



THE FARLEY FAMILY REUNION

A comic play for an actress and an actor

by
James Arrington



Newport, Maine

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THE FARLEY FAMILY REUNION

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CHARACTERS:

The following roles are played by the Actor [or by a number of actors] (in order of appearance)

CHESTER
HEBER
VIOLA
UFFER
LEROY
MARVA
VOLCO
PEARL

The following roles are played by the Actress [or by a number of actresses] (in order of appearance)

ARVILLA
GRAMPA
GRETCHEN
AUNT MINNIE
GENEVA
FAYREEN
VESTA

PHOTOS used in the travel sketch are available from the publisher as digital images that can be leaded into a program like PowerPoint.

THE FARLEY FAMILY REUNION by James Arrington 1m 1f playing multiple roles of 6 male characters and 9 female characters, or those characters can be played by multiple individual or doubled actors. The wacky, weird, wonderful, witty, whimsical, one-man show written and performed by James Arrington. Described as "a must see," and "stunningly hilarious," this play takes on family culture in a way to "bless yer heart."

James Arrington — Retired former Associate Professor, Former Department Chair at Utah Valley University. Professor James Arrington was schooled professionally at The American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco and has earned a Masters Degree in Theatre from Brigham Young University. He has worked professionally for over 30 years and became a local sensation on the Utah theatre scene when returned to create and star in his well known groundbreaking one-man show *Here's Brother Brigham*.

He followed this by displaying a quirky writing talent with *The Farley Family Reunion* and *J. Golden*. He starred in the former and wrote, directed and produced the latter. He went on to write and produce numerous works including *Farley Two: the Next Gyration*, *Wilford Woodruff: God's Fisherman*, *Farley Family Xmas*, *Tumuaki! Matthew Cowley of the Pacific*, and the pioneer musical *The Trail of Dreams*. He has written and produced numerous smaller works and was granted a commission by the Sesquicentennial Utah War Committee to write a new touring work entitled *March of the Salt Soldiers: The Utah War*. He has written for stage, screen, outdoor pageant, radio drama, and puppet shows.

Professor Arrington was the first Chairman of the Department of Theatrical Arts for Stage and Screen for UVU. He recently received both the local Star award from the SCERA and a highly sought after regional award, The Kennedy Center American Theatre College Faculty Excellence Award. Along with his teaching at UVU, Professor Arrington oversees the playwriting programs. He also originated the annual *Short Attention Span Theatre*, an engaging ten-minute play festival devoted to new student works. <https://www.jamesarringtonproductions.com/>

The Farley Family Reunion

(As the audience enters the theatre they are each given a nametag and instructed to fill it out and wear it. They are given a mimeographed program that is printed off center and folded rather crookedly, complete with a number of humorous typographical errors. Stage right we see the back porch of Victor and Viola's house with some normal back porch claptrap including rakes, paint cans, milk bottles, assorted broken and oddly matched toys, and the perennial slamming screen door. There is a window on the back of the house through which some of the dialogue is passed. Stage left is a picnic table with man pans of food covered with aluminum foil, cups, condiments, and a large bag of potato chips. Behind the table is a clothesline and behind that a picket fence. We see evidence of several outdoor games such as croquet mallets lying about. We hear the sound of a volleyball game going on off stage left. Suddenly a strange looking man wanders onstage. He is about 21, wears a mismatched tie and glasses. House lights are still up, the young man stares about himself as if he doesn't know what to do, spots the potato chips, opens them and eats a handful while making his way offstage. One at a time, he brings components of a sound system onstage including two ragged mismatched speakers, a mike stand and finally the mike. Each time he takes a handful of chips and watches as the house fills. He attempts to get the system operational but can't seem to get the mike working. After several tries he remembers to check the on/off button, turns it on, and there is a roar of feedback. He turns it off and runs offstage, returns and blows into the microphone to prove it's working and then sees he has left potato chips bits on it. Stealthily he scrapes them off and disappears off stage.

House lights dim and we have Victor and Viola's house at 1:00 pm Saturday afternoon the day of the family reunion. Heber Farley enters from the house to the porch. He is seventy-four, a gentle, fatherly man with glasses halfway down his nose, and his hands in his pockets. He pulls out a handkerchief and mops at his forehead, looks up at the sun and approaches the mike. Suddenly he realizes that mike cord is a hazard for anyone who will speak. He laboriously clears it, mops his neck and face again, checks his fly and bellows into the microphone.

Note: all characters address the audience directly, making the audience the family.

HEBER: *(Very loudly)* TEEEEEST!!! TESTIN' TESTIN' TEEEST!!!

(The volume is way up and the sound is way too loud.)

Can ya hear me out there?

(He listens, then off mike.)

Chester, it's too loud...I said IT'S TOO LOUD...alright, alright...I'll try it again.

(Into the mike.)

Test, test. 1, 2, 3, 4, teeeeeest.

(Off mike.)

Chester, it's gone completely...there ain't nothin', alright...

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(Into mike.)

Test—

(It's too loud again. Off mike.)

Too loud, Chester, can't ya fuss with it somehow?...It's too loud already...what...oh...alright then.

(Into mike, while motioning up and down but is finally adjusted.)

Test, test, test. I believe that's got 'er, Chester.

