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Making the trip from San Angelo to Hartford, Connecticut means finding the right concourse in Dallas/Fort Worth to change planes, then allowing the swarms of passengers to sweep you to the correct gate. The wobbling wheels of the roll-on bags set the cadence for the last frantic lap to recover the time lost by the commuter's flight from San Angelo finding a parking place on the tarmac.

My son and daughter-in-law's home takes 30 minutes to get to from the airport. Thirty minutes of road time in Connecticut covers a lot of space. The State is 71 miles across at the widest point; 200 miles deep in the longest part. Land mass is 5540 square miles. (I read the atlas in spare moments. Started the habit writing themes in the fifth grade.) In comparison, driving from the ranch to San Angelo goes through three counties with an aggregate of more than 5000 square miles.

One of the wonderful features of the creaky 1779 inn where I stayed was listening to the rapids of the Farmington River way into the night. Fly fisherman abound around the inn. Until the maids turned the mattress over on my bed, I beat the fishermen up in the morning. A historical lump arched my back so severely that I walked the way zombies walked in the old-time movies. On top of the innkeepers' spreading ghost stories to bring in business, I had a

serious anti-social hurdle to overcome lumbering around like Frankenstein.

Right over a bridge from the inn is Riverton, a small village centered on Hitchcock Furniture, an old custom manufacturer taking advantage of the hardwoods in the forests. Way back, Riverton was called "Hitchcockville," but I imagine some sorehead objected to the inference of living in a company town. Every morning on my walk, I peered in the cavernous display windows of the factory at dim outlines of carved wood tables and delicate colonial style dining room chairs.

Every morning, I drove down to my son's place before the factory opened. The last sign leaving the village was a red-lettered one reading, "Great Big Sale - Huge Close Out." At the sight, I'd start drumming my fingers on the steering wheel, trying to work off the passion to buy more furniture.

However, I needed to consider the future of the new granddaughter I was there to see. She was a month old. As beautiful as she is, she's destined to have rich suitors. The furniture in my paternal grandparents' house came from New England. Might have been from the Hitchcock factory. But as classy a lady as she will be, refined taste and such, she won't like the old stuff at the ranch. The people she'll be dating won't want to sit on rickety oak chairs in pressed linen trousers, or drag their English tailored coat sleeves on a rough-hewn dining table.

On the ground at my son's house, I concentrated on lecturing how to burp a baby and divert a diaper crisis instead of buying furniture. Burping is all I remember about helping raise the kids. After I'd walked three babies 30 miles back and forth across a 12x12 nursery from midnight feeding into the daylight hours, I began a search for a cure for wind colic. I discovered that holding the infant lying on my lap, facing my left when elevated to sitting position, at the same movement bringing the right-hand fingers extended under the left lower rib will relieve the most desperate case of colic known to the world of frightened and weary parents. (A baby blue whale gains 300 pounds a day on his mother's rich milk. The furious surfacing of the mother whale is connected to the exasperation of motherhood, ie. colic.)

If my recommendation so much as rated a nod, the signal slipped by unnoticed. I was a month too late to give advice on diapers, too. (Used to take six dozen per issue at the ranch before we had an automatic washing machine.) A bachelor down the road named Walter some-such had already convinced my son that cotton diapers are environmentally sound. But I shot that goofy idea to bits. Imagine what a 10-day New England blizzard means to wash day stranded in rooftop snow banks with an overflowing diaper pail. I knew I would have to compromise on the disposing of disposable diapers. But I had to answer to that objection. Just make a compost pile in the back yard of disposable diapers to mulch

and fertilize next spring's organic garden, protected by a natural insecticide.

I guess I was wrong from the start thinking they wanted me to come for a visit as a consultant. I suppose they will accept a baby present if it's recycled furniture. Things will change when she's older. As smart as she'll be, she'll catch on that her granddad knows more than "old rusty diaper pail Walter."