

## Hankadookadee and the Worm Bus

-Thomas W. King rev. 28 February 2008

Ahhh, the imagination of a four year old!

When our younger son, Seth, was a little guy, we often went fishing on Upper St. Croix Lake and River, near our family's pioneer homestead at Solon Springs, WI, in rural Douglas County. Part of the big adventure of fishing with hook and line with a kid that age is first digging the worms.

We generally headed out, with empty cottage cheese carton in hand, to our moist red-clay and black-dirt garden. We had mulched in lots of plant material, especially on one end of the garden, and started by carefully turning over the rich soil with Seth's small spade.

Sure enough, there were always lots of worms. Within five or ten minutes of worm picking, we typically had enough worms to last us all morning -- or at least until an active four year old lost interest, or he and dad got too hungry to fish any more.

One morning, when Seth and I went out to dig worms, we started poking around, and found an especially fat, juicy worm. I figured would be great for a big blue gill or a crappie.

"No, that's Hankadookadee!" Seth quickly stated.

"Who's Hankadookadee?" I asked.

"He's my sssriend." Seth affirmed, in four-year old speech.

"Well, I bet he'll catch us a big one." I said.

"No, he's my sssriend!" Seth restated.

"All right", I returned, "Let's put him over here on the other side of the garden so he'll be real happy in the dirt, and let's look for some more."

OK", he said.

We dug some more and soon found other large worms. It looked like we'd have fish for lunch that day for sure. I could almost smell them frying in cornmeal and vegetable oil.

"NO!" Seth shouted, "Those are Hankadookadee's sssriends and relatives!"

"You mean we can't use these worms either?" the frustrated father said.

"No, these are all Hankadookadee's sssriends." Seth insisted.

“Let’s just dig over on that other side of the garden then,” I said. “Do you think he knows any of these worms over here?”

Seth thought that would be OK. We soon filled our worm carton and went fishing.

Later that morning, we ran out of worms. As resourceful guys, Seth and I went over to a moist patch of forest dirt and leaves near our tool shed. We poked around with sticks for more worms, and found many just under the damp leaves. I started to put them in our container.

“No!” said Seth. “Those are Hankadookadee’s sssriends!”

“I thought his friends were back home in the garden”, I said. “How did they get here?”

“They took the Worm Bus!” he replied instantly, with an air of “Isn’t that totally obvious to everyone?”

For the next year or so, whenever we dug worms, we had to carefully distinguish which one might be Hankadookadee, and which ones were his friends and relatives. Some were, some weren’t. This was important stuff. We always had to be certain before any worm got taken in our worm bucket.

Over the years, the concept expanded. We all began to use “The Worm Bus” as the convenient and obvious family explanation for why and how things, people, animals, events, and anything else in existence could show up instantly and unexpectedly at any place on the planet at any time. No wonder that Seth is a research physicist now.

The Worm Bus really was and still is a handy explanation for how things can get around without a whole lot of time and effort. Maybe it’s for real!

Both our grown, professional sons now live many miles and long hours away. We visit them for the Holidays and for brief vacations, as possible. The loyal, loving, and rapidly aging father and mother return battered from our fun but grueling road trips to see them – always, it seems to us, through too much ugly urban congestion and road construction.

But we have hit on the solution! No need to ever again drive or fly to visit our cherished boys. From now on, we’ll take the Worm Bus!

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