

There's Always a Fly in the Ointment

by Judy Gruenfeld

Dedicated to the fly in my ointment who shall remain nameless. And to Barbara who is with the Angels.

The stories contained within are all true. Believe me, you can't make this stuff up.

All names have been changed to maintain privacy.

There's always a fly in the ointment. Life's just like that. I don't know if God imposed Murphy's Law at the beginning of creation long before Murphy ever put it down on paper but it seems that whenever there is room for error, something will definitely go wrong. Take today, for instance. It's a beautiful Sunday morning. I'm sound asleep when the phone rings. One eyelid begrudgingly opens at half mast & glances over at the clock on my nightstand: 7:00. Maybe it's Monday & that was my alarm clock.

"Brrring!" Nope! That's definitely the phone.

"Hello," I mumbled as I picked up the receiver.

"Hello, Marilyn" the voice on the other end says, "sorry to wake you but...."

"Wait a minute," I said.

"There's no one here by that name. You have the wrong number."

Click!

By now both eyes are open & I'm wide awake. There goes my Sunday morning sleep-in. There's always a fly in the ointment.

"Howdy, Strangers"

I work with developmentally disabled adults. My husband is an accountant. His stories just can't compare with mine.

One day someone was conducting a tour at the workshop where I am employed. The hinge on the ladies room door was broken so the door

remained ajar. One of the ladies who attends the workshop was in one of the stalls. That door also happened to be ajar. As the tour passed the ladies room, Susie looked up from her seated position, smiled, waved, and said, "Howdy, strangers."

"Wanna Drag?"

I was on the telephone at work when I heard a knock on my office door.

"Come in," I said as I hung up the phone.

"I'm wet," said Pete.

"Did you pee yourself," I inquired.

"Yes," Pete nodded.

"Go in the men's room. I'll have your mom come & bring you some dry clothes."

"Okay," responded Pete as he left my office.

I gave him a plastic bag to put his wet clothes in.

A few minutes later the intercom rang. It was the secretary telling me that Pete's mom had arrived with a change of clothes for Pete.

"I'll be right there," I told the secretary. "Have her wait for me in the reception area."

As I started going down the hall, there was Pete coming up the hall dragging the bag with his wet clothes in it, totally naked from the waist down.

"The Directions Are On The Box"

When I started working full time I told my husband and my older son (who is developmentally disabled) that they would have to pitch in & help with dinner. Tuesday & Thursday became their nights to cook.

On Tuesday nights my husband would bring home BBQ'd chicken and on Thursday night he'd bring home cooked Italian dishes from the local Italian deli.

One Thursday night my husband decided to make spaghetti with the meatballs & chicken cutlets he brought home.

"How do you make spaghetti," he inquired as I walked in the door.

"The directions are right on the box," I told him.

"Just get the pot out for me," he pleaded.

I complied

"How much water do I put in the pot?" he asked.

"The directions are on the box," I repeated.

"Just fill the pot for me, please," he begged.

I filled the pot with water, turned to go upstairs, and informed him, "I'm going up to change. If you have any problems, the directions are on the box."

Somehow the spaghetti got cooked & we were able to eat it.

Next Tuesday, when I arrived home, there were 2 BBQ chickens sitting on the stove, keeping warm. My son was at the stove fluffing up a pot of rice.

"Oh, that's great," I said. "Who made the rice?"

"I did," my son responded.

"That's terrific," I remarked. "Who showed you how to cook rice?"

"No one," was his reply.

"The directions were on the box."

"We Need Another Cupcake"

One day, several years ago, when the children were small, my husband came home from work early. Delighted at the prospect of having dinner at "dinnertime" for a change, I telephone my neighbor and asked her to send my younger son home. He had been playing at her house with her children.

Twenty minutes later, my son, age 5 at the time, had not returned. When I telephoned my neighbor again she told me she had sent my son home right after we spoke. In a panic I ran to the front door, opened it & saw my son standing in front of my house, one arm raised in the air and a very large dog sitting in front of him. My husband ran out to rescue him. I gathered him up in my arms and tried to comfort my sobbing child.

"What happened," I asked him.

In between sobs, he managed to blurt out, "Debbie gave me two cupcakes; one for me and one for my brother and the dog ate my brother's cupcake."

