

The Purina Diet

(based on a joke told over and over again via spammed email via the Internet)

Many of you are aware that I spend a considerable amount of time at my local "watering hole" when I am trying to get away from work. If the truth be known, I spend some of my work time at that watering hole as well.

Instead of leaving there drunker than Foster Brooks (if you don't remember him, just imagine "Otis the town drunk" from the Andy Griffith squared. And if you don't recall Otis, then just think of a drunk man who have problems even standing without weaving!), I leave Starbucks with all kinds of great stories and new friends who share with me their stories.

On this one particular day, I had to go back to my home and change clothes -- for I had spilled so much coffee on my shirt that it looked as if I was playing in the mud outdoors that rainy Thursday evening.

The culprit was a gal named Carlotta. Carly and I frequent the Ford Parkway Starbucks at about the same time each day -- around lunchtime. A little later for me because I tend to wait until everyone else has had their lunch before I take off for an hour to get away and be something other than "Dex" (short for "Rolodex", the guy who has the phone number for everything and everyone and who can tell you the quickest way to get to the base where I work at).

Carlotta reminds me of Chris Tanner. Chris is no longer with us -- I'll see him in Heaven, for I know he's there. Chris and I were high school friends. Not "buddies" -- we moved in different "circles" but those "circles" intersected a few times for me and him to get to know each other well. Chris had this way of telling a joke so straight that you SWEAR that it was absolutely true...until he hits you with the punch line!!

Carlotta is the same way -- a female "Chris Tanner."

She's a defense attorney working out of a small office five blocks down from the Starbucks.

So I would imagine she had the "stone face" down pat.

She told me "I was feeling really pissy a week ago yesterday... my boss was ragging on me, I was ragging, and stuff just wasn't working the way I needed it to."

She looked at me with those green eyes of hers.

"So I went to Hy-Vee. I needed to get some things -- woman things, you know --"

I nodded my head in agreement. With five daughters and two former wives, I knew what she was

talking about.

"...and I needed to get some food for Henry."

Henry is that slobber bucket of a mixed hound and something else -- don't really know -- that she keeps sending me pictures of to my email account. All I know is that he slobbers more than any other animal I have ever seen.

"You know Mike; some people are just so freakin' stupid!" She stopped to take a sip from her coffee.

"At Hy-Vee, they have those lines where you can self-ring your food items and then have some gal to check to make sure you didn't slip anything in there..."

I nodded. Self-service registers are all the rage now, especially since they can't get those teenagers to work for less than minimum wage to ring up your things.

"There were a couple people behind me and this woman, I guess, wanted to start a conversation with me. I wasn't in the mood for a conversation. "

Carlotta took another sip and moved her body to sit straight in the chair within the crowded coffeeshop. "This woman asked me if I had a dog. Never mind that the big-assed bag of Purina Dog Chow was taking up most of the basket I was holding. So, you know me...I had to wind her up."

I smiled. I know by now whenever she says something about 'winding someone up' what she's actually meaning is to "lead them on."

I looked back at the woman and said "No, I'm starting the Purina Diet again, although I probably shouldn't.."

"...because I ended up in the hospital last time -- the last time I was on the diet I lost 50 pounds."

I grinned. "The woman confirmed "50 pounds? Wow."

Now, you have to understand that Carlotta is all of five foot five, and my estimation (which is always off by at least 20 pounds) is that she's about 110 or 120 pounds. Carlotta is about the same age I am -- in the late 40s -- but she looks a lot younger.

"Yeah, 50 pounds. Great diet -- read about it in Vanity Fair. Anyway, I awoke in an intensive care unit last time with all kinds of tubes sticking out of my body..."

"Mike", Carlotta said, "You should have SEEN her eyes!!" I was giggling.

"So, I was really telling her about the benefits of the diet, glancing occasionally at the bag as if it was giving me inspiration -- saying things like "it made my hair unbelievably shiny and my skin felt a lot better... I swear," she added, stopping to take another sip of her coffee before continuing, "I had never been on a better diet!"

"I told her that it was an easy, inexpensive diet and that the way it works is to load your pockets or purse with Purina nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry. The package said the food is nutritionally complete so I was going to try it again."

At this point, I was laughing and not paying too much attention to the dribbles coming from the cover on my coffee cup.

"You know, there were like four or five people in line now, as I was explaining this diet as I was running the Kotex and the body spray and all of that stuff through the scanner. You know how people like to eavesdrop -- that's what they were doing. There was this really tall man two people back that was drinking this story in too..."

Carly took another drink.

"Here's the zinger, okay? The woman asked me "Why were you in the hospital, honey? Did something in the dog food poison me?" I turned to grab my credit card out of my purse, looked at her and said, "No...what happened was I was sitting in the street licking my butt when a car came along and hit me!"

Carlotta laughed and I laughed and so did the man in the other table laughed! "I thought the tall guy was going to have to be carried out the door!!" Carly said through her laughter.

"That was the most fun I had that day... and it sure made the rest of my day a hell of a lot better!!"

It was worth driving home and changing clothes to hear that!!