

Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories Study Guide

Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories by Jean Shepherd

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Contents

Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Story One, The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds.....	3
Story Two, County Fair!.....	5
Story 3, Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah.....	7
Story Four, Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss.....	9
Story Five, The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski.....	12
Story 6, Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose.....	14
Story 7, The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll Summary:.....	16
Story 8, Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories.....	18
Characters.....	20
Objects/Places.....	34
Themes.....	40
Style.....	44
Quotes.....	48
Topics for Discussion.....	53



Story One, The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Story One, The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds Summary

The town is Hohman, Indiana near the Sinclair oil refineries and the steel mills of Northern Indiana; a stone's throw from Chicago, across the polluted lake. The narrator, who is unnamed, lives there with his brother, mother and father, who is called the Old Man. Overnight a family moves into the house next door to our narrator and a record player belts out the sounds of Gene Autry, singing about twilight on the trail in the middle of the night. The Old Man nearly breaks his toe rushing to the window to view the hillbilly family that has descended on the neighborhood. From the moment the Bumpuses move next door to the narrator's family, there is no peace to be had. The actual number of Bumpuses who move in next door is never known for sure. "The Taylors, a quiet family who had lived next to us for years, had moved out and—without warning—the Bumpuses had flooded in. There were thousands of them!" (p. 19). Life changes from this point onward.

Of the family, Delbert Bumpus is the one the narrator remembers the most. Both boys attend Warren G. Harding Elementary School in Hohman, and Delbert shakes up the hierarchy on the playground. Prior to the advent of Delbert, Skut Farkas and his toadie, Grover Dill, ruled the playground. Delbert Bumpus is not one to easily give in to the standards established prior to his arrival. While Grover Dill is chanting a sing-song insulting rhyme to his name, Delbert lowers his head and charges the bully like a rhino with similar results. "He lay flat, gazing paralyzed at the spring sky, one shoe wrenched off his foot by the impact. The schoolyard was hushed, except for the sound of a prolonged gurgling and wheezing as Dill, now half his original size, lay retching" (p. 19). Delbert Bumpus disrupts the entire school from the volleyball games to the study of literature in Miss Shields's class. None of the other Bumpus children deign to attend school the three days a month that Delbert believes necessary. The narrator, however, is treated to Bumpus delights from dawn to dusk and beyond.

Formerly a tidy, attractive house, after the Bumpuses move next door, the house seems to have aged overnight. A favorite shopping expedition for the Bumpus family is the city dump, where they bring home things that disappear inside never to be seen again. The rest of their treasures are used to decorate the yard; license plates, old batteries, wire, tire pumps, so much that frequently the babies of the family are lost in the debris. A truly wonderful addition is discovered one day; a little wooden house with a little moon on the door. The porcelain features inside the home are used for making moonshine. In addition to the lost infants, creatures populate that back yard, from the meanest chickens known to mankind, to the rats that sit in the sunshine with the dogs. For the narrator's Old Man, the Bumpus hounds are his greatest nemesis.



About four times a year, the narrator's family will go to the local A&P grocery store and stock up on canned corn, meat loaf, peanut-butter, oatmeal, red cabbage, and peas. For such a family, a real treat comes at Easter when the deviation from the daily menu includes the Easter Ham. Days before the event, the entire family treks to the A&P to choose their perfect ham. Mother begins the preparation by boiling the whole ham for hours, after which time she pours off the broth for pea soup and places the ham in a pan. It is covered with brown sugar, butter, cloves, and pineapple (canned, of course) and topped each with a maraschino cherry. This is baked until late Saturday night when the oven is turned off and the ham must sit in the oven for twelve hours to rest. The Old Man is in a Ham Frenzy, and can hardly stand the wait. The next morning the ham is reheated slowly until early afternoon when it is removed from the oven and placed on the table to rest, allowing all the sweet and sticky goodness to thicken and set. The entire neighborhood knows exactly what the narrator's family is having for Easter Dinner. This includes the Bumpus hounds. The 4,293 blue-ticked hounds roar through the screen door of the narrator's house and make off with the Easter Ham that has been tantalizing the family and neighborhood for more than twenty-four hours. Easter dinner that year is chop-suey, and marks the start of the Shepherd-Bumpus feud, which lasts until the Bumpus family disappears one night under the cover of darkness, never to be heard from again.

Story One, The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds Analysis

The story introduces the Shepherd family as the narrator, his kid brother, mother, and the Old Man, his father. By extrapolating when Gene Autry's songs were famous, the story is likely set in the early 1940s. The narrator describes Hohman, Indiana as the broad backside of the state of Indiana, nestled among steel mills and oil refineries. The day to day routine of the Shepherd's family life is set astir when the Bumpus family from Kentucky moves in next door. Shepherd uses the term "hill-billy" easily, in a time when political correctness had not yet condemned the word. A better word is hard to find for a family that destroys a home overnight, turns the yard into the second city dump, and raises packs of untrained hounds that find their way into the neighbor house to steal their treasured Easter Ham.

Shepherd is able to paint a picture of lower middle class life of his family in the most vivid colors. They are a family of four who eat meatloaf just about every night, send off for every free or discounted item with the appropriate number of box tops, and find unusual ways of entertaining themselves, especially watching the antics of the Bumpus family next door. In fact, the Old Man is slightly disappointed when they wake in the dark of night to realize that it is quiet next door, that Gene Autry is no longer crooning twenty-four hours a day. Even the smell of the family is gone. "It was true. The air in my bedroom was clear of cabbage, dog urine and corn whiskey for the first time in six months" (p. 47). The Old Man feels that they left because they just knew he was planning some devious form of retribution. For the Old Man, some of his meaning of life is now gone.



Story Two, County Fair!

Story Two, County Fair! Summary

The Shepherd family's excursion to the County Fair is one fraught with great anticipation. The narrator and his friends, Schwartz, Flick, and Junior Kissel debate the veritable pros and cons of the various rides. They are of an age when they believe that their fathers, all called the Old Man, are experts on the rides and the results of the event; poor Junior Kissel having ridden the whip about fifty times the previous year stands half a head shorter than all the other boys. Schwartz's Old Man is obvious correct in his assessment.

Over a meatloaf and mashed potatoes dinner the night before the Fair, the Old Man tells the narrator's mother that he does not care if she wishes to look at the quilts and raspberry preserves as long as he and the narrator get to see the first heat of the race. Randy immediately begins to whine about having to tag along after Mother, as is his wont, until Mother promises him a taffy apple. For the Old Man, the dirt track races absolutely make the County Fair, all the farming exhibits are for the birds. After a night of vicious mosquito hunting and a breakfast of scrambled eggs, the family is assembled in the Pontiac, which is a strange deviation from the Old Man's dedication to the Oldsmobile. "He was an Oldsmobile man the way others were Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, or Holy Rollers" (p. 55). Half a day's worth of driving finds the Shepherd family near the fairgrounds as the sun approaches high noon. A car ahead of them boils over, contributing to the delay of traffic, then the parking lot derby to find the closest space that is about four miles distant from the fairgrounds, and having the look that the cars have not moved in over two hours! It is taking forever to get to the fair!

The family separates, with the kid brother, Randy, going with Mother going to see some of the home crafts and the narrator with the Old Man to see Iron Man Gabruzzi battle it out with his archrival, Duke Grunion, around the dusty dirt track. One hundred dry and dirty miles are fought as fiercely as the Grand Prix, and the Old Man enjoys every second of the event, especially as the Iron Man wins by half a car length. Liquid refreshment is necessary, beer for the Old Man, and an Orange Nehi for the narrator, his fifth of the day. Meeting up with Mother and Randy, the four Shepherds see the cows, the grand champion pig, a fortune-telling chicken, a forty-seven pound Indiana Pumpkin that looks like President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and finally the world's largest cheese. Randy is hungry despite the fact that he has eaten three taffy apples, four hot dogs and two root beers. A huge pickle is added to the mix, washed down with cool buttermilk. Folks eat the strangest combination of foods at the fair.

With darkness falling, the fair seems to be more exciting, especially watching the two skinny blond girls ride loud motorcycles and wearing crash helmets. The Old Man simply has to see this. Their coup de grace is to exchange motorcycles in mid-air, and after seeing this daredevil feat the Old Man is finally ready to accompany Mother and Randy to see the quilts. He minds his manners through the exhibit, but is truly touched



when he sees Luke Appling on a quilt. The Old Man, a lifelong Chicago White Sox fan, finds the sight truly touching. From there the family experiences the strong man exhibit, where the Old Man successfully rings the bell, showing up the strong muscular Caleb who strikes time after time in futility. More food is piled into the stomachs of the two boys, plates of pork and beans, lemonade, fudge, pumpkin pie, and Purina Chick Chow.

The Old Man is disdainful of most rides at the County Fair, until he finds one of his absolute favorites, the Whirligig Rocket Whip. Mother is hesitant, but the Old Man insists that it will be good for both boys to join him on the Rocket Whip. Into the cage all three go, and clamp themselves down so that they do not become dismembered. Round and round, up and down, at top speed the ride whirls faster and faster. It does not take too much time for the entire contents of Randy's stomach to leave the confines of his body. The Old Man and the narrator are treated to a shower of fermented fair food, and still this does not diminish the Old Man's appreciation for such a fine piece of machinery. Soon they are all ready for the four mile trek to the car, with the Old Man stating that the fair seems to get better every year.

Story Two, County Fair! Analysis

As with many events remembered over the years, the past seems to somehow be a little different than perhaps it actually was. The narrator begins the story as a grown man, watching a late-night 1945 movie starring Dick Haymes in *State Fair*, set in Indiana. This sets the narrator's mind to reviewing his own fair experience which is a far cry from the movie that precipitated the memory. The narrator begins with the moment he and his friends debate the various pros and cons of the fair, especially the rides. Their views demonstrate just how much they rely on their fathers and the experiences the men have had in their lives. Being kids, however, they would never admit to such an infraction as honoring their fathers. The memory of the County Fair continues in the greatest of detail, from his kid brother's constant whining to his mother's desire to see the raspberry preserves. However, his greatest memories include the times with his Old Man, watching the Iron Man win the dirt track race, the two motorcycle girls trading motorcycles in mid-air, the odd and unusual, and most spectacularly, the Whirligig Rocket Whip ride with his Old Man and kid brother. The ride is the most daring, frightening, and stomach-churning event of the fair, and the narrator's kid brother treats the narrator and his father to an experience that is designed to only top the great events of the day. Each memory is tinged with reality. The narrator remembers enough of his own experience to know that it does not even come close to the movie that precipitated the memory, and yet he remembers some wonderful things about the day interspersed with a few less than wonderful events. The less than terrific events are what frequently make a memory more poignant.



Story 3, Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah

Story 3, Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah Summary

A visit to a museum as a successful adult brings the narrator face to face with a top that is believed to have been the boyhood toy of former president, Thomas Jefferson. As the narrator gazes in rapt wonder at the top, he believes that it is one of the same sort of tops he once had in the Scut Farkas Battle of the Tops. While at Warren G. Harding Elementary school, one of the most popular playground games is top spinning. Each boy has his own personal style, some more flamboyant than others, but none are able to best the murderous style of Scut Farkas. The narrator decides that it is time for someone to stand up to the master, and sets about on a practice schedule to hone his own skills. Eventually, he believes that he is as good as Farkas, now his only problem is the style of top. Most kids get their tops at Pulaski's store, but his tops are not fighting tops.

Determined to find a top worthy of the upcoming battle that only the narrator knows is coming, he searches high and low before coming across a little shop tucked so far in between two looming buildings he very nearly misses it. Gathering up his courage, he enters the dark and dank little shop and is greeted by a woman wearing a black shawl, as most of the Polish ladies did in his neighborhood. He asks for a top, and the first offering shows tops no better than he can find at Pulaski's store. He is ready to leave when she goes to the back of the store and comes out with a box of odds and ends. After rooting around in the box, she pulls out a top that looks to be the twin of the Mariah, only it is a silver pewter color rather than black. It looks exactly like Mariah. The narrator knows that he finally has found his weapon.

