

I'd to tell you about an American artist and author, Hugh Troy, who lived from 1906 to 1964, though, perhaps surprisingly, I'm not going to talk much about his art or his writing - this is, after all, a short paper.

Have any of you heard of him?

I ran across his history when looking into the wider history of what we at MIT term "hacking". This has nothing to do with 'computer hacking' or anything like that; rather, it involves sophisticated pranks of various sorts. Hugh was a master of these, and I will tell you about a few of them.

Hugh Charles Troy, Jr. was born April 28, 1906, in Ithaca, NY, son of a professor at Cornell; he himself attended Cornell, entering in 1922. I will begin my story with his undergraduate days. I should say in advance that he was generally credited with a quite kind and generous nature, and was unusually tall - 6' 6" or so. (Jan?)

So, it's September of 1925 - a new Freshman registers at Cornell University, and walks towards White Hall, when he encounters an obvious amputee, legs missing from about mid-hip down, wrapped in a worn gray topcoat, wearing dark glasses and carrying a cup. "Any spare change, mister?" he asks. The Freshman rummages in his pockets and finds a dime, which he drops in the cup. "Thank you, thank you kindly." The Freshman walks into the foyer of White Hall, and the janitor smiles and says "I see you lost some money."

"What? What do you mean."

"That fellow out there."

"Oh, I felt sorry for him. What a raw deal."

"Not exactly" the janitor says. That's Hugh Troy; he's a Junior. You're the fifth freshman he's hoodwinked."

"But his legs?! I don't understand..."

"He's standing in a manhole."

This is the side of Hugh Troy I'd like to describe this evening.

He began as an Architecture student. The architecture drafting room in White Hall was on the third floor; Prof. Martin lectured on the second floor directly underneath. In that room's ceiling a crack had formed - Prof. Martin would often comment on it, and suggested that, in an old building such as this one, it would be wisest not to stand or sit under it.

The students above would be often be moving around a bit, and occasionally bits of plaster would fall from the ceiling; particularly if some horseplay were afoot upstairs. On two occasions Prof. Martin paused his lecture and ran upstairs, warning those in the drafting room: "Boys, Boys, how many times do I have to tell you? This is an old building. The ceiling below can only take so much. I'll tell you this - if anything happens because of your horseplay, I guarantee you'll pay for it. You can bet on that."

So Hugh had an idea. He did a largish painting, of a damaged ceiling; around the deep black "hole" in the middle he painted lathe fragments, and then glued pieces of plaster and lathe around the edges so

that they would hang down. He and some friends installed this one night right over Prof. Martin's lectern, and sprinkled pieces of broken lathe and plaster on the podium and around the area.

The next morning Prof. Martin entered, saw the mess on the floor, looked at the ceiling, and ran upstairs. "At last you've done it!" he yelled. A big piece of ceiling has fallen, and I'm lucky I wasn't under it. " He took down the names of those present, and promised they'd be billed for the damage. "I'm going to call Charley Curtis, our building and grounds superintendant - he'll have it fixed and tell you your share of the cost." Then he strode into his office and slammed the door.

Hugh posted classmates outside his office with drawings and prepared questions, in case Prof. Martin decided to exit his office, while they removed the painting and plaster bits.

In about an hour Charley Curtis arrived, went in to see Prof. Martin, and asked what the trouble was. "Trouble? I'll show you trouble, just come with me. Take a look in there!" Curtis walked in, looked around, and said "What's wrong?". Prof. Martin stared at the ceiling, mouth open, and couldn't speak.

In the office of Louis Agassiz Fuertes, a painter and naturalist, were many souvenirs of various trips, including the foot of a rhinoceros that had been made into a sort of wastebasket.

One night after several inches of snow had fallen, Hugh and a friend "borrowed" it. They filled it with various objects to weight it down, and tied it to the middle of a rope about 50 feet long. Hugh and his friend each held an end, and as they walked they raised and lowered the foot and moved it from side to side to leave huge footprints in the snow. When they reached Beebe Lake, Cornell's water reservoir, they went out about 20 feet and then made a large hole in the ice.

