

The ROAD TO ABILENE | Groupthink

A story by Jerry Harvey as told by the Reverend John H. Nichols

They were sitting around on the porch in Coleman, Texas. The temperature was 104 degrees, but the porch was shaded, and everyone was comfortable. Then, Jerry Harvey's father-in-law said, "Let's get in the car and go to Abilene and have dinner at the cafeteria." In the back of Jerry's mind a little voice said, "This is nuts. I don't want to travel 53 miles in the heat of summer in a 1958 Buick to have dinner in a lousy cafeteria."

But Jerry's wife said, "It sounds like a great idea." And Jerry heard himself saying, "Sounds good to me. I hope your mother wants to go." And Jerry's mother said, "Of course I want to go." Four hours and 106 miles later, they returned. The heat had been brutal. Perspiration and dust stuck to their clothing and bodies. The food, as Jerry guessed, had been awful.

Later that evening Jerry said, quite dishonestly, "It was a great trip wasn't it." Nobody spoke. Finally, his mother in law said, "To tell the truth, I really didn't enjoy it much. I would rather have stayed home, and I wouldn't have gone at all if you hadn't pressured me into it." To which Jerry responded, "I didn't pressure you. I was happy here. I only went to make the rest of you happy." His wife said, "You and Dad and Mamma were the ones who wanted to go. I just wanted to make you happy." And his father in law said, "I never wanted to go to Abilene. I just thought you might be bored sitting at home with the rest of us."

So, they all made a 106 mile round trip in the God forsaken desert under furnace- like conditions to eat unpalatable food in a dingy cafeteria, a trip nobody had been looking forward to and nobody wanted to take. **Ω**