



The Three Boys

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The Story-Behind-the-Story

These are stories that have been told and retold in the Howard and Lois (Gerbrandt) Penner family, and subsequently, the families of The Three Boys: Bryan, Rod, and Duane. As is true in all cultures, oral history is in peril. And, with the deaths of Lois (1976), Bryan (1991), and Howard (1994), the first-person storytellers are on the decline. To prevent stories being buried with storytellers, and links to the past lost, Naomi Gaede-Penner, wife of Bryan, decided to record the humor and history for her children—and their cousins.

Thus on January 23, 1999, the recording of The Three Boys took place. This in itself occurred within the context of a traditional event: The Pheasant Festival. For decades, Penner men and boys have flocked to Western Kansas each November to hunt pheasant on their old home place, now farmed by their cousin, Dennis Penner. Over the years, and following the successful hunt, Naomi assumed the position of Pheasant Chef and an annual dinner was prepared. So it was at the 1999 Pheasant Festival, at Rod's house in Denver, at which Rod and wife Sue (Carlson), Naomi, Nicole and husband, Mike Clark, and Aaron enjoyed the feast—and The Three Boys stories were retold by Rod and recorded by Naomi.

The Settings

On a farm about 7 1/2 miles north of Ingalls, Kansas
Linvale Place in the Bear Valley neighborhood, Denver, Colorado
Princeton Court near Pinehurst Country Club, Denver, Colorado



The Main Characters

(approximate ages 7 or 8)



Bryan Grant Penner, October 1, 1949 to January 1, 1991. Freckled, gregarious, intense, uncontained, animated, active. Sports R-US. Cowboy boots. Entrepreneur. 5' 11 3/4"



Rodney Warren Penner, September 18, 1951. Tow-head, no eye-brows, very busy, running everywhere, stretched out. Only 3-bottle-baby in hospital. Inventor. Skilled woodworker. 6' 10"



Duane Randall Penner, April 3, 1953. Mellow, little "porky," put in playpen to protect him from his older brothers. Creative. Artist. Skilled woodworker. 6' 7"

Supporting Characters

- ♦ Dad, Howard Penner, HP
- ♦ Mom, Lois Gerbrandt Penner, Cookie
- ♦ Grandpa Penner, Henry Penner
- ♦ Grandpa JJ, Rev. John J. Gerbrandt

All Three Boys were born in Dodge City, Kansas, and delivered by Dr. Jackman, who was ahead of his time and allowed Howard in the delivery room.





Top left: Rod, Duane and Bryan; Mom, Rod, Duane and Bryan
 Center left: Grandpa JJ; Lois and Howard; Bryan; Dad and Duane
 Bottom left: Mom and Bryan; One of the three boys on the farm; Grandpa Henry and Bryan

The Three Boys

The Donkey And The Bucket

Every morning, a Donkey would show up in the Penner barnyard, do Donkey-things, and then leave in the afternoon. It seemed to be a fugitive Donkey from some strange land.



Dad was unconcerned and thought it was a benign Donkey. He said, to Mom, "Lois, let the boys play with the Donkey." However, since Duane was just a baby, it was more of the Bryan and Rod Show with the Donkey, rather than all Three Boys.

To begin with, the Donkey was nothing to the boys, since they were too short and too inexperienced to ride it. But, after awhile, Bryan saw some potential adventure in the Donkey and became obsessed with wanting to ride it. One day, he and Rod decided that the only way he could get on the Donkey, was with some teamwork. Of course, Rod being the junior of the team, was the assistant to Bryan. Truthfully, Rod didn't care about riding the Donkey, but Bryan was relentless in his zeal.

And, so, it happened that every morning the Donkey would arrive in the yard, and Bryan and Rod would arrive in the kitchen. There they conferred about preparations to ride the Donkey. This preparation primarily involved finding the milk Bucket. The plan was for Rod to place the Bucket up-side-down beside the Donkey and Bryan would get a running start, jump onto the Bucket, and launch himself on top of the Donkey.

Although the barnyard was barren except for the Donkey, the Two Boys would nonchalantly amble out into the yard, pretending to have something to do. They naively expected that the Donkey would not suspect that their true mission was to catapult Bryan onto his back.

Rod would just-so-happen to come up behind the Donkey and place the Bucket beside him. Simultaneously, Bryan would put his short legs into motion, preparing for lift-off onto the Donkey.



But, as fate would have it, at the precise moment Bryan arrived on the Bucket and leaped into the air, the Donkey would move. This was no dumb Donkey. Bryan would land in a heap in the dusty barnyard.



Undaunted, the Two Boys would again assume indifference, and follow the Donkey around the barnyard. Again and again, the scenario was replayed: the placement of the Bucket, followed by Bryan's airborne maneuvers, and the sidestepping of the Donkey.

Rod did not attempt Donkey-riding and was content to be the Bucket-placer. Actually, he considered this role to be the better part of valor and that there were points to be earned as an assistant to Bryan.

As it turned out, the Two Boys never did gain control of the Donkey. But, what did anyone care? Dad said the Donkey was benign; Mom was relieved of entertaining Two of the Three boys; the Two of the Three Boys had great fun and were kept busy for the summer. And, the clever Donkey got a good laugh. 😊



Dust Storms and Sticker Patches

The Three Boys were terrified of Dust Storms. Even into mid-life, memories of sinister Dust Storms were forever seared in their minds. One Sunday, a traumatizing event took place on the drive home from church. Ominous blackness shrouded the car, and even though the car doors and windows were tightly closed,

dust sifted in everywhere. The Boys couldn't imagine how Dad could see to drive and if they would ever see their home again. They were petrified. The Dust Storms would last for hours, darkening the sky at midday, roaring around outside, seeping into the house, and clogging the air.

