

JANUARY 20, 1977

You are going to have to pay close attention to follow this story on my neighbor Goat Whiskers the Younger. I have the details, yet the time sequences and the lapses make the tale hard to follow.

Mrs. Goat Whiskers, you see, came by the house to see my wife a few months ago. Television blared a football game. The two women were filling gossip gaps between their visit and a morning telephone call. I was exercising my sovereign rights on the living room couch, attempting to fight ear drum decay by rolling my head in a pillow.

Above the din of these interruptions, I overheard Mrs. Whiskers report that she had agreed to allow her husband to buy an airplane on the condition that he stop smoking cigars. Mrs. Whiskers did not elaborate whether the treaty was to avoid aerial fire diving acts or to forestall the inevitable day that the environmentalists were going to enact the smog prevention code against their ranch for pollution control.

Dallas made a touchdown. My wife's dog knocked a planter rack out into a tile floor. The touchdown was called back; the clay pots dumped water into a mound of peat moss. I missed the rest of the conversation. I did hear the Indian word for "mush." I feel certain that it was not meant in the same sense that arctic sled dogs are commanded to mush. I think it meant you'd better get out of this house before you are made into mush.

Pause now, please, to examine the case. Young Whiskers' ground records of accidents includes such items as diving from a moving cat as a child and running over black bulls while at the wheel of his car. Furthermore, was Mrs. Whiskers concerned about smoldering upholstery at 10,000 feet, or watching her children grow up in an environment that smelled similar to the downwind currents from the trash pile of a tobacco company? these facts are unknown. I just figured that perhaps she had seen Whiskers' landing style off the right shoulder of a bronc. She may have decided that he did not need the distraction of a stogy as he touched a runway.

Once again open the scene at my home. Mrs. Whiskers and wife were drinking coffee at the dining room table. They were planning on going to a movie called "King Kong" about a big gorilla that climbed skyscrapers. The real conspiracy was to divert my attention by the gorilla movie ruse in order to make an unrestrained raid on San Angelo's department stores.

Green firewood had heated the living room to perfect nap temperature. The chatter was broken by a direct statement by Mrs. Whiskers: "I am not going to buy my husband a Christmas gift. An airplane is enough Christmas for anyone."

Black-robed justices of the very Supreme Court of these United States of America will kick a case of double jeopardy so far from their chambers that the lawyers need help to regather their notes. She had jerked Young Whiskers from the weed so fast that he was trying to unwrap ball point pens and biting the caps from the same. What else can be asked of a man? Did Mr. Jefferson, as he made the final draft of the Declaration of Independence, intend among the loops of his pen to imply that a married man's bondage should be a chain that could be exacted tenfold? No, he did not.

I arose from the chair to my full height. I addressed those two idlers: "Go see King Kong. Waste our money. Clear the highways with your wild driving. But do not

entertain in your madness to decree that my friend and cousin Young Whiskers is going to pay for an airplane the rest of his life."

The room emptied.

I sit today wondering over the extent of suffering in the American home, the countless cases of man paying and repaying for a frolic or a folly. As usual, Whiskers is airborne while I stay around to fight his cause. One store alone reaped \$200 from the trip to the movie. I wish the white eyes would leave Indian women alone.