

## Theodore Weesner

*Weesner (1935– ) was born in Flint, Michigan. His reputation as a special kind of realist with impeccable craft and extraordinary powers of compassion was established by his first novel The Car Thief (1972). The grief of his wayward adolescent in a precarious home environment should be an antidote for the barrels of crocodile tears spilled so copiously in our time for the plight of rotten kids. Weesner presently teaches creative writing at Emerson College in Boston. His other novels to date are A German Affair (1976) and Winning City (1991). Some of his short stories are collected in Children's Hearts (1992).*

### Voke-Tech

Burger King is crowded and Kyle Hart has to join a confusion of lines. He said twelve-thirty and he wants to show up at just that time. Whopper with extra cheese, large fries, Pepsi. The Combo. Lunch in a sack should help—a small step in his scheme to help his nineteen-year-old son, Jesse, get his life on track.

"Here or to travel?" the teenage girl asks and Kyle—he likes to think he isn't losing touch—replies, "To travel."

Four blocks down the street he turns his Buick Le Sabre into the car lot where Jesse works. Kyle's oldest son is an MBA candidate at Carnegie Mellon; his daughter, in her first year at the Kennedy School, is like her father, taken with public policy and hopes to enter government service in the nation's capital. Jesse, the youngest, likes extra cheese on his Whopper and assists in the repair of European cars.

Foreign Auto Emporium has used BMW's, Mercedes, Jaguars, Saabs lined up for sale in front. Kyle drives around to the rear where overhead doors reveal two active repair bays. Jesse sees him and smiles, calls as he releases the trigger on a power tool, "Hey Dad—be right there."

The time is as Kyle said and the sack of food on the passenger seat remains warm. He notices that Jesse's jeep, parked to the side, is topped with a new crash bar. The jeep was his own gift for Jesse's sixteenth birthday, and, true, it was delivered in the wake of the separation. When they talked on the phone, Jesse usually mentioned his new car items, but he had not mentioned the crash bar. Probably because it cost a month's pay, Kyle thinks. Unless—another sinking divorce thought—the men-

tioning of such small things there was being left behind.

He watches as Jesse wipes his hands on a gray rag. Jesse always arouses an emotion of fondness in him. Just the thought of him, he realizes, and the emotion surfaces—is in him now, as he waits, in the form of a proud smile. Jesse, as friends like to remark, is the most thoughtful of his children.

Head angled to hear something being said by an older man in coveralls, Jesse glances his father's way. Jesse's teeth glint as white as white paper from his tanned, grease-marked face. Jesse's good looks always surprise Kyle, as they do now. All those dental visits at his mother's insistence. What a set of ivories he has, a smile and good looks of which he seems unaware.

Here he comes. The man in coveralls is laughing in parting. It's obvious that the man—he appears to be the senior mechanic in the staff of three or four—likes Jesse. It's always been like that; Jesse is a nice kid, is liked by all.

Wait. The man has something to add and Jesse pauses, cocks an ear. Watching, Kyle remarks to himself, well, that is his son, a would-be mechanic, a dropout, a good-looking kid liked by all, smiling in response to something being said by that older mechanic. Kyle feels a tinge of jealousy over the laughter as it is shared with the older man.

Opening the door, taking up the sack as he slides in, Jesse says, "Hey—Burger King!"

"If you ate on the way," Kyle says, "I figured we'd have more time."

"Dad thinks of everything," Jesse says. "You already ate?"

"Not really hungry," Kyle says. The bed and breakfast where he stays on trips to visit his youngest son and former wife serves slight breakfasts, but he is seldom hungry when he is here.

"Whopper with cheese—all right!" Jesse says, adds on his way to his first bite, "Long live the King!"

Kyle, pulling away, feels again the old pleasure of having Jesse at his side. The vocational-technical school was Jesse's suggestion for himself—when he failed to complete his first semester at college—and is something Kyle has been working on, for Jesse's sake, ever since. Jesse needed an extra year to finish high school, and he dropped out of the overpriced college in Massachusetts before Thanksgiving. On another visit Kyle stopped at the voke-tech school himself, to look it over and to pick up literature. He talked to Jesse at the time about what the school might mean to his work and future, to his pay, self-confidence, independence, but when he mentioned it again, long-distance, a week later, Jesse said no, he hadn't had a chance yet to drive over and pick up the application form. It was his own idea and a good idea, Kyle reminded him. Better to be moving, as opposed to standing still, he added.