The next day people were asking about the tracks, the press was called, and the professor of zoology was called to identify them. "Hmmm... Let me see." He consulted his guidebook. "Some foreign animal." "Foreign animal?" the newspaperman asked. "What kind of foreign animal?"

"Well, it doesn't seem possible, but it must be a rhinoceros." "*Rhinoceros? Are you sure?*" "Yep. No other animal makes a footprint like that. The tracks lead over there, over the ice to that hole." "Must have fallen in." says the reporter. "Looks that way - so heavy it crashed through the ice."

The next day a newspaper headline read "Rhinoceros Drowns in Beebe Lake"

Many of the people served by water from Beebe Lake stopped drinking the tap water. "Tastes too much like rhinoceros" was the complaint.

At Cornell two statues face each other from opposite sides of the Arts Quad: Ezra Cornell and "Andy" White, the first president. A sidewalk connects them. Hugh had an idea. One midnight he wore some old galoshes, and a friend brought some white paint and a pan. Hugh would deep his feet in the paint, take a few steps, and repeat the process. They did this from each statue towards the center, where the

prints indicated they'd met in the middle. The footprints have been repainted frequently and may still be seen.

A friend of Hugh's At Cornell later said "I had a blind date with a girl from out Cortland way. Having just returned to America from a Swiss finishing school, she was presumed to be very sophisticated. The next day a man phoned me and asked what my intentions were toward his innocent little daughter. He grilled me severely and left me terribly confused. It was some time before I found out it was Hugh who had called me."

One woman he knew at Cornell said "I appeared in a play in Cornell's Willard Straight theater and was surprised to receive a wire: "PLEASED WITH PERFORMANCE. GRACE AND I SEND GREETINGS. CALVIN COOLIDGE." Which shows that these sorts of pranks need not be elaborate affairs.

I think in part these stories show a different and often delightful way of looking at the world. He was never nasty; indeed many of his 'victims' appreciated his efforts. I suppose he came close to the line on occasion, though - a Cornell friend remarked, "He nearly turned friends away from my wedding. He was one of my ushers and, as each guest came through the door, Hugh asked him, "Would you like the four or five dollar seat?"

A group including Hugh Troy produced a bogus newspaper for the Spring Day Carnival in 1926, with a number of parodies. One headline that seems to have been especially problematic was "President Breaks Wind For New Aeronautical College." In the ensuing fuss Hugh was told to take a semester off. He had at that point moved from architecture to fine art, and moved to New York with friends - he thought some professional experience might be valuable in a number of ways. He intended to return to Cornell, but never did.

While living at 8 West 76th St., he would often walk in Central Park. Sometimes, after lunch, he'd stretch out on a bench for a nap. One day a cop whacked the bottom of his shoe with his club - "Feet on the ground, Mac. No sleeping on the city benches."

Hugh thought about it the unfortunate nature of this regulation. An idea came to mind.

A week later he was again napping, and the same cop on his route again accosted him. "I've told you before! No sleeping on city benches! It's against the law."

"But officer, I'm not breaking the law."

"Whaddya mean, not breaking the law?"

"Just what I said."

"Listen, Buster, you've had that bench long enough. Move along."

"No. This is my bench. I'm staying right here."

"Your bench, huh? Ok, stay right there a few minutes, we'll see what'll happen."

Ten minutes later they put Troy into the paddy wagon.

"Wait a minute, officer. Put the bench in too."

"*The bench? Why?*"

Because it's *my* bench. If that doesn't go, I won't go.

Not wanting an altercation with the 6'6", 240 lb Hugh, they decided to humor him, and took the bench along to the station house. When questioned, the history of the encounters was reviewed. Hugh asked to comment - "You've had your say. You admitted to sleeping on a city bench."

"Oh, no, sir. Take a look at that bench. It doesn't have the Park Department's initials on it."

"Doesn't matter. Anyone can see it's a city park bench."

"Then what about *this?*" said Hugh, as he handed over a bill of sale for the bench.

Hugh didn't have much trouble parking his car in New York - he'd made a wooden fire hydrant, which he'd place on the sidewalk when he left. On his return he'd place it in his trunk.