(The mike squeaks with feedback.)

It's fine now, don't fiddle with it anymore. Its' fine now!

(Back into the mike, grinning.)

Oh, it is certainly a great thrill and a blessin' to be standin' where I'm standin' and seein' what I'm seein'. Yessir, it is surely a great blessin' and an honor to see ya all here once again and to feel yer spirits and to rejoice in unity and bonds of love with ya once again. First of all we'd like to thank Chester Christensen for settin' up the sound system so's everybody speaks can be heard loud n' clear. It's certainly a gracious disposal of 'ees time and talents. Thanks Chester.

(Off mike.)

You can take a seat if ya so desire...don't mess with it anymore!

(Into mike.)

We're so pleased to see so many of ya here this year. Especially those as hasn't been here before. We're so glad to feel yer spirits and to rejoice in unity and the bonds of love with you once again. We believe that bringin' the family together in this fashion serves to bring us all together so's we can feel one another's spirits and rejoice in the unity and bonds of love with each other the way we should.

Now then, I suppose, for the benefit of those as doesn't know, I ought to introduce myself. My name is Heber J. Farley, and I'm second son, third child to Grampa Dean who was second after Jordan to Christian and Constance and I'm behind Ione, who is dead, and Volco Eugene, and I'm the first child to Grampa Dean's second wife Phoebe Peterson who's also passed on. Now, that ought to clear up who I am. Oh, and the reason I'm standin' here in front of all you good folks is that I am the present presidin' president of the Farley Family Corporation Organization Association and this is my fourth year as presidin' president since it was officially give to me four years ago.

Now, then, I think this would be a fittin' time for us to introduce the other officers of the family so's you can acquaint yerselves with them and lend your support. Volco Eugene Farley

(He points to an imaginary man in the audience.)

is reigning as our ex-fisshio president

(He places his hand over the mike and leans forward.)

No, no Volco, ya don't have to get up...Ya don't have to...tell him he don't have to stand up...

(Acquiescing, he encourages applause from the audience.)

They clapped fo ya so you can sit down. Get him to sit down there!

(On mike.)

Uh, I'm the president this year as was already mentioned...uhh...where are ya Parley...oh yes, there ya are, Parley P. Farley is vice president. He's my brother. What are ya now Parley, how old are ya now? Yeh,

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yeh. He's 62 now, so that shows ya where we're going, um hmm! Pearl Axelson is our treasurer and historian...Pearl?...she's sister to Parley and me...no I ain't gonna tell how old ya are Pearl...well, I don't even know so don't get on yer high horse. 'N last of all but certainly not least is our secretary, Arvilla Farley...

(Off mike, towards the house.)

ARVILLA...ARVILLA!

(The woman appears at the back door wiping her hands on a towel. She is 45, strong, a no-nonsense type of woman who in another lifetime must have been a drill sergeant.)

ARVILLA: Callin' me?

HEBER: Just introducing the officers to the family.

ARVILLA: Well, such as I am here I am.

HEBER: Now that makes up the family organization as officers 'n I can testify they're real good, they're real fine and I love 'em dearly and it's such a pleasure to work with such fine folks and to feel their spirits and rejoice in the unity and bonds of love with them...

ARVILLA: *(Interrupting.)* Heber, aren't ya ready for the reading of the rules?

HEBER: ...Uh, yeah, yeah, that would be right fine.

(Arvilla disappears into the house.)

Alright now, this here's Arvilla Farley, the secretary to the Farley Family Corporation Organization Association to read a few rules we made up for the benefit of everybody here this year to the Farley Family Reunion.

ARVILLA: *(She comes to the microphone.)* Weeeeeell, it's such a pleasure to see everybuddy here today. Lots of folks I don't even know. Well, bless yer hearts we sure are glad ya come out this year. Now, I'm here in my official capacity as the secretary of the Farley Family Corporation Organization Association to read a few rules we made up for the benefit of everybody here this year to the reunion.

(Heber has finished picking up the papers and gives them to Arvilla and sits left.)

Thank you Heber, oh here, mercy, I've lost my place. Just a second.

(She turns around and there is a furious shuffling of papers, suddenly a paper airplane comes flying onstage at her. Frustrated and angry, she turns around and into the mike very close and very loud, looking toward the house.)

IF THAT'S YOU BOYS OVER THERE NOW YOU JUST LISTEN TO ME!! WE'LL HAVE NONE OF THAT KIND OF THING HERE THIS AFTERNOON AND I WANT...

(Controlling herself.)

Would somebuddy here go round and get them kids so's they can hear the rules along with everbuddy else? They're the one's as most need to hear 'em anyways...Thelma could ya?...Thank you. Oh, this is

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such a mess, let me just find my rules sheet. I know it was here somewhere's...

(She looks again.)

Oh, OOOH, oh

(She laughs.)

Here it is...it's right here. I had it in my other hand the whole blessed time, can you imagine that?

(She laughs again then sees Thelma.)

Was they gone, Thelma? Well, I thought as much. I guess there's nothing to be done...except, well, he's your kid...I think we ought to make sure them kids hears the rules, so all you parents make sure yer kids understands 'em...expecially will somebuddy make perfect sure that Skipper, Bud, 'n Cleetus and that bunch hears it fer sure, fer sure! Okay then, here is the rules for the Farley Family Reunion, [current date]. The seventeenth anniversary of the Farley Family, etc. Now let's all remember and keep in mind that these rules is to facilitate that everbuddy has a real nice time and nobuddy gets hurt nor mad, and if anything gets ruint or broke we know who's gonna pay for it.

