

# Home Alone: The Original Story!

*By Papa Jack Hoeschler*

I have always been independent and self-reliant. I believe I learned this from my mother, possibly in the womb, but certainly with my birth. My mother, Janet



Bowe Hoeschler, was a free spirit who wanted to flee the boredom of farm life in Fox Lake, Wisconsin. She was pretty and willful, and disliked doing her daily tasks. Her sister, Jewell, noted that whenever they had chores to do, Janet would just hop on their



pony and ride it out the yard! (*Janet on left, with siblings Jewell and Jack*)

Mother's cousin, Malcolm MacMillan, said that it was always clear that Janet



wanted to be on the first train out of town as soon as she graduated from high school. My mother often said how disappointed she was that her parents would not help her go to the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Besides being of modest means, they did not believe in higher education, especially for girls. So Mother worked at a knitting shop in nearby ←Beaver Dam for a year in order to save enough money to start college.



During the next four years Mother majored in secondary education at the ←State Teachers College in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She was a so-so student, but popular



and charming. She was elected homecoming→ queen in 1938, among other beauty and personality titles she acquired there.



During college my mother met Jake Hoeschler, a young pharmacist, and another up and comer. They ←married in August 1940 after her college graduation. I came along in February 1942, just a year and a half after their wedding. Mother later admitted that she was *not* ready to be a parent.

My birth was breach, meaning I started to come out feet first. I had to be turned around and extracted with a forceps. This crushed one side of my face and left one eye paralyzed open. Since there was serious danger that my petite mother might bleed to death, I was put on a stainless steel cart and pushed to the side of the delivery room. All hands turned to save my mother.



Mother was able to go home after a few weeks. But I was left in the hospital until I finally got the regular use of my eye and other face muscles. When I was released from the hospital after two ←months, my mother said she didn't care whether or not I came home. Some would see this as the failure of a mother to bond with her son. I just considered it life as usual.

My mother never worried about the rules. She also wanted a career as a teacher, and not just to be stuck home with a baby. Sometimes Central High School→ would call her on short notice to take over a class for a sick



teacher. One time the boys in a chemistry class saw a “great” opportunity with the young substitute, my mother. They set off a smoke bomb, causing howls and screams from the other students, as well as the evacuation of the entire class through the windows and onto a nearby roof. The principal had to come in and restore order, but this didn't faze my mother in the least.



Because my mother did not have a regular baby sitter for me, she would usually leave me in the baby buggy in the backyard of our

←house at 303 North 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to “enjoy” the sunny



day alone. She would also place dry cereal and a milk bottle in the carriage, so that I could feed myself.



I was fine until my cloth diapers became too wet or dirty. Then I would cry until a neighbor would become concerned and call my grandmother, Maebelle Hoeschler, who lived about 4 blocks away. Grandma would always run over, take me home, change, feed, and hold me, and never ever seemed to complain. *(Maebelle in 1956 with granddaughters Parki, Susan and Janice)*

When my mother would come home after a day of teaching, she would see that everything was all right. Therefore, she was never very upset by the fuss she had caused. Today my mother would be arrested for child neglect or worse. But in those days, the community and neighbors tried to solve many of their own problems. They knew my mother was wrong, but they thought she would eventually learn better.



My glamorous, lighthearted mother never tried to change. She continued to leave me, and later, my brothers and sister, home alone. She never seemed to be too bothered by this, even when I would talk to her about it in later years. She would agree with the facts, and cheerfully say that that it was lucky that a dog didn't tip over the buggy (or walk away with me)!



One day when I was barely 5 years old, my mother took me grocery shopping. She parked across the street from the store, next to a skating rink. She agreed that I could watch some older kids play ice hockey while she shopped. Soon I got cold and scared, and ran across the street to

the store. Sadly, I never made it. As I cut between two parked cars, a moving car hit me and dragged me over 100 feet, breaking my right leg in three places. I was in the hospital for more than a month with ←both legs in casts,



hung in traction. I was miserable, and still had misery to come. When they took the casts off, much of the outer layer of my skin came off, too.

Once out of the hospital, I had to wear a full leg cast for at least 6 weeks. I had to be pushed about→ in a wheelchair. I really can't remember much about this rather pathetic period. Because of all the time in the hospital, I also had to repeat kindergarten. But this turned out to be a good idea since I then became slightly older for my grade.