But while the Three Boys lived in fear of Dust Storms, it seemed that Mom and Dad derived some strange enjoyment from teasing them about Dust Storms, or "Rollers." Dad would say, "Ahh, those Dust Rollers! Kids go in and *never* come out!"

The Rollers could be seen on the horizon, the wind churning the surface of the ground and stirring up dust. One's fate was evident before the Storm actually enveloped him or her. In reality, it would be several hours before the Storm would hit, yet, to the Three Boys, near-hysteria set in as they anticipated the catastrophic event.

One day, Bryan and Rod took advantage of this terror—to their own satisfaction—and to Duane's horror.

By this time, Duane was a bit older, the Donkey was gone, and the Three Boys had found new amusement for the hot, dusty summers. Dad had a stock tank in which they learned to swim. The tank was situated across the yard and had a fence through it so the cattle could drink on one side and the boys could swim on the other.



A pipe in the middle brought up well water and kept the water circulating. Nevertheless, cow slobber mingled about and the bottom was so slippery from green slime-stuff that it was impossible to stand up. Of course the Three Boys tried, and of course this was a source of amusement to watch one another fall and splash about. Then, too, besides the fascinating flora of Green Slime, there were the occasional glimpses of Cow Faces beneath the water.

Now, between the tank and the house lay a Sticker Patch. Although the Three Boys were tough farm kids and constantly ran around barefooted, this Sticker Patch was to be avoided at all costs. In most cases, they had the time to skirt the Sticker Patch and reach their destination of the stock tank, a.k.a. swimming pool.

On this particular afternoon, however, Bryan and Rod deviously devised a plot against their unsuspecting, younger, and gullible brother. At the decided moment, both older boys looked to the west, the direction of the Dust Storms, and Bryan yelled out loudly, "Oh, look! It's a Dust Roller!"

Duane popped up out of the water, tried to gain footing on the mossy tank, and screamed out in fright. In a flash, he bolted over the tank edge and headed straight for the house. Not in the usual safe and circuitous pathway, but right through the Sticker Patch! Now, pain was added to his mental anguish. Shrieking, he stumbled into the house.

Unfortunately, when Mom questioned him as to the source of his panic, he was unable to articulate the harassment of his brothers. Consequently, with no punishment and with much hilarious gratification, the two older brothers continued to taunt the little brother throughout the summer. ☺

Blackie or Puddin'

Farm dogs were nondescript. Nothing purebred, much less pedigreed. Whenever any dog from neighboring farms had puppies, they would be distributed. Herewith, the Three Boys acquired a series of dogs. One unfortunate pup met his untimely demise because he slept under the car tires. But, Blackie and Puddin' were different. They were good dogs. Due to a memory lapse, it is uncertain which dog this story is actually about. But regardless, the small dog was a very nice dog and dearly loved by the Three Boys.



At this same time, the Three Boys had just discovered rubber bands. These objects could be used for a variety of activities, such as shooting one another. Although Duane has been blamed for the unfortunate happenstance in this story, Rod recently stepped forward, owing that Duane was too young to be indicted and was an innocent bystander. Thus Rod takes responsibility for combining the rubber band with the dog.

At that moment though, young Rod's intentions were not evil. Nay, instead he reasoned like an inventor. "This looks like a collar," he thought. "How handy. It will never come off the dog." And so it was. Such a miracle! Once Rod put the "collar" on Blackie, (or Puddin'), the "collar" remained in place.

One day, Dad asked the Three Boys, "Why is the dog acting so strange? He can't seem to hold his head up." This seemed unusual to Rod as well. How could this be? He'd recently given the dog a new collar.



Later in the day, the Three Boys saw Blackie (or Puddin') in the yard and decided to examine him. When they rolled him over, much to their horror, they discovered that the "collar" had served as a tourniquet and had severed poor Blackie's (or Puddin's') neck! Rod had never intended to torment Blackie (or Puddin') in this way, but it had just been the miracle of rubber bands that had caused this disastrous effect.

Poor, good dog. Poor boys. Tears everywhere. They had loved that good dog so much. But, alas, Dad took Blackie (or Puddin') behind the chicken coop, and...may he rest in peace. ☹️

Adventures with Schnitzel

Part I.

After the family had moved off the farm to Denver, they acquired another dog. During these early years, Dad worked out-of-town and would always arrive home with something special for the Three Boys. In most cases, he would bring home candy, throw it in the yard, and the Three Boys would stay busy searching for treats on the lawn and in the bushes.



At first glance, this appears a kind gesture by a loving father. However, it was actually a ploy, a sophisticated ploy. They'd run all around, for nearly half-an-hour, and then return with their goods to find that the door to the house was locked. They could not figure out why this happened and that there was a correlation. Once they got much

older, in fact, after they got married, and reflected on the sequence of events, they figured out that their lockout was a lock-in by Dad—with Cookie.

Well, the Three Boys became quicker at retrieving the candy and Dad had to come up with another distraction. One day he showed up with a shoe box. In it was an innocent Dachshund puppy, unaware of what his future would hold.

With the Three Boys around, eager to satisfy the little pup, Schnitzel did not *remain small for long*. Soon he grew into a chunkier, sausage-like dog. The resemblance was so strong that Rod developed an uncontrollable urge to perform an experiment with Schnitzel.

