

Danville News Column
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"A Mother's Day Tale"

We had planned this vacation for a while. We had pinched our pennies for a longer while. Our three children were especially giddy. They liked visiting Grandma and Grandpa but they really liked Micky and Dumbo. My youngest especially had a thing for Dumbo.

We flew to Orlando. We even rented a car because we were spared the expense of a hotel room; we were staying for free with Elaine's brother and family in Winter Park. I always had wanted to see Cape Canaveral. Elaine wanted to see the manatees. The kids wanted to go to Disney World.

Our son waited till we were at the car rental agency to throw up. At first we thought it was air sickness. He always threw up wherever we went. There are little monuments throughout Pennsylvania marking spots where we pulled over and helped him vomit. He didn't stop throwing up for three days. You learn to go with the flow, literally.

It wasn't air sickness. It was the flu. He was a sick little boy. Elaine was getting sick too. At least little Margaret and I were healthy enough to spend one day at Disney World. Elaine shuttled our son back and forth to her brother's pediatrician. Margaret and I made sure we bought a big stuffed Dumbo for Penelope. Still have it.

We returned from Florida to learn that Rachel had sold her newborn twins. It is possible she didn't realize that she sold them. Rachel came from a long line of simple people. Her IQ, I would have guessed, was in the educable range. Rachel was a sweet girl. She had most of her teeth. She had tried working as an aide at the local nursing home but that got difficult for her. Her sister helped her get a job in the next town working in the sewing factory. Probation for his drunk driving conviction gave Reggie, the father of the twins, enough time to have sex with Rachel on the sofa in the back room of the fire hall.

Plans had been set for when Rachel would deliver her babies. We had worked hard on that at the church. She really wanted to keep her babies. We got her connected with social services. She was receiving decent medical care. Rachel had some familiarity with babies. Her older sister already had three little ones.

The difference was that her sister was married. We had helped Rachel work it out so she could stay with her mother in the trailer outside town. She needed her mother. Her mother needed Rachel. Her mother suffered from legs always swollen. The ladies from church had begun collecting a few things for Rachel: diapers, some clothes, even a crib. The ladies were getting hormonally excited about the babies. It was not as if the father was going to be of much help. Reggie was back in jail.

He was going to be there for a while too. Reggie's wife finally wised up and pressed charges. Assault with a deadly weapon tends to help persuade you. Twice before I had received the frantic phone call from Reggie's wife that he was outside trying to bust down the door to their trailer. He was drunk again. Reggie came from a long line of drunks. Twice before I

delivered her to the women's shelter in Lancaster. Twice she returned home ready to forgive Reggie. After all, he couldn't help it. He needed her. Besides, she was pregnant, again.

Third time was the charm. Reggie had seen his wife getting dropped off after work by a young black man. The guys hanging around Reggie made some crude jokes. Reggie erupted. Reggie was drunk. He made ugly accusations. He threw her down on the linoleum floor in their kitchen, pulled out his hunting knife, prepared to perform a cesarean to make sure the infant inside her wasn't black. He didn't use the word, black.

A lawyer from Lancaster filled the void created when I went on vacation. How the lawyer found out, I don't know. Rachel got all her medical bills covered and about \$200 extra for each child. She gave birth to a boy and a girl. She had them with her for a couple of days in the hospital before the lawyer's hired nurse took them from her.

What I heard later was that a young couple living in Manhattan, eager for children, had adopted them. Part of me was glad for the twins. If this couple were loving, the children had a chance. But part of me was very worried. It is tough, but not impossible, to fight our genes.

I wonder where the twins are now? That was twenty-two years ago.