The house was really a studio. Books filled the shelves and lay around on the tables. Here and there were objects in the process of construction—chairs being caned, dresses being stitched, lectures being composed.

I shared the northwest room with my mother, and possessed a corner of it. Here was my desk, facing a window. In addition to birds’ nests, odd rocks, ink bottles, paper weights, preserved insects, books, and magnifying glasses, there was usually a cat on the blotter. Beside the desk stood a bookcase filled with a heterogeneous collection of books, pamphlets, and card files. The surrounding wall was covered with maps and a small bulletin board; in the corner lay my botany field equipment—plant-press, pack, and vasculum.

Only a few blocks west sprawled the university where my mother taught. The main hall consisted of three buildings connected by towers. At sunrise or sunset I loved to stand under the two hemlocks at the west of the hall and look down its long, sun-touched side, to see the light bring out the pinkness of the granite and glint on the leaded windows.

Down the hillside beyond the hemlocks lay the canal, and a little farther, the river. In the spring, violets, false anemone, squirrel corn, and marigolds lined the sides of the tow-path, and the grotesque heads of horse-tail rushes pushed up through the gravel. By the river the wild garlic filled the air with its lusty smell, and the current rushed waist high. In summer, sand bars stretched down the middle, and the trees on the bank shaded myriads of mosquitoes. During the fall, the riverside sheltered many a campfire. In the winter, chunks of ice piled up along the shores, and every noise was sharp.

One person around whom my home life turned was Grandmother. Her capable hands, wearing a turquoise ring green with age, were a symbol of security to me. Those hands ended children, cooked, scrubbed, stitched, and ran scales. They were gentle when caring for my great grandmother, and strong when administering a spanking.

In the kitchen, Grandmother all but covered herself with a muslin apron, trimmed around with bright tape. She turned out cakes, pies, loaves, and meats, spurning all artificial flavorings. When I was a youngster, Saturday baking enchanted me. First of all, I examined and tasted each ingredient. I made a game of seeing if I could stick my finger into the mixing bowl.
without being caught by the stirring spoon. Finally, there was
the joy of licking the bowl.

I used to go with Grandmother to the A. and P. Store
on Saturday nights. That was a bright, noisy world. The
shiny tin cans, gaudy soap-boxes, enticing fruits piled layer on
layer were exciting. I careened up one aisle and down the other,
pushing a cart almost as tall as I. On the way home, Grand-
mother would tuck my hand into the crook of her arm, and we
would talk and laugh together.

One morning I awoke with a toothache. A sick feeling
started to spread over me, and I felt the corners of my mouth
draw down in fear as a dental appointment was made for me.
When the time came, I allowed Grandmother to lead me to the
dentist's. I was horrified when she left me outside the office,
and could not believe it when she smiled good-bye. Since there
was nothing else to do, I turned and tottered toward the chair
alone. I felt betrayed, and my imagination turned her smile
into a leer.

Soon after that, I entered school, became independent, and
spent many hours away from home. Grandmother baked on
Saturday while I studied, and I went to the movies while she
marketed. Grandmother's spare moments were taken by Great
Grandmother, now bedridden, who demanded attention even at
midnight and left Grandmother sleepy and exhausted. Occasion-
ally we played Fish, or Old Maid together. Even less fre-
quently we had long discussions on religion, philosophy, or am-
bition. But our viewpoints were two generations apart; it was
seldom that we agreed, and we often argued fiercely. Never-
theless, Grandmother maintained a remarkable tolerance toward
my untried theories. When I needed her, she was always there
to iron a dress, audit a speech, or bandage a cut.

As I sprawled in the wingchair one night, conjugating
German verbs, my gaze shifted to Grandmother. The light, tipped
so as not to glare into her eyes, highlighted her hair. Its white-
ness shocked me. Her face was more lined than I remembered
it, and she seemed tired. That night I slept little; the next
morning I awakened early, and walked over to the campus. I
stood under the hemlock trees and watched the sun rise; I
marveled at the incongruity of the tiny cones on the huge trees.
I scrambled down the hill and startled a crayfish, lurking in
the shallows of the canal. Crossing the bridge, I was alone
except for the spiders hanging heavily on their webs spun
between the iron supports. I saw all these things, but they did
not penetrate my thoughts, for deep inside me the impact of
Grandmother's appearance lingered. Something set my fingers
tingling just as it had years ago, on my first trip to the den-
tist's. By the time I reached the river, I recognized this sensa-
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

Herbert 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 uneared! 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