Back at home, the narrator begins training in earnest in the basement of his house. Wolf's sound is high-pitched, a screaming sound, cold, hissing, like a snake. It is a good opponent for Farkas. For two weeks, the narrator practices with Wolf, not telling anyone of his intentions. He keeps this top secret, even from his friends, for if Farkas knows ahead of time what the narrator plans to do, there is no hope of success. In the school yard, the narrator begins to throw his weight around, but not with Wolf. He uses lesser quality tops, but his skill allows him great success. Once he believes himself to be ready, the narrator issues a challenge, saying, "There's no good top men around here, anyway. Let's get up a game of softball" p. 112. Before sides are chosen for the softball game, Grover Dill, who has been hanging around gathering information for his boss, reports to Farkas, and the two bullies demand to challenge the narrator at top spinning. Cleverly, the narrator uses a dummy top first, and allows Farkas the first kill.

As Farkas walks away from the unfulfilling contest, the narrator brings out Wolf, and throws him down with an ominous spin. Wolf talks for the both of them. Farkas spins



around and stares at Wolf in disbelief. Instantly he releases the Mariah and the tops spin together so closely that the paint must have been blistering. The narrator picks up his top and releases it in a spin that astonishes the gathering crowd of kids who are hoping that for once someone will best Scut Farkas. In an astonishing maneuver, Wolf appears to just barely skip over Mariah, as if he does not wish to touch the other top. On and on this goes, each boy repeatedly wrapping and releasing their tops with increasing ferocity until Farkas challenges that they play for keeps. This means that both tops are released into a circle, and the first one to move out of the circle loses. This becomes merely a battle between the tops, the only skill involved is to get the top to spin in place. Watching with bated breath, the crowd of kids watch in great anticipation, for this is mortal combat. The winner could very well change life at Warren G. Harding School. To the stunned amazement of both boys, the tops spin and dance around each other, as if they are locked in some kind of embrace, they both leave the circle together, and jump the curb, and disappear down the sewer. To this day, the narrator believes that the two tops are still duking it out.

Story 3, Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah Analysis

The author is obviously a successful grownup with his "tapered Italian trousers", and he looks back at a time in his life when he very nearly bests the meanest kid in town. All the memories of the narrator's top-spinning days come rushing back to him, his humiliation at the hands of Scut Farkas, his determination to train for the upcoming battle, and his quest for the perfect opponent top in order to take on the Mariah. Even through the many intervening years, the narrator relives the events of the battle of the tops as if it were yesterday, for such a contest is life or death in the eyes of a kid. Scut Farkas and Grover Dill rule over the playground at Warren G. Harding school, and the narrator knows that physically he will never be able to best the two bullies. He does discover that he has an ability to spin tops that he believes rivals the skill of Scut Farkas. In fact, he believes his abilities to be better than Farkas, and that with the right top, he can finally put the bully in his place. As expected, the narrator is able to manipulate the bully into a contest, where the narrator uses a decoy top for the first round. Farkas instantly destroys the top and turns away in disgust. This is when the narrator brings out his secret weapon, so secret that even his closest friends know nothing of Wolf. The fight is on. And for a time, it looks as though the narrator will emerge victor. But the tops, with minds of their own, choose to leave their owners and disappear down the raging sewer, amidst the mud and the rain, never to be seen by the boys again. While the narrator is not the clear victor, neither is he the clear loser. Perhaps this is the best he can expect. The perseverance of the narrator in preparing for his battle is like the reason for his current success.



Story Four, Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss

Story Four, Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss Summary

A TV commercial about a perfect family preparing to go on a family holiday brings to the narrator's mind the annual family vacation to Clear Lake, Michigan. For fourteen years the Shepherd family takes its annual pilgrimage for fourteen days to southern Michigan, on the shores of Clear Lake at Ollie Hopnoodle's resort. Once school lets out, the narrator and his kid brother begin preparations for vacation, of which the most important are amassing their collection of dime-store fishing tackle and a BB gun. Even though the vacation is still almost two months away, the boys must begin their preparations early, no doubt modeling the efforts of their mother who is also beginning to lay in supplies for the journey. Two weeks prior to departure, the Old Man takes the Olds to Paswinski's Garage for a tuneup as part of the preparatory ritual. One week before the trip, the Old Man makes the Big Phone Call, a long-distance call to Marcellus, Michigan, something not done every day in the narrator's house. The Old Man continues the ritual with the request for the green cabin this year, and is delighted to report that Ollie Hopnoodle has installed two more holes in the outhouse. This is big news.

The last week drags interminably for the narrator and his kid brother, but finally Saturday night arrives, for the Old Man works on Saturdays. This is when everything kicks into high gear. The Old Man threatens that they are going to be on the road by six in the morning in order to beat all the traffic, and then he and mother go over the list; far into the night they account for every can of pork and beans, slices of bacon, clothing, and bug repellent. This activity lasts far beyond midnight. As is to be expected, the following morning is not the early rising sort promised by the Old Man, for he is still in bed, Mother is in the kitchen fixing scrambled eggs and coffee and calling out periodically to see whether the Old Man is up yet. The only way to get the man started in the morning is with a cigarette and a cup of coffee; until these needs are met, no one speaks to the Old Man.

With the sun well up in the sky, the Old Man is finally revived enough to start packing. This process takes a few more hours, attaching the Sears luggage rack onto the roof of the Olds, and loading all the heavy things on top, such as blankets, chairs, beach umbrellas, golf clubs, and more. The car is so full the narrator and his kid brother are designated two tiny cubicles inside the vehicle, for the pile of necessary supplies is taking up all the rest of the space. Traffic is heavy, the car is hot, and at one point Mother insists that the Old Man stop the car; she is just in time for the narrator's kid brother to expel everything he has eaten in the past twelve hours. The narrator uses this signal to evaluate that they are halfway to their destination, for his kid brother does this every year.



It is at this point in the journey that the narrator realizes that he had forgotten to have his father pack all of the fishing gear. It is still sitting beside the garage door back at the house. The boy tells his father, to the expected vitriolic reply, while his mother sleeps through the disaster. In his little cubbyhole, the narrator weeps. This annual trip is bigger than Christmas for him, and he has forgotten to pack the most important gear. This also means that his father's fishing gear is still back at the house. What a beginning to summer vacation. Shortly after this, a sound alerts the Old Man and mother to the newest disaster; a flat tire. Everyone piles out of the Olds, Mother and the boys sit by the side of the road to have a picnic while the Old Man changes the tire. Mother cautions the boys not to get on the Old Man's nerves, and not to whine, the latter directed at the narrator's kid brother. Once the flat is fixed, everyone piles back into the car. One minor disaster after another accompanies the family. There is a roadblock that requires a look at the map that has been baptized by a Hershey's chocolate bar. After hours of delay and the event of quicksand, the Old Man manages to make it sound like it was a barrel of laughs, a common characteristic for him. Then they are passed by a chicken truck, and must deal with the feathers and smells for miles. The narrator's kid brother has to use every restroom between home and Clear Lake, and the Old Man refuses the opportunity to purchase gas at the last station, so has to hike back when they do run out of gas. A bee in the car terrifies Mother, and the Old Man has little patience with her, but does stop the car in an effort to locate the intruder.

They finally reach their destination, exchange jocular pleasantries with Ollie, and feel jubilant that they have finally arrived. Despite the rain, the subsequent power outage, no flashlight, and the delay in finding a lantern, there is great satisfaction that they have finally arrived. The Old Man has made his oldest son stew in his disappointment that he failed to ensure that the fishing gear was packed. Now that they are finally at their destination, the Old Man talks about anticipating their fishing endeavors. When the narrator reminds the Old Man that he forgot to pack the gear, the Old Man replies, "So how come I found it on top of the car? I wonder who put all that fishing stuff on top of the car? Hmmm. . . I guess somebody must have snuck up and put it on top of the car when you weren't looking" (p. 159). Satisfaction and ecstasy are the emotions of the hour, and the narrator is able to go to bed looking forward to two entire weeks of bliss.

Story Four, Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss Analysis

A family vacation is a recipe for great trauma, emotion, and drama. The Shepherd's annual trek to the lake is no different. Plans begin months ahead of time to prepare for the journey on both the mother's part as well as the narrator's part. Each is concerned with their responsibilities or interests, as is usually the case. The narrator's kid brother is barely involved in the process, nor is the Old Man. The narrator is only worried about his fishing gear and his BB gun. That means that the bulk of the preparation duties falls on Mother, who accepts her lot in life with equanimity, and knows that this will be the way it will be this year and for the years to come. The Old Man is predictable in the way that everything he is involved in becomes some sort of crisis that only he can handle. The reader must know someone in their life who always seems to have bad luck follow them. This is a huge characteristic of the Old Man—everything in his life seems to be

huge drama. It is likely a good think that his wife is calm, accepting, and is able to deal with life with such a calm temperament. Again, the narrator remembers this trip because of all the disasters and crises that arise along the way. Had everything gone exactly the way it should have, the event would not have been nearly as memorable. It is the adversity in life that creates memories.



Story Five, The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Story Five, The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski Summary

The lure of things foreign is the narrator's demise in *The Star-Crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski*. Walking home from band practice a week before Christmas, he smells the usual smells of his hometown in Indiana, the sulphur from the Chemical Works plant, the swap-gas smell from the Sinclair refining plant, and the blast-furnace dust that mix together to blend his daily breathing air. Overlying this usual smell, the narrator catches whiffs of something different, something foreign and spicy. As he reaches his house, he sees that there are lights on in the Bumpus house, a place that has been empty ever since the hillbilly family bailed out in the middle of the night after trashing the place. His mother knows that a Polish family has moved in next door, and that they have a daughter just the same age as her oldest son. The narrator is ecstatic. Finally, a girl in the neighborhood, and she is his age. He tells Flick, Schwartz, and Junior Kissel the next day over lunch, and after school they join him in a parade in front of the Cosnowski house in order to see if they can catch a glimpse of the exotic beauty.

As usual, the narrator is sent to Pulaski's grocery store on an errand for his mother. At Pulaski's, he talks for a moment with Howie, who used to play on his softball team. Howie had to quit high school and get married, and now he works two jobs in order to make ends meet for his family. Howie used to be fun, now he is always angry. By chance, the narrator meets Josie on the way home from Pulaski's store. Josie's bag has torn and the narrator helps her to gather her groceries and they end up walking home together. By the time they reach their respective houses, Josie has invited the narrator to a party on Thursday night. Besotted, the narrator accepts the invitation before he realizes that Thursday is the night of the big Whiting basketball game, to which he has a ticket. No matter, a date with an exotic beauty is worth missing the game. He, Schwartz, and Flick hitchhike home from school and are picked up by a rough looking steelworker. Inside the car the three boys talk about the narrator missing the biggest game of the year for a date with a girl. Then Flick asks Schwartz if he thinks that the narrator is going to get lucky with his date. The narrator meets the eyes of the driver of the car, eyes he has never seen before, but will see again in the very near future.

The night of the party the narrator goes through the ritualistic bathing and grooming session that lasts approximately three and a half hours. When he finally emerges from the bathroom, there is no soap left, no hot water, and his face is covered with tissue scraps to staunch the flow of blood from his shaving experience. All of this is necessary for a date with an East Chicago Polish girl. Taking the family car next door to pick up Josie, the narrator is then invited inside and expected to partake of a very heavy Polish dinner of cabbage, pickles, bread, and potatoes while Josie finishes getting ready.



When Josie appears she is a vision. She wears a dirndl skirt with a very narrow waist, and a beautiful white blouse with puffy sleeves. The remark from Josie's mother that Josie will make a good wife one day should have set off alarm bells in the narrator's mind, but he is too besotted to think straight yet. Josie does not tell him where they are going, she simply gives him directions one street at a time, and he pulls into what he thinks is a house of a very rich family. Once inside, he realizes that he is inside the vestibule of St. Ignatious R.C. Church, complete with priests and nuns, polka music from the live band, and huge families with wailing children. All who meet them are delighted to meet Josie's young man. The narrator is getting more and more concerned, and once he sees Howie there, he is certain that this date is the biggest mistake of his life. He has no desire to get married right now and drop out of high school like Howie had to. When he has the opportunity, the narrator eludes Josie, her uncle Stanley who was the driver who picked up the three boys hitch-hiking the day before, and her big brother Stosh, who chases the narrator for blocks before finally giving him up as a lost cause. He races to the Whiting basketball game, lies about his date, and spends the next several weeks climbing in through the basement window of his home in order not to see the Cosnowski family face to face.

