

A strange sense of humor is better than no sense at all

Do you remember the first time you told a joke and no one laughed?

I don't. It's happened to me so many times I can't remember the first.

I grew up in a home with lots of jokes, teasing and laughter. Our mother's family was full of jokesters and Mom kept us laughing, too. Our family's sense of humor was earthy. Dirty jokes were strictly forbidden (when Mom and Dad were home) but we siblings joked about most anything else

a baby sister sneezing milk through her nose, accidental flatulence, even a father who stalked an annoying box elder bug on the kitchen floor to bring a quick and certain end to its miserable life. Dad, however, saw no humor in our laughter. When you have grown up this way you assume everyone else has, too. We learned that is not the case.

It is interesting when two people with different senses of humor marry. My first wife's sense of humor was more refined than mine. (I married up!) My being the louder and more jocular of the two of us, it was my sense of humor that our children adopted as their own.

As the kids were growing up I often engaged them in tomfoolery while their mother simply smiled and shook her head. My son and daughter both love words and language and we share a fondness for puns, considered by some (but not us) the lowest form of humor. Their mother tolerated our pun fun but didn't find the delight in it that we do.

(By the way, I was reading that new book, The History of Glue, earlier today. I couldn't put it down.)

An early sign that our kids' sense of humor came from their father occurred at Brookfield Zoo in Chicago when they were children. One of the cow elephants we were watching delicately relieved herself, creating a large and loud splash. Fortunately, we were standing far enough away to avoid the spray.

Like most kids witnessing nature at its most fundamental level, our kids giggled. Two older women were standing nearby and one of them sternly exclaimed, "How rude!"

Our kids lost it! Their mother and I hoped the woman was thinking they were laughing at the elephant. They were really laughing at someone who was



Arvid Huisman
Country Roads

offended by an elephant simply doing what elephants have to do. The woman obviously did not grow up on a farm... or in our family.

We laugh at each other, too heartily and unapologetically. While on a South Dakota vacation some 40-years ago a family member pointed out a large butte but pronounced it "butt" instead of "byoot." That was long remembered.

My current wife, Julie, and I have different senses of humor, as well. She frequently rolls her eyes but we laugh at each other's jokes. Most of the time. Well, usually.

Many years ago a family member told us that when her 2-year-old daughter noisily broke wind during a church service the toddler immediately and loudly blamed her mother. The poor embarrassed mother said everyone in the pews around them snickered.

Now that's funny! I shared that story with a group of friends. All of them, except one woman, laughed. She gravely declared, "Oh my, that little girl must have a dietary problem."

Dietary problem? Heck no! Healthy kids do these things. I recognized that our friend did not find a toddler tooting in church humorous and dropped the matter.

I try to be sensitive to the fact that my earthy and unsophisticated sense of humor is not universally appreciated. If you are offended by my ramblings today, I apologize. I pledge to not write about tooting toddlers again for at least a month.

As I have grown older I realize that the gift of humor our mother passed down to us is an invaluable way of coping with life. As a family we faced some difficult times but we never stopped laughing. It was our laughter - frequent and hearty - that got us through those tough times. As an adult, laughter has helped me through some rough spots.

One of my favorite journalists, the late Hugh Sidey, wrote, "Laughter on one's lips is a sign that the person down deep has a pretty good grasp on life."

Recognizing All Americans

BLINDSIDE

Ever since I was a child I can remember going to Odebolt, Iowa, to Aunt Clair and Uncle Richard Conrady's home for Memorial Day observance. At first I didn't understand the reason for the holiday, but in later years I can remember their regret that Uncle Wilford was buried in the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery near Rome, Italy, because his wife chose not to have his body returned to America after he was killed in a battle in Italy.

Fortunately, Uncle Lloyd Peterson also served on the European front in World War II. I recall him telling stories of how well Americans were received in France and Italy and North Africa, where he had served. Uncle George Leutjens successfully served in the Army on the Pacific front, but little was said about his service. More was said about his injury after he was discharged. He was walking on the street in Omaha, Nebraska, when a pigeon cage fell from the roof and struck him. George survived but suffered severe headaches for the rest of his life.

Stepbrother Carl Riley served on the USS Nemitz, an aircraft carrier. He was on his way home with some friends, driving across Georgia, when they came upon a semi tractor trailer turning around in the middle of the road at night.

Carl was lying down in the back seat. Three of his friends were not as fortunate, as they were killed. Because of his injuries, Carl was not able to continue his military service.

