

Dad's Pranks

He was great at keeping family and friends on their toes.

By Mary Blye Kramer

My dad's second job, outside of the coal mines, was as a handyman, and by the time I was 3 years old in 1960, I was up at 7 a.m., ready to go to work with him. My older sister wrote my name in calligraphy on the front of the old milk truck that Dad had bought to haul his tools. As a result, I decided I was going to be a plumber when I grew up.



Mary with her dad in his handyman truck. She always wanted to grow up to be a plumber from spending time helping him out as handyman.

The best parts of the day were our breaks between jobs. We would head to the Pen-Yu Drugstore and hop up onto the red plastic stools at the soda counter where my dad would entertain the girls that worked there.

"I bet I can make you smile with just one word," he'd say, taking a swig from his curvy glass of cola.

"Bet you can't," the girls would answer.

"Boys," my dad said, and the girls would double over giggling.

Dad's favorite practical joke involved pressing a dime onto the forehead of a new girl at the counter.

"I'm a'gonna stick a dime on your forehead, and you have to wiggle it off without touching it," said Dad. "I bet you can't."

The girl—I'll call her Beth—scrunched up her forehead and the dime fell right off. She looked at my dad smugly.

"Well, that just beats everything," Dad said. "Let's try that again." He pressed the dime back into place, Beth flexed her forehead and off fell the dime.

Dad feigned frustration. "Let's try this one more time," he said. "I can't figure out how you're a'messin' up my trick." Again, Dad pressed his thumb to Beth's forehead. "I think I've got it this time," he said.

Beth rolled her eyes and lifted her eyebrows, but this time, no dime fell. Beth wiggled and wrinkled up her forehead until she looked like a Shar-Pei dog. No dime fell. She flung her head from side to side, jerked it forward, blinked wildly, and opened and closed her mouth, hoping to jar the dime from her forehead, but still no coin fell.

Swinging back to face the soda counter, Dad opened his hand, grinned his signature half smile, and displayed the dime. Of course, the last time he hadn't actually put the dime on Beth's forehead. She had merely felt the pressure of his thumb.

"Joe!" she wailed, and off she flounced.

It was my favorite trick. I thought my dad was funnier than Red Skelton.

Dad had jokes he liked to play on his family also. One time he and my mom had been out to eat. When they headed out to the car, Dad opened the door and Mom slid inside. Then he disappeared back into the restaurant and waited. Outside, my mother at first didn't notice how long it was taking him to get into the car, but eventually she began to look around.



Giant Grab Bag 200 U.S. Stamps Only \$1.00

Giant Grab Bag of over 200 used U.S. stamps includes obsolete issues as much as 100 years old. Also historic airmails and commemoratives.

Each Grab Bag is different and yours is guaranteed to contain at least 200 used stamps. Perfect to start or add to a collection. Limit one Grab Bag per address. Satisfaction guaranteed.

Send \$1 for your Grab Bag today and also receive special collector's information along with other interesting stamps on approval.

Giant Grab Bag of Stamps

☒ **Yes!** Send me the Giant Grab Bag of 200 used US stamps. Enclosed is \$1. Shipping and guaranteed delivery are free. Strict limit of one. My satisfaction is guaranteed.

Quick order at MysticAd.com/SH147

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

☐ Check or money order *Add state sales tax to order total

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Exp. Date ____/____/____

Please send payment to: Mystic Stamp Company

Dept. SH147, 9700 Mill St., Camden, NY 13316-9111

Where is he? she wondered, sighing.

More minutes passed and still no Dad. Reaching forward to flip open the glove compartment for a tissue, my mother suddenly sat upright, startled. She realized she wasn't sitting in their car! High-tailing it into the restaurant, she spotted my dad sitting, waiting for her, smiling his lopsided grin. He'd put her in someone else's car on purpose.

Another evening, we were sitting at the kitchen table playing cards. As I dealt the cards, my sister Linda suddenly detected movement behind her. There stood Dad with his face smushed up against the window. Linda screamed as she flung her chair backward, nearly toppling it over in her effort to get away from "The Face." We all laughed—even Linda, eventually.

Since our family time was always centered around dinner, it was the location of a good many of Dad's jokes. One night as we sat waiting for Dad to finish dinner, long after the rest of us

were finished, Dad suddenly looked up, startled, and waved to someone in our backyard. The rest of us strained to see who it was, knocking each other over in our effort to get to the window to look out. Seeing no one, we looked back at Dad, puzzled. He grinned and waved. Of course, no one was in our backyard. It was another one of his jokes.

It didn't matter how often Dad played one of his pranks, we always fell for it. With his face pressed to the window, he'd give us a scare, and the next night it was precisely the same scenario with the same results. Dad would pretend to wave at someone outside at the beginning of a meal, and we'd look without thinking; before we left the table, he'd wave and we'd look again.

My mom, however, never got into another car without a thorough inspection.

"What if someone had come and driven off with me?" she asked. Dad just wiggled his mouth into that half grin of his. ♦

My Yellowstone Adventure

Continued from page 11

About 10 to 12 feet across the parking lot was a huge bear, sitting on its haunches with its head about 6 feet in the air, and its long tongue hanging almost to the pavement. Its body expanded and contracted with each heavy breath after what, my brother and I decided, must

have been a tough climb out of the canyon.

We didn't even worry about that exhausted bruin having the energy to chase us, but we did appreciate it giving us a special memory as part of our adventure in beautiful Yellowstone National Park. ♦