

tion as a fear of desolation, fear of Grandmother's going away from me, just as she had before. I waded out to my favorite rock and sat down, while I contemplated that episode. I had never quite forgiven Grandmother for smiling and offering me no pity when I was so overcome with fear, but now I felt that I was stumbling on the brink of the explanation. I watched a bird sail out of sight into the distance, and with that illustration of eternal space came the answer. Grandmother had smiled not from lack of sympathy, but in spite of it. She had wanted me to start toward that dental chair under my own power. Understanding, I realized what a fool I had been to doubt her. I thought of her hands and of the security they symbolized to me. I realized that they remained unchanged, and would remain unchanged until the time when I smiled good-bye to her just as she had smiled to me.

## *The Rise and Fall of Herbert Oswald Smith*

Tom Pease

**H**erbert Oswald Smith was a very singular man, and he decided that the world was not a fit place in which to live. And so, one fine day when the mood was strong within his manly chest, he found himself a large and comfy cave that completely suited his simple needs, and announced to the world that no longer to man's conventions would he be a slave. But Herbert Oswald soon found out that living in a cave is about as easy as carrying water in a sieve. For it happened one bright morning while Herbert was using a near-by stream as a mirror, so that he could see to trim his beard, that a pebble fell into the water with a large ker-plunk! and caused Herbert's image to become all blurred and ragged. This turned out to be a very bad thing indeed, for as fate would have it the razor which Herbert was using was speckled with rust, and its blade was quite jagged. And when he stopped screaming and looked again at his reflection on the mirror-like surface of the stream he discovered to his dismay that on the left side of his face he was completely unearled! But this small tragedy did not daunt Herbert Oswald, for he had always been a one-sided man and this just made it more pronounced.

The years went slowly on their way, and each day would find Herbert sitting in front of his cave clothed in a squirrel skin breech-clout and scoffing at the world and its trouble. For Herbert always said (to no one in particular except the neighboring chipmunks and racoons), "Trouble is nothing but a bubble." And that is exactly what it was, but it burst the day Herbert saw what he supposed to be a squirrel's tail sticking

out from a clump of bushes, and on it he pounced. Because, as luck would have it, the tail turned out to be the endpiece of an especially large and ferocious black bear. Unfortunately for Herbert Oswald this choice bit of knowledge came when it was far too late to be of any use. And in spite of his polite bowings and "pardon-me-ings", which were very forgiving and quite profuse, the highly annoyed bear uncurled an authoritative left hook which sent Herbert's one good ear flying in the general direction of the state of Delaware.

This sad event caused Herbert no end of grief and misery; in fact, it made him lose his faith in the advantages of the outdoor life to such an extent that he hurriedly made himself a squirrelskin knapsack, packed it with his few belongings, and strode off with grim determination in the direction of the nearest metropolis. For bouncing around in Herbert Oswald's mind was a grand idea, and deep down within Herbert's singular self he knew it could not miss. And he was right! People were exceedingly willing to pay large prices to glimpse the man who had fought with nature's elements and who had lost both ears in the strife.

Fame came quickly to Herbert Oswald, as it does to all men who have something different to show the world, and it was not long before Herbert was snowed under with money. People stopped to gaze at him with awe as he walked down the avenue in his hand-made alligator shoes and his custom-tailored grey suit. Great authors wrote great books about the man who had lived the hermit's life and who had lost two ears enroute. Yes, fame made Herbert Oswald's life overflow with an excess of pleasant things to do, and every day that he arose was sunny.

Then one dark day Herbert Oswald fell victim to a commercial on the radio which solemnly declared, "A man is not a real man who does not wear a hat. Buy one today and face the world with a smile." And so Herbert did, a fancy white homburg with a green feather, which the clerk assured him was in the very latest style. But Herbert Oswald Smith reckoned without his ears and the hat fell over his eyes, causing him to take a fatal plunge into a conveniently open man-hole for which he was totally unprepared.

And therein, somewhere between the lines, rests the moral of this tale: Fate may push you down the path of Fame and make you famous, rich, and carefree for a time—but when that Fame attacks the space between your ears it makes your ego grow by prodigious leaps and bounds, and your life is hardly worth a dime. And when you have no ears at all, your chances are as nil as those of fizzed-out ginger ale.