Another Perspective

By Lori Pankonin

Summertime brought a fun visit from Australian relatives that was indeed intriguing.

I attempted to prepare my grandchildren for the accent they could expect from our anticipated company. I showed them pictures of the kids on Facebook.

“They don’t look like they have an accent,” was seven-year-old Austin’s observation. No, they didn’t look foreign but their different dialect was immediately obvious from the five-year-old through the adults.

This was our first chance to meet my cousin’s husband and four children. They were delightful! Just like our previous visits with Leanne, her brothers and parents, we soon found that although we all speak English, we do use different words.

What we call supper would be tea for them. So when invited to tea, they would expect a meal. Their yute is our pickup and a vehicle’s bonnet is what we would call the hood.

Mum to them is Mom to us. A bloke to them is a guy to us, and a barbie would be a barbecue.

The list goes on with a need for clarification becoming apparent. Yes, there’s a tad bit of contrast to the image of playing with a Barbie doll compared to grilling steaks at a barbecue.

Unique words or phrases also become a part of the language of various families.

We call our Suburban the burb and the skid loader is Betsy. My friend called her grandpa “Bumpup” which also carried on to the next generation.

Our grandkids call Russ “Bunka” and me “CeeCee” just because that’s what the oldest child started.

Actually it’s now changed to Grandpa Bunka and Grandma CeeCee.

Some people have unique names for a child’s favorite blanket, pacifier or naptime only to be identified by that family. Tayvin loved the privilege of playing with Grandpa Bunka’s iPad recently and now requests to use his “eye patch” whenever she sees him.

Consequently, I now call it his “eye patch.”

Decades ago, we had a visit from my Dad’s uncle and family from California. Uncle George (or “Unc” as my dad called him) weighed more than 500 pounds.

Their visit created many memories to say the least. Imagine what it takes to sit down or get up with that kind of weight. Simple tasks required assistance.

It was always a relief when he made it down the three steps to get out the back door, not only a relief that he didn’t fall but a relief that the steps were strong enough. There was one more step at the end of the sidewalk and he had to stop to catch his breath before continuing on to his car.

His dear sweet wife, Ella Marie, always scurried to help him and it became common to hear him call out, “Ella Marie. Ella Marie.”

One day Uncle George called from the bathroom, “Ella Marie. Ella Marie.”

She went to his rescue and came out asking for toilet paper. Evidently the supply had run out.

Who knows why but that became our new term for needing toilet paper. If someone yelled “Ella Marie” from the bathroom, you immediately went to provide them with that important necessity.

A while back, I was on the phone with Celeste, our youngest daughter, when she started to laugh. Her roommate was yelling “Ella Marie.”

Yes, it seems that the house of college girls had added our meaning for “Ella Marie” to their vocabulary. What a kick!

Be it a use of words from foreign relatives or adopted terms established by a family or group, we adapt and learn to communicate.

G’Day Mate!

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