

The Fruit Juice Fiasco

By Richard Cleaveland

Here is my version of a memorable event that occurred at my grandparents home on Farwell avenue, Milwaukee in the early 30's. I'm sure my uncle Earl had a different version.

The family of about eight had just finished having dinner; desert was preserved peaches or pears - I forget which. My Uncle Earl was about to leave to go bowling - he was a professional bowler - and had on his fancy bowling shirt - silk, perhaps, I don't recall. The fruit had all been eaten, leaving the accompanying syrup in the bottom of the large serving bowl. Not being able to stand the thought of such a delicacy going to waste ("waste not, want not") my uncle picked up the bowl and put it to his lips to slurp down the dregs. Now I was not above liking the syrup myself, so I reached over and said "hey - save some for me" or words to that effect. Unfortunately my hand went father than it should, tipped the bowl up and doused Uncle Earl nicely - bowling shirt and all. As I recall at that moment my feelings were of mixed astonishment and amusement - I don't think I had ever seen anyone so angry, and I guess I could understand it, but I felt it served him right for taking the bowl without offering anyone else (me, that is) a portion. Knowing what to expect, I ran from the table, but he caught me in the vestibule near the front door and gave me the licking of my life. I recall saying, through my tears, that I wasn't crying, I was laughing. And that was partly true.

My Aunt Ethel: "I knew as soon as Earl picked up that bowl there'd be trouble. But it was apricot juice, not pear juice."

Uncle Earl: "We never had apricots. It was peaches."