

Humor II

Another horse story concerns the farmer who loaded his wagon and drove to the neighboring town to sell his produce. Soon a customer came by, the owner of a store who had done business with the farmer on previous occasions. "What are you selling today?" The farmer whispered in his ear, "Oats." "Why the secrecy?" asked the merchant. "S-s-sh," breathed the farmer. "Not so loud. I don't want the horse to hear."

Colebrook used to abound with stories about Clarence Stotts, the owner-operator of the Colebrook Store. Stottsie was a good man, but not the most astute store owner. I don't know whether the following yarn took place before or after the incident with the lantern, where he refused to sell one of the three he had hanging up behind the register because he hadn't sold one for so long that he didn't know where to order its replacement.

One day Stottsie and Bob Whiting were in the back office, the one that held all the town documents, because he was the Town Clerk, playing checkers, when Bob heard the front door open and then someone walking around. "Stottsie, hadn't you better go up front and see what that customer wants?" "No need to, - if we're quiet, maybe he'll go away."

Back in the 1930s, when these hills were overrun with summer visitors, most of whom came from the New York City area, a summer never passed without some sort of interaction between the visitors and the indigenous farm animals. One day a "paying visitor", who was boarding at Homer Deming's Robertsville farm, was watching Homer's daughter, Ruth, milk one of their Guernseys. This was a special cow, and was being milked outside the barn rather than inside, standing in a stanchion.

So this evening, while the visitor watched the milking process, Homer's hired hand came out of the barn and hollered to Ruth "Watch out, here comes the bull!" The city man jumped the fence in one bound and sought refuge in the milk shed. Carefully sticking his head out to look around, he was surprised to see that Ruth hadn't budged, nor had she changed her milking rhythm. He had looked out at the exact time to see the bull come to a sliding stop no more than five feet from the cow and Ruth, heard him give a sort of apologetic snort and meekly return to his enclosure. "Weren't you scared to death?" asked the New Yorker.

"Not me", said Ruth, "but I'll bet the bull was. I happen to know that the bull is near-sighted, and this cow here is his mother-in-law."

Shortly after the new Colebrook Consolidated School opened in 1949, the third graders were assigned the project of writing a paper using the title "A Bird and a Beast." We won't use any last names here, because the grandchildren of the writer of the paper we are about to tell you of are going to the same school currently.

"A Bird and a Beast"

“The bird I am going to write about is the Owl. The Owl cannot move his eyes, and cannot see at all in the daytime and at night is as blind as a bat.

I do not know much about the Owl, so I will go on to the beast, which I am going to choose. It is the Cow. The Cow is a mammal. It has six sides – right, left, upper and below, and at the back it has a tail, on which hangs a brush. With this it drives the flies away so that they will not get in the milk. The head is at the other end and is for the purpose of growing horns so that the mouth can go anywhere it wants. The horns are to butt with, and the mouth is to moo with. Under the cow hangs the milk. It is arranged for milking. When people milk, the milk comes and there is never an end to the supply. How the cow does it I have not yet figured out, but it makes more and more.

The cow has a fine sense of smell; you can smell her from far away. This is the reason for the fresh air in the country.

The man cow is called a bull. It is not a mammal. The cow does not eat much, but what it does eat it eats twice, so that it gets enough. When it is hungry, it moos, and when it says nothing, it is because its insides are full up with grass.”

There seems to be no end to the garbled comments attributed to Yogi Berra, even though it has been decades since he hung up his catcher’s mitt. If I’m not mistaken there have even been books published on the subject, but here is one that supposedly is true (but weren’t most of them?) that seems to have been overlooked, but is typical Yogi:

During an interview session, one of the reporters observed that Yogi had the most beat-up, disreputable-looking suitcase imaginable, and asked “Why don’t you treat yourself to a new suitcase, you certainly ought to be able to afford one.” “What for?” argued Yogi. “The only time I ever use it is when I travel.”

There exists a good-natured ribbing between adjacent rural communities in these Foothills of the Berkshires, and it is not uncommon for one town to perpetuate some untruth about its neighbor only to have that community respond with an even bigger exaggeration – and so on. I know of one case of rivalry between Colebrook and Norfolk that Norfolk wins hands down. It undoubtedly has to do with the fact that Norfolk has eateries and Colebrook doesn’t. The fact of the matter is that Norfolk has had confirmed flying saucer sightings, while Colebrook has been left out in the cold on the subject. This sighting came about one evening back in 1998 on the opening day of fishing season. A hungry customer came into The Pub carrying his extended fishing rod, which in his need for sustenance, he had neglected to shorten. Striding onto the crowded floor, he inadvertently came up behind a waitress carrying a full tray of plates and saucers, and the resulting explosion was observed by several trustworthy and reliable Norfolk patrons.

Historic Bytes
Bob Grigg