Halfway along the fifteen-minute drive, Kyle says, "It'd be easy to zip over here for classes, don't you think?"

"It'd be a snap to zip over here," Jesse says.

Kyle drives along. "As a matter of fact I've always thought this was not just a good idea but a great idea," he says. He adds, at last, "I'll say this once, Jesse, and leave it alone. Doing this will be your decision. Whatever you do—if it's going to mean anything—it has to come from within you. Not from within me. I could pay the tuition, too. But it's not that much, and the crucial thing is that *you* do it, so it's yours.

"You complete this two-year program, even if it takes three years. And an apprenticeship with a dealer. You'd always have a way to earn a living, and it wouldn't have anything to do with going on to college, or not going to college. You could become an expert Mercedes mechanic, for example. As I understand it—a Mercedes dealer takes you as an apprentice, they send you to a school they have in Florida every year or so to keep you up-to-date on new technology.

"Key thing is to keep investing in yourself. Always. So you won't end up dependent on circumstances that are out of your control. With training, you'd have a position from which to work. You can always be your own person. Do you know what I'm saying?"

Jesse nods, finishing off the Whopper.

"I'm sure they're nice people where you work," Kyle says. "I'm sure they like you and you do a good job. Still, they could go belly up any day, for any reason. It happens. They might decide they *don't* like you. They could hire a new manager who'd give the job to his son-in-law. Where would you be then?"

"Lenny did fire this other assistant mechanic, just last week," Jesse says.

"Why'd he do that?"

"Oh, he came in late. Was supposed to clean up one night and didn't do it."

"What's he do now?"

"Just out of work, I guess. I know he washed dishes a few days at Copper Kettle."

"Well, I don't think you'd be a bad worker, but it's always possible to lose your job. With training, you're not at the mercy of those things. That's what I want you to get a handle on—to do things you have to start doing things. If you're going to get somewhere, you have to keep moving."

"Yes, Dad."

"Okay, I'm lecturing, I know. But I believe it has to be said. Not only that—listen to me now—not only that, but one of these days you're going to meet some girl who'll mean a lot to you. You may want to get married. Or you may just want her to respect you. It could be crucial to your happiness—hers, too—that you're going somewhere in life."

"Yes, Dad."

"Don't laugh. Listen, I knew that college you went to last fall was a mistake. It was expensive baby-sitting filled with screw-offs drinking beer all day. I'd have been disappointed if you *hadn't* pulled out of that place.

"This school isn't going to be like that. It's not going to be wasting time. These students pretty much pay their own way, and the courses are well organized. They have an actual purpose."

"They do have mini-car races," Jesse says. "That's what I heard. In the automotive program. They build miniature cars, in teams, and have a race at the end of the year."

"Sounds good. Would you like to do that?"

"I'd love to do that."

"Go for it then."

"Yes, Dad."

He keeps driving and in a moment remembers to say, "You can always read on your own, you know, and be an educated person. You don't have to go to college to be intelligent. And anytime you wanted, you could take regular college courses, even go full-time to get a degree. A person with a certificate from voke-tech *and* a college degree would be a truly remarkable person."

"Hmm," Jesse says.

"I saw your new crash bar," Kyle says in a moment.

"Well, it's for safety," Jesse says.

Kyle especially likes the feel of the large building now that Jesse is here with him. The lobby offers windows that face attractive fields to the rear and a neatly arranged reception counter offers racks of catalogs from which he selected items on his previous visit. The hopeful feeling calls up his own first visit to college when he was young and full of dreams, a sensation that still stirs within him on autumn days as a new semester is getting underway at some nearby college. Learning. Books and knowledge. Has that intoxicating appeal ever gotten through to Jesse?

The man who interviews them—he happens to be the Night Program Director—couldn't be better, Kyle thinks. The man does a quick take on things—a father trying to get his son going in life—and after a brief exchange, plays a trump card. "Let's take a stroll down the hall and I'll show you the shop while we talk," he says. "You, too, Dad. By the way, it isn't 'mechanic' we say anymore, it's 'auto technician.'"

Along the hall, the man adds, "You get under the hood of a car these days, you have to know your stuff. Electronics. The Buick alone has three computers in there. You get into a Mercedes, a BMW—those cars cost more than most houses in the world—you don't stick a screw-driver into something to see if it'll give off a spark. Just like that, you can destroy ten thousand dollars' worth of equipment."

