

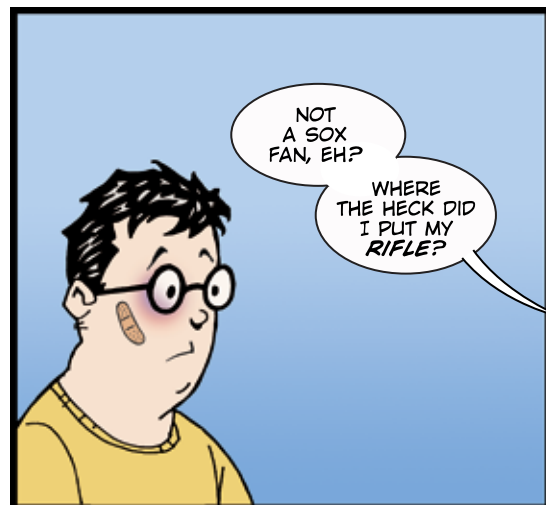
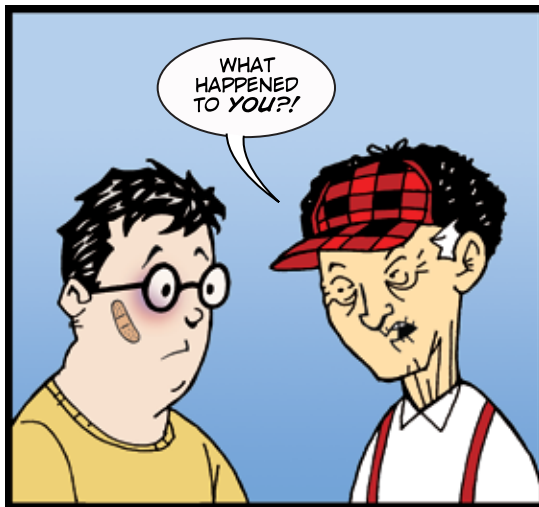


THE UNVERIFIABLE TALES OF EARL HORNSWAGGLE THE OLDEST MAN IN BANGOR

written and illustrated by
Mark Ricketts

Earl Hornswaggle claims to be the oldest man in Bangor, Maine, clocking in, according to him, at 122 years old. However, this is the tamest of his assertions. Find yourself drawn into his gravity, and he will regale you with stories of his days as a lumber baron, schoolteacher, river driver, newspaper man, ferry operator, inventor, escape artist, and, well, the list goes on and on. It would be easy to write him off as a pathological liar, but in his oddly charismatic presence, each of his extraordinary yarns seems so very real . . .

EARL AND I





EXTRA TOURIST-RIAL

as told to Mark Ricketts by Earl Hornswaggle

“ It was 1954 the night me ‘n’ my dog Salty got stuck up the tote road on our way home from the Timber! Tavern. That beat-down path was a shortcut to my trailer most the year, but even a Sherman tank would have trouble passin’ that way durin’ mud season—which it was. Shoulda known better, but there we were, up t’ our headlights in mud. No way we were goin’ nowheres, ‘least anytime soon, so Salty and me found a station on the radio and settled in for the night.

“Somewhere past midnight’s when it come up on us—a big blast o’ bright light. Then the radio went dead and the truck took to shakin’. For a moment, it felt like the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad was chuggin’ our way. Salty commenced to yelpin’ while I muddled down waitin’ for whatever-the-heck-that-was to crash into us. But their wunt no crash. Just more light. Bright as heaven, I’d bet. White as snow. So danged bright white you couldn’t see your boots to tie the laces.

“Salty growled, as the cause of all this commotion rolled up to the truck. And then, there it was, big as life. Looked half-man and half-octopus. Had a mess o’ long, rangy legs and this one dewy eyeball that rolled ‘round

its big blue noggin.

“Now, I’ve seen some ugly critters in these parts afore, but no moose or lobster could hold a candle to this cuss. And it sure wunt local. Had to be an alien from another world.

“Had a Delorme map with it, so I guess it musta got itself lost. And it was pointin’ at a certain spot on that map, too. You know, like a tourist’ll do when they ask for directions.

“Well sir, opportunity like this only comes along maybe once or twice in a Mainer’s lifetime, so I mustered up my thickest accent, tryin’ like the devil not to crack a smile, and right there and then, I tol’ that alien fella, ‘Sorry, chummy. You can’t get theah from heah!’

“That alien’s eyeball stared straight at me, glanced back at the map, looked up at me once more, then he made this grumblin’ noise and slunk off. Minute or two later, the truck went to rattlin’ again and that bright light shot overhead off into the night sky.

“April Fool! Had ya goin’, didn’t I?

“See, that alien fella never did have no map. I just added that part to spice up my story. ”



Turn here next month for another unverifiable tale from Earl Hornswaggle.