

Humorous essays about pets, looney relatives, careers, dating, childhood, etc.

## **Sound Bites**

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# **SOUND BITES**



ESSAYS BY

GINA MARQUARDT

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## THANKSGIVING WITH GRAMPS

Each year, at Thanksgiving, I am reminded of my grandfather's last visit with me. He seemed to be acting rather odd, but I just chalked it up to his natural cantankerous personality and thought nothing more of it. With the advent of Thanksgiving, I began planning for a sumptuous feast at home, but Gramps was adamant that we spend the holiday in a restaurant. Unable to convince him that this was a bad idea, I reluctantly gave in. Gramps generously allowed me to pick the restaurant, a choice I later came to regret.

When we arrived at the restaurant, the waiter seated us in the middle of the room, with full view of the diners around us. He placed a tray of hot rolls on the table and we attacked them with vigor. My appetite lasted as long as it took my grandfather to polish off his rolls. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the unthinkable. He had removed his teeth and placed them on the table. I surreptitiously glanced to my right and there, clear as day, were his dentures. I froze in mid-bite, horrified at this new turn of events. I slowly looked around the room thinking that perhaps no one else had noticed. As I saw the controlled looks, shocked faces and outright grins, I realized that we were now on display for the entire evening.

Thankfully, Gramps returned his dentures to his mouth after the first course, and I breathed a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, Gramps' return to sanity was only temporary. He calmly removed his pearly whites again after finishing his salad. My solution to this disastrous situation was to order a Bloody Mary. Each time my grandfather removed his teeth, I ordered another drink. In an effort to keep up with him, I began ordering Bloody Mary's on an average of every 10 minutes. Gramps was soon eyeing my consumption of alcohol with alarm.

Ever the optimist, I figured that once Gramps got to the turkey, he'd forget all about his displeasure over my choice of restaurant. Alas, it was not to be. He wolfed down half his dinner, then returned it to the kitchen claiming

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it was inedible. The management was kind enough not to charge him for his meal sensing this was a battle they could not win.

When we had first entered the restaurant, Gramps had admired the "lovely, cloth napkins" on the tables. I hadn't thought much of it until we arrived home. As I was taking in my first full breath of oxygen in the last three hours, Gramps opened his jacket and said, "Look what I've got, these lovely cloth napkins." It seems he had swiped them off the tables as we passed them on our way out. I had been in such a hurry I hadn't even noticed his sleight of hand, but I'm sure it didn't escape the attention of our fellow revelers or our hosts.

Although I was mortified at the time, when I think back on it now, I have to laugh at my grandfather's antics. The older he became, the less concerned he was with proper etiquette. Even when his behavior was outrageous, he was endearingly funny at the same time.

Gramps has since passed on, but wherever he is, I'm sure he's still leaving his choppers on the table.

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