



PAPA BROWN

by Nancy Dively

I am extremely glad that I lived in the same neighborhood as Papa Brown. For Papa Brown no day was quite complete without a walk around the block. He always had a cheery "hello" or a short bit of "yarn spinning" for his friends and neighbors. He had wonderful stories to tell of places he had visited, for he had travelled in practically every state in the Union.

He always looked so clean and fresh, like a spring day. He was as straight as an arrow all of his 95 years. His sight was failing but he stood erect. He carried a cane but walked with his head held high. Even though he carried a cane, he very rarely used it.

It was good to see his joy at the smallest favors. It was like that of a child with a new toy. He loved children and loved to have them walk around the block with him.

He had many hobbies and one of them was carving canes and whittling pipes. The canes that he made were many, each different and each coming from a place where he had been. Many times he bent a young hickory limb to grow in the right way. When it was ready to carve, he would cut it, dry it, and carve it. Many people have canes which he carved. He made any size needed; small for short people, medium for average people and large for tall people, and if none of them fit, he would make one to fit.

He used to work on a pipe, then he would hold it up and looking at it, he would say, "You know, this is the only really bad habit I have and I ought to give it up". Then he would laugh, put it in his mouth and smoke up a storm.

I never heard him say a mean thing about anyone. He always managed to find something good in everyone.

Often conversations of older people are ramblings, but not so with Papa Brown. I have often thought that it is too bad that there isn't a book about his experiences. It would make interesting reading. For instance, it might tell about the times he caught trout in the waters below Black Water Falls in the canyons of West Virginia, or a description of a big hotel in Chicago, or his early years in the West, or about the time he was in Buffalo across the street when President McKinley was shot.

When Papa Brown was asked to what he accredited his long life, he would think for a minute and then say "I guess to clean living, lots of exercise, to love of a fine family, and to the will of God."

On my grand mother's 77th Birthday, he stopped to chat for a while and when he heard it was her birthday, he asked her how old she was. Grandmother said "I am getting up there, I am 77 today". Papa Brown looked at her and smiled and said "My goodness, Mrs. Weloh, you are just a girl".

Papa Brown's mind was a clear and sharp as a bell. He could talk intelligently on almost any subject and to the very last, kept up on news and sports. His life was a fine example of manhood which he passed on to everyone who knew him. He died as he lived, with courage. I am glad that my life was touched by that of Papa Brown.