

GROVER

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Grover was a small nine-year-old very curious young boy. He had exceptionally large feet and if he grew to fit the size of his feet he would be a big man indeed. Grover's dad bought him a pair of combat boots that Grover loved. He would have slept in them in his bed if his mother had let him. Grover lived with his mother, father and older sister Louise on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC just two blocks from the nation's capitol. Grover's dad worked for a Senator in the Hart Senate office building. Grover's mother was a Research Associate at the Library of Congress. The family had a dog, Mr. Henry and a large orange cat named Jack. Jack and Mr. Henry were the odd couple. Jack actually liked to sleep curled up against Mr. Henry and Henry seemed to tolerate this invasion of his personal space.

Every morning and every afternoon Mr. Henry had to be walked. Grover loved these walks and he would almost always join his dad or mom when they walked Mr. Henry. Often they would stop to chat with a neighbor and Grover learned many things during these chats.

The US Attorney General lived only a few blocks from Grover and one day Mr. Henry and the Attorney General's dog got into a terrible fight. It was all dad and the secret service guy could do to pull the dogs apart. Henry became a hero to half the people on Capitol Hill and a terrorist to the other half. Whenever we walked him people would ask is that the democratic dog that went after the Republican Attorney General's dog.

Grover was not a gossip but he was curious. There was a telephone pole in back of their house and he was very friendly with the telephone linemen who from time to time worked on the pole. He had traced all of the lines and could tell you which line

went to which neighbor. He also was friendly with the air conditioning repair people when they came to repair the air conditioners. Best of all he knew the plumbers. He would tell his dad that the Smith's had their drain snaked out today. Grover was fascinated that the snake could seem to go into the drain forever. Albert, the plumber and Grover got to be good friends. From time to time people had carpenters work on their houses, fences or decks. Often Grover could watch them from his family's roof top deck. Grover knew everything that happened in the neighborhood.

Old Mrs. Higgins lived down the street from Grover. Some of the other kids thought she must be over 100 years old. She was just 82 white haired and walked with a cane. She ordered her groceries by phone and a truck delivered them to her door once or twice a week. Grover was fascinated that this happened. In talking with her he found out that she could just telephone the grocery store or go online and order whatever she wanted. When she went online she could actually tour the grocery area and pick out the fresh vegetables and fruits she ordered. Grover liked to go to the Eastern Market with his mother. Eastern Market is over 100 years old and farmers bring in fresh products on Saturdays. She would tell him about the food they bought. She helped him learn how to tell about the fresh vegetables they bought. His mother also liked to read the dates and labels on the food they bought. He thought that ordering groceries over the telephone or computer would be difficult, because you could not see the fresh vegetables or read labels on the food. One day he asked Mrs. Higgins about how she knew her vegetable were fresh. She said I talk to the same clerk every time and they have begun to know what I like. If they don't send me things I think are fresh I just send it back and they soon begin to know what I like. Grover asked her why she didn't go to the grocery store like his mom. She said. I don't have a car and I don't drive anymore my eyesight makes me dangerous on the road.

Mrs. Higgins and Grover got to be good friends. Some times she even baked Grover cookies. Mrs. Higgins was a retired science and mathematics teacher. She had a room in her house that was her office. She had a number of books and her computer in the room. On the walls she had some NASA posters of pictures taken by the Hubble telescope. She had a number of autographed pictures of astronauts like John Glenn, Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom, Grodon Cooper; Walter Schirra, Deke Slayton, Scott Carpenter, Buz Aldren and Neal Armstrong. As Grover got to know her better she also shared some of the letters she had received from Astronauts. When she was a teacher she had asked some of the Astronauts to talk to her classes and they had done so. Grover was quite impressed and liked to talk with her more and more.

Grover loved to watch Star Wars and dreamed of going into space as an astronaut. He told Mrs. Higgins that he wanted to be an astronaut and he wanted to go to Mars. She told him he needed to learn about Mars. She asked him how much he thought he would weigh on Mars. In fact, she said she would give him a homework assignment to find out his weight on Mars. Grover weighed exactly 100 pounds on Earth. He discovered that he would weigh only a little more than 38 pounds on

Mars. She next asked him if he could breath in the Mars atmosphere and if not what would he have to do to be on Mars.

Grover saw a picture in Mrs. Higgins' office of a young Marine in his dress blues. He asked her who he was. She replied that is Michael my son. He was on his last patrol in Vietnam just before he was scheduled to come home when a sniper killed him. His name is on the black marble wall on the mall. He was my only child. His father a Naval officer saw him the week before he died. We were never the same after that. I think his father pined away in grief over our loss. Even though he had been in the Navy since World War II he was never the same after we lost Michael. He just sort of gave up and eventually died. Michael was our pride and joy. I was very, very sad but life goes on and I had to teach my children. Grover didn't really know what to say, but he told her he was sorry.

Mrs. Higgins said we have a lot to do and there is much we can find that is joy in life. She said Grover you live at a wonderful time Mars and Earth will come as close together as they have ever been. When you look at Mars in the night sky it will be as big as our full moon. What a wonderful time to be alive. The two planets will not be this close again until 2287. On August 27th when Mars comes to within 34,649,589 miles of Earth it will be the closest ever that the two planets have come together. Grover was very excited and he asked Mrs. Higgins if she thought people would ever live on Mars. She replied that there were many people who are working on how mankind could survive on Mars. She believed that by 2050 people would have traveled to Mars and that maybe there would be a Mars City. Grover said he wanted to go there and be a pioneer. Mission Control Earth to Mars: Is everything A okay Grover. We are doing just fine January 1 2055 over and out. **WELL GROVER GUESS WHAT? THE MARS STORY IS A HOAX! EVERY AUGUST WHEN THE TWO PLANETS ARE CLOSE TOGETHER THIS HOAX SEEMS TO APPEAR. SORRY ABOUT THAT. THERE ARE MISTAKES IN THE WRITE UP. TRY TO FIND THEM.**

Mrs. Higgins said to Grover you must always check your facts. I remember a time when there was a big issue about cold fusion. Everyone was convinced that scientists had actually created cold fusion. It took a long time to test out the claims and to find out that they had not actually done what they claimed. Grover let this be a lesson to you to always check out the source and the reliability of things that are supposed to be facts.

Gosh! What can I believe? You need to test out the ideas and check the facts before you make up your mind. You need to know the primary source of the information and why they are presenting the story or information. I thought Mrs. Higgins said she got the information from a NASA friend. Most of what she tells me is right. Mrs. Higgins said, "I should have checked my facts but I got the email from a long time friend. You just have to be careful today because there is so much information and you cannot always know it is factual. We both need to be careful about what we hear and say." Grover said, " I guess a



square plus b square equals c square will always remain true and not be a hoax.” Mrs. Higgins said, “ We just have to think and be careful.

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Grover Joined the Mars City Balloon Team Corps. He was particularly interested in agriculture on Mars. How would they create a green house on Mars and grow green vegetables? He studied the work of Rob Ferl and his team. How will plants grow in low gravity? What will we have to do to the soil to make it useable? Will plants have to be genetically altered to survive in space? What plants will be the best to start with on Mars? Is there a psychological advantage to growing vegetables for the astronauts? Some of the longest inhabitants of the International Space Station said that the thing they most wanted to do when they got home was grab a green growing plant.