Just as Rod was Bryan's assistant, Rod called upon Duane to be his assistant. Rod instructed Duane to go to the bottom of the basement stairs while he positioned Schnitzel at the top. The objective of the experiment was to observe if Schnitzel would behave like a sausage and roll down the stairs—but then end up on his feet.



All was set. Rod shoved Schnitzel down the stairs. Bam! Bam! Bam! The poor sausage-like dog crashed to the bottom of the stairs—and did NOT land on his feet.

Understandably, Schnitzel lost his trust in Rod and refused to acknowledge his presence for the entire next week. But, given Schnitzel's unrestrained appetite, he did return to Rod, not so much out of loyalty and affection, but for food. Schnitzel knew if he'd sit up and beg at the table that Rod would feed him scraps. Moreover, if he'd sit between Rod *and* Bryan he'd get a double helping of everything. It was no wonder that although he'd arrived in a shoe

box, that within months, he filled out and sat up steadfastly beside the table like a stout Leaning Tower of Pisa—or Pizza.

It was not as if Schnitzel did not get any exercise to retain his puppy-figure. Every Sunday afternoon, the Three Boys, Dad, and Schnitzel would find themselves in the Family Room, a room that seemed to shrink as the highly energetic boys grew.

Please allow a digression here. The Three Boys had little respect for the Family Room. Mom had carefully decorated it in Early American with a large braided rug and a floral couch. Unavoidably, Mom had redecorated this room several times, in the same decor, with repeated braided rugs and floral couches. One would think that these items would remain intact for a number of years. Not so. Given the

Three Boys' level of exuberance, the rugs would be ripped, and the couches would be torn off their bases. Fortunately, Dad was in construction and could bring home 2x4s on which to shore up the couches.



So it was, during the Sunday Afternoon Penner Wrestling Matches that Schnitzel would run around in a circle, barking, and nipping, not knowing who to defend or to attack. This refereeing should have reduced his girth, but somehow, any weight reduction was short-lived when once again he stationed himself between Bryan and Rod at the table. Strangely, after these ongoing Sunday afternoon fracas, the lovely, Early American, floral couches ended up on the street curb.

Also, strangely, although Schnitzel was a house-dog by day, he was a homeless-dog by night. No matter what the temperature, Schnitzel slept forlornly on the frigid garage floor. Dad bestowed upon Schnitzel one of his old wool army blankets. Not only did he give this shredded bed wrap to the dog, but he taught him how to take a corner of the blanket in his mouth, and roll over and over until he was indeed a wrapped up large sausage-dog. Then, each morning, the Three Boys would make a beeline to the garage to see if Schnitzel was still alive. As cruel as it seems, Schnitzel really did like the garage, and would greet the Three Boys by whipping about his antennae-like tail.

Part II.

And now, the rest of the story: The origination of Schnitzel. Anyone who knew Howard, knew he visited wayside shops, black markets, and other places with "good deals." And, indeed it is plausible that he sought out a discount dog store. Add to this propensity, his disadvantage since in those olden days, pre-Barnes & Noble, there were probably no *How to Choose a Puppy* books. Subsequently, rather than testing the puppies in the litter for sociability, assertiveness, and affection, his decision-making was based on the bark-for-the-buck. When the puppy-seller pointed out that a certain puppy was at a discount, Howard knew he'd ended his search. "I'll take it!" he said.

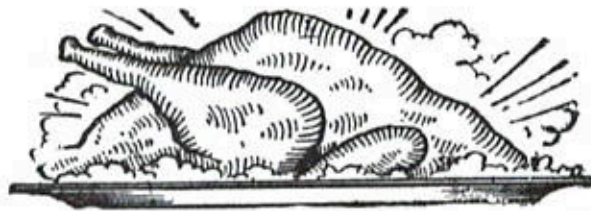
The reason for the discount was that Schnitzel had a hernia. The boys thought this little protrusion was fascinating. They could produce a cause-and-effect by poking the hernia and then watching the dog run off howling. Furthermore, they came to realize that whenever they examined other dogs, that not all dogs had this unique feature. On all accounts, they had a treasure of a dog.

Part III.

It is obvious that Schnitzel grew up in a chaotic family system, with taunting and teasing, some abuse, weird experimentation, and heavy doses of love that only boys can bestow on a dog. It should not seem strange that given this environment, he developed a fetish, one which Mom spoke of with mortification. Admittedly, Schnitzel had a *doll* fetish. Sad but true, neighborhood girls were brought to tears by his kidnapping of their cherished dolls. He would drag the dolls home by their hair, some even larger than himself, and attempt to bury his perversion in the backyard. Mom was appalled!



However, none of these peculiarities caused his demise. What did occur was not a pretty sight. Amongst other things, Schnitzel was a Casanova and in fair weather would station himself on the front yard for night, being on the alert for any romantic possibilities. Unfortunately, he was not destined for ongoing thrills and happiness. One night, rather than such dreams, a real-life nightmare took place. About 3:00 A.M., the neighbor, who was a cop, came home, opened the door to his car, and out leaped his K-9 Police Dog. Before Schnitzel knew what had happened, the German Shepherd had Schnitzel's hindquarters in a vise-grip. This was the end of Schnitzel and he went to the Big Kennel in the sky to live with Blackie and Puddin'. ☺



Thanksgiving Follies

Take 1

When the Three Boys were quite young, Thanksgivings took place at Grandpa and Grandma Penner's farm in Western Kansas. A sundry collection of similarly-aged, boy-dominated Penner grandchildren and cousins gathered for the event.

