

Once in a great while, My Beloved gets into a bit of a funk, just as we all do. So I try to jockey her out of her bad mood, usually with a flurry of bad jokes, noisy puns, suggestive expressions, and an occasional goose, whether it's Christmas or not.



Some would say I am annoying. I don't think she would disagree. Nor would I. I've always been this way. And I'll never change.

Why? Because it amuses me to no end, that's why!

I suppose I always knew, even when I was a little boy, I liked to be annoying. From my first knock-knock jokes and wearing out all six awful jokes on those Dixie Riddle Cups parents so despised to my favorite practical jokes, it is a part of me that I refuse to have exorcised.

Of course, this is not without it's dangers. Harsh words and bar fights have escalated from less. I've also made it a habit over the years to approach nearly every authority figure I've ever met on the "If I got smart with you, how would you know?" principle and once in a very great while this has back-fired, because most of these people lack a sense of humor as well as IQ points. But I digress.

As I kid, I found out early that my mouth could be hazardous to my well-being. By the time I was maybe in the fourth grade, I was developing an extremely wise line of chatter amusing only to me, much as a comb-over only looks good to its owner.

At any rate, report card day came – an event known to kids back then as NBC (National Butt Cuttin') Day – and I had no math grade. This was a good thing, I thought, because I knew I was going to be in some trouble over the C that was to eventually appear there. At any rate, my dad glanced at it, then in his quietest – and most ominous – voice, said, "Why don't you have a math grade?"

A simple "I don't know" would have sufficed. Instead, I smirked and said, "I dunno. Why?" When I came to a minute or so later, I could see the seal of the United States Military Academy and the year he graduated, both features of his class ring, clearly imprinted over my right eye.

The old man spent most of his career ordering grown men around, and he was damned if he would take any insubordination from a shorter version of himself.

I suppose we all suffer for our art.

And so it would go. Over the years, shrieks would reverberate through the household. My mom would find a rubber snake in the refrigerator. The cleaning lady would nearly have heart failure then threaten to quit because she had just seen a human hand trying to claw its way out of a toilet she was getting ready to clean.

Probably the worst moment, though, was the time dad took us all to Disney World. You must remember this was a supreme sacrifice for him; he hated crowds, cartoons, traffic, tourist traps, and tourists roughly in that order. So for him this trip was like having to pay to go to hell.

He spent the entire trip sitting in the back seat, grumbling to himself, legal pad and pencil in hand, constantly figuring out how much this trip was costing him per day. How much per gallon of gas, how much per kid at Disney, how much the last round of grape sodas and Nekots were, how much more a hamburger cost at a Florida McDonald's than a South Carolina McDonald's,

He did this the entire time he was awake on this journey. The upside was that at least it gave him something to do to.

About halfway through Florida, I decided it would be both intellectually stimulating and interesting to all to count and loudly roadcast the number of motorcycles on the road. After all, I was sitting in the back seat between my father and my older sister and was in the perfect position to inform everyone exactly how many we had passed with about the same precision and frequency as the Atomic Clock, only shriller.

I don't know what was more deafening. That one moment of pregnant silence, or the two-syllable volcanic explosion that followed:

Oh well. At least for the first four and half hours of the trip home, everyone knew we had passed 752 motorcycles. This thought cheered me even before I started singing the tune to “Ninety nine bottles of beer on the wall...