"A Perfect Fit"

When my younger son was 2 we decided to get him a bed since he had figured out how to climb out of the crib at the age of 1.

My mother, who is an expert at knitting & crocheting had made us all afghans. Now it was my son's turn. My parents had come for a visit and my mother was crocheting granny squares which she would sew together for Kevin to use on his new bed.

Kevin took one of these granny squares (which measured 6" x 6") and disappeared into his room. About ten minutes later he came downstairs, returned the square to my mother, and announced,

"It fits!"

"Try To See Things From My Angle"

My parents came out to visit for the weekend. We have a high-riser in the guest room for such occasions.

When it was time to retire for the night, I pulled the bottom bed out from underneath the top bed and raised it up to the height of the top bed. I then gave my parents pillows & blankets.

My father is a verrry sound sleeper and he slept on the outside bed.

In the morning when I walked by the guest room my father's head, arms & torso were low to the floor while his legs were at the height of my mother's bed. Apparently at some point during the night the hinges at one end of the bed had come loose, crashing half the bed to the floor. My father, however, slept through the whole thing.

"Don't Touch Me, I'm Sterile"

One day we took a bunch of people from our Day Program (for adults with developmental disabilities) on a bus trip. Joan and Bob (who both have Down Syndrome) were seated next to each other. Down Syndrome males cannot father children.

When debarking the bus, one of the other staff members through she had noticed that Joan had wet herself. I went to check and found that it was not so.

"Good," said Bob. "I don't want to catch any germs. I'm sterile."

"An Eggceptional Lunch"

My girlfriend next door has two daughters. One Saturday afternoon several years ago my girlfriend decided to make egg salad for lunch and instructed her daughters to peel the eggs after they were boiled.

About an hour later, my friend's husband walked into the kitchen and noticed one of his daughters very painstakingly trying to peel the eggs.

"What are you doing" queried the father.

"I'm trying to peel the eggs" was the daughter's reply.

Said the father, "Your sister already did that!"

"Person To Person Mail"

My son, who happens to be very bright (who would know better than a mother) showed me an envelope, the contents of which he was mailing to a major university. The address contained about six lines with box numbers & room numbers among other descriptive information.

Since my son was a freshman in high school at the time I asked him if it wasn't too soon for him to start writing to colleges.

"I'm writing to a friend of mine," he stated, and then added,

"Do you think I should put his name on the envelope?"

"You Don't Have To Be Catholic... But It Wouldn't Hurt"

Today is my birthday. I won't say how old I am, but I've started counting backwards.

I couldn't wait to get home to see what kind of surprise my husband and older son had in store for me.

I walked in the door to sounds of "Happy Birthday To You." After the singing I got my presents. From hubby I got a beautiful ruby ring (my birthstone). Next came my son's gift.

As I opened the gift my husband explained, "Ronnie walked to the card shop by himself to buy you your present. He insisted on going alone."

"Hm," I thought. "What would a nice Jewish boy pick out for his Yiddish Mama for her birthday?"

When I took the wrapping off the present, it revealed a small plastic box with a picture of the Virgin Mary on it.

"I think you should have gone with him," I told my husband who had all he could do to keep himself from laughing.

"This is a very nice box," I said to my son. "I can't wait to see what's in it."

As I opened the box I saw clear crystal Rosary Beads and a silver cross with a Crucifix on it.

"It's very beautiful," I told my son. "I love it. But do you know what it is," I queried.

"It's a chai," replied my son. A chai is a Jewish religious symbol meaning "life." Many Jewish men & women wear a chai necklace.

"Well, not exactly," I told my son.

I explained the difference and we went shopping & exchanged the cross for a chai.

"If A Teenager Answers"

My younger son Kevin got a telephone for his Bar Mitzvah. Up until that time he was using the phone in the kitchen but now, with one in his own room, he was constantly on the phone.

One morning my mother called & complained that she had tried to phone me until 10:00 the night before and couldn't get through.

I immediately ordered call waiting.

When my son came home from school I told him we would have call waiting in two days and began explaining how it worked.

"I know how call waiting works," he assured me.

"No you don't," I insisted.

"Yes I do," he persisted.

"Indulge me for a minute and let me explain," I insisted again.

