

## **I Lost My Marbles**

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I was nine. Not just nine years old, but a very street wise and capable nine. You could see that just by looking at me. At least I could see it. Then something happened that changed everything. I lost all sense of comfort and well being. I was sent, along with my younger brother, Daryn, to Oregon to live with my Grandfather and Grandmother Hlobil. Daryn and I were quite unprepared for the changes we faced living in the country. We were both born in Syracuse, New York--lots of people and lots of things going on all the time, it seemed. In Hugo, Oregon, there was not even a street, let alone a corner to hang out on. In fact, there was not a paved road in the entire Hugo area. A gravel road went past a few buildings and that was it. Population? Not enough people to raise dust from the country roads. We could not have even imagined the life we were to have living with two very much older people.

One of the first things that I missed was the throne- the toilet. I mean to say that it was just not there. When I walked into the bathroom I found it to be just that-- Only a bath room. There was nothing but towels and a tub. When someone says that they have to go to the bathroom do you see them going to take a bath? No, of course not. Well, that's what it meant in Grandma Hlobil's house. Her house had water for only the kitchen sink and for the bathtub. I couldn't understand why there was no water closet. Of course back then I wouldn't have called it a water closet, but whatever it was called, grandpa had not installed one. It was because he had never installed a septic tank. My grandpa was from Bohemia, which was right next to Germany prior to World War Two, and everyone has heard stories about those frugal Germans. That was my grandpa--frugal. He would straighten old rusty nails to use to save a new one.

He was not about to install a septic tank when he had a perfectly fine outhouse. Even the roof was good, as he was quick to point out. You see, Grandma and Grandpa Hlobil's house was at one time the Three Pines Schoolhouse. So that is why grandpa had such a grand four holer for an outhouse!

I would never have believed, living in the big city, that I would one day be using an outhouse, and this out house even had sentry. Grandpa had this goose that insisted on chasing anyone coming into the back yard.

During this period of my life I became fascinated with marbles. No streets to hang out on? Fine! Get a new profession. I developed a new image; I became a sort of marble master. I had acquired a huge collection of marbles. I had the shooters and the aggies and the steelies . I had purees and cat-eyes. Whatever type of marble was available, I had it.

My grandma also knew I had them. She had the habit of entering my bedroom at odd moments. I'm sure she did it to see what I was up to. On more than one occasion she found my marble collection on the floor. After practicing several dance steps that I think she made up she would tell me, in what I thought was a rather un-grandmotherly fashion, that I had better not let her find

them on the floor again or she would dispose of them. I was more impressed when she disclosed that disposal meant dumping them down the number two hole of the outhouse. Why she picked the second hole was never questioned.

Well, it had to happen. Entering my room one afternoon it was immediately obvious to me that the marbles were gone. Oh no! I rushed out to find Daryn. Maybe he was playing with them. I found him on the tire swing. Together we ran to the outhouse. I rushed in, hoping that the marbles might be somehow rescued from a very bad fate. As I hung my head over the hole and tried to see something that I might want to see down there, Daryn slammed the outhouse door. I jumped back and there was Daryn and there was the goose. The goose had tried to bite Daryn and when he slammed the door shut in self defense, it caught the goose just behind the head. We went back to the house, Daryn carrying the dead goose. After all, he was the one that had killed it. Grandma and Grandpa didn't see it that way. We both got our bottoms warmed that evening. We both got our tummies warmed, too. That goose went real swell with grandma's dumplings.