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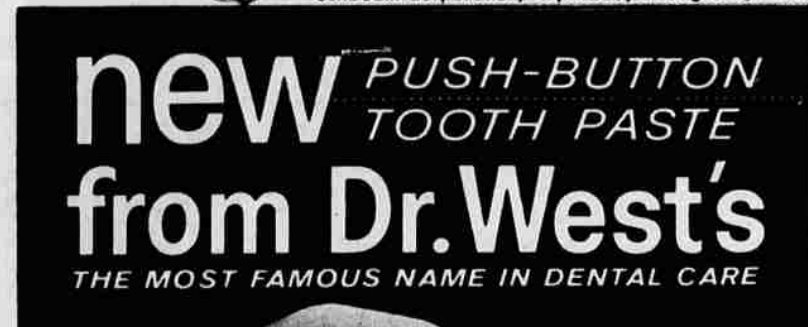
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It's That Day Again!



by Dick Emmons

IT'S MY GUESS that, at this very moment, most of the mothers in the nation are propped up in bed waiting smugly for their husbands to bring them breakfast.

For this is Mother's Day—the one day in the year when virtually millions of men who can't tell the difference between bacon drippings and floor wax feel constrained to serve the day's first meal to the mothers of their children. Mother's Day is always on a Sunday so no male can escape the assignment.

The fact that the three-minute eggs are cooked for eight minutes, that the bacon shows great bulges of uncooked fat, and that the cold toast is incapable of melting its icebergs of butter apparently makes no difference. The tribute, however indigestible, has been paid. If the husband-father-cook is a new one and, filled with zeal, brings in the tray while singing "Happy Mother's Day to You," so much the better.

That's the way it used to be around our house. Perhaps because my singing and cooking are equally poor, my wife suggested just before Mother's Day last year that we dispense with the breakfast-in-bed routine and attempt some other form of honor.

"Like—uh—what?" I asked warily.

"Like me sleeping until noon," she purred. "All I ask is that you keep the children quiet and ward off all interruptions until that time. If you succeed, I will return the compliment on Father's Day."

I gleefully agreed.

Mother's Day, 1957, seemed to me to begin earlier than ordinary days. It was 6 a.m. by my luminous dial when disorder broke loose in the room occupied by our 5-year-old twin boys.

Remembering my promise and the subsequent reward, I eased out of bed and slipped like a shadow into the boys' room to put down the insurrection. At 6 a.m. my vision is not quite 20-20

(it is more like 0-0), and my first official act on entering the twins' room was to sprawl over their electric train.

"Oh, boy!" Dickie squealed, noting that I was down on my hands and knees, "Daddy wants to give us a horseback ride!" Before I could whinny, my back was filled with small horsemen and, in exchange for their promise to be quiet, I agreed to trot them out to the kitchen.

"Listen, men," I whispered conspiratorially when my front hooves told me we had reached the cold asphalt-tile of the kitchen, "this is Mommy's Day and we're going to let her sleep while we get our own breakfast. Okay?"

"Can I make the toast, Daddy?" Davie cried.

"I wanna shake the orange juice!" Dickie insisted.

I beamed. This wasn't going to be so hard after all. "Right," I said, "every man take a job, and then we'll all sit down and eat."

My memory of the next few minutes is like that of a man watching a locomotive bearing down upon him, with his foot caught in the tracks.

Davie, pulling the automatic toaster closer to the edge of the counter so he could perform his chore, jerked the thing too far and it crashed to the floor. I made a leap to catch the toaster with one hand while juggling four eggs in the other. I lost both battles.

Dickie, perched on a nearby counter, shook the orange juice vigorously without remembering to put the plastic top on the shaker.

My daughter Ann appeared at that moment, and the swinging kitchen door caught my heel and sent me sprawling into the goo.

At the next swing of the door, my wife entered. "Something new, eh? Getting breakfast on the floor?"

I'll say this for her, though: she cleaned up the mess and didn't mention the incident again. That is, not until 6:30 a.m. on Father's Day.