

THE DUTCHMAN'S BEARD

After Mother and Dad moved to town from out on the river Dad went to work for Uncles Sam, Bryan, and Hank, at the service station for several years. His job for the most part was driving the delivery truck, hauling gasoline, oil, and kerosene, to other service stations and retail fuel to the farmers in the area of Thomas.

Many of the customers were the Amish Dutch farmers, these people who are from Pennsylvania Dutch origin. Most of them came to Oklahoma from that region of the country, however some of them came from the area of Georgia.

The Amish. A peculiar people who dressed plain, the men wore black hats, if they were married they wore a beard, all clothing was hand made using traditional patterns, there were no buttons, zippers, or belt, fastening was accomplished by suspenders and wire hook-and-eyes, thus the slang reference (Hook-n-Eye Dutch). German Mennonite farmers lived Southwest of Thomas.

The Amish women wore plain dress from colors of white, blue, purple, or black, if married the ladies wore bonnets and a very plain wedding band with a single aim in life, EXCELLENCE as Mother, wife, cook, and DILIGENT Bible teacher taking most serious their duty as instructor of the young women who were to someday be a glory to their husband.

Outside of the house every Amish farmer was master from fence row to fence row, when he crossed the threshold into the home his wife and children made him a honored and cherished guest, but woe to the whiskered Dutchman who intended to exert unreasonable control there, it is his wife's house!

A quiet people holding to Bible teachings in all things, all of the Amish that I knew, farmed for a living using horses for most farm work, but some tractors and other engine powered equipment. They had no electricity on their farms, lighting at night, cooking, brooding chickens, etc., was done with kerosene. They never owned automobiles or trucks so horse and buggy or wagon was used for all transport.

The most striking thing about their farms was that everything was painted white, houses and buildings, green farm equipment, and black buggies. Their fences were always stretched tight, lawns cut short, not a weed to be seen, well cared for gardens and orchards, so much hard hand work that everything was clean and cared for it looked out of place in a land that was known for dry and dusty.

When you drove into their driveway the boys would stop and look at you like you was a stranger from another planet with your automobile, western boots, and clothing with buttons, zippers, belts, and sometimes colorful print shirts. Once I saw how amused two young boys were when they saw me step out wearing a green hat, to the embarrassment of their Father they laughed, then hid their faces behind their Father's back. Thinking how silly I must have looked to them, I too was amused at my gaudiness standing in the midst of their plain, clean, but wonderful surroundings. The girls and women would always disappear into the house until you were gone. I

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always wondered what an Amish girl looked like other than a full skirted dress, two white cotton stockings at the bottom, and two braids of hair at the top, running the other way as if they had just seen the Devil himself.

One evening Dad drove the fuel delivery truck home from work. Came in on the back porch and began to pull a bucket of water out from the cistern with the rope and pulley when Mother ask, "Why did you drive the fuel delivery home from work?"

I have to make a delivery to Custer City in the morning, since this is half way I drove the delivery home leaving the pickup truck at the station in town.

Where are you going with that bucket of water?

To wash the blood out of the delivery.

What blood?

The Dutchman's blood.

What happened?

I was delivering fuel out in the Amish community when I saw this Dutchman run out of a driveway with a bunch of other Dutchmen chasing him.

What had he done?

He hadn't done anything, they were trying to stop him before he ran until he bled to death.

What had happened to him?

Well, that group of men were grinding feed for the horses and cattle when one of them bent over to pick up something and the flat belt on the grinder grabbed his beard flipping it around the pulley ripping the skin loose from his face.

Pulled his beard out?!

No, just tore the skin loose from his ear to his chin, but not completely off.

Did they catch him?

No, he was running too fast, but I caught him.

You did? How?

When I drove up to the men who were chasing him, one of them ran up to the side of the truck and shouted, "Catch him with your truck before he runs himself to death!"

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In about a quarter of a mile I caught up with him and hollered out the window and shouted, "Get in the truck!"

He just looked at me real wild like and replied, "I can't visit with you now Frank. I'm going to the doctor!"

Oh my! How far was it to the doctor?

About eight miles.

Is he all right?

Yes. But don't ever try to reason with an excited Dutchman!

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