Number one, first and foremost...now everbuddy listen up now...This is the most important one... All parents are completely responsible for their children's whereabouts and ACTIONS...during the whole entire total day. Viola wouldn't let us have the reunion here this year till we agreed on this rule cuz she says it cost her pertnear \$200 to fix her waterheater and to get herself a new cat after last year. So let that stick as a reminder. Viola has asked us to keep the kids out of the garden as the

(Spelling it.)

R-A-S-P-B-R-R-I-E-S'es is just now comin' on and she'd like to put some up this year, fer once. One last thing on this, don't any of you children for any reason whatsoever play in the attic overtop the garage and that includes you kids...

(Moving closer to the mike an loudly.)

DID YOU HEAR THAT WHEREVER YOU ARE, YOU BOYS? ARE YOU OUT THERE, SKIPPER, BUD 'N CLEETUS? DO NOT FOR ANY REASON WHATSOEVER PLAY IN THE ATTIC OVERTOP THE GARAGE!

Next, now let's see here...each and every person has to have one of these blue tickets to eat today. Every family should have enough for themselves and each one of their kids. Nobuddy as doesn't have a ticket gets any food. What Ferrel?...Oh no, you don't have to have two tickets for a second helpin', you above all ought to know that, but on that note just be sure your aren't takin' food out of somebuddy's mouth like last year. Which reminds me, we don't want no playing with matches nor any other kind of fire and that includes the hamburger grill where Uncle Verlo and Preston are cookin'. Okay now lastly, anybuddy as hasn't paid their family dues yet should either see me or Pearl directly after I finish here.

Well, it appears I've said everything I was supposed to soooo...Just keep these little few things in mind and I know we'll all get along fine and everbuddy'll have a real good time here today. We'd like to thank Victor and Viola—

(She claps he hands encouraging applause.)

for allowin' us to hold the reunion here again this year. We're grateful to Luanna and Ellagene for

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supervising the food this year. It's a bigger job every year, naturally, and Pearl and Twila and their mailing committee for invitations and newsletters. And we're especially grateful for Mahonri and Blaine and their efforts with the printed program, which you know is the first time we ever did have one.

(Applause stops.)

'N gosh, we're just so happy to see how many showed up this year. Hope we all get to meet 'cha. In fact we ought to do that right now. Everbuddy shake hands and innerduce yourself to whoever's next to ya. Oh well, go ahead. They're yer family, ain't they? My gosh!

(Urges the audience to take part.)

Good, now doesn't that make ya feel better? Well, that's all I had. If there's anybuddy who has questions or anything be sure and come up to ask me as I'm sure I'll know the answer. That's all Heber. Heber!

(He has fallen asleep at the picnic table. She marches over and punches him. He leaps to his feet clapping. He watches her leave while trying to collect his wits.)

HEBER: I think we ought to all give Arvilla a big hand fer bein' so painstakin' with all the arrangements.

(He begins to clap again.)

It's a big big job. Yessire, a big one, and a important one. She's a real good girl, a *reeal* fine one and I have to say that I think my son Mahonri Dean done a real smart thing when he picked her, cuz she's a real good girl, she's real fine and good. Alright, well then let's see here. Well, I guess that about takes care of all the formalities so then next I guess we can go right into the program. As has been our tradition since we started we'd like to invite Viola to come up first and sing a song for us so Vi...

(Towards house.)

Vi...Oh, Vi...OH, VI...VI!...Well, can't the Jello wait?...Alright, then, alright.

(Back to mike.)

I guess we can thank all those as helped bring the piana out the house so's we cold use it out here today. Oh, and we heard from the clinic that it ain't serious and H.L. will be back to join us later this afternoon.

(Off mike.)

Who's goin' to play for ya, Vi? Oh.

(On mike.)

Alright. Verdell is agonna play for Viola. I think ya ought to know and be proud that Verdell got his certificate in music here from the Cedar City [*or LOCAL TOWN*] there, and of course, since he's graduated he's got 'em lined up to teach the piana. You remember that little place down on First East used to be "Ida's Sewin' Closet"? Well, Verdell's got it now, teachin' there and calls it "Verdell's Virtuosas." Kinda highfalootin', ain't it? So any of you folks as wants to git yer kids educated musicwise to the piana here's yer opportunity because he's real good. He's real fine. He's real fine and good.

(We hear an earsplitting man's scream and muttering from off right. It startles Heber. Arvilla sticks her head out the window.)

ARVILLA: Oh my gosh!!

(She come rushing out the door as Heber passes through.)

HEBER: Everybody's waitin' on Viola

ARVILLA: Well, go git ‘er.

(She arrives at the microphone and with a big forced smile.)

There was one announcement I clean forgot. If anybuddy’s see the Memmot’s long-handled barbeque cookware set, would they please let uncle Preston know immediately...

HEBER: *(From the house.)* Don’t worry about yer hair, now get out there and sing.

(Viola appears on the porch in curlers and a smock. She is 50ish.)

