



The author interests 'Woody' Woodchuck in a bite of lunch.

Interesting Little Fellows Are Found at Home on Almost Any Sunny Slide of Rock

By IRENE FINLEY

THIS is a story of Woody, the woodchuck. We were meandering about Yellowstone park a couple of Septembers ago in that soft after-summer calm when all the rush and bustle of city visitors had died out and the hush of Indian summer brooded over the little valleys and blue lakes. We headed for one of our old stamping-grounds, the grassy meadows of Willow creek, where the beavers had converted the wet bottoms into a reclamation project of dams and reservoirs. But we found it a day of the past, for they had exhausted their supply of willow food and had abandoned the valley for other fields. So, hunting for new game, we turned off the highway with no tracks to follow up a ravine that was labeled "Sheep-eaters' Cliffs." It was rough going and we soon stopped abruptly at a dead-end against a big jumbled

rock-slide. The little hollow was as still as death as if no living thing had ever found interest enough to look in upon it, but the sun was caught in its secluded bowl and made it an irresistible place to pause for lunch.

Munching away under a scrubby tree, we were interrupted by the appearance of two marmots racing up and down the rocks of the slide with that peculiar flowing gait that only the woodchuck family has. The smaller of the two was chasing the other, silently and relentlessly. Finally both disappeared over the rimrock at the top. Returning to our sandwiches, we sat enjoying the peace and remoteness.

All at once almost at our elbows appeared the big marmot that had been the fugitive of a few minutes ago in the rock-slide. We sat motionless. Finally I gingerly reached out a piece of bread, slowly, closer and closer, to the almost statue-like

marmot sitting on a rock. No sign of notice, no move. Then, cautiously he reached out his paws, took the bread and began to nibble it eagerly, hungrily. When it was finished he crept slowly toward us and stood waiting. Another piece of bread went the same way. Soon he was clutching a coat sleeve, begging for more as unconcernedly as if we were old friends.

His head turned and he looked at something up the hill. Then, with a stiff jump he was faced the other way and speeding up over the rocks, his long hair billowing in the sun. And behind him went his former pursuer. Up and down, over and under, now seen, now gone, the silent race went on again. It ended as before, with the big marmot driven over the rim. The whole performance was as arresting as if carried on by ghosts in broad daylight. When they were gone, the hollow in the hills was as quiet in the sunshine as if it had never known the little play of life.

What was behind this queer incident—two creatures in a lonely canyon, one as wild as a hawk, the other as tame as a kitten? Had we accidentally witnessed a family scene that is usually hidden from human eyes? Was it a mother marmot encouraging a grown child by severe methods to vacate the home premises of the rock-slide to make room for a new brood to come? And in this far-away lovely corner of the world, how had the child become so trusting of chance strangers as to sit unafraid and partake of their lunch? There were no remains of lunches or scattered papers on the ground; no evidence of human visits or anything to lure them, no real road to bring a car there.

It is no surprise to meet a woodchuck in a rock-slide almost anywhere. Perhaps more than any other little wild fellow from the North Pacific region to Yellowstone park, the hoary marmot is the most common animal seen by casual travelers. On the road from Longmire, Wash., to Paradise inn on the slopes of Mount Rainier, old Hoary is a frequent watcher of cars and horseback riders. Lying on the top of a rock in a jumbled hillside mass, frozen into the inanimate stone like a very part of it, he is only seen by a glint of the sharp hat-pin eyes.

Realizing detection, there is a slight twitching of whiskers and an imperceptible flattening of the shadowy form as it melts still further into the gray rock. If the stranger on the road hesitates or stops for a closer look, that filmy outline to the rock top changes and fades away before one's eyes.

Not every woodchuck or groundhog, as he is called in some regions, can have a mountain rock-slide in which to barricade his burrow or den. In the middle states he has been found in a hillside den bordering a farm, or along a hedgerow or old stone fence in a perfectly flat field, and his open hole with a large look-out mound in front and a concealed back door has even been handily located behind a farmer's barn.

Woody has other individual qualities also. He is the original sun-bather, for he loves the feel of the earth and sunshine, and his home must have a spot where he can sprawl as limp as a rag and literally "pass out" to everything around—but not quite, for every wild creature has an inner sense of danger that never really sleeps.

