

## Dad-isms

Paul and Larry and Sylvia randomly come up with what were their father's "Dad-isms."

Here's their attempt at recalling some of them:

"You're cruisin' for a bruisin'" (preceded or followed by "Mister")

"Now we're cookin' with gas!" (spoken whenever Dad successfully overcame a frustrating impediment)

"And now we're cookin' on all four burners."

"I gotta pee so bad I'm bustin' both boilers." (Or reduced): "I'm bustin' both boilers here."

Sung: "Lep-ro-sy, my God I got leprosy!" (Sung to a popular melody we can sing but cannot pin to a title)

Sung somewhat sarcastically and usually when shaving (We remember the melody to this one, too): "I love life and I don't wanna die" (often getting this response from Mom: "Oh, Ed!")

(Eating something that's mixed with stuff, like a stew or hot-dish): "Damn, that's good gunk!" (followed sometimes by): "What's in it?" (a joke that always pissed off Mom)

"He didn't have a pot to pee in." (when talking about some poor somebody)

"He talked like he had a rod up his ass."

"Women, ya can't live with 'em, and you can't live without 'em."

"We're headin' up to God's country" (usually someplace with woods, poison ivy and ticks where the family would camp in the middle of nowhere)

"He didn't have two nickels to rub together."

"He's the salt of the earth."

"He's just a big pain in the ass."

Of smart guys: "One smart genie-ass."

"What's the German word for brazier? 'Holds-em-from-floppin'"

"How many times I gotta tell ya? I tell ya once, I told you a million times."

"Time for you two to hit the sack -- To your hole, moles!" (Paul and Larry shared a basement bedroom)

"You got any biffy material"? (something to read while on the toilet = "biffy")

"Eh, he drinks his own bathwater" (usually when in reference to any pompous person)

"The guy's a Mama's boy" (i.e. gay guy)

"The stinkin' fruit business" (his occupation)

"The shit sheet" (a typed list of his produce on the train tracks or on the truck unloading docks that he needed to sell the next day)

"Gotta now go do some bowing and scraping today."  
(attending Episcopal services with his parents)

Sylvia was "Pudgy", Sue was "Blondie". About his sons: "Paul's good looking, Larry's smart, and Rick, well Rick's just a damned good kid." And about Paul again: "For such a smart kid you can be pretty stupid."  
(whenever Paul got into one jam or another)

"You gotta give it the right touch." (while talking about music, art, manners, or about women)

(When listening to a record featuring a bass soloist of the Soviet Red Army Chorus who hit amazingly low notes with such deep resonance): "That guy must have testicles the size of watermelons!"

"When you see a guy comin' at you who you think wants to pick a fight with you? You best run like hell."

"When I got married, I thought it would be hot and cold running sex all the time."

"Damn, can that guy write!" (could be Faulkner, Philip Wylie, Thomas Wolfe, Alan Paton, etc.)

"You want a honkus on the bonkus?" = a hard rap on the head with the handle side of a butter knife, served, as we recall, on only his male offspring and it hurt like hell.

"That's for nothin', but you probably had it comin'" (a "honkus on the bonkus" that comes out of nowhere from behind you, bam! Usually served up at the dinner table. No one gave much thought to abuse back then).

"She's a Jaguar and needs a lotta maintenance. What you need is a Ford." (when trying to talk Larry out of marrying Hita -- and for the record, he was wrong, and for better or worse, Larry rarely took anybody's advice about anything)

(When Dad refused advice he didn't want to hear, or when he thought somebody was telling him what to do): "Drop dead."

"Morrie! Morrie! Stop squeezing my balls! I can't give away my grapes for less than twenty-nine cents."

(Overheard by Larry when Larry was in eighth grade. Larry had completed a summer school typing class at

Vocational High School located in downtown Minneapolis and worked in Dad's produce brokerage office every day, typing stuff that was maybe useless make-work.