Hugh frequented one nearby movie theatre; he preferred to sit in the balcony. One day he happened to be in the center, almost directly front of the projection booth; being tall, every time he stood up to admit newcomers his head interfered with the projection beam.

The audience complained, the manager appeared. Rather than quietly speaking with Hugh, he unleashed a bit of verbal abuse and tossed him out.

A little later Hugh was going to the movies with an old friend, Bob Alexander. Bob noticed that Hugh was carrying a small box. "What's in the box?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing special. I'll show you when we get to the theatre." On arrival Hugh put the box on the floor. About halfway through the Greta Garbo film, Bob saw Hugh reach for the box. "Watch this, Bob" he whispered.

When Hugh opened the box, giant moths emerged. They fluttered about, and moved towards the projection beam. Their shadows had a fantastic effect on the screen.

Soon the projector stopped. The house lights came on. The manager arrived, chased away the few moths that remained near the projector; all seemed fine. The house lights when down, the movie started again, and the moths returned.

The manager gave up - he called off the show and issued "moth checks" for a future showing.

One of Hugh's jobs was working with another muralist decorating the 12-ft diameter globe that revolves in the lobby of the Daily News building on East 42nd St. Hugh added the "Troy Islands" near Antarctica.

As he explained to a friend, "I really don't know if there are any islands there, but if there are, then that's their name."

As Rockefeller Center was being built, at first there was a flimsy fence around the construction site. Hugh's friend, Alice Woodward, was secretary to Mr. Rockefeller's PR director, Merrill Crowell; she told Hugh that John D. planned to put up a strong, high, board fence around the site for safety.

The next day Hugh passed a note to Rockefeller: "People like to watch your building going up. Why not cut a series of portholes in your new fence so they can watch?" Rockefeller liked the suggestion and had it done.

Hugh thanked Rockefeller in a unique way. Each day around noon he'd walk around the site, handing out cards he'd designed and printed. At the top was a Dutch phrase, which translated said "The best pilots stand on the shore." In the center was a coat of arms, celebrating the Dutch heritage of the city and Rockefellers. Below that: "The Sidewalk Superintendent's Club/Rockefeller Center/ welcomes you as a charter member, and extends the privileges and courtesies of the Club to the bearer of this card." Rockefeller liked the card so much that he too would walk around handing them out.

Hugh and his friend Ezra Winter did the "Fountain of Youth" mural in the Grand Foyer of Radio City Music Hall, which is still there. Aside from his illustrated children's books, much of his work was doing murals for various commercial buildings. Not very many of these survive.

One which I believe has disappeared was for a branch of the Bowery Bank in Manhattan. Hugh had been asked to do a painting of South Street, with ships tied up at piers along one side of the street. He reputedly did a fine job. What wasn't noticed at the time was that the signal flags on the nearest ship read "Keep your money in your mattress."

If you've ever had to analyze some type of secure system, it becomes clear that it's often intended to operate in only one direction - say, to keep people out, or prevent artifacts from being removed from an exhibition. Hugh noticed that at the Metropolitan Museum of Art there was a lot of care taken to make sure nothing *left* the museum, but no attention was given to anyone *adding* something to the museum.

America's first Van Gogh exhibition opened there in 1935; Hugh visited, but there were so many people he could hardly see anything. He felt that people were there because of the fame of the artist, that it was the popular thing to do, rather than to see the art (an effect many of have likely seen with the 'mega exhibits' that seem so popular). The story of Van Gogh slicing off one of his ears and sending it to his favorite prostitute had garnered much attention, and Hugh felt it was partly this that intrigued many visitors.

Taking some dried beef, Hugh carved an ear, and mounted it professionally in a velvet-lined box, complete with inscribed label: "This is the ear that Van Gogh cut off and sent to his mistress Dec. 24, 1888". He smuggled it into the museum and hung it on the wall. It was a big hit. Hugh attended, and actually had some space to view the paintings, as the crowd seemed to gravitate to that particular item.

He hacked the security force there in another way as well - he left some broken frame fragments, etc., on the front steps, as if someone had removed a painting and hurriedly unmounted it.

