

Monotonous rain finally leads to a column; Daydreaming proves to be the answer to a case of writer's block



Newspaper Telegraph - Herald (Dubuque) April 17, 2005 | JIM SWENSON

Sitting at my office desk, I stare out the window like a bored, day-dreaming fifth grader.

Fortunately, Mrs. Grefsheim isn't around.

It is raining for the second day in a row - not very inspirational for a columnist with writer's block.

It can hit the best of us (and the worst). This is the fourth column I've started this week. I saved two for future use, deleted a third.

I'm still not sure where this one is going.

The incessant rain hits the plain parking ramp across from our building. Smoke rises from a hidden chimney. There are no leaves on the trees. The sky has no color.

Wonder why can't I seem to write a column this week?

Maybe if I were back in fifth grade ...

On rainy days, my dad would get off of work early. He labored in construction, helping build streets in Madison, Wis.

It was back-breaking work. And he had some of the biggest tanned muscles I'd ever seen.

We lived a half-hour drive from where he worked. My mom also had a job in Madison. They'd drive together.

When it rained, though, my dad would come home and later go back to Madison to pick her up.

Sometimes, I'd get to go.

I'll never forget sitting shotgun next to my dad. He'd usually smoked, and country music played on the radio.

He never said much. Sometimes he'd whistle or sing along with a song:

"Trailers for sale or rent ... ain't got no cigarettes."

"A WHITE, sport coat, and a pinnnnk carnation ..."

He sort of sounded like the real singers.

But it was the rhythmic windshield wipers that mesmerized me.

Splash and then swoosh. Splash and then swoosh. Over and over again. I wasn't just riding with my dad to get my mom. I was in another world. My imagination would take me to hundreds of places I can't even recall.

I'll never forget the experience.

And I'll always remember other rainy - warmer - days in my youth.

If I wasn't out sliding around on the grass, turning it into mud, I'd be making dams in the gutter or picking up night crawlers sprawled in the street.

That's only when I managed to sneak out past my mom. For some reason, she didn't enjoy cleaning up after such slimy outings.

But, when I couldn't go out in the rain, I had fun inside.

I'd organize my football cards or play a baseball dice game called APBA that my dad taught me to play. I'd color in my coloring book (even though I was getting too old for that sort of thing). Or, I might try to force my younger siblings into doing something with me.

But often, I recall taking breaks and just lying around watching television when it rained. I'd laugh at the funny parts and mimic the commercial jingles.

My parents would be sitting in the living room, too - dad reading, mom trying to coax him into a conversation. Somehow, I could tell that they loved each other.

Yeah, those rainy days were times to remember ... better than today.

But I'd better quit daydreaming or this column will never get finished.

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