

## Columnists

### **THE BAIRD FACTS: A blend of pain and humor**

By Esther C. Baird

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BEVERLY, MASS. - "Seriously, you aren't going to eat it?" I dished myself out a bowl of the butternut squash that I'd infused with lime, garlic and cumin.

"No." My husband stared at me with a stony look.

My mother-in-law sat there politely declining to engage except to say, "It smells wonderful."

I couldn't help but notice that she didn't take any.

"It is great!" I said swallowing a big spoon of it.

My husband looked away.

"Seriously," I said with a touch of loopiness that was . . . suspicious. "There is almost no chance that a piece of my finger is in it."

"I'm not a cannibal." My husband whispered.

"More salad?" chimed my mother-in-law.

For my birthday my husband gave me a blender. I know, it's the stereotypical sexist gift. But I had asked for one because it's not just any blender. It's one of those wand blenders that allow you to puree all sorts of wonderful items including, most recently, my finger.

I was making "Zesty Squash" and while I won't replay the actual moment of blending, I will say that my new utensil has quite the powerful, and trigger-happy, motor. The blender was off when I sampled the mixture with my finger (and everybody knows that the most puree-a-licious area is around the blade) but when I lightly grazed the power button with my elbow, my new blender zipped, fully and irreversibly, on.

[No, Regular Reader, I had not unplugged it before I sampled my squash. I know, I know. My bad. I'm the one with the blended figure. Trust me, I get it.]

My mother-in-law had just come to visit, she'd been there exactly nine minutes when my finger clashed with my blender and within minute twelve of her stay, I'd collapsed into my neighbor's car, and left her with my two young girls to play "Let's Clean up Mommy's Kitchen."

My neighbor, of gardening and yard sale fame, had me to Beverly Hospital within minutes. As they wheeled me into triage with my hand wrapped in my dish towel, I became singularly focused.

"I need something for the pain!"

The nurse smiled apologetically. "I can't give you anything until they look at you."

I rolled my eyes over to my neighbor, who also happens to be a nurse. "I need you get me a shot of whiskey and sneak it back into the ER in a water bottle or juice box."

My neighbor nodded to me encouragingly and I knew she was going to do nothing of the sort.

I sighed and took a deep breath. The secret reality was I knew what to expect. I spent six months as a student chaplain at Beverly Hospital and I'll be there for another rotation this fall. I've sat with patients when they were in pain and upset, and I did my best to meet their needs. Now I was the patient with the need. I might have punched somebody (with my good hand) if they asked to pray with me at that point, or I might have found it calming and helpful. I didn't know. I felt out of control and unsure about what I wanted, beyond a pain killer. In a brief moment of clarity, I knew this experience was useful.

OK. Important life lesson duly noted . . . now where was my pain medicine!?

My husband arrived as I was taken to be sutured and he was there for the endearing moment when I yelled at the doctor that birthing two children had not hurt as much as the four shots he

stuck into my pureed finger. The doctor chuckled. Then the numbing agents of the shots worked their magic and I chuckled too and leaned in to watch him sew me up.

Not more than two hours later, I returned home stitched, splinted and happily drugged. My mother-in-law had worked no small amount of magic. The kitchen was sparkling clean. The girls were fed, bathed and in their PJs, and the table was set for our grown-up dinner.

"But where is the squash?" I said when I saw the table.

There was a strained silence as I walked, possibly not in a straight line, into the kitchen, took out the puree and placed it on the table. Cue the aforementioned conversation.

Now three weeks into said injury I'm happy to report that my finger is mostly intact though my fingerprint is gone forever. I've also lost all feeling in the tip making it hard to type these 't's and 'b's and 'g's among other things. But it's OK. I have my finger. And I have my blender.

Squash anyone?

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