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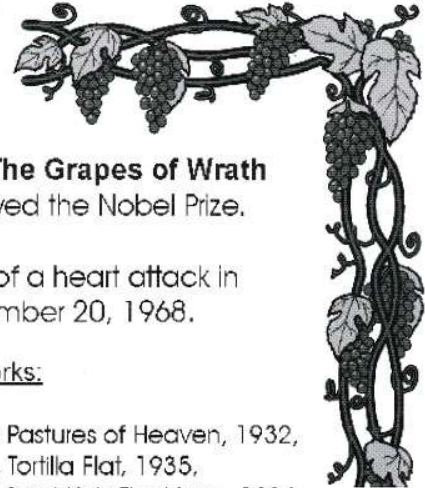
American Author **JOHN STEINBECK**

Born in Salinas, California, John Steinbeck attended the local high school. He studied marine biology at Stanford University between 1920 and 1926, though he did not finish. He had always dreamed of becoming a writer. Steinbeck returned to California after being a reporter for the *American* in New York City.

Cup of Gold, Steinbeck's first book, was published in 1929. It didn't earn back its advance.

Steinbeck was first noticed for his fourth novel, **Tortilla Flat** in 1935. His financial situation improved dramatically when he was paid thousands of dollars for the film rights.

However, Steinbeck's first big success was **Of Mice and Men** in 1937.



In 1939 came **The Grapes of Wrath** for which he received the Nobel Prize.

Steinbeck died of a heart attack in New York on December 20, 1968.

Some of Steinbeck's works:

Cup of Gold, 1929, The Pastures of Heaven, 1932, To God Unknown, 1933, Tortilla Flat, 1935, In Dubious Battle, 1936, Saint Katy The Virgin, 1936, Nothing So Monstrous, 1936, Of Mice And Men, 1937, The Red Pony, 1937, Their Blood Is Strong, 1938, The Long Walley, 1938, The Grapes Of Wrath, 1939, A Letter To The Friends Of Democracy, 1940, The Sea Of Cortez, 1941, The Forgotten Village, 1941, Bombs Away!, 1942, The Moon Is Down, 1942, How Edith McGillicuddy Met R.L.S., 1943, Steinbeck, 1943, Cannery Row, 1945, The Wayward Bus, 1947, A Russian Journal, 1948, Burning Bright, 1950, East Of Eden, 1952, Short Novels, 1953, Sweet Thursday, 1954, The Short Reign Of Pippin IV, 1957, The Crapshooter, 1957, Once There Was A War, 1958, The Winter Of Our Discontent, 1961, Travels With Charley, 1962, Letters To Alicia, 1965, America And Americans, 1966, Journal Of A Novel, 1969



"The Grapes of Wrath" movie 1940 dir by John Ford

Johnson-Smith, We Love You

Joe Cuhaj

It's hard to believe but the granddaddy of all practical joke companies, the Johnson-Smith Company, is still in business. A catalog came in the mail the other day from them and the flood of memories of their ads in the comic books of my youth came roaring back.

Their ads appeared in comic books of the '50's and '60's and were full pages of glorious black and white line drawings promising hilarious results. For kids of nine and ten-years-old, it was a company well worth investing in.

One ad caught our eyes week after week. It was for a pair of glasses with swirley, hypnotic lenses: the X-ray glasses. There were two ads. One showed that you could see a person's skeleton while the other said you could see a woman's body under her dress. Never did we question the impossibility of seeing bones one minute, a naked woman the next, but the latter was tantalizing.

Deep in the testosterone-induced haze of our youthful boy brains, the X-ray glasses beckoned. This was our best chance at pure, unadulterated sex at this young age, but while this sent our hormones into overdrive, none of us wanted to be labeled "perverts" so no one ever purchased the specs until one afternoon when our gang was summoned by Fred Badger to our tree house.

"Guys," he began, "X-ray glasses!"

We all looked at them.

"Where's the swirley lenses?" I asked.

"Dunno," he answered.