ARVILLA: Oh, Viola, good. Love your smock, kid.

(Exit to house.)

(VIOLA runs with tiny, mincing steps to the microphone, readies herself and nods to Verdell, who is off stage left, to begin. She smiles a “I’m nervous and excited and I love to do this” kind of smile and waits for the music to start. The music does not start and with a bit of frustration she looks at Verdell, again giving him a silent NOW! with her lips. As the music begins we see her head bobbing in time to the music getting deeply involved. Out comes a horrendous version of “Climb Every Mountain”. The song is not about music or words or message. This song is about her unbelievable monstrous vibrato. As she sings she begins glancing down at a small card hidden in a handkerchief where she clearly as all the words written and once or twice almost loses her place. She becomes so involved in the song that her hand inadvertently slips on the card and the next time she looks down for the words prompting there is no card. However, in the great tradition of troopers after a few moments of fright and embarrassment she finishes with “la la al al a laaaaaaaaaaaaa”. She takes appetite little bow for her bulk, turns to race into the house. The actor quickly removes the props, puts on the glasses and turns around clapping as Heber.)

HEBER: Ain’t she inspirin’? It’s just inspirin’ the way she sings! And she ain’t never had a lesson in her life either! Oh, isn’t it wonderful...SA WONDERFUL. Well sir, now that we got that out of the way...

(He is startled by some fireworks going off.)

Here, here, here! Now you boys, here no, here...here. Those boys.

ARVILLA: *(Bursting from the house.)* I gotta make an important announcement, Heber.

HEBER: Is everything alright?

ARVILLA: No. Well, yes...yes and no. Nobuddy’s hurt, but somebuddy’s in big trouble.

(Into the mike.)

We know that somebuddy’s been into the attic overtop the garage becuz there was fireworks in there and we got a pretty good idea as to who dunnit. So, if you boys will come and turn yourselves in right now there won’t be any trouble. As of right now ya only have the new lock to pay for...NOW, DON’T BE

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FOOLISH, YOU CAN'T HIDE THE REST OF THE DAY, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL TURN YOURSELVES IN!

(She starts for the house.)

HEBER: Kids is kids, Arvilla.

(Arvilla shoots him a poisonous eye.)

'Scuse me. Well, yes, yes, well now, uh. As I was about to say when we was interrupted.

(Heber glances off left.)

Oh my goodness! Glory be! Them firecrackers musta woke up Grampa. Grampa? Grampa? Turn his hearin' aid on there so he knows he's alive. Grampa? Grampa? Do you wanna say a few words to the family? Do you wanna talk?

(He motions speech.)

Oh, boy! My friends, I now take great pride and prejudice in presenting the patriarch of our family, my father Asa Dean Farley. Come on over her Grampa. Here you kids here, come up real close and pay attention, this here is Grampa Dean gonna talk and it's my favorite so pipe down and don't laugh at him like you did last year. Here ya are Grampa.

(GRAMPA is 99 and walks with the aid of a cane. His pants are hiked up and he wears a 1940's wide-brimmed hat, very old glasses, and a string hearing aid. The spirit is alive and aware, the body barely functions. He moves carefully and perilously to the mike, and seems to have trouble with his dentures.)

GRAMPA: The other day I was sittin' in the front of Finlayson's store and seed Brother Jacobson come into town in his rig with his new harse. I thought that a might peculiar. I seed Brother Jacobson the next day. I says to him, "Brother Jacobson, I seed ya yesterdy with yer rig and yer new harse, commenced it rain ya pulled out an umbrelli and held it out over his rump. What'd ya do that fer?" "Well sir," says he to me, says he, "Well sir," says he, "the feller I bought the harse from says as if he got the rains (reigns) under his tail he might run away."

(Grandpa laughs and teeters off.)

HEBER: *(clapping)* Clap loud so he can hear ya! Good that's good. He heard ya! Good. Will you boys help Grampa get settled down? Thank you. Put the blanket over his knees, that's right. Now turn off hes hearin' aid so he can go to sleep...NO! NO! That's his heart pump!! The blue one!!! That's right, that's right. The blue one. Alright then.

(In mike.)

Good old Grampa, his mind's like a steel trap, his body's like a rubber band. I love that man. I love him. So full of vim and vitalis! We'll be really alookin' forward to his hundredth birthday come next year. That's real good, real fine. Real fine and good. Well now, next up here you probably noticed a fella round here today in a red cap with a fine sense o' humor. His name is Uffer K. Johnson, that ring some bells? Yessir, he married Pearl's daughter Perlene, and we don't get them up here too often. He's says he's got a big family surprise for us. Come on up, Uffer.

(Exiting offstage.)

ARVILLA: *(Calling out to the audience from the window with her hand over the telephone.)* Beatrice? Beatrice? Where are you hon'? Oh, it's your mother hon', she wants to know if the box in little Bud's snake collection is supposed to be empty? Huh? Oh...just as second.

(Into phone.)

Which one Mrs. Baumgarten? What's it say? Huh? Hello? Hello? Beatrice, I think she said boa constrictor, but there's so much screamin' it's hard to be sure...right I think you better get over there right away, hon'.

(Into phone.)

She'll be right over, she's coming...hello...