His friends would often subject him to the occasional prank, and this could become a game. One friend who'd drawn his interest was Harry Klug, who was looking forwards to sailing to Europe. Hugh and friends saw him off. When Harry went to his stateroom (a double), he expected to be alone. He was mortified to find evidence of a roommate: on the other berth was a rattan suitcase with a broken handle. Inside the door was a greasy suit that smelled. The room smelled; there was soiled underwear, dirty socks on the floor; in the washbasin were two used cornplasters. An indecent photo was stuck in the mirror.

Harry spent the night in a half-doze in the smoking room, not wanting to make further acquaintance with his roommate. The next morning he returned and was surprised to find nothing at all changed; when he moved the suitcase was a note - "Dear Harry - Have a great trip. Hugh."

In the summer of 1937 a rich and famous lady planned a "benefit carnival and art auction" at her estate at Sands Point, Long Island (an area used by F. Scott Fitzgerald as the neighborhood for *The Great Gatsby*). It was to be invitation only, the "A" social list. She invited a number of artists, including Hugh, to volunteer their services, and asked them to bring their paints and brushes.

Upon arrival the artists were taken to see the lady; "I'm giving you just two minutes of my time", she declared. "Your task is very simple. Each of you is to paint a picture for the auction. You'll find easels and various sizes of canvases on the terrace. Please get to work right now. My carnival starts in two hours.

"Will we be attending your carnival?" asked an artist timidly.

"Oh no. Our caterers have more than they can handle now."

Hugh raised his hand - "May I ask - "

"No more questions please. I have too many things to do." She rose and departed.

Selecting 4 large canvases, Hugh went to a corner of the terrace to work. The others noticed that he finished quickly. He then carried the canvases out the driveway to the large stone gate on the busy road, where he leaned them against the fence. They read: "Welcome to the Carnival!", "Free Rides! Bring the Kiddies!", "Free Drinks for All!", and "Picnic Parties Welcome!".

While working on one of his books he began dating Patricia Carey, whom he'd known since childhood. He would often drive to Ithaca from Manhattan to see her; he frequently took the Holland Tunnel. At that time there were ticket takers who stood at the tunnel entrance, collecting tickets that were sold in books to commuters. One of these men began to annoy Hugh more and more, as he would reach out, grab the ticket, but also some of Hugh's fingers as well. He thought the problem over and came up with a solution.

He made up a false hand, complete with bloody wrist, out of paper mache, and affixed a ticket to the fingers. On his next trip he put the hand in his coat sleeve and held it out for the ticket collector. The collector made his grab, and Hugh sped away, leaving the horrified man holding the ticket and bloody stump of a hand.

After Pearl Harbor Hugh entered the military; here's his description of his induction:

"I was inducted in a huge building near Hartford CT, and I recall those long lines, as far as you could see, of naked men, each clutching a brown paper bag that held an apple and a cheese sandwich. The food was to eat if we got hungry while going through the different booths. It was fascinating. I'd never been through anything like that before.

I finally entered a room with about eight desks. It was late in the afternoon so most of the men normally at the desks had gone home. At the last desk sat a man with three huge volumes that listed all the MOS (Military Operation Specialty) numbers in the servers.

He also had a machine for punching IBM cards. He'd put your card in his machine, hit some buttons, and the machine would punch your card with your MOS number. Once he punched your card with that number, you were stuck with it, *for life*. That was the number that determined the course of your training and, thus, your whole career in the service.

"Which do you like best", he asked me, "to write or to paint?"

"Why, neither, " I said. I like 'em both."

"Well you have to tell me one so I can give you a number."

"I do 'em both well", I said, "and I don't want any of your numbers."

"Well," he said, I've gotta give you *some* number."

He stuck my card in the machine and was going to punch it for me. But just then the phone rang at one of the vacant desks and he left to answer it. While his back was

turned, I reached over to his machine and quickly gave my card eight wild punches. As a result, according to my card, I was qualified as, of all things, a *demolition expert*.

