

Our Kodak Moment

by Gita M. Smith

“Isn't that Burt Reynolds over there?” my mother asked in a whisper as subtle as a weed eater.

“Where?” my father asked, turning in his chair to scan the diner.

“Over THERE!” my mother said, fumbling in her purse for her new Kodak Instamatic camera.

We were vacationing in Jupiter Beach, Florida, over the Memorial Day weekend. I was 12 years old and Burt still had his own hair. It was before his romance with Lonni Anderson.

I was duly impressed that my parents had found a restaurant where we would sight a movie star. Burt was totally into his steak and potatoes, oblivious to our excited table.

“Should I go over?” Ma asked, wishing she could freshen her lipstick while finger-combing her frosted hair.

“Sarah, *fagodsake*, let the man eat in peace. No one wants to have their picture made with food in their mouth,” said Pa.

We all watched Burt Reynolds closely. I noted that he cut each piece of meat precisely and carefully, then ferried the chunks to his mouth with his fork tines facing down. By contrast, my Pa stabbed his food as if he was killing the animal for sure one last time before eating it.

Burt moved on to a giant piece of Texas toast that he daubed in his steak juices. I was staring real hard just at the moment he looked up and saw me. He put his fork down and slowly winked at me, one of those exaggerated winks that people make when they want you to know it wasn't just a blink. Then he grinned at me and pushed his chair back.

Burt Reynolds was standing up. He was walking. Toward our table!

Burt Reynolds was standing at OUR table.

He thrust a pen at me and said, "Miss, may I have your autograph?"

I froze. He turned to my Ma and then my Pa and said the same. When no one said a word, he said, "Didn't think so," and walked away.

That was the last time my family gawked at someone famous. Pa was real happy, some years later, when Burt went bald.