UFFER: *(Uffer enters, he's 45, wears a baseball cap, a truckin' tee shirt and has an inelegant but affably loud manner about him.)* Well, howdy, howdy!! Ah bring to you a BIG HALLO and SAAALLLUUTTTEEE from your cousins down in Texas. Pearlene sends her regards and wished she coulda come but she always gets sick in the truck and that's the way our marriage has lasted. I can only stay a little while as I got to get my rid out to Bakersfield, but I got a big story to tell ya right now. This is the biggest family news we got. I hope you're ready for this one cause it's a gooder.

You remember my little girl, Queezle Dean? Shor you do, well she ain't so little anymore, fact is just last week she won the county wrestlin' elimination! Woo! Now wait, wait, that isn't the best news. Day before yesterday, now listen to this, she signed with a promotion man who come all the way up from Houston to sign her. Do you get it? My little girl's gonna WRATTLE ON TEEVEE!!! Now beat that!! I say beat that!!! YEEEOOWW!! They gonna giver her a whole lotsa money just to try it. Imagine that!? Oh, and she's a big girl too. She gonna win. WOOOO! She's aweignin' in about 267 right now, give'r take a pound and stands six foot 3 and a half.

Now, you all know you got to have a flashytype name to wrestle on TV and she's got 'em narrowed down to three now. She said, "Daddy, I want you to go on up there and tell the family 'bout 'em and see which one they like, and whatever it is, by dang, I'll use'er! And she will too. So I'm gonna explain them all to ya, and then you're gonna vote on yer favert, alright? Alright! Now, here's the three she's decidin' on. Number one is "The Atomic Slammer". Ya See, that's the name of her favorite throw, she invented it. They outlawed it in the county this year cause too many girls was getting' hurt. We protested it was discrimination, I mean just cause the other girls can't lift Queezel like that, but you know how far that goes, so they throwed it out anyway. But she won anyway. So that's the first name—"The Atomic Slammer". The second one is "Queen Kong". That's sorta gotta ring to it, don't it? Queezel ain't so sure about it though cause she says she ain't legally a queen yet since she ain't married yet, so I suggested "Princess Kong", but she says that kinda loses that "good old ring". Besides, she says, "it don't sound mean enough". So the second one is "Queen Kong". And the third one is purty much explains itself, the third one is "Queezel the Diesel". Honk, honk! So alright then, that's the three. We gone vote on 'em this time, clap fer yer favert. All those for "The Atomic Slammer".

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(Actual audience response.)

All those for “Queen Kong”.

(Response again.)

And now all those for “Queezel the Diesel”. Well that’s good, it appears that cher favorite is _____ and I think that’s a gooder too. So you be watchin’ on TV for _____

And if you send a self addressed stamped envelope we gonna send you a picture of Queezel in her purple tights! Now, there’s a picture you can put on your refrigerator!!! Alright!

I know Pearlene would sure like to see some of ya, so, now that Queezel’s a movin’ out we gonna have a whole losts more room, so y’all come down and see us, y’hear? Thanks y’all. Bye bye now.

(Sound of a semi truck start and move off honking.)

HEBER: *(Looks back.)* Bye! Bye! Honk, honk! BYE! Certainly is a friendly enthusiastic fella. You can see how Pearlene loves him. Well, we sure got good in-laws in this family—ain’t no outlaws, that’s fer sure, just a little joke. Well, as I said before, we’re grateful to say that Grampa’s sister, Aunt Minnie June, is with us today.

(MINNIE JUNE enters from the audience, a little frumpy woman, 89, her hair in a net, with on of those awful old lady print driesses, covered by a gray coat. She carries and enormous handbag that hangs millimeters above the ground. She wears a little hat and walks bowlegged waddling a bit as she goes.)

Now, Aunt Minnie’s had a bad year with her health, worse than other years...what I mean to say is that she seemed to be sicker than she seemed to be other years. I mean, she’s always been a little sickly or claimed she was but this year she had more problems than most. Well she just got out of the hospital again and we’d like to hear a few words from her...Aunt Minnie...For all you youngsters this here is my aunt so to some of you she’s a great aunt, and to some a great great aunt.

(To Minnie.)

We’re glad to have you back with us Aunt Minnie, speak into this microphone here so’s everybody can hear you.

AUNT MINNIE: Thank you, boy. Well, it’ll probably kill me, I ain’t out of the woods yet, and the way these doctors treat you these days you would think you was just so much baggage awaitin’ on them. But if it ain’t the doctor’s it’s the damn nurses. Oh, it’ll probably kill me, and nobody would know it was them what killed me. I swear I’ll never go to another doctor again while I live. They don’t know their own business. I keep tellin’ them about this pain in my stomach right here. Now you know your stomach isn’t down here where you think. It’s up here, and that your heartburn is actually your stomach-ache wheras your stomach-ache is actually you intestine-ache. See there, that’s just how them doctors tries to bamboozle ya, mix you up as to your own innards.

Well, the pain in my stomach became so acute they put me in the hospital for testing. Now it wasn’t my first time in the hospital and it wasn’t the first time they made me swallow your barium for you upper gastro intestinal x-rays, but it was the most they ever made me drink, nearly choked me senseless to where

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I was spitting it up. And me in my condition! Well, this doctor was as bad or worse than all them others I stopped goin' to. I tell ya, ya can't fool around when yer foolin' with yer health. No.

