

The Adventures of Uncle Weed

A story about
a boy named Bob,
his Uncle Weed,
and Bob's friend Otto

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DUCT TAPE, SURVEY STAKES, AND LIZARDS -
An Uncle Weed Adventure

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Note: Brandon Kiggins' fine illustrations do not appear in this edition since I am still finding a way to digitize the big oversize paintings in a quality manner. Stay tuned for the whole enchilada.

Olson / WEED

Bob was going camping. His mom's brother had invited him. "Let me take Bob down to the desert for a few days," Uncle Weed had asked.

At first Bob's mom pretended to be a bit hesitant, "I don't know if I want you taking my young, impressionable boy on one of your crazy adventures to never-never land," she had said.

Uncle Weed assured her everything would be fine, and after listening to a heavy amount of pleading, Bob's mom finally said, "Okay."

Bob figured his mom would've let him go either way, it was just her way of being goofy.

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Bob really liked his Uncle Weed. He came around fairly regularly, but not so often that it was too much, or not a treat when he did. Bob's dad would tease about Uncle Weed's visits, "Here comes that long hair looking for a free meal again," he would say. His dad always winked when he said it so Bob would know it was a joke, he enjoyed the visits as much as everyone else.

Uncle Weed brought along curious items to show, and presents to give. Since he was a gardener, he often brought fresh vegetables or fruit. Sometimes he brought crafts he'd made (like pottery) or objects he'd found on his adventures (many Indian arrowheads from the Anasazi tribe). You could count on him for a load of stories and a stack on pictures as well.

According to Bob's dad, Uncle Weed didn't have a real job. Bob's mom said he didn't need one, and Uncle Weed himself said he didn't have time for one. In summer, he took tourists on river trips and mountain

bike rides; in fall, he sold pumpkins on the side of the road. When winter came, he sold firewood he cut from old Christmas trees he gathered. He kept busy helping different groups of people, and donating his time to well-meaning organizations. Bob noticed he thought that this is what made Uncle Weed happy and successful.

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And so, Bob and Uncle Weed were going camping. Not only them, but Bob's friend, Otto. Bob told his friend all about his uncle, so he thought he'd ask if Otto could come along. They were, after all, best friends.

Uncle Weed said, "Alright, but under two conditions: If Otto likes wedgies, and would laugh at his dumb jokes." Agreed.

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First off, the boys had to trek to Uncle Weed's cabin in the canyon. It wasn't too far, but far enough that Bob's Mom wanted to drive them. They thought it would be better if they hiked instead. It would get the adventure off to a good start they figured.

They went through a cemetery (it was daytime), through a canal (it was empty) and up and down a hill into the canyon. A busy road wound through the canyon but they easily found a path along the river that would led right to Uncle Weed's cabin in the woods.

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Bob couldn't remember which of the huts Uncle Weed's lived in so they yodeled and hollered for him. It wasn't too far away and before they knew it, he came running at top speed down a side road pushing a wheelbarrow. They leapt in and he pushed them along for a while. Then they just threw the backpacks in and took turns pushing.

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Uncle Weed's hut sat amongst a bunch of trees, bushes, flowers and gardens. All around lived rabbits, squirrels, butterflies and bugs. Tree-forts, doghouses and bird-feeders appeared here and there around the colorful yard as did the dogs, birds and even a few wiener pigs with bright collars and name tags.

Inside was filled with boxes, shelves, crates and closets filled with stuff. It was one of those places you could stay for a year or two just looking. Looking and touching a lot. Sort of like a museum and petting zoo mixed together. There were bicycle parts, wooden toys, plenty of books, paintings, pots and pans, garlic bulbs, mobiles, photographs and sculpture. Bob and Otto decided that Uncle Weed was certainly creative and handy.

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Bob's favorite thing was a collection of about a half-dozen wooden drummer statues. Some were brown but most were black. Otto's favorite was all the bikes, four that actually worked and a bunch more in a haphazard stack in the corner.

They emptied their backpacks on the bed so Uncle Weed could make sure they had everything they needed. "Leave the chewing gum and foam mattresses here and make sure to bring all your paint-brushes and granola bars," he suggested. He threw a toothbrush, spare socks, pocketknife and a big floppy hat into a burlap sack and off they went.

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They all sat in the front seat of the 'Earth Ship' which was the old van's name. It looked a lot like Uncle Weed's house except it had wheels. A built-in ice-box, a propane stove and a sink sat, ready for use. The table and back seat folded into a comfortable bed

and the cupboards were full of useful equipment and tools.

