

SATIRE

The Meeting

University of Utah folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand produced a major scholarly work this fall, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, published by Norton and favorably reviewed in both professional and popular journals, including a half-page article in *Time* (Nov. 9, 1981, p. 116). Brunvand cites as "the most popular American folk yarn" the recurrent story of "the vanishing hitchhiker." Coincidentally, the narrative surfaces once again in the history of the following piece. A Dialogue staffer was driving to Kensington, Md., in her 1979 Ford Fairmont. She spotted a young woman on the roadside who seemed to be having car trouble, so she stopped to give her a lift. As they continued along, a large hay-wagon suddenly came out of a side-road, requiring the Ford's driver to veer sharply to avoid a collision. Regaining the road, she turned to see how her passenger was faring, only to discover the woman was gone. In her place was a slim manuscript in a manila envelope. We print it herewith unchanged.

Scene: Inside a large, conventional meeting house. There is the usual pre-meeting hubbub. Women are busily conferring with one another over agenda and announcements; at the door, two women are shaking hands with members of the congregation as they enter, trying diligently to call each entrant by her name.

The men are hurriedly urging children into pews, settling quarrels and trying to arrange seating so that the least mayhem will ensue. Some of the men do a better job than others at juggling their paraphernalia: in addition to diaper bags and bottles of apple juice or milk, most have "quiet books," small toys, and some have rather large and cumbersome Primary materials to hang onto and keep track of.

Three or four younger men are radiantly absorbed in small bundles wrapped in fancy crocheted afghans; their fuzzy-headed infants are all dressed in special finery for the occasion, and the seats immediately around them are filled with smiling, wet-eyed grandfathers, uncles, brothers; and over the heads of the crowds, we can see visiting teachers nodding their assurance that they will be ready when the moment presents itself.

Presently, a confident, comfortable-looking woman in her late forties takes her seat on the stand. She is almost immediately flanked by two others: a slender, dark-suited woman of about thirty who keeps whispering last-minute information to the woman in the center; and a woman of perhaps sixty who appears totally unflappable, as if, having engineered reconstruction after the Flood and supervised logistics during the Exodus, she is scarcely about to be intimidated by anything the present moment might demand of her.

Behind them, on the second row, sit four men of varying ages, each in black trousers, white shirt, and black tie.

The youngest of the three women, whose name is Abbot, steps to the pulpit. She smiles silently at the buzzing congregation for a few moments, and as the crowd quietens, we hear a tiny voice call out boldly, "That's MOMMY!" Abbot smiles benignly at the child, while the father, seated in the second pew, blushes, puts a hand gently over the child's mouth, and shakes his head hopelessly at his neighbor.

Abbot: Sisters and brothers, it's time to begin. We welcome you all here, members and visitors and friends, and hope your time with us will be pleasant. Now I'm afraid we have a large number of announcements today, but they are all important, so we ask for your attention.

To begin with, Brother Hales of the Elders group has asked me to tell you that our lovely brethren are collecting empty one-quart oil cans, to be used by the group in making special Christmas projects. They are going to construct Christmas tree stands, candle molds and toys from these used oil cans, I'm told. Elder Hales has placed a large carton outside the south entrance and would appreciate it if you'd all deposit your empty oil cans there, and in so doing contribute to this worthwhile project.

Next, we want to remind you of the Education Week program early next month. Four of our members will be participating, and I'm sure we'll all want to attend and take advantage of this special opportunity. Sister Lorraine Larson will be giving a lecture on "Eschatology and Ether in the Perspective of the Book of Revelation." Sister Ellen Hemming is speaking on "The Gnostic Scrolls and Our Concept of Spirit Translation." Brother LeRuth Davis will have a workshop titled "Twenty Tips for Keeping a Tidy Garage," and Brother Terry Joe Jones will repeat last year's popular series on "Being a More Masculine You."

Brother Allen informs me that the quorum is having a special fireside this next Sunday evening with two important guest speakers. Sister Amanda Ridgely Knight will discuss "The Role of Man: Where Does He Fit in the Eternal Plan?" and Sister Alice Young Taylor will lecture on "Three Important Men from Church History."

Next weekend is a big one for the younger teens in our congregation: the Beehive class is going to kayak down the Green River, under the direction of Sister Lynn Harrison. And as I understand it, the deacons will be here at home, helping to fold and stamp the ward newsletter.

In the Young Men's meeting tonight, the boys will have something special

to look forward to—a panel of Laurels from the stake will discuss “What We Look for in Boys We Date.” Here’s your big chance, boys!

Now finally, clipped to your program you see a proposal—and I stress that that is all it is so far—for a method of handling our financial commitments for this next year. This is of vital importance to *every member*. I stress that. We want *every one of you* to go home, gather your husbands and children around you, examine this proposal, and decide if you can give us your sustaining vote on it.

