber chairs that appeared to have been used and yet another pushed against the wall. The floor was littered with cut hair, hopefully only from today's customers but considering the general run-down appearance of everything else, it could have been this week's collection. The chairs for waiting customers were someone's cast off living room furniture, all of which had seen much better days, probably a long time ago.

The barber looked normal enough, dressed casually in shorts and T shirt and carrying on a sincere conversation with the present occupant of the chair who was getting an old fashioned flat-top cut. The barber was tall, so tall in fact, that the chair had been installed on blocks so that it could be high enough for him to use comfortably.

The conversation was about hunting and guns. Every time the barber wanted to make a serious point, he stopped cutting and stood there spinning the clippers around in his hands. It took three tries to get the flat-top to just the right length to satisfy the barber and the customer. Another customer, who looked like he had his hair cut within the last week sat in a side chair, reading a dog-eared magazine and did not enter into the conversation.

Finally, the first customer left and the waiting one climbed into the chair. The pair could have been mistaken for Mutt and Jeff, except the short rotund customer had the moustache. The conversation continued in the same vein: guns and hunting. "Boy, that Tom, down there on the south side can sure dress up a gun." And "He can fix a trigger so that you can set it off with your breath, sure can. He's a good one."

It took at least twenty minutes to cut the almost non-existent hair and to settle the world of firearms. Finally, it was his turn. Meanwhile "chubby" had gone over to inspect a rifle the barber just happened to have in the shop. Brief instructions seemed understood and the clippers started. The conversation continued with the customer now holding the rifle.



The haircut went faster than for the others. It was after closing time after all. But by then there were two more customers waiting. Earlier the barber had volunteered that his wife had gone to Florida for the week but he refused to go—too hot down there, he'd go in March or February. As he remembered it, the comment came just about the time a nicely dressed young lady walked by and whose walk was followed closely by the barber's eyes.

Finally, the moment came, the mirror was held and the hair was perfect, just the way he wanted it. No muss, no fuss. There was no straight razor trim, no hot lather like he remembered from those early days, not a strop in sight as a matter of fact. But—the results were there. How nice.

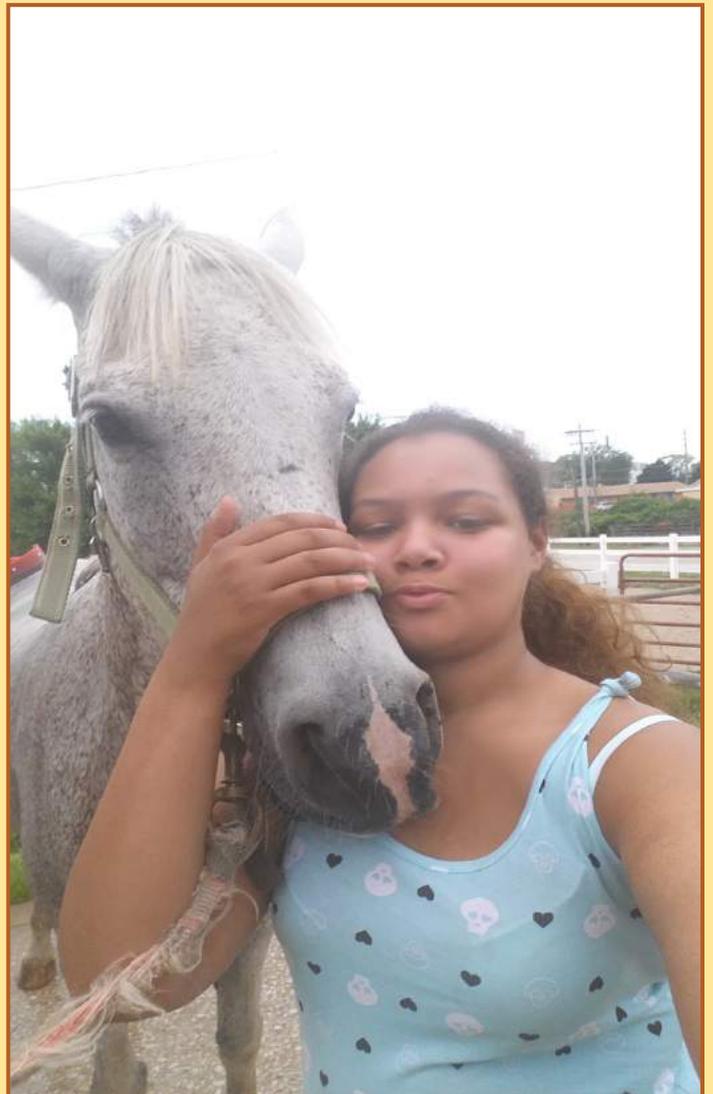
The price was \$8.00; about half of what he was paying in the salons. He gave the barber a ten and told him to keep the change. "Thank you, y'all come back."

He thought to himself, I don't think so!

View from the Top



Mouthful



Jasper Tells Chloe How to Take a Selfie