

JIM BABE'S ADVENTURES ON 'THE LONG WALK'

I was deeply involved whaling the dust out of my house, hoping it would remain suspended until I found another interval from my jobs to "whale" it again.

Young Jim raced through the house, hurricane-fashion, relieved himself of a few inaudible words, and buzzed out, heading for the "Long Walk". Suddenly I realized that Ms. Samantha and Ms. Bear were not in Jim's big crib beside the front door, and figured that he must have taken them along with him.

I had created Ms. Bear and Ms. Samantha from whole cloth in rare idle moments. Samantha was made of golden brown cloth. Ms. Bear was made of darker brown stuff. They had been smooth and expertly stuffed with something soft and firm and tempting to the touch. They wore colorful and very becoming costumes - - well suited to their culture and the environment of their time. There was an enchantment and an aliveness about these remarkable toys that puzzles me to this day. They seemed to repudiate inanimacey and kinship with distant culture. They were definitely a part and parcel of the "now" generation.

I often discussed with them the vexations of our times and the trials and tribulations of my days. I missed them when they were absent from the big crib when dusk came,

BB-18-2-45

just as I missed young Jim at that hour when he was overdue from his wanderings. A psychiatrist would dub such conduct on my part as a departure from the norm, no doubt just as I, on the other hand, have always entertained a deep conviction that the theory advanced by the doctors of psychiatry is merely the outward manifestation of deep-seated disturbance of the mind. There is no verification of the claim that psychiatry ever 'cured' anything or anybody..

Restless over the absence of young Jim and the dolls, I walked out on the front porch and was startled to find all the village dogs stretched at full length in deep sleep of exhaustion from the morning run with Jim. I had never known them to sleep through his departure before.

At that moment there was a frightful scream from the direction Jim had gone. All of the dogs leaped up at once, knocking me down on my knees as they charged away at break-neck speed in the direction of the sound. I leaped to my feet and took off behind the dogs. Tearing my way through green briars, tall weeds, and dead branches, there in the vacant lot I came to a high fence of chicken wire.

The dogs had torn the sturdy gate down so it was flat on the ground. The air was a fog of chicken feathers. Chickens were running madly about. Some, overcome with

BB-18-2-46

fear, huddled in fence corners and in the outbuilding which had been home to them. All were nude or semi-nude. Unfortunately, some had been killed. Pal Dog; a capable leader and an astute strategist, was indeed a formidable adversary when young Jim was being either embarrassed, harrassed, or harmed. He was a large snow white Eskimo Spitz.

Pal had taken a firm grip on the back of Jim's sunsuit and had dragged him out of the path of the dogs and the panicked chickens and was comforting him with his large wet tongue. Jim; who had been laying prostrate, but thrashing wildly about and yelling at the top of his lungs, became quiet. I restrained the dogs, bellowing loudly to recall them. They formed a circle around young Jim. As I tested his flesh for injuries, the dogs observed me closely. Had he let out a yell of protest, the dogs would have jumped me, in mass, as readily as they had rushed the chickens. Jim's flesh was pitted with triangular breaks. The fowls, in the desperation of hunger and thirst, had attacked him and bitten out small pieces of his flesh.

I hurried him to our house which was only a short distance away, where I disinfected his wounds. Jim Babe was pitching hisie fits over the disappearance of Ms. Bear and Ms. Samantha. I was also troubled about that and the plight of the surviving chickens. Hotly pursued by the dogs, the fowls had crossed the railroad tracks and headed for the

deep woods to the southwest.

I laid a trail of cracked corn from my chicken lot back to the scene of the conflict in hopes the surviving birds might return and follow it to the safety of my house. I also put food and water there, where they had lived so long and suffered so much. This place had not been visible from the Long Walk because of intervening weed growth. My inquiry established that no person had knowledge of the fowls being penned up there without food or water, or even a notion as to who might have done such a cruel thing or for what reason.

Little Jim and I searched the lot often, hoping to rescue some of the surviving chickens and find some clue to the disappearance of Ms. Bear and Ms. Samantha. This quest was unsuccessful. The fate of the dolls and the surviving chickens was never revealed. We have often wondered about it, over the years.

BB-18-2-48

Remind Lynetta to write the story of the young doctor

The churchy woman who left an ill man rotting in his filth and would not bathe his privates because she thought it was sinfull...

BB-18-2-15