

## Hearts Are Trued by Attitude

Attitude is the magnet that either draws people together or pushes them apart. Kindly, bright-eyed smiles unite; cold, unfriendly stares repel. It seems to be a regional thing. When we first began spending summers in South Dakota, I was really impressed by the friendliness of the people. Farmers out on tractors, truckers on the roads, ranchers with their herds, nearly everyone one met would wave like an old friend.

That was certainly not the case when one crossed the borders either to the north or to the east where few waved back. I'm not sure where these conflicting attitudes get their start. I think, though, it probably starts during childhood. I have a brother, Charles. At home we called him Chuzzy, and he was and is a natural performer. He and my younger siblings and their friends delighted in acting out an on-going drama in which each had a name and a persona to match, and this, Chuzzy- created serial was called "Important Man."

The main character was Timmy, played by Chuzzy, who put on a face and demeanor perfectly suited to the title role. In Important man, Chuzzy created an expression for Timmy that really caught on, and he called it a the *schmaerdt*. If you were super-self confident, as if you were enjoying great acclaim and success, you put on a *schmeardt*. You would shoot out your lower jaw, bring the upper jaw down into it, adding a grin of absolute certainty. Then, you'd caper about like a real winner. Timmy usually wore a *schmeardt* when he made an entrance. I gave that look a three-word description – 'you look stupid' That's why I was never given a part in "Important Man;" I was too critical, and too old. I was banished into taking my *Daisy Red Ryder* BB gun and powdering down our lane to the river where all *true* Indian guides stalked the wiley gophers or *flang* their spears at the heavy- scaled, and spooky carp.

I've often wondered where Chuzzy got the idea for the *schmeardt*. It might have been Barry Fitzgerald or Gabby Hayes, but more probably it was an original imagination, created on the fly. There are others in the movies with a unique face, like Alfred E. Newman of *MAD Magazine*, with his big, tooth-missing, "What, me worry?" smile.

And silent movie star, Buster Keaton had his poker face, a strange, unsmiling stare and a choppy side-to-side walk of total uncertainty. The great clown, Red Skelton, had his "Scrapbook of Satire" filled with unforgettable faces. I loved Cauliflower Mcpug, the punch-drunk ex boxer. His look was that of a guy just stunned by a left hook, cross-eyed and gazing around to see where the flamingos went.

One summer, my half-sister Virginia came home with her third husband, a comedian with a great shtick of stand-up jokes, but when he saw Chuzzy's *schmeardt*, he blurted, 'I've got to master that for my act.' Our last photo of him showed him doing a *schmeardt*.

Truly, the world is obsessed with faces. Recognize these famous out-takes? "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" or "That face, that face, that cover-girl face." or "Sir, if that face were mine, I'd have it amputated on he spot." or "I see your face in every flower, /Your eyes in stars above," or "Mama Mama up in the heaven a' / How you like a' my girl? How you like that simpatica smile on that face?/ Mamma that face!/ Like a' the sun, she's the light of my place!" or "And he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine like the sun." (Mt 17:2) or "Indeed there will be time,/ Time to put on a face/ To meet the faces that I meet."

I could take the column space to give the sources of all those quotes, but since most people now have cell phones, I'll allow my readers the *Jeopardy*

pleasure of Googling up the sources for themselves. Let me restate my thesis just once more: attitude is everything; it will open doors of favor for you or leave you on the outside looking in.

If you really want people to accept you, there is one medicine that never fails – love. It’s simply heeding the great commandment, realizing that each of the others out there is a child of God, whom He loves just as much as He loves you. And likely each has a load of cares darkening his or her life just like you do. “So spread sunshine all over the place/ And put on a hap hap happy face.” Or if that doesn’t work, try a *schmeardt*. People might think your on to something.

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