The three happy nomads headed south, singing along loudly to songs playing from an old stereo that was duct taped to the dashboard. Bob and Otto were soon laughing too hard to sing because of the words Uncle Weed made up for the songs. He was a good singer too, or a least knew a lot of songs.

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They took their time and stopped several times along the way. They stopped in small town city parks to monkey on the monkey bars and talked with old folks in motorhomes at rest areas. At one point, Uncle Weed made an abrupt turn and headed up a skinny, twisty road. They hiked over some slippery rocks and climbed over a ledge to see a cliff with a sun etched in it. Bob and Otto decided everyone should know where these things are or at least, have an uncle who does.

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After a while, Uncle Weed landed the Earth Ship, hopped out and threw on his pack. He carried almost everything so Bob and Otto could run around and dig the scenery. They stopped often so Uncle Weed could point out interesting rocks, plants and lizards or answer questions about things Bob and Otto found peculiar. Uncle Weed knew the names of most things and they made up names for the things he didn't. "Someone has to or did at one time," the three of them determined.

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When they found a comfortable box canyon which met their needs, Uncle Weed kicked out some sand and threw down his bedroll. He flopped down, pulled his hat over his eyes and was asleep in no time.

Bob and Otto continued exploring, with so much to

see, sleeping seemed a waste of time and a burden.

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By the time they returned to the campsite, Uncle Weed was almost done with dinner. They all sat down amongst the tiny cacti and ate pinto beans and homemade salsa wrapped in flour tortillas. They washed it down with fresh spring water which poured from a nearby crevice. Blossoms from a prickly pear provided a tasty desert.

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They lay down, bellies full, beside their little fire and told stories. Bob and Otto told about the Arches and the cave they found while exploring. "Now you tell us a story, another good one," the boys asked.

"Alright, alright, once I had a job repairing lawnmowers and one day this guy comes in and says; Well I reckon my valve cover gasket is blown to tarnation and my piston rings aren't seating in the proper circumference in the cylinder which is resulting in an acute lack of synchronization in the timing, so as a result, the camshaft is opening the intake and exhaust valves on the wrong lobes causing premature wear on the crankshaft main bearing on account of the push-rod tubes spurting because the oil cooler isn't. . . "

"Uncle! We told you a good story!"

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"What, you didn't like that one?" Uncle Weed teased. "Well, here's a good one, an important one in fact." Uncle Weed sat up to tell the story better and collect his thoughts. "Back when I was about your age, I think I was eleven, I went with my dad on a trip to a place not too far away from here. Our friend Ed and his

daughter who was about my age came along as well. Before we left the city, we bought an old rubber dinghy at an Army-Navy surplus store and taking just a couple bags of gear and the clothes on our back, we pushed off a sandy bank into a beautiful, vibrant river. We floated down this cascading river for about two weeks."

"Two weeks in a boat with a girl and the same clothes!"

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"Don't say anything yet you two, it was amazing. Anyway, everynight, whenever we felt like it, we pulled up to a sandy shore or rocky beach up a side canyon and throw our sleeping bags down on the ground. My dad would cook up a pot of grub, he used plants, roots, berries, whatever he could find around. You Grandpa's real good at that sort of thing you know, cooking and all."

"Then," Uncle Weed continued, "We would lie around the fire and tell about what we had seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted and thought that day. Sort of like what we're doing here. You might think that after a couple of weeks, you would run out of things to say, but you wouldn't. Those two weeks could've been a thousand and you'd still want more. Every time you would find a perfect view, you would turn around and find one twice as stunning. Then you would turn your head again and find something more breathtaking still."

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"There I was, a youngster, out digging the scenery, while all the other kids went to Disneyland. I wouldn't trade it for anything, I couldn't. I learned how important it is to notice every detail possible, to remember the majesty of the Earth and respect all living

things. There's so much to see and experience but people still don't notice or even take the time to look and when they do, it's through the window of a car. Well, all the more space for us to roam 'eh?" It almost looked like Uncle weed was crying, not exactly, but sort of leaking around the eyes.

"Is that where we're going tomorrow or something?" The boys figure that anyplace that got Uncle Weed this emotional had to quite amazing.

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"I wish we could, but it's closed. Closed for renovations."

"How can they close a river? You're teasing again."

"Well, I'll tell more of the story. Shortly after we finished our adventure, a bunch of government guys came and said; "Wow, sure is nice out here but all canyons look the same and there's plenty of them anyhow. This one would be ideal for our purposes. Barely anyone comes here anyhow, we could probably score us some medals and high-paying office jobs for fixing this place up."