Story Five, The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski Analysis

Having a girl move into the neighborhood seems to be a true stroke of luck. The narrator is lording it over his friends that he lives right next door to a beautiful and mysterious Polish beauty who is exactly his age. He manages to get a date with what he believes to be the woman of his dreams only to discover that his idea of a date and having fun are strikingly dissimilar to her ideas. From the protectiveness of her men folk and the remarks of her mother and the women at the party, the narrator can tell that Josie is in the marriage market. The narrator is only interested in a date, and maybe getting lucky, whatever that means to him. Howie sounds to be near the narrator's age, and he is stuck at Pulaski's store and works a second job in order to provide for his accidental family. Howie had to drop out of high school to get married, and when he sees the narrator at the party, his eyes are wild with warning, as if to tell him to get out now before it is too late. Fortunately, the narrator wises up quickly, and knowing himself to be in mortal danger from Josie's brother and uncle, but fearing the matrimonial danger even more, he runs. He runs as fast as he can away from the East Chicago Polish beauty straight into the arms of his friends at the big Whiting basketball game. This is a much more comfortable environment for him than the Polish Christmas party at St. Ignatious.



Story 6, Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose

Story 6, Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose Summary

It is universal. Boys are attracted to girls, and when this happens reason flies out the window. The narrator is fifteen and finds the girls of his dreams in Biology I class. Her name is Daphne Bigelow, and for him, this girl is the personification of everything ideal in a girl. He has trouble describing her appearance, for to him she is a goddess, so far above everyone else in the school as to be an untouchable. Spring semester she is not only in his Biology II class, she is assigned as his lab partner. The boy is in ecstasy, to be so near the girl of his dreams and talk to her on a weekly basis. The Spring Dance invitation is issued, and he decides that he really wants to ask Daphne Bigelow to the dance, but first, they must have a regular date so that they can cement their love for one another. In a very awkward and gauche manner, he spits out his request for a date, and can hardly believe it when she agrees to go. From that moment on all manner of conversations run through his head, how he will impress her with his Lindy dance, unparalleled by no one in Hohman, Indiana, and how they will be seen by all his friends, and their envy will be his nectar.

Before the date, the narrator springs the news on his family. They are in the middle of a typical family dinner of meatloaf, red cabbage, mashed potatoes, and gallons of ketchup over it all. The Old Man is interested in the fact that his oldest son actually asked Maxwell Bigelow's daughter for a date. Bigelow is a chairman of the bank. He donated the ice skating rink to the park. This is big news for the Shepherd family. In fact, the Old Man is astounded that his son asked Daphne for a date, and that she agreed to go with him. It is a sign of things to come, for the Bigelows are a totally different crowd from the Shepherds. The day of the date is upon him, and the narrator hurries home from school to prepare. A half a bar of Life Boy, Old Spice talcum powder, and well greased coiffure are followed by a gallon of Listerine and Pepsodent before he feels that he is prepared for close proximity with a girl and that he will not offend her in any way.

A rather long bus ride across town takes the narrator to the Bigelows' neighborhood, where even the trees grow taller and there is no smell of oil refineries and steel mill excretions in the air. The door is answered by a butler, Drew, and the boy is invited to wait for his date. Mr. Bigelow comes in to chat and believes the boy to be one of the Pittsburgh Steel Shepherds, and the narrator, knowing that one of his uncles works in the steel mill, wonders how on earth Mr. Bigelow can possibly know his uncle. A fumbling of coins and tokens, spilled sherry, and his electric blue sports coat finally give



Mr. Bigelow some idea that the narrator is not quite top drawer material. He is still willing to allow his daughter on the date, but is not quite as exuberant as he was initially.

Raymond, the chauffeur, drives the couple in the Bigelow limousine to the Orpheum to see a John Wayne movie, where the narrator hopes that someone he knows will see them together and be impressed. He is disappointed. Inside the theater, people are burping, belching, copulating, fighting, and throwing paper airplanes. Daphne is intrigued by the place, and finds it to be very interesting. She manages to make it through the movie, but refuses food and drink. Once outside the theater, she proactively suggests that it is late and it is time to return home, stalling the narrator's idea of going to the Rooster afterward. Once they return to the Bigelow mansion, Daphne shakes his hand goodnight, and the narrator, refusing a ride, walks all the way home, mile after tedious mile. He really never realized just how far it was to the North Side. Once he is home, he realizes that he never did ask Daphne to the Spring Dance. Perhaps he might take someone else.

Story 6, Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose Analysis

A grasp for the golden ring is what Daphne Bigelow is for the Shepherd family when the narrator asks the girl out on a date. The boy is not aware just how far out of his league she is, but the Old Man is suitably impressed that the narrator just asked the girl out and she agreed to go with him. The Old Man is still enough of a dreamer to hope that this date might make a difference in the lives of the Shepherd family. The narrator is merely delighted that he asked a girl to go out on a date with him and she acquiesced. Initially it does not really bother him that she lives so far away from him; he finds it to be a source of pride that she lives all the way on the North Side. The evening, however, does not go at all as he had envisioned in his mind. None of the scintillating conversation he has practiced in his head ever comes out of his mouth. His date seems curiously interested in the atmosphere of the Orpheum, but she refuses both popcorn and a coke. Once the movie is over she wishes to go home, though she is very, very polite about her request. There is nothing in the girl's manner that can be criticized. As a point of analysis, however, the refusal to share food with someone is a sign of hostility and suspicion. The metaphor that the narrator never realized that the North Side was such a long way from home is telling; for not only is the distance long, but the class distinction is as well.



Story 7, The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll Summary:

Story 7, The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll Summary: Summary

Christmas in Manhattan finds the narrator grown. He is an ex-GI and old enough to have an apartment with a doorman and fine enough furniture. By all rights, his set of first edition Peanuts paperbacks should be enough to keep the man content. Then a package arrives. The initial thrill of excitement gives away to feelings of dread and caution. His mother has packed a ton of his childhood mementos into a Life—The Complete Cereal box. Deep inside, he hears the quacking of a duck amidst the clinking and clanking of the contents of the battered carton. Resigned and compelled, he cuts the baling wire restraints with his scissors and the first item he sees is his long-lost Brownie Bear. This is quickly followed by his once prized Wimpy doll, Popeye's sidekick who was constantly mooching hamburgers. The mining endeavor into the box continues and with each treasure uncovered, the narrator begins to adorn his body with memorabilia. He puts on a Buck Rogers Space Helmet and goggles, a Flash Gordon Zap Gun, an official Jack Armstrong Wheaties pedometer, a temporary tattoo of a Marine killing a yellow Jap soldier with an M-1, blowing into the Captain Midnight Three-Way Mystic Dog Whistle when he spies his Ed Wynn Fire Chief Hat that he puts on his head, then sticks that head out the window only to have the wind catch the hat, take it off his head and then sail it down to the ground. The narrator immediately calls the doorman and in a panic begs him to retrieve the treasure. After fighting with the little boy who picks up the hat, the doorman brings it up to the narrator. One look at the tenant's decorated person is enough to cause the tenant to worry that the doorman will tell the story of the crazy man with the red toy fire chief hat. The narrator will simply have to move. A few mementos bring back unhappy memories. The nasturtium seeds recall his horrible salesmanship abilities. The fact that he had never sent money for the stamp set has been a source of guilt for him all these years, though long-forgotten until now. He finally decides to pack everything back in the box and hides it on the top shelf of a closet.

Story 7, The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll Summary: Analysis

The fact that all these boyhood treasures are packed in a box entitled Life-The Complete Cereal is somewhat metaphoric, and the narrator even refers to this and wonders if his mother is trying to tell him something. He experiences numerous highs and lows, an emotional roller coaster of old and forgotten feelings, but then it is time to put them back. "An angry wind laden with sooty ice crystals banged briefly at the windows of my apartment. It was getting colder. Sadly I returned it to the dusty magic

mountain of illusion—lost and gone, grieved by only the wind. I had had enough" (p. 294). He knows that it is time to truly put his childhood away, for it belongs to the past.



Story 8, Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories

Story 8, Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories Summary

The Junior Prom is the event of the year, and the narrator knows that as a member of the human race he is required to participate in the ritualistic rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Such rites are set and difficult and practiced today as much as they have been in as far away a place as Micronesia. When asked by Flick and Schwartz, the narrator tells them he plans to ask Daphne Bigelow. The dress code is summer formal, which must be rented at Al Swank's Formalwear, where they are fitted with a white jacket, dark trousers, shoes, socks, shirt, tie, boutonnière, and cummerbund. The matter of the prom is considered by the narrator's entire family. The Old Man believes one's prom date can somehow foretell one's future. Mother wants him to ask that nice Wanda Hickey. The narrator still believes he will ask Daphne Bigelow, yet somehow he never gets around to it. It is the weekend before Prom and Schwartz has already methodically made all his plans and pushes the narrator for not having asked Daphne Bigelow yet.

Watering the lawn, one of his chores, gives the narrator the opportunity to ponder his fate. He distracts himself from his problems by periodically spraying his kid brother. Wanda Hickey happens along, and the narrator asks her to the Prom. It is a little late to ask Daphne Bigelow. Wanda agrees instantly. Preparations continue. The Ford convertible is Simonized, the corsage ordered, and on the big day he needs his mother's help to get into the painful apparatus called formalware. A double date with Schwartz and Clara gives them all moral support. The trial by fire called Junior Prom continues the ritual where both male and female are bound so tightly that breathing is considered an extracurricular activity. By the end of the dance, flowers are wilted, jackets sweaty and limp, and for the narrator's group, their chariot is wet from a passing rain shower. In good spirits they move onto the next phase of the ritual, the Rooster.

In an attempt to impress his friends and himself, the narrator orders a drink he's heard his old man order before, a triple bourbon. Schwartz follows suit. Neither of the two boys have ever slammed that much alcohol before and the ugly reality that is nearly impossible for them to bear. Without thinking they agree to a second round. With two triples wending their toxic way through their bloodstream, Schwartz and the narrator have only very dim recollections of the remainder of the evening. Having dropped Schwartz and Clara off, the narrator takes Wanda home. When he tries to give her the kiss she expects, he is overwhelmed not by his date, but by the odor of sauerkraut on her breath. A very rush goodbye and he heads down the street in a panic where he can be thoroughly and disgustingly sick for the second time that evening. Thus ends the rite of puberty passage.



Story 8, Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories Analysis

Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories is likely one of Shepherd's most hilarious stories, and few readers will have trouble identifying with at least some element of this story. The idea that a prom is the cultural equivalent of a rite of passage is genius. The narrator never has a malicious thought or idea in his head. He takes life as it comes. His apparent inability to invite Daphne Bigelow to the Prom likely has its roots in the fact that everyone refers to the girl by her first and last name. She is someone to be revered, and after his first disastrous date with the girl, the narrator is likely not interested in a repeat performance. Wanda has always had a crush on the narrator, and they actually do have a really nice time together at the prom. For her, she is having the night of her life, and she believes herself to be in love with her date. Her date, while not in love with her, enjoys her company and enjoys the entire event. His performance at the Rooster is a must read for every reader. He has no idea what bourbon really is, and he has absolutely no clue what it means to order a triple. He thinks it is some sort of brand. Two double bourbons pickle his mind, and eating a heavy meal on top of them is a mistake of indefinable proportions. It seems, however, that this is all part of the rite of passage. He survives his Junior Prom, with the memories necessary to prove it.



Characters

Narrator appears in All Stories

Narrator - Appears in all stories as noted below:

The narrator is never referred to by name, and yet is either the main character or one of the main characters in all of the stories.

In "The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds", the narrator introduces his family; his father as the Old Man, his mother, and his kid brother, Randy. The reader understands that his family is one of tradition, that they eat meatloaf and mashed potatoes and red cabbage nearly every night of the year except on Easter. In this story, the narrator is in elementary school at Warren G. Harding School in Hohman, Indiana, and there is quite a social hierarchy on the playground that is ruled by Skut Farkas and his toadie Grover Dill. The narrator describes his experience of having the Bumpus family move in next door and the effect this has on his family, especially his Old Man. The boy watches the battle his father wages against the family, especially the blue-tick hounds that seem to have taken a particular liking to the Old Man. The incident with the Easter Ham shows just how much the narrator looks forward to the tradition of the Easter Ham, with all its pomp and circumstance and the disappointment that it is to have Easter Dinner at the Chop Suey place, usually an event of great celebration.

County Fair! is sparked by the narrator watching an old late-night movie about a fair in Indiana that bears little resemblance to his memory of the county fair he and his family attend annually in Indiana. He recalls the whining of his kid brother and the great delight his father takes in the events of the fair. As the older of the two boys, the narrator is obviously old enough to accompany his Old Man who acts much like a kid himself at the fair. The narrator, as with most kids, enjoys copious amounts of junk food at the fair, and manages to hold everything in even when he, his kid brother, and Old Man ride the Rocket Whip and his kid brother hurls the entire contents of his stomach over all of them. The memory of that fair is not diminished over time, and appears to be an event of moment for the narrator.

Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah is a story where the narrator finally stands up to the school bully, matching him stride for stride as he sets Scut Farkas up for what he believes to be an opportunity to finally best the bully. Having carefully sized up his enemy, the narrator practices unceasingly in the basement of his house until he knows he is ready for the confrontation. Once he finds the top he deems equal to the Mariah, the narrator is ready. He practices ceaselessly until he knows that he is physically ready for the challenge against the acknowledged champion, Scut Farkas. To actually challenge Farkas takes a great deal of courage and audacity, both of which the narrator finds within himself. This is a great example of growth for this character.



In Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, the narrator is a typical boy who anticipates summer vacation, and even more importantly, the two week fishing trip his family always takes every summer for the past fourteen years. His focus is on his fishing gear and tackle that he has been collecting over the years, oiling, polishing, and dreaming about using. There is no real indication of the age of the narrator at this point, but it is likely he is in his early teens, and his only focus is on his needs and wants and desires. He is aware that his mother has begun the process of gathering supplies for the trip, and for him this is his signal to start dreaming. He focuses so intently on what he wants that when the time actually comes to get the car packed, the narrator actually forgets to pack the fishing gear, and does not realize it until they are well underway and it is way too late to turn around and retrieve it. The remainder of the trip for the narrator is colored by his disappointment in himself and the fact that the fishing trip will not include fishing this year. It could be that this trip is so memorable for the narrator for this very reason; his disappointment in himself is so intense that all other events during the trip are magnified because of this. His pain and anguish is dissipated in a flash, however, when they are unloading at the cabin and his Old Man tells him that the fishing gear is on the top of the car.

In The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski, learning that a beautiful Polish girl just his age has moved in next door to him, the narrator is anxious to catch sight of the vision of loveliness. He and his three friends catch a glimpse of her one night, and finally he meets her on the way home from Pulaski's store. On the way home, she invites the narrator to a party, and he feels that she is a dream come true for him. He is even willing to miss the big Whiting basketball game for a date with Josie Cosnowski. Preparations begin the day before, as he washes and waxes the car in December. The night of the party he spends a lot of time on his preparations, ensuring that he will look his best when he picks up his date. Before they can leave, the narrator is stuffed to the gills with Polish food, a tribute to Josie's cooking abilities. Once at the party, the narrator figures out that he is matrimonial material for little Josie Cosnowski, and he makes a bolt for freedom. He does not want to end up like Howie, who is married to a girl who attends St. Ignatious and has caused him to be angry all the time.

In Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Moose, the narrator believes himself to be in the presence of a goddess when he is paired with Daphne Bigelow in Freshman Biology class. They work well together; in his mind all their conversations are sparkling, scintillating, and perfect. He finally works up the courage to ask her on a date preparatory to asking her to the Spring Dance. The date seems to go fine, though he does see things a little differently with such a classy girl at his side. The wonderful Orpheum seems seedy and dirty, something he had never noticed before. He also discovers just how far it is for him to walk home from the North Side, for he is too proud to take a ride from the Bigelow's chauffeur after their date is over. He realizes that he never did invite Daphne to the Spring Dance, but then considers he may invite someone else after all.

The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll is an intense journey down memory lane for the narrator, a reminder of many of the toys he had in his youth the result of downing hundreds cans of soup, or a certain drink or cereal in order to attain an item of desire,



whether it is the Wimpy Doll, Flash Gordon, or Buck Rogers gear. His descent into shame for being an inadequate salesman or for not paying for a collection of stamps tracks him into adulthood when confronted with the evidence. After he has taken an afternoon with his past, he chooses to wrap it all back up and put it in a closet.

Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories shows the narrator at his most gloriously funny and innocent. Comparing the rites of puberty passage of the Ugga Bugga tribes in Micronesia to the corresponding rite of passage of the Junior Prom shows the narrator to be on a ride that appears to be going out of control and he cannot get off. Every step of the way the narrator is dogged by the results of his choices, and the decisions of others. His date with Wanda Hickey comes about only because she happens by his house, otherwise he may very well have gone to the Prom alone. At the Prom, the ride is self-sustaining, until he has to bail out his convertible which has flooded in the rain during the dance. At the Rooster, he tries to impress his friends, and likely himself by ordering a bourbon like his Old Man, a triple, when he has never had a drink before. A second triple follows the first with predictable results. It is his choice to eat a huge and heavy meal in an attempt to feel better that has the reader cringing. His final humiliation of the evening seems to be the final rite of passage which his Old Man believes has made him a man the following morning.

Old Man appears in Several Stories as noted below:

In The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds, The Old Man is shown in his true element here. He awakens the night the Bumpus family moves in next door, cursing them and the fact that he has stubbed his toe for the millionth time on the bed. The battle between the Old Man and the Bumpuses is covert and rather quiet until the episode of the Easter Ham, when he is deprived of one of his most favorite and anticipated culinary treats by the Bumpus hounds entering the house in a horde and stealing the ham. From this point forward it is open war, not that the Bumpuses notice. When the Bumpuses finally disappear, the Old Man is every so slightly disappointed that he no longer has a daily adversary.

The event of the County Fair is another annual event that the Old Man pretends to have no interest in, yet when the time comes he is just as anxious as the rest of the family to join in the fun. For him, the dirt track racing is the highlight of the fair, followed by the skinny blondes on motorcycles, and then the pumpkin that looks like the president and a quilt that bears the likeness of a famous baseball player. The only rides the Old Man will consider are the most frightening and terrifying on the strip; to show his benevolence, he takes both his boys aboard the Whirligig Rocket Whip that whips the three of them to fluff; he loses all his pocket change and his Wearever pen bestowed on him by his bowling buddies. Each year he ends the year by saying the same thing, that the fair this year was better than the fair last year.

In Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, The Old Man's delight in their annual journey to southern Michigan is unsurpassed by any other event of the year. He manages to maintain his cool until about a week before the event when he makes The Big Call to



Ollie's to reserve the green cabin. The night before they leave he insists that they will be on the road by six in the morning, then he and the narrator's mother stay up until long past midnight going over the provisions that have been collecting over the past two months. It is only after a cigarette and two cups of coffee that the Old Man is ready to handle the packing job, which takes hours. The sun is well past its zenith by the time the Shepherd family is on the road. The Old Man curses the traffic, his youngest son who gets carsick, the flat tire, the bee that terrifies his wife, and the smelly chicken truck. Finally, at the cabin, the Old Man reveals to the narrator that the fishing gear did indeed get packed, and that all is now right with the world again.

A boon for the Old Man occurs in the story Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose when his son informs him that he has asked Daphne Bigelow for a date. Daphne Bigelow is the daughter of chairman-of-the-bank Maxwell Bigelow. The Old Man sees this as an opportunity for his family to finally make a huge jump in their class, that they will finally live the high life, that things will finally change for them. He seems somewhat skeptical, but does have a certain amount of pride in his son that he has managed to get a date with one of the upper class citizens from the North Side.

Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories has the Old Man continuing to support his son in oblique and indirect ways. He gives his oldest son twenty dollars when he discovers that he likely does not have enough money for the prom. When his son still thinks that he might ask Daphne Bigelow to the Prom, he believes his son to be a glutton for punishment. The morning after the Prom, when his son returns home, he sees the devastation that is his rented suit and remarks that he must have had a good time. Good times for the Old Man are now early mornings when he goes fishing.

Mother appears in Several Stories as Listed Below

The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds shows Mother to be a bit of a quiet woman who merely accepts life as it comes her way. She may have had plans and ideas in the past, but her life now is one of endless meals of meatloaf, mashed potatoes, red cabbage, and coffee grounds. Her reaction to the Bumpus clan next door is one of shock and eventual acceptance, not having enough inside of her to actually fight against the situation. She takes very good care of her family, and spends countless hours preparing the Easter Ham because it is the tradition of the family. How her heart must have broken when the Bumpus hounds devoured their lovely dinner.

County Fair! again shows Mother as a calm and accepting woman. It is likely that she has resigned herself to her life as a wife and mother and that her lot in life is unlikely to change. The event of the county fair is a high point in her life, one where she wishes to see the work of other women in the quilting display and the canning events. She deals with her whiny youngest son by bribing him with taffy apples, accepts her husband's decision to take both boys on the Rocket Whip, and it is likely she enjoys the results of that decision, though that is never mentioned in the story. She has spent a lot of time



worrying about her husband making a fool of himself and feels the compunction to remind him at the fair.

In Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, Mother begins the preparations for the two week vacation at Ollie Hopnoodle's at the beginning of the summer. She begins to lay in supplies of canned goods, clothing, sleeping apparatus, bug repellent in a summer-long effort. The night before they leave for vacation, she and the Old Man go over the list late into the night. She must have known that the very early start promised by her husband will not happen and she is resigned to it. In fact, Mother seems resigned to her lot in life. She knows that there is not much she can do to change things, and so she merely goes along with whatever happens and calmly accepts things as they come. Every crisis and disaster that accompanies them on their trip to Ollie Hopnoodle's does not faze her. She knows that her youngest is getting carsick. She knows to have her kids not irritate her husband when the tire goes flat. She does get in a few digs, especially when the Old Man refuses to fill the gas tank at the last station and they run out of gas. She is a calming and steadying influence on the family, and yet the reader has to have some sort of pity for her, as she is the only female in a group of guys going fishing for two weeks.

In The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski, Mother is the narrator's source of information on the new family that has moved in next door to them in the Bumpus's old house. The Cosnowskis, a Polish family from East Chicago, have moved in, and they have a daughter just the narrator's age. It is unclear how she comes by this information. She also nags the narrator to leave his overshoes on the back porch and not mess up her kitchen floor. Her last role in this story is to send the narrator to Pulaski's store whenever she does not feel like shopping.

In Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose, Mother does not quite understand the magnitude and gravity of the news when the narrator informs his family that he is taking Daphne Bigelow out on a date. Mother has a tendency to not want to deal with anything out of the ordinary, and so tries to heal all wounds with an extra helping of mashed potatoes. Once she finally realizes that her son really is going out on the date, her words of wisdom are set in granite. He is to be nice to them. She does not want anyone thinking that she did not raise her kids right. When her son returns after his disastrous date, she asks if he was nice to them. That is of greater concern to her than whether or not he really had a nice time.

Mother's role in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories is not much expanded. She is still the long-suffering woman who puts up with her two sons fighting about nonsensical things. She continually nags Randy to eat. Her ability to get stains out is perhaps her most stellar role, for when the narrator gets the collar of his rented suit dirty she is able to get it beautifully clean. She then assists the narrator in getting ready, and is truly impressed by the cummerbund as she has never touched one before.



Kid Brother - Randy appears in Several Stories as Listed Below

The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds refers to Randy as the kid brother who constantly whines.

County Fair! continues with the whining theme as well as sobbing when he does not get his way. This manipulative behavior is continued throughout the day at the fair where he manages to wheedle not one but three taffy apples out of his mother in return for accompanying her to the exhibits she wishes to see. The kid brother eats too much junk food, and loses it all on a wild ride with his father and brother. He also rides both the ferris wheel and merry-go-round, screaming to stay each time the rides stop.

Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss: The narrator's kid brother is a side-kick and fodder for a great many jokes. The kid brother's only role in this story is to delay the trip with his seventy-five stops to use a restroom and the one time that he gets carsick, a sign to the narrator that they are halfway through their trip. He is still a whiny, complaining kid who is irritating both awake and asleep.

Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose is the story where the narrator's kid brother's famous eating habits are exposed. He prefers to form his meatloaf and mashed potatoes into an inflated football, or he simply refuses to eat and his mother and the Old Man have to pry his mouth open so that they can pour the pureed turnips down his throat.

Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories shows Randy being a pest, wearing his new Flash Gordon t-shirt. The narrator sprays his little brother with the hose, and causes the t-shirt to shrink enough to expose Randy's belly button. He is still a whining pest of a little brother.

Delbert Bumpus appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Delbert Bumpus, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Delbert Bumpus is in the narrator's grade at Warren G. Harding School, and changes the dynamics of the school, the teachers, and the bullies on the playground. Delbert attends school about three days out of the month, and spends his time while at school not playing, not talking, but chewing and spitting, and creating an aroma that results from a combination of not bathing and living with many animals. Delbert understands the concept of volleyball, but is frustrated when he nails the ball and knocks someone from the opposite team down, and is then told that is not how to play. The narrator once throws Delbert out at third base during a game, and the boy's scowl warns the narrator that he will pay him back. The Easter Ham is that payoff, as the narrator and his stricken family watch the Bumpus hounds finish what is left of the ham,



the narrator sees Delbert watching him and nods his head as if to emphasize his culpability in the matter.

