

The Story of Seeley Caro Lindeman

(July 27, 1879 - June 20, 1976)

Compiled and Written by June Koch Price

Seeley was born July 27, 1879 in Cincinnati Ohio, the son of Gustav and Henrietta Lindeman and the fifth of nine children. He left school at 14 (as did his brothers) and worked in a grocery store to help support his large family. He was musically talented, as were most of his family, and as a youth played the mandolin, guitar and banjo.

About 1896 he studied painting and took art lessons. He returned to it again as a hobby after his retirement. The Koch family marveled at the oil painting he did of the Del Carmen mountains in Mexico by looking at Peter Koch's postcard, long before he had ever been to Texas. His watercolor and oil paintings still hang in Etta's house.

Seeley was employed most of his early life as an interior designer and worked for many wallpaper companies in his younger years as a decorating consultant. While his family was young, he also worked for his brother who was District Manager for southern states for Delco (Dayton Electric Co.). Seeley sold these Delco light plants in several rural areas of the south. Later he worked for Kirsch Hardware, a manufacturer of drapery fixtures, and was a top salesman for many years until his retirement.

Seeley had his first machine (automobiles were called "machines" in the early days) in 1917 when they were living in Ashville N.C. The Model-T- Ford was a company car since he was selling Delco power plants to farm families who lived in the back woods. It was outfitted with a Delco electric generator plant in the back seat so his daughters never got to ride in it.

The first automobile Seeley owned was a 1921 Hupmobile. They lived in South Carolina at the time and Etta was in high school. Every Sunday they went riding out along the country roads. No pavement then, just plenty of flat tires.

Several years later Seeley bought a Reo. Etta remembers that the family would get up at 4 a.m. and drive out into the country near Batavia Ohio and cook breakfast on an open fire. Then Seeley would get into his boat and fish. Pearl and the girls took walks and visited with the farm family on whose property they were "day-camping." The family had a boy their age who took them for rides in the buggy. At times they included Emma Batchelor who enjoyed the outings enough to mention them in detail in her journal.

"When friends ask Seeley how he keeps his good health and sense of humor, his customary reply is, 'Well, there's an old saying: don't eat too much, don't sleep too much, don't drink too much or love too much. Everything in moderation. And that's the way life ought to be.' And that's the way it is--for Seeley."

In another summary of her father's life, Etta wrote: *"Late in life Seeley continued his search for knowledge, and enjoyed reading and expanding his vocabulary by playing his favorite game- Scrabble... And he always won."*

All of the family knew that as an adult his first love was fishing. He made numerous trips to the north woods of Minnesota, Michigan and Canada. There are several family pictures, even home movies, made of him fly fishing.

Seeley enjoyed the quiet country life for another eight years then died quietly in his sleep on June 20, 1976 at 97 years of age.

Etta wrote a short story of her father in 1973 from which the following is condensed:

“ . . . His eventual climb to success led him along many trails and through varied occupations: as clerk in a bookstore, assistant salesman in a wallpaper store; manager of a drapery department in several large city concerns; interior decorator; field representative for farm electrical plants; to top salesman for an international drapery hardware firm.

“Major surgery in the prime years of his life, forced Seeley to retire from active business. Unable to adjust from years on the road to an easy chair at home, he first took up paint brush and palette and proceeded to do a number of interesting oils (even decorating cans and wastebaskets around the house.) Then he had another idea. He put away the brushes, oiled up his old portable typewriter, and wrote a book. “The Know-How of Salesmanship” which he self-published in 1953. This accomplished, his restless creative urge directed him once more into salesmanship. Approaching his mid-80's, Seeley found it necessary to curtail personal contacts with his customers, and he initiated a mail-order business.

“At 88 years of age, Seeley and his late wife, Pearl Batchelor Lindeman, moved from Cincinnati, Ohio to Alpine Texas (in the spring of 1967) with their daughter Emma (Mrs. George E.) Dhonau, to join another daughter and her family there. His first move upon arrival in the West was to purchase a broad-brimmed Stetson. Not content with accepting this new environment passively as a prospective “retired” Texan, he proceeded to acquaint himself with Texas industries, particularly ranching. Here, he found a good market for his newest sales endeavor-magnetic signs for trucks and cars, and decals picturing everything from Brahma bulls to German shepherds.

“He likes to reminisce upon the rugged horse-and-buggy days when he endured the hardships of the traveling salesman of that day-unbeated hotel rooms in small towns during freezing winter months; unpalatable food in mediocre boarding houses along his route; later, traveling in the T-model Ford over rutted country roads, mired by rains, stalled by snows, and always ready with patching kit for repairing tires that blew with consistent regularity; meanwhile, accepting all these frustrations with philosophical resignation-and a few cuss words. Yet, Seeley claims he would do it all over again, and laments the fast pace of today's world, wondering how people have time to savor the pleasures of living, measured against the speed and turmoil of this age.

