By Thornton W. Burgess

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

Life is real and life is stern.
Each his place in it must earn.
—Old Mother Nature.

Homer the Roamer was Farmer Brown's Boy's pet homing or carrier pigeon. There was Mrs. Homer too, but it was Homer to whom Farmer Brown's Boy gave most of his attention.

"It is about time you learned to do a little flying," said Farmer Brown's Boy, as he watched Homer strutting about in the dooryard. He was bobbing, bowing and cooing to Mrs. Homer who was paying no attention to him whatever. "Yes, sir, it is time you did a little flying," repeated Farmer Brown's Boy.

Of course Homer paid no attention to this. Of course he didn't understand what Farmer Brown's Boy said. It would have made no difference if he had understoood. The truth is, Homer the Roamer thought he was a pretty good flyer as it was. He and his pretty mate had done a lot of flying every pleasant day. Sometimes they had gone so far away that even where way up in the air they couldn't see home. But always they knew where home was.

The very next day Homer had a strange experience. Farmer Brown's Boy put him in a box. He put the box in his car, and drove off. Homer was being taken for a ride. It was a strange experience. He never had had a ride before. He was a little frightened at first. He couldn't see outside the car. He didn't know where he was being taken, or why.

At long last the car stopped. Homer's ride was at an end. What was going to happen now? Homer was a litttle anxious. He didn't know what to make of it. It was all so strange, that he couldn't help but be a bit frightened.

Gently Farmer Brown's Boy took him from the box. He held him carefully so as not to hurt him in any way. All the time he talked to him soothingly. He took Homer into an open field. There he did an odd thing. He gently tossed Homer up in the air. Still a little frightened, but not too much so, Homer flew. Up, up he went. When he was quite high up he began to circle. He circled several times. Each time the circle was bigger. Down below, Farmer Brown's Boy stood watching him. Perhaps at first Homer was just a little bit panicky. Everything down below was strange. Everything in all directions as far as he could see was strange. He didn't start straight for home, because at first he didn't know in what direction home lay. But after he had circled several times, he stopped circling, and started off straight-a-way. He was headed straight for home, and he knew it. How he knew it, he couldn't have said. He just knew, that was all. It was for all the world as if in that small head of his, there was a compass that gave him the right direction to start with and kept him going in the right direction.

He flew hard and fast. Suddenly he began to recognize things below him. He flew all the faster. There way in the distance ahead of him was Farmer Brown's house and barn and other buildings. He flew faster, or tried to. He wanted to get back to join Mrs. Homer in the loft where they had a nest. He knew she was sitting on two eggs. He wanted to get home. Never had he felt that call of home as he felt it now.

He was there cooing at the entrance to the loft when Farmer Brown's Boy got back. Farmer Brown's Boy looked up at him. "Next time," said he, "you'll be taken for a little longer ride." Homer the Roamer paid no attention to him whatever.

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All night long the big flakes of snow had fallen. Big, fluffy, lazy flakes they were, and they kept heaping up on the branches of the trees, on the tops of the fence posts, and on the top of Susan's house across the way.

Laurie woke up, crawled to the foot of his bed, and looked out. "Come, Mommy, come!" he called. "Just see the lovely snow. Doesn't it look beautiful? I can see all the snow on Susan's roof from here. I must hurry and get dressed."

Soon he was downstairs. "Give me my cod liver oil and tomato juice," he called to his mother, as he sat in at the table. "Is my porridge cool? I want to be able to play hard today."

"Just take your time laughed Mrs. Page. "Three year old boys need to take time to eat, or their food won't be any good to them."

"All right, I'll eat slowly, but please, Mommy, don't let Frisky out. He'll make tracks and spoil the beautiful snow."

"What a boy you are!" said his mother, "but Frisky can wait for you."

It wasn't too long before Laurie was out. Frisky raced here and there, with Laurie running after him, both of them trying to be everywhere at once.

Just then Susan and her two year old brother David arrived along.

"Let's make roads in the snow," said Laurie. "I'll be the snow plow because there is a box on my sleigh."

Soon the orchard was like a big highway with little roads here and there. David trotted along behind Susan, falling every now and then, but still having fun.

As for Frisky, he went off by himself. That snowplow of Laurie's spoiled all his little dog roads.

"Isn't this great fun?" Susan said as she pushed her sleigh around a sharp turn in the road. "Beep beep, Laurie, move your snow plow to let my car past."

"I'm all done plowing the roads now," said Laurie. "Let's just haul wood on our roads. See how nice and smooth they are."

And for the rest of that morning the roads in the Page Orchard were very, very busy highways indeed.

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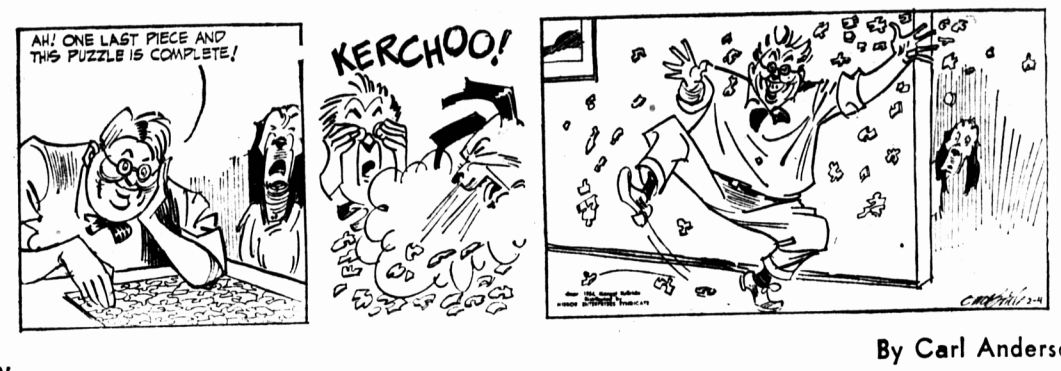

