

Heather
LAMPE

The young are the restless

A child's laughter is sweetest in death's face

"Come on, sweetie, take your hand out of the blender. We don't play with things that frappe."
Dear God, why do people procreate? Please strike me down if I



ever volunteer to baby-sit for anyone again.
"Please don't eat the plants ... OK, don't eat the dirt either ... Take the Miracle-Gro out of your nose. Step away from the fern."
When I said I would baby-sit, I only had intentions of making a little cash and giving a friend an evening of peace. But I had a kind of understanding and realization this weekend that I haven't had since I found out that Bert and Ernie were just felt bags with hair and that the World Wrestling Federation was all a sham.
I felt a closeness with God that I haven't had in all my 22 years. I realized that it is utterly amazing that I lived through childhood. I believe it is a considerable achievement that any of us live past age 12.
I spent the whole evening keeping this 2-year-old out of the hands of death. Every move she made, she was flirting with mortality. Though her mother had attempted to make her home child-proof and safe from danger, this little darling pried out

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the plastic caps that go into the wall sockets and tried to give Barbie and Ken some free electrolysis.
I couldn't imagine how her parents ever got anything done. I had to follow this child around for six hours to make sure she didn't get into any perilous situations. She decided that she wanted to spend the evening spinning herself around and falling down. I had to be referee between her and the furniture to see that she didn't fall on a corner and crack her head open.
I believe that we must all be born without a sense of danger. It takes our parents and guardians, who managed to live through their childhoods, to rescue us and teach us not to venture into traffic and not to put dimes in our nasal passages.
Throughout childhood we are basically squatty, unpaidstuntpeople with runny noses. Because it isn't just toddlers who can't sense hazardous conditions, for some kids it takes all 18 years to learn not to stick a fork in a toaster.
My younger brothers are prime

examples. They shouldn't really be alive today. Whether it was eating a whole bottle of children's aspirin or sticking their tongues to frozen metal, they both have cheated the afterlife more than once.
The older of the two had a fascination with fireworks and gunpowder.
On the Fourth of July, he scoffed at sparklers and smoke bombs. He had to get the largest firecrackers legally available to children under 5 feet tall. And if mom and dad wouldn't allow that, then he would befriend the neighbor child whose parents were liberal enough to drive him over the Nebraska-Missouri border for M-80s.
And he wasn't content with just lighting and throwing them. He liked to see how long he could hold them before they would blow up. He also liked to dig through the garbage and find aluminum cans to blow up. Our family pets have shrapnel scars to prove it.
My younger brother teased death by playing with the older brother. In

the 13 years since he was born, he has suffered hundreds of bruises, a concussion, a broken arm and a hernia at the hands of my older brother. He was also shot at close range with a pump-action BB gun by my older brother. All in fun, of course, all in fun.
I shouldn't make my brothers the pawns of this column though. I was equally as stupid as a child. When I was in grade school, I tried to jump off the roof of our utility shed. I was in love with "The Fall Guy's" Lee Major and was practicing for the show.
When I was in fourth grade, I wanted to see what the fascination was with shaving one's legs and I ended up with two thighs full of Band-Aids and a near slash of the large artery in my upper leg.
I'd like to end this column with a disclaimer for my parents and with some of their words of wisdom.
Despite what I have told you, my parents tried and for the most part succeeded in keeping us from harm. Unfortunately, you can't be with a child every moment so you must instill them with knowledge and common sense. So in the words of my beloved mother ... don't run with scissors.
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Brent
POPE

Born to blunder

The Pope men are graced with clumsiness

Since the dawn of the human race, three things in life have been certain: death, taxes, and the fact that men in the Pope family are accident prone. My grandpa is, my dad is, and I am.



To prove that what I like to call "Jack Tripper Disease" is passed on from previous generations, I must tell you that my dad once flipped an entire steak into his lap at a fancy restaurant, prompting the Olympic-diving judges at the next table to give him 9.8's straight across the board. (They had to deduct two-tenths for the tiny steak sauce splash.)
To give you an idea of my extensive history of clumsy accidents, here are some of the really dumb ones in chronological order:
Age 2: I was sitting in a high chair in my Grandma Pope's kitchen. I tried to stand up and fell out of the high chair headfirst. The damage: 16 stitches. On the good side, this episode was later the inspiration for a B movie called "The Boy Who Thought He Could Fly and Cracked His Head Open."
Age 5: My dad and I were fishing at Lake Jacomo in Missouri. I ask my dad where I should spray the Off to keep the mosquitoes away. "All over," he said. So I sprayed it in my eyes. Incidentally, this was also the same night that my dad got a fishing hook caught in his scalp. At first

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he didn't know the hook was caught in his head. He actually yelled, "Wow, I've got a bite, and it's a big one!" Then he reeled himself in.
Age 9: I was climbing a tree. At the height of about 8 feet, I lost my grip and slid all the way down, using my chest as a brake. When I went inside my house to get some sympathy, my parents said, "We'd like to help you out, but we don't have a Band-Aid that big."
Age 13: I was chasing my dog through the backyard. He jumped over the fence. I mistakenly thought I could also do this, but I caught my foot on the top of the fence. On the way down, I saw a stake sticking out of the ground heading right for the part of my anatomy that doesn't want to land on ANYTHING hard, let alone a stake. Luckily, it missed that part of my body. A couple inches to the right, and I would have understood that sad look on my dog's face that time we brought him back home from the vet.
Age 17: I was working at the family farm, moving hay with a

pitchfork. I went for another scoop of hay and stuck one prong of the pitchfork directly into my foot. By an amazing coincidence, my dad once stuck an ax directly into his foot while chopping wood, also at the age of 17. (How cute — generational deja vu.)
Age 21: I was in Spain during my Navy years. Somehow I got sand in my eye and rubbed it so much that I scratched my cornea. I ended up wearing a patch on my eye for a week, earning new nicknames like "Cabbage Patch Pope," "Blackbeard the One-Eyed Pirate" and "The Dumb-Ass That Sanded Part of His Eyeball Off With His Own Hand."
Age 22: I was eating at the Bonanza in south Lincoln. I scooped up a baked potato with a large spoon and attempted to get it all the way to my plate — a good 2 feet away. Sadly, this unfortunate tater tumbled off of the spoon toward a large vat of nacho cheese. I reached out with my skunk-like reflexes, but it was too late. I thought about trying to retrieve it, but after envisioning several messy possibilities, I decided to cut

my losses and walk casually back to my table. (This is going to seem pretty unbelievable, but a few minutes later my roommate walked over with his plate and right in the middle was — you guessed it — a baked potato smothered with nacho cheese. I didn't dare ask if he had covered it with cheese himself.)
And finally, just last month, I was going through the drive-thru at McDonald's. I drove up to the first window as instructed. Then, after paying, I drove off WITHOUT stopping at the second window to pick up my food. By the time I figured out what I had done, I had screwed up the orders of the next eight carloads of people. And here's worst thing about this ordeal: I DID IT TWICE! IN ONE MONTH!
At this point you may be wondering "What's the point?" Well here it is. There are people who are just as clumsy if not clumsier than I am. And we're not doing these things on purpose, it's hereditary. It's in that one little gene whose motto is "Hey, why stand up when it's so easy to fall down? Why hold onto something when it's so easy to drop it?"
So be careful, people. There are a lot of clumsy folks out there just waiting to accidentally trip and shove you into a large vat of nacho cheese. (And you don't even like nachos.)
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