(At this point, the third woman on the stand, whose name is Chaplin, gets up and whispers briefly to the speaker.)

Abbot: Sister Chaplin reminds me that the basketball team will be practicing this week in preparation for the stake play-offs Saturday. Practice will be every afternoon this week from 4 until 6. Coach Tanner has asked that every player get there right at four, or a little before, if she can. Young women, we want you to know how proud we are of you! In the same vein, the *boys’* basketball team has also been doing nicely; if I’m not mistaken, they are leading the region and also have a game sometime this next month. Practice for the boys’ team will be over in the old stake house from 5 to 6:30 A.M. this next week. Any boy having a basketball is asked to bring it, since we’re a little short on equipment for the boys’ team.

Well, I think that’s all of the announcements. We will open the meeting by singing on page 102, after which Brother Donny Dee Williams will give the invocation.

The Chorister steps to his stand and leads the congregation in the following song:

We are cooking, daily cooking
Food that strengthens, food that fills,
Casseroles that feed the starving,
Wheat from ever-turning mills.
Wheat that’s grown and ground and garnished,
Wheat that’s fiber-rich and pure,
Wheat for woman, to sustain her,
As she labors strong and sure.

After the prayer, Abbott returns to the pulpit.

Abbot: I am happy to report that our numbers are growing: we have had six babies born this last month alone! I’ll just mention each one, and you can congratulate the happy parents after the service.

Sister Jean Hammond and her husband Dale have a new little girl, to be named Rachel Sariah Hammond. Sister and Brother Ellen Taylor, a girl to be named Ellen Fielding Taylor, Jr. Sister and Brother Margaret Jones, a girl to be named Elizabeth Eleanor Jones. As you know, this baby is Sister and Brother Jones’ sixth, but the very first girl they’ve managed to have, and I just want to share with you what Margaret said this past week. Someone who

didn't know the family asked her how many children she had. "Six," she said, "and they're all girls but five!"

Now in case you think we've forgotten the opposite sex, Sister and Brother Anne Henderson are welcoming a little boy to their home; he's to be named LeWinky Henderson. Gale and Jimmy Jenson also have a new boy, to be named Tippy Tom Jenson; and Meredith and Billy Joe Gordon have a son whom they have named Fortitude Oak Gordon.

Well, our congratulations to all the families and their new members.

Right now, it's time for a special number from our Singing Fathers. They will announce their own selection.

(The four men dressed in black trousers come to the front of the stand, cluster together, place their arms on each other's shoulders, and set themselves for singing. At this point, one man whispers to another, who steps forward.)

Quartet member: We will sing "O My Mother."

After the song, Abbot returns to the pulpit.

Abbot: Thank you very much, brothers, for that special number. Now our speaker today, sisters and brothers, is a returned missionary from our congregation, Sister Eve Wentworth. Sister Wentworth filled a highly successful mission to Japan, was made a district supervisor after she had been out only twelve months, and in due time became Second Counselor to President Mariko Yashimoto of the Nagoya Japan Mission. I happened to meet President and Brother Yashimoto at conference last month, and she told me there wasn't a missionary in their mission who had been a finer example of dedication and leadership than Sister Wentworth. We're happy today to hear from Sister Eve F. Wentworth.

(In the interests of saving space and avoiding repetition, we here give, instead of Sister Wentworth's complete speech, a copy of the ward clerk's notes thereon.)

Speaker: Sister Eve F. Wentworth, recently returned missionary.

Summary of remarks: Missionary work—the central calling of House of Israel. Reason Israel was chosen of God. Greatest thing we can do to bless world in anguish. All worthy women to shoulder this responsibility. Mission also the making of character. Boys must help young women prepare for calling. Must never tempt young women or cause them to fall. Tight pants, dangers of. Bare chests an abomination before Lord. Boys don't understand female nature, how easily ignited. Must set example. Not to be cause for some young woman's unworthiness to serve mission. Use time when women are on missions to improve selves, prepare for marriage, prepare to be companion to returned missionary, conduit whereby spirits of women are sent to earth. Can be learning skills—gardening, yard work, home repair, etc. Young

women to be serious about missions—cosmic in scope. Eternal consequences. Work affects ages yet unborn, fate of nations. Prepare well. Study scriptures in depth; learn languages; social skills. Avoid getting serious abt. boys prior to call. Boys-charming distractions. Then recounted her own experiences from mission—healing sick, rebuking spirits, receiving revelation abt. impending catastrophe, directing district missionaries out of danger. Value of gentlemen missionaries. Did much good, worked right along with sisters. Need more of right kind of brother missionaries in field. Closed with testimony of work.

Closing song: “Come all Ye Daughters of God.”

Closing prayer: Sister Hannah Ruth Williams