To Larry, it all seemed to be "macho theater" at the George C. Palmer Brokerage Company, a hardboiled cut-throat business that frightened Larry. While in the office his father seemed so unlike the rough-but-mostly-gentle man Larry knew at home, sans his tough business mask.

Larry knew nothing about masks back then when Dad would shout and gesticulate wildly while on his office phone, cuss like a sailor, and then fiercely slam the phone down hard into the receiver after each call.  
Bam!

Of course Larry did not know then that there were a lot of Italian, Greek, and Jewish Mafioso types in the Minneapolis produce and trucking businesses, where you had to talk and act like them to survive.

George C. Palmer was Babu, our mother's father who was given that name by Paul when Paul was an infant.

Dad had to give up a career in mechanical engineering. He had a small part in building the B-29 during World War II, the plane that dropped atomic bombs on Japan.

He had to then move his family from Detroit to Minneapolis and kowtow to Babu and agree to be monitored daily by Babu against any kind of further hanky-panky of the sort Dad had undertook with Larry and Paul's piano teacher back in Detroit.

That was the price he had to pay to keep his marriage together: move to Minneapolis and work for Babu where he could keep an eye on Dad.

As five-year-old and seven-year-old children, of course, Larry and Paul had no idea why Dad had kept lingering with her while Larry and Paul sat waiting in the car for him after their piano lessons in Detroit. She was a nice lady.

(After modest dinners Mom prepared in the usual lean times in the winter when there was little produce for Dad to sell. Remember this was before frozen foods): "That was delicious. What there was of it. And so now what's for dinner?" ("Oh, Ed!")

(Tchaikovsky, Chopin): "Mama's boys"

(Verdi, Rossini): "Circus music"

(Brahms): "Melancholy, yearning, magic" (Dad played Brahms beautifully and with feeling - a bonding of two souls, one here, one over there and on the page)

(Bach): "Too mathematical" (That always pissed Larry off. Larry loved Bach, and he played Bach a lot just to annoy Dad and when Larry was sure Dad wasn't around, Larry played Brahms)

(Gershwin): Dad spent hours upon hours on the piano trying to perfectly play "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Concerto in F" and never quite got there, his mistakes usually punctuated with "Come on, Johnson!" or "OH SHEEEE IT," or simply "God-dammit!!"

"All right already!"

"You're gonna make me puke."

"Hummana, hummana, hummana!"

(Whenever Paul looked to find something cold to drink while holding open the refrigerator door) "Shut that damn door. The fridge is not an air conditioner."

"The worst thing that can happen to you is you die, and that ain't so bad." (What he forgot to tell us is how hard that would be for those he left behind).

"I can see what you had for lunch on your shirt."

(Our Uncle Doug said of him): "When your Dad walked into a room, everyone knew it." (There are a lot of ways to interpret that).

"Look alive!"

"Get on the ball!"

"Is that supposed to be a joke?"

"You're one big joke!"

"You gonna make me wait all day?"

(About a TV program we were watching): "How can you stand to watch that swill?"

(About TV in general): "That thing is going to rot your mind."

"What a stuffed shirt, he looks like he's got a hot poker stuck up his ass."

"You wanna win at poker, you gotta get caught bluffing at least once."

"Watch out, that guy's as smart as a fox."

(Describing a couple in love): "Those two went at it like a couple of minks."

"He couldn't find his ass if you drew him a map."

"I'm going upstairs to conk out."

(While loading and lighting his pipe) "Don't take up smoking, it's a dirty habit."

"Don't go out on a date unless you got a few bucks in your pocket and can show her a good time."

"Whatever you do, never marry a women just because she has big tits."

"You gonna just sit around here and mope all day?"

"I've been and gone two hours and you're still sitting in that same chair."

"Get the lead out."

"You wanna go back to bed and try getting out on the right side this time?"

"Let's clean up this rat's nest!"

"If I'm gonna get any of these Hydrox cookies I gotta hide 'em."

(Sharing his beer): "Hey, I said just a sip."

