



Beaver Bob

Our intrepid reporter interviews
the Sage of the Castor

When the editor assigned us to visit Beaver Bob, we were of course, filled with a sense of privilege at the opportunity of meeting the Sage of the Castor. We found the Philosopher in his humble home on the river bank, a quiet spot where the wind rustled in the trees and the silence was unmarred except for the occasional slap of a beaver's tail on the placid stream.

Beaver Bob was seated in the front room of the cabin, wearing his famous felt hat which looked as though it had been rolled on by a bull in fly time. He puffed thoughtfully on his old pipe, keeping up a spirited conversation with his friends, Punjab Dick and Chatterjee the ineffable Sikh. His hound dog lay at his feet, thumping his tail idly on the floor, while his black Egyptian cat, Semiramis sat in the window, its golden eyes gazing down the centuries of the past.

"You take that cat." Beaver Bob removed his pipe and expectorated in the direction of the new parlour stove which he had imported at great expense from Taiwan.

"Now, that cat is four thousand years old, if he's a day."

"There are not many cats of that exalted age." Mr. Chatterjee rolled his eyes heavenward. Punjab Dick hitched his chair forward.

"Now, when I was in the Khyber, we saw very few cats. Although I must admit, in the mountains over Kashmir leopards were an everyday thing. There was one leopard who took a siesta every afternoon in the minefields in full view of everyone. We couldn't go after him because of the mines. He knew where they were. We didn't."

"That cat." Beaver Bob went on as though there had been no interruption. "That cat is well over four thousand. When they opened King Tut's tomb, who do you think walked out? Why that cat walked out, that's who. He walked out into the sunlight without blinking an eye, after four thousand years of being shut up with a mummy. A dead one at that."

The black cat stretched and yawned, showing a long, pink tongue. The golden eyes closed and opened again. Mr. Chatterjee shifted uneasily and looked out the front door where sunlight danced on the sparkling waters of the Castor. I decided it was time to ask a few questions.

"How is your campaign to save the beavers going?"

"Going very well." Beaver Bob's teeth clamped firmly on the stem of his old pipe. "I think we'll save 'em yet. People are beginning to appreciate that the beavers have a right to live. You still get the odd farmer who complains about three or four of his best acres being flooded, but when they realize the tourist value of the beavers, even they will come around. Come down to the river and I'll show you."

We followed him down the winding path to the river, Punjab Dick and Mr. Chatterjee close behind. I forgot to mention that Punjab Dick was wearing whipcord breeches and knee-high leather boots which had been issued to him while on observer duty in Kashmir. They stood on the bank while Beaver Bob walked out on the beaver dam.

There is not much point in describing the dam in detail. Anyone who has seen one knows what a beaver dam looks like; and anyone who has not probably wouldn't understand it, anyway.

"Nature's engineers." Beaver Bob wagged his head admiringly. "Let the beavers go at it without interference and they will install and maintain the finest drainage system in the world. Why won't people listen?"

A beaver came up in the water and swam along the front of the dam, pulling a stick here, patting a little bit of mud there, for all the world as though performing for an appreciative gallery, which indeed we were.

"It is absolutely too wonderful for words." Overcome with admiration, Mr. Chatterjee stumbled and fell from the dam into the water from which we were able to draw him by tugging on his long sick turban. Drenched and breathless, he made his way up to the cabin to dry off.

"Silly fellow," Punjab Dick said. "Too excitable by far."

Back in the cabin, Beaver Bob expatiated on the qualities of the beaver, with a far away look in his eye.

"They're almost human. Just like you and I. I regard them as my brothers"

"That's going a bit far old man." Punjab Dick shook his head. "I'm a bit more particular about my relatives, dash it."

Beaver Bob shrugged. He took out a wooden match and picked the dottle out of his pipe which he then proceeded to empty into the Taiwan stove. "I won't be happy until the beavers are back on the Castor," he said.

We sat, pencil poised. "May we say that you regard this as your life mission?"

Beaver Bob nodded. "I think you can say that."

"Tell us something about your life for the readers of the Castor Review. Do you live here all by yourself?"

"Except for my faithful friends, the beavers. There is also an occasional muskrat along the bank and, of course, the giant blue heron who fishes a little way from here. Apart from my cat and my dog, Toby, I lead a rather solitary life." He nodded in the direction of Punjab Dick who was busily rolling cigarettes on the kitchen table; and Mr. Chatterjee, a forlorn, badragged figure in front of the stove.

"From time to time, my friends drop in. Mr. Chatterjee is an expert on the arts of the Orient, including levitation and the Indian Rope Trick, while Major Whiffle, better known as Punjab Dick, is well versed in the arts of survival and cultural exchange among peoples."

I was rather surprised at the quality of language exhibited by one described to me as an uneducated countryman.

When I commented on Beaver Bob's mastery of language Mr. Chatterjee chimed in. "Oh, yes. Mr. Bob is something of a scholar. A very omnivorous reader."

Mr. Chatterjee, I learned was himself a graduate of the University of Lahore, fluent in Pushtu, Urdu and Hindi as well as English and the holder of a postgraduate degree from one of Canada's best known universities. Major Whiffle might be described as a soldier of fortune. After retirement from the Canadian Army where he did valorous duty in World War 2, he had found employment in Africa, Asia and South America. About these activities he was very close-mouthed, contenting himself with listening quietly as I interviewed Beaver Bob about his crusade to return the beaver to the Castor.

Finally, it was time to go. I rose, bowed politely to Beaver Bob's visitors and went to the door. As I set out down the track toward the road, my last view was of Beaver Bob in the doorway of his cabin, old felt hat well back on his head, arm upraised in the setting sun. Behind him, the Castor sparkled on its way to the Nation, the Ottawa, the St. Lawrence and, finally, the sea.

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Visits

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Parlee (Eleanor Cherry) and family of North Bay spent a few days last week with parents Mr. and Mrs. Chester Cherry. On Good Friday Maynard and Joyce had the family for dinner to celebrate their parents 57th wedding anniversary which was March 30.

Mrs. John Twiname spent a few days with Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Stevenson at Dunrobin.

Mrs. Norman Norton of Perth was a guest of Mr. and Mrs. James Eadie.

Miss Linda Weatherall spent Easter at her home in Russell.

Mrs. Harold Dempsey of Hamilton visited Mrs. James Dempsey.

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