

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

February 2009

(Originally appeared in the *Herndon Observer*)

“Mom, That’s Soooo Embarrassing”

On Super Bowl Sunday, like many of you, my family sat glued to the television watching two teams we couldn’t care less about. Nonetheless, the game was great and we were entertained by the creative commercials. Except for the car commercials. Can’t someone tell the auto industry that a car moving smoothly on a mountain road just isn’t that interesting? A man throwing a snow globe through a vending machine is funny. The back end of a moose hanging over someone’s desk is funny. “Stylish handling” however is dull, boring, and one more example of why Detroit is running out of gas.

For me, the highlight of the Super Bowl was the halftime show with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. As the band played *Born to Run*, my wife and I sang, clapped, and yelled, “Bruuuuce!” We were instantly transported back to college when Bruce Springsteen was in his heyday. In fact, my wife and I enjoyed our first kiss after dancing to *Rosilita*. Of course, she was thinking about Bruce and I was thinking about Rosilita but it was still the beautiful beginning to a life sentence...uh...commitment.

While the halftime music played, my wife was unable to take it any longer. She jumped from her seat and began to dance. At that moment in time, she entered into a strange new dimension of sight and sound. She had danced her way into...*The Unhip Zone*. In the privacy of our own home where no one else would ever see, our children witnessed this transformation and screamed, “Mom, that’s soooo embarrassing.” In fact, they ran from the room to avoid going blind or turning into a pillar of salt.

Ironically, Bruce Springsteen currently holds the number one spot on Billboard’s album chart. By all societal standards, he personifies cool. And yet, my wife’s *dancing* to Bruce Springsteen is comparable to my wearing shorts with black socks and sandals. So, if Bruce is still hot, why are *we* so embarrassing?

My investigation into this phenomenon uncovered signs of teenage embarrassment throughout history. For example, when young caveteens saw a parent being eaten by a dinosaur, they were often so embarrassed, they would hit themselves repeatedly on the head with a rock to display their discontent. As the teen population vanished quicker than the dinosaurs, caveparents realized they needed professional help. So, they sought the counsel of cromagno-therapists to help their thin-headed children cope. That, coupled with a little Darwinian evolution, led to the thick headed teens we see today. But they still get embarrassed.

My son owned a skateboard ramp a few years ago but was always afraid to use it for fear that he would break a limb. One day, I decided to give the ramp a try. In my day (which is parentese for “many decades ago”), I was a decent skateboarder. So, I figured it couldn’t be that hard.

I made my first few jumps into the grass – where a fall would only bruise my ego. Seeing this, my son hid behind the curtains lest anyone recognize that I was *his* father. An hour later, I was soaring off the ramp, landing with the grace of Tony Hawk (see how hip I am?), and gliding into the road to the cheers of, well, myself. My son was no longer embarrassed by my riding in the grass. Now, he was embarrassed because I could do something he couldn’t. Funny how that works.

In the 1950’s teenage embarrassment reached its peak. With television shows like *Leave it To Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*, parents were portrayed as buttoned up, sugary-worded nerds who slept in separate beds. They were so not cool. Their teenagers rebelled in the 60’s and the hippy culture was born. Ironically, those same teens became hip parents who, believe it or not, embarrassed their own teenagers.

When my daughter entered ninth grade, I was friends with the high school principal. I told my daughter if she didn’t get good grades and display good behavior, I’d have to talk to the principal. My daughter was unimpressed. So I tried another tactic. I told her that if she did anything unacceptable in school, I would come to her school dressed in nothing but a thong and my Mickey Mouse tattoo. The look on her face confirmed that my message had gotten through.

Whenever my kids suggest that we are embarrassing parents, I take great comfort in knowing that they have no idea what I’m capable of.

Until, next time, just humor me.

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*Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including *Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between*. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.*