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Truck rendering drawn by great grandson
Nicholas Naugle (age 14) 2017

Sanford and Son Incident

When I was little, my grandfather liked to have me “make change” and hand out food at the drive-thru in the early days. I could make the change quickly, climb out the skinny little window with what at the time was a skinny little butt, and hand the food to the customers in a quick and professional manner. He would use me as his whipping boy to motivate the rest of the crew. “*Sonny, can’t you go any faster?*”

We would joke later as the first few times it hurt my feelings, but I became numb to it over time. Sometimes I needed to be pushed to improve.

Gramps would get mad as I hated to wear the pointy paper hat shown in the introduction. I would complain that it kept falling off due to the short window height. He would consistently berate me for this behavior, using it as an example for the other employees, who dared not take off the hat.



One Friday afternoon, normally our busiest day of the week, I heard a truck rumble up to the drive-thru menu board. It was a rusty old *"Sanford and Son"* pickup truck like in the TV show—one of Dick Naugle's favorites.

The driver made the mistake of pulling up and turning off the motor. I knew exactly what was coming. Dick Naugle hit the intercom on the backup grill station, behind the fry warmer, and his voice came booming over the speaker:

"Damn it, this is NOT a parking lot!"

"Turn your motor on and pull forward NOW!"

(I have edited out the expletives)

The driver nervously edged forward and kept a distance from the car in front. This made my grandfather even madder, because he wanted the employees to have as much time as possible to prepare food and "Move 'em out!" He never wanted the space between cars in the drive thru to be, if possible, about as far as it is from the last word in this sentence to the period. If he could fit 6 cars in the drive-thru, especially during rush hour, he wanted it "loaded up". This was a learning experience for the customers (TM) in the walk-up area and dining room, who were watching or listening to the situation.

Gramps yelled, *"How many people in that pile of junk?"* I replied, *"Just the driver!"*

I hesitantly watched as this poor guy finally made his way up to the drive-thru window. In a case like this, we would usually tell the customer that the meal was on us. Yeah!

If they needed more time to order, they were politely advised to come to the walkup window next time. There we could give them all the time and assistance they required. Grandpa would either serve up a burger or have the taco bar prepare a taco, get it in a bag, throw in some fries and a drink, and send the person on their way. If there were 2 or more people in the vehicle, then the order would be multiplied by the number of occupants and graciously given at no charge.

Well, this poor guy went on to commit the ultimate sin. After pulling up to the drive-thru window, he turned off the motor again. Grandpa barked out, "This ain't no parking lot." And yes, it was meant for the customer to hear.

"It's on us, now Move 'em out, Joe!" Gramps said, continuing to press the issue. This guy proceeded to reach into his pocket and search for change. I just looked at him and said "Sir, I do not know what is going to happen next. Please just take the food and go!"



At that moment there came the sound of a loud “slap” as Gramps threw a big slice of tomato that hit my pointy hat and left tomato juice dripping down the side of my face. Gramps’s aim was excellent from his station at the 2nd grill position.

When the guy in the truck asked who the heck that man was, I stated, “*It is my Grandpa!*”

The driver shouted, “You are an ornery old man,” with which I agreed and repeated my plea that he please go. He obliged with a nod, but then in his nervousness he dropped his keys on the floorboard. “*Sir, I have no idea what is going to happen next. Please start your truck. You received a free taco AND a free cheeseburger, fries, and a drink, which was more than normal. “Seriously it is on us!”* I politely tried to calm him and stated, “*Please remember that if you need more time, you can always come into the drive-thru after 2:00 p.m. and not feel as rushed.*”

As the guy was finally starting up his *rust bucket*, my grandfather, to the tune of his own extensive profane vocabulary, took off his hard-soled therapeutic brown shoe and hurled it at my head, knocking my hat off. The hat and the shoe landed squarely in the truck bed as the poor “stressed out” guy sped away, spewing a thick trail of carbon monoxide into the air.

To this day, it is one of the fondest memories of my early days in the restaurant biz: My grandfather working the remainder of rush hour with only one shoe. Moaning and groaning the whole time, he kept asking, “*Where’s my shoe!*” All the other employees just kept snickering through the rest of the lunch rush.

When things slowed down, he approached and asked me to go outside and retrieve the missing shoe. I burst into laughter. “It landed in the back of the guy’s truck.” The whole place erupted.

As funny as that sounds, in time things usually worked to the favor of my grandfather. The following Monday, when the man pulled into the drive-thru at 2:00 p.m., he knew exactly what he wanted to order and did not turn off the motor to his truck. Eventually the rust bucket pulled up, and all eyes were on my grandfather as he shoved me away from the drive-thru window.

Gramps shouted out, “*Where the heck is my shoe?*” The guy in the truck chuckled out loud, “You ornery old fart, my dog was enjoying his new treat all weekend long!”



Grandpa let loose with a thunderous roar and laughingly insisted on meeting the gentleman in the rear parking lot of the restaurant as he wanted to personally deliver his lunch request, at no charge, of course.

I do not know if Gramps ever directly apologized, but he and the guy in the truck talked for over an hour. They reminisced and laughed about the whole situation and other random topics, like the *Good ol' days*. Dick Naugle was one of the few guys I have ever known who were able to get away with these types of situations, begin friendships in this way and developing a loyal following.

In the end, after returning from the rear parking lot, my grandfather shouted out so everyone could hear:

"Another Satisfied Customer!"

For the rest of the summer, the Sanford and Son truck driver pulled into the drive-thru multiple times every week, just never during lunch rush. He even came into the dining room a few times during the early evening hours.

Normally he would ask for me to take his order and I would scurry to the front to do so. But more importantly, *Naugles* had a newfound friend and advocate!

