

# *The Preacher Came for Dinner*

*by Frederick Wickert*



The preacher and his wife have accepted an invitation for dinner, after the church services on Sunday. Dinner to us is lunch to some, but Sunday dinner is a big meal to us. What some folks call dinner, we call supper.

Mom and Dad of course, want to make a good impression on the preacher and his wife. The preacher's wife is especially sophisticated as she is a visiting college professor with a photographic memory. She never forgets anything. She can flip through the pages of a book and tell you six months later what the book said on any page you want to ask her about, and she will do it verbatim. The preacher was for a few years a professor of anthropology in a University in Sydney, Australia before he decided he wanted to become a minister. He had been doing research there on the Aborigine peoples of Australia.

Due to the sophistication of our dinner guests, my parents were interested in all of us being on our best behavior and making as good an impression as we possibly could.

We had some pets living in the household. There was a cat and two Collies and an Alsatian police dog. None of our guests were in any danger from them and one might expect they were all going to be on their good behavior.

One of the Collies was a tri-color female named Gypsy.\* She was predominantly black with some white, and a few tan markings, especially at her eyebrows. Gypsy was a highly intelligent dog and learned quickly. She loved mom and usually was with mom wherever she went around the house.

Because of her intelligence, I had taught Gypsy a few tricks. I had seen the movie "Lassie Come Home," and in the story Lassie opened a door by putting her teeth around the doorknob and turning it. Thinking it a clever trick, I taught Gypsy to do it.

The preacher had three churches to serve. On Sundays, he first preached at our church in Gilboa. After our service ended he had fifteen minutes to drive to Grand Gorge church three miles distant, and conduct a service there. In the evening he conducted a third service in the North Blenheim church. He and his wife were to come to our house after the Grand Gorge service. We attended the Gilboa service and had time to get home and have all prepared for their arrival.

We had a large and delicious dinner. Mom and Dad enjoyed conversation with the preacher and his wife during and after the meal. After dinner my grandmother and sisters cleared the table and went into the kitchen to wash dishes and put everything away. My parents, the preacher and his wife took seats in the living room and continued their conversation.

The living room stretched across the middle of the house from front to rear. The dining room was off the living room in the front part of the house. The grand piano occupied the end of the living room adjacent to the front of the house and the front door was beside the piano. At the rear of the living room on the left side past the end of the sofa was the entrance to the bathroom.

It so happened the preacher had seated himself in a chair on the opposite side of the room from the bathroom door and had a straight line view of the bathroom interior from where he was seated.

The time came during the afternoon that Mom felt the call of nature. She excused herself and went in the bathroom. She shut the door behind her and got comfortably seated on the throne. Gypsy missed her, and wanting to be near her, went to the bathroom door, put her teeth around the doorknob and entered the bathroom. I had failed to teach Gypsy to close the door behind her.

All conversation came to a sudden stop. Gypsy having opened the bathroom door gave the preacher a view I am sure neither he nor Mom ever contemplated. Mom yelled at Gypsy to get out of there. Gypsy, being unaccustomed to being dealt with in this manner was confused, and in no hurry to comply.

The preacher became red in the face, my sister rushed to get Gypsy out and close the door. She remained on guard at the door until Mom completed her business. When Mom came out of the bathroom she looked at me and emphatically stated, "By heck, you taught her to do that and you can darned well teach her not to!"

The atmosphere remained one of embarrassment for the next fifteen minutes and conversation dwindled rapidly. The preacher's wife suggested to her husband that something at home needed his attention before the Blenheim service. They gave their thanks for a lovely meal and enjoyable afternoon (said with a straight face), and made their retreat.

Many times I have thought of what fun it must have been, if one could be a fly on the wall in the preachers car on the way home that day. Needless to say, I refrained from teaching Gypsy anymore tricks and no longer encouraged her to perform the one of opening the door.