

Make It Happy

By Dennis Knight

I had resisted it for years, but a latent urge impelled me to a sudden left turn across the bow of traffic into the drive-thru lane. I encountered an assembly of lighted panels offering dozens of menu options and combinations, and the weight of my car alerted the remote attendant. It was a loud voice, untrained, uninspired and short on vowels.

“WLCM T MCDNLDS...WHDY WNT?”

“Fill her up! Make it Ethyl and check the tires,” was my lighthearted response, but it fell flat. So did my right rear tire, but that would have to wait for another drive-up lane.

“WHADJA SY?”

“Never mind. Let me look at the menu first.”

“OK WHNVR YR RDY!”

The voice expressed patience, but implied a deadline, and the pressure to make a selection mounted as a hungry, roaring Humvee pulled up behind me. My eyes caught the corner of the sign and a clown holding a bright red box.

“Okay”, I said, “I’ll take one of them Happy Meals.”

“BRGR CHSBRGR R CHKN NGTS?”

I interpreted the query, inserted some vowels and examined the choices. I don’t like chicken nuggets, so beef it would be, but I still had to decide between two models of the classic hamburger. I had just fallen off the diet wagon anyway, so the choice was obvious. “Cheeseburger,” I proclaimed.

“YGRT R APL SLCS R FRYZ?”

“Uhhh... What was that?”

“YGRT R APL SLCS R FRYZ!”

I was confused at first, but I realized the chain now offers in their Happy Meals yogurt and apple slices if you want something besides the ubiquitous French fries. I was still suffering guilt from my cheeseburger choice, so I declared, “YGRT!” Now I was dropping my vowels and we were beginning to find a common language.

“STRWBRRY OK?”

“GRT!”

“GRL R BY?”

“Boy, I guess” My vowels were back, but what business did they have questioning my gender? I was I was still in the car, so I know I hadn’t gone through the ladies door again. I figured the answer would come eventually, and I did, when I got my order.

“WHT DRNK DYA WNT?”

“What are my choices?”

“MLK CHCLT MLK R APL JC!”

The line of cars had grown to five, and the Hummer revved his engine. He was ready to bump me to kingdom come.

“Uh... chocolate milk!”

“DS THT CMPLT YR RDR?”

I answered yes and waited instructions to pull ahead. A manager came on line. Her voice carried for a block, and she spoke her vowels.

“SIR, HOW OLD ARE YOU?”

Sensing the Queen of Arches would deny me a Happy Meal for myself, I pulled to the window, tossed a hat on the dog and said it was for my ugly kid. I finished the purchase. The dog ate the burger. I took the yogurt, the milk and the prize. It is a shiny Mario action toy. Luckily I had answered “Boy”, or it would have been from the Barbie collection.