It is rare that anyone sees a wild animal at his best. But how like a ruler in his realm, he is free, unfearing in his own wild haunts. Driving along in a rugged region in summer time, one often starts and listens to a wind-blown, ventriloquial whistle that comes from somewhere, nowhere. It is usually the marmot communing with his neighbor as he sits atop a rock. Like the black bear father, he takes family cares quite casually. It is much easier, in woodchuck philosophy, to lie in the sun. But a female woodchuck with a young brood may be a very anxious mother.

Passing through a mountain canyon one time, we glimpsed a big marmot sitting on a rock. She remained perfectly quiet and unconcerned until a chunky, puppy-like baby crawled out behind her. She fussed at him, but he did not heed her warnings. She became perturbed and shuffled about, but did not slide out of sight as usual. Finally we saw her nuzzle over the little fellow and then pick him up by the back of the neck as a cat carries her kitten and lug him stiffly

over another big boulder and down out of sight.

Groundhogs are supposed to be vegetarians, although, like porcupines, they may be induced to taste meat mixed with other foods. In the wild they live on roots and grasses and arouse the ire of farmers who have crops of hay and vegetables. A chuck likes to sit up on his square elbows and eat the center out of a big cabbage head, or he will strip a row of peas closer than a rabbit. And he loves fruits of all kinds—cherries, apples, melons. He has big front teeth like all gnawers and in a dispute with his own kind, or even the farm dog, will put up a good fight. In cold regions he hibernates in his deep hole in the winter, and if dug out can be handled and rolled over without knowing anything about it. He lives on the fat stored up in the summer months and gets thinner and thinner as the winter wanes. Although he has February 2 set aside as a special day for his "coming out," he frequently ignores it and doesn't show his nose.

All in all, the woodchuck lives a lazy life for, of course, it is easier to lie half your time in the sun.

Summer Not So Good for Dogs

By BOB BECKER

SUMMER weather, with its hot days, usually is welcomed by all outdoor fans, but with dogs, we imagine that the summer is not so popular. Hot weather brings trouble to some pups that suffer from "summer skin disease," or so-called eczema. Then there are fleas and flies. As if that were not enough, thousands of owners fail to groom their pets properly, which means that the pups are very uncomfortable with their unnecessarily long coats.

The following letter from the owner of a cocker spaniel tells how dogs may be uncomfortable during hot weather because the owners haven't kept themselves posted on correct dog care:

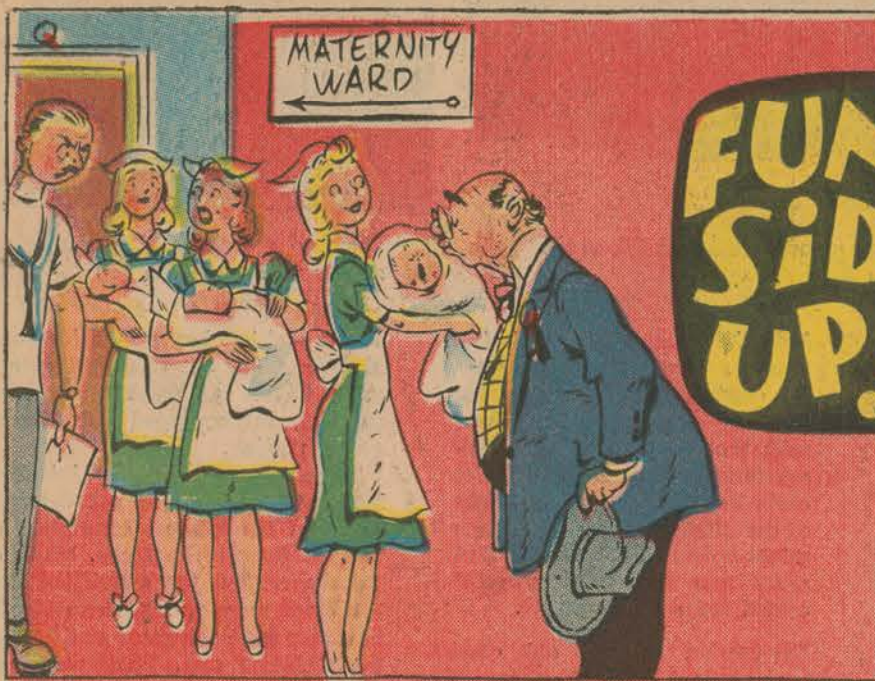
"Will you advise me if it is possible to have my cocker spaniel's coat trimmed during this hot weather? He's scratching a lot, his hair is coming out, and he apparently has fleas. He has very long hair on his stomach and his legs."