It may seem unusual that the Three Boys loved going to the farm when Grandpa Penner was often perceived as stoic and austere. Although he wasn't the kind of grandfather who would bounce grandchildren on his knee, he nevertheless, went out of his way to provide a good time for them. For example, one time in anticipation of their arrival, he spent weeks getting the wheat-cutter, which was much like a riding lawnmower, in shape so the grandchildren could ride it around the barnyard.



It was during this particular Thanksgiving that the first Folly took place. For some reason, Bryan did not join his cousins in the barnyard fun. Instead, he was up on the haystack playing "Haystack." Obviously, he did not know how to play Haystack very well since he fell off the backside. Boom! He knocked the wind out of himself and conked himself on the head. This interrupted the usual events of the day—and it should have been a warning to everyone that *This Kid Needs To Be Watched!*

Take 2

A subsequent Thanksgiving took place at the Linvale house. Prior to this event, Dad had assisted the boys in creating a go-cart which evolved from an ugly old lawnmower. At this time, Dad was into welding, so an old bed-frame was quickly added to the configuration. In fact, anything metal in the garage or at the job site became a possibility for the uniquely modified contraption. As it turned out, the only purchased parts were wheels.

Now, just prior to Thanksgiving, the street was paved. The process at that time was to put down the asphalt and then layer a thick mat of gravel on top. Instead of using rollers to press this together, the cars were expected to force the gravel into the surface. Consequently, the go-cart, which was structurally overbuilt and ridiculously underpowered, could maintain some speed of its own while traveling on the concrete, but in the cumbersome gravel it bogged down.



And so, Thanksgiving dinner came and went. As one would expect, the Three Boys became bored, so they checked out any possible diversions. It was at this fatal juncture that Bryan put his problem-solving skills to work. What if they'd scoop up some of the gravel so the go-cart could travel more easily? All Three Boys were up to the challenge. This time, Rod and Duane were the worker-bees while Bryan was the driver-bee. However, being inventors as well as worker-bees, they had a wonderful idea. "Here is a bucket," they told Bryan, "You sit on the seat and hold the bucket and then we can unload it when it's full."

For some unknown reason, Bryan chose not to hang on to the bucket at the top rim, but instead, wrapped his fingers around the bottom edge. Rod and Duane pushed with all their might. As a result, Bryan's fingers made contact with the pavement. Down the hill they plowed while Bryan yelled and screamed. Rod and Duane thought he was extra excited, so pushed all the harder. Finally, the gravel, the bucket, and Bryan's fingers rendered the go-cart immovable and the two worker-bees discovered the actual source of Bryan's exclamations.

Into the house they followed the bleeding and shrieking driver-bee. Mom referred the emergency to Dad, who patiently went to work on Bryan's fingers, picking out the gravel. But, what a surprise when he discovered that the piece of gravel that would not come out was actually finger bone! Off to Dr. Foreman's they went.

In the end, that unfortunate Thanksgiving Day ended up with Follies for all. Rather than being praised for their ingenuity and staying out from under foot, Rod and Duane were chastised for harming their poor older brother. My what a sad misunderstanding—here they'd just been trying to be good teammates. As for Bryan, he found the splints on his fingers to increase the pain, so he modified them for comfort. The end result was a permanently misshapen, crooked finger.

Take 3

The Three Boys were quick to forgive one another's unintentional foibles, but even so, Thanksgiving holidays seemed to test their relationships. Take for instance, when Bryan and Rod were old enough to do menial labor, Dad took them along to job sites. Just prior to the doomed holiday, Dad was building a house in Cherry Creek. The bricklayers had just completed their task, but had left a pile of ugly scrap bricks on the ground. Dad told the boys to load the bucket of the front-end loader and then he'd go dump the refuse.



Bryan and Rod developed their own rhythm of brick-tossing and in unison, they'd bend and toss. This efficient pattern did not last for long. All too soon, Bryan messed up the synchronization by working more rapidly than Rod. A disastrous effect of alternately bending and tossing resulted. Suddenly, Rod inadvertently threw a brick and hit Bryan right in the forehead. Smack! Down went Bryan. Out cold. Blood everywhere. Oh, dear, oh, dear. Rod had killed his brother!

But, once again, Dad came to the rescue. So many times had these emergencies occurred that he'd become used to having one of the Three Boys on injured reserve. Fortunately, the third-time's-a-charm and no more Thanksgiving-related Follies took place after this. ☺



No Pain, No Gain

The Three Boys each had a Bicycle. These provided transportation to and from school. In addition, the Bikes transported books, lunches, and, being the sons of Lois the music teacher—musical instruments. Bryan played the trumpet, Rod a trombone, and Duane a saxophone. In fact, every Christmas, the Three Boys would join with their cousins for a concert at the Garden Park Church where Roger played the baritone and Diana the cello.

Let us digress. Actually, piano lessons preceded the possession of these musical instruments. And, even though Mom was a piano teacher herself, she wisely farmed the boys out to Barbara Kornelsen for lessons. Mom would drop off all Three Boys at the Kornelsen home where Dean, her husband, was already home from teaching. The typical format proceeded like this: while one boy took a piano lesson from Barb, the other two boys were left in Dean's charge. Dean, having only two daughters himself, did not know what to do with these rambunctious Three Boys. Forced into a survival mode, he pulled out boxing gloves and gave the waiting-piano-lesson-takers boxing lessons.

After two hours of whaling on each other, the boys had bright red cheeks and, Duane, who the older two boys picked on, nearly had his brains beat out. Saving their piano-playing fingers was not the primary concern for Dean—saving his sanity and Barb's glass coffee table were. And, as the Three Boys recall memories, the boxing lessons stand out much better than the piano lessons.



