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PREFACE

For a number of years I have made my living as a professional storyteller and traditional musician, performing at schools, museums, grange halls, libraries, and festivals throughout the United States. In 1984 I moved my family from West Virginia to Greene County, Pennsylvania, purchasing a small farm near Waynesburg. My father's people were from southwestern Pennsylvania and it's been a great pleasure to me to walk the same hills as they did when first they arrived in America from Ireland. As I often perform in the Pittsburgh area I must drive over the ridge to Ruff Creek to get on Interstate 79. I've gotten in the habit of stopping at the Ruff Creek General Store to buy my gas and indulge in a Dole frozen-fruit bar.

Ray Stockdale and his wife, Karen, are the owners of the store. Ray loves to hear and tell jokes and, as that's my passion as well, we have swapped many good stories over the years. Most of Ray's collection of anecdotes and tall tales he's picked up from his regular customers, like Kissy Davin and Wayne Miller, who are natural-born storytellers in their own right. For my own part, the stories I've told in return are those I've gleaned from numerous years of living in the central Appalachians, an area rich in oral literature. These are stories I have often performed and have found them to be popular with both urban and rural audiences of all ages.

Recently my family, along with my partner and illustrator, Paula Blasius, decided to relocate to another part of the country. I know I shall miss the relaxed, enjoyable moments I have spent sharing stories with Ray and the others down at the store. I've decided to write this book, before we leave,

to serve as a record of these tales and perhaps, more importantly, to reflect the simple human warmth and wisdom I found there.

I make no claim upon the “originality” of these stories. It is said that if Adam and Eve ever return to the earth, the only thing they would recognize are the old stories. They are part of our heritage as Americans, faithfully passed from one generation to the next. They belong to everyone, I merely borrow a few.

On the other hand, I am not a folklorist, and it is not my intention to scientifically document the folktales of the Appalachians. With generous use of my imagination, and, I trust, respect for the tradition, I have reworked, modified, and embellished many of these tales as plot and circumstance seemed to warrant. I offer them for simple enjoyment since it was with this intent that they were first told to me. Furthermore, I consider the fine people of Greene County to be friends and would not, for the world, insult or embarrass anyone. All but a few of the names, therefore, are fictitious and bear no resemblance to anyone living or dead.

Although I have attempted to set these tales down on paper in a way that best expresses the wonderful mountain style in which they are told, they remain essentially spoken stories. They are never told the same way twice and will often involve the listener in some way in the telling. This spontaneous and participatory quality acts to keep the tales continually fresh and satisfying. The greatest compliment you could give this author is to read the stories in this book and then go out and tell them.

Joe McHugh, the Mayor of Mudlick, 1988

This book is about an old-fashioned general store and the art of storytelling. It is full of light-hearted yarns and colorful characters. There are stories about city-slickers and country-wits, (called “hill-hoppers” and “stump-jumpers” in Ruff Creek), stubborn mules, three-legged chickens, haunted coal mines, and frustrated ministers. Although located in western Pennsylvania, the stories themselves are universal. They are an integral part of America’s rich oral literature and, as such, could be as easily heard in a country store in the bayous of Louisiana, the lake country of Wisconsin, the granite hills of Vermont, or the coastal forests of Oregon.

THE STORE

If you happen to be traveling down Interstate 79 through the rugged hills of Greene County in southwestern Pennsylvania, just before crossing the border into West Virginia, you’ll see a sign for Ruff Creek. Slow down and take the exit. The village of Ruff Creek is not much more than a crossroads where Rt. 221 intersects Rt. 19. There’s a red-brick Baptist church with an old-fashioned hillside cemetery, a barber shop, a video-rental business built on the back of someone’s house, the township building, a garage for repairing everything from diesel trucks to lawn mowers, and the general store.

