

QUOTH THE MAVEN

BY BEVERLY KING POLLOCK

Dear Mr. Webster

The delicacies of "chutzpa" are no longer restricted for Jewish enjoyment only. Chutzpa is now a wasp "in" word with show biz folks and like that.

For years I accepted the classic definition that chutzpa is when a child kills his mother and father and then throws himself on the mercy of the court because he's an orphan.

But recently I came across an example that Webster should use the next time he revises his dictionary.

First a little background music. My 12-year-old son has a morning paper route. It's supposed to build character and look impressive on his college applications.

For the most part it's a good idea. My son learns the value of a dollar (it's something that's spent like water unless forced into a savings account) and he learns the necessity for self-discipline (at 5:30 a.m. the alarm goes off and he goes off too, else at 7 a.m. people can't have the paper with their coffee).

It is only natural that a paper boy should have a substitute (in case of camp, Bar Mitzvah, the usual). But if a paper boy wakes up with 103 temperature, he can't wake up a substitute in the wee small hours.

So who delivers in the car in the rain? His mother, the maven! (Yes, a paper route has helped me build character.)

Now please understand -- this is not an example of chutzpa. After all, what greater joy for a Jewish mother than to do for her child -- particularly when she can throw it up to him for a long time afterwards.

To continue. My son (after a bout with the flu, which I took over when he was through with it) set out one rainy afternoon to collect from his customers.

I was at home sneezing, coughing and minding my own business when the phone rang. A customer of my son. Her dog had jumped its leash and bitten my bubbelah.

Yes, the dog was well cared for, had rabies shots and the bite on my son's leg was not serious. But her Anglo-Saxon son the doctor thought it advisable for my son the paperboy to go to the hospital for a checkup. And since I had the flu, they took him.

My son got four nice fang marks, a tetanus shot and a pair of torn trousers out of the deal. Now comes the crucial point of the story. Two days after the biting, who got the \$12 bill from the hospital. Guess!

Therefore in all humility I offer you a new definition. When a dog owner puts the "bite" on you after his pet does, that's real chutzpa.

If you have one to top this, please let me know!

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HUMOR IS TRAGEDY MADE FUNNY--A TENSION RELIEVER OF BAD SITUATIONS--ACCORDING TO THESE THREE EXPERTS WHO LECTURED LAST WEEK AT LAS VEGAS HIGH

SCHOOL. FROM LEFT, VETERAN CHARACTER ACTOR B. S. PULLEY, CAESAR'S PALACE PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR LENNY KENT, AND COMEDIAN RONNIE MARTIN.

READING UP

The Clark County School District's Reading Improvement Program, which reaches 570 third grade youngsters in 51 schools, is an apparent success, according to an interim evaluation released by the Research and Development Department. So far 80 students have been "tested out" of the program. While they were reading an average six months below expectations when they entered, now they average three months above grade level in

reading. More students are being tested daily, and for those now reading at or above grade level, attendance in special program is no longer required.

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