But back to the Bikes. Dad was such a creative guy and handily built custom-designed racks for the instruments. These were constructed out of wood and attached with metal straps. Bryan had it easy with his smaller instrument which could ride sideways on the front of his bike, whereas Rod had a back-carrier. By far, the trombone had the largest rack and acted like a huge, heavy fin.

A week before Rod was to graduate from sixth grade, he was merrily flying home on his Bike. The sun was bright. Life was good. Birds sang. A gentle breeze touched his face. Then, as he had done many times before, he took a shortcut through the church parking lot, and headed down the street—which was still pavement topped with loose gravel.

The good day ended. The Bike hit the gravel. The front tire snapped around and locked. Pow! Rod sailed head-first over the bike handles, and for a brief moment, while still airborne, he told himself, *This is really going to hurt!* Literally, on the heels of it's owner, the trombone followed. Face first, the once-happy-sixth-grader, planted himself on the road. Since his arms were behind him, his face skidded along the pavement leaving face-debris. Chopped liver could only describe the writhing mass.

Fortunately, Duane, was not far behind, and raced home to Mom, who put aside her paper-grading and hastened out the door. By this time, Rod had scraped himself off the pavement and was struggling home. Not a pretty sight. Off to Dr. Foreman who put stitches in the bit-through lip.

In this fashion, the much dejected and defaced Rod returned to his last week of sixth grade. Although a pathetic sight, Rod got so much sympathy from the teachers and the girls that his pain turned into gain. As for the trombone—it survived the catastrophe and still remains in Rod's possession. As for the piano lessons, none of the Three Boys ever played piano again. ☺

Special Olympics

The Three Boys were active, adventurous, and aspiring athletes. In high school, Rod was on the Golf and the Basketball teams, whereas Duane played Football and Basketball. Bryan, although an athlete wannabe, found himself in choir and lead actor of *The Sound of Music*.

Rod was the first one in the family to seriously take up Golf. The Golf-bug had been passed on to him from Grandpa JJ.

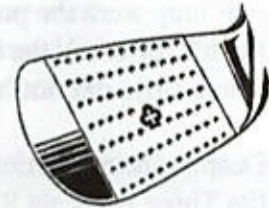




Grandpa would take the Three Boys to the Evergreen Golf course and would pay them a quarter for every Golf ball they'd find. As soon as Grandpa would tee-off, the Three Boys would scramble through creeks, over rocks, into the rough, chasing balls everywhere.

But, now in high school, Rod wanted to improve his own game. At school, there was a strange-looking room with a high ceiling that was useful for nothing else than Golfing. Inside was a netted apparatus which caught the Golf balls. This struck Rod as a possibility for the backyard. Back at home, the Three Boys had a collection of track and field gear which included a high jump stand. These looked to Rod as being perfect for his invention. So, he hung up the bar and looped over some blankets. Over and over Rod hit the Golf balls and with a muffled thump they'd secure themselves into the blankets. Duane, who had never played Golf, thought this was pretty neat stuff and would come out to watch Rod. Time after time he'd beg Rod to allow him to hit the balls, too. "Nah, you'll just mess up everything," responded Rod. After awhile, Rod wore down from the constant pleas and handed him a club. "Whatever you do, *don't* miss the blankets," he sternly instructed Duane.

Duane wound up, hit the ball, and off into orbit it went—nowhere near the blankets. What a shot! Both boys watched the speck in the sky as it headed west. *This is not good*, thought Rod. Quickly the boys took down the paraphernalia, stashed it back in the garage, pulled down the door—and went about business as usual.



Later in the afternoon, a knock sounded on the front door. Having had prior negative experiences with knocks on the doors and neighborhood parent-types searching them out, the Three Boys had come to fear the sound of knocking. This was another case in point. There stood Bob Dish with a Golf ball. "This yours, boys?" he asked. The Two Boys couldn't believe he had come to their house. How could he have known? It could have been anybody's. They stood ashen, thinking of the Dish's huge plate glass window. Wordlessly, they listened to Bob Dish describe how and where the Golf ball had hit—in a small corner pane. Whew! Sigh! Relief! This time they'd been lucky.

The Three Boys activities extended into the winter months. If they didn't invent the necessary means to an end, then Dad would come up with something, and so it was true with the ice Hockey rink. Who knows where Dad came up with the idea, perhaps on TV, but given the fact that he was a contractor, he had the materials to assemble nearly anything.



❄ The Linvale backyard was enormous, with the back edge *dropping down a hillside*. Dad *pounded in stakes and built a rim*, lined it with previously used plastic, and filled it with water. The Three Boys preferred clear Visquin plastic to black, since the black would absorb too much heat and a meltdown would take place. On the other hand, holes did not show up as easily on the clear as with the black.

Each year, prior to the Visquin-spreading, the Three Boys and Dad would haul the Visquin down to the basement, spread it out, turn out the lights, and all four would crawl beneath it with flashlights and tape, searching for holes. The huddled mass resembled a bizarre game of Twister.

Then, once the rink was in place, the Three Boys would take turns watering down the pond every night. No matter the below zero temperatures, the boys would spray on a fresh, smooth layer of ice for the next day's Hockey game.

Although there was a rim, with the force behind the hits, the pucks would fly everywhere, into the air, into the bushes. This obviously created a puck-deficit. Not only were the pucks at risk, but the Three Boys would hit one another down the hill, or break the Hockey sticks. Additional equipment meant dollars, which the Three Boys did not have, so they instituted the No Big Shot rule.