"Do that one more time and you and me are going to tangle."

(Commenting on your tangled, messy hair): "What you got living in there?"

"You're not so big I still can't spank you."

"She screamed like a banshee."

"One thing about women and cars, you gotta treat 'em both with respect."

"You're sitting in the wrong pew, fella."

"There are no two ways about it."

"You wanna stick out like a sore thumb?"

"You wanna wind up being a bum?"

"Hallelujah I'm a bum!"

"Sometimes I feel like being a bum and then see how you kids figure out what to do then."

"You want this, you want that, here, why don't you just take my wallet."

"Quit beating around the bush and get to the point."

"You got till nine nine o'clock, then I'm throwing your friends out."

"If you're stuck go find two sticks and rub them together."

"I'm gonna go get a steam and a rub."

"So you think you got problems? I got half a boxcar full of rotten strawberries."

"Don't give me a lotta your backtalk."

"You're not making any sense. Start over."

(Wanting an explanation): "Draw me a picture."

"Let's get this kitchen organized"

"When's the last time you said something nice to your mother?"

"Now go to your room. And I'll tell you when you can come out."

(Discovering it hadn't been done): "Who's supposed to take out the trash this week?"

"You can eat in the car if you're careful, but don't leave any trash."

"You should see what I see when I look at you eat."

(From the kitchen): "I can hear you eating with your mouth open from here."

"That's not the way to hold a knife."

"Don't everyone try to turn the Lay-Z-Susan at once!"

"Don't turn the Lay-Z-Susan so fast!"

"You want me to cut up your meat for you?"

"Save some milk for everybody else."

(Taking your leftovers): "If you're done eating, send me over your plate."

(Noticing you hardly ate anything): "Your Mom goes to a lot of trouble making dinner, the least you could do is not eat before dinner."

(Noticing you hardly ate anything): "You don't eat now there'll be nothing again until tomorrow."

(Noticing you hardly ate anything): "Don't come crying to me if you get hungry later."

(Dinner having just been consumed): "Now to finish this off with some Graham crackers and chocolate sauce!" ("Oh, Ed!")

(In the car): "Who keeps playing with the mirror?"

(When you're fiddling with the car radio): "Just turn that damn thing off."

(About driving with the right technique): "Always watch out for other nuts on the road and don't ride the clutch."

"Are you nuts? You must be joking. You gotta be nuts."

"Do I look like I'm made out of money?"

"Now if it's anything you may need for school I'll pop for it."

"That pie cost me only six bits."

"Business ain't so good right now, you're gonna have to wear your shoes a little longer."

(Eating yet another hot dish): "What we don't eat we can give to the dog."

"Make me proud of ya."

(After reciting good things that happened to you): "Looks like you had yourself quite a day."

"If there's one thing I cannot abide it's a managing woman." (Is why Paul chose to never introduce Dad to the mothers of Paul's buddies)

"There's three things every young man must possess. One: a dark blue suit. Two: enough spending money in his pockets. Three: knowing how to dance."

"A redheaded woman can make a choo-choo jump its track." (may have already been included in the above but so it goes with short-term memory loss).

"Now I've shown ya the facts of life. But Paul here's one more: If ya knock her up ya gotta marry her."

"Don't be such a wet blanket."

"Stop your whining or I'll give you something to really cry about."

"Rise and shine!"

(Sung): "Oh what a beautiful morning. Oh what a beautiful day."

"You don't need a fancy schmancy college degree. There's more than a thousand ways to make a buck."

"All of you five kids are all going to attend college. All for at least one semester. So that you can then all discover how unimportant it is."

"I'm keepin' my eye on you."

(You've run out of options): "I think you've reached the end of the line."

"Go soak your head."

"They were two people riding backwards on a train, each thinking the other person liked it that way."

"Stop mumbling. E-nun-ci-ate."

(Sung): "I got me a red hot mama, gonna ride her choo-choo train!" ("Oh, Ed!")