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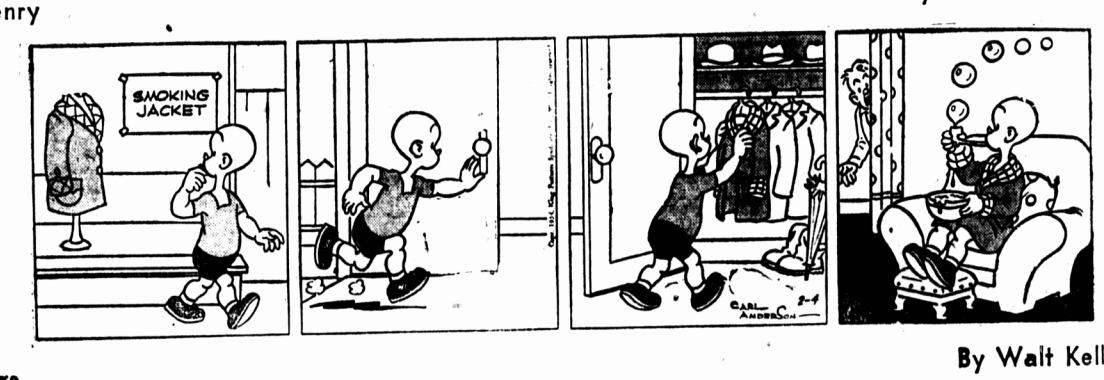

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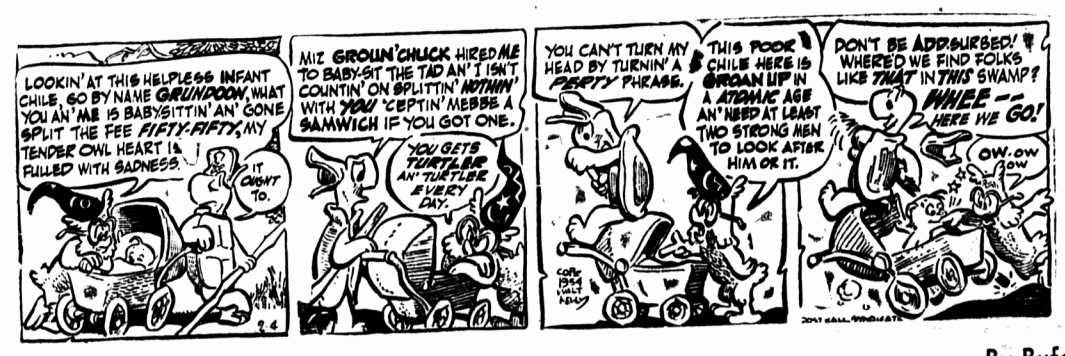

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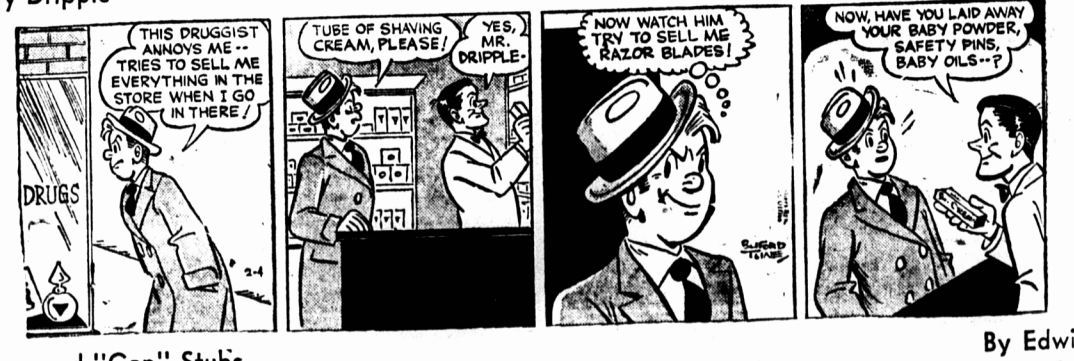

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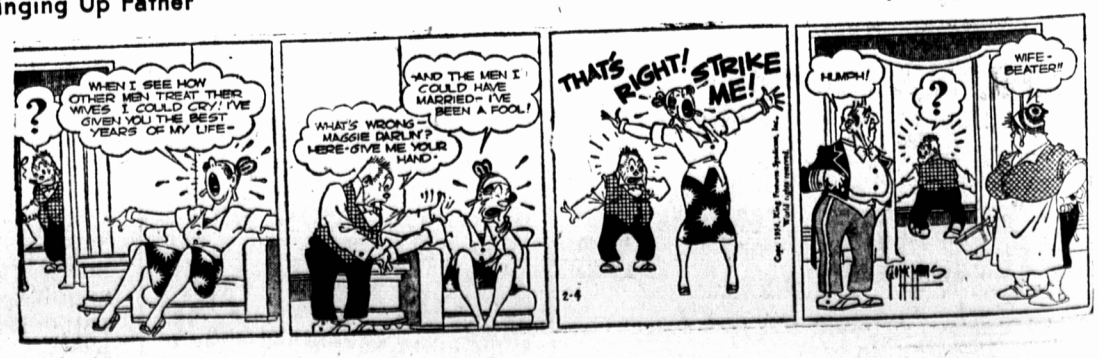

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