Uncle Weed continued, "So they built a huge concrete plug of a dam. "One of the biggest in the world," they were proud to say. They went on to build a matching visitors center, highways and byways, hotels, marinas, liquor stores, bridges, convenience stores, government offices, fast food chains, trailer parks and eventually, a whole town. They called it a National Recreation Area and received their shiny medals and increase in dollars. I call it a National Recreation Slum, a filthy, bathtub playground for the inconsiderate and wealthy to play with expensive, polluting toys."

"These politicians felt it was more important to create electricity to light giant clowns and waving

cowboys in Las Vegas and keep the malls in Phoenix air-conditioned then it is to preserve a natural splendor filled with life and history. "All in the name of progress, can't let technology pass you by, it ain't worth anything unless it shows a profit," they said, so they abused it until it did. Now bus-loads of people go down and gaze with wonder at this glorious piece of cement and steel, buy postcards and motor on to their next stop. I don't know about you guys, but I find it hard to love concrete."

* * *

"Well that's lame. If they did that, why don't we go down and torch the waving cowboy! Yeah! and throw rocks at the buildings and tear down the dam!" Bob and Otto were excited.

"Well boys, direct action speaks louder than words!" shouted Uncle Weed.

"Talk minus action equals nothin'," yelled Otto and Bob.

Then, all of a sudden, Uncle Weed hollered, "Who wants wedgies?" Bob and Otto ran for cover as the crazy, bearded man chased after them, "Come here you little revolutionaries, this is tradition." He yanked Bob from his sleeping bag and climbed up a tree after Otto. After pulling boths' underwear clear up by their neck, they groaned, laughed, wrestled and went to bed.

* * *

It was one of those nights where the air is warm yet crisp. The moon was fat and full and made everything radiate. The prickly pears, scrub oak, pinyons, junipers, little flowers on hardy plants cast long, sharp shadows against the deep orange slickrock. The desert sounds of scurrying feet, rustling breeze and creature calling out bounced around the canyons. It

made everything seem comfortable, alive and content. It was a good night, a good night for just about anything.

* * *

Awhile later, someone singing off in the distance woke Otto up. "Bob, Bob, hey wake up guy."

Bob heard it too. Uncle Weed wasn't in his sleeping bag or anywhere to be seen. "Should we go find him and see what he's doing?" Bob wondered.

"No, he's probably just throwing a whiz or something," Otto answered.

"Not for that long, c'mon, let's go find him, we'll surprise him." They could barely make out the words of the song but it was loud enough to find him easily. He was just over a few slickrock hills and through a few stream washes.

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"He looks like the lady in the Sound of Music," laughed Bob and Otto, perched up on a hill watching as Uncle Weed danced around a field. He was spinning and whirling in just his cut-offs and floppy hat. Every few feet, he pulled something out of the ground and tossed it off into the darkness.

"What's he doing?" the kids wondered. It looked goofy whatever it was they laughed quietly some more.

As Uncle Weed got closer, the words became clearer;

*Stealing survey stakes, on a friday night
stealing survey stakes, by candlelight
you better not get caught*

*you'll be thrown in an institution
they'll give crazy shots
then a long conviction.
Someone's got to do it
to prevent the mass destruction
of Earth's private property
from wholesale degradation.*

* * *

"Survey stakes! he's yanking those wooden things, you know, the ones with the orange on top!" said Bob.

"What's wrong with those? Are they dumb?" asked Otto.

"I guess, we should ask."

* * *

Uncle Weed's song continued;

*Some people say that we're crazy
sick and all alone
we pull up your stakes
and roll on the ground
Ha ha hah ha.*

Bob and otto started throwing pebbles at the dancing man to startle him. All of a sudden, he vanished, disappeared.

"Where did he go? Dang, we must of spooked him," said Bob.

"It was your idea you meathead, we better blaze back to camp before he discovers us," said Otto.

* * *

They started quietly running back to camp, but within seconds, Uncle Weed was tackling them into the sand.

"You maniacs," he said, out of breath, "You scared me half to death." He turned around and started galloping back to the field as if nothing had happened. Then he turned around and told them to wait up.

"See that sign over there," he said, "That's why we're doing this. That sign announces the building of a smooth new road that will wind right through here. The weird thing is, a strong, healthy gravel road goes the exact same places, it may take an hour longer, but it works fine."

"Some people feel that the land belongs to them only or to one group of people just because they have a piece of paper stamped by someone," continued Uncle weed, searching for the best words, "This is alright sometimes, you need some sense of order, but often, people try to find personal gain by irresponsibly manipulating, damaging or destroying the land when its not necessary."

"Like stinky factories with thick orange stuff coming from the smokestacks, making it hard to breathe?" asked Bob.

"Or buildings big hotels in the middle of national parks?" Asked Otto, "Or dumping dangerous trash in the ocean?"

