

THE WAY TO GO: MRS. FEENY REVISITED

(Originally published December 1963)

An anonymous phone call reminded us that the holiday season is approaching and that a whole year has passed without any report on the activities of that effervescent Columbus clubwoman, Mrs. Jay Feeny, the eggnog lady. Mrs. Feeny, you may remember, was one of the leaders in the fight to preserve the purity of our water supply. In fact, Mrs. Feeny spoke out so sharply against fluoridation last year that many believe that it was her declamation that turned the tide and saved us all from an insidious and Communist-inspired poisoning that could have spelled *finis* to our American way of life. For her outstanding work against the fluoridationists, Mrs. Feeny was awarded the Third Order Barbara Fritchie Medallion and named Woman of the Year by the National Association of Oral Prosthetics Societies.

“Imagine!” said Mrs. Feeny when we returned to interview her recently. “Little old me! I didn’t deserve all that recognition, but NAOPS went all out. Besides the award, they even made me a lifetime member of their new Denture-of-the-Month Club.”

We congratulated her on the honors, accepting a brimming cup of Feeny formula eggnog, and registered surprise about the new club. Between sips, Mrs. Feeny gave us her winning toothless smile. “They send me a new set, air mail, every month. On my diet I don’t need them, so I don’t really bother to wear them. But they do look pretty lined up there on the mantle. The set last month had a couple of diamonds in the front incisors, and gold canines.”

Mrs. Feeny refilled the cups with eggnog and hopped to a perch on the arm of a chair. “Did you read where they found out that fluorides were bad for mice with cancer?” she asked.

“No,” we said.

“Well, it’s a fact. Not that I’m fond of mice with cancer. Or any mice for that matter. I think it serves them right.”

We asked Mrs. Feeny if she was still busy with the fluoridation problem.

“Land no, son,” she hooted. “It’s passé. A dead duck. Besides I’ve got too much on my mind these days. I’m all out helping to preserve our American birthright. Where’s your cup, sugar?” Mrs. Feeny took a couple of defiant swallows from her own cup of the oh be joyful, and glowered. “They’re trying to destroy our sacred heritage. They’re sucking away at the life blood of our basic economy. That’s what.”

“Who?” we asked.

“The Communists, son. That’s who.” That bunch of burial beatniks. That’s who. Didn’t you watch that television program last month? Now they’re after the undertakers. It was plain un-American. Imagine!”

Mrs. Feeny’s composure was so rattled she fluttered off the chair arm and refilled her own eggnog cup twice without offering us any. When we expressed surprise that she was so attached to the morticians, she replied, “Why, Dearie, they’re the salt of the earth. I love ’em like my own flesh and blood. I couldn’t live without them. After all, except for the last, poor Mr. Feeny, who defaulted on his burial premiums, they helped me put away my first six departed husbands. Even gave me a discount on the last two.”

“Why,” she continued, “do you know, on poor Mr. Unsfedder—he was my fourth one—the cosmetologist and the dermosurgeon did such a terrific restoration that it broke me up for over two weeks. Really, when I seen him that first time, I took one look at the deceased reposing there in the slumber room and screamed, ‘My God, it’s Rock Hudson!’”

“It must have been a shattering experience,” we said.

“You’re right, angel,” agreed Mrs. Feeny. “You don’t lose a Rock Hudson every day without it getting you here.” Mrs. Feeny clawed gently at the double bosom Natural Form over her bilateral mastectomy scars. “But they pulled me through with twenty sessions of grief therapy at the memorial home.”

Mrs. Feeny wiped away a tear and sighed. “You know, sugar, if Unsfedder had only looked half as good stretched out in bed as he did resting there in that three-thousand-dollar casket, I might still be Mrs. Unsfedder.”

We asked Mrs. Feeny if she had any plans for her own funeral.

“I’m all set, honey,” she said. I’ve got five burial policies, and on my pre-need purchase plan, I’ve already picked out the floral tributes and the casket coach. And you should see my double-sealed, burnished copper, vacuumatic casket. When they slide me into that Heart-Level crypt in the Westminster Abbey Room of the mausoleum at Eternal Gardens, there’ll be a fifty-voice choir singing while the memorial chimes play “Nearer My God to Thee” and “God Bless America.” I’m lining up Norman Vincent Peale to read the service.

“It sounds impressive,” we said.

“It’s the way to go,” nodded Mrs. Feeny. “Whole hog. Shoot the works. When I pass, dearie, I’m taking it all with me. High style. First class all the way.”

Mrs. Feeny flapped out to the kitchen to replenish the supply of eggnog. When she returned, she was chirping on a happier note. I don’t want you to get the idea that I’m going any time soon. I’m not ready for Gabriel and that golden chariot just yet. Pass your cup, honey.” Mrs. Feeny poured more eggnog, and after checking the door to make sure

no one was eavesdropping, she held up a silencing finger and, with her eyes hooded, came closer and whispered, "I'll let you in on a secret. I'm headed for the altar again."

"Not really!" we exclaimed.

"Cross my heart and hope to die," she sang gaily. A wonderful man. A living doll. A retired master sergeant with forty years' service, Bright's disease and dropsy. He's a little feeble and ailing right now with all the excitement, but what a dear soul!"

We said that we were very happy for her and that maybe his health would improve come warm weather and spring.

"It better not," cackled Mrs. Feeny draining her cup. "I've already reserved the Memory Chapel for May and signed up with the grief therapist for ten more sessions."

We bid Mrs. Feeny goodbye and wished her a Merry Christmas. As we walked to the car, she waved her cup and shrilled from the door: "Watch for it in the notices next spring, sugar. It'll be a lovely funeral."