

Horse Poop

It seems appropriate that Mother-In-Law Day and Tell A Story Day occur simultaneously on October 27. I told my wife's mother so many stories I should have been arrested. I was but a young lad of 20 summers when I first met her. I spirited away her daughter barely a year later, if you could call the country club wedding my mother-in-law insisted on a case of spiring away. Since she didn't know anyone who belonged to the club, I kind of suspected she knew how to tell a story herself.

I couldn't help making things up in her presence. First of all, I have always made things up, and it's only been in the last 40 years I've learned to channel that talent into useful activity. Well ... somewhat useful. And I've never let anyone go away with the wrong impression, always explaining that I was kidding. Pretty much. Most of the time. Sometimes.

And Dude (I called my mother-in-law by her childhood nickname,) now deceased these past twenty-plus years, poured gasoline on the fire of my blarney by reacting in a manner that would have made a Silent Screen actress envious. She would put her hand to her chest and fall backward into a chair while her face wore a look of utter amazement and shock. All of that because I kiddingly told her I had backed over her peony bush with the car.

"My gol," she exclaimed, short for golly-gee-whiz I guessed. Or, "My Land," short for I don't know what. Then she grabbed a nearby copy of one of the numerous Catholic magazines lying about

the house and begin fanning herself to cool down from the excitement.

As I stood there watching her and wondering if she had mastered sarcasm better than myself, she said, "Well, not to worry. I'll go right down this afternoon and buy a new bush."

"Where are you going to buy a peony bush in September?" I asked.

"At the liquor store," she said.

"Were you going there anyway?" I asked.

"Oh no," she replied, "I still have half a bottle of Creme de Menthe."

"From your wedding night?" I said.

"No, I think I bought it when that peanut farmer was elected President."

"You're a hard drinking woman," I said.

"He grows the nicest peonies. Mr. Rathner, the liquorist," she said.

"The liquorist?" I said.

"In his back yard, behind the store," she said.

"I'll bet he grows them on the rocks," I said.

"Oh no," she said, "he has his own pile of horse poop."

"I can well imagine," I said.

"Just like yours, David," and she laughed uproariously.

"Haha," I laughed. "I didn't really run over anything."

"And you wouldn't know a peony from a petunia," she said, still fanning herself.

Which was true. I was brought up on Cornhill in Utica. All we ever had in the yard were dandelions.

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