

When down in the dump wasn't such a bad place

A few weeks ago I did a column about my new correspondent friend, Violet Eldred Dynes, who lives in White Rock, B.C. As I said in my article, Violet grew up in our community and has many fond childhood memories of this area. She has sent me a number of articles she has had published in the B.C. papers and some books of poetry she has had published.

One of the articles was about my old friend, now deceased, Charlie Utley. As the story tells, Charlie was the supervisor of the city dump. For you newcomers, the city dump was located where the beautiful Rotary club Riverfront Park now graces the banks of the Skagit River.

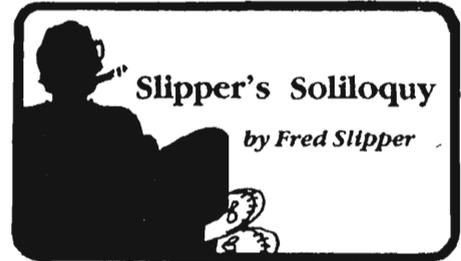
Violet's story follows:

Probably why truth is stranger than fiction is because a great story often has a very simple, almost unnoticeable beginning that soon unfolds facts of mounting interest and importance until there it is, a story so unique and appealing it leaves its never-to-be-forgotten impact imprinted in the reader's mind.

As an example, one day Uncle Guy Burwell needed a part for his lawnmower and instead of going to the hardware store he went to a place where he knew he would have better, and maybe cheaper, results.

His destination was the city dump and in those days the dump was under the supervision of Charlie Utley. Of course, Uncle Guy not only got the part he needed, but a couple more old mowers, all free, plus a good cup of coffee and he got to keep the coffee cup!

That was only the beginning because there is something about a garbage dump that is akin to prospecting for gold. Uncle Guy soon became Charlie's right hand man.



When we saw some of the treasures Uncle Guy brought home, we decided to take a look ourselves. We were in luck. A truck had just unloaded some back-door accumulations from a store in town and one of them was a cardboard box half full of straw packing. Under the straw we found a layer of beautiful vases. "Help yourself," said Charlie, "we wouldn't know what to do with such fancy do-dads here anyway."

When we got home with the vases and some other loot, Mama was flabbergasted. "I never thought I'd see the day I'd brave a garbage dump's elements," said Mama, "but come dusk when no one is watching, I'm going to go down there myself and see if there are any more vases. Of course, it will be a real short visit, just long enough to take Charlie and Uncle Guy a sack of cookies for being so good to you girls today."

Well, come dusk she hopped on her bike and did as she said she would, only the short visit turned into more than an hour. She brought back a pair of vases and a box of beautiful cut-out velvet quilt blocks, that, she explained, "needed only a little airing on the back lawn."

"They certainly make good coffee down there, don't they?" I asked.

"Coffee," she exclaimed, "I didn't have time for that kind of hospitality — I had to hurry home before dark."