"Okay," said my son.

I began, "suppose you're on the phone & you hear a beep. Tell the person you're talking to,

"Hold on a minute," and then press the reset button.

"When the person on the other end asks to speak with one of your parents, you say 'One moment, please.' You push the reset button again and tell your friend 'My parents got a phone call. I have to hang up.' You push the reset button again, tell the called, 'My mother or father, as the case may be, will be right with you.' Then you call us & tell us we have a phone call."

"You mean your calls always take precedence over mine?" Kevin responded.

"Now you know how call waiting works." I assured him.

"It's A Wise Child....."

Several years ago we went to my friend's son's Bar Mitzvah. Also invited was another friend and her two teenage daughters.

When it was time for the services to begin my friend's older daughter came over to me and asked,

"Can you & your family sit in the pew with us so no one will be able to tell which are my parents?"

"Mother, Can You Spare A Quarter"

When my younger son was five years old he wanted to get posters of kittens & puppies that were advertised on the back of a cereal box. I told him he could do so when he finished the cereal.

When the cereal box was empty my son again asked me if he could send away for the posters. I agreed & filled out the form and addressed the envelope.

"Okay," I told my son. Go up to your room & get me a quarter to pay for the posters."

"You mean I have to spend my own money," he asked.

"Yes, you do," I replied.

"I think I'll just cut the pictures off the cereal box," my son responded.

"Hit The Deck"

One day, when my older son was about 3 years old we went over to a friend's house for the afternoon.

While my friend & I were chatting over a pot of coffee in the kitchen, my son & my friend's daughter were playing outside on the patio deck.

When it was time to leave we went onto the deck & discovered all the toys had been thrown off the deck onto the grass. Both children were reprimanded and told to go downstairs & bring all the toys back up to the deck, which they did.

By that time I was downstairs in the backyard ready to leave. There

was just one problem. I had left my jacket in my girlfriend's kitchen. She was standing on the deck with my jacket hanging over the rail.

"Throw it down," I said.

"After we yelled at the kids not to throw things over the deck, do you think I should?"

Needless to say I walked up the steps & got my jacket.

"From The Four Corners Of The Supermarket"

With my two kids & my neighbor's two kids in tow I bravely set out for the supermarket.

As soon as we got into the store the four of them took off in four different directions. I didn't know which way to run first. Finally I decided, if they wanted to come home with me they'd have to worry about where I was.

They all found me!

Following are 2 poems I wrote for a creative writing class:

Feet
I hate feet
I don't think they're neat.
In all kinds of feet
The world is replete/
There are fat feet
and skinny feet
Hot feet
And cold feet
Wide feet
And narrow feet
These feet
And those feet.
There are feet that get sweaty
And those that stay dry
I just can't seem to like feet
No matter how hard I try.

When I think of feet
I start in to twitch
Which reminds me of feet
That constantly itch.
When I go to the beach
Or I go to the pool
I see all those bare feet
And I blow my cool.
Put on some sneakers
Or put on some shoes
Or to be sure
Your feet you will bruise
Most awful are toes
And Heaven knows
I hate it the most
When through shoes one shows.
Some toes are stubby
And others are lanky
Whenever I see them
I'm sure to get cranky.
The fact that I hate feet
And think they're the dregs
Keeps me wishing that
We could just walk on our legs.

Tribute to a Lost Friend

I miss the you
That I once knew
The Cheery smile that said
You're welcome here at any time
Come in! We'll break some bread@

Your spirit seemed to fade before me
Like daylight on a summer's eve
And when I tried to light a spark

My pleas you did not heed

Your heart beats still
Life's blood does spill
Throughout your every vein
And though you breathe, and walk and talk
Your spirit's not the same.

But once the soul within you dies
The body very soon decries
The light of life can no longer shine.
Good-bye, beloved friend of mine.

"Give Me A Hint"

My husband could never find the milk in the refrigerator until one day
I told him,

"I'll give you a hint, it's white!"

"You Might Wanna Damp Mop The Floor"

In the middle of my lunch break I heard it over the loud speaker.

Judy, please come to the front. Judy to the front."

I put my sandwich down, took leave of my co-workers, and proceeded
to the reception area at my place of employment.

