

## Perspective Digest

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**"Ben Met Anna. Made a Hit. Ben Wouldn't Shave. Ben-Anna Splyty."  
Burma Shave (Work Station One)**

Roland R. Hegstad

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W O R K S T A T I O N O N E



Roland R. Hegstad

In Work Station One One, in other words, the First One, I used "Burma Shave theology" as a metaphor for theology that no longer communicates. Was I ever right! My daughter Kimberly—just touching 30 (I won't tell from which side), an honors graduate of Loma Linda University School of Something or Other, and therefore well within the pale of the perceptive and prospective *Perspective* readership with whom I'm trying to communicate—thought that Burma Shave was the name of the backwoods poet who wrote the doggerel preceding his signature (why does the name Adelai Esteb come to mind? Now I suppose she'll ask me "Who was *that?*").\*

When you left me for the asterisk, I was telling you about Kimberly, who thought Burma Shave was the philosopher-poet who wrote:

"BEN MET ANNA.  
MADE A HIT.  
BEN WOULDN'T  
SHAVE.

BEN-ANNA SPLIT!"

*Burma Shave*

"Within this vale  
of toil and sin,  
Your head grows  
bald, but not  
your chin."

—Burma Shave.

"*Kimberly, Burma Shave was the trademarked name*

*of a shaving cream. And 40-50 years ago you'd see signs, each with a line of the limerick on it, flanking the highways and byways of America."*

"*Careful, Dad, you're dating yourself. And it sure looks like somebody's name. After all, you're the one who told me about the Lear Jet guy who named his daughters Chanda Lear, Lava Lear, and Gonda Lear. And what about those basketball players with*

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\*For lovers of Adelai's poetry, I use "doggerel" as Chaucer used it, which isn't Shakespeare, but, on the other hand, isn't all that bad. The Germans have a word for it: *knuttelvers*, literally "cudgel verse." Now, let's get back to Kimberly.

such names as Exree Hipp (Maryland), Ansu Sesay (Mississippi), onn'A Givens (UCLA), Alico Dunk (Tennessee), Boubacar Aw (Georgetown), and—get this one, Dad—Scientific Mapp (Florida A&M). I think Burma Shave would fit right into that list.”

The point is that Hegstad, the Great Communicator, was using a metaphor for communicative obsolescence that didn't communicate to an esteemed element of *Perspective's* target audience. Ah, well, I also know the value of repetition. So for all the Kimberlys who read *Perspective Digest*, BURMA SHAVE IS A SHAVING CREAM! In the days when the Beatles' parents were hoping to have sons who would become tradesmen who could earn a living, Burma Shave signs, spaced a hundred yards (an undocumented estimate) apart, added a bit of erudition to your trip.

Again: BURMA SHAVE IS A SHAVING CREAM!

“You don't have to SHOUT, Dad. In fact, people listen more intently when you whisper to them.”

“Right you are, Kim. By the way, have you heard the latest about that theologian from out west who was speaking in a meeting in that college, you know that college, and he blah, blah, blah, blah. Ad infinitum, ad nau

“OK, Dad. Don't overdo it. And remember: some of your Adventist

Theological Society members might not like your humor.”

“If they don't, you know what I'm going to do?”

“What? Resign?”

“No, nothing that drastic. I'll quote Ellen G. White to them.”

“I thought you'd used up all her quotes on me when I was a kid.”

“She was a very voluminous writer, Kim. I've still got a few left. Like: 'It's a sin to preach the gospel in an uninteresting manner.'”

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## PERSPECTIVE DIGEST CHALLENGE AWARDS

Sorry about the mailing problems with our first issue.

We've extended the contest deadline to November 30. See pages 94 and 95 and go for it!

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“Where's that one from?”

“I'll have to check with Tim Poirier at the White Estate. He's got everything on a CD ROM.”

“I hope you haven't added to the considerable pile of E.G.W. apocrypha.”

“Believe me, if I have, Tim Poirier and 50 theologians will let me know.”

Now, while I'm still thanking the Good Lord for your gracious affir-

mation of the first *Perspective*, notice that Burma Shave is relevant enough to point you to a delightful "Frontiers of Theology" in this issue.

The last Burma Shave sign I remember seeing—last summer on Highway 2 in Montana—was about 80 miles west of Jordan. And Jordan is just 30 miles from the Freeman Ranch, much in the news recently. And in Jordan resides Adventist pastor John Bilbro, who has studied with a number of Freeman. Beginning on page 82 is his story, "a hitherto untold tale of theological misreads out on the Big Sky frontiers of theology." In a sense it's my story, too, as you shall find. But I'm not the one who had the "close shave" out on the ranch, and I don't mean Burma. I mean handcuffs and fist-clenching tension.

And if you're surfeited with bad news, check in with "Good News," a column for those readers who are tired of the bad (see page 90). If you need affirmation, don't miss ATS President Richard M. Davidson's "Then Was *This* Christian 'Glad and Lightsome'" (see page 51). If you've ever had a worry about the great time of trouble, Norman R. Gully will have you singing! (see page 36) If your troubles are more immediate

and financial/spiritual, don't miss the \$500 (and down) *Perspective Digest Challenge Awards* (see pages 94 and 95). Or you can seek "Treasure in a Matchbox" with layman Charles P. Harris, Jr. (see page 22). Of course, by the time you get there you'll already have discovered how to heed the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and *insult* all nations" (see page 14). The author, Dr. Edwin M. Yamauchi, with a fistful of credentials as a biblical scholar and linguist, will be your instructor—and, to a few theologians, probably a provocateur as well.

By the way, Ellen White erected hundreds of theological Burma Shave signs and placed them all through her writings, including those dreaded testimonies that begin, "Dear Brother (or Sister) A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, Etc."—I always found my throat tightening when I got to an H. The "signs" that I recall best emphasized the happiness that should characterize the child of God. So here are—

FAMOUS LAST WORDS  
ABOUT A COLUMN—MINE;  
CRITICIZE IT, AND  
I'LL ERECT THIS SIGN—  
"SMILE!"

—E.S.W.

