



# Managing Danger

*Enough is enough!*

By Barry Perryman, Ph.D.

I was taking a ride in Mr. Peabody's Wayback Machine a couple of weeks ago and ended up at the old Ellis County rodeo grounds in 1972. They were home to the annual County Stock Show and Rodeo. My posse and I were Future Farmers of America and full participants in the show.

About 11 p.m. the whole place was settling down to a cool, crisp October sky. We, minus one, were bedded down in a small auction ring off to the side of the parking lot when an inebriated Ron came stumbling in. He was a good kid and a happy drunk, but he was also loud. Now Waxahachie, Texas, was a dry section of the county in those days. It was illegal to possess adult beverages, and especially illegal for minors to be in possession. There was hardly ever any need to prosecute for the deed, because the confiscated contraband normally ended up in the refrigerator of the arresting officer. But you couldn't be certain all the time, and we were convinced it was one of those uncertain times.

With the sheriff's office well represented that evening, Ron's sudden appearance and very loud greeting spurred us to action! He continued with his slightly slurred banter to the point where we all thought he would be heard by the Law. We collectively decided that for his own good, he had to be silenced. Immediately someone suggested we knock him out. Apparently, someone's uncle had in some time past heard about someone who once knew a man who was kin to someone who heard someone say they might have knocked someone out to save him from the Law.

So we laid him out on his back, raised him up a little, and in the quietest way (aside from his protests), the largest and strongest of us landed an uppercut on his chin in an attempt to put him to sleep. It didn't work. So he tried again, and a third time. Ron was getting a bit upset over the proceedings and began to flail around and protest even louder. We became desperate for his sake, so we all had a go, but no one knew exactly how much force it would take to do the job. However, after much trial and error we found the solution. It was a good thing...for his sake.

It dawned on me at work recently that

there were a lot of administrative folks looking out for my sake just as we did for Ron, especially the Risk Management Department. They go out of their way to educate and train me how to manage danger. A number of years ago, Risk Management wanted me to take a course on driving tractors, forklifts and other machinery. A young teacher was dispatched to ensure I and others were instructed correctly. The first question of the day was, "Have you ever driven a tractor before and for how long?" I was the first called upon, and I said, "Yes, since I was eight." You could hear the air exit the balloon.

Individuals and societies have to take risks to grow and evolve. Everyone in their own way manages risk, whether it be in their personal life or in the workplace. Risk is inherent in all that we do, but when our efforts to minimize risk take more and more time away from other more important duties and requirements, we cowboy-up and say, "Enough is enough!"

My first brush with risk management came around age two. I was told to stay away from electrical outlets or Reddy Kilowatt would jump out and get me! Soon after, I conducted my own controlled experiment and yes, he did get me. I have managed that risk fairly well ever since. It drives me nuts that we are now required to put dummy plugs in outlets and "officially" train adult employees that Reddy Kilowatt lives inside them. Ridiculous warning labels displayed for our sakes are now as common as dust particles:

- Do not eat toner—*on a toner cartridge for a laser printer*
- Eating rocks may lead to broken teeth—*on a novelty rock garden set called "Popcorn Rock"*
- Caution: Hot beverages are hot!—*on a coffee cup*

I remember what the world was like before the risk-management folks took it over and ruined it. Look what they have done for childhood playground experiences. Two-storey steel slides have been replaced with four-foot plastic ones. Swings that would catapult you 10 feet into the air have been replaced with padded seats and safety straps, and merry-go-rounds that would throw you off with G-forces that Apollo astronauts trained with are virtually extinct. They exist now only as pictures in history books. It's a brave new world I suppose.

I must minimize some personal risk now by stating, "This article in no way endorses the possession or consumption of adult beverages by minors." ■

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