

Wednesday's Wisdom

a weekly short note from Mike Minear

Shine Your Shoes and Smile

by Dee Bowman

My grandfather was a veterinarian and and a blacksmith. His wife, my grandmother, died at age 42, so I never knew her. actually, I remember very little about my grandfather, since I was only 12 or so when he died and he was not around much when I was very young. But I remember he came to stay with us for a while when I was about 10 years old. He was a rather handsome fellow as I recall, and rather melancholic, I think. But he had a very warm smile, and even when he was at the anvil bending red-hot iron, he wore a white shirt and tie.

We lived in the old Taylor place. It was literally two rooms and a path, so my Dad and "Papa" shaved in the kitchen. They stood in front of an oval mirror and dipped a little brush in a porcelain pan of hot water recently poured from a tea kettle which always reigned as principal occupant on top of the kerosene cookstove. They did that to get some water to work with. After they dipped the brush in the hot, water, they would wiggle it furiously in what looked like a coffee mug until the soap became a thick lather that spilled over the top of the container in little white mounds. After having brushed the foamy stuff generously on their face, they would unfold an ominous looking, long-bladed straight razor and "strop" it several times on a thick leather strap which hung by the table. Then, with great care, they would cause the razor to slide gracefully over their face with a skill that would rival a great orchestral conductor.

I can still recall how Papa looked on this particular morning. Every hair was in place as he turned his shirt collar inside so as not to get shaving soap on it. As he was conjuring up a white pile of lather, he looked down at me and smiled. "Whatcha doin', son?" he asked in a mellow and friendly tone. "Jus watchin', Papa," I replied. "Someday you'll have to shave too." he said, with a sort of grand-paternal pride. The he suddenly stopped from brushing the thick foam on his face and bent down to me. His eyes shot deeply into my soul. "Remember, son," he said, "always keep a shine on your shoes and a smile on your

face and everything will work out fine."

I thought I knew what he meant. I've always kept my shoes shined. My Dad used to kid me about keeping a see-your-face-shine, even on my baseball cleats. And I've always thought that a smiling face looked good on anybody, and even made a not-too-pretty face like mine bearable, it not sometimes appealing.

I'm sure that's part of what he meant, but as I look back on that morning, I think he had more on his mind than that. Shinning shoes is hard work. So he was saying, "Work hard. "

Shining shoes is personal. I'm responsible for my own shoes and whether or not they shine is solely up to me (see Galatians 6:1-2)

Shining shoes never ends. You shine them over and over again and you don't quit. Actually, you need to brush them up a little every day (I Corinthians 15:58).

Shining shoes shows you care. It's a shame to "put your best foot forward" when it's "groady" and shows signs of no-care.

And "always keep a smile on your face," what about that?

A smiling face speaks. It says, "I want to be your friend," or "Can I help you?" or "I like you." A smiling face says, "I care."

A smiling face hides the bad stuff. There aren't any wrinkles in a smiling face.

A smiling face says all's well. There's enough frowning in the world. A happy countenance spreads joy everywhere it goes (Proverbs 16:20) It's a promise. Let someone see the hope in you. A smiling face is the best way to say it.

I still remember his face. I can almost smell the shaving soap and hear the tea kettle. But most of all, I remember what he said on that fall morning in Morton, "always keep a smile on your face and shine on your shoes and everything will be all right."

'Scuse me, I have to shine my shoes now.