

cally call the "zone in transition". We hadn't gone far when we were stopped by a red light. Out of the corner of my eye I could see what appeared to be the world's bummiest bum approaching the car. He weaved rather unsteadily to the driver's side, cupped his hands and peered through my rolled up window. Suddenly he shouted, "Johnny Downes old pal! How are you?" It was a boyhood friend who hadn't fared too well. I rolled down the window and introduced him to the girls. After he had explained to me the destitute state of his finances, I loaned him fifty cents and we drove on.

Actually, this experience had a happy ending. One daughter has a friend who knows the mayor; another has visited a home where the father once shook hands with the President; but our little ones are thrilled, enthralled and delighted that their father knows a real, live, honest-to-goodness bum!

Another occasion wherein the script stumbled, we call the "crystal incident". This came about because Margaret felt that the girls should be polished with proper table manners and should realize that every family doesn't drink out of jelly glasses. She decided, therefore, that one night a week we would forego the kitchen and set the dining room table complete with sterling, linen, crystal, tea service, etc. The first session got off to a bad beginning when Betsy,

seven at the time, started off proceedings by biting a perfect crescent out of a stemmed water glass. The meal wasn't entirely wasted since everyone observed the application of first aid.

We've had a few other departures from the script, such as the time we visited the fire engine house and midway through our visit the alarm rang! We scrambled left and right, chasing children into a safe corner as firemen slid down the pole, bells clanged, sirens wailed, and engines roared out of the station—all to the accompaniment of our girls' screeches. I was a little taken aback when several firemen told me later that they could hardly hear the sirens above the screaming.

Another event that didn't go off as planned happened when I took sixteen year old Mary to a beatnik coffee house. She had regaled me with stories of the fun we would have—of the different coffees I could order—of the odd characters I'd see—and of the divine poetry we would hear. Actually, the visit was prosaic. It turned out they didn't serve instant. The characters looked like people who looked like me looking for people who looked different. The only poetry we heard was when the waitress warned us to, "Be careful of the pot 'cause the coffee's awful hot."

Our latest departure from the script occurred last summer when a Canadian bass outsmarted me and

I ended up with a plug deeply embedded in my index finger. Margaret and I talked it over and decided we would take the younger children with us to the doctor's office to prove there really is nothing to fear in such a visit. As things turned out, the doctor did a painless, quick, and efficient job; and I think the children were properly impressed.

The script stumbled, however, when I described my plight to the doctor and held up the hand containing the hook. He made a few non-committal remarks; I glanced at the girls, a little pleased at the awe with which they admired my courage. In a moment the doctor returned with what appeared to be pliers in his hand. He eyed me up and down and then asked, "Were you a soldier?" Taken aback and a little on the worried side, I replied rather hesitantly that I had been. My apprehensive heart sunk when he said, "Good! When I have to

take a hook out of a man's hand, I'm always glad to deal with an ex-soldier".

At that point I explained, with no military bravado, "Well, actually, Doctor, I did mostly office work in the Army—no battles you know—very little rifle training—no combat or anything like that." With weak humor I explained that I once killed a bat that flew into the barracks.

He cut in to say, "My reason for asking was to determine whether I should give you a full tetanus shot or a booster. It's as simple as this. If you were a soldier you've had a full shot, and all you'll need is the booster."

On the return trip to our cottage one of the girls observed the newly bandaged finger and said, "Daddy, do you always turn green when someone asks if you were a soldier?"

"Honey," I replied "it just wasn't in the script".