Emil Bumpus appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Emil Bumpus, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Emil is the patriarch of the Bumpus clan who moves next door to the Shepherd family. He is some kind of headman, very tall, big man, chews, and an original red neck. Most people originally thought he wore a red bandana, but that is the actual color of his neck. He has huge hands that are made for hitting things. He was once accosted at the Blue Bird Tavern, but did not actually realize he had been hit over the head with his own jug, his head is that hard. He imbibes in a regular basis, both at the Blue Bird Tavern and of his own homemade brew; one time becoming so inebriated that he thinks that his back porch is talking back to him. In response, Emil tears the porch off the house and the house is porchless from this point forward. He has a strangely affectionate way of greeting his daughter Cassie who comes home from the reformatory.

Daisy Mae Bumpus appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Daisy Mae Bumpus, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Delbert's sister.

Ima Jean Bumpus appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Ima Jean Bumpus, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Short, muscular, in sixth grade if she attends school, but prefers to spend time in the pool hall.

Jamie Bumpus appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Jamie Bumpus, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Has a perpetual beard shadow, is tall, wears shoes, and runs the still.



Ace Bumpus appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Ace Bumpus, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Wears a fedora, sits on the front porch and pretends to light sticks of dynamite when little old ladies walk by the house.

Cassie Bumpus appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Cassie Bumpus, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - The Bumpus daughter who has been in reformatory school. Once she is home she lounges around the house wearing very little, prompting the narrator's Old Man to watch the Bumpus house much more carefully than before.

Miss Parsons appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hound

Miss Parsons, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Teacher at Warren G. Harding School, volleyball instructor.

Miss Shields appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hound

Miss Shields, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Teacher at Warren G. Harding School, literature instructor.

Jack Morton appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Jack Morton, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Classmate of the narrator and Delbert Bumpus who is struck by the volleyball in the pit of the stomach. He collapses on the floor the color of hot porridge. Delbert Bumpus has a truly mean volleyball serve.

Grover Dill appears in Several Stories as listed below

Grover Dill, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Toadie to Scut Farkas, and the second most feared kid on the school



playground. He finally meets his match with Delbert Bumpus, who knocks him flat in two seconds.

Appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah - Equally as dangerous as Scut Farkas, Grover Dill is a menace in his own right. By combining forces with Farkas, Dill creates an alliance that is still talked about to this day. Grover Dill's usual job is to hang around the kids and report back to Farkas. This is know Dill knows of the challenge the narrator makes regarding the war of the tops. Once the challenge has been answered by Farkas, Dill makes a toss of his two-sided nickel so that Farkas wins the toss. In order to assist his boss, Dill tries to throw the narrator off balance, kicks up mud, and even pushing the narrator in order to assure a victory for Farkas.

Scut Farkas appears in Several Stories as listed below

Scut Farkas, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Scut Farkas is the major bully at Warren G. Harding School. His second in command is Grover Dill, who actually does most of the bullying at Scut's behest.

Appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah - The character of the playground bully at Warren G. Harding school is further defined. He is a master top spinner, being the owner of a top that some say is not a toy, but something more like a weapon. Farkas carries the top around in his back pocket and brings it out only in anger. Called the Mariah, the top is known for over fifty kills, where Farkas will spin his top, releasing it in a murderous throw, usually splitting his opponent's top in two. Another defining characteristic of Farkas is his evil eye, seen by just about every kid on the playground. His eye is of pure silver-gray, unblinking and it glows from the inside. To round out his personality, Farkas chews Red Mule Cut Plug, spitting into his inkwell while in class, and then aiming for someone's hair on the playground. For him, calling another kid by his first name is to demonstrate weakness. But it is Scut's unsurpassed ability as a top spinner that is recognized by all. Unable to pass up the challenge issued by the narrator, Farkas enters into a battle of the tops, Mariah against Wolf. His disbelief when both tops disappear is satisfying to the reader. He is not the loser of this match, but neither is he the victor.

Schwartz appears in Several Stories as listed below

Schwartz, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Friend of the narrator, equal to him in the playground hierarchy at Warren G. Harding School.

Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski - Joins narrator, Junior Kissel, and Flick in the parade in front of Josie Cosnowski's house in an attempt to catch a first glimpse of the new girl in the neighborhood. Schwartz, Flick and the narrator are also in the Buick that has just given them a ride home from school when Flick asks Schwartz if he thinks the narrator will get lucky that night.



Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - In this story, Schwartz plays a bigger role than just a companion. Here Schwartz is shown to actually be a close friend and confidant. Schwartz has a tendency to be very organized and meticulous about things. The Prom is no different. He has his date, formalwear and corsage lined up long before the narrator does. He joins the narrator on a double date to the prom, including the event at the Rooster afterward where he has his first taste of two double bourbons. Ever the friend, he joins the narrator in the bathroom of the Rooster in one of the more painful and embarrassing of the rites of passage.

Flick appears in Several Stories as listed below

Flick, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Friend of the narrator, equal to the narrator in the playground hierarchy at Warren G. Harding School.

Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski - Joins narrator, Junior Kissel, and Schwartz in the parade in front of Josie Cosnowski's house in an attempt to catch a first glimpse of the new girl in the neighborhood. Flick, Schwartz and the narrator are also in the Buick that has just given them a ride home from school when Flick asks Schwartz if he thinks the narrator will get lucky that night.

Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - Flick is a peripheral friend of the narrator and of Schwartz. His success in life is uncertain for he apparently fails just about everything, though he doggedly works through his chemistry during study hall. He, too, attends the prom, but is not actually with the narrator and Schwartz.

Junior Kissel appears in Two Stories as listed below

Appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah - Junior Kissel lives near the narrator, and is one of his frequent companions. On the school playground, Kissel is a player of tops, and the narrator sacrifices his friend's top in order to get Scut Farkas to enter a battle of the tops with him.

Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski - Junior Kissel joins the narrator, Flick, and Schwartz as the quartet parade in front of the Shepherd and Cosnowski house about a dozen times in an effort to catch sight of the foreign beauty who lives next door to the narrator. Kissel makes the first score and catches sight of Josie first.

Old Man Pulaski appears in Two Stories as listed below

Old Man Pulaski, Appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah - Old Man Pulaski has little time for the kids of Hohman. His job is to sell as much merchandise as possible, and he has no patience for the decision making process of a young person, especially when it comes to the selection of a top. He main clientele are the Polish and



Lithuanian housewives who use the soup bones he sells. He tries to hurry the purchase along, but to no avail.

Appears in *The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski* -

Ollie Hopnoodle appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss

Ollie Hopnoodle, Appears in *Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss* - The old owner of the Clear Lake resort in Michigan. He takes reservations two weeks in advance, and is pleased to announce that he has installed two additional seats in the outhouse nearest the Haven of Bliss cottage for the narrator's family.

Josephine Cosnowski, a.k.a. Josie appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Josephine Cosnowski, Appears in *The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski* - The new girl in the neighborhood whose family has moved into the old Bumpus house. She is of Polish origin and the narrator thinks that she is the most exotic creature he has ever seen. He dreams of asking her out when she invites him to go to a holiday party with her. She acts as if she is really attracted to the narrator, and seems to feel very secure with him as her date while at the party. It is unknown what her reaction is when the narrator leaves the party without her.

Howie appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Howie, Appears in *The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski* - Clerk at Pulaski's store who used to play softball with the narrator and also used to be fun. Now, he is married, had to leave highschool in order to do the right thing. He works nineteen hours a day, thin, red hawk like face, mustard yellow hair. After he had to get married, he is always mad. Howie is at the St. Ignatius party and looks harried, handing out doughnuts to his kids. His eyes seem to tell the narrator that he had better run while he still can.

Uncle Stanley appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Uncle Stanley, Appears in *The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski* - A steelworker who gives the narrator, Schwartz, and Flick a ride when the boys are hitchhiking home. They do not realize that he is Josie Cosnowski's uncle and he overhears



Schwartz asking the narrator if he is going to score tonight. Later at the party, Uncle Stanley recognizes the narrator and indicates that he wants to speak to Josie.

Stosh Cosnowski appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Stosh Cosnowski, Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski - Brother to Josephine Cosnowski who takes it on himself to warn the narrator that he had better give his sister a good time at the party. Stosh is a huge boy, smelling of a locker room where he spends a good deal of time. He leaves a dent the size of an elephant's footprint on the fender of the Olds just by putting his foot up there. He chases the narrator for blocks through the dark when the narrator makes a run for it from the party at the church. As a huge football player, he moves pretty quickly, but finally gives up and leaves the narrator to finish running home in the dark alone.

Priest appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Priest, Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski - Bald, gold-rimmed glasses, pastor of St. Ignatius Roman Catholic Church. He remembers giving Josephine the sacrament of baptism and is interested in getting to know the narrator very well as he is Josephine's young man.

Daphne Bigelow appears in Two Stories as listed below

Daphne Bigelow, Appears in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose - Daphne is the narrator's lab partner in Biology during sophomore year in high school. She is one of the upper crust in town. She actually says very little to the narrator, but they work well together as lab partners. She agrees to go out on a date with the narrator. Once he arrives at her palatial home, she tells him that their driver will take them. In the car, she waits for the narrator to give directions to the chauffeur, but when the narrator is unable to give the order, she does so in such a way that the narrator realizes that he is seeing a different side of Daphne Bigelow. She finds the atmosphere at the Orpheum Theater "interesting", she smells and carnal activities something new for her. After the movie she indicates she prefers to go home rather than going to the Rooster. That is the end of the romance between the narrator and Daphne Bigelow.

Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - The narrator intends to ask Daphne Bigelow to the Junior Prom, based on the fact that he had been brave enough to go out on a date with her the year before. The narrator never gets around to asking Daphne, and she appears at the prom with her date, a Princeton college student.



Maxwell Bigelow appears in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose

Maxwell Bigelow, Appears in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose - A very successful businessman who lives with his daughter Daphne, on the North Side. They have a butler who answers the door, and a chauffeur who drives the car for them. He mistakenly believes the narrator to be one of the Pittsburgh Steel Shepherds, and treats him, initially like an equal. Astutely, he realizes that the narrator is just another boy at the public school his daughter attends.

Doorman appears in The Return of the Wimpy Doll

Doorman, Appears in The Return of the Wimpy Doll - The doorman to the apartment building in Manhattan where the narrator is living as an adult. He retrieves the Ed Wynn Fire Chief Hat from a little boy after the Narrator drops it out the window of his apartment. He finds the vision of the narrator with all his childhood memorabilia strangely interesting.

Clara Mae Mattingly appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories

Clara Mae Mattingly, Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - The girl who spells well and has agreed to go to the Junior Prom with Schwartz. She appears to be a pretty good sport as she does not fuss about the soggy car seats after the Prom on the way to the Rooster. She drinks a Pink Lady at the Rooster.

Eileen Akers appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories

Eileen Akers, Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - Girl who wears glasses, on whom the narrator had a crush in the third grade. Plays tennis with Wanda Hickey in high school.

Janie Hutchison appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories

Janie Hutchison, Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - A tall funny girl who has accepted Flick's invitation to the Junior Prom.



Wanda Hickey appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories

Wanda Hickey, Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - Wanda Hickey has had a crush on the narrator for years, starting in the third grade. The narrator's mother suggested that he invite Wanda to the Junior Prom, which he eventually does. Wanda is thrilled to go with the boy she's had a crush on for eight years. She dresses beautifully, enjoys the Prom, does not complain about the soggy car on the ride over to the Rooster, and is impressed with the narrator through his bourbon introduction and generous tip for the waiter. She expects a kiss at the end of the evening, but the sauerkraut on her breath prevents that final moment of bliss.



Objects/Places

Gene Autry Record appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Gene Autry Record, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - The sounds of the country singer begin to pester the Shepherd family at three in the morning the day the Bumpus clan moves in next door to the Shepherd family, and bother them until the night they pull up stakes and leave.

Lake Michigan appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Lake Michigan, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Lake Michigan is a great landmark for Northern Indiana, and Chicago is a mere stone's throw across the polluted lake.

