

Put on your glasses Grandma,
I can't see you



Jeanne Pommier Stanton

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**To my parents
Albert Pommier and Mary Ruppert**

*Without them I could not have written this book -
obviously.*

To my husband Keith

*Without him there would be no offspring to write
about.*

To our children

**Michelle - Toni - Brenda - Conan
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suggesting, censoring, advising and encouraging*

As he has done for me since our marriage in 1953.

***Put on your glasses, Grandma.
I can't see you!***

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Taking up the gauntlet – February, 2004

Enough already! My boss Seth is 50 years old and worrying about feeling old! Big deal. I have been married longer than that!

Seth is the Editor of our small town's weekly newspaper, the *Headlight-Herald* of Tracy, Minnesota. I have worked for the man since 1988 so I now feel free to let him know my thoughts. My fellow workers might argue that I have always felt free to express my opinion. I told him my feelings about his column *Two Cents Worth* where he moaned and groaned about being 50. How old did he think that made me feel? He then suggested I write his column!

That was like throwing down the gauntlet! Hey, if he wants to pay me for writing his column, I'm game. My fellow workers heard this exchange and Lisa immediately said, "OK, but you can't write about politics or religion." Bummer!

Okay, and when I am finished I will put it on his desk saying that he has his *Two Cents Worth* and I have my *Plug Nickel*.

I proceeded to boot up my computer but it wouldn't boot. I think it is my magnetic field or something. If I try to use any machine in the office it quits or runs out of paper or just plain won't work. Not trusting me to get it right, our youngest employee, April, comes over and does it for me. I ask her "How am I going to learn if you won't let me do it myself?" That brought back memories of when I was raising my family.

While all this was going on Seth, "THE BOSS" was meeting with Jan and Shaela discussing their next project. He doesn't bother discussing anything with me. It wouldn't do much good anyway. After all these years here, I have become pretty independent. Lorraine and Dick, both older than me, also work here. Due to our extreme maturity we work pretty much on our own without much direction. Unless I need help with the office machines. Or when I forget to use my time card---again. If I do forget, I can expect a call from Carol, the bookkeeper. Can't she just let it go until I come to work again and remember to check out? I would love to accrue all those extra hours. Patient, soft-spoken Chris holds down the front office.

You know what really bugs me about this business? Of course you don't. It is the proof reading. Actually, it isn't about the proof reading, it is the people who always ask why there are so many

errors in the paper. Don't complain until you have walked in our shoes. It is a hard job. Especially if you try to proof your own work because you usually see what you expect to see.

When I started here (as a much younger, unwrinkled woman) I was told the paper was proof read at least three times. That is true! For those of you who complain, come on down and help us. You would leave with more respect for us and realize just how hard the job is, but that would be true for any of us. The grass is always greener and that sort of thing.

Do I like my work? Seth says I enjoy it so much that I should pay him to work here. I answer that he cannot afford to pay me what I am worth.

Having lived here most of my life, via Currie and Mankato, Minnesota; Alaska; South Dakota and Indiana, I have reason to love my job. I "get" to go through the old newspapers and pick out things to write about for the *Remember When* column. That is pure joy.

However, I also "get" to do *Sports Flashbacks*. I know I will be stopped on the streets and berated because I spelled a name wrong (where are the proof readers?). I don't write enough on wrestling, or basketball, or golf, or whatever. I will say to you what Seth said to me, "Write it yourself!"

The problem, of course, is that I don't like sports. I don't know anything about sports. Furthermore, I don't care how many baskets a guy makes during the fourth down or how many touchdowns are made in an inning. As for golf, so who cares if it is an eagle, a birdie, an owl or a hawk? And wrestling? I know there are holds and pins. For some reason that sounds painful to me.

Do I enjoy working here? I love it. I like my co-workers even if they are a bunch of young whippersnappers who give me no respect. I tell them that if I want to be put down and insulted I can go to any one of our eight kids at any given time and they will oblige. I certainly do not have to come to work for that.

I tell my friends I will continue to work here for as long as I can fake it. Or until they change my computer. Whichever comes first. So if Seth hasn't the heart to fire me, at least he knows now how to get rid of me.

I just hope he waits a while.