One of the bus drivers who transported some of our developmentally
disabled clients to the workshop had come in and told the receptionist there
was a problem. Apparently one of our young men was standing in the
middle of the parking lot clad only in his shoes, socks & cowboy ????.

We managed to get Mike inside. Apparently, he had had diarrhea,
took just clothes off in the men's room & then went outside to wait for his
parents to pick him up. I went outside, got Mike & told him to wait in the
men's room (which was covered with brown spots) for his parents. I then
called the parents who arrived with a change of clothes, a towel & a bar of
soap for Mike (we have a stall shower in the men's room).

Several minutes later, Mike & his father emerged from the men's
room.

Mike's father went over to one of my co-workers, & said,
"I wiped the shit with his shirt, but you might wanna damp mop the floor."

"The Check's In The Mail But There's No Delivery Today"

I had just come out of the shower when I heard voices downstairs. It was about 8:00 PM and my husband wasn't home. I peeked around the corner & saw my son Ronnie talking to a pretty young lady. I was in my night-gown so I was waiting until they finished talking to go downstairs. I couldn't imagine what the conversation was about. My son went upstairs to his room & the young lady remained in my foyer. I threw on a bathrobe and went downstairs.

"Can I help you?" I asked.

"Was that your son?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied. "What is this about?"

"Well," she said, "I'm from the Environmental Protection Agency. We're collecting funds for political campaigns to help pass legislation to ensure clean drinking water all over the entire state."

"Oh, how much are you collecting?" I inquired.

"Fifteen dollars," I was told. "Your son just went upstairs to get a check."

"Did he?" I replied in amazement. "He doesn't have a check."

I explained that my son was developmentally disabled and didn't have a checking account, and then wrote out a check for \$15 & gave it to the girl. She thanked me & left.

I then went upstairs to my son to try to find out what he had understood about what had transpired between himself & our caller only to find him in his pajamas, sound asleep.

"Wrap Me Up And Take Me Home"

It was another rubber glove day at work. Another one of our clients had had an accident and wet his clothes. I gave him a plastic bag to put his clothes in & told him to wait in the bathroom for his dad to pick him up. Sam got tired of waiting for his father to come and proceeded down the hall wrapped in the clear plastic bag.

"He's A Growing Boy"

Kevin was always small for his age. When he was 12 or 13 I took him to the pediatrician for a check-up. The doctor started with his head & began working his way down. When he reached his private parts my son asked me to leave the room, which I did. As the nurse passed by she said, "Get thrown out?" "The doctor is checking his diaper area," I responded.

Seconds later the exam room door opened and both my son & the doctor came out.

"Kevin is fine," he said & then added in Yiddish,

"Do you understand Jewish?"

"A little," I replied, also in Yiddish. "Why?"

"Well," said the doctor. He may be small but one part of him is growing very nicely."

"Oh!" I said, feeling that my husband would be very proud.

Later that evening we went out to dinner with my parents. Kevin, God bless him, ate like there was no tomorrow.

"Does he have a hollow leg?" asked my mother.

"Where does he put it all?"

"I know where it all went," I sung out.

"Bloom Where You're Planted"

My husband is somewhat of a horticulturist, though not by profession. He's helped many of our friends & family with their landscaping. While assisting some friends with their front yard my husband suggested they remove a particular bush from a particular spot stating that the bush needed much more sunlight than it was getting and he was surprised it was still living there.

My friend informed him,

"Maybe it has no place to go."

"That's Not What I Ordered"

My mother-in-law came to this country in the late 1930's and still has a thick accent & speaks a combination of English and German. She was

raised in a kosher home & maintains one herself today.

Several years ago my sister-in-law & her family took my mother-in-law on vacation with them. They went to McDonald's for breakfast. My mother-in-law went to the counter to order her breakfast and order an egg mit (with) a muffin. Imagine her surprise when she was given an Egg McMuffin - ham and all!

"Above All To Thine Own Self Be True"

When perchance you do reflect
And think of things in retrospect.
Be sure you are not apt to say
I should have done it the other way.

