

## *Daughter had him starring in ‘Father of the (Idaho) Bride’*

I have survived a harrowing event. I was one of the lucky ones who lived to tell about it. One of the fortunate “boys who came home.” One of those who dodged the bullets and missed the mines. I have survived as the father of the bride.

There is a great deal of pressure on the bride’s father. While the financial pressure is staggering and well-documented (most weddings are calculated in “percentage of the national debt”) the greater pressure on dad is this: He must perform flawlessly, and utter his one line with perfection as one small contributor to the epic event of the only daughter’s big day. Should he fail at this small part — at the very beginning of the ceremony — it would be a bad omen that could send the entire affair spiraling down in a fiery crash. So, relax, Dad.

My part was simply this: The preacher will ask me, “Who gives this woman to be married to this man?” And then I say, “Her mother and I.” Four simple words. “Her mother and I”. What could be hard about that? Still, I practiced incessantly until the big day.

The day came. The preliminaries raced by. The music played and I marched proudly down the aisle with my beautiful, very young (21), and only daughter. As he had promised, the preacher said, “Who gives this woman to be married to this man?” and I, with button-popping pride and evident confidence said loudly and clearly, ‘She and someone’s mother.’”

I felt it was a respectable answer to a difficult question. However I was immediately hit with three pieces of evidence, like cue balls bouncing off my bald skull, that this was an incorrect answer. The first piece of evidence was that my daughter’s fingernails embedded in my bicep. (It was just a flesh wound — I set the bone myself.) The second indicator that my answer was wrong was a look of blanched terror on the pastor’s face. Thirdly, it sounded as if someone had lighted the “laugh sign” in the sanctuary. (A feature not found in most church sanctuaries these days.)

Given the rude and painful response to my first answer I tried again “The king and I?” (More laughter.) “I give you my mother-in-law?” (Wrong again.) “Laurel and Hardy?” (Rejected.)

I knew the answer included two people so I frantically listed a string of famous duos. “Roy Rodgers and Trigger?” “Hootie and the



**“HOOT” GIBSON**

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Blowfish?” “Joe Albertson and Fred Meyer?” “Mayor Milam and the Vandellas?” “Chief Sitting Bull and Chief Pocatello?” “DOE and LMITCO?” By now I felt like a frantic, fully panicked contestant on final Jeopardy — “Do, do, do, do, do, do, do...”

Finally I asked him to repeat the question, which he did with some disgust. By now I figured he was searching for two people in our family. I couldn’t think who it would be.

“Let me give you a not so subtle hint, Mr. Gibson,” he said with disgust. He said slowly, as if I was a 4-year-old, “The answer is “Her mother and I.” I was very relieved to have the answer and I said with relief, “Her mother and the preacher.”

My daughter did not like this answer either but the preacher himself had given it as the correct answer so I went and sat next to my wife, who was so happy to see me that she dug her fingernails into my forearm. (I guess when women are overcome with love on a special day like this they don’t know their own strength.)

The rest of the wedding went off without a hitch. I feel that my little mistake loosened up the rest of the performers considerably and made for a much better ceremony.

Amy and Joshua, I love you both. God bless you on the adventure of marriage. And Joshua, if one of your daughters ever gets married, just write the answer on your hand — no one would consider it cheating: “Her mother and I.”

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**Dave “Hoot” Gibson of Idaho Falls is one of several local writers who contribute to Voices from the Valley.**