Family rituals

Imagine my surprised when Seth published my column the next week and titled it Plug Nickel! I was hooked. It must be an addiction. So now I can write until my heart's content. And if I write enough and he publishes them I just may compile it into a book.

Do you have rituals in your home? I don't mean having ham on Easter, or a flocked Christmas tree, or having turkey for Thanksgiving. I mean rituals, something you do day in and day out, always in the same way. Like making a bed.

My Random House Dictionary of the English Language has many definitions of the word "ritual" and the first seven have to do with religion. But number eight is "any practice or pattern of behavior regularly performed in a set manner." So that goes along with what I am trying to write about. Religion has nothing to do with it!

When Keith and I get up in the morning we may not say anything to each other before we both automatically start making the bed. (My way, of course, which is the right way!)

We pull up the top sheet, then we pull up the quilt, smooth it out, fold the top sheet back over the quilt and reach for the pillows. Then we fluff the pillows. Of course he doesn't do it as good as I do because my feather pillow is always fluffier than his, but that is all right. I don't use his pillow!

Then comes the tricky part, we put on the bedspread.

Most days we follow the same routine, but on days that we have company it goes something like this.

Me: Get it nice and smooth now, you know company is coming.

Him: Nobody is going to notice.

Me: But they might. You never know. They might want to use the bathroom and when they walk by the bedroom they might look in.

Him: Oh, yeah! And they are going to say "Look there is a wrinkle on the bed. What a terrible housekeeper Mrs. Stanton is. Mrs. Pommier would turn over in her grave. What a shame, how awful," and so on ad nauseam.

Me--interrupting: Never mind, just help me finish the bed.

Then we get dressed and go walking.

So far no one has ever said anything about how I make a bed but there is always the first time and I want to be prepared.

That goes right along with making sure everything is picture perfect with the house when we go away for more than a day. My remark then is "But what if we die or some other catastrophe happens? Someone would have to come to the house and find it in a mess!"

This next may not be called a ritual but it certainly is related. Recently, I came across a quote from Seth's *Two Cents Worth* of May 4, 1994. He wrote: "Why is it, that when most American families get into a car to visit Grandma's house at Thanksgiving, it is the dad who usually gets behind the wheel? "

That's easy! It is because the dad can drive and block everything else from his mind. The mom, on the other hand, must listen to everything and try to keep order among the kids.

I can recall very clearly a time, many years ago, when we had spent the day with my parents and family in Currie, 13 miles away. We were going back to Tracy when the incident occurred.

All eight children were with us. I, of course, had the two babies in the front seat of the station wagon with me. It had been a long day. It was about to get longer. I must have been criticizing someone's driving. The most logical would be that I thought someone was approaching a corner a bit too fast. Without saying a word, Keith stopped the car and walked around to my side. I, silently, got out, walked to the other side and got behind the wheel. The kids didn't say a word.

I don't really remember what happened after that but suspect that by the time we got to Tracy the kids were giggling and laughing in the back seat and things were back to normal.

When we made the trip to the Stanton Grandparents in Huron, SD, we usually made a chart for the seating arrangements as everyone always wanted a window seat. We would stop at Brookings, SD, for a break and a change in seating. Surprisingly, Conan once volunteered to make the chart. It soon became evident why.....he had himself getting a window seat all the way there and back. Needless to say that did not pass the approval of his siblings.

And so it goes, the little things about a large family that makes the memories so much fun.

It's a dirty job but someone had to do it

My first paying job, where I actually got a check, was the summer I turned 16. It was at the Hadley Creamery. My sister Dolores was their bookkeeper, another sister, Joyce, myself, and three other girls candled eggs. I doubt if many of you know what that is. Even fewer of you did it for a living.

We worked in a darkened room upstairs in the creamery. Each of us had a work station. We passed the eggs in front of a light, graded them by size and quality, then sorted them accordingly. Some were dirty and we cleaned them with sandpaper. If the eggs were extremely dirty they were immersed in a solution before we could clean and grade them. Rotten eggs were dropped into a container. I won't even think of elaborating on that.

It was a dirty job, but I didn't care. For me, it was a memorable summer. Five of us lived in a boarding house owned by Mr. and Mrs. Dugan. They were very nice people. She was a great cook and I loved her vanilla pudding.