"Depression"

When the demons get their grip
And I feel I start to slip
I go deep inside myself
The pain I try to squelch

I know not where it's coming from
Or why the clouds descend
I only know I'm trapped inside
A hurt that will not end
Impending doom will start to loom
Of life and all its strife
Why does it have to be this way
I sit and wonder, hope & pray

My heart is heavy
Amidst a bevy
of blessings I should count
The tears won't stop
I seem to shed
A plentiful amount

If in the end I should descend
Amidst toil and travail
I won't give in
I'll try to win
And eventually prevail.

"My Precious Child"

My precious child I love you so
My love for you will only grow
If ever you're lost & all alone
Know you'll always have a home
Within my heart while I still breathe
And to that love you can always cleave
The world may not see you through my eyes
But no matter what your size
You'll always be my precious child
You'll always be my precious child.

"Special Delivery"

One dreary winter's day I was cooped up in the house with both kids sick. I had been in for a couple of weeks and was getting a bad case of cabin fever.

I happened to glance out the window and saw a delivery truck in front of my house. The driver was walking towards my door carrying a beautiful bouquet of flowers. I greeted him at the door with a huge smile that quickly faded when he said,

"Can you take these flowers for your next door neighbor? No one is home"

"Do you realize what you just did to me," I screamed.

He laughed and left.

Later that afternoon when my husband called, I told him what happened.

He came home that evening with a smaller but lovely bouquet of flowers for me.

"Bombs Away"

I was trying to get some services for one of my clients at work. In order to do this I needed some background information so I phoned the client's brother. Apparently my client, though mentally retarded, had been inducted into the service and had served overseas during wartime.

Knowing this client fairly well, I responded,

"That's amazing. How was he able to do that?"

"Not very well," responded the brother. "He was a danger to all."

"I've never known your brother to be dangerous," I said into the phone.

"Well," replied the brother, "he jumped into a foxhole with a live grenade."

It was then that he was released from active duty to Uncle Sam.

"A Poem From Jr. High"

"The Would Be Poet"

My teacher said to write a poem.

And then I thought

Boy, I would show 'em.

I racked my brain

Spent all my time

Trying to get the words to rhyme.

When suddenly it dawned on me

A poet I would never be.

"There A Hole In The Bucket"

One of our staff at work wanted a cup of coffee and asked one of the clients to get one for her from the coffee truck.

The client gladly made the purchase. However, there was a hole in the bottom of the cup and by the time it reached its destination the cup was empty.

"There A Hole In The Bucket II"

For a short period of time I worked in a nursing home as a Social Worker.

Due to trouble with her roommate we moved one of the residents to another wing in the building.

Poor Mrs. Wilson, she could never remember that her room had been changed.

One day she had a bladder accident and went into her old room to change her clothes. The room was then occupied by two gentlemen. Mrs. Wilson emerged from the room clad only in a pair of men's briefs complaining that someone had torn a gold in the front of her underwear.

"Here, Kitty"

When Ronnie was 27 he begged us for a cat. We finally relented and went to the local animal shelter to adopt one. We brought home a 5 week old kitten that weighed 1/4 lb.

Ronnie was holding her and petting her until it was time to make dinner. Ronnie usually made the salad. Before he did so he put the tiny kitten into the cat carry box we had purchased so she wouldn't get into trouble, much like a mother puts her baby into a playpen. I don't know anyone with a purer heart & soul.

"You Weren't Such A Beautiful Baby"

My girlfriend tells a story about an incident that occurred when her husband was a baby. Though he is a handsome man, apparently he wasn't such a beautiful baby.

Mom was proudly wheeling her newborn down the street when a neighbor stopped her and commented,

"Oh, what a beautiful... carriage."

"Take Two Prozac And Call Me In The Morning"

A friend of mine told me of an incident that occurred when he was a teenager.

His mother was concerned about him and brought him to a psychologist. After talking to mother and son for a while, the doctor said,

"I'll give you an appointment for next Tuesday at 4:00."

"Fine," said the mother, "he'll be here."

"No," said replied the doctor. "He's fine. The appointment is for

you."

"What A Bargain"

Many years ago my grandmother had a couch she wanted to sell. It was still in excellent condition but my grandmother no longer had any use for it.

After many unsuccessful attempts at unloading the couch the junk man agreed to a price of \$10.

"Ten dollars!" my grandmother repeated astounded. "This is a very good couch. I can't accept \$10. for it."

