



The Stroller...

Vacation Recalls Excommunication

By W. W. EDGAR

As the rays of the hot sun beat down on the populace these days, most folks are thinking of their vacations—some nice cottage in a shady nook at a lake or a nice sandy beach where they can roll away the hours in satisfying relaxation.

Others may be looking ahead to a long anticipated trip to a foreign land...an ocean voyage...and a destination as fabulous as the Hawaiian Islands.

But not The Stroller.

When vacation time rolls around each year, it brings with it memories of one of the most thought-

provoking moments of his life and a decision that finally got him excommunicated from a Presbyterian Church.

Our little home town was a mecca for tourists during the summer months because of the huge blast furnaces. Twice each day the furnace would be opened and the molten metal allowed to run along the prescribed troughs to wind up being ingots of "pig" iron.

The opening of the furnace always was a picturesque sight, and at night it was even more attractive as the golden glow of the hot iron pierced the sky.

This particular summer was no different and the old home town was glowing in the fact that the tourist army was larger than usual. And among the most delighted were the churches. They attracted the tourists in sufficient numbers to balance the absence of regular members who had gone elsewhere for their vacation days.

During this particular vacation period, there had been a change of ministers in our little old, white church on top of the hill, and our congregation was assigned a short, round Dutch lad, fresh out of Princeton University.

Anxious to make good, he called a meeting of all the church organizations and stated his views and what he wanted. Finally, he got around to the deacons, or ushers as they were known in those days.

He asked that the policy of each usher walking up front to the pulpit with the collection plate be abandoned. In its place he asked that one usher come up with both plates.

He also gave instructions that the plates should be carried in a certain way—the fingers of the right hand on the bottom of the lower plate and the thumb between the two plates. Then he added—

"And I want to see you place your left hand up on your back with the palm showing."

"Do you think we'd steal any of it?" The Stroller asked in a rather provoking mood.

"Never mind," the new pastor said, "Just put your hand up your back with the palm showing."

Came the next Sunday morning. It was The Stroller's turn to walk up the aisle with the plates.

During the gathering of the offering he noted a beautiful blond lass seated with several other tourists about midway in the pew. She was a sight for sore eyes—especially on so lovely a morning.

The collection gathered, The Stroller took the two plates—fingers of the right hand under one, with thumb between the plates, and his left hand up his back with the palm showing.

Still resenting the inference that the left hand could go astray, he started up the aisle, while the new minister stood at the pulpit with arms raised. Incidentally, he was the first minister in our "blue stocking" church who ever wore a gown. This was resented in some circles.

To the strains of the organ, The Stroller started up the aisle. About midway to the pulpit he decided on one more look at that gorgeous blond. He turned just a bit to let his eyes focus on her charm when it happened...

The top plate fell to the floor. Nickels, dimes, quarters and pennies went rolling all over the place.

What to do? The Stroller was in a quandary—with the minister, his upraised arms, waiting at the pulpit.

Should he ignore the fallen change and continue on to the pulpit—or should he stop and pick up the offering?

You can guess the choice he made.

Without the trace of a smile, but with a feeling of "getting even," he got to his knees, scrambled in and out of the church pews to get the very last cent.

It took a matter of five or six minutes. There were snickers among the congregation, and a blushed look of rage on the minister's face when The Stroller reached his destination.

Not a word was spoken—until the service was ended.

Then, the minister walked down the aisle to The Stroller's mother, and very definitely said—

"I don't care if your son ever comes to church again."

So, The Stroller virtually was excommunicated.

And the thought of the terrifying moment in the old home town church haunts The Stroller every year at vacation time.

Is it any wonder?



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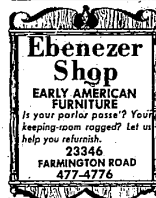
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