Now, I've always been deathly afraid of handling anything like dynamite or TNT - But now they wanted me to *teach it!* And - would you believe it - I wound up as a second lieutenant in the Air Force Intelligence School and was put on the staff! And those eight wild punches did it all.

During the second phase of his training in 1943, Hugh was stationed at a base near Richmond Virginia. The days were filled with pointless work, much of it involving submitting various forms and reports concerning the trivial details of camp life. He felt it was futile, that his contribution to the war effort was nil. His commanding officer advised him to just accept this as part of the way things are, that it wasn't up to him to judge what was worth doing and what wasn't.

One August Lt. Troy was inspecting one of the mess halls. Though late in the season, there were not yet any window screens in place - so the mess sergeants had hung up a number of sticky flypaper spirals. This triggered an idea. Back in his office he created a form: "FLYPAPER REPORT"/ B Company Mess hall. Date; Flypaper No. 1, flies this week, flies last week; gain/loss (strike one out) Flypaper No. 2, and so on. He ran off a number of copies and filled out one with random numbers, along with averages and totals.

About a month later a very upset lieutenant came into his office - "Are you Troy?" "Thank God I caught you. I'm from A Company. Listen, what's all this about some Flypaper Report I'm supposed to turn in? The Old Man just got a rocket from Washington, asking why his Flypaper Reports weren't complete, and he's chewing out every adjutant on the base. I wouldn't know a Flypaper Report if it pinned a medal on me, but my clerk says he heard your clerk mention 'em. Brief me, will you?"

Hugh was a bit staggered at this. He brought out his forms and gave the other Lieutenant some. "Thanks!" he said - then, "but wait, hold on a minute! There's one thing on here I don't get. You say 'flies this week' and 'flies last week'. When you check your flypapers, how do you tell last week's flies from this week's?"

Hugh came up with an answer on the spot, though it was a near thing. "A very good question - you're the first one who has had the vision to ask it. The answer is... I have a sergeant follow me around with a matchstick and a saucer of ketchup, and as I count each fly, he daubs it. Simple! No sweat at all. Some sergeants prefer mustard as a dauber, but we here in B Company find that ketchup has a certain something that mustard lacks."

As that lieutenant left, he nearly collided with two other lieutenants coming to ask about the reports as well. From that day on, every bundle of reports that went to the Pentagon included Flypaper Reports.

By 1945 Hugh Troy was on Gen. Curtis LeMay's staff, of the 21st Bomber Command on Saipan. After bombing raids the target areas would be photographed, and a team of photo interpreters would try to

determine what damage had been done. When one of the photo interpreters left, Hugh was assigned to replace him.

Since his training had all been on land, he was pretty much completely unfamiliar with nautical and naval terminology. Copies of Hugh's reports always went to the Navy, and they would always find something in his language to complain about; Hugh would be yelled at to use the proper nautical terminology. He became more and more annoyed at this state of affairs.

So after a large Japanese ship was bombed, he decided to go all in:

"Photos show this big Jap boat is hurt real bad. Its floors are all torn up, front, center, and back. The chimney has been knocked down as well as its two flagpoles. Many lifeboats are unusable, their hangers being torn apart. There is a big hole in the left side, but the boat is leaning to the right, showing that a torpedo may have pierced the cellar wall on that side. Hole in center floor shows kitchen stoves strewn about one floor below. Some damaged beds can be seen. Attack took place about 3PM so we would estimate boat would turn over about seven bells."

Twelve hours later, Hugh was ordered to report to General LeMay on the double and bring his file of reports. LeMay glared at Hugh, took his cigar out of his mouth, and said "Dammit, Captain Troy, you've got me in trouble."

"Trouble sir?" said Hugh.

"Your report on that damned Jap ship. Got your file there?"

"Yes sir"

"Gimme your last report."

LeMay grabbed it and read it. "Hmmm. Well, Captain Troy, you... ah... you've got plenty of facts there. But I'll tell you something. The Navy doesn't like it one damned bit. And, the way they talked, I've gotta *do something* about you. Well... ah... listen. Consider yourself reprimanded. Understand?"

"Yes sir."

"That's all. You may go."

