

*From Goalie*

It was “special assembly” time in Miss Weatherbee’s class on American History. The term was written in her syllabus, as apparently it was written in the syllabus of every teacher of every American history class in every high school in the state of Oregon, there having been a mandate from somebody’s legislator that students in the state weren’t getting enough “special assembly” time, of which it wasn’t either -special or assembly - as it was usually the exact same thing and it took place in class which was assembled already, so on absolutely every level, it just didn’t make sense.

However, through time and through many unscheduled and unjustified trips to the assistant principle’s office, Dave had learned that the idea was simply to watch whatever they had put in front of him and to try, try, try, try not to say anything. So he did, and he didn’t, unless and until it had all become too much, and increasingly, he hoped that it wouldn’t.

“Today, class we have a special treat,” Miss Weatherbee said, and Dave just wanted to reach back under her hair which was pulled as tight as a sixteen-year-old nun sitting on a park bench in January; Dave just wanted to reach under that hair and that scalp and that skull and feel inside to see if there was any grey matter and if so, if it was even warm.

“Boys and girls,” she continued, “you all know the members of our specially assembly today because they were our special assembly three months ago. But this time, they have something extra special! A brand new and completely different reenaction of the story of your forefathers who crossed the Oregon Trail!”

Dave looked at the middle-aged couple seated behind his, ‘never been to the Bahamas, never been to Las Vegas, never been to Europe, but I have visited Olympia, Washington once’ - teacher. The man had cultivated at least two weeks worth of facial hair suggesting that his role in the reenaction was more important than any sort of job that would have preferred clean shaven. He wore suspenders over a flannel shirt and his canvas pants looked as though they had been purposefully rolled in the garden to give it that “on the trail” look: The Oregon Trail; the story of the mighty pioneer descendants who braved all odds to cross the country in Conestoga wagons so that they could come to this mighty land of the big pine tree where they would fry every living thing in lard and eat like pigs. Had these two ‘reenactors’ and Miss Weatherbee actually weighed in on one of the mighty Conestogas, they would still be taking on water at the first Platte River crossing in Nebraska.

Another thing Dave had noticed since his family had moved him to Oregon: people here were fat; fat and stupid; the kind of stupid that doesn’t know it’s stupid; the kind of stupid that surrounds itself with itself as if it were the only thing in the universe, telling its own little ‘myth of the metals’ repeatedly, ad infinitum, as this was, in fact, the fourth time these same ‘reenactors’ had come to speak to his class this year; and this was, in fact, the only event that had constituted “special assembly.”

*First draft: To be continued.*

*For a comparison between the book and the film, see “Goalie: The Screenplay”*