"Those aren't real," Creep jumped in.

"Are too," Fred insisted. "Paid a buck and a half for 'em."

"Those are sunglasses," Creep shot back.

In honesty, they weren't even that good with their red cellophane lenses.

"Are not," Fred snarled. "These are the real thing."

"Where are the swirley lenses?" I asked again.

"Forget the swirley things," Fred shouted. "I'll prove it to you. Let's take these babies out for a test run."

"Wait," I said. "I've got something, too."

I held out my hands. In one was a bag that contained five fake fire crackers. They looked like miniature sticks of dynamite with long fuses. The tubes were empty, but what a hoot

when you lit the fuse and tossed them at someone.

In the other hand was another bag that contained ten snake capsules. These gems were pellets that, when you ignited them with a match, billowed smoke and expanded into an ashen snake five feet long.

We scampered down the tree and ran to town for a day of practical joking and a bit of peeping with the glasses. Arriving in front of Schwartz's Five and Dime it occurred to me and I put two and two together - a smoke bomb! Why not grind up the pellets and put them into the fake firecrackers? It was sheer genius.

Mitch and I ground up three or four pellets and stuffed them into the hollow tube of the firecracker. Creep and Fred watched.

"Did you ever think," Creep asked, "if those are really X-ray glasses they might burn your eyes out and you'll never see again?"

Fred thought about that for a moment. For a glimpse of school hottie Gianina Rosalito, it was a chance worth taking.

As luck would have it, Gianina walked out of the Five and Dime.

"Hi, boys," she cooed, flicking that long hair of hers seductively.

"H-h-h-h-hi, Gianina," we all stuttered.

About that time, I had lit the fuse of our smoke bomb and was ready to toss it out into the street. In an event that had better timing than a Swiss watch, I saw police officer Harrison approaching and had to ditch the evidence. Quickly, I tossed the smoke bomb. It landed at Fred's feet.

Fred had just put the glasses on and in that instant, the smoke bomb let out a belching black and green cloud, engulfing him in a putrid stench. Choking and wheezing, he stepped out the cloud like the Phoenix, his eyes turning puffy, streaming with tears. The puffiness got worse, until...

"I can't see!" Fred screamed.

He started to run frantically around hitting telephone poles, mailboxes, and parked cars.

Officer Harrison jogged up to help, while Mr. Schwartz ran out of his store with a damp rag. Putting it over Fred's eyes, the puffiness disappeared in no time and Fred was able to see again. Back then an injury like this wasn't a big deal like today. Hack a finger off? It'll be okay. Stick some first aid cream and a Band-Aid on it.

"When will you boys ever learn?" Officer Harrison asked in a scolding tone. "Someone

could be seriously injured with these pranks of yours."

"Yes, Officer Harrison," we all said in unison, our heads hanging low.

Officer Harrison looked at Creep.

"We're sorry, sir," Creep said. "We won't do it again."

Officer Harrison bent over and reached out his hand to shake Creep's.

"Lesson learned," he said as he grabbed Creep's hand.

A loud BUZZZZZZZZZZ and shriek from the officer faded into the distance as we ran off chuckling after a good day of practical joking. ☺

Mr. Cuhaj has written two books, Hiking Alabama and Paddling Alabama, both published by Globe-Pequot/Falcon Books. He has also co-authored a book with Tamra Carraway titled Baseball in Mobile, published by Arcadia Publishing. He's written for Backpacker Magazine, E: Environmental News and a piece on shortwave radio listening for Monitoring Time. He lives in Daphne, Alabama.

Changes

Where have all the boulders gone
Those we used to climb upon
Gone's the hill with lofty brow
All of those are smaller now

And the lake from shore to shore
Vast it was but is no more
Now there's just a pond I see
Not the lake it used to be

When we're small, the world's immense
Looking up, our reverence
As we grow in size and years
Looking down perseveres

Changes always follow time
According to a paradigm
Outlooks need to still remain
Looking up, yet not in vain

Phillip William Hays
Westernport, MD