

## **Recollections of an Old Neighbor**

**By Monica Levis**

There is a shopping center near where I live which lies right on a county line. Every time I pass it, I think of an old neighbor of mine, John R. Sevil, who used to drive by the place every evening on his way home from work.

My whole family used to visit Mr. Sevil on Saturday nights. He would tell my cousins and I stories of his youth as he sat in his high-backed armchair next to the fake fire, wearing a neon floral shirt that matched the stripes on his black pants and clashed with his neon sneakers. He was a bit eccentric and always full of *joie de vivre*.

Mr Sevil had a very few scruples, but amazingly, he was also a lawyer. He often told me that one of his friends, also a lawyer, used to say, "John, you're too honest to be a lawyer. I don't know how you make a living." I don't know how he did either.

His being a lawyer may have partly accounted for his lack of conscience, as he would know the law, and (more importantly) its loopholes.

One of his favorite stories to tell us was this, which I think gives you a very good idea of his character:

He had finished law school only a few years before, and one night he had been working late, so he had speeded just a little (he insisted that he was only a paltry twenty miles an hour over the speed limit) to get home quickly. There happened to be a county policeman near the shopping center who saw him, and began to chase him in his car.

By this time Sevil was only about 500 yards from the county line. In those days, if you could get over the county line, police from another county could not pull you over.

Once there were about 400 yards between him and the county line there were at least five police cars chasing him. By 300 yards Mr. Sevil had 37 police cars after him, and more were on their way.

Mr Sevil always swore that as soon as he was 200 yards from the county line, an elephant herd was just beginning to cross the road (the zoo was nearby), and he realized that as soon as the first one blocked the road, there would be no opening for him to get through for at least five minutes, by which time the police would have long caught up with him. He had only inches to spare as he pulled in front of the first elephant and the curb, and since the ninety-four police cars following him

had none of his skill (or luck) with his car, he was able to fly over the county line to safety.

He took another route home after that.