The Sawmill Road

David Lee
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
yougn 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 threwed 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 woman
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 wasp nest 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 once
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 climb't 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 womem 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