Except for the gas pumps out front and an odd assortment of signs, the Ruff Creek General Store looks more like a house than a place of business. Long a fixture in Greene County, it is a “general” store in the truest sense of the word, selling a wide variety of merchandise from groceries, clothing, and footwear to hardware, feed, and kerosene. The current owners are Ray and Karen Stockdale. Ray, a graduate of West

Virginia University, took the store over from his father, Jack, when he retired. Despite the long hours and lack of big city amenities, the Stockdales are proud of their store and the important role it plays in the community.

In an age of television and mass-marketing, where “image” is everything, (and content often sadly neglected), the general store is refreshingly simple and direct. It is exactly what it presents itself to be. What it sells is displayed without pretense or artifice. Prices, although often a few cents higher than in the chain stores, are plainly marked on items and are not figured by a computer. Customers are known on a first-name basis and their trade is appreciated. No matter how much or how little money people spend in the store, they are treated with the same courtesy and friendliness.

It doesn't take long, sitting on the bench in the store and observing the daily activity, the comings and goings, to realize that the store is not only the economic center of this small farming and coal mining community, it is also its social and cultural center as well. Ray, and the others who work at the store, informally carry out the essential function of disseminating a wide range of necessary information to the people of the area. The bulletin board, back by the meat counter, is a convenient place to give away puppies, rent a house, learn about the next church social, or sell property. The store is also the place where many of Ruff Creek's young people work their first job and where a customer can get a check cashed easily. And, lastly, there's the storytelling.

It is perhaps a fortunate coincidence that the word “store” and the word “story” are so very close, for in no other place but a country store is one as likely to hear a well-told story. They go together so naturally that one, without the other,

is unimaginable. Why is it then that the country store is so well suited to this enjoyable activity? There are several basic reasons. For one, the general store, viewed as a sort of stage, is hard to surpass. All day long it is frequented by a diverse and engaging assortment of local residents. Chance meetings are commonplace and lend themselves to the spontaneous swapping of tales and good-natured competition. There is a rich texture of history at the store in everything from the simple, functional architecture and worn oak floors to the old-fashioned pressed-tin ceiling. The air is a mixture of wonderful aromas, fresh-brewed coffee, cheeses, and sweet molasses. The atmosphere is friendly and unhurried, an inviting place to linger awhile away from the cares and stress of a busy world. Here is a physical and social environment in harmony with the intimate nature of storytelling.

Another essential aspect of the store's role as a place of storytelling is its rural location. Storytelling relies for its effectiveness primarily on action, humor, and unusual or unexpected occurrences. Country life provides an abundance of this raw material. A teacher in Greene County who sold his thirty-five acre farm and moved to Waynesburg was eventually reprimanded by his fellow teachers in Pittsburgh. They said that since his move to town he no longer had any good stories to tell. He sadly realized that they were right. Instead of risking life and limb repairing a roof in a thunder storm, finding an abandoned fawn along the road, or having the tractor brakes fail on a steep hill while taking the relatives for a hayride, he now stayed in the house and watched other peoples' made-up adventures on the video player.

Country people often possess an appreciation of language itself, not just as a means of conveying facts, but for the sheer

pleasure of it. Attention is paid to the sound of the human voice, its variety and texture. There is a rich, imaginative use of similes. In the humorous anecdote, or joke, the enjoyment is in the story itself. The punch-line, although carefully crafted to fetch a laugh, serves more as a destination, the journey being the real purpose.

Finally, the store's real virtue as a home for storytelling is its interrelatedness to the stuff of everyday life. In more urbanized areas, retired men who spend their time in the indoor malls seem seldom to tell stories. Little in the shiny, high-tech environment around them has to do with their own lives, either past or present. The country store, on the other hand, is full of familiar things that relate directly to the lives and work of the people who shop there. A farmer feels naturally at ease sitting next to a bin of fencing staples or sacks of calf-starter. It's not much different from sitting in his own barn or workshed. There he is usually alone, a good thing if his work requires individual attention, but at the store, he's in the company of neighbors, a good thing for telling a story.