Now this doctor originally told me that at my age he thought it was probably the Zolinger Ellison syndrome, but that don't cut no mustard with me. Then he says he finds evidence of a possible hiatal hernia...hiatal hernia my foot! Ha! Well, lookee here...

(She takes a large x-ray out of her purse.)

You probably wonder where I got these. I ain't no dumb bunny and I know what's what. When I pay for something, I take it home. Well, thank goodness I been sick most of my life so's I can tell the full story.

(She shows us with an enormous flashlight she has retrieved from her bag.)

Ya see here on this here x-ray on the upper frontal portion there is a dark splotch right along the edge here that looks suspiciously like the photographs I have seen of the occurrence of your gastrointestinal carcinoma. Now for those of you who don't know, that is cancer of the stomach. If it is caught in the early stages it is easily curable but as it grows it spreads its tendrils like a gray octopus made of gristle and begins choking the surrounding tissue as it festers turning perfectly good tissue into dead or mutant tissue that overruns then consumes first the duodenum then the liver with pustules of poisonous mucous which makes its way to your heart or lungs and slowly strangles you to death. Now, I know what I'm talking about, I seen it once on Phil Donohue! [Oprah?]

Now when a person is that sick you do whatever is necessary but this here doctor tells me he thinks it is a simple hiatal hernia. What's a woman to do? I says to him I says, "Well this is all well and good but I believe I better get a second opinion, don't you?" and you know what that little so and so said to me? He says to me, "Second Opinion? Why you come back here tomorrow Mrs. Booth and I'll give you a second opinion?" Just like that. Well, I did what I had to, I told him to go straight to H-E-double toothpicks with no right or left turns and I checked out, taking my x-rays with me. I won't put up with that, and I'll show him. I made an appointment for my second opinion this afternoon. Thank you boy.

(She toddles off.)

HEBER: Thank you Aunt Minnie June. Thank you. Your trials and tribulations have always been a great inspiration to me and many other members of the family. Maybe someday we can all be just like ya. The best for ya and hope that all will be well with ya. You know, I don't think she'll ever go till she's good 'n ready.

(Suddenly there is a loud blast from offstage, startling Heber.)

OOOOooooo, boy, I thought they got us that time. Whew. I ain't been in the army for alotta years, but 'cassionally something sets me off. Whew! 'Bout sceert me baldheaded.

(Mops his face with a hankie.)

Whewieeee. It's pretty hot here today anyways ain't it? Oh well now, let's see here. What'sa comin' up next? Oh yes, we're now gonna—

(Avilla comes rushing in with the purned ans smoking remains of a doll in her hand.)

ARVILLA: Heber, I gotta make another announcement.

HEBER: Go right ahead.

ARVILLA: *(Just barely under control.)* Will those responsible for blowing up little Shondell's dolly with a cherry bomb please come to me and admit it immediately...

(She waits.)

Otherwise WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND WE'RE MARKIN' THIS DOWN. Thanks Heber, that's all.

(She exits clutching the doll to her breast.)

HEBER: That is just a cryin' shame! And such an ugly baby doll to begin with. Well, now that we've taken care of our special innerducitons we'll have our family farm report. My oldest son Leroy is chairman of the farm committee...Leroy. Well, he was here just a second ago...

(We hear a lawnmower start up off stage left and children screaming.)

Oh no, you boys better not...Oh no, oh dear....

ARVILLA: Mercy, what'll they think of next? A body needs to be three people at once here today. Thelma, you go that way and I'll go this...I know they're just playin' but yer payin'. Alright then I'll go by myself. Double back, Birdeen, double back.

(LEROY is fifty-five with a beer gut, a big buckle, a cowboy hat and safety glasses. He chews something throughout the scene. He approaches the mike casually, clears his nose, refits his cowboy hat, and speaks in a strange unhurried monotone.)

LEROY: Wheat's up...It's fine...Got hundred acres on the Rasmussen place. Got 80 acres o' alfalfa on the old Cook place. We're probly lookin' at 3 and a half ton per cuttin', probly four cuttin's. Rest of the farm's in contrac' beans.

We had some weather this year, late frost. The neighbors planted early, lost their beans. When the frost finished, it rained—couldn't plant. So we got 400 acres o' late contrac' beans. So this fall if there's and early frost, we'll lose the beans; if it's normal frost, we'll lose the beans. Those o' you that're the praying kind, pray for a late frost, cuz if the beans don't come in we're sunk deeper 'n a submarine.

I got one more thing to say on behalf o' the farm committee. We been hearin' lotsa complainin' lately, a little whinin' about the price o' things 'n this 'n that...the new tractor! What with the stereo tape deck, the air conditionin', the CB radio, and the cold drink dispenser... Well I only got one thing to say to all you complainers... You don't have to drive it!!

ARVILLA: Okay. Will the parents of Skipper, Bud and Cleteus see me immediately? That was them hotwired the lawntractor, we got a list of things they run over and you gotta pay for. Oh, and I got to read this following thing her for cousin Elmer as he donated the beef for the hamburgers even though he ain't

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here but home. Oh, sort of a paid political announcement. “The annual regional Christian-Patriots Defense League Freedom Festival and Citizens Emergency Defense System Picnic and Small Bore Rifle Marksmanship Competition, Camp Custer up Freedom Fork of Macarthur Canyon 29th of this month.” And here’s cousin Elmer’s number I got here case anybody wants to know, private like.

