

Writetrack

Grizzly bears and knee caps

“Let’s go for a hike on the Fourth of July,” my daughter, April, said cheerily. “We’ll hike up Precipice Canyon.”

“Yes, that sounds like fun!” chimed in my wife Julie.

“What?” they said in unison as they saw the stunned look on my face.

“You want to go for a hike? Up in the mountains?” I asked Julie incredulously.

“Yes, what’s the matter with that?”

“You complain when I park too far from the door at the grocery store. Walking in the mall wears you out. And now you’re going to hike up a mountain trail?”

“Those things are different. That’s not walking for the fun of it. I imagine

we’ll have a very good time.”

Thank goodness for Julie’s imagination. It keeps the world of reality at bay, at least temporarily. She imagines a lot of things. She imagines a nice garden full of flowers and vegetables even though she thinks “hoe” is a word Santa keeps repeating. She imagines her grandchildren are all little angels. She imagines that Willie Nelson is good looking. I wonder who she imagines she is married to? I don’t think I want to know.

She imagines what it would be like to be rich and famous. That’s why she subscribes to Peep Hole magazine, at least that’s what I call it.

“That’s People Magazine, not Peep Hole magazine,” she corrects.

“Same difference.”

She imagines she will win the lottery, but she won’t buy a ticket. She imagines her little dog, a cross between a Schnauzer and a muskrat, is cute. She even imagines that some day I will be a properly trained husband. How unrealistic is that?

“Things will work out,” she says, no matter what the circumstance. When the wolf is at the door, she looks for

doggie treats.

On the other hand, Julie says I am too much of a worrier. I consider myself a realist. I know there is a boogey man. I have seen him many times lurking behind a broad smile. He overcharges me for repairs on my car, he promises me that I will lose weight if I buy product X and he drives like an idiot. I know, you’ve seen him too.

And sometimes when I am in the woods, I worry about mountain lions and grizzly bears. I was not worried, however, about the hike we are going to take on the Fourth of July. As the old saying goes, “If a grizzly bear attacks, you don’t have to outrun the bear, you just have to outrun whoever you’re with.” I can out run Julie.

I repeated that saying to Julie and she said, “You mean you wouldn’t stay and protect me?”

“I’d send help.”

“You creep. I’ll fix you. At the first sign of an animal, I’m going to smack you in the knee with my walking stick. We’ll see then who can outrun who.”

“I was just kidding.”

Ya right, me too, heh heh.”

So it was Julie and I and April and other assorted family members and friends hiked up the trail on the Fourth of July. Christine Johnson, an old friend and April’s mother-in-law, was among the hikers. She noticed that I was uncharacteristically leading the charge up the trail.

“Mack, what’s the hurry?” she said.

“Oh, I’m just looking for animals.”

“Silly, there’s no dangerous animals around here to worry about.”

“That’s what you think. If so much as a chipmunk scampers by I’m likely to lose my kneecaps.”

Christine’s fiancé, Lynn, was by her side. He gave me a puzzled look and I could see his mouth begin to form a question when Christine stopped him.

“Never mind, Lynn. I’ve known Mack for 20 years. I’ve learned not to ask.”



By Mack McConnell

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