THE STORYTELLERS

“To be a good storyteller one must be gloriously alive. It is not possible to kindle fresh fires from burned-out embers.”
- Ruth Sawyer

The art of storytelling is an ancient one. Since the invention of language itself, storytellers have been society's entertainers, social critics, journalists, and teachers. Whether Hassidic rabbi, Cheyenne medicine-man, or Irish bard, the tellers are the faithful custodians of an important part of the cultural

heritage left by those who have passed this way before. No mere historians, they are creative artists in their own right, tapping the multi-faceted vein of imagination deep within the human psyche to discover new meaning in the irony and paradoxes of life.

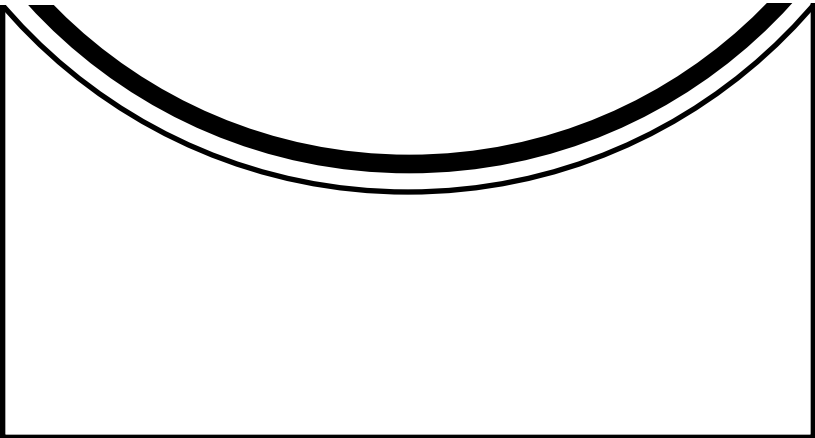
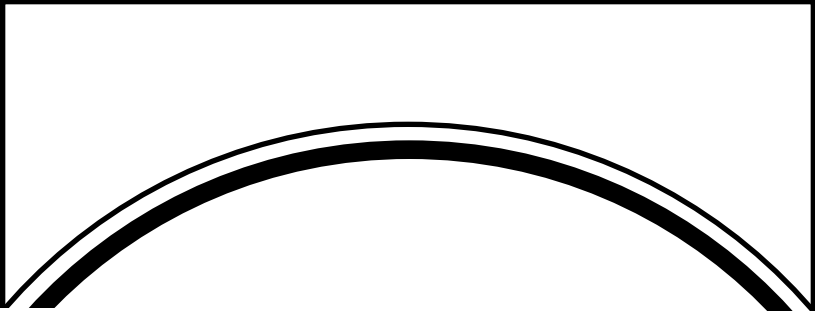
The mountain storytellers of western Pennsylvania and West Virginia are a vital part of this noble tradition. Uniquely American, they intuitively understand the value of folk stories and keep them alive with both humor and style. Truth, in a limited sense, is not their concern, (lawyers and preachers, the professional purveyors of truth in society, are the butt of much of their ridicule). They are more interested in insight, that momentary glimpse of the “bigger picture” that is often found in the ordinary affairs of day-to-day life and the unexpected heart-felt laugh. They poke fun at the self-important, invent strange and fantastic creatures, laugh at life’s small humiliations, and help reawaken a sense of mystery and wonder in existence itself. Without them, and their lively imaginations and vitality, the world can be a dreary and prosaic affair.

THE TALES

The stories presented in this book cover a wide range of story types most commonly found in the American oral tradition. They have been organized into seven chapters with the first, *Around the Store*, serving to introduce the reader to both the store and its main characters. *Country Wit and Wisdom* is one of the larger chapters since rural people, often at a disadvantage both financially and politically, place great value upon these virtues. While they take delight in

outsmarting the city-slicker, they derive equal pleasure from getting the upper-hand of a neighbor, as is evident in the Charlie and Oscar tales.