The man unlocks a double door and throws on a bank of lights. The centerpiece, a red car, highlighted, could be a sculptor's work-in-progress. "Wow," Jesse utters. Kyle gazes in awe.

The man lets the shop speak for itself, and so it does. Cavemous as a gymnasium, the glistening red car at its center, its walls are lined with gauge-covered instruments that resemble stoves and refrigerators on wheels. Unlike any other garage anywhere, each tool, cable, connector is in its place, is oiled, coiled, freshly painted, and every glass panel is clean, filled with apparent power and accuracy.

"We can make a car in here from scratch," the man says.

"Wow—*two* dyna-machines!" Jesse says. "Most *dealers* don't even have one of those. They cost a hundred thousand apiece," he adds to his father.

They walk and look around. Kyle is thinking, well, it's an entire life projected here. And it's as good and as honorable as any. Better than most, he thinks.

"Our instructions are the best," the man is saying. "Nothing is assumed. Our students are taken through every step and phase and they have to know it all or they don't graduate. You can't be right four times out of five when you're repairing a car. Someone's life could be at stake."

He has walked them into an adjacent space where yet another vehicle is positioned on a rectangular bench in the room's center. "These cars are given to us by dealers," he says. "This Chevrolet came from a local dealer, was damaged in unloading. The dealers are desperate for first-class auto technicians. We have graduates in the state right now making fifty to sixty thousand a year."

A side room is lined with lockers and has two circular sinks in the center, operated by foot bars. "Students keep their tools here," the man says. "You do have to put out some money for tools. About a thousand dollars. But they'll be yours forever, so we encourage that you buy the best and learn to take good care of them."

Close to his son, Kyle says, "Something, isn't it?"

They return through the large rooms to the exit. A smile of satisfaction is on the man's face as he opens the door for them, and Kyle feels good too. A group of men, he thinks, charged with love, passing a torch.

"Now, son," the man says in the lobby. "Next step's up to you. You need to stop back to be interviewed by the Day Program Director, Mister Vinto. He's here most of the time, so you don't have to make an appointment. Our enrollments are not real high, so I'm sure we'd be glad to have you. Standards *are* high, though, so you'd have to meet the requirements, maybe even do some make-up work. Course work is demanding; I won't kid you about that. Myself, I think a lot of young people in these colleges, boys and girls alike, they'd be better taking our programs, for themselves and for the rest of the world, but that's not the way it is, I'm afraid. One thing you will get here, I absolutely guarantee, besides the skills you

acquire: confidence in yourself. You make it through one of our programs, you'll know there's something in this world you can do extremely well. You'll always have a place."

In the car, returning, neither of them speaks for a time. However hopeful he feels, Kyle says to himself, let it be. If it takes, fine. Don't press. Let it be his.

In a moment, though, he says, "Jesse—I'll tell you something. You decide you want to do that program, it would be an honor for me—to buy your tools. That way you could say, years from now, I paid my tuition but my dad bought my tools and it was something he got a kick out of doing because he was my dad and he loved me."

"So far, so good," he tells his friend Wolf Regus over coffee that afternoon. "We're going out to dinner tonight, the three of us, and I'm taking Jesse back tomorrow to see the Director of the Day Program."

"How's Jesse feel about this school?" Wolf says.

"He's not saying much and I'm trying not to ask."

Kyle has stopped by his former university world and Wolf, a professor of economics, has taken a coffee break with him in the faculty lounge.

"I picked out a dealer in the Yellow Pages," he tells Wolf. "It was a crisis. Jesse was having problems, had to get out of that fake college he was going to—he called and said he'd rather go to voke-tech and work on cars than do what he was doing. I used the Yellow Pages and got through to a service manager, a Mercedes dealer in Alexandria—it's one of the European cars Jesse's always liked. What was amazing to me was how this guy understood everything and how helpful he was. Jerry, the service manager. I told him I had a nineteen-year-old son who was at sea in life, who loved cars and wanted to become a first-rate mechanic. Guy could have said he was busy. He didn't. It was like this was the priority repair job. He took his time and laid it all out. Vocational school to learn the basics was the right thing, he said. Apprenticeship with a dealer. Specialize in one product. GM. Volkswagen. He was so understanding, it was like a glimpse into some level of human nature I hadn't seen in some time, not in the mirror either, I'm afraid."

"What's in it for you?" Wolf says.