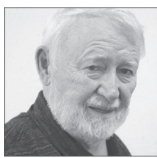
Brother Dennis served nearly 20 years aboard a Navy destroyer before he retired from the military and went to work for General Electric in Albany, New York.

Brothers Darrell and Mike joined the military but were later medically discharged for health reasons. I tried to join the Navy, but the recruiter was aware of my vision issue and would not accept me.

On Monday, May 26, I will again be on hand at the Sharon Hill Cemetery to observe the Richmond AmVets recognize everyone who has served in the military and those who were killed. The Ladies Auxiliary will lay a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The cemetery will be lined with American flags recognizing those who were killed. The flags will be erected by Mid-Prairie students and other volunteers.

Over 350 flags will be placed by the Optimists of Kalona in the yards of people who subscribe to the Optimists' Community of Flags. You can subscribe to have flags put in your yard six times a year or in the special flag display at Kalona



Ron Slechta
Observations

City Park by contacting an Optimist or filling out a form and leaving your donation at The News office, 419 B Avenue.

America does a great job recognizing those who have given their time to serve in the military. Recently Kalona resident Larry Geno was accompanied by his son and 97 other former military personnel and their chaperones on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. They received a hero's welcome when they returned to the Cedar Rapids Airport.

Because of my family history of military service, I have the highest respect for our military personnel.

We should also recognize and thank those who served in an alternative capacity. Or those who kept America running by making airplanes, other military vehicles, ammunition, clothing, and food to supply our military.

Thank you to everyone, civilians as well as military, working to keep America strong.



NEWS

Amana Heritage Society announces full season of Communal Dinners

The Amana Heritage Society is excited to announce its schedule of authentic Communal Dining Experiences at the Communal Kitchen Museum in Middle Amana.

We are offering our regularly scheduled Communal Dining Experiences on June 6 & 20, July 11 & 25, August 15 & 29, September 19, October 17, and December 5. These themed dinners will highlight various aspects of communal Amana life. This year themes will include A Kitchen Girl's Birthday, Communal-Era Printing & Bookbinding, Middle Amana Walking Tours, and the wedding of Dr. Christian and Johanna Jeck Herrmann, a presentation about Dr. Hermann's life in the Amana Colonies, medical school training, his WWI experience, his love of photography, and his career as a "Colony" doctor. The December 5 communal dinner will be a traditional Christmas dinner with a special dessert.

Traditional communal-era menus are exclusively offered to share the culinary legacy of the Amana Colonies that transformed into a leading Iowa visitor attraction known for family-style dining.

All communal dining experiences take place at the Communal Kitchen Museum, 1003 26th Ave, Middle Amana, IA. Limited seating of 24. Advanced tickets required and can be purchased at www.amanaheritage.org. The price is only \$35 per person with no tax or gratuity required. Proceeds benefit the Amana Heritage Society's efforts to share Amana's rich 300-year heritage.

For more information about communal dinners please call 319-622-3567 or email heritage-programs@southslope.net.

For a complete list of upcoming activities and events visit www.amanacolnies.com.

WaCo board OKs appointments, budget amendment

BY MARY ZIELINSKI
The News

WASHINGTON

In less than 15 minutes Tuesday, the Washington County Board of Supervisors approved four process servers, three raises for ambulance service personnel, a routine budget amendment and a June tractorcade.

The process servers, whose three-year terms run through December 31, 2028, are Jill Duwa, Victory Rico, Darren Denler and Tyler Cleese. The raises are for ambulance ser-

vices paramedics from \$29.52 to \$32.30, effective May 20, and involve Hogan Miller, Curt Olson and Ian Gannon.

The Secondary Road Use permit, for NRG Media, is for the 2025 Tractorcade parade June 5, which includes Highway 78 and Highway 1 and a lunch stop at the Washington County fairgrounds. The parade will go through Mt. Pleasant, Washington, and Wayland, returning to Mt. Pleasant at the conclusion, starting at 9 a.m., ending at 4 p.m.

The secondary road budget amendment, to the DOT bud-

get, is simply to cover a formatting change.

The board also learned that some adjustments and realignments will be made to the courthouse remodeling and at the Orchard Hill complex where the county Health Department will relocate, all expected to be done by mid-July. An initial delay at the courthouse involved the removal of some asbestos tiles. The basement level of the courthouse will house juvenile justice, the county attorney offices and related legal services.

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