A collection of exaggerated stories is found in the next chapter, *The Taller The Better*. Although found in European culture, most notably the Baron Munchausen stories, the tall tale truly came into its own in America. To be most effective, the tall tale must attend scrupulously to every detail, going to extremes at times to uphold the strictest accuracy. But then, when the end is reached, it becomes completely preposterous. This contrast is the source of its humor. *Dogs, Horses, and Mules* brings together several light-hearted stories about the four-legged creatures most closely associated with rural life. The chapter on *Kissy Davin* presents a number of imaginative tall tales and anecdotes typical of the mountain storyteller. *Mountain Humor* is an assortment of old and new jokes that could be heard any day down at the general store. *Touch of the Supernatural* presents three traditional ghost stories and a devil tale that challenge our notions of the world of the unseen. Finally, the book closes on a lighter note with the chapter, *At the Gates of Heaven*.



== **AROUND THE** **==**
STORE

“You can learn much in a country store.”
- P.T. Barnum

HIGH WATER

In late November of 1985, Greene County experienced some disastrous flooding after several days and nights of drenching rain. Many of the creeks overflowed their banks and, in some places, the waters covered the roads, making travel impossible. The area around Ruff Creek was particularly hard hit. The general store lost a great deal of merchandise to water damage when its basement was flooded. Worst of all, the underground gas storage tanks were also ruined and had to be replaced at considerable cost. It was some time until the store was back to normal.

Now not far from the general store, an old farmhouse had a rough time of it. It was completely surrounded by brown swirling water. Two young boys were upstairs in the house looking out of the window and enjoying themselves. As with most kids, the flood was an adventure. They excitedly watched as bits of old furniture, broken tree limbs, and even a neighbor's chicken coop floated past. The boys then noticed an old straw hat go by. They didn't pay much attention to it at first, until it got just below the house. Then, it suddenly changed direction and began floating back the way it had come, against the current. The puzzled boys watched as the hat reached the other end of the house, where it again reversed itself, and once more floated down with the water. This went on five or six times, the hat going back and forth in front of the house. The boys watched awhile fascinated until the younger boy asked his brother what in the world was going on. The older boy smiled and said, "Oh, that's just Pa. He said he'd mow the lawn come hell or high water!"

THE HICKORY SWITCH

Most old-time general stores have their resident characters and the store in Ruff Creek is no exception. Among the colorful bunch who frequent the place is Kissy Davin who, along with other distinctions, holds the coveted, unofficial title as Ruff Creek's top storyteller. Kissy possesses a fine imagination, a reliable sense of timing, and a consistently cheerful disposition. His unhurried style never fails to hold the listener's attention. Most importantly, he has a sure-fire instinct for what makes a good tale and doesn't always let the 'facts' get in the way of his creations. Some folks around Ruff Creek claim Kissy'd as soon climb a tree to tell a lie as stand on the ground to tell the truth. In short, Kissy is an artist.

One winter's day, a few of the boys were a-loafin' down at the store. They were passing the time talking about one thing and another. After a bit, the conversation got onto the plight of modern education. Ansel started it off by saying that the trouble with education was that they'd gotten rid of the hickory switch.

"That's what I think!" Ansel went on. "Kids can do whatever they want nowadays. Why, when I was in school, I felt the sting of that switch many a time. Makes me wince just thinking about it, but it sure did make you sit up and take notice."

With a collective nod of their sage heads, everyone agreed with Ansel's comments. Everyone, that is, but old Kissy. He just sat deep in thought and remained silent. As this was not his custom when such weighty subjects were being discussed, there was a great deal of curiosity expressed regarding his views.

“Well,” Kissy said at last, “I just don’t hold with what you fellows are a-sayin’.”

“And why not?” asked Ansel.

“You see,” continued Kissy, as if the thought pained him, “it’s like this. I got hit only once with the hickory switch when I was in school, and it was for telling the truth!”

There was a moment of silence as these words were considered. Then Ansel replied, “Well, Kissy, then it sure did cure you!”