"If you're not gonna help, then get out of the way."

"You handle her with kid gloves. She's a prima donna."

(From bathroom): "Somebody hand me some toilet paper!"

"My Uncle Willy always had twelve kids running around his farm with no clothes on."

"I thought I had it bad with no shoes until I saw a man with no feet."

"Why do you leave the fat on your plate, that's the best part."

(After warming a bowl of milk and putting torn pieces of buttered toast into it, eating it all with a spoon): "This always helps me sleep. Your Gramma Mary used to make this for me as a kid."

(While eating a drumstick): "I think this chicken is still alive."

(About something he wanted to get rid of or not face): "I'm gonna take a match to this." or "Let's take a match to it."

(possibly a repeat): "The worst thing that can happen to you is you die, and that ain't so bad."

(Exasperated by your stupidity or stubbornness): "Do I have to hit you over the head with a two-by-four?"

(Exasperated by your stupidity or stubbornness): "Do I have to spell it out for you?"

(Exasperated by your stupidity or stubbornness): "It's staring you right in the face!"

(Exasperated by your stupidity or stubbornness, and you not seeing the solution): "If you got any closer, it would bite you in the ass!"

"She can't sing worth a damn, but those sure as hell are some great tits."

"He's a big cry-baby."

(A serious warning): "Just keep that up."

(When Bugle would fart his noxious farts, often under the dining room table at dinner): "P U, what have you been feeding that dog?"

(Affecting Chinese accent): "Woman who cook carrots and peas in same pot unsanitary."

(About the JFK assassination): "He had it coming."  
(Dad thought JFK was a socialist)

"I sure hope you have kids of your own some day so you'll appreciate what I have had to put up with."

"Someday you'll learn the value of a buck."

"Oh get off your high horse already!"

"Who died and made you God?"

"What makes you think I give a good goddamn?"

"We need to get going. Can you put it in second gear?"

"Do I have to light a fire under you to get you going?" -- "What's taking Sylvia so long, light a fire under her!"

(Upon entering Paul and Larry's bedroom in the basement after being kept awake by their post-bedtime chatter that floated up the laundry chute): "Do you two have ANY idea what time I have to get up in the morning?" Now how about I wake you two up at 4:30?"

"She just has to wiggle her cute behind and he comes running."

"Before you marry someone, make sure she can cook. Your mom couldn't even cook an egg."

"You throw a steak on a fire, add some onions, and suddenly you're a chef!"

"This steak tastes like shoe leather."

"You want a license to steal? Become a lawyer."

"Put your Aunt Helen and your Aunt Vivian together and you'll never get a word in edgewise."

(About his Uncle Joe, Grampa Oscar's brother, who was institutionalized in Faribault, Minnesota and after Dad and our family had first visited with Uncle Joe): "He's probably the happiest guy I know. Don't feel sorry for him. We should be so lucky." (A lasting memory of Uncle Joe as we said goodbye to him through the staves of an iron gate: he has a few days' whisker stubble and saltine crackers stuck between his teeth. We were children. Uncle Joe fascinated and frightened us at the same time. When Dad and Joe conversed it was as though we were witnessing children's conversation.

(About Mr. Olson, an assistant Boy Scout Master who resembled and often acted like Nazi Heinrich Himmller): "What a horse's ass!"

(The closest Larry ever got to the birds and bees talk): "I sure as hell hope you never come home someday and tell me you've knocked up some girl." ("Nope, sure won't!")

(To Paul and Larry when they were their late teens): "Gee, you're getting so big. I guess I'm gonna have to now use psychology on you."

(Every night at the family dinner table): "Anyone had a victory today to tell us about?" (Then one by one, Paul, Larry, Sue, Sylvia, Rick, and Mom would tell a tale of something, anything, that could be construed as being an achievement, before we all cleared the dishes from the table, washed and dried them, and then often formed around Dad at the piano where we joyfully sang songs together).