Now Hadley was even smaller than Currie, but we managed to enjoy ourselves. We would sometimes walk down to the station/store on Hi-way 30 to get a bottle of pop. Outdoor movies, our main source of entertainment, were shown once a week. That was when the young people got together. Otherwise we would just hang out.

My next job, other than baby sitting which I started doing at the age of 11, I helped my Uncle Cletus Riordan at his grocery store for an hour or two when needed. However, I ate up all the profits. He had candy in bulk and my nemesis was chocolate candy shaped in a half circle with a white filling (not coconut) .

When I was a senior I started working for my Uncle Eddie Ruppert at the West Side Hardware. Shades of nepotism! I continued working there until my girlfriend, Juan* Fischer, and I moved to Mankato to embark upon our future.

Every job I had taught me something. Working at the hardware store, I learned what a bastard-file** was. Men had a great time asking me for one. Another man tried to explain plumbing to me, showing me how pipes fit into each other. I may have been a naive, innocent Catholic school girl, but I wasn't stupid. I acted nonchalant

about it which must have disappointed him. (As my cousin Girlie would say. Darned old fool!)

For 12 years, starting in the 1970s, I worked for Sally and Cy Sanders in the Montgomery Ward Catalog store in Tracy. Many interesting things happened while I worked there. The following one has to be the granddaddy of them all.

A man walked in, old enough to be my father. I didn't know him, he was ordinary looking and dressed neatly.

Our catalogs were arranged so the customer on one side of the counter could look at one of our large catalogs while we looked at one on our side. That way we could discuss what information we needed for writing up an order.

The man explained that he wanted to buy a truss. Well, I was experienced after having worked there a few years, so I took it in my stride. It got a little sticky when he started asking me how to measure for one. He seemed to be enjoying himself. I, of course, was not. But....all in a days work!

He kept asking questions so finally I said that we needed his waist measurement. Before I had time to react he had come around the counter, turned his back to me, pulled his trousers down about six inches (revealing a brand new pair of white jockey shorts) and said "Measure me."

I was furious. I grabbed the tape measure, put it around him and said, "It is 36 inches."

He answered, "That is what my wife said."

Enraged, I grabbed the order sheet, wrote it out, told him when the order would be in, and turned my back on him as he walked out. That man is lucky he lived to walk out of that building!

I was livid as I stomped into the back room, only to see Cy doubled over in laughter. It took a long time before I could do any thing but give him a dirty look

Actually, I guess it was kind of funny!

* I have no idea why she was named Juan. Her parents were of German extraction.

** A file intermediate between the coarsest and the second-cut.

Are two heads better than one?

E-mail has its good and bad side. I find that we get the same jokes over, and over and over. In some cases, there is nothing new under the sun. We get jokes that I heard in high school--in the 'olden days.'

This is one little gem that was new to me that I really enjoyed. And I enjoyed it many, many times over as I sent it along to everyone I knew. It was titled "This one is going to drive you crazy!" And it will.

While sitting at your desk, lift your right foot off the floor and make clockwise circles. Now, while doing this, draw the number "6" in the air with your right hand. Your foot will change direction and there is nothing you can do about it.

This may not drive you crazy but it is a puzzler. We recently stayed at a Bed and Breakfast near Summit Avenue in the Twin Cities. The regular size shower had two hand held shower heads! Now that puzzles me. There wasn't even room for two people in the shower (although a shower is not my idea of group entertainment.) So, what to do? Run them both, one in each hand and spray? Or do you use one until you run out of water and then use the other? This is an old house and maybe the plumbing is shot. It did take a long time to get hot water. Or is one hot and one cold? Something to think about the next time you have a minute to spare.

* * *

Time to change pace here I think. Speaking of pace, my husband, Keith, and I get up at 6:15 each weekday morning to walk. We began doing this about 12 years ago. In the fall when the weather gets cold we go out to the high school to walk. We continue until the weather gets nice in the spring.

Walkers have changed during the years. Most of the walkers are women. One couple were regulars for a number of years. Some walkers come for a short time. Some come sporadically. Some come after surgery and leave when they achieve their goal. Some slow down and leave when they are no longer able to continue.

On the way driving to school we usually see John Coulter jogging with his dogs. He does it in all kinds of weather. You have to admire his tenacity. He doesn't care how bad and miserable the weather is.