

Teamwork?

Our first farm on the East-West Line was small enough (ten acres) so that my father could, during off-season, work at the carbide factory in the city of Niagara Falls (on the Canadian side).

One weekday morning in early spring, Dad was leaving for the factory – about a half-hour drive. He was running late. My older brother, Andy, had already left for school. I wasn't going anywhere because I was down with the flu, although I think my father thought I was pretty much over it. Dad stuck his head into my sickroom and told me Mr. Manning from across the road had backed his truck into the ditch. Could I harness our team of horses and pull him (actually, the truck) out? He (my father) had to leave. Sure, I could do that! I was, after all, 12 years old. There wasn't much I couldn't do around the farm. I guess my father felt the same way, or he wouldn't have asked me.

First, I groggily got dressed. Then, I managed to find the stable on the first try and dressed...I mean harnessed... the horses. Got a sturdy hitch and attached a long, heavy chain to it. I was ready. I never asked Mr. Manning how he managed to back his truck out of his driveway and across the road and into the muddy ditch. Well, at least the front wheels were on the road. I guided the horses to the edge of Mr. Manning's driveway and attached the chain to the front of the truck.

Evidently, the weight and angle of the stuck-in-the-mud truck were too much for my trusty team. Or they just didn't feel like working so hard so early in the morning. They tried pulling straight ahead but, when that didn't work, they began to weave from side to side. They were moving but they weren't going anywhere.

The next thing I remember I was regaining consciousness, with the truck over me and the ditch under me. The truck was now parallel with the road and completely in the ditch. The horses calmly stood on the edge of the road, facing in the direction of home.

Mr. Manning? Well, he must have been looking the other way when the chain tripped me and I hit my head on the rocky road, was dragged to the right and into the ditch. Then the horses were able to pull the truck just far enough to cover me completely. (Right or wrong, I figured out all this while regaining consciousness under Mr. Manning's stuck truck.)

In any case, Mr. Manning had no clue as to my whereabouts. One moment I was there, the next moment I was gone. Disappeared. Vanished. He was running around, calling my name. Weakly, I signaled my unlikely location. With his helping hand, I was able to make it out from under the truck. I felt too sick, too dizzy and too feeble to do anything about the horses. (Mr. Manning did the honors.) I managed to make it home, wash up and fall back into bed. If I was nearly over the flu, I now had a new reason to be back in bed.

My father? He regretted getting me out of bed in the first place, but he was happy to see me back in bed – alive. ◇◇◇