The following nine page “report” was written in response to Etta's request, about 1965, for information about his life for her “genealogical research”-in response to my (June Price) request for information for “my genealogical research.”

[Ed. Note-This story below refers to and describes illustrations made by Seeley that were not included in the document.]

“The following is an original copy of the unaltered, authenticated, unexaggerated, capricious, self-illustrated autobiography of

*ESCARO, PTOLEMYTHEODOSIUS, EZEKIELTHE xxxcivdccc”
(AKA: Seeley Caro Lindeman)*

‘WHEN I WAS FOUR, MY MOTHER’S HAND SEEMED BIGGER THAN A WASHTUB. I WAS KNOWN IN SOCIAL CIRCLES AS ‘LITTLE I WONT’ (stubborn as hellfire!’)

[Seeley's illustration of himself in baby dress saying “Won't Won't” as crocodile tears flow down into the Ohio River, at left a hand is identified as “Persuader”.]

“WHEN I WAS ABOUT 7 (circa) I thought I was the cat's meow, marching in the political parades (torchlights). I thought I'd sure be president some day.”

[Illustration of people carrying poles with lights dangling from them.]

“When I was about 14, I “sold lemonade 1 cent a glass” “Ice-cold and sweet” “made in the shade, by an old maid” “with an old rusty-spade” et cetera et cetera, until I got hoarse and then I'd drink some MORE lemonade, and then again “I.....,” adfinitum, I made enough to buy my pants and stockings, and got “free-lunch” at the corner saloon, where I “wormed” a piece of ice outta the bartender. On my way out the family entrance I'd sneak some “free-lunch”. Boy! Was I a dizzie! That was the beginning of my “sales efforts!”

[Illustration of 2 men at table one labeled “me” one labeled “negro customer” third man is approaching labeled “Norwegian friend.” who is saying “Coming Seeley” very small cart with horse (or pig) going down the street]

“When I was 15 (circa), I worked at Peebles Grocery on 4th near Vine (Old Pike Bldg). I got \$7.50 per week (7AM to 6PM) and all the prunes, coffee beans and citron I could eat! My job was to go to the old East End where the rich customers of ours then lived (Taft, Foraker, Gambels, etc.) on Fourth, Hammond, Pike, etc., get their orders then put them up at the store, where I ate more citron, coffee beans, prunes and got bloated!

[Illustration of tall buildings with man at door saying “knock knock” face at window saying “What's the hurry?”]

“The RS&G RR stood for “Run-Slow-in-General” This is me unloading watermelons in Dayton O. Worked for Krugs Grocery. This pic. Isn't so good as it was taken at 4:30 am at the yards.

[Illustration of building labeled R-S-I-G. Man in doorway labeled “me,” stack of melons seen inside building, wagon on street, driver saying “Hey! Hold it *IX7@”. Horse is saying “Boy, I'm pooped”]

“At 21 (circa) I was a “road” salesman for Louis Voight Wall Paper Co., Cincy. Territory, So. Ohio, No. Kentucky, and some W. Virginia. This is the “star” salesman ASCENDING.

[Boardwalk-not Atlantic City”, figure labeled “me” approaching. Foreground is railroad track and back end of a train with dog labeled “dog chasing caboose” saying "yep yip"]

“This was my RED-LETTER day: A true story, and if you don't believe me - I'll send an affidavit! Crossing the ice- (my name Seeley Eliza Lindeman, IS. (this means ice-shover). The Ohio River. Getting to the C&O RR across from Higginsport, Ohio. Two men oared me over. I pushed the[ice]flow. Cost me a fortune (\$5). Being late afternoon, it was dark. You just waited till you saw the train “commin” round the bend - lit a piece of paper, and they stopt right on the dot - even helped you with your trunk of wallpaper samples. I wanted to get to Cincy the day before Xmas (21 -again “circa” to see my best girl -Pearl the Queen of Calhoun Street). I was glad to get a hot meal. Just about fed-UP, on cold eggs on a cold plate in a cold room and COOL landladies?

[Illustration of river with ice flows, landing leads to railroad station labeled “3 x 6 feet” In foreground square chunks of ice labeled “ice flows all over the damn river”.]

“So-0-0-0-0, I decided to make a man of myself and spend it studying “wild-life”, such as sticking pins in puffed up toads, skinning crawdads, throwing stones at squirrels and chasing dogs- but one day it chased me and I gave up the good work. I then decided to confine my wild-life study to fishing, then do some more fishing and if it interfered with my business, I'd give up the biziness. This became my greatest ambition - to be the best fisherman in the world, and if I couldn't be that, I'd be the next best, or just an ordinary fisherman or maybe just sit on the bank and wonder what the best fisherman in the world would do to be an even better one. So that's what I became - an ole worm-dunker!

