

## My Infantile Amnesia

By *Dennis Payton Knight*

I have forgotten what or when it was in my wee years that I first learned to remember. Nor do I remember the last time, or what it was, that I was told to remember. I believe these lapses can all be explained by what the experts call infantile amnesia, or childhood amnesia. It's a condition that has carried into my adulthood. Or is that adulthood? I've forgotten.

Sigmund Freud in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century described this phenomenon in which people are unable to recall events from early childhood. It is a paradox in that, despite the exuberant learning capacity of young children, adults have few memories of their early childhoods. Psychological theorists correlate it to development of language and development of self-awareness, and biologists associate it with development of key brain regions.

Despite being so afflicted, I do recall bits and pieces going back to my terrible twos which spanned twelve months of the years 1945 and 1946. They include a vague recollection of gas rationing and sitting in our '36 Chevy sedan watching my dad dickering with Mr. Bishop, a farmer he knew at Virginia Dale, Colorado, for enough gasoline from his tank to get us home to Laramie, thirty miles away.

Gas rationing must have ended soon after, because I remember standing in the back seat and looking out the rear window of that same Chevy at the Yellowstone Park bears. It would have been in the summer of 1946, and I had plenty of time for bear observation as we were spending hours at a standstill due to road construction in the park. I remember we had to sleep in the car that night because there was no room left at the inn when we finally got to Old Faithful. But my faithful old infantile amnesia does not remember seeing Old Faithful spouting off, nor do I remember any parental eruptions over the long delays.

I seem to have memories from those years of standing in a crib, but I was likely in incarceration, serving time for some random terrible-tvos transgression. I turned two within a few days of the end of World War Two in September 1945. I have no recollection of celebrating the victory with my two older siblings who were then about six and eight, but I was likely so engaged in *Dennis-the-Menacing* then to have made any note of history.

It strikes me that the comic strip *Dennis the Menace* was and is entirely patterned on my first years of citizenship on this planet. It is a slanderous, vilifying, defamatory, malicious attack on my good name and it has been going on for nearly seven decades. I still read, every morning, the continuing character assassination, the calumny, the mudslinging and the vituperation, as I have all those years, collecting evidence of libel. I have plenty to go on now, and I plan to sue as soon as they let me out of this corner.