

## **LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON, LIKE GRANDFATHER, TOO**

**10/21/97**

When you were a kid did you ever wreck or lose any of your father's cars, tools or sporting equipment?

Well, my brother and I certainly did and so did my children to their father. The coincidence doesn't end there, as their mother sheltered and soft-pedaled the perpetrators just as my mother did us.

At the time, my father's problem seemed quite trivial, but I realize now they were not. Brother Cliff was fearless when it came to plundering dad's equipment and clothes. The clothes he threw out a window, spirited them away, and donned them at a discreet distance from home.

His worst transgression was with dad's prize shotgun, a beautiful Hopkins & Allen double. Cliff slipped it out of the house and we went rabbit hunting.

We were returning home on a back country-macadam road and Cliff had the gun draped over both shoulders behind his neck. It fell on the end of the barrels and bent one part way closed. I pried it back to some semblance of a circle and we speculated that it happened when she was cleaning the closet. I knew they both knew better.

Murphy's Law prevailed whenever I borrowed something of dad's. No matter how hard I tried, something always seemed to happen to them.

The worst was to a '37 Ford that was new to him and was his pride and joy. I can hear him yet, "Can you believe it, a 100 horsepower motor in a Ford!"

I borrowed it one rainy day, with mom's permission while dad was at work. I needed to pick up a wiper motor for my old car in a nearby town.

The road was wet and the mechanical brakes locked when I tried to keep from rear-ending a mailman's car that had stopped unexpectedly in front of me. I did a 360 raking all four sides of the car on a three-strand cable guardrail that, fortunately for me, was there.

Mom and I planned our strategy on how best to break the news to dad. The car was parked in the drive and (I thought) hidden by the house. The taillight dangled out beyond the corner of the house by the electrical wires and the cat was out of the bag before he hit the house.

He never looked at the rest of the car, but told us both what we could do with it in no uncertain terms. It was not pretty.

So it went with fishing tackle, tools – you name it. Somehow we all overcame it and were able to laugh about it in the end. The idea for this column occurred to me the other day when the topic was being discussed with two locals.

The younger man has a teenage son who is flexing his wings with the family car for the first time. We two veterans were filling him in on what to expect. My counterpart had a unique way of dealing with his son's costly gaffe with the new family car.

The transgressor's license was nailed to the living room wall with a roofing nail and he was told he would get it back when the nail rotted.

The son wrote a letter of apology to the whole family, outlining in detail what he would do to make amends if he could be forgiven. His dad has saved the letter to be sprung when his grandchildren zing his son – and we all know it's a given.