LIVER MEDICINE

Over the years, the Ruff Creek General Store has sold just about everything folks have needed. When doctors were scarce in the country, the store stocked a wide variety of patent medicines. Some said these medicines worked wonders while others argued that they were next to useless. Back in the store’s early days, they carried a line of medicine called “Dr. Pendleton’s Liver Restorer”. The advertisement for this miracle elixir, manufactured in Erie, Pennsylvania, claimed it would cure any ailment affecting the liver, that most delicate and important of organs, even those caused from the ravages of home-made whiskey. As moonshine was readily available in Ruff Creek at the time, this medicine was always a good seller at the store, particularly with the coal miners.

One local miner, Buster Abcorn, took to using “Dr. Pendleton’s Liver Restorer” and he’d tell anyone who’d listen that the medicine was a marvel and no mistake. He bought the stuff by the case, which contributed significantly to the store’s revenues, and drank half a bottle a day religiously. He swore it cured him completely. But then tragedy struck. While

working underground, the unfortunate Buster was crushed in a sudden roof fall. The poor man died instantly. It took several hours to dig him out and bring his lifeless body to the surface. And then they had to cut him open and beat his liver to death with a stick! That's just how healthy it was after all that medicine!

HEARING AIDS

Along with a variety of patent medicines, the general store experimented with a line of hearing aids for a time. A man named Abe was getting on in years and his hearing wasn't what it used to be. He came into the store one day and asked about purchasing one of the new-fangled hearing machines. Bob, who was minding the store that day, said they carried three different kinds. One was \$95, another was \$60, and one was \$5.

"Well, what's the difference?" Abe wanted to know.

"The \$95 hearing aid has twenty transistors and restores nearly 100% of your natural hearing," Bob replied. The \$60 one has ten transistors and restores about 50% of your hearing.

Abe studied the two new hearing aids awhile, wondering which one he should buy.

"Well, what about the \$5 one?" he then asked.

"Oh," said Bob, "that one's just a rubber plug with a string a-hangin' from it. You stick the plug in your ear and stick the end of the string in your shirt pocket. It makes folks TALK LOUDER!"

FLY IN THE CIDER

Some years ago there was a farmer over in Deerlick who operated a small cider mill. Each autumn, when apples were easy to come by, he'd set to work, day and night, producing lots of fresh sweet cider which the Ruff Creek Store would sell to its customers by the gallon or glass.

One of the fellows who'd lived in Ruff Creek all his life and was a steady customer of the store was Ezzy Gabbert. He was a likable sort-of-fellow but awful tight when it came to money, or anything else for that manner. Folks said he was so miserly "he'd skin a flea for the tallow." There was also a rumor that he'd make his kids take off their glasses when they weren't reading, so they wouldn't wear out so fast.

One day Ezzy was down at the store with two of his buddies, Henry and Gil. It was late October, but the weather was unusually warm and they were sitting outside. They each had bought a cold, delicious glass of cider to drink. As they raised the glasses to their lips, each noticed a fly swimming around in his own glass. It nearly turned Henry's stomach. He got a spoon from inside the store and lifted the half-drowned insect out of the glass and pitched it away. He then drained the cider in a single, long swallow. Gil didn't want to waste time a-goin' for a spoon so he just took his finger and held the fly to the side of the glass while he drank his cider down.

But Ezzy looked the most put out. He reached into his drink and grabbed the cider-logged fly between his fingers. He held it up, slapped it on the back with his other hand, and said sternly, "Spit it out!"

A DONATION

On another occasion, the local minister from the Ruff Creek Church was out collecting money to purchase some frozen turkeys to give to needy families for Thanksgiving. He went into the general store to ask Ray for a donation and noticed Ezzy sitting in back by the meat counter.

“Morning, Ezzy,” the minister said pleasantly. “Would you consider donating \$5 to the Turkeys-for-Thanksgiving drive?”

Ezzy, who when it comes to money is tighter than bark on a tree, let on his hearing was failing. “Sorry, Reverend, I didn’t quite make out what you said.”

The minister, however, wasn’t going to be put off that easily and said much more loudly, “I said, Ezzy, would you donate \$10 to the Turkeys-for-Thanksgiving drive?”

The old man then replied in a mournful voice, “I sure wish to Heaven I’d heard you the first time!”