HEBER: Threat the kitty nice Birdeen. Birdeen! Put that broom back! OH! I bet if you were nicer to the kitty he wouldn’t do that. Birdeen. BIRDEEN FARLEY!

ARVILLA: It’ll be amazing if that cat lives through the day, Heber. You remember last year, that cat—oh, I shouldn’t have thought of it. Oh, Maybellene, could you help Twilla with the triplets there? Oh, quick, quick before they’re dead. Good. Thanks...Okay, well, it’s all yours Heber.

(She catches Heber cleaning out his nose, and leaves disgusted.)

HEBER: Well, we’ve come to the most exitin’ part of the program. This here’s the talent portion of the program and we got some really talented folks in the family and they wished they could come; no, no, just a joke...uh, but we got seem real fine talent for ya anyways. As you cans see on you program there we had to change some things at the last minute and some things we’re still achangin’. Now as you can see we had Janice Jill to do the ventriloquism act that she done at the Onion queen contest and won her a prize, but day before yesterday she caught her little brother Skipper putting lipstick on the dummy; she whacked him a couple of times and now can’t work the puppet on account of the cast on her hand, so that’s how we have the real luck to have a budding poetry boy in the family, my little granddaughter Edith Memmot. She won three dollars last winter and took first place in the childrens’ division of the annual Christmas poetry held by the newspaper downtown. Now she’s been aworkin’ on a poem here today about the family reunion, why she’s even got ‘er memorized too. I believe she’s gonna put our name on top, right on top yessir and o’course she’s on the Peterson side of the family. Are you ready Edith?

(EDITH is 6. She comes on shyly onto stage looking very closely at everyone. She pics out his mother and waves to her, and then hears something nasty from one of the children in the group.)

EDITH: Shut up...you dummy.

(She sticks out her tongue at the offender and then goes through quite a repetoire of the ugliest faces she can make, screwing up her face and with the use of her fingers. She then puts her hands into the position she has been taught, puts her feet in exactly the right position, takes a large breath and suddenly remembers that she has forgotten her speech. Her face goes through all sorts of pain and agony; finally, she breaks down almost crying and, to her mother.)

I forgot mama, I forget. What?

(To children.)

Shut up! I’ll kick you dummy!

(To mother.)

What? WHAT? Oh yeah. Oh yeah, okay...what? Oh yeah, okay, okay...

(Again a big breath. She gesticulates with meaningless gestures obviously taught to her.)

OH I WISH THAT EVERYONE COULD SEE,
JUST HOW MUCH MY FAMILY MEANS TO ME.
THEY ARE SO SWEET AND KIND AND DEAR,
I LIKE TO SEE THEM EVERY YEAR,
I LIKE THEM ALL EXCEPT THE BOYS
WHO STEAL AND BREAK MY FAVORITE TOYS
(Pulls a face at them.)
I WANT TO SAY “HELLO ALL YOU”
HERE AT THE FARLEY FAMILY REUUUU...NION.

(She starts to run off, returns and takes a very serious practiced bow and runs off.)

HEBER: *(Clapping.)* Well, ain't that good ain't that fine, its sa fine and sa good. Why them's good clear Peterson characteristics a shinin' through. And she done it all her self. Are you girls ready, Geneva?

GENEVA: *(Offstage.)* Yup, ready and waitin'.

HEBER: Well, now we got to the real excitin' part of what we got for ya today. We got some real authentic culture for ya. Well, as most of ya know, Geneva, Marva and Verlene all went to Yorp (Europe) together this spring and now they got their slides back in time for the reunion so I'm gonna turn the time directly over to Geneva. Ladies.

(He exits. Geneva enters. She is in her late fifties, rather gaudily dressed as is her vision of a socialite. She wheels on a small projector and struggles with a large screen midstage.)

Marva, is there an extension cord?

MARVA: *(Offstage.)* Oh, is it ours already? Yep, jist a second...

(From offstage comes an extension cord. Geneva attaches it to the projector while she straddles it whereupon the slack is pulled out of the cord. She screams at Marva while fighting to keep her dress down. The slack is thrown back out onstage. Geneva regains composure.)

GENEVA: Bon Jour, Bon Jorno, and Veegates to you all. That's French, Italian and German for hello case ya don't know. Just shows how much you can learn with just a little time in a place such as Yorp. For those as doesn't know or didn't watch, this trip is what I won on the The Price Is Right last winter, and since Parley said he already seen Yorp during World War Two he said I could take anybody I wanted to so I picked Marva and Verlene decided to come along with but she couldn't attend today on account of her car. We took lots and lots of pitchers wherever we went, of which we only brought a few with us today.

(Marva enters bringing in five extra carriages for the slide projector. She is very frumpy, with glasses and a turban.)

After the first little while we figured out how to use the camera and most of 'em turned out real nice. Oh, I'm just so excited about this. Oh, I'm just so excited about this. Okay, Marva's at the controls, let's—

(Both.)

