

Maggie and Anna Belle: How the West was *really* won... Episode Two

Of all people on planet Earth, I am most blessed (for the proper effect, you need to read that "bless-ed").

God has favored me above all others by allowing me to live across the street from Maggie and Anna Belle, two of the finest little old ladies who ever walked the earth. Now, Maggie is in her late-60's-early 70's. And Anna Belle is her momma. You do the math. They are both widows. Their men must have been *real* men.

I first met these two sweeties when they were trying to wrestle mounted shop tools, stands and all, from the bed of Maggie's pickup onto a hand-truck. Now, Maggie walks with a cane, leaning on it heavily, and Anna Belle is not in quite as good of shape as Maggie. So I walked over to meet them, and offered my manly assistance. They insisted with a typical old-west spirit of independence that they could handle the job themselves. After all, they got 'em into the truck by themselves.

Knowing these two old birds the way I do now (they never ask for help, don't whine, and no task is impossible), they probably got those things in the bed of that pickup the same way the Romans finally conquered Masada. After some bit of cajoling and convincing from me, they finally agreed to let me help them, and to get those tools down out of the pickup and wheel them around back to their shed. Whilst I was engaged in this task, I was getting instructed on the proper way of strapping down heavy machines on the bed of a pickup. I hadn't asked for instructions in that manly art, but it did not seem to matter. *These women are incredible*, I thought, *and these shop tools weigh a ton*.

Darn things nearly crushed me, but, of course, a young man such as myself does not admit such a thing around his elders. Especially if they are *really* elder. Especially if they are *really elder women*. No offense to anyone by that last, of course. But I am a self-respectin' man, and probably in some books a chauvinist. However, I am now convinced that it was really women like Maggie and Anna Belle that won the West. In fact, it may have been Anna Belle by her own self. But I digress.

Anyway, after getting the task done we talked pick-up trucks a while. They each have their own, and they are both fairly new, and they are both pretty big trucks. I decided not to talk about my little S10, sitting primly in my driveway across the street. Somehow, it was at that moment an insult to my manhood. So, we talked about their trucks. Which they were quite eager to do.

Anyway, that was Episode One. So now we come to Episode Two . . .

A most wonderful blizzard concluded this afternoon. Lots of wind, lots of snow, big drifts. I finally got outside, when the wind died down, to crank up my snowblower, and start working on

my driveway. The snow for a major portion of my driveway was probably drifted to a good foot over the top of my machine. But no problem. Patience and time, and that little baby did the job. I was really proud of my little snowblower. It cuts about a 15 inch swath, or so. If the snow is light and powdery, might throw it, oh, eight or ten feet. Does a great job. Much better than shoveling. It's one mean little snow machine.

I looked across the street, and saw that Maggie and Anna Belle's driveway had not been touched. One of their (big) pickups was sitting in the driveway, snow mounded all over it. Now, when it snows, these two tough little old ladies would usually get their driveway clear using snow shovels well before I am home from the office. But back in December I had seen the same situation (driveway not touched) after a storm and had gone over and cleared their driveway. Later that day I had learned that Maggie was sick in bed with the flu.

This afternoon there was not so much as a footprint in the snow in their driveway and it was already after five PM. I figured maybe somebody was ill again. So, I wheeled my handy dandy snow-blower over and got right to work.

After neatly cutting two swaths, and turning back toward their house for my third, I saw that the garage door had gone up and both women were busy with shovels. Feeling all gentlemanly and such, I turned off my snowblower, walked over to them and instructed them to go on back inside, I'd take care of it.

Maggie asks, "You know anything about snowblowers? I got me one, but it just wants to back up. It's self-propelled." If I had been smart, I would have simply said, 'No,' and gotten back to work. Instead, I indicated that I knew just enough to know that a self-propelled snow-blower stuck in reverse is not going to be good for much other than making noise. So we got to talking, and they called me into the garage to look at their snow-blower.

Oh, my. It was a monster. It must have a four-foot swath. The wheels came up higher than my snow-blower's entire chassis. I think the engine must have come out of a small automobile. I looked back at my tiny toy snow-blower, sitting primly in their driveway, and shook my head. Not again.

"No, ma'am," I said. "I don't know how to fix snow-blowers."

"Well, I'll just work on it myself," Maggie growled, but not in an unfriendly way. There is nothing about these two ladies that is unfriendly. So I went back to my little toy, meekly pulled the cord, and after it putt-putted into life, resumed working.

I noticed, each time I made a pass back toward the house, that she was working over her monster snow-blower in the garage with all sorts of tools. I just shook my head. *That's one amazing lady.*

After finishing up their driveway, I headed a few houses down to help another neighbor. I was not twenty steps away from Maggie's driveway when the most magnificent roar of an engine emanated from their garage. It would have done a D9 Caterpillar proud. I turned around. Maggie was smiling sweetly at me from the garage. She shifted that big machine into forward and engaged the clutch. It lurched out of the garage (moving forward, not backward, I noted). Maggie had a maniacal grin on her face as she headed for a huge snowdrift. That big machine chewed through that drift like it was a D9 Cat, throwing snow, thirty, maybe forty feet into the air. It even had a crank so that you could crank around the output chute and direct the snow where you wanted it.

For the next thirty minutes, Maggie walked up and down the street, blowing all the snow in the street up into the yards. All this with one king-sized grin on her face. Her momma, Anna Belle, finally came out in the street and insisted that she come home.

I know how the West was won. And I know who did it, too.