

Albert and the Denver Fire Department

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The Denver "Square" was a term applicable to a group of homes built in that city, in the thirty years before the Great Depression. It was as defined; same length four sides, built on two lots, two story with basement, various peaked roof, detached double garage. Simple, four rooms on 1st and 2nd floor, no usable attic, partly finished basement. Mostly in the eastern inner city; those modestly maintained are treasures today, each valued near one million dollars, 300 times their construction cost.

My wife's mother bought one during The War years. Then in 1960, her children, all but one moved away from Denver, she negotiated a friendly sale to that daughter's family; she remained with them until death a dozen years later. She had become my mother-in-law when her daughter and I married in 1951, capped by that wonderful "bash" filling the "square" that April 28 with merriment all neighbors enjoyed too.

Many improvements followed our residence there which lasted 38 years.

It was customary that a back porch be added by the builder, as appendage to the first and second floors. The space underneath was vacant, for storage.

Our early improvement, dig out the dirt below this extension, brick a basement room the same size, as permanent support for the rooms above.

The basement space abutting this addition was the furnace room, and our family Ironing Room. This ceiling had the delivery end of a dirty-clothes chute allowing those on the 2nd floor relocation of their dirty clothes to the basement laundry basket always below.

This chute, metal lined, was kept clean by the abrasion of garments falling into the laundry basket. Nothing stuck in the chute. The 2nd floor laundry entry was a small door, closed except for inserting dirty laundry.

And temptations.

One afternoon circa 1964, Barbara was ironing in the basement room next to the laundry chute, while talking on the phone; with nine children she was

adept at dual tasking. She hears a scream, a rumble, then silence. Apologizing to her fiend, she quickly determines something has fallen into the chute, is stuck midway. Looking up she recognizes the head of her son.

Calling out, no response.

He's unconscious. She can't reach his body. She asks her friend to hang up, call the Fire Department, tell them something is in the laundry chute.

Almost immediately oversized, well muscled, well protected Denver Firemen are rushing into the basement. One in the background mistakenly says "Another case of a Squirrel in the laundry chute". The mother's protest is ignored. The Fireman were also unable to reach the body. They began dismantling that kitchen wall on the floor above. A few whacks and the body is released, falls into the arms of a fireman still in the basement. The child is revived without harm. Excepting, red friction burns on both ears and on that bone area outside the jaw hinges.

Apologies for shouts, unfortunate statements, all around. The Denver Firemen had once again understood a problem, were quick to find the cure.

Denver Fire demands of the residents.

Forever secure a short brass chain on the Second floor laundry door requiring large laundry pieces be carried to the basement.

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Dare I ask?

Do You recall

going where no man had gone before?

Finding impossible adventure?

