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## The Sawmill Road

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David Lee

## *The Sawmill Road*

We got our town supply  
of cripples on the sawmill road  
it wasn't a year or a season  
went by that somebody didn't get  
mashed up one way or another  
on that road

it started about a mile  
out of town and went straight up  
to blowup where the 1st sawmill was  
and the boiler exploded years ago  
killing 2 men and one  
they never found  
either blowed all to hell  
or left without sending word  
it's not a flat place on that road  
youn speak of anywhere  
hard going up or down  
and dangerous  
a lot of people got killed  
and their bones busted  
on the sawmill road

back then when wagons  
was what we had  
it was always a runaway  
or a accident about to happen

somebody got ruint for life  
Charlie Ivie was coming  
downhill loaded with 2 ton of cutwood  
for a barn when his neck yoke busted  
wagon rode up on the horses  
pushed them ahead of it  
going straight down  
and this drag he made  
out of some logs he chained up  
to the back  
to slow it down come loose  
his brakes wouldn't hold  
wagon pushed the horses  
off the road heading right for a cliff  
Charlie Ivie give it up  
jumped off but caught his foot  
in the brakerope  
it throwed him under  
crushed his legs  
where one had to be cut off  
other one wouldn't bend  
he's a sorry dam mess from then on  
but the wagon turned on its own  
the horses wasn't killed  
they saved the wood  
but he had to sell it  
he couldn't build no barn after that

Ray Evanses' daddy took a load  
uphill to sell it to the mill  
he had Ray with him

he's about 14 back then  
horse stumbled  
wagon started to roll back  
so his daddy yelled  
jump down off them logs where he's sitting  
and block off the wheel  
Ray couldn't find no rock close by  
quick so he shoved his foot under  
he sed he wouldn't do that again  
mashed it flat like a duck  
waddled like a fat womern  
on that side from then on

the one we's all scared of  
got Clarence Murphey  
the pole strap that fits  
over the neck yoke fastened  
to the britchens on the harness  
to keep the wagon from rolling ahead  
and for backing it up  
finally broke  
and his brakes wouldn't hold  
he jumped and got tangled  
wagon went over his chest  
left him splattered all over the road  
turned sideways and rolled  
killed one horse and broke the othem  
he had to be shot  
nobody got crippled though  
they had to get him all in a cotton sack  
to bring him down

it was right below that place  
my brother and me  
found that branch  
and the still where  
he got his finger chopped off  
in the leaf springs of a wagon  
stealing sugar  
but it didn't make him no cripple

my uncle Elwood was going up  
tandem with Cletus Young  
to the sawmill when he seen  
this waspnest hanging on a tree limb  
he got up and crawled back  
along the reach and whacked it  
with a axe handle  
whipped them horses with a rein  
for a ways and pulled off  
the side the road  
here come Cletus Young standing up  
on the double tree of his wagon  
them horses running belly to the ground  
with a string of wasps following  
like he's dragging a plow  
went right on past  
when he outrun them he come back  
hit my uncle Elwood oncet  
so hard he's knocked out  
busted 2 teeth but he sed  
it was worth it



Cletus got stung in his ear  
sed it got him down deep  
and he couldn't hear out of it no more  
but we never believed him

had a lot of hunting accidents  
on that road where we'd go  
for turkeys and deer  
R. B. McCravey's 1 boy was hunting  
on his horse with R. B.'s rifle  
without permission  
this deer run out  
he had that rifle in his lap  
lifted it up and fired too fast  
without sighting he shot  
that horse in the back of his head  
when it fell down it trapped him  
his one leg broke  
where he limped from then on  
and his hand with the rifle in it  
was under him and the horse  
and the saddle  
smashed it up where it never did  
work right after that  
he wore a glove on it  
couldn't even hold a cigarette  
or write his name

Cephas Bilberry was hunting  
rabbits up there  
when he thought he seen

these turkeys out of season  
he climbt through this fence  
to get them and poached hisself  
shot off half his chin and part of his face  
a handful of teeth and 1 eye  
on that side  
he walked down that mountain  
all the way home  
sed he was afraid he might of  
bled to death  
but it never got a good start  
figured mebbe the heat off the shotgun  
sealed it off shut  
he was a sight after that  
couldn't even let him  
pass the plate  
the contribution would go down  
ever Sunday he did

after we started driving cars  
it was about a wreck a month  
at 1st till we got used to it  
then down to a few every year  
some dead  
like the Clarys that went off  
Left Hand canyon  
or old man Benson that run  
into a logging truck  
he was too old to drive  
should of known better

when he's young  
before he got blinded by lightning  
Harold Wayne Johnston was up there  
on a Saturday night  
in the back seat with Marva Beth Williamson  
the hand brake must of slipped  
or they got to rocking  
it come out of gear  
that car rolled a quarter of a mile backwards  
hit a tree and broke her back  
she's so skinny she could of  
walked up to a flagpole  
and bit a piece off  
without turning her head sideways  
so it might not of hit that hard  
Harold Wayne sed he never known  
a thing till it hit  
sed he was amazed by it all  
she's paralyzed for a while  
but got better  
walked like a goose from then on  
but she's so skinny  
we never noticed it  
we didn't look at her that much

there's not a foot of that road  
don't remember somebody by name  
Carla Prowst got 5 unmarried kids up there  
named every one  
after its daddy  
we lost a banker and a Baptist deacon



and a deputy sheriff over that road  
every time she went up  
we'd watch to see  
who left town

when the ambulance come from that direction  
we known it was a bad one  
we'd wait a day to see  
if Edna Mae worn her golden shoes  
then we'd call the hospital  
to see who and how bad  
the whole town got infected  
by that road  
it wasn't hardly nobody  
man or womern who grew up there  
who didn't lose something sometime  
on the Sawmill Road  
we even wondered once  
if we oughta close it off  
but the town board decided if we didn't have  
our Sawmill Road cripples  
we'd be too perfect  
and that's a load  
that's too heavy to carry