

Growler

My grandmother Mary and her sister, Lucidia, got sort of wild and crazy on the front porch one night in the summer of 1913, and decided to go get a pail of beer ... a growler, as they were called. So off they went down the block to a saloon at Steuben and Eagle streets, a smelly den of beer, spittoons and cigars. On the way home, Molly and Lucy, as they were known, packed my 6 week old Mother and the open pail of beer in the carriage, pulling the lace coverlet down to hide the baby and the bucket. Almost back to their porch, they were intercepted by old Mrs. Beisser, who wanted to have a look at the new baby.

Grandma began to muster an excuse, when she remembered Mrs. Beisser's poor eyesight. So she rolled back the lace and opened the carriage.

"My goodness," said Mrs. Beisser, when she unexpectedly reached down to the open pail and dipped her fingers into the beer. "I can't find the baby!" she said.

Great Aunt Lucy, a born mischief maker, stifled a laugh and blurted out, "Heavens, Molly, we've lost the baby!"

"No, no," said Grandma, her elbow shooting out to Lucy's ribs, "she's only lost in her covers. But she's got an awfully wet diaper."

"She smells like beer," said Mrs. Beisser. "And cigar smoke," said Lucy, not too helpfully.

Baby Mom began at that moment to cry lustily and Grandma picked her up, saying, "Oh, she is so wet!"

"Probably from all that beer," said Lucy.

"You shouldn't give beer to a baby to make her sleep," offered Mrs. Beisser.

"Yes, yes, you're right," said Grandma, "but she was so cranky tonight."

"Maybe from the cigars," said Lucy, for which she received another elbow to the ribs.

My Mom was pretty much a teetotaler, but she always told that story with relish. It never failed to get us laughing when Grandma would deny any memory of it. Great Aunt Lucy was the source of the tale, but she was not there to defend it. After a long and agreeable life, she had died in bed after smoking her last cigar.

"It's a wonder she didn't burn the house down," said Grandma.

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