"If you mean am I working out of guilt, that's part of it. The thing that's always been the hardest—inside—is the feeling that I left him, too. Problem here, though, is not being selfish, being unpossessive—letting it be his move and not mine."

"Tell you something I've never told anyone, you no-good sonof-a-bitch," Wolf says. "Of all the children of our friends. I like your other kids a lot, and I love my daughters. But of all the kids we saw grow up

around here, Jesse has always been my favorite. He's a great kid. You know I gave him my old Ithaca twenty gauge last year. I hope you don't mind. I have so many shotguns I don't know what to do with them all. Well, that's not the truth. Truth is, I just like Jesse."

"Know what Jesse is?" Kyle says. "He's what is known as a good man. Do people still say that? That guy Jerry was a good man. The mechanic who tells you the truth about your car and doesn't try to screw you. The good master sergeant, the good cop. That's what Jesse really is—a good man."

"How could a father be any more proud of a son than that?" Wolf says.

"He can't," Kyle says.

"So what's the problem? Somebody did a good job of raising that kid."

"I don't want him dealt out—and I'm afraid that's what's happening."

"Remember the time Jesse saved that little Wiley kid's ass?" Wolf says.

Of course Kyle remembers, and he nods.

"Jesse's strength is what amazed me more than anything," Wolf says. "I don't know if I told you that at the time. I'm strong, and I know I'm strong, but I had no idea Jesse could call up that kind of physical strength. At that age. To be a good man is to be cool under fire—isn't that what we're saying here? Unpretentious."

"Anyway, besides his strength, Jesse's cool impressed me. I was coming up one side of Hagamore Hill and Jesse was coming up the other side. I first heard the sound—it was kind of a whine—I thought it was Jesse, because he was the only living thing in sight. Truth is, Jesse was more cool than I was. There was that Wiley kid and his goddamned dirt bike, hanging from the overpass. I still don't believe he got out there like he said he did. Handlebar's hooked onto a beam, and he's holding on with both hands—I still think somebody dumped him and his fancy bike over the side—and he's about three seconds from losing his grip and taking one hell of a free-fall to railroad tracks and chipped stones. Could have raked him up bad—coulda killed him.

"Jesse was so cool. I still can't believe it. He may have problems with math in school but he sure as hell calculated all the angles and forces of that equation in a hurry. Over the side he goes. He sticks his legs up and all he says is, 'Hold my ankles.' He handwalks headfirst onto the beam, reaches the kid's wrist, with me holding his ankles. I mean it was a *smart* thing to do.

"Holds the kid's wrist in one hand; with the other, from the elbow, he unhooks the bike handle, drops the sonofabitch out of the way. Props his other elbow, gets the kid's other wrist in hand even though the kid

doesn't want to release his fingers from the wood. Says, 'Okay, Mister Regus.' Mister Regus—at a time like that! I'll never forget it. Then, as I bring him back by his ankles and belt, he *lifts* and *pulls* the kid onto the beam, and we hoist him over the railing. And there goes Jesse, heading around to the bank, and I say, 'Where you going?' and he says he's going to get the bike so it won't get hit by a train. Can you believe it?

"Tell you this, old friend. Jesse was fifteen when he did that, and maybe he didn't make it into University of Chicago or Harvard like other kids around here. And he may never do anything more spectacular than repair automobiles. But I'll tell you this: I knew he was a good man even then, and before then, and I've never seen anything to change my mind, and if I found myself in trouble, of any kind, and needed help, and the gods said, 'You can make one call, for one person, to fashion boat or raft or motorized flying machine, and the person will have to fight off alligators with one hand, shoot vultures out of the sky, dodge spears and read a compass, go three days without food or sleep and be strong enough of heart and mind to carry you back to the high ground,' I know who I'd ask for. Wouldn't hesitate. That's what it's all about, you no-good sonofabitch. Which I know you know. If you were a kid, wouldn't you want Jesse as your old man—auto technician or whatever? I sure as hell would. And so would you. I know you would. That's why you're my goddam friend and it's why Jesse is your kid and it's why both of us love him like we do."

Jesse is late coming home from work. They had agreed to leave for the restaurant at six and at six-twenty Kyle is having a drink he fixed standing in the painfully familiar kitchen. When Lucy comes downstairs, he says, "Thought Jesse got home by five-thirty."

"He works late one night—has to clean up or something."

"Which night?"

"I don't know; I think Tuesday."