[Illustration of man sitting under tree with pole, line and float. In foreground fish spitting out bait saying “Phowi! You can't fool me I am too ignorant” another fish swimming by saying “sucker!”]

“AND THUS ENDETH THE LAST CHAPTER. INSTEAD OF FISIN! AND FISIN' AND FISIN' I JUST SIT AND SIT AND SIT AND WONDER WHY I HADN'T THOUGHT OF IT YEARS AGO AND BEEN “A” HOTSHOT COWBOY or a Philadelphia “Liar” or Lawyer or anything!

[Illustration of Man sitting in chair smoking a pipe titled “You Dreamer You!”

In the corner is tiny figure labeled MOM saying, **“Seeley, take the garbage out”]**

Not all of Seeley's writing efforts were this unusual. (Perhaps he was a little punchy from having recently completed his self-published volume entitled "The Know How of Salesmanship.") He wrote other short stories and articles, as well, but none of them have been preserved with the exception of a two-page letter written (with Emma Dhonau's help) to his great grandson, Andy Dhonau, who was in the third grade in 1976.

"Dear Andy,

"... I will try to tell you how things have changed in my lifetime.

"I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1879- so you know that was a long, long time ago. That makes me how old? Yes, 97 years old. To give you sort of an idea of how long ago that is, we had no buses, no automobiles, no radios or television, no telephones (that is our family didn't have a telephone), no airplanes, no refrigerators or TV dinners, and oh so many things were unheard of.

"... When I was young there was a canal that went through the northern part of the city. It came down from Lake Erie and the canal boats would bring coal and other supplies. The boats were pulled by horses or mules that walked along what was called a "towpath" along-side the water. In the winter it was very cold, The canal would freeze over and all the children and young people had lots of fun ice-skating on the canal and building bonfires at the edge of the shore. That canal...has been gone a long time and an Expressway was built on top of it.

"When I was about Danny's age we lived not too far away from the marketplace where the farmers would come in their horse and wagons. All the family would come to help and would have to get up in the middle of the night to get to the market by morning. As you know a horse pulling a wagonload cannot travel very fast.

"In town there were no automobiles, or taxicabs or buses. But we did have streetcars. They were similar to the "trolley-cars" in San Francisco. I'm sure you have seen that on TV. Only the streetcars were pulled by horses. The horses couldn't pull the cars up the streets that were too steep, so there they had what they called 'cable-cars', and there were big cables that pulled the cars up. Of course, if you were in a hurry, you could walk faster than the cars could go, and that is what lots of people did- they walked or rode bicycles. And in the winter time those steep streets were so much fun to coast on, especially with the large sleds that could hold six or eight people.

"Do you remember the river boats in St. Louis? Well, in Cincinnati there used to be lots of them too, years ago. They would go from Pittsburgh down the Ohio to the Mississippi and on down to New Orleans. Lots of people traveled on the boats and lots of merchandise was shipped on them. It was fun to sleep on one of those boats and pretend you were on an ocean steamer going to Europe. Only the rooms were very small and you were a little crowded. There is still a lot of shipping on the Ohio River but it is all oil and coal barges. It used to be that when the river was rough and near flood stage the barges would have to tie up somewhere along shore and wait until the water settled down- maybe for a week, but now with all the dams built along the river it is under better control.

"There were eight of us children so when the boys each reached fourteen, they left school to get jobs. I worked in a grocery store. There were no supermarkets, of course, only neighborhood stores. There were large stores downtown and the people with plenty of money would buy from these stores. Then the delivery man and I would take the horse and wagon around to the houses and deliver the groceries every day and at the same time pick up the grocery list for the next day. We delivered all day long, until it got dark. But I was always allowed to take an apple out of the barrel, or a big sour pickle. It was always exciting to unpack the big wooden boxes of dates and apricots that had come over on the ships from Europe.

"Yes, things have changed a lot since I was your age. And the places I remember as quiet small towns are now busy, noisy cities. I have never been on an airplane and don't expect to at my age. I still like to remember driving a pretty horse and buggy and going clop, clop, clop over a covered wood bridge on my way to my favorite "fishin' hole."

"I wonder how things will look to you, when you are 97 years old. I can't imagine how that will be!

"If you come to see me this summer, I'll try to remember some other things that happened when I was a boy-like falling down a flight of stairs into a basket of tomatoes and my mother thought I was covered with blood!

Love from,

Granpa- Great Lindy"