

The Bandera PROPHEET

February 19, 2020

My Mama Said

By Elena Tucker
Special to the Prophet

My mama never did tell me that life would be easy. She grew up on a West Texas farm right on the end of the Depression. As a girl she knew little about ease. She taught me to like myself, to work hard, listen hard and talk loud, if necessary. This is because my mother lost a good portion of her hearing to a scarlet fever spike in the pre-antibiotic days...days when dry land cotton farmers had no extra pennies for hearing devices. She didn't get her hearing aids until she was in college. They've never ceased to be a blessing for her...and for the rest of us. We begged her to put them in first thing every morning. She was stone-wall deaf without them. Drove us nuts.

Living with my mother almost prepared me for marriage to the Breadwinner, who also suffers from a hearing loss. Hanging out with the Breadwinner after he's removed his hearing aids is not unlike living with Murphy the hound: those eyes stare at you in the same sweet uncomprehending way. Willing, but lost. Away in a fuzzy world of their own. Love takes on a certain blend of frustration and compassion swirled together like those cool jars of peanut butter and grape jelly.

'Selective hearing' some call it. And many wives blame their spouses whether they've a medical excuse or not. This is not just us borderline-old wives. This goes for the young ones too. And it's not only our Western culture, because I've heard it from women in all parts of the world. Women everywhere aren't merely talking to their mates.

They're talking and watching. Watching the man-face, trying to gauge if there really is discernment behind that vague smile or not. Because

his head is nodding and his eyes are possibly making contact...but are my words *connecting*?

It isn't easy for the children. One of our favorite stories involves a breakfast disaster where the Breadwinner, misunderstanding a teenager's innocent remark, stands up dramatically and grinds the teen's scrambled eggs down the disposal. It was one of those landmark family events where everybody's mad then everybody laughs, and everybody learns a lesson. The family learns to talk LOUDLY and to e-nun-ci-ate. The Breadwinner learns to double-check before making sweeping gestures.

Really, it's the Breadwinner who comes out on top. Despite thinning hair and aids in both ears, he knows he's sexier than he was the day we were married. It's not just his wife who thinks that either. He got stopped on Main Street last week and was offered a modeling job. He now carries his portfolio around in his attaché case, along with crumbling maps, pot sherds, and whatever else it is that archaeologists trundle around. He has this confident aloofness that puts the onus on us when he doesn't hear. It's our fault, not his. We try to support him in this attitude.

So the suggestion would be this: don't get mad. Don't push your agenda. Don't find fault. It's not worth it. Instead, when you speak and those eyes look blankly into yours, don't stress. Just pat him on his thinning top and say fondly, "Good boy!"

It's possibly what your mama would recommend too.