TWO TRAMPS

Two tramps came through Ruff Creek one summer looking for a hand-out. As chance would have it they happened on the Ezzy Gabbert place. Ezzy wasn’t at home but his wife, Mabel, was. Now, if Ezzy was hard to get a dollar out of, Mabel was even worse. Ezzy said she was tighter than the backdoor on a Scottish bank.

One of the tramps said to his partner as they opened the front gate, “Bill, I’ve an idea. You get down on your hands and knees in the yard here and pretend you’re eating the

grass, like a starving horse. They're bound to feel sorry for us and we'll get something good to eat."

Then the tramp went up and knocked on the door. Mabel opened the door and the man pointed to his friend and said, "Ma'am, we've been on the road a long time and we're desperate for something to eat. My friend there is so hungry, why he's eating the grass in your front yard."

The old woman replied without a pause, "Mister, you can tell him the grass is a lot taller out back."

A SECRET INGREDIENT

Harvey Deakins came into the store one day to buy some minnows and started bragging about how he'd come up with the best fishing idea that ever was. When Ray asked him about it, Harvey said, "It was more of an accident, than anything else. You see, I was out fishing on Ten Mile Creek yesterday. I was using the minnows I'd bought here and they were lively little fellows but I wasn't having any luck. Ray, you know my wife, if I don't come home with some fresh fish after spending my day off on the river, (instead of doing them honey-do jobs she's always got ready, like 'honey, do this and honey, do that'), I'm in deep trouble. But them fish weren't biting. Hour after hour, I tried every trick I know without so much as a nibble. Just nothing at all."

"Well, what happened?" asked Ray, as he sliced some salami for a customer.

"Well, it's no secret," went on Harvey, "I take a little drink now and again. Well, I had some first-rate moonshine with me on the river. I was sipping on that whiskey with my line in the water and it was growing dark. I was desperate when,

all of a sudden, I had a brainstorm. If I enjoy the taste of moonshine, well, maybe a fish would take to it too. So, I took my last minnow and put him on the hook. Then I swished him around in the jar of whiskey and made my cast. I'm telling you the truth, Ray, that bait no sooner hit the water than something big grabbed hold of it. The line zzzinged out and I had to hold onto my rod with both hands to keep from losing it. It was some fish, Ray. I never felt such fight in my life. Pretty soon I tired the poor thing out and brought it up next to the boat. You may not believe it, but I had a ten-foot catfish on the end of my line! And you know what? That little minnow had him by the throat and was choking him!"

POSEY READING THE NEWSPAPER

Back in the 1920's in Ruff Creek, there lived a man named Posey Wills. Posey had been born on a farm but had gone to work in the mines at an early age. He only went to school for a few years and wasn't able to read or write at all. This deficiency was a serious embarrassment to Posey throughout his life, even though it didn't affect how folks regarded him around Ruff Creek. Like many illiterate people, he'd mastered a variety of clever subterfuges to hide the fact that he couldn't read. He even owned a pair of wire-rim glasses he'd found somewhere and he would put them on whenever something was given him to read. Of course, all the glasses did was make things blurry for the old man but it kept up appearances.

One day, Posey was down at the general store and he had his glasses on and was holding a newspaper up in front of him, pretending to read it. This was back in the heyday of

the fancy ocean-going luxury liners and there was a picture on the front page of a new ship that had been launched that week in New York. Another miner named Sim came in the store. He'd just come off his shift in the mine and his face was still black with coal dust. He looked over at Posey and noticed that the old man was holding the newspaper upside down and didn't know it. It was too good an opportunity to pass up and he decided to have some fun with the old-timer.

Sim said in a casual way, so everyone in the store could hear, "Howdy, Posey, what's in the news today?"

The old man replied, "Well, I can tell you one thing, Sim. There's certainly been a terrible shipwreck!"

REFUSING A JOB

Ray worked for his dad down at the Ruff Creek Store when he was a youngster. Now that he runs the store himself, he always tries to help the young people of the area by providing employment whenever possible. A few years back a teenager named Billy Meighen approached Ray for a job. He was a healthy, good-sized boy but Ray had all the help he needed just then. Day after day the young fellow would stop by the store and ask about a job.

