

Set Up a Boilermaker for Ruth

In the early seventies, I was teaching a course for the Navy at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland during my annual Naval Reserve obligation, and Ruth came to spend the long weekend with me. A little get away from the kids in beautiful Annapolis. We got a room at a hotel in small harbor in downtown Annapolis, just a few hundred yards from the Severn River. We walked around the city, through the Naval Academy and around Capitol Square. What a wonderful place to catch up during our busy lives of nursing, professing and raising children!

I wanted to take Ruth to the restaurant where the Marines always invited me for their annual crab feast. They would always meet there on a hot night in July, and with mounds of hard shell crabs on the table, would celebrate another year...washing it all down with pitchers of ice tea and beer. There were big round holes in each table, with a trashcan placed right below, and when a leatherneck finished a crab he just tossed the shell in the hole. Prices were low and for ten dollars one could have all the crabs and beer they wanted. As a Naval Officer, I felt honored to be the only "Navy Guy" invited each year. I wanted Ruth to experience the place in a quieter atmosphere, and we drove out to this wonderful restaurant by the Chesapeake Bay.... just a romantic dinner for two!

Ruth was dressed in a new blue sundress and with her tan looked like a million dollars. She always looked perfect, but tonight she looked even better. On the way to the restaurant,

we started talking about some family issues and by the time we reached our destination, Ruth was a little perturbed with me.... in fact, she was being her “quiet self”...the way she sometimes became when she was angry. Ruth rarely “blew up,” but would become very quiet until she realized she was wrong and I was right!! Sometimes, even an apology for her mistake, didn't help matters.

We were ushered to a booth overlooking the Bay and the waitress asked if we would like a drink. Ruth, without hesitation said, “A Boilermaker!” The waitress said, “Excuse me?” and Ruth said, “ A Boilermaker.” I ordered a beer. (Note: For you non-drinkers, a Boilermaker is a beer and a shot of whiskey...sometimes poured together, sometimes drunk separately, sometimes the whiskey dropped into the mug of beer, shot glass and all!)

Ruth lit up a cigarette and we sat quietly. The waitress delivered our drinks and Ruth just stared at her mug of beer and shot of whiskey, and kept smoking. After several minutes, the waitress returned, and seeing that Ruth had not taken a sip, said, “ Is everything OK?” Ruth looked up at her and said, “What is the name of the drink made with Kahlua and vodka?” The waitress said, “Maybe a Black Russian?” Ruth said, “That's what I wanted.” The waitress laughed and said, “The bartender took one look at you and said, ‘That lady will never drink a Boilermaker!’” Ruth started laughing, I started laughing and the rest of that night is history!

(Note: Poor Ruth has to endure this story from time to time. She is such a good sport about it that I am never going to share it with anyone again.)

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