"Today's Friday," Kyle says, thinking, well, nothing's changed. She doesn't even know which night Jesse works late. Nor is she ready to go. The same old rubs. He remarks, against his better judgment, "You really don't know which night he works late?"

She makes a face that says "Go to hell" and heads back upstairs.

It's different. On other occasions she would have fired a shot back, certainly from the hip, or made some remark about his girlfriend in D.C., he thinks. That she doesn't return fire is a relief to him, maybe, he thinks, a new phase in the ongoing hostilities.

He is outside, waiting near a basketball hoop he installed in that previous life when, in the handsome jeep, Jesse wheels into the driveway, stops, and smiles as both feet hit the asphalt. There are his white teeth in the midst of grease and dirt and tanned skin and he is explaining at

once. "Couldn't get away even to make a call—had this neat old Jaguar that needed a flywheel and the guy who owned it was right there because he had to drive it to Boston . . ."

"No problem," Kyle says. "How's the jeep running?"

"It's great, I love it."

They circle the powerful box of a car as Jesse points to a single dent he hopes to repair when he gets a chance, and to the spare tire mounted on the back which, he says, is the only tire he has with enough tread to pass inspection. "I'm saving up to put eleven inches on it," he says. "Off-the-road monsters—for the next inspection."

"Eleven inches wide?"

"Been doing off-the-road stuff, on weekends."

"What about on the road? Those tires cost in gas mileage."

"Not that bad."

"Who do you do off-the-road stuff with?"

"Oh, Andy Curwood mostly, Erskine, some others. Karen Cormier likes to go along."

Kyle nods, in awareness that what he is asking is less his business now than it used to be. Still he says, "Andy Curwood—I thought you two had a falling out."

"Long ago," Jesse says. "Old news. Still on for Chinese—I'm starving."

Mr. Vinto, the Day Program Director, appears to be a good man, too. Kyle surmises this at once, and feels added hope.

"We're not merely after people who have fooled around with a car in the driveway," Mr. Vinto says. "We're after people with brains. It's electronics now. Computers. Math. You have to be able to decipher theoretical relationships, not just take apart a fuel pump and put it back together. You have to understand not only the *how* but the *why*. Are you interested? Is that what you're here for?"

Kyle glances to Jesse, who sits in a chair to his right. He wants to answer for him, restrains himself from doing so.

"Yes," Jesse says.

"Okay—okay, good," Mr. Vinto says. "You'll have to get your application in, including your high school transcript. How much math in high school, how far did you go?"

"I did algebra," Jesse says. "Geometry and algebra."

"Two years of algebra?"

"Three," Jesse says.

"Three—you repeated?"

"One year."

"Well, math is important. We have people here who've been out of school fifteen, even twenty years. They have a difficult time, because

they've forgotten so much. Should be easier for you, given your age and how recently you've been in school. Still, math is the first thing you should do."

"He's interested in starting on a part-time basis," Kyle says. "Maybe two courses the first semester. He'd like to start carefully and do a good job, before going full-time."

"Three courses is better, given the sequences that have to be followed and because some courses need to be taken in tandem with others. Electronics and Auto Shop, for example. They should both be taken the first semester. But he'd also have to take the math course. And it costs just as much to take three as it does to take two."

"Two wouldn't work?" Kyle says.

"I don't think so," the man says. "Not first semester."

"Jesse, what do you think?" Kyle says.

Jesse returns, it seems to Kyle, from a momentary journey. "What would the schedule be?" Jesse says. "I don't know how much time I can be away from my job."

Something is wrong, Kyle realizes.

Jesse is leaning in and Kyle leans in too, to look at the schedule the man is pointing at. There, four days out of five, every day but Friday, at eight A.M., is math. Is that what it is? Kyle wonders. Math?

"After math, see, Tuesday and Thursday," the man is saying. "Electronics Lab. Electronics Lecture is Monday, Wednesday, Friday, here, eleven to twelve. Auto Shop Lab, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, one to four P.M. Even with three courses, it's a demanding first semester."

Silence follows. Kyle doesn't look his way, but is hoping for Jesse to speak, to ask a question about eating lunch, parking, books, anything at all. He doesn't, and Kyle knows with certainty that something is wrong.

"In your court now," Mr. Vinto says at last. "There's an application in the catalog, tells you about having your high school transcript sent in. You don't want to include a transcript from that college you went to, that's up to you. Sooner you get your application in the better, though. It's only a few weeks away."