Bumpus House appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Bumpus House, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - The house next door to the Shepherds used to be occupied by the Taylors, and when they moved the Bumpus clan moves in and destroys the house and the neighborhood overnight. The house is filled with untold numbers of Bumpuses, the yard is filled with debris from the local dump where the family likes to shop on a weekly basis, and houses all manner of livestock from goats and dogs to chickens and rats.

Sinclair Oil Refinery appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Sinclair Oil Refinery, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - One of the great industries in the Hohman, Indiana area where people either work for the oil refineries or the steel companies.

Back Porch appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Back Porch, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - This is the porch that apparently talks back to Emil Bumpus during one of his encounters with homemade brew, and as a result is torn off the house. The back door is



now eight feet above the level of the ground. From time to time one of the Bumpus women falls out the door throwing dishwater into the back yard.

City Dump appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

City Dump, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - The city dump is where the Bumpus clan likes to shop for things they need, things they might need, and things that absolutely no one else wants.

Bumpus Hound Dogs appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Bumpus Hound Dogs, Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - The dogs that plague the narrator's Old Man and who decimate the Easter Ham after two whole days of smelling the cooking meat.

Animals appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds

Animals (Rats, Chickens, Possum), Appears in The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds - Part of the Bumpus collection and addition to the neighborhood. The Bumpus family eats all of these critters.

Fairgrounds appears in County Fair!

Fairgrounds, Appears in County Fair! - The location of the best fun of the season where the entire Shepherd family can enjoy something they like. Mother likes the crafts and fine arts. Kid brother loves taffy apples and the Ferris Wheel. The Old Man is nuts about the dirt track racing and really terrifying rides. The narrator just follows along and enjoys everything.

Pontiac appears in County Fair!

Pontiac, Appears in County Fair! - A deviation for the narrator's father who is a dedicated Oldsmobile man. The Pontiac is their current mode of transportation.

47-Pound Pumpkin appears in County Fair!

47-Pound Pumpkin, Appears in County Fair! - An anomaly at the fair, that bears a striking resemblance to the current President of the United States, Franklin Delano



Roosevelt. This serves to help date the story at the time of the narrator's childhood to the years between 1933 to 1945.

Ferris Wheel appears in County Fair!

Ferris Wheel, Appears in County Fair! - Kid brother's favorite ride of the entire fair, he could ride the ferris wheel for the entire night, and throws a huge fit when it is time for him to get off.

Whirligig Rocket Whip appears in County Fair!

Whirligig Rocket Whip, Appears in County Fair! - The daring ride the Old Man chooses to take both boys on, which results in the loss of a shoe, a pocketful of change, a Wearever Fountain pen, and the contents of one stomach.

Wearever Fountain Pen appears in County Fair!

Wearever Fountain Pen, Appears in County Fair! - The brown and white fountain pen with the Old Man's name on it given to him by his bowling team disappears into the night during the Rocket Whip ride.

Mariah appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah

Mariah, Appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah - The spikesie top that has a mind of its own and is as mean as its owner, Skut Farkas.

Warren G. Harding School appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah

Warren G. Harding School, Appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah - The elementary school where the narrator, Flick, Schwartz, Junior Kissel, Skut Farkas, and Grover Dill go to school.

Wolf appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah

Wolf, Appears in Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah - An identical spikesie top to Mariah that the narrator finds in a shop that he discovers by accident and can never find again. Wolf is finally an equal to the Mariah.



Fishing Tackle and Gear appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss

Fishing Tackle and Gear, Appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss - The fishing tackle and gear that the narrator has spent the great majority of his allowance on, many hours fondling and dreaming about, and then actually forgets to pack for the fishing trip to Clear Lake, Michigan. Fortunately, the Old Man rectifies the oversight, but does not inform the narrator until they are at the Haven of Bliss.

Olds appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss

Olds, Appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss - The Old Man has apparently returned to the Oldsmobile fold after his momentary aberration with the Pontiac in the previous story. The Oldsmobile is a finicky old car that requires the Old Man to stand on the front bumper and jump up and down while someone inside the car turns the key. It is a very touchy operation.

Flat Tire appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss

Flat Tire, Appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss - A minor blip on the journey to Ollie Hopnoodle's place. The Old Man begins the ritual in silent rage, believing that the tire is flat as a direct insult to his determination to get to Michigan at a decent time.

Bee appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss

Bee, Appears in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss - A bee that seems to hang out about just before cars hit Crystal Lake is well known to Ollie. It has been attacking cars all summer long. This same bee is the one that enters the Shepherd's car and terrifies Mother. After the Old Man stops the car to get rid of the bee, it flies out, never harming anyone.

Polish Food appears in Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Polish Food, Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski - The beginning of the narrator's ill-fated date with the exotic next door neighbor girl, Josephine Cosnowski. Her Polish heritage dictates that they eat stuffed cabbage rather than meatloaf and mashed potatoes. The smell of the cooking is the first indicator to the narrator that something unusual is going on in the neighborhood. Later, the night of his date, he is expected to eat copious quantities of the Polish food prior to departure. He finds that Polish food and his digestive system are not well acquainted.



Ticket to Basketball Game appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski

Ticket to Basketball Game - Appears in The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski - The narrator has a ticket to the big Whiting basketball game, the game of the season. Josie invites the narrator out on a date the night of the game, but he refuses to part with his ticket. It turns out later that he needs his ticket.

Orpheum appears in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose

Orpheum, Appears in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose - The Orpheum is the local theater where everyone goes to see what is currently playing at the theater. This is home territory for the narrator and his friends, and until he brings Daphne Bigelow to the Orpheum, he never realizes just how seedy and dirty the place is.

Supper vs. Dinner appears in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose

Supper vs. Dinner - Appears in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose - When the narrator asks what time he should pick up Daphne, he suggests after supper. Her reply is to correct his terminology, she says he must mean after dinner. Dinner for the narrator is something that happens at three in the afternoon on Sundays, Christmas, New Year's, and Easter. The evening meal for him is supper.

Ed Wynn Fire Chief Hat appears in The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll

Ed Wynn Fire Chief Hat, Appears in The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll - This is a childhood memento that the narrator is wearing when he looks outside his high rise apartment and the hat falls off his head. He immediately calls the doorman to get his hat back for him. The doorman has to fight the kid who picked the hat up to get it back.

Nasturtium Seeds appears in The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll

Nasturtium Seeds, Appears in The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll - The nasturtium seeds are a reminder to the narrator that he is simply not a salesman. He believed that he would be able to sell all the packs of seeds in his set of one dozen, and is only able



to sell some to his mother and his aunts. The packet of seeds still in his box of mementos is a painful reminder of this past failure, and it still affects him as an adult.

Spring Prom appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories

Spring Prom at Cherryhills Country Club, Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - The Prom is a formal event requiring the rental of a summer suit, a date, and a great deal of pomp and circumstance.

Rooster appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories

Rooster, Appears in Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories - This is the place to go after a great event like the Prom. This is where the narrator and Schwartz learn of the effects of two triple bourbons on their virginal stomachs.



Themes

Class Distinction

Many refuse to believe that there is a class system in America, and yet three stories in the collection *Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters* deal with upper class, middle class, and lower class people. Each of the three families is similar in that they are called family. The ways in which they differ are myriad. The Shepherd family is made up of the Old Man, Mother, the narrator, and Randy, the kid brother. They subsist on meatloaf, canned corn, red cabbage, and mashed potatoes. Their life is adequate. There is enough in their budget for them to own a used car, albeit they are the fourth or fifth owner, but they do have a car. The Old Man bowls every Wednesday night and sometimes on Friday night. They usually have turkey for Thanksgiving and ham for Easter. The Old Man works as a salesman for about six days a week. For the reader, they seem to be solid, middle class citizens.

Then the reader is introduced to the Bumpus family, who hail from Kentucky, and move into a rental home in the middle of the night. They play Gene Autry records day and night, they shop daily at the city dump, and create their own surplus store in the back yard. They raise chickens, dogs, goats, and rats. From time to time they even have a possum. Most of the animals are eaten at some time or another. Favorite activities include chewing and spitting, making homemade applejack in the bathroom, using their very own outhouse, and generally procreating like rabbits. The narrator never knows exactly how many human bodies live in the house next door, but there seem to be quite a surplus of babies at all times. They eschew school for the lure of the pool hall and rejoice when their older daughter returns from reformatory school. Emil Bumpus does not work; his family lives on his relief check.

The final family comparison is that of the Bigelow family. Daphne Bigelow attends the same high school as the narrator, and when he first lays eyes on her he realizes that she is head and shoulders above everyone else in the school. As the story progresses, the reader understands why this is the case. She does not hitchhike to school, nor does she pay a dime to ride the school bus. She is chauffeured to school in the family limousine. Her clothing changes daily, whereas the narrator talks about a single pair of pants and a single purple sweater that have seen better days. When they discuss the evening meal, the narrator's family calls it supper, whereas the Bigelows call it dinner. The very long bus ride to the North Side of town shows that the air is cleaner, the trees are taller, and the houses are set far back from the road with lots of room in between. Mr. Bigelow is a chairman at the bank and donated an ice-skating rink to the park. He wants to know if the narrator is related to the Pittsburgh Steel Shepherds, thinking that he is from a wealthy family as well.

Each of the families live near one another, and yet they are all three worlds apart from one another. There are aspirations to achieve the heights of the wealthy, as seen in the reaction of the Old Man when he discovers that his son has asked Daphne Bigelow out



on a date and she accepted. The narrator realizes, however, on the way home that the dreams of his entire family have been dashed, that he has somehow let the entire family down and he really is not sure how or why. His intentions were to show Daphne a good evening, he treated her like a lady, and yet he still did not quite come up to snuff. It might have been interesting for the author to have one of the Bumpus girls come on to the narrator and see just how that played out.

The Best Memories Come From Imperfect Events

Usually the reason an event stays in one's memory for such a very long time is because it was either a painful event or because something went very, very wrong at the time. The narrator's stories focus on remembrances of his past, starting with the arrival of the Bumpus clan next door. Their once quiet lives are disrupted by nonstop country music, the sound of human and animals, and the smells that accompany both. That Easter, as is the tradition in the Shepherd family, they go to the grocery store on the Friday before Easter as a family to choose a ham. The lengthy cooking process tantalizes not only the Old Man and the narrator, but obviously advertises to the entire neighborhood what the Shepherd family will be having for Easter Dinner. The Bumpus hounds are no less attracted to the smell, and when the ham is finally finished and is airing on the table just prior to serving disaster strikes, and the dogs burst into the house, tear the ham from the table, and disappear into the back yard of the Bumpus house and complete the consumption of the ham. A normal Easter Dinner is really not nearly so memorable. So, too, is it with the battle of the spikesies between Scut Farkas and the narrator. The narrator has to practice for weeks on end in order to prepare for the battle of the tops, and when he finally finds a top the equal to the one the bully has, he believes that victory is within his grasp. The contest progresses much as expected, but then the tops seemed to take on minds of their own, and they both disappear down into the sewer where neither boy is able to retrieve his prized possession. Had one or the other won the contest, it would not have nearly as memorable. Think about the trip to the county fair and the annual fishing trip to southern Michigan. Neither trip would be nearly so memorable had the Old Man not been such a memorable disaster magnet. The narrator's kid brother, who has a tendency to get motion sickness, makes a memorable appearance in both events. Additionally, the narrator forgets to pack his fishing gear for the fishing trip, and finds out after hours of trial and tribulation on the journey that his Old Man had packed the gear after all. Believing himself to be in for two whole weeks of misery, the narrator finds himself eternally grateful to his Old Man, and the vacation is saved.

The next area in the narrator's life that is affected by this strange tendency to remember adversity is in his love life. Starting with the exotic Polish girl next door who invites him to her church party, the narrator discovers that what he considers to be "getting lucky" is nothing like what she and her family expect. A quick escape through the darkness, eluding both angry steel-worker uncle and wild-eyed football playing brother, the narrator believes his narrow escape to be fortuitous. His lesson is not yet learned when he finds himself attracted to his Biology lab partner, Daphne Bigelow. He thinks she is nice, and so she is. What he does not expect is to find himself to be so completely



outclassed, for Daphne's father is chairman on the board of the bank, and is the man who donated the ice-skating rink to the park. She lives on the North Side. They have a butler. They also have a chauffeur who drives the two on their date. One date is obviously enough for Daphne, for she does not wish to get a bite to eat at the Rooster after the movie at the Orpheum. Then the narrator moves on to his experience at the Junior Prom. He plans everything, from his rented suit, to the orchid corsage for his date, to how he and Schwartz will split the gas money for the car that night of the prom. His intention is to ask Daphne Bigelow to the prom, but he never actually gets around to it. Almost by accident he actually ends up asking Wanda Hickey, who has had a crush on the narrator for years. For her, it is the night of her dreams. For the narrator, his convertible is flooded in the rainstorm that passes through town, he and Schwartz have no idea what two triple bourbons will do to their neophyte stomachs, and then in an attempt to kiss his date goodbye, the smell of sauerkraut from dinner on her breath nearly does him in right on her doorstep. He makes a hasty escape, just in time to complete the agony of the dating ritual in the privacy provided by a sign down the road. Again, if everything had gone perfectly, the memories would not have been quite so acute, vivid, and remarkable.