Despite the restrictions, Hockey season was very short at the Penner house, and the Three Boys ala Renaissance men ended up practicing Figure Skating instead. ☺

Car-Challenged

The family of the Three Boys was Car-Challenged. For instance, Mom acquired a Corvair for driving to and from her college classes at Colorado University in Boulder. As everyone knows, the Corvair had a treacherous and pitiful design with the engine in the back. Consequently, anytime Cookie-Penner or the boys drove the Doom-Mobile over 60 m.p.h., the back-end wanted to trade places with the front-end, which led to 360 degree circles on ice, hydroplaning in the rain, and "cutting cookies," by The Three Boys in the school parking lot.

Duane. Eventually, Mom moved up to the noteworthy gold Cutlass Supreme and Duane inherited the oil-leaking Corvair. Truthfully, it leaked so badly that he could fill it with oil and then watch it trickle down below on the driveway. For this reason, Duane took it upon himself to overhaul the engine. He worked



for quite some time on this project. The end result being less oil leakage and several tin cans of remaining car parts—their origination unknown.

Mom. One winter morning, the Mother-of-the-Three Boys was driving to Kunsmiller Junior High where she taught music. Unbeknownst to her, over the hill lay a multi-car pileup. Indeed it was as if an icy vortex was sucking unsuspecting vehicles over to the side of the street, where one car in particular served as a target.

As Mom crested the hill by Loretta Heights College, she looked ahead to her intended route. The owner of the target car wandered around in hopeless resignation as car after car slid on the glazed ice toward his mutilated vehicle. (This is the truth, we are not making this up.)

Was she destined for the same fate? Cautiously, she made her way down the road with all intentions of politely moving past the wreckage. But, the inevitable happened. As if being pulled by a magnet, she felt the Cutlass heading toward the vehicle.

But, being the gracious woman she was, she rolled down her car window and called ahead, “Excuse me...I’m going to hit you.” The man threw his hands in the air. What could he do? And sure enough, she, too, hit the target car.

Rod. Another Car-Challenge was Rod’s red Mach I Mustang. He was the only one who loved this car. No one else could understand the rapport he had with it. To begin with, he unscrewed the front seat and re-bolted it in the back seat. This provided the necessary length for his approaching 6’ 10” frame—and basically prevented anyone else from driving it.

Second of all, conversation was impossible at the chronic and sonic decibel level this vehicle maintained. It was no surprise that Rod’s arrival was announced ten blocks away.



Dad. Inevitably, the Father-of-the-Three Boys was also Car-Challenged. In much the same way that he’d chosen the herniated Schnitzel, so also he chose a Saab. This “good deal” had some of the first heated car seats. Such a luxury. However, they would heat at their own whim, rather than at a designated time. Furthermore,

the seat padding on the passenger side disintegrated, leaving a large depression. To prevent the loss of his grandchildren in this sink hole, he tossed in several pillows—for their safety and comfort.



No one is sure why Dad didn't just sell the Sob Case, but instead he would leave it in a parking lot, unlocked, keys in the ignition, with the hopes that he would return to find it missing.

Bryan. Being Car-Challenged wasn't limited to the make or model of car, but extended to driving records as well. Cookie-Penner and Bryan had ongoing contests to see who could keep their driver's licenses the longest. Cookie-Penner determined her own speed limit, regardless of signs. Bryan was either late, or optimistic about the time required to arrive on time. Consequently, they both accumulated speeding tickets. It was only after Mom passed away...where she rests in peace...that Bryan overcame his ticket-challenged state. ☺

The Referee

The Three boys eventually grew up, which was unquestionably a miracle. They'd survived Haystacks and Hockey sticks, Bicycles and Go-Carts. When Rod went off to college in Laramie, to play basketball, Bryan was one of his biggest fans. Bryan attended Colorado State University in Fort Collins—which was the arch rival of Wyoming, yet there was never any doubt in Bryan's mind, or anyone sitting near him, which team he supported during the basketball season. He had no sense of embarrassment about his obnoxious behavior. And Rod never was embarrassed by Bryan's unbridled fanaticism.



Besides the usual cheering of his brother, Bryan frequently foamed at the mouth over the Referee's calls. One Christmas, Rod bought him, as a gag gift—a Referee shirt. The Three Boys yuked it up about the possibilities this presented for Bryan.

As was typical, Dad and Mom would drive the Ford LTD from Denver to Fort Collins to pick up Bryan and his wife, Naomi, and then on to Laramie for Rod's games. The weather was never taken into account and many treacherous drives were made.

As it turned out, CSU and Wyoming played a post-holiday game. This was a particularly ugly game for Rod since he was on the bench. Understandably, Bryan found this beyond his toleration, and as if this wasn't enough to enrage him, at one

point, the Referees made one too many unjustified calls. That was it. Bryan became absolutely incensed.

He ripped off his outer shirt, revealing his Referee shirt—complete with a whistle, jumped up from his seat, which was six or seven rows from the court, stepped onto the announcer's table, and leapt onto the floor. Wham! With whistle blowing, he bounded across the floor.



The Referees on the floor turned around, saw the black and white tornado coming toward them and recognized it as an official. What was the alarm? Something serious must be happening. Whatever it was, the game must be stopped. They walked over to him to hear the matter. Bryan unleashed his opinion upon them. They stood stunned. It took them awhile to realize that he was an imposter. Meanwhile, over the radio, the announcers were describing the mystery Referee who had appeared out of nowhere. No one recognized him as Rod's brother.

Out came the campus cops. They dragged Bryan off the floor and interrogated him. "How many Referees are in a game?" they asked him. "Two," he blurted out. "Are you one of them?" they continued. Eventually they wore him down and convinced him that he was NOT one of the official Referees. With this agreement, they allowed him back in the game—but with a constant eye in his direction.