As before in the car, Kyle is afraid to speak. Then he says, "Well?"

"I don't know," Jesse says in a moment.

Kyle knew it was coming, still his heart collapses a little. "You've got to do something," he says.

"I've got a job."

"What if you lose your job?"

"I won't."

"What if you do?"

"I'll get another job."

They drive on. Kyle resists reminding Jesse that the voke-tech pro-

gram was his idea, and he doesn't want to show anger or disappointment—the departed father come back to manage his youngest son's life—but nothing coming to mind is free of either helpless emotion. Nor can he look past an awareness that has been building in him since he arrived, that Jesse is divorcing him, keeping a distance from him.

He drives on.

"If you wanted to go full-time, I'd be happy to pay for it," Kyle says. "You don't have to work at all right now."

"I know," Jesse says.

They go along, reentering town, and drive along the street of gas stations to Foreign Auto Emporium. Kyle pulls in, and around to the rear. He debates turning off the motor, does so.

"Is it the math?" he says. "Does math—put you off?"

"I don't know," Jesse says. "I don't think so."

"You don't want to do it?" Kyle says.

"No."

Kyle looks at his son and doesn't know what to say.

They sit there.

"Don't worry about me, Dad," Jesse says. "I'll do something, sometime. Have to get back," he adds.

Kyle nods; Jesse leaves the car and returns toward the opened garage door where the older mechanic and a boy Jesse's age look up and smile as friends do.

Jesse is probably smiling in turn; Kyle cannot tell from his angle. The school application remains left behind in the passenger seat.

At the street, Kyle pulls up to look both ways. Only then do his eyes blink. They blink once, as they have at other times in his life. He'd like to go back, correct the mistakes he's made in his life, but knows he cannot. He'd like to give Jesse whatever room he needs, without losing him, but doesn't know how. He sits there. He has nowhere to go for the moment, wonders how he will pass the rest of the afternoon. He knows that he must enter the street to find out, and in a moment he does so, turns left, drives in that direction.

1. What parts of Kyle's past life apply to his present quandary?
2. What shared values bind father and son?
3. What is the nature of the "goodness" attributed to Jesse? Is it a matter of merits or accomplishments that can be enumerated?
4. What makes it impossible for father and son to reach an accord about the future?
5. Why can't Kyle keep from trying to lead?

## Eudora Welty

*Welty (1909— ) was born in Jackson, Mississippi, where she has lived for most of her productive life. She received her formal education at the Mississippi State College for Women and the University of Wisconsin, studying advertising at Columbia University for a brief period. Her early ambitions to be a painter were subordinated by the success of her first book of stories, A Curtain of Green and Other Stories (1941). Readers recognized in this and following works a writer who gives full value to the quality and spectacle of her home region and the people she knows best while at the same time she displays a cosmopolitan awareness and technical sophistication. Other books of short stories are The Wide Net and Other Stories (1943), The Golden Apples (1949), The Bride of the Inmifallen and Other Stories (1955), Thirteen Stories (1965), and The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty (1980). Her novels include Delta Wedding (1946), The Ponder Heart (1954), and The Optimist's Daughter (1972). One Writer's Beginnings (1983), based on three lectures Welty delivered at Harvard, is autobiographical.*

### Why I Live at the P.O.

I was getting along fine with Mama, Papa-Daddy, and Uncle Rondo until my sister Stella-Rondo just separated from her husband and came back home again. Mr. Whitaker! Of course I went with Mr. Whitaker first, when he first appeared here in China Grove, taking "Pose Yourself" photos, and Stella-Rondo broke us up. Told him I was one-sided. Bigger on one side than the other, which is a deliberate, calculated falsehood: I'm the same. Stella-Rondo is exactly twelve months to the day younger than I am and for that reason she's spoiled.

She's always had anything in the world she wanted and then she'd throw it away. Papa-Daddy give her this gorgeous Add-a-Pearl necklace when she was eight years old and she threw it away playing baseball when she was nine, with only two pearls.

So as soon as she got married and moved away from home the first thing she did was separate! From Mr. Whitaker! This photographer with the popeyes she said she trusted. Came home from one of those towns up in Illinois and to our complete surprise brought this child of two.

Mama said she like to make her drop dead for a second. "Here you had this marvelous blonde child and never so much as wrote your mother a word about it," says Mama. "I'm thoroughly ashamed of you." But of course she wasn't.