

Early Heroes

It began in our family's living room. The house had only a living room, dining room and kitchen on the first floor. Huddled in the corner where the radiator separated the radio from the couch, I joined my two older brothers to listen to Straight Arrow. The Indian brave would shoot his unerring shaft at the story's wrongdoer, saving the good and bringing justice to the world. At the end he would chant, "N-A-B-I-S-C-O, Nabisco is the name to know; when you want something that can't be beat, eat Nabisco Shredded Wheat." Straight Arrow's stories are long forgotten, but he remains my first hero.

More heroes arrived with our first television set. It found a place in the living room in front of the blocked-off fire place. The Lone Ranger quickly captured my imagination, fighting bad guys and occasionally firing a silver bullet. At the end of each episode he would ride off with sidekick Tanto, shouting "Hi, ho, Silver," the name of his horse. Truth and Justice triumphed each Saturday morning and spurred my friends and I to gallop around the neighborhood with toy guns and holsters wrapped around our waists.

The Tales of Sir. Lancelot introduced a new hero. Riding on a horse with lance and armor stirred the imagination. Jousts and sword fights

replaced the cowboy fist fights, and damsels in distress replaced the held up stagecoaches. Might for right would be my slogan long after the Knights of the Roundtable had faded from view.

Huckleberry Finn surpassed all the other heroes, but years passed before he reached my consciousness. High school was my time for questioning and for reading books that raised more questions. In my junior year I followed Huck on his raft trip down the Mississippi River with Jim, a slave escaping service to his neighbor, Miss Watson. The slow moving raft gave Huck time to think about his helping Jim and how that violated everything he had been taught. He had no love for Miss Watson but that could never excuse the terrible thing he had done by helping her slave escape. His aroused conscience settled after making plans to return Jim to captivity. Then he thought of all the things Jim had done to help him and how Jim had said that Huck was the best friend that Jim had ever had. Finally, Huck said to himself, "Alright, I'll go to hell," and help Jim to escape. Those words made Huck forever my hero, rejecting everything he had been taught and doing what his heart knew was right.

As high school gave way to college and college to law school, heroes faded into memory. The crooked ways of life foiled Straight Arrow, and silver bullets rarely found their mark. Huck's troubled trip down the

Mississippi became more and more relevant as he outshone all my early heroes.