

## Gremlins Will Be Gremlins

By Dennis Payton Knight

They are said to be mythological, but we know gremlins are real by dint of flat tires, lawnmowers gone haywire, spilt milk, overcooked spaghetti, sparking microwaves, and computers spewing bits and bytes all over the infamous cloud.

Gremlins have been part of our world as long as humans, but it wasn't until pilots in Britain's Royal Air Force in World War II gave them a name to account for various flying mechanical troubles and mishaps. The author Roald Dahl described them in his book, *The Gremlins*. Dahl reported how the RAF first encountered the rascals after having raised their ire by destroying their forest home to build an aircraft factory. Dahl tells how the RAF rehabilitated its royally disloyal nemeses by retraining gremlins to repair rather than sabotage aircraft, joining forces against the common enemy, Hitler.

Rehabilitation of England's population of the miscreants proved successful only long enough to get the British through the war. But any inclination the gremlin has for good is canceled by its inclination to recidivism. Once a gremlin, always a gremlin is a basic truth borne out when the continent of Atlantis went missing and the tower in Pisa took a lean from which it has never recovered.

Gremlins also infected operations in the United States Army Air Corps. This was documented by Warner Brothers Studios in an incident wherein the famous Bugs Bunny had quite an unpleasant encounter. Cinematographers recorded a gremlin wearing a flight helmet and single handedly felling the rabbit from his lofty perch. Yes, it was that same dignitary who battled, frustrated and perplexed movie stars from Elmer Fudd to the Tasmanian Devil. *Falling Hare* was the name of the World War II documentary, and when it reached its finis with Porky Pig declaring "t-t-t-t...That's all folks!" poor Mr. Bunny was a fallen hare indeed.

As gremlinism infiltrated the allied forces in two theaters, there was speculation that they might have been placed by the enemy. Our spies, however, investigated and reported back that the enemies had plenty of gremlins of their own.

American Motors in 1970 chopped the rear end from their Hornet automobile to come up with an oddly shaped compact car. They loaded it with gremlins, and capitalized by calling their new model the Gremlin. The novelty caught on and sold at first, but the concept soon became laughable, and today there are AMC Gremlins drawing snickers on wooden blocks and junkyards of America.

In 1984 Steven Spielberg used his skills to create a series of three successful, funny but scary films about gremlins. I watched and enjoyed them, too, but those creatures were the product of a wonderful imagination.

My gremlins are real, just like yours, and what prompted this spate of research is an email I received from my doctor's office after some tests I took last week. It had lots of medical chit chat, but it was the bottom line that really got my attention. Diagnosis: Gremlins.