

Not!

Like many other guys, I often find myself thinking about how/whether I'll adapt as a dad to the many changes that come down the pike. I think this thinking usually takes place after I've been thinking about women, which would often be well before having thought some thoughts about tools, which typically occurs long after I'd thunk about football (I think), which me thinks falls near my thoughtification of large trucks. Say, anybody else suddenly picturing women doing stuff to him with tools in a large truck parked on a football field? Give me a moment here...

Okay, where were we? Oh yeah—while thinking about my future fathering, aspiring to be an at-least-mildly-better-than--passable dad, I look to a variety of sources for that balanced mixture of instruction & inspiration. My “inspiration,” if you will.

For starters, I talk to other dads of young children. Almost always, dads of children only slightly older than mine, always-always those with daughters. Just as a couple of them have shared with me, I'm betting many of you have heard that age-old, favorite plan for the dreadful day their little girls have their first date. How it typically goes: some well-dressed (no doubt for the first time in his miserable, pimply little life) adolescent punk arrives to pick up your little princess (his impure thoughts of her practically printed on his forehead in large font), you open the door (wishing you'd nailed it shut), exchange introductions (“Hi, my name is Jacob” “Hello Jacob, my name is ‘Sir’”), you shake his video game-calloused hand (with the force of the jaws of a pit bull), and the few minutes he waits for your little angel (who damn well better not be tarting up like Jacob is picturing) are spent in the living room watching you clean your pistol. Your lovely daughter shows up ready to go, you wish her (and only her) a good time, and watch her leave with her date (the

bastard).

This is the way I picture my own situation, except when I shake the boy's hand it's with the force of the Jaws of Life, and the firearm I'm cleaning is a shotgun the size of a railroad tie.

Additionally, memories of my own father and my grandfather are productive sources for me to mine. The main thing from my father I'll be applying to my little ones, as they become less little, is a collection of jokes complete with lessons on their proper delivery. In case anyone is wondering if any of the material I plan on sharing with my kids might not be appropriate, I'll put your mind at ease: the material most certainly *won't* be appropriate. I of course recognize the need to approach this endeavor a little more responsibly when it's happening to, er, I mean with, my daughter. While many (dang-near all) of the best jokes tend to be appropriate-challenged, an awful lot of them are really, unmistakably sexist. Witness here my solemn pledge: my little sweetheart's mind will never be polluted by such glaring misogynist trash. Until she's good and desensitized. Certainly no earlier than second grade. It's just proper parenting, and that's how I roll.

As for my mother's father, God rest his soul, the one nugget of his to which I've already "treated" his two youngest great-grandchildren is his little version of the old get-them-to-look-the-other-way-and-steal-something-from-their-plate game. (Show me someone who says that's no longer funny and I'll show you a LIAR.) With our esteemed patriarch, it always involved a mouse. He'd start it up saying something like "did you see the mouse?" or "watch out for the mouse." It continued with his unsuspecting little mark turning his head, having forgotten his repeatedly falling for the scam since diaperhood. It ended with Grandpa making the kid's dinner roll vanish from his plate with the speed of a hummingbird on amphetamines. I referred to the victim as a male on purpose, because I don't recall my cousin Pam, the lone granddaughter amidst all us

grandsons, ever seeing her roll suffer the same fate. Maybe the old man had a soft spot for her. Maybe she got wise to it long before I joined the grand-ranks. Or, it just might be, Pam was victimized as much as the rest of us were, but every time it happened I was already in the other room crying.

It goes without saying I have a soft spot for my little girl, and would likewise for a granddaughter should I ever be blessed with one, but it won't keep me from scamming their food regularly. My grandfather had the gift of stealth, I require practice.

Speaking of scamming, now onto that president of ours (columns just don't feel complete without a little fun at his expense)—yes, believe it or not, he too is one of my inspirations. This isn't coming from any observation of his relationship with his daughters, though I don't doubt he loves his kids just as much as his predecessors loved theirs. He might even care for them as much as he does himself, but that's an awfully tall mountain to climb. This also isn't about me telling my kids at some point, "of course you could become president—this guy got there, didn't he?" I'm actually talking about his setting a perfect non-example for children.

You know, like if your 16-year-old son starts hanging out with a bunch of juvenile delinquents (like that Jacob punk), in hoping he'll consider his own welfare, you tell him "do NOT use drugs—look what happened to River Phoenix." Or if your 14-year-old daughter starts wanting to dress and behave more, shall we say, "maturely," you try encouraging a little restraint or moderation on her part by telling her "just look at Miley Cyrus—you do NOT want to be like her." Well, I've already started running some of my own scenarios in my head. For example, say my 10-year-old son is trying to make the little league team, and he's competing for the last roster spot with a boy who is more athletic and has played the game longer than he. So one day I find out my boy is considering anonymously tipping the coach that his rival is responsible

for the graffiti someone else spray-painted on the backstop, thus taking him out of contention. I then sit him (my son) down and try to steer him straight: "Listen, you do NOT want to do this; look at what Obama did to his opponents in Illinois. You will NOT be able to live with yourself." Or, say it's my daughter's first day in kindergarten, and right after she gets home from school I get a call from her teacher, who tells me she (my daughter) threw a tantrum after not getting her way. I then sit my little girl down and try to steer *her* straight: "Listen, you are NOT allowed to behave like that to your teacher. Remember that tape of Obama I showed you? Do you really want to act like *him*?"

You gotta admit, most any decent 5-year-old would NOT relish the idea of being that big a brat.

I am very confident my children will become fine, upstanding citizens, and for one simple reason: the majority of their time is spent with their mother, NOT me.