

Old Man Wilcox's Pick-Up Truck - Fall 1940

Early afternoon precisely at 3:30pm Old Man Wilcox would park his Ford pickup truck near the hedge in the parking lot adjacent to the Old Town Tavern. It was where the old Shell station was located on Main Street. He would amble into the bar for his afternoon beer.

He always wore blue farm overalls, a battered felt hat, and with his white beard stained with tobacco juice, he looked like a Norman Rockwell character. He walked with a straight stick, not a cane, and did not seem to use it for support. I guess you would call it a walking stick.

After school in the fall, if we didn't have a touch football game, we usually went to Bill Gordon's drugstore for a soda on our way home.

Not looking to get into trouble we listened to Georgie Drezek who said, "Let's jack up Old Man Wilcox's pickup."

"How are you going to do it? We'll get caught for sure," said Casey

"We'll hide behind the hedge and no one will ever see us," said George confidently.

Behind the Shell station the owner, Gordon Strong, had thrown away an old auto jack, the kind that you put under the rear axle.

Sure enough, at 3:30 sharp, Old Man Wilcox backed up his pickup with the rear wheels nearly into the hemlock hedge where we were hiding and waiting.

Off he went into the tavern.

We placed the jack under the rear axle near the middle and slowly cranked the handle until the rear wheels were off the ground about half an inch. All we had to do now was to wait and not to laugh out loud when Wilcox returned.

At 4:00 out came the old gent. He started up the Ford, put it in low gear, revved up the engine, and went nowhere. The rear wheels were spinning in place off the ground.

Wilcox turned off the engine, got out of the truck, looked at the rear wheels in the weeds near the hedge and scratched his head.

Muttering to himself he went back into the tavern, and a few minutes later came out with Henry and Primo, the owners of the bar.

In the meantime we lowered the jack and the wheels were back on the ground.

"If you put it in gear and nothing happens, the clutch must be shot," said Primo.

"I'll show you what happened," said the old man.

He revved up the engine and put it in gear. The rear wheels spun, leaving a cloud of dust, as old man Wilcox took off like a rocket. He jammed on his brakes just before hitting a parked car on Main Street.

"Damn those kids!" I just know it's those brats! Someday I'll catch them," Wilcox yelled, while waving his walking stick in a menacing fashion. "I'll get 'em!" Just you wait and see."