A professional handler or a dog owner who knows the tricks of dog care can take this dog, use a stripping knife on its coat to make it look and feel better, give the dog a treatment for fleas, and finally a bath, and make the cocker look forward to happier days. Thousands of wire-haired terriers, Scotties, Airedales, spaniels and other dogs need attention to their coats during the summer. Veterinarians and professional dog handlers are the best counselors on this problem.

Some dog owners must get discouraged every summer when their pets develop eczema or dermatitis, no matter how carefully the animals are cared for. On the other hand, many owners neglect the diet of their pets, let them get very fat, and then wonder why their dogs have skin trouble in the summer. Improper diet during hot weather is a major factor in summer skin trouble among dogs. The term improper diet includes many an error on the part of

the dog owner. For example, it means overfeeding, so that the dog is far above normal weight; unbalanced diet; too much food for the amount of exercise that the dog gets; giving the dog pastries or sweets; feeding a poorly made, cheap prepared dog food; a diet that lacks the necessary vitamins, and similar factors.

One of the things that bothers some dogs in the summer (and, we might add, also bothers their owners) is the woodtick. Woodticks are increasing in many parts of the country and extending their range to others. They're tough, hard to kill, difficult to locate on a dog with a long coat, and a headache to a kennel owner once the little things get a foothold. One may use both powders and liquids in combating ticks on dogs. A liquid insect killer applied with a little hand spray is used by many dog owners and kennels. This same liquid may be used for fleas and other insects which bother dogs.



"WITH THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN COMING ON, HE WANTS TO GET IN PRACTICE!"



"SAY UGH!"



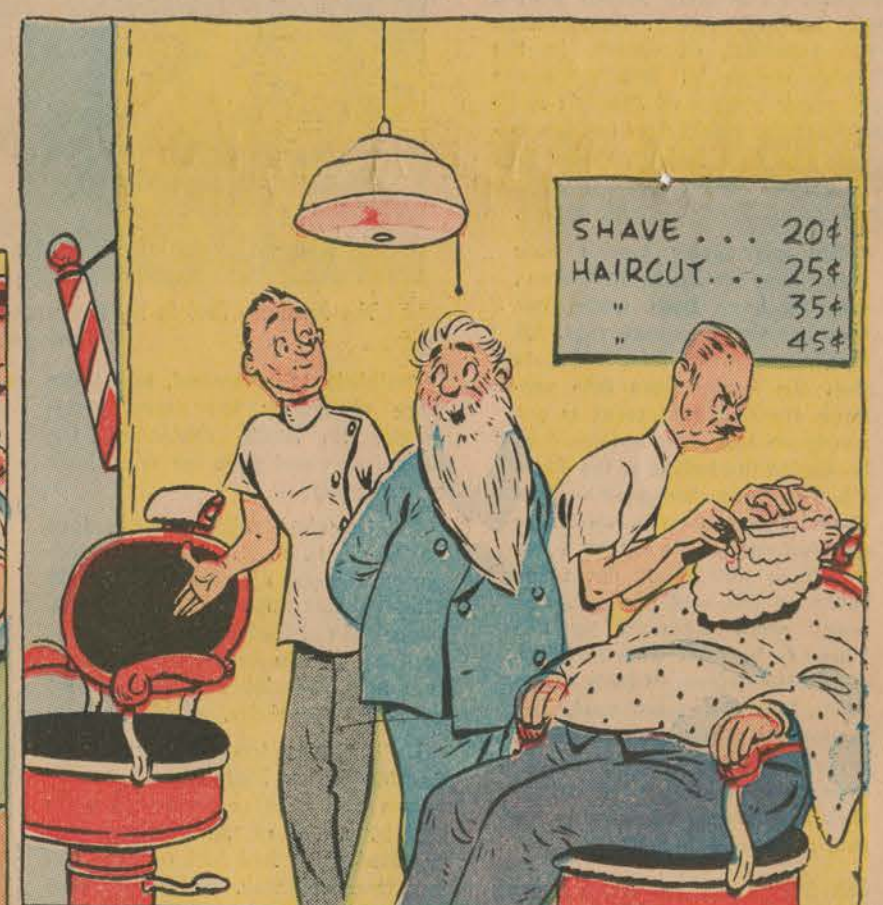
"WINGIE'S TAKEN ON A SIDE-LINE... HIS WIFE'S ON A SPENDING SPREE!"



"ALL YEAR SHE'S BEEN STUDYING HYPNOTISM!"



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"NO THANKS... I'M JUST LOOKING!"