

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
28 March 1993

Rolling with the war weapon By Jay Graybeal

Humerous columns became an important element in the literary sections of nineteenth century newspapers. Writers poked fun at a wide variety of subjects including the opposite political party, neighboring communities or regions, ethnic groups, foreigners and those who were not "overly burdened" with "smarts," good looks, social graces or anything else deemed essential by Society.

The following article by Ira N. Barnes of Freedom describes a family reunion on the occasion of a couple's 25th wedding anniversary. The column originally ran in the April 16, 1926 issue of the Westminster *Democratic Advocate*. Mr. Barnes poked fun at a then current topic, Prohibition, by naming one of the guests "Beersheba" and noting that the guests anticipated a "bountiful supply of home brew." He also dealt with some age-old conflicts which arise in families, the wife's use of a rolling pin to settle arguments with her husband, a generation gap, and a husband's relationship with his mother-in-law.

"Exhibited Her War Weapon"

"Last Saturday, Mr. Silly Shorty, a very prominent resident of the Barrens, held a family reunion, the day also being the 25th anniversary of Mr. Shorty's wedding.

"Anticipating good eats, as well as a bountiful supply of home brew members of the Shorty family from Dan to Beersheba came together in great numbers. Some came in autos, some in buggies, some in farm carts and a very large number of other astride Shank's old mare. After dinner had been served, Mrs. Shorty brought into the dining room the family rolling pin, gaily bedecked with ribbons depicting every hue of the rainbow.

"As a reason for this ostentatious performance of Mrs. Shorty, she explained to the assembled guests that this old rolling pin had been instrumental in adjusting many a decided difference between herself and her dear hubby during the many long years that they had trotted together in double harness. The company then all repaired to the parlor, where the elderly members indulged in an exciting game of penny ante, while the younger portion, to the music of jazz, participated in the Charleston, bunny-hugging, shimming and turkey-trotting. After becoming tired of these innocent diversions, Miss Sissie Shorty, Silly's oldest gal, constructed a genealogical tree of the Shorty family but discovering many rotten, gnarled and naughty limbs, these were summarily pruned and discarded.

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

“Further tracing the roots of their family tree, the fact was deduced that the original progenitors of the Shorty family in America came over from England in the Mayflower, mostly as butlers, valets, cooks, maids, men-of-all-work and other servants. Delving still deeper into their genealogical rootlets it was finally ascertained that one of the remote ancestors of the Shorty family was hung at old Newgate Prison in England for the murder of his mother-in-law. In those days English law was very strict. At the present time in this country, no one would be subjected to capital punishment for such a trivial offense; especially if tried by a jury of married men. They would not only acquit the accused, but would also present him with a medal for bravery. After the discovery of this last fact regarding the Shorty lineage, consideration of the genealogical tree was brought to a sudden close, and Miss Sissie for the further entertainment of the numerous guests eloquently recited the following immortalized lines:

‘Depend upon it my snobbish friend, Your family thread you can’t ascend Without good reason to apprehend, You’ll find it waxed at the farther end By some common occupation Or worse than that your boasted line May end in a loop of stranger twine, That choked some of your relation.’”