Hugh saluted. He was halfway to the door when LeMay barked, "Captain Troy!"

"Yes, sir?"

"If you get a chance, do it to the bastards again."

About 1950 Hugh joined the CIA, in part because one of his friends (Joe Bryan III, former managing editor of *Town and Country*, and associate editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*) was hired to organize a Political and Psychological Warfare Section. He was involved with political satirists, cartoonists, etc., to counter or advance what I suppose we must call 'propaganda'. In the spirit of avoiding anything serious

in a short paper, I won't speak much about his work in this area, but rather some of his 'outside activities'.

One tidbit related to the CIA is worth repeating, however. There was a directive that anyone in the agency who had *any* conversation with anyone in the press, had to report it fully and in writing within 48 hours, no matter how inconsequential it might seem. You might now be able to imagine how this might have gotten Hugh's wheels turning.

Here's an excerpt from Hugh's first report:

7:00 PM. Was having dinner with my wife when interrupted by low rap on front door. Investigated. Opened door and at first saw no one. Then looked down and saw Leroy, last name not available, a representative of *The Washington Post*. Conversation ran as follows:

"Hello, Leroy. How are you?"

"Fine, Mr. Troy, how you?"

"Fine, Leroy. What's the bad news?"

"Same old bad news, Mr. Troy. I come for the money."

"How much do I owe you, Leroy?"

"Two weeks, Mr. Troy."

"Here you are, Leroy."

"Thank you, Mr. Troy."

Conversation terminated. Subject Leroy disappeared down side street.

Around this time he began to notice that many "authors", even quite famous and presumably literate people, had "ghost writers" who would do the work of writing autobiographies or commentaries. So after some thought he advertised a "ghost painters" service, "We Paint It - You Sign It!" - "Primitive (grandma moses type), impressionist, modern, cubist, Persian abstract" - "Why not give an exhibition?"

Hugh said when asked "All I wanted to do was to crystallize editorial comment on the ghosting trend, to provoke a lot of thought on the morality of it, how far one should go. Although I had placed my own phone number on the ad, I didn't expect any replies. So I didn't tell Mrs. Troy about it."

"But the weirdest thing happened. The phone started to ring. " A doctor came to the door - "I saw your ad in the paper - all the other doctors in my clinic are quite good at art. Now I want something rather small, just a still life of a fish and a pineapple. But don't make it too good because next year I want you to paint me something much better so my friends can see I'm improving."

This did hit the media; even the London Times commented, denouncing it as an example of 'soft underbelly of American corruption.' "It's just another of the many growing evils that beset their society."

Hugh was interviewed. He invented wildly - he was having troubles with his New York staff, it was difficult to find good cubists. The impressionists were organizing. And so forth. But he and his friends did some work in this line, producing a few paintings.

Later on he remarked that "The incredible thing is that we actually change our client's lives. They'd always dreamed about being artists. Now suddenly they are. They have prestige, a sense of belonging. People want that so much today, they'll stoop to anything."

He did decide to hack Dean Acheson, secretary of state under President Truman. As he said later, "Dean looks more like a Secretary of State than anyone else could ever hope to look like. With his erect, military bearing, and bristly, sandy, adjutant's mustache, the Secretary was the prototype of the starch-straight, dignified, professional diplomat.

One weekend Dean was at his country house. His children were in town, as, as Hugh said, "they helped me work this out". They hired a character actor of about Dean's build, then dressed him in formal morning coat, striped pants, silk hat. On this Sunday morning as people walked past the Secretary's home in Georgetown, there, sitting on the front steps, was this "Dean Acheson" in his full morning regalia, *fishing*. In a little pail of water.

Hugh said "his kids and I were sitting at a friend's house across the street, enjoying the show and especially the remarks of the passersby. "Dear, dear, isn't it sad? Why, the poor man; he's off his rocker."

Hugh Troy died on July 8th, 1964, at age 58.

I've told you only a few of Hugh Troy's escapades. These are the sorts of things that are forgotten in the larger histories of the times, but I hope will not be completely lost. I hope you've enjoyed the spirit that animated his endeavors.

