

Feature

I DISGRACED My FAMILY at Church

She thought if it was all right for
the preacher to do it, she could too.

by EVE MEREDITH

ONE OF MY earliest childhood memories takes me back to Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, a small country church somewhere near Sand Mountain. The nearest small town was Geraldine.

Although that was many years ago and I was only about 4, I can still remember watching Daddy crank our shiny black Ford while Mama sat in the driver's seat to start it. Off to church we went in what Grandpa called a noisy contraption. He still drove a horse and buggy — no horseless carriage for him!

On the way to church one Sunday morning, Daddy said, "It's sure going to be a scorcher!" Mama said something about the long-winded sermon.

When we arrived at the little church, the yard was filled with a variety of vehicles — horses and buggies and automobiles — and a few saddle horses tied to trees. We exchanged how-you-all's and went inside to sit in our usual place.

The service proceeded as usual. With singing over, it was time to settle down, be quiet, and listen to the preacher. During the sermon, I became restless. I squirmed around in my seat and then stood on my knees to take a better look. I saw Grandma, Grandpa, and old Uncle Albert dozing. Daddy tugged at me, "Sit down and be still."

I sat down and smoothed the ruffles on my skirt with my hands and then thought about my new black shoes with the little round buttons. I lifted a foot to look; my new shoes were dusty. I took a hankie from my pocket and carefully polished my pretty shoes. The buttons intrigued me, so I sat and fidgeted with them.

It was becoming hot and stuffy. I stood up and looked around. All the windows were open. The little church was full of people; and the ladies were using fans. As I looked around, I wished I could have a drink of water. Just as I looked up front, the preacher paused, poured himself a glass of water, and drank it! "Daddy, I want a drink of water," I whispered.

"Sit down and be quiet!" All I could think of was water. I wanted a drink. I crawled across Daddy's lap and wriggled in between him and the end of the pew. I sat for a few minutes and then looked

at Mama and Daddy. They were entranced by the preacher, and my little brother was asleep.

I slid quietly out of my seat and tiptoed down the aisle and up on the podium where the preacher continued, unaware of my presence.

I stood on the tips of my toes and reached the glass, then the pitcher of water, ... poured myself



*All I could think
of was water.
I wanted a drink.*

a glass of water, and drank it with relish. The pitcher and glass were carefully replaced. At that moment, Mama's eyes glimpsed the pitcher being replaced. *Oh no, it couldn't be!* she thought.

I scampered down the steps and the aisle to my seat — much to the amusement of the congregation and the embarrassment of my parents.

Later when they scolded me, I couldn't understand why they were so angry with me. I said, "I don't know why you're so mad; the preacher drank from the glass first!" I learned from that experience — you can believe I got the message — "Thou shalt not drink from the preacher's glass." ❁

Reprint from Mature Living, November 1978, when Eve Meredith was a homemaker and freelance writer in Little Rock, Arkansas.