In many cases, Bryan would become so lathered up during a game that he would go shower down with his brother and the rest of the team. This was of course appropriate after this game, too.

As was the tradition, the family gathered at their usual restaurant, the Diamond Horse Shoe, for a late dinner before returning to Colorado. Believably, on this night there were more than ordinary game highlights to recount. Mom, although slightly embarrassed, had to admit that the zaniness of the event was fitting for the Wyoming-CSU competition. She expressed no surprise that Bryan had gotten himself out of his self-imposed predicament. The family in general laughed, shrugged, and accepted that "that's just Bryan." ☺



Penners and Pies

In the Howard and Lois Penner household, there was the Pie-Maker and there were the Pie-Eaters. None of these were the same. Mom was the Pie-maker, putting out Pecan, Chocolate, and Fruit Pies. The Three Boys and Dad were the

Pie-Eaters. If every family member had been a Pie-Eater, the Pie would have had to be cut into fifths—a geometrical exercise. However, cutting the Pie into fourths *was much more simple. And, subsequently, it helped the Pie-Maker maintain her slender figure.*

Even so, Pie-Cutting did not just happen. One of the Three Boys would be selected to cut the Pie—into hopefully uniformed quadrants. Then, the other Boys would study the exact dimensions, choosing a piece that was at least a smidgen larger than the others. Following this, Dad would choose a piece. Finally, the Pie-Cutter would be left with the remaining piece. Thus, the tedious and careful measuring by the Pie-Cutter before cutting.

Penners-and-Pies did not cease to be a interlinked after The Three Boys grew up, or HP grew older. The last in-person memory Nicole and Aaron have of their



Grandpa is that of Pie-Eating. On Thanksgiving weekend, 1994, Howard was in Prescott, Arizona, at Nicole's college apartment. Before he returned to his home in L.A., the family went out for a quick meal. Each person ordered soup or a sandwich—except for Grandpa—who ordered a slice of Pecan Pie. Everyone teased him for his bold and nonconforming selection. But, within a month, his choice was seen as sensible, for he had proven, *Life is so uncertain. Eat dessert first.* With that finale, on December 4, 1994, he went up to join the Pie-Maker and another Pie-Eater. ☺

Dessert First

Here's what's cookin' New Year Cookies Serves
Recipe from the kitchen of Man Penner



2 pkg. dry yeast dissolved in a
little warm water.

1 qt milk (warmed)

1 T salt

6 eggs, separated

1/2 c sugar

3 c raisins (flavored)

6 c. flour (about)

add dissolved yeast to milk. add sugar salt &
egg yolks Beat well (add milk a little at a time)
add flour 1 c at a time & keep beating. (over

Here's what's cookin' Farmer's Brownies Serves
Recipe from the kitchen of Man Penner



1/4 c cocoa

1 c hot water 1 t soda

3/4 c Butter 1/2 t salt

2 1/2 c flour 2 c sugar

1/2 c Buttermilk 2 eggs (or 1)

1/2 t vanilla 1/2 c nuts

Mix well: ~~put~~ dry ingredients & add cocoa -
beaten eggs & butter. milk & vanilla Beat
well for about 2 min. Add nuts &
Bake in jelly Roll type Pan (about 10 x 15) at

375° for about 20 min. Frost while

Here's what's cookin' Roll Kuchen Serves
Recipe from the kitchen of Mom Penner



Put 2 eggs in a cup & fill with milk. Pour into bowl. Beat well & add 6 T oleo or butter, 1/2 t salt, 2 t B. Powder, 2 cups flour & mix well, place on floured board. Knead well & roll out with rolling pin. Cut into 3 inch strips. Cut strips into 3" x 5" pieces & slash. Pull one end thru slash to make a twist at top & deep fat 400° until brown on one side, turn over & brown &

Here's what's cookin' Pepper Nuts

Recipe from the kitchen of Mom Penner Serves



3 c Br. Sugar	1 t cin.
2 c Butter or oleo	1 t nutmeg
1 c sour cream	1 t cloves
4 eggs	1/4 t. pepper (Blk)
4 1/2 c flour	1 t B. Powder
1/2 t salt	1 c walnuts
1 t soda	chopped fine

Mix all ingredients (you can use a heater-electric if you want.) the last cup or so of flour may make it too stiff for an electric heater & you have to mix by hand. Chill in ref. over night. (over)

New Year's Cookies

2 pkg. dry yeast dissolved in a little warm water.

1 qt. milk (warmed)	1 T. salt
6 eggs, separated	1/2 c. sugar
3 c. raisins (floured)	6 c. flour (about)

Add dissolved yeast to milk. Add sugar, salt and egg yolks. Beat well. Add milk a little at a time. Add flour 1 c. at a time and keep beating. Add floured raisins last (don't beat them in). Dough will be a sponge. Allow to raise in a warm place until double in size. Drop by tablespoonsful into hot oil (400°) and fry until done (5 to 6 minutes). Poke one with a toothpick to see if it's done all the way through. They may turn themselves in the hot oil. These fritters may be sprinkled with sugar or served plain. Good hot or cold.

Farmer's Brownies

1/4 c. cocoa	1 ts. soda
1 c. hot water	1/2 ts. salt
3/4 c. butter	2 c. sugar
2 1/2 c. flour	2 eggs
1/2 c. buttermilk	1/2 ts. vanilla
1/2 or 1 c. nuts	

Pour hot water over cocoa and butter. Mix well. Mix dry ingredients and add cocoa, beaten eggs, buttermilk, and vanilla. Beat well for about 2 minutes. Add nuts. Bake in jelly roll type pan (about 10x15) at 375° for about 20 minutes. Frost while warm with a mixture of: 4 ts. cocoa and 3 to 6 T. buttermilk. (Heat this to boiling and add powdered sugar to make consistency of frosting).

