

City streets were sweltering in the blazing sun. The day was already uncomfortable, and afternoon temperatures would surely reach over a hundred degrees. High humidity would make it feel worse. Neighborhood children sat quietly in the shadow of a tall building. Any amount of shade was a welcome relief from the heat.

Much to the surprise of the children, fire trucks suddenly appeared! Nothing was on fire. No one was in danger. Why were firemen here, they wondered? The local station chief had sent his men to block the streets and turn on the water hydrants. He knew the children needed a break from the heat. The children cheered! Just hearing the splashes of cool water as they hit the concrete roadway made them feel cooler.

Parents came outside and sat on porch steps to watch the children play. There was much shouting and laughter. The children, drenched from head to toe, invented games. Some tried to see how much water they could catch in their hands. Others stuck their tongues out to taste the clear liquid. Mothers and fathers also took advantage of the opportunity to get wet. They wanted relief from the miserable weather, too.

That night, as the sun dipped behind the tall, city buildings, everyone agreed it had been a wonderful day.

A young, Pony Express rider was traveling across the prairie. It seemed to stretch endlessly ahead. Yet the galloping rider, Johnny Fry, was relaxed and knew he would soon be at the way station. He would be sharing a hot meal with friends. He was proud to have been the first rider to take the mail westward. The final destination of the mail in his saddlebags was the West Coast.

The exhausted rider had traveled nearly a hundred miles. Every ten or fifteen miles, he was supplied with a fresh horse. Each time Johnny stopped, he dunked his head in the way station watering tank. Then, he filled his hat with cool water and dumped it over his shoulders. He was grateful for a few minutes of rest. The first part of the journey across the Great Plains was dangerous. He felt sorry for the next rider who would be crossing the Rocky Mountains. That part of the trip was even more hazardous.

Johnny Fry loved his job. Answering the want ad in his local newspaper was the best thing he had done. The company wanted a young, expert rider, and he was certainly qualified. Yet the part about being willing to risk his life every day was a little scary. "Oh, well," he thought. "It's an important job." He guided his mustang into the corral. He took the saddlebags and tossed them to the waiting rider.