

HAWARDEN...HOW IT ALL BEGAN
QUARRELING CITY EMPLOYEES OUT CLOWN
CIRCUS BUFFOONS

Chapter 30

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I must confess that the article this week is copied almost word for word from the article written in the July 4, 1946 edition of the Hawarden Independent. Some things can just not be improved and need to be reported as written. It is important to know, however that this is a true story, but the names have been omitted to protect the innocent as well as the guilty. And so it is written:

It might have been just a clownish spirit inspired by those circus billboards around town that prompted a City Street Employee painting parking stripes to swipe the City Police Chief across the side of his head with a large brush heavily laden with orange colored pavement paint. The affair was comical enough to make any of the Big Tops funny men hide their faces in shame.

None of the carefully rehearsed slap-stick stuff put on by the Bell Bros. Circus Clowns was as mirth provoking as when an employee of the Hawarden Street Department massaged the right side of the Police Chief's face with that dripping paint brush.

People who were fortunate enough to have been witnesses of the fracas on Central Avenue between the two City employees say that they felt cheated later when they paid out real money to see the professional buffoons do their stuff on Circus day.

After the Police Chief deputized the aid of "Big John" (a by-stander) to subdue the paint brush wielder and the trio started the swaying, block-long jaunt down the main drag to put this "stripe painter" in the clink, the kids really thought the circus had already come to town, and no one could blame them. There was the big burly clown and the Cop Clown, bedaubed with orange paint, his hat awry and his shirt torn half off, taking the skinny clown with his paint brush to the calaboose.

It should have happened only under a circus tent, but it did happen here on the City's main avenue. It gave Hawarden the biggest and heartiest community belly laugh that it has had in many a year.

To review the whole silly affair, it seems that a quarrel between the Chief and the line painter had been brewing for some time, for a number of reasons. It flared up anew that fateful morning, when the line painter and his crew, including his two sons, started to repaint the automobile parking stripes in the business district. It was necessary to move a number of cars and the street department appealed to the police department for help. Co operation was not readily forthcoming, and there were arguments.

Shortly after noon, the line painters started to paint the middle of the street parking places on Central Avenue, north of Ninth Street. The painter in charge parked the city truck carrying his painting equipment partly in the intersection. The Police Chief seized the opportunity to wield the authority of the Police Department against the Street Department and ordered them to move the City truck. The Paint Brush wielder replied that he needed the truck there to have available the equipment needed for the job.



The Police Chief seized the Painter by the arm and told him he was under arrest. Then things happened: the painter had just dipped his four inch brush in the paint supply can, he gave the cop “the works” and a tussle started. With his shirt and undershirt torn down the front, the Chief was “getting the worst of it”, so he called on “Big John” for help. John and the Chief marched the Paint brush villain down the street to the city jail and placed him in a cell, still waving his paint brush. He stayed in jail while the Police Chief discussed the situation with Mayor Clayton Thompson. The villain was released about an hour later, and went back painting the parking stripes with the same brush.

Both the Chief and the Painter were verbally spanked by the City Fathers. At an executive session of the council, held behind closed doors, each of the culprits was allowed to give his version of the scrape. Following a lengthy discussion the Council decided that both men could retain their jobs, providing they don’t “pop off” in public anymore. Also it was decided to define more clearly the duties of the various departments in an effort to avoid further clashes between City employees.

The July 11, 1946 issue of the Hawarden Independent had headlines stating: CITY EMPLOYEE FINED \$50.00 FOR PAINT EPISODE. The article reported that “Some of Hawarden’s soiled city laundry was washed out in the Sioux County District Court at Orange City when a city employee was fined \$50.00 and costs and given a suspended 90 day jail sentence on the charge of resisting an officer, the complainant being Hawarden’s Chief of Police.”

Evidently the executive session of the council and their decision to “smooth over” the incident did not set well with the Chief of Police. The Chief went to Orange City and filed charges against the Street Employee. The sheriff came to Hawarden and served the warrant to the painter. After appearing in Sioux County District Court the Painter entered a plea of guilty

It is interesting to report that in the edition of the paper reporting the painting episode and the council’s decision, there was a separate article stating the following: “The City Council is planning to increase the pay of Hawarden’s Police Force, \$10.00 per month all the way around. The Chief now receives \$120.00 and the two Marshalls draw \$110.00 a month. Nothing was mentioned about pay increases for the Street Department employees.