“Go on a trip to Europe.” This was the most exciting thing in the world. Next.

(A picture of Parliament.)

We first landed in London in the evening and course we spent some time seeing things there that was real old but the only good picture we have is this London Tower which has Big Ben on it. Next. And here’s one of the buses we went on, as you can read there backwards it says Cook tours which is the one we went on. It was European package number four if anybody wants to know. Right there you can see the best friend we made on the tour. Her name is Luella—

(Both)

Ericson, and she’s a retired school teacher from Minnesota. Her husband died last year and—

MARVA: We’ll never get through ‘me if you go so slow.

GENEVA: I just want to give ‘em a good interduction Marva. Next.

(Speeding in reprisal.)

Now this is a pitcher taken from the bus of Yorp and as you can see its pretty green and flat. Next. Oh, and here was some kids we met was hitchhikin’ from Sweden just to show you what they look like since we didn’t go there. Next. This here is the Arch of Triumph in Paris they built cause they think they won World War II. Next. There we are on our way to the Eiffel tower. We woulda had some more pitchers, but I got height sick and they had to take me back to the hotel. Next. This is the famous big church called Notre Dame after our college here. Now it was right here in front of this church, if you can imagine it in front of a church, Verlene was standing there looking at it and this frenchyman walked right up to her as bold as ya please and—

MARVA: Geneva!

GENEVA: Well, he done somethin’ fresh is what he done. I tell ya, them frenchy men most of ‘em don’t have a mind in this world except on one particular thing...and in front of a church, no less. Well, we was on our guard after that. Next. Oh, quick next, there’s kids here! Uhh, didn’t know that was there. Uhh, that was a pitcher of that famous armless lady in the Looover Museum in France name Venus. They got all them naked statues all over the place and you just get used to it after a while. On that one they had all them diagrams down below how they thought her arms was but I told Marva I thought that one in front was holdin’ up her towel after her bath.

(They giggle. Slide change, then proudly.)

OHH! This is our bus parked! Next. Oh, good now we’re into It-lee. It was oo-la-la and my favorite. This particular slide is of Venice, the famous city built on water. But the water there is the grimiest you ever seen. The just take and throw anything they please in the water and it sure ain’t as romatic as you’d expect what from the movies and all. Why one day we seen a floatin’ in there 12, we counted ‘em...12 pieces—

MARVA: Please Geneva, don’t!

GENEVA: Well, I suppose you’re right. Next. Oh, this here’s our other good friend we made on the tour

named Grace—

(Both.)

Nesbitt. You can see there she's got that funny old ugly orange hat we give her that we found because of her last name bin' Nesbitt like the drink and all. It was really funny. And here's Grace feedin' them pigeons, she just loved them pigeons. Like 'em, really like them birds. Next. Oh, now this here is what you might call your granddaddy cathedral of them all. This here's the Vatican of St. Peter's in Rome where the pope lives with all them fancy painted ceilin's in the Sestern Chapel. Makes ya wonder how he done it but they was all painted by the famous artist Mickey Angelo...But I'll tell you, you have to be awfully darn careful some o' those mafia boys doesn't steal your purse. I mean it's open season on the Americans over there. Our little group had four purses and wallets stolen, one break in, and Charlotte Keller from Cincinnati lost all her underwear to some crooked cleaning outfit. Well, we wasn't to be taken in on that. We all bought a good thick rope and attached it to our purses and tied it around our waists. That's how we done it. And you can bet them thieves and pursesnatchers...

MARVA: Geneva!

GENEVA: I gotta tell 'em that we didn't have one purse took after that. Clarissa Daniels, however, suffered a pretty severe rope burn one day. Okay, next...Okay this is that real famous "the leaning tower of Pizza", but I guess I sorta straightened it out for ya. I never did figure out what it had to do with pizza except it bein' Italian and all. Next...Oh, here's some of them Roman Ruins. There's just a whole bunch of these. Run 'em Marva...Oh, stop here, Marva. Now this is your Roman public baths. Can you believe it? They just all went in this big building and hopped in the tub together. Hard to believe, I know, but they done it. What?...Well of course they was necked, do you take a bath with your clothes on? My stars. Next...some people's children...

(Picture of David.)

Yipes, ahead Marva, ahead. Again! Again! Hurry, Marva! Well, sorry. Okay, that was Mickey Anglo's David without a stitch of clothes on. This is David and Goliath with his head—Goliath's. Next. OH! Back Marva! To the other one!

MARVA: It's broke!

GENEVA: Lowsy, Marva, let me have it! Oh no, Marva. Blast! Just turn it off!...

(Marva takes the machine offstage.)

And we didn't even get to the best pitchers either. Dangit. Well, what a pity. What a blakety blank blank pity. Shoot! Well, I guess that's all. Too bad. I had lotsa really good pitchers. But that reminds me, next Wednesday at my house a 7 p.m. sharp at night, Parley and I invite you over for an evening of travel discussion. You know, sort of debriefing like the astronauts. And we'll show you all we missed today. And we'll have some refreshments and a real good ole time. Oh and it'd probly be better if ya didn't bring yer kids unless they're old enough to appreciate culture and not break things. Thanks.

(She goes off stage.)

13 MORE PAGES TO THE END OF THIS DELIGHTFUL SCRIPT