Peppernuts

3 c. brown sugar	1 ts. cinnamon
2 c. butter or oleo (margarine)	1 ts. nutmeg
1 c. sour cream	1 ts. cloves
4 eggs	1/4 ts. black pepper
4 1/2 c. flour	1 ts. baking powder
1/2 ts. salt	1 c. walnuts (chopped fine)
1 ts. soda	

Continued on next page.

Mix all ingredients (you can use an electric beater if you want). The last cup or so of flour may make it too stiff for an electric beater and you may have to mix by hand. Chill in refrigerator over night. Take small mounds and roll into long, thin rolls about 12x1/2 inches and chill (works best if frozen). Slice little tiny slices and place on cookie sheet. Bake at 375° for 5 to 6 minutes or until lightly brown.

Rollkuchen

Put 2 eggs in 1 c. measure and fill with milk. Pour into bowl. Beat well and add 6 T. oleo or butter, 1/2 ts. salt, 2 ts. baking powder, 2 c. flour and mix well. Place on floured board. Knead well. Roll out with rolling pin. Cut into 3 inch strips. Cut strips into 3x5 inch pieces and slash. Pull one end through slash to make a twist. Fry in deep fat (400°) until brown on one side; turn over and brown other side. Drain on paper towels. Salt if you like. Good with cold watermelon.

Hello Dolly Cookies

1 stick oleo	1 pkg. chocolate chips
1 c. Graham cracker crumbs	1 c. chopped walnuts
1 can Eagle brand condensed milk	1 c. coconut

Melt oleo in 9x13 pan. Pour Graham cracker crumbs over oleo and spread. Pour coconut over and spread, pour nuts over and spread, pour chocolate chips over and spread, pour Eagle brand milk over all and spread. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Let cool completely before cutting into squares.

Cream Cheese Brownies

1 pkg. (4 oz.) Bakers German sweet chocolate	
5 T. butter	1/2 ts. baking powder
1 pkg. (3 oz.) cream cheese	1/4 ts. salt
1 c. sugar	1/2 c. chopped nuts
3 eggs	1/4 ts. almond extract
1/2 c. plus 1 T. unsifted flour	1 1/2 ts. vanilla

Melt chocolate and 3 T. butter over low heat, stirring constantly. Cool. Cream remaining butter with cream cheese until softened. Gradually add 1/4 c. sugar, creaming until light and fluffy. Stir in 1 egg, 1 T. flour and 1/2 ts. vanilla until

blended. Beat remaining eggs until fluffy and light. Add remaining 3/4 c. sugar, beat until thickened. Fold in baking powder, salt and remaining 1/2 c. flour. Blend in cooled chocolate mixture. Stir in nuts, almond extract and remaining 1 ts. vanilla. Measure 1 c. chocolate batter and set aside. Spread remaining chocolate batter in a greased 9 inch square pan. Pour cheese mixture over top. Drop chocolate batter by T. on cheese mixture and swirl to marble. Bake 350° for 35 to 40 minutes. Cool and cut into bars.

German Chocolate Cake

Beat 4 egg whites until stiff; add 1/2 c. sugar and set aside.

Pour 1/2 c. boiling water over 1 bar German sweet chocolate. Stir until melted.

Sift together: 2 1/2 c. flour, 1/2 ts. salt and 1 1/2 c. sugar.

Add to flour mixture and beat 2 minutes with an electric beater:

1 c. shortening	3/4 c. buttermilk
4 egg yolks	chocolate mixture

Add to mixture and beat 2 more minutes:

1/4 c. buttermilk	1 ts. soda
2 ts. vanilla	

Add egg whites and beat on lowest speed just until blended. Bake in three-9 inch pans 1 1/2 in. deep at 375° for 25 minutes or until done. Frost with German Chocolate Cake Frosting when cooled.

German Chocolate Cake Frosting

1 c. Pet evaporated milk	1 c. sugar
3 egg yolks	1 cube oleo or butter

Cook over low heat until thick; stirring constantly.

Add and stir occasionally until cool:

1 1/2 c. Angel Flake coconut	1 c. chopped pecans
2 squares German sweet chocolate	1 ts. vanilla

Spread on cooled cake.

Pecan Pie

Beat together with rotary beater:

3 eggs	2/3 c. sugar
1/2 ts. salt	1/3 c. butter, melted
1 c. dark corn syrup	

Mix in:

1 c. pecan halves

Pour into an unbaked pie shell. Bake at 375° for 40-50 minutes.

Duane's Cookies

Mix thoroughly:

2/3 c. soft shortening (part butter)
1 c. granulated sugar
1/2 c. brown sugar; packed
1 egg
1 ts. vanilla

Sift together and stir:

1 1/2 c. flour
1/2 ts. soda
1/2 ts. salt

Stir in:

1/2 c. cut up nuts
6 oz. chocolate chips

Drop 2 inches apart on ungreased sheet. Bake at 375° for 8 to 10 minutes until golden and soft. Yield: 4-5 dozen.

Bryan's Oatmeal Cookies

1 c. brown sugar	1/2 ts. soda
2 c. flour	3/4 c. shortening
1/2 ts. salt	2 eggs
2 c. oatmeal	1/2 ts. vanilla
1 c. raisins	1/2 c. hot water

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