**Chase Child; Injured By Vehicle**

Chased by older boys off a plot of ice in a vacant lot where he had been playing, five-year-old John Hoeschler, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jake Hoeschler, 303 North 23rd street, ran into the path of a car on Jackson street at East avenue Friday afternoon, suffering a fractured right leg when struck by the automobile.

Witnesses told police the Hoeschler boy had hesitated momentarily at the sidewalk when running from the ice pond and then ran out into the street from behind a parked car so that the driver, Edward A. Gallagher, 2227 George street, did not have a chance to stop. Persons who saw the accident said Gallagher was not traveling at a fast rate of speed.

The boy was taken to a local hospital in the police ambulance. His leg was broken above and below the knee, the physician in charge told Policemen Harold A. Johnson and Frederick Howley, who investigated the accident.

My wife, Nonna, says that being left alone as a child makes me want to be left alone when I am sick. I can also remember that a high school teacher, Sr. Paula Marie Ripple, once told me that I would have to learn to work with others, and not try to do everything by myself. Nonna has helped me learn that self-reliance is good, but teamwork is often better and more fun.

***Now if you don't try any chemistry experiments on your own, the next time you can hear about the day Papa's parents abandoned him in the desert!***

# Alone in the Arizona Desert

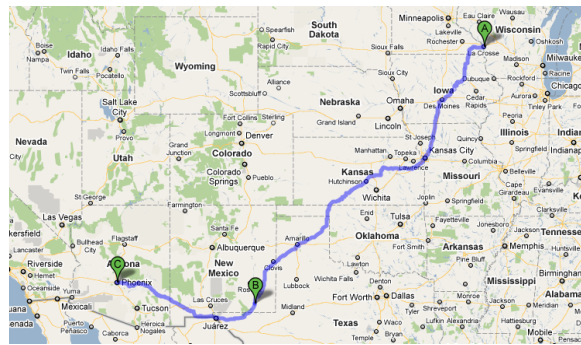
*By Papa Jack Hoeschler*



When I was about 6 years old, I went with my parents on a car trip to Arizona. I was always very quiet while riding in the back seat of our Buick, so I got to go with them on many car adventures. For this trip I wore a cowboy hat



and carried a water pistol. We left Wisconsin in the winter, and traveled south and southwest, through Iowa and Kansas, leaving the heavy snow behind. After a few days we reached Oklahoma, then Texas, then New Mexico, where the weather was warm.



As we were driving across New Mexico toward Arizona, we ran into a violent thunderstorm. My father was a good driver, so we kept on going. But we had to stop when we saw “Bridge Out” signs on the highway.



My father decided to go back to the filling station we had just passed, to ask about an alternate route to take. Once we got there, Dad went inside the station to get directions. My mother decided to get out of the car and walk around. After they had both left the car, I woke up from my nap and went into the filling station bathroom to fill up my squirt gun with water.

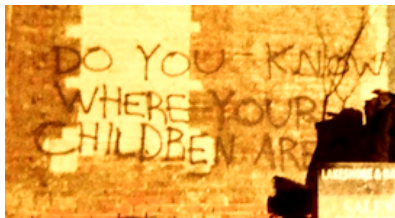
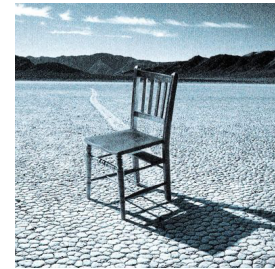


## BY-PASS

In the meantime, a local man told my father that he would lead him and the other travelers to a bypass road. A caravan of cars quickly formed with our car close to the front. It seems that my parents thought that I was still asleep in the back seat. When I came out of the bathroom, I found no one around except a rather unconcerned gas station attendant who told me that everyone had left.



I wasn't particularly scared since I was used to being left alone. I decided just to sit on the gas pump island because I knew that my parents would miss me, sooner or later. Then they would happily return, I kept telling myself.



That is exactly what happened, but only after a couple of hours. By then my loneliness and sadness had turned to outright worry. I probably cried. My parents later said that they were all the way through the bypass before they looked in the back seat and realized that I was missing.



We continued on our driving trip. No one made a fuss about leaving me, so I didn't either. It was just business as usual in the La Crosse Hoeschler family. I hope this never happens to you, but if it does, always remember the rule: go back to the last place where everyone was together. That way you will always find each other.

***Now if you promise only to use your squirt gun in the tub or yard, the next time you can learn why Nonna often dreamed she escaped out a window and used her bed sheets as a rope!***