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SUGAR AND SPICE

by Bill Smiley



The Organization Man

All my life I have admired organized people. This doesn't mean that I like them. In fact, my usual response to this type is instant hatred, because they make me look so confused in comparison.

You know the sort of person I mean. The chap leering at you from the life insurance ads. Mortgage on house paid up, pension all figured out, and a big, fat annuity when he retires at 60. And dies at sixty-one from sheer boredom because there's nothing left to organize.

Then there's the wife who runs her house like clockwork. Everything on time. Not a dirty ash-tray. Not a half-hour in the day of pure bumming for anybody in the family. Surely it isn't her fault that her kids become greasy beatniks the minute they leave home, and her husband goes the normal course, from ulcer to coronary to stroke.

Much as I detest organization, I've got to let admiration overrule distaste. It's not easy, after a lifetime of comfortable chaos, but I've been driven to it. By my daughter. In a fit of teenage blues the other day, she was sounding off on the futility of life. Naturally, I told her she was crazy, that life was a glorious adventure.

"Huh! Some adventure! Same old thing, day after day, week after week, year after year. Tell me, Dad, what do you and Mom have to look forward to?"

Well, that struck home. It didn't seem quite the moment to talk about the resurrection and the life ever after. Or even about growing old gracefully. Or even about the sheer joy of having the living-room papered.

It was right there and then I decided she was right. I don't plunge ahead toward a goal. I merely go around in ever-decreasing circles. I don't seize life by the scruff of the neck and shake it. I merely beg it to leggo and stop shaking me.

And this is the reason I, who has never made a serious New Year's resolution in my life, have a list of them drawn up. No more of this tottering from

crisis to crisis. No more of this being late and lazy, inconsistent and inefficient, unhealthy and unwealthy.

Resolved: that I'm going to stop fighting with my wife. In 20 years, I haven't won a single battle. Why spoil a record like this?

Resolved: that I'm going to stop smoking, drinking and ogling. I think my lungs and liver are shot by now, so the first two don't amount to much. But the third one is liable to give me a heart attack from sheer indignation that these shameless hussies are allowed to go around like that on the beach. It says here.

Resolved: that I'm going to stop pampering my kids. The next time Hugh suggests he needs another ten bucks, I'll punch him right in the nose. The next time Kim tells me I'm an old fud, I'll take a strap to her. It's going to be difficult, as he outweighs me by 10 pounds, and I couldn't beat that sweet if she committed murder. But organization will make it possible.

Resolved: that I'm going to take regular exercises, something more strenuous than bending my elbow, striking a match, or taking a cap off a jar of jam.

Resolved: that this column will be written at my leisure, not to a deadline which means sprinting through the snow to the mailbox at 9.59 p.m. In my slippers.

Resolved: that I will make lesson plans like the other teachers, and not arrive daily, gaily, and ask, "Well, where were we yesterday?"

Resolved: that I will stop being nice to people just because I like them, and will assiduously court those who can do me some good.

Sorry, we've run out of space. There are 374 other resolutions, and I feel that I've just scratched the surface. But look for a more dynamic, disgusting Bill Smiley in '66. I'm organized.

Toronto Telegram News Service

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