

A Hot Breakfast

One of my earliest memories happened at breakfast when I was about two and a half. Grandpa was out of town on a business trip, and Aunt Mary Ellen and I were having our breakfast with Grammy. I was sitting in my high chair, as usual, at the kitchen table.

You know how Grammy and Grandpa like antiques? Well, we had a round oak table in the kitchen, where we ate breakfast and most all our meals. It was covered with a tablecloth, designed with brightly colored flowers. Aunt Mary Ellen must have been about five. It was a school day, and Grammy was hurrying to get us fed, in order to get Aunt Mary Ellen off to kindergarten.

Grammy put a piece of bread in the toaster which sat on the other side of the table. Then she heard the trash truck coming down the street. Grandpa had asked her to be sure to put

the trash cans out the night before, and she had forgotten. She jumped up, telling Aunt Mary Ellen to watch me and ran outside to take the trash cans to the street before the workers got there. Well, the moment she went out one door, Aunt Mary Ellen, being an active kid, went out the other.

And I sat there alone eating my oatmeal; that is, until something strange began to happen. Smoke started to come out of the toaster. At first, it was just a little wisp, but it caught my attention. It went straight up like one of those ropes in the cartoons that comes out of a snake charmer's basket.

As I watched it, the smoke grew darker and wider. Pretty soon, smoke was coming out from under the toaster too. And that's when the table caught on fire.

Luckily, I wasn't that close to it, so I just kept watching it to see what would happen next.

Suddenly I heard a terrible scream which scared the heck out of me, as Grammy came running into the room and grabbed me out of my high chair. She unplugged the toaster from the wall, ran to the cupboard and grabbed a big pitcher. She filled it with water and threw the water on the fire, as horrible hissing sounds and a great plume of white smoke filled the room.

I didn't get my piece of toast that morning. And for quite a while after that, if you looked under the tablecloth, which I did often, you could see a big black spot where the toaster had been.
