"Tidbits of Starke County" No. 31 ---- **Stories**

Alexander L. Jonas was a prominent gentleman in Knox many years ago - owner of the Reiss Clothing Store, bank president and one of the people who helped start WKVI Radio. Since he had come to Knox in the 1920's, he knew a lot of people in town. He wrote a little book, "Knox Characters I Have Known". One of the programs on WKVI during 1969 and 1970 was Almo Smith's "Musical Stepping Stones" on Thursday evenings. Quite often on this show, Al would read some of these little "vignettes" about his friends in Knox. One of these stories is about Clarence "Dutch" Slidinger.

The story ---- according to Al Jonas:

"Possible our most active practical joker was our barber, Clarence "Dutch" Slidinger who always was playing a trick on someone. In the 1920's he operated a shop in the basement of the Fitz Hotel [now Dollar General] and since shaves cost only ten cents in those days, the men would get their morning shave at the barber's instead of shaving themselves. Dutch's brother in South Bend sent him a beautiful parrot which he caged in his shop and which he was rightfully very proud. I had just moved to Knox from Chicago and I was indeed a greenhorn when one morning Charlie Baker who worked for us showed me a small egg and asked if I knew what it was. He explained that it was a pullet's egg and I asked him if he could get any more. He said that his sister, Mrs. Meineke, who with her husband owned the farm north of town that Thelma Bennett farms part of today, had many chickens and it was no problem to get these pullet eggs.

"I suggested that each morning when we went to get shaved that one of us would place one of these eggs in the parrot's cage giving Dutch the impression that his bird was laying eggs. That morning I took the egg and when I entered the shop, Dutch was busy shaving a customer and our aristocratic looking attorney, Charles Hamilton Peters was reading the morning paper underneath the parrot's cage. Unnoticed, I slipped the egg into the cage and sat down to await developments. In a minute or two the parrot picked up the egg and dropped it to the floor right next to Charles Peters who shouted, "Good Lord, Dutch, your parrot laid an egg". Of course the egg broke, but Dutch was truly excited and each morning unknown to anyone except Baker and me, we placed an egg in the parrot's cage and the bird continued to drop them out.

"Dutch and his egg laying parrot became the talk of the town and needless to say Dutch enjoyed being in the limelight. Mrs. Seagraves came to Dutch and told him that she had a male parrot and would like to bring him to the shop to mate with Dutch's female bird and then they would raise parrots. Dutch was enthused, so Mrs. Seagraves brought her bird to the shop and the parrots were placed together in the same cage. Well --- they took one look at each other and before they could be separated they tore almost every feather off of each other until they were almost as bare as a billiard ball. Dutch couldn't understand, so he called his brother in South Bend to learn what he did wrong. The brother told him not to be such a fool since he, too, had a male parrot. Of course it was too good to be a secret any longer, so Baker and I told how we had planted the eggs. Dutch was indeed crushed and for several weeks we didn't dare to have Dutch give us our morning shave for fear of an accidental throat cutting."

More of the stories from Al's book can be seen on http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/scpl_files/Page470.htm then on the right scroll down to "Knox Characters I Have Known".