



The Worst Job I Ever Had (Moose Turd Pie!)



Story told by Utah Phillips

I'll tell you about the worst job I ever had in my life. The worst job I ever had in my life was working for the Santa Fe Rail Road south of Las Vegas, Nevada. That's the old Mormon Muddy Mission ya see, way out in what the Navajos called the "boonies", out in the desert. The job was gandy-dancing. Now, gandy-dancing used to be in the old days when the Irish were building the railroad. Of course, the first transcontinental rail road was built by Irish laborers, and they used these long handled shovels called "Irish Banjos" that were made by the Gandy Shovel Company of Chicago. Now, the Irish laborer would take the wide end of the shovel, when he could find it, and he would jam it in under the rail or tie, and he would climb out on the long handle...do a little jig step out there. And that would lever the tie up and they'd push gravel up underneath it, and tamp it down; and that leveled the road bed. See, that's what gandy-dancing is...leveling the road bed so the damn train doesn't fall off as it goes by...which is just a big drag for everybody.

Now, they don't do gandy-dancing in the normal way anymore; ya see, like they did in the old days. Nowadays they run 3 cars out on the line. They run a box car out there that's a bunk car; you sleep in it and it's got bunks that are 18 inches apart. Then you got a tool car with your tamping irons, your tongs, your double jack hammers, and your spikes, and all of the equipment to do the job. And then you got a cook car. There's no restaurants anywhere around, so you got a cook car; pots and pans, a coal or wood burning stove, and a long table down the middle to eat at. The only thing they don't hire is a cook. That's 'cause they're cheap; saves them money. The rule is that in the crew they're supposed to pick among their own members, who's going to be the cook. They don't try to do this sensibly, like draw lots or decide who the best cook is. What they do is wait to find out who bitches and whines and pisses and moans the most about the cooking, and they say "all right wise-guy, you think you can do better, you get to be the cook". Well, that was me, see! ol' alligator mouth, new man on the crew; and that was the worst food I'd ever had. I mean it was otter water, comes out of an otter; terrible, terrible stuff. Some people think that's a delicacy, but I thought it was garbage. So I complained, so they said "all right, wise guy, you get to be the cook". That made me mad! Because I didn't want to cook, but I knew if anybody complained about my cooking, they were going to have to cook.

Armed with that knowledge, I sallied forth over the muddy river. I was walking around among the sheet grass and the bunch grass there, and I looked down, and there was just a hell of a big moose turd. Biggest damn moose turd; that was a real steamer! I looked down at that meadow wafer, and I said to myself "Self, I'm going to bake up a big moose turd pie, 'cause if anybody complains about my cookin', they were going to have to cook". So I tipped that pasture pastry up on edge. I got my shit together, so to speak. And I started rolling it down towards the old cook car... BALUUMP! BALUUMP!

I got it down there and leaned it up against the side and I climbed up in the cook car, and I baked a hell of a big pie shell. And I baked that moose turd in as slick as you please. And I cribbed it with my thumbs, and laid strips of dough across it, and garnished it with a sprig of parsley, a little paprika and it was beautiful; poetry on a plate. And I served it up for dessert, waiting for the first hint of a complaint. Well, this giant dude come in, about 5 foot 40; I mean he was big; threw himself down like a fool on a stool, picked up his fork and took a big bite of that moose turd pie. Well, he threw down his fork, and he let out a bellow, and he yelled...

My God! That's Moose Turd Pie! It's Good, Though!