



Here I am—engrossed in a comic book rather than running up and down the aisle of the train car. Father is the gentleman seated next to Mother, attention on a rotogravure magazine, while my brother, about twelve years of age, assumes

his customary place as family memory-gatherer behind the lens of one of his cameras. I'm not certain of the date; it is toward the end of World War 2; we are traveling on the coastal route between California and Washington.

The Classic Carl Barks Reader

by Joseph Cowles

My mother spent a bit of time every afternoon with her young son (yours truly) seated on her lap, pointing out each word as she read aloud to me from *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* and other “funny books” of the times. While I am not certain how many months it took for my infant mind to somehow absorb the “secret code” that transcribes spoken language into characters of the alphabet on a printed page—and vice versa—I do know that without any specific effort on

Mother's part to coax or teach me to read, I began doing so sometime shy of my fourth birthday.

It's quite possible that she simply wanted to get off her feet and relax a while before my brother arrived home from school and our father returned from work. Reading to me about ducks that behaved like human beings happened to be a way she could fascinate me so that I would sit still and afford her a few minutes of peace. Mother was prob-

ably delighted when one day I took the book from her hands and said, “Now I read to you,” and proceeded to do so, *viva voce*.

Those first reading efforts were no doubt halting, yet easily enough accomplished to make me wonder what is going on these days that makes so many young folks struggle in agony when it comes to this relatively simple skill. Was it because Mother was devoting a bit of time to me each day, or was it that the engrossing



Undoubtedly this photo was staged by my brother David, who probably enrolled our mother into plastering my hair down with Spry or Vaseline. The little companion to whom I am reading is "Pete The Pup." Sadly, Pete disappeared somewhere along one

of life's meandering byways. In recent years I have seen numbers of his brethren offered for sale on eBay, but my nostalgia hasn't managed to equal the asking price. Back in 1945, my friend Pete cost one U.S. dollar.

stories of D. Duck & Co. as reported by Carl Barks begged to be read again and again until they became embossed on my tender gray matter?

And what might be the correlation between the fact that in those days

wholesome comic books were abundant and today they're as scarce as duck's teeth? Well, that's a soapbox to be climbed upon at a later date, whereupon I shall gripe at length about the dearth of classic Disney comics nowadays. What I

want to share with you here is that this website is the ultimate result of that passion for reading Carl Barks tales about Disney's denizens of Duckburg—a passion that has continued to be a driving force in my life all these years.