

Knock your socks off

By William Corden

A friend I had some years back (we've lost touch now) was a hippy type of guy, wore his hair in a pony tail, smoked grass and was clueless about finances. Just to illustrate how clueless he was, he thought that the mortgage he took out to buy his house would be paid off in a year... but that's not the story I want to tell you about.

David had a lovely personality, was full of Liverpool wit and everything about him was ... "whatever"..... as easygoing as a person could be.

He served his apprenticeship as an electrician in the UK , emigrated to British Columbia and travelled within, wherever the job would take him. He worked on the Revelstoke dam in British Columbia, worked on Grouse Mountain on the North Shore of Vancouver and then disappeared for a while as he worked on the enormous Grand Duc copper mine on the BC/Alaska border, a remote and forbidding place at the top of the Portland Canal.



Grand Duc in its day produced 42 million lbs of copper... that's a lot of wire.

In Stewart he was joined by his girlfriend Joan, also from Liverpool, being very different in that she was a well educated teacher with a fairly good understanding of the way life works but a bit ditzy.

She was very organized, smart and very artsy but very bad tempered in the mornings, so much so that nobody could approach her (students included) before 10 am otherwise they suffered the wrath of Khan.

They were a perfect match, with each making up for the deficiencies of the other. They had a dog which was about as stupid as a dog can be, it was an Afghan hound and they called it "Knickerbrain"

She quickly got hired as a schoolteacher in Stewart and they settled into that community of six month's worth of nights and five month's worth of daylight... how people survive those places I'll never know, but booze certainly helps.

Be patient I'll get to the story soon

To get to the minesite for work each morning was an ordeal in itself; There was an hourlong bus ride which took you along a road which (in the winter) had snow piled up along either side at about 30 feet high and this only get you to a helicopter pad that took you to for a twenty minute ride to the mine entrance.

Question? How do people find these places and make money from them?

One of the stories that I got from him was that the snowpiled road was so featureless that if you nodded off on the journey and woke up while still rolling, you couldn't tell and didn't dare ask, if you were going to the mine or coming home from it . And given that you were almost permanently under the influence of alcohol living in that community, you were never quite sure what time of day or night it was.

In any event, if you were hungover from the night before and discovered that you were actually on your way to start a shift, there was an emergency, under the table system, whereby they'd hollowed out a sick bay cave and if you paid the timekeeper and co-workers they would cover for you until you were in a fit state to pick up the tools. He said it happened more times than you could believe!

That's the backdrop for the events that now unfold.

They'd got into a routine , like you do in small remote towns ... off to the bar at night, local artsy type hobbies, snow shoeing, fishing, 4x4, amateur dramatics, canoeing, and a pastime unique to my friend.. visiting the local dump and scavenging. Scavenging was his favourite pastime.

Joan's favourite pastime apart from teaching , doing evening classes and being bad-tempered was ... organising the household. She carted back to the dump all of the detritus that he brought home, the broken lampshades ,the driftwood artifacts, lavalamps, plantpots etc. and fought a valiant battle against his hoarding proclivities.

One day she decided to go through the drawers and gather up all of the old odd socks he refused to throw out, got the

matched pairs together and carefully stowed them back, while she put all of the ones to be thrown out in a clear plastic bag and took them to the dump. Job done!

Later that day, David, on his way home, decides to visit the dump and ... he spots a bag of socks and he's over the moon. Picks it up and takes it home and says to Joan. "You won't believe it, I found this bag and some of the socks in it will match the ones in my sock drawer, it's like finding a gold mine!"

Sadly they're no longer together which is a pity because they were meant for each other. He now lives on the Sunshine Coast and the last news I had of him several years back was that his house had burnt down while he was on vacation in the UK. Nobody was hurt but I guess our connection is broken by the passage of time.