"No lady, you don't understand. You have to pay me \$10. to cart it away for you!"

"Do You Know A Good Baby Sitter?"

When my older son was a teenager he went through a period of time when he was very stubborn. He is also very strong.

One evening he refused to get out of my husband's recliner chair. Though Ronnie thought it was cute my husband was not amused. He tried grabbing and pulling Ronnie's arm to no avail. With the last pull, however, Ronnie decided to give in. Because of the force of my husband's pull Ronnie ended up being hurled across the room. Fortunately, he wasn't hurt.

A few minutes later a friend called and asked if I could watch her children the next day.

"No problem," I told her. "If I'm not home, my husband will be."

"Little King Solomon"

When the boys were 4 and 8 we had a sandbox in the backyard. Actually, it consisted of 4 planks of wood made into a square. The kids dug in the dirt.

Kevin came running over to me yelling,

"Mommy, mommy, look at the huge worm I found!" It must have been 6" long. Kevin & Ronnie then began fighting over the worm, each wanting it for his own possession.

Kevin said, "I know what to do." And with that he took his shovel

and split the worm in two.

"For Our Next Feature....."

There are periods of time at work when there are no jobs for the clients to do. We call this "down time." Clients can read magazines, do puzzles, or watch videos on TV.

As I walked through the workshop during one of these periods I noticed one particular group of clients sitting mesmerized in front of a TV screen. Wondering what was so interesting I walked over to the group and glanced at the TV. The screen was blank!

"I Can Tell From Your Accent You're Not From Around Here"

One Saturday afternoon my girlfriend & I were sitting over a cup of herbal tea when I said,

"How's you meet your husband?"

She started laughing. "Funny you should ask."

"Why, what happened?" I inquired

"We almost never had a second date," was her reply.

My interest was piqued.

"Tell me the story," I insisted.

"Well," my friend continued, "When my husband came to this country from Mexico he moved in with some people from New York. They began introducing him to eligible young women from the area but none of them appealed to him. When I came up from Maryland to stay with mutual friends we were introduced. Fred said that he had a little trouble understanding me because of my accent."

"Put A Little Bounce In Your Life"

One day while sitting & talking over lunch a co-worker told me the following story.

One of the jobs we get in the workshop for the clients to do is packaging sponges. Two sponges are put into a plastic bag and are then neatly placed in a large cardboard box to be shipped back to the manufacturer for distribution.

One day one of our ladies tripped and fell into a box that was piled

high with sponges. The look on her face when she bounced out of the box and back onto her feet was priceless.

"One Philosophy On Housework"

If it can't be seen
It needn't be clean

"I'd Like Mine A Little More Well-Done Please"

My husband, who would normally wither step over or trip over a pile of junk in the middle of the living room floor, for some reason is very fastidious about certain things. One of these things is with regard to the oven. He insists on leaving the oven door half open after being used so it can cool off faster.

One Sunday afternoon he passed by the oven and felt a warm gush of air. As the oven door was hot, he opened it so the oven would cool off. The only problem was, when I returned home a couple of hours later the roast I was cooking for dinner was still raw.

"Who Turned The Lights Out?"

Several years ago when the kids were all small a girlfriend of mine decided to have a romantic evening at home with her husband.

She fed the kids early & put them to bed. She then turned out the lights, put candles in the living room, dining room and kitchen and changed into a beautiful, black, lacy, negligee.

When her husband walked in the door and saw the lit candles he inquired,

"Is there a power failure?"

"No," replied my girlfriend as she emerged from the kitchen clad in her provocative nightgown.

The mood was completely lost when he further inquired,

"How come you're in pajamas? Are you sick?"

"Strother And Joan"

Here's a tale of a guy named Strother
And also a gal named Joan

For if they hadn't found each other
Both would have lived life alone.

"The Things You Do For Cash"

The cafeteria where our clients eat their lunch has several vending machines. They dispense snacks, soda, juice and coffee.

One day, one of our heavier men dropped some money that rolled behind a machine. While trying to retrieve his money the fellow got stuck between two machines.

We finally managed to pull him out by having a staff member grab each of his legs & pull. None the worse for wear, Jim opened up his hand and showed us the shiny penny he had gotten from behind the machine. Needless to say, we were ready to shove him back in.