One Cannot Escape One's Past

The narrator shares a number of stories from his childhood that are poignant, funny, painful, and impossible to forget. What this does is remind one that the past is what creates the individual of today. Every event that is part of the narrator's experience has had a role in creating the man he has become, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. Of all the stories, *The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll* illustrates this point most effectively. In this story, the narrator receives a box from his mother filled with boyhood treasures, all long forgotten until he sees them again. At the time of the story, the narrator is an adult, living in Manhattan, New York, a long way from Hohman, Indiana both in distance and in expectation. The Life Cereal box that houses the collection of treasures is a lovely metaphor for the story as is the collection of paraphernalia his mother sends to him. Within that box are various items that once meant something very important to the narrator, and with each item he recalls the event when he acquired the item, what else was going on in his life, and how it is affecting him as an adult. Most of the items are long-forgotten toys that he acquired by eating or drinking a certain brand of something and then sending in the required number of box tops in order to receive the item. This tells the reader that the narrator has a truly persevering nature, for it takes quite a bit of organization skills to keep track of the many required labels or box tops. This is likely an unusual skill for a boy unless he has grown up in an environment of frugality and need. Most of the narrator's toys are acquired in this manner. By extrapolation, the stories take place in the late 1930s to the early 1940s, either during the time of the Great Depression, or shortly afterward. Such an experience can shape an individual to acquire items and then have a very hard time letting go of them. By going through the items in the box, the narrator relives some events in his life, some joyous and ebullient, others where he relives the feelings of inadequacy and shame. This is normal, for one's history is what shapes the individual of the present, and the author shares some of his most hilarious and demeaning experiences equally, showing



a rather strangely balanced past. He gives in, temporarily, to the feelings that the items recreate, but then masters them and packs them back into the Life Cereal Box where he stores them on the top shelf of a closet, another metaphor for the memories stored in our mind.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the series of short stories in the collection *Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters* is that of first person, where the narrator is frequently the protagonist. However, the author does create several stories within a story where conflict is created between other characters and the narrator is merely relating the story to the reader. For example, in *The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds*, the narrator is in conflict with Delbert Bumpus, and the Old Man is in conflict with the Bumpus family in general and specifically with the Bumpus hounds in the Sunday Ham incident. The Old Man figures heavily in the stories of *County Fair!*, *Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss* where he battles with his current automobiles, and *the Pontiac and the Olds*, respectively.

The narrator often goes back in time to memories of days gone by, with a truly nostalgic flavor given to the story, lending credence to the fact that the most memorable events are where something does not go as expected. The reader has a pretty good idea of the expectations of the narrator and expects things to go wrong. The narrator stays very true to his point of view, never giving thoughts or ideas of other characters, other than what the narrator discerns himself. He usually knows what his mother or Old Man are thinking, and will enlighten the reader from time to time with that kind of intimate knowledge, but he never enters the minds of any of the other characters, pretending to know their thoughts.

By using the first person point of view, the events are especially poignant. The reader literally climbs into the narrator's skin and experiences each of the incidents first hand, and can laugh or cry as the occasion warrants, knowing exactly how the narrator feels at any given moment. There is plenty of dialogue between characters, but the majority of the stories are written in an expository manner detailing the event, setting, and motivation of each of the characters as understood by the narrator.

Setting

Virtually every short story in the collection *Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters* is located in Hohman, Indiana. This is a very small town at the very northernmost portion of Indiana where the Lake Michigan shoreline allows for fierce winter weather to affect the area, where they are a stone's throw across the polluted lake from Chicago, and where he describes Hohman to be Chicago's broad rear end. The town is encircled by steel mills and oil refineries, city dumps and polluted rivers. It is not at all a genteel neighborhood, but one of blue collar workers who live hand to mouth on a daily basis, shopping either at the local A&P supermarket or Pulaski's general store. The neighborhood is made up of similar families, and notable exceptions are when the hillbilly Bumpus clan from Kentucky moves in next door, and later when the



Polish Cosnowski's move into the same house. The narrator sees these people as foreign; indeed for him, they are. The narrator gives the impression that people live and die in Hohman without ever getting further than Clear Lake, Michigan all their live long days. The fact that the narrator is living in Manhattan, New York is an aberration from the expectation of most of Hohman's population. His way out is to join the military right out of high school. Otherwise, it would be off to the refinery or steel mill as all the fathers before him.

Smaller settings include the description of the Bumpus house after they move into the neighborhood. What used to be a standard home turns old and decrepit overnight as the family uses the yard as a dumping ground, installs an outhouse so that they can brew homemade applejack in the bathroom, and populates a single family home with what seems like dozens of people. The playground at Warren G. Harding School is a specific place that holds a lot of memories for the author, and as a setting is memorable for the drama that unfolds there, from the bullying of Scut Farkas and Grover Dill on the nameless rabble of underling students to the famous battle of the spikesies, Mariah versus Wolf. Class distinction comes into play with the story of Daphne Bigelow, who is of a very wealthy family and lives on the North Side. The mere description of the narrator's bus ride to Daphne's home allows the reader to see the gross class distinction of her neighborhood and his. Back on his own home turf, the narrator speaks intimately of the Orpheum theater with its odors and activities, as well as the Rooster where the double-dating quartet of the narrator and Wanda, Schwartz, and Rosie go for an after-prom celebration. All the settings are described in stunning and intimate detail, allowing the reader to simply step through time and personally join the author on one of his adventures.

Language and Meaning

The language of Wanda Hickey's *Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters* by Jean Shepherd is cleverly wrought. There are the hillbilly Bumpus clan, who speak with an obvious Kentucky accent, "Ah nevah did heah such a crock a hog drippin's" (p. 30), spoken by Delbert Bumpus at school. The entire area of town is populated by blue-collar workers who bowl on Wednesday nights and frequent the Blue Bird Tavern on a regular basis. The narrator's father speaks his mind without question. "Damn Sunday drivers! Stupid sons of bitches!" a result of "His vast catalog of invective—learned in the field, so to speak, back of the stockyard son the South Side of Chicago—had enriched every Sunday-afternoon drive we ever took. Some men gain their education about life at their mother's knee, others by reading yellowed volumes of fiction. I nurtured and flowered in the back seat of the Olds, listening to my father" (p. 134). The author is able to create characters that come so alive that they virtually jump up off the page and introduce themselves to you. His ability to use language to identify character is nearly unparalleled. Shepherd is a master of storytelling, his stories begin as words on a page that he has brought to life many times on his radio programs. With this experience, he is able to create for the reader truly vivid and life-like characters who refuse to leave the reader's mind long after the book has been put down.



By using the vocabulary and terminology of the day and location, Shepherd brings an bygone era back to life for the reader, allowing the opportunity for a trip down memory lane, sparked by a particularly graphic mental image created by his use of language. There are references to less acceptable behavior that the author merely deals with via his humor, despite the potential descent into a darker side of human nature. "Emil grabbed her suitcase and Cassie, the ripest 16-year-old ever to descend on northern Indiana, kissed her father in a way that clouded up windows for blocks around" (p. 31). This is likely a reference to potential incest; as a child, Shepherd would have no understanding of this, but as an adult he realizes just how twisted this situation could have been, especially considering the number of babies he remembers populating the Bumpus house. It is obvious that an adult mind is behind the memories, yet Shepherd works very hard to recreate them in as childlike a way as possible, making them appropriate memories for the Shepherd he was at that time and his chronological age during the event.

Structure

The structure of most of the stories in the collection *Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters* is that of the narrator looking back from his viewpoint as an adult on the events and memories of his childhood days encompassing a period of elementary and high school years. Usually, each story begins with a precipitating event that prompts the narrator to recall a hidden memory, usually because there is something especially painful about the event that he remembers. For example, while watching the movie *State Fair*, with Dick Haymes, reflecting the bucolic Indiana countryside, the narrator is struck by just how different his memory of a county fair truly is from the movie. Even though the narrator is an adult, he seems to be attracted to the things that recall his boyhood days, such as the county fair and the spikesie top, prompted by the sight of Thomas Jefferson's boyhood top. Each story tells of a specific period in the life of the narrator, with all peripheral events that lead up to the main event. The night of the Junior Prom the narrator recalls the agony of deciding who to ask to the dance, and what the protocol is if he plans to go. He and his friend Schwartz go to Al Swank's Formalwear in order to be fitted for the summer suit required for the event. Additional expenses include the corsage for the girl, splitting gas money for the car, and the price of the after-Prom dinner at the Rooster. Each individual event is fraught with dark humor and nostalgic pain, knowing that happiness and heartache forever fight for balance. Shepherd brings to each portion of the story his own perspective, as if it were happening right at the time rather than as a distant memory. This grants the reader a sense of immediacy to either the pain or the hilarity as the events unfold.

By this method, the author shows the reader just how easy it is to take a trip down memory lane, and just how fresh some of those memories can be. It is quite obvious that the author is poking fun at himself, his family, his school, and hometown. What is equally obvious is just how much he treasures those memories, and how important they were in creating the man that he has become. Without every event that he experiences, he would be less of a man today. By demonstrating how a seemingly harmless catalyst can unleash the floodgates of emotions, the author teaches the reader that a trip down



memory lane can be a little painful until one can view it from a perspective of humor. The author's ability to laugh at himself as well as at the entire cast of characters from his past make his collection of stories a perfect example of how to view the past—with a grain of salt and a great sense of humor.

There are a total of eight stories contained in the collection that is named for the final story in the book, Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories. He adds to that title, And Other Disasters, giving the reader the insight that many of his life experiences can be viewed as disasters. What the reader has to understand is that a life that goes smoothly and perfectly is unremarkable and truly unmemorable. By recalling the very events that did NOT go as planned, the author takes day to day, mundane activities in the lives of the average middle-class American of the era and brings them vividly to life. Each story is a unit unto itself; however, a number of characters do show up in several stories, especially the narrator's family, friends, and nemesis, Skut Farkas.



