

## Wise-Crack-itis

By Marilyn Reeves

*Wise-Crack-itis: 'An insufferable, incurable disease, usually inherited; although occasionally a result of contagion if subjected to prolonged exposure to those who continuously crack wise.'*

In my case, the disease was passed down by my father. As children, he and his brothers spent much of their time making wise cracks, competing for the coveted title of Family Court Jester. I believe my dad won most of the bouts and passed the Wise-Crack-itis on down to his children.

So I spent much of my own youth trying to be witty and clever like my father, but somehow I never quite got the hang of it. All my attempts at cracking wise went over like the proverbial lead balloon. Still, I kept trying, and whenever something struck me as amusing I would interject some smart little remark. Occasionally I got a laugh, which was a bad thing. It only encouraged me to keep up the banter.

I thought I was doing pretty well with my ability to blurt out inappropriate witticisms until I met my first husband Tom. He and his three brothers had not only inherited the same disease of Wise-Crack-itis, but were also blessed (or cursed, as the case may be) with near-genius I.Q.'s. So when I was around the four of them, I meekly withdrew my pathetic little interjections, as I had more than met my match. Consequently my own symptoms fell into a state of remission, and eventually I thought I was cured.

But now that I've arrived at the mid-point of old age, that old demon Wise-Crack-itis has reared up again, unbidden, and I simply can't seem to control it. What's worse is that I seem to have lost my filter. I used to be able to control the things that came out of my mouth, but now it's as if my words have a life of their own and come blurting out before I've had a chance to stop them. Could it be – oh, say it isn't so – that along with the re-emergence of Wise-Crack-itis, I'm also flirting with the bug called 'senility'? I kid people I barely know who haven't a clue where I'm coming from, and tease the people I like best without mercy. Those who know me well know there's no venom in my words – in fact, just the opposite. The better I like them the more often I target them.

So if I happen to say something that catches you off-guard, throws you off-balance, and leaves you wondering why on earth I would say whatever it was I just said, please know that I suffer from an insufferable disease. That if I tease you it means I like you. And that I really am just kidding.