Remember the House out Back?

Fun by a Landslide

IN 1931, when I was 10 years old, my family lived on a farm 9 miles east of Worthington, Minnesota.

After a lot of rain, I was out working by the outhouse and noticed that most of the dirt had washed out around the bottom of one corner.

My brother, Kenny, and I put a board under the bad corner, shoveled the rest of the dirt away, tied a rope around the board, hid in the lilac bushes and waited for a victim to use the outhouse.

Shortly afterward, our mother and little sister went in. Once they got settled, we pulled the rope. The board slid out from under the corner, and the outhouse slowly tipped over on its side.

There was quite a commotion on the inside, and soon our mother and sister were crawling out the door.

That evening, at supper, Mother told Dad all about the incident, and my brother and I were sweating bullets. Dad asked if anyone had been hurt, and Mom said no. First Dad tried hard not to smile, but then he burst out laughing—then we all laughed, Kenny and I mostly from relief.

That Saturday night, Dad couldn't wait to get to Meyers Brothers' pool hall and tell the story to his friends.

—Duane U.,New Hope, Minnesota

Watch Where You Sit

IN THE COUNTRY, we kids weren't always too particular about making sure the privy door was closed, especially when we were in the middle of shooting marbles and wanted to prevent "game adjustment" by our brother.

While entering the outhouse, my 10-year-old sister kept her eyes on the marbles circle scratched in the dirt of our yard in 1940s Glendale, Wisconsin.

With all of her concentration on the game, Esther forgot that our dad hadn't had time to install both seats in our new outhouse.

Without looking, she chose the side with the big square opening. I remember looking up just in time to see her legs and feet fly up and then disappear as she fell 6 feet down.

I ran over and looked down. There she was, looking up and crying, "Get me outta here. There are spiders down here!"

I ran into the house and yelled, "Pa, Esther fell into the toilet!" I can still see the expression of disbelief on his face. All I could do was say, "Honest, she just fell in."

We all ran outside, and Pa pulled her out. It took several washtubs of heated water to get Esther clean, and Pa made sure the second seat was installed the next day.

—Bob Z., West Bend, Wisconsin

Just Picture This

MY NEIGHBOR, the late Harry Wells, told me this story involving his wife, Emma, which took place in 1935 in the Griswoldville section of Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Emma had complained about splinters on the seat of their "three-holer" outhouse. While she was gone, Harry decided to sand and varnish the outhouse seats.

Harry was doing some mowing out in the fields when Emma came home and hurried to the outhouse. Lo and behold, she became stuck hard and fast to the fresh varnish. Harry tried to pull her off and even tried using turpentine and paint thinner, but to no avail.

In desperation, Harry telephoned their old family doctor, Bill Storms, and the doctor advised him to saw off the wooden seat on both sides and rush it and Emma to Hartford Hospital's emergency room.

Several hospital interns and nurses were having no luck freeing Emma with alcohol and hot water when Dr. Storms arrived on the scene. One of the interns asked the doctor, "In all your years of practice, did you ever see anything like this?

Dr. Storms replied, "No, never with a picture frame around it."

—Richard L., Wethersfield, Connecticut