Quotes

"My old man, my mother, my kid brother and I slogged along in the great tradition. The old man had his high point every Wednesday at George's Bowling Alley, where he once rolled a historic game in which he got three consecutive strikes. My kid brother's nose ran steadily, winter and summer. My mother made red cabbage, peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches, meat loaf and Jell-O in an endless stream. And I studied the principal exports of Peru at the Warren G. Harding School." *The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds*, p. 16

"She was right. We were living next door to a tightly knit band of total slobs, a genuine gypsy family. The Bumpuses were so low down on the evolutionary totem pole that they weren't even included in Darwin's famous family tree. They had inbred and ingrown and finally emerged from the Kentucky hills like some remnant of Attila the Hun's barbarian horde. Flick said that they had webbed feet and only three toes. It might have been true." *The Grandstand Passion Play of Delbert and the Bumpus Hounds*, p. 27

"It was now well past noon, but we were getting close. Far ahead, we could see the enormous, billowing cloud of dust that rose from the fairgrounds. Excitement mounted in the Pontiac as we shimmied closer and closer to the scene of the action. Suddenly, with a great hissing, scalding roar, the radiator of the car ahead boiled over. Drops of red, rusty sludge streaked down over our windshield and splattered on the hood." *County Fair!*, p. 56

"It was then that the operator turned the power on full. Everything that had gone before was only a warmup. Our necks snapped back as the Rocket Whip accelerated. I was not touching the seat at any point. Jack-knifed over the bar, I saw that one of my shoes had been wrenched off my foot. At that moment, with no warning, my kid brother let it all go. His entire day's accumulation of goodies, now marinated and pungent, gushed out in a geyser. The car spun crazily. The air was filled with the atomized spray of everything he had ingested for the past 24 hours. Down we swooped." *County Fair!*, p. 86

"We were a long way from the parking lot, which was over on the other side of the race track, about four miles away. We slogged doggedly through drifting mountains of candy wrappers, cigar butts, apple cores and cow flop; past tents full of canned lima beans and crocheted doilies, sweetheart pillows and gingerbread men, past shooting galleries and harvester machines and, finally, as the rain was really beginning to come down hard, we reached the car. We joined the procession of mud-splattered vehicles inching painfully, bumper to bumper, toward the distant highway." *County Fair!*, P. 89

"Farkas' secret was not in his choice of weapons alone. He had the evil eye. We all have seen this eye at one time or another in our lives, glimpsed fleetingly, perhaps, for a terrifying, paralyzing moment on the subway, among a jostling throng on the sidewalk in the midst of a riotous Saturday night, peering from the gloom through the bars of a deathhouse cell in a B movie at the Orpheum, or through the steamy, aromatic air of the



reptile house. It is not easy to describe the effect that Farkas' eye had on the playground of the Warren G. Harding School. I know that such a thing is anatomically not possible, but Farkas' eye seemed to be of the purest silver-gray, totally unblinking and glowing from within with a kind of gemlike hardness. These eyes, set in his narrow, high-cheeked weasel face above a sharp, runny nose, have scarred forever the tender psyches of countless preadolescents. Many's the kid who awakened screaming, drenched in a cold sweat in the dead of night, dreaming wild nightmares of being chased over fences, under porches, through garages by that remorseless weasel face. The closest thing I have ever seen to the less general quality, both physical and spiritual, of Scut Farkas was when, on a sunny afternoon on a Florida dock, I came face to face with a not-quite-deceased, eight-foot mako shark. Scut Farkas, at ten, was a man not to be trifled with." Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah, pp. 98-99

"Vaguely uneasy, I turned, one foot out on the sidewalk, the other on the greasy floor, my Keds ready to spring for the Elgin. She had disappeared into the back of the store behind a beaded curtain. She re-emerged into the murky gloom, carrying a cardboard Quaker Oats box. She set it down on the counter and began fishing in it with a withered claw. I waited, figuring she was going to spring a yo-yo on me, a toy for boobs and idiots, a sop for the untalented." Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah, p. 105

"For a few moments it seemed as though Wolf was doomed, but then, righting itself, it shouldered Mariah closer. Impossibly, the two seemed to pick up speed as they spun. Angrier and angrier they grew, until suddenly, with a lunge, the two tops smashed together, both reeling in tandem in a mad, locked, spinning embrace together over the line and out of the circle. The rain, falling steadily, pattered down on the two hazy forms in the misty air." Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah, p. 118

"He was warming up for the bid scenes yet to come. As traffic fighters go, he was probably no more talented nor dedicated than most other men of his time. But what he lacked in finesse he more than made up for in sheer ferocity. His vast catalog of invective—learned in the field, so to speak, back of the stockyards on the South Side of Chicago—had enriched every Sunday-afternoon drive we ever took. Some men gain their education about life at their mother's knee, others by reading yellowed volumes of fiction. I nurtured and flowered in the back seat of the Olds, listening to my father." Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, p. 134

"It was then that the bombshell struck. Oh, no! OH, NO! I slumped deep down into the seat, a two-pound box of rice sliding from the shelf behind me and pouring its contents down the back of my neck. The Oldsmobile boomed on toward Clear Lake and its fighting three-ounce sunfish, its seven-inch bluegills and its five-inch perch, all waiting for me under lily pads, beside submerged logs and in the weed beds. Oh, no! I had left all my fishing tackle in the garage, all piled up next to the door, where I had taken it the night before to make sure I wouldn't forget it! Every sinker, every bobber, every hook I had saved for, polished, loved and cherished stood all neatly piled up back home in the garage." Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, p. 136



"Two and a half hours later, we were up to our hubs in a swamp. Overhead, four large crows circled angrily at the first disturbance their wilderness had seen in years. After backing and filling for half an hour, we finally managed to regain semisolid ground on the corduroy road that we had been thumping over for the past hour or so. None of us spoke. We long ago had learned not to say a word in times like these." Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, p. 143

"A huge belch welled its way up from the dark hidden caves of my body. I couldn't control it. It rumbled deep in my throat like a passing freight train laden with smoked hams and late fall turnips. My fellow eater burped amiably through his handlebar mustache and gulped down another two liters of beer." The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski, p. 202

"Josie smiled. Like a greased pig. I darted off through the doorway, threading my way through the crowd like a halfback on an off-tackle slant. I edged past a table where nuns were selling gingerbread men and cider. Again I caught a glimpse of Howie, who looked more harassed than ever as he handed doughnuts around to his crowd of kids. It was a sight that chilled the marrow. I worked my way up a stairway against a stream of people who were working their way down. I was in the vestibule, moving like a shadow. And now I was at the door." The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski, p. 211

"They both turned to look for Josephine. I saw my chance and took it. Like a flash, I was out the door. Behind me I could hear the Polka All-Stars going into high gear for the second set. I darted across the crusted ice, catching a fleeting impression of the door slamming open against the wall behind me as Stosh, all his magnificent killer instincts turned up to full, lumbered into the backfield. I knew I'd have to come back for the car later. Around a concrete wall I shot, Stosh huffing behind me, through a hedge, across a street, down an alley, through a used-car lot, past the Ever Rest Funeral Parlor And Furniture Store, down another alley and then a long, dark street. Stosh moved surprisingly well for a giant, but after what seemed hours, he finally gave up the chase. I continued to run, blindly, hysterically, sensing that I was running not from just Stosh or Stanley, but from what happened to Howie, from the doughnuts, the toadstools, the ladies with the shawls—all of it!" The Star-crossed Romance of Josephine Cosnowski, p. 212

"From that deceptively unprepossessing yet starkly symbolic beginning, our love took root and grew. By the end of the third week we were on a first-name basis. This may seem a small achievement, but it is not every man who is privileged to call a genuine goddess by her first name, and to be answered in kind." Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose, p. 218

"I glanced up at the clock hanging over the stove, a clock of purest white plastic made in the form of a large chicken, with two red hands. It didn't have actual numbers to mark the hours; instead, golden plastic letters marched around the rim spelling out: 'It hasn't scratched yet.' My mother had gotten the clock by saving Bon Ami cleanser labels. It was considered the most beautiful thing in that part of the house." Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Noose, p. 237



"Gradually the neighborhoods changed, until at last I was on the North Side. The bus rarely stopped now. Few got on or off except an occasional maid or elderly people carrying little bundles. Somehow the night was different over here: darker and yet more exciting. I watched the trees grow thicker and higher outside the bus window—hedges and graveled walks, until finally we reached my stop. I got off, and the bus roared on. Again I was alone under a streetlight. There were no Bull Durham signs. Mr. Kissel was light-years away. Even the street sign was different from those on the other side of town; a kind of carved Olde English sort of plaque swung in the breeze under the short, stubby little street lamp: WAVERLY STREET." Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Moose, p. 239

"Mr. Bigelow settled back in his deep leather armchair and for the first time really looked at me. It was then, inexplicably, that my sports coat began to glow in the dark. His beautifully cut muted mocha creation looked like no suit I had ever seen before. It was not a Cleveland Street pick-'em-off-the-pipe-rack special. Even I knew it. My father's only good suit was a kind of yellowish color with a tasty Kelly-green plaid. Its lapels, high and sweeping, jutted out like the mainsails on a Spanish galleon. He always wore his lodge button stuck in the left sail, a pin the size of a nickel made in the shape of a Sacred Beaver. He belonged to the Royal Order of the Beaver, Dam 28. Mr. Bigelow wore no pins." Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-chilling Saga of the Snail-encrusted Tinfoil Moose. p. 245

"Then, from deep inside the box came another sound, a faint honking, as of some ancient flivver caught in a long-forgotten traffic jam. It stopped. Maybe it was the duck, maybe the horn, maybe Christmas itself; but I found myself rising slowly from the camel seat, picking up my pair of shears and standing over the vast carton. From some remote apartment came the unmistakable beat of that new smash Christmas hit The King Wenceslas Rock by the Bullwhip Four. Taking a deep breath, I plunged the shears into the top of the box. There was no turning back. As I sawed away, I began to be conscious of a rising twinge of apprehension. What was in this box? After all, as a kid, I had had a lot of things in my possession at one time or another that I would not want my mother to know about. Furthermore, it came as a somewhat nasty shock that this stuff was still in existence." The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll, pp. 266-67

"I tucked the stamp collection well back under the middle sofa cushion and moodily sipped my drink. Maybe that was the first misstep, I thought. Maybe if I had paid for those stamps, I could have marched through life clear-eyed, clean, honest, straight to the White House. I'll bet Lyndon Johnson paid for his stamps! On second thought, however. . ." The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll, p. 275-276

"Retreating hastily—clicking with each step—I mumbled my thanks and slammed the door. There was no doubt about it. I knew I would have to move. When the doorman told this story around, I would be cooked." The Return of the Smiling Wimpy Doll, p. 291

"Wanda, Schwartz and Clara Mae piled in on the damp, soggy seats and we took off. Do you know what happens to a maroon-wool carnation on a white-serge lapel in a



heavy June downpour in the Midwest, where it rains not water but carbolic acid from the steel-mill fallout? It had a dark, wide, spreading maroon stripe that went all the way down to the bottom of my white coat. My French cuffs were covered with grease from fighting the top, and I had cracked a thumbnail, which was beginning to throb." Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories, p. 341

"Swiftly, I brought the bourbon to my lips, intending to down it in a single devil-may-care draught, the way Gary Cooper used to do in the Silver Dollar Saloon. I did, and Schwartz followed suit. Down it went—a screaming 90-proof rocket searing savagely down my gullet. For an instant, I sat stunned, unable to comprehend what had happened. Eyes watering copiously, I had a brief urge to sneeze, but my throat seemed to be paralyzed. Wanda and Clara Mae swam before my misted vision; and Schwartz seemed to have disappeared under the table. He popped up again—face beat-red, eyes bugging, jaw slack, tongue lolling." Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories, p. 345

"I knew what was expected of me now. Her eyes closed dreamily. Swaying slightly, I leaned forward—and the faint odor of sauerkraut from her parted lips coiled slowly up to my nostrils. This was not in the script. I knew I had better get off that porch fast, or else. Backpedaling desperately and down the stairs, I blurted, 'Bye!' and—fighting down my rising gorge—clamped my mouth tight, leaped into the Ford, burned rubber and tore off into the dawn. Two blocks away, I squealed to a stop alongside a vacant lot containing only a huge Sherwin-Williams painting sign. WE COVER THE WORLD, it aptly read. In the blessed darkness behind the sign, concealed from prying eyes, I complete the final rite of the ceremony." Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories, p. 349



Topics for Discussion

If a family like the Bumpuses moved next door to you, what would be your reaction? Why? If there were legal recourse would you use it? If not, what could you do?

Why is the ham debacle so spectacular? Would it have been as big a deal to the Old Man if the hounds had come in and stolen a meatloaf? Explain.

Discuss tradition and the ham incident. Do you have a similar tradition with as much pomp and circumstance attached? Describe it.

Describe your most memorable day at a fair. Is it memorable because it was the best day you ever had or because something specific happened? Explain.

Discuss the parenting skills of the narrator's parents while at the Fair. What would you have done differently? Why?

Discuss the narrator's approach to the battle of the tops with Scut Farkas. What prompts the narrator to try to best the bully? Why does he believe he can win? Who is the winner?

In Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, the narrator's father is a character of great contrasts. Identify and describe them.

As demonstrated in Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss, the most memorable events are usually the ones where everything seems to go wrong. Write about just such an event in your life. Why do you remember it so well?

Describe a date with the boy or girl of your dreams. Was it everything you expected? Or was it nothing like you expected? Explain and compare your experience with that of the narrator.

What is it about things foreign and unusual that draws one? Describe the narrator's expectations and how they were or were not met in *The Star-Crossed Romance*.

Why is it such a big deal for the narrator to have a date with Daphne Bigelow? Explain, using details from the text.

Compare and contrast the elements of anticipation and expectation with reality in Daphne Bigelow and the Spine-Chilling Saga of the Snail-Encrusted Tinfoil Noose

Why is the narrator so reluctant to open the package sent by his mother? Do his feelings change? Explain.

Discuss the issue of the stamps. How does the narrator handle them now? What does his behavior suggest?



Compare and contrast the rituals of puberty as described in the story of the Micronesian adolescents and those of the narrator and his friends.

Why is Wanda Hickey a better date for the Junior Prom than Daphne Bigelow would have been?