"Exactly!" said Uncle Weed, "Sometimes you have to help the rocks, plants and lizards out a bit, give the land back the Mother Nature. A lot of great men and women have been fighting for the planet for years and we can't let their efforts die."

* * *

The boys sat confused for a minute sorting out what

they had heard.

"C'mon guys, don't let it get to ya, there's still a lot more to it than that. Just remember to question everything someone tries to convince you of and always think clearly. Let's go back to bed."

They started back to camp following the trail of survey stakes, pulling them up along the way and tossing them into the sagebrush.

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Someone threw a stake and it didn't make the soft thud of landing on the ground. Instead, there a sharp metallic ring sounded from the darkness. It must of landed on a trailer or a bulldozer or something.

* * *

Searchlights came on, the three of them dove and hid.

"Bob, bob, is there anyone there?" Otto asked nervously.

"There must be, there's lights," answered Bob.

The bright, yellow lights scanned back and forth across the area, then a new voice spoke up and it didn't sound too friendly. "Hey, what's the big idea? Who's there? What's going on?" The man walked around poking his flashlight beam under every cactus, bush and beside every rock.

"Whoever you are, you better surrender yourselves now or you'll be in even bigger trouble," called out the man.

* * *

"Yikes, what are we going to do, where's Uncle

Weed? He didn't ditch us did he?' Otto whispered.

"Relax guy, he's over there doing something to that earthmover machine," answered Bob.

The new voice spoke again, "I can see you so stand up and walk towards me with you hands up or else they'll be some real problems."

"Bob, what are we gonna do, I think we're in trouble."

"Don't worry, he's just trying to psyche us out, he doesn't know where we are. Uncle Weed won't let us down, we're safe here I think."

The man spoke softly now, "Ah, I see, there's the culprit, there on the machine. a monkeywrencher, toying with the equipment." He rushed over towards the action, "Well I ain't letting this maniac radical get away this time I tell you for sure." His heavy shot-gun made one noises it does before it a fires, a loud CLICK-CLUNK. Uncle Weed disappeared again. Vanished.

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The man stood confused for a moment, "Son of a gun, where did that madman feller go." Then he started blasting his shotgun all over the place, screaming, yelling and shooting.

"Fools, you can't win, you just can't, it's not in the orders. That's just the nature of the way things is," he bellowed, his voice shaky and rough.

* * *

"Holy smokes," said the boys, looking down from their hiding place, "Did he shoot Uncle Weed? This sucks!"

"Calm down, Uncle Weed's fine," a voice said. Bob

and Otto turned around to see an exhausted Uncle Weed lying down right behind them. "Shh, stay quiet and don't move." He took off again into the night.

* * *

The man continued blasting off his blunderbuss. "Gosh dang it, you terrorists, thieves, bad guys, criminals, justice obstructers, malcontents. You won't get away!"

Uncle Weed crept up behind him and leapt into action. He tackled him to the ground and grabbed his weapon and tossed it away. They wrestled, kicked, yelled and worked up a furious cloud of dust.

"C'mon Uncle Weed!" Bob and Otto cheered, "Waste him! Give him a wedgie! Piledrive him!"

"How am I doing guys?" Uncle Weed called back, "Should I supplex him?"

"Arghh!" the man said, "You won't get away, let go of me! Don't hurt me!" The man huffed and puffed.

"Hey, don't worry old man, I mean you no harm," said Uncle Weed as he hauled his struggling body into the government issue, corrugated tin trailer.

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He propped his chubby body up against the refrigerator and duct taped him securely to it. "Well that ought to hold you for the night my silly friend," said Uncle Weed.

"Mmmmmmmmm," struggled the man. from the freezer, Uncle Weed selected a variety of creamsicles, fudgesicles and drumsticks. From the cupboard, he borrowed a handful of popcorn kernels and marshmallows.

"Listen, my misguided captive," said Uncle Weed, "I would think twice before I pursued this further, I'd be quite embarrassed if I was you being defeated by a skinny, longhair. They might even put you back on garbage patrol on account of this slacking. I would sure hate to see that happen. Cheers!" He tipped his hat, walked out and secured the outside door handles with the barrel of the gun.

"Mmmmmmm," mumbled the gagged man.

* * *

Bob and Otto ran up to Uncle Weed, "Wow, you could probably take on Jimmy Snuka!"

"Ah, stop it guys. Hey, go gather up some survey stakes and three long, skinny branches.

The three compadres sat around their little fire eating creamsicles, roasting marshmallows and talking about what they had seen, heard, smelled, touched, tasted and thought that day. It was a good night, a good night for just about anything.

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1988, written in Orem, UT