Finally another boy who had been working at the store for several years graduated from high school. He up and joined the Air Force and told Ray he'd be leaving. So Ray decided to offer his job to Billy.

The next day when Billy came into the store, Ray told him the good news.

"I guess I can finally put you to work if you're still of a mind," announced Ray.

“What kind of work do you want me to do?” the boy asked.

“Well, you can start by pumping gas and watching the cash register when I’m in the back,” said Ray. “Other times, you can stock shelves and sweep the floor.”

“How much are you going to pay me for all this work?” the young man wanted to know.

“Well now,” answered Ray thoughtfully, “reckon I’ll pay you whatever you’re worth.”

“Oh, that won’t do,” replied Billy. “I don’t work for that kind of money.”

DEATH RATE

A man from the city stopped at the general store one afternoon to buy some gasoline. As he was paying for his purchase, he remarked, “This sure is lovely country you’ve got around here. Everything’s so green and the air smells wonderful! Bet folks here take life easy and enjoy themselves.”

Ray’s wife, Karen, was minding the store at the time and agreed it was a nice place to live. At this, the man went on about the city.

“Seems people in town are always racing around and worried all the time. It’s got to be healthier to live in the country. What’s the death-rate in these parts, anyhow?” he asked.

Karen replied, “Oh, I reckon it’s the same here as anywhere else. About one to a person.”

THIRTY MILES TO TOWN

Another city fellow was a-drivin' through the country one time and stopped at a store on the other side of Cannonsburg to ask directions to a certain town. The store owner told him it was thirty miles straight down the road. The fellow thanked him and drove on but never came to the town. After more than an hour, he stopped at the Ruff Creek General Store and asked Ray, the owner, how to get to the town he was looking for.

"Well, mister," said Ray, "that town's about thirty miles straight down the road."

At this, the city fellow got hotter than a hen eating chilli peppers. "Why, I stopped at a store up the road more than an hour ago and he told me it was thirty miles to that town. Now, you're telling me the same thing!"

Ray calmly answered, "Leastwise, mister, you can see we ain't a-lyin'!"

PEANUTS IN THE BOWL

When Jack Stockdale retired from running the Ruff Creek General Store, his son, Ray, took over. Still, the old man would often help out minding the store when his son had to go someplace on business. On one such occasion, a lady came into the store saying her car had broken down a mile or so up the road. Mr. Stockdale couldn't leave the woman without help, so he put a note on the door saying he'd be back soon, and went to see what was wrong with the car. He closed up the cash register but didn't lock the door. He figured if anyone

wanted to buy something, they'd wait for him to return or just leave the money on the counter.

Soon after he left, a young fellow named Calvin came into the store. He needed to buy some chain to hang up a porch swing he'd just made as a birthday present for his mother. There were several big spools of different size chain in the back of the store but, with nobody around to help him, Calvin couldn't locate the cutters. As there wasn't anything more he could do until he got some chain, he decided to wait.

It was well past noon and Calvin had been working so hard getting the swing built that he'd gone without his dinner. He was awfully hungry and his stomach was growling like an old tractor with a bad muffler. He then noticed there was a bowl of peanuts on the counter. They were the shelled variety and look mighty inviting to the boy. He took one and ate it. It tasted pretty good. Like most folks, Calvin kept right on eating the peanuts, one after another, until they were all gone. He suspected that the peanuts belonged to the old man and he started to feel guilty. When Mr. Stockdale finally returned, Calvin confessed his crime and offered to make restitution.

"I reckon that bowl of peanuts belonged to you, Mr. Stockdale," said the young man. "I only meant to eat a couple but, before I knew what I was doing, I'd finished the lot. I'll be glad to buy you some more."

"Oh, that's alright," said the old man good-naturedly. "Why, since I've lost my teeth, I can't eat them things anyhow. Now I only buy the candy-coated peanuts. Then I suck the coverings off and spit what's left into the bowl."