

## Advice

There is such a thing as duty, of course, and it is sometimes conditional. But family .... that is never conditional. We stick with each other even when it might not be a good idea to do so.

I remember at age nine sitting at the kitchen table doing homework while my mother peeled potatoes and my father fooled with a lamp he was trying to get working again. Mom asked my father, "Who should I vote for, Ed?"

"Stevenson," he said, "a Democrat is always the working man's friend."

"But I like Ike," she said. "He looks like a President."

"I suppose so," said my father, "but what about Father Gallagher, Mary? He likes Stevenson."

"The priests always like Democrats," she said. "Something fishy there."

"That's sacrilegious, Mary," he said.

My mother didn't respond. A proper Irish Catholic woman in 1952 did not play against the Catholic trump card, not in our neighborhood.

"What about the bomb?" she said.

"What bomb?" asked my father.

"The Atomic Bomb," she said.

"What about the Atomic Bomb?" he inquired.

"Well," said my mother, "Ike is a military man. He'd know how to stop one."

"Now, just how would Ike stop an Atomic Bomb, Mary," said my father, exasperated.

"I don't know," she said, "and it's probably a military secret."

"Uh huh," said my father.

"Just how do you think Father Gallagher would stop a bomb?" she asked.

"Father Gallagher is a priest," said my father with some emphasis, "he doesn't have to know how to stop a bomb!"

"Well, I'm talking about if it lands here in Cornhill," she said, heat now rising in her voice. "After all, Ike can't be everywhere! Father Gallagher is always in some gin mill ....

"Mary!" interjected my father.

".... do you think Stevenson is going to come to this town and stop an Atomic Bomb?" she ended with a flourish.

My father was quiet for a moment as he stared up at the ceiling, grinding his teeth

"I think," he said finally, "you should vote for Ike."

"No!" she shouted, slamming the potato peeler down on the table. "I will vote with my husband," she said. "I'll vote for Stevenson."

My father made a good decision. He got up and left the kitchen.

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