

Comments on an Episode of Leave It to Beaver

by Phillip W. Weiss

I watched an interesting episode of Leave It to Beaver. In this episode, Beaver gets involved in selling raffle tickets. The prize is a car. Eddie Haskell laughs at Beaver, telling Beaver that he is wasting his time because if he wins his parents won't let him keep the car. Both Beaver and his brother Wally dismiss Eddie's comments as rubbish.

Well, Beaver wins the raffle, and Eddie's statement proves true. Beaver's father, Ward, tells Beaver that he cannot keep the car. Ward, claiming that he is acting in Beaver's best interest, wants to sell the car and put the money into Beaver's college fund (Beaver is ten years old). Beaver breaks down and cries. All he knows is that Eddie Haskell was right and that his father is nothing but a two-timing skunk that is using his authority as a parent to deny something that Beaver won and owns.

Beaver knows that he is not old enough to drive the car, but he wanted to keep it to enjoy it and have his father drive it. Instead, Ward acts the way Eddie predicted proving Eddie correct. I would have re-written that script to show Eddie that his cynicism is unfounded. I would have had Ward tell Beaver that of course he can keep the car and care for it and cherish it until he is old enough to drive it, and that in the meantime the car would become an honored part of the family, a Beavermobile. Ward could drive it, knowing that it is his son's car. Wally could

drive it, knowing that it was his brother's car. Beaver could tell Eddie to get lost.

In another re-write, I would have Beaver developing a new respect for Eddie Haskell. Beaver tells Eddie that he was right, and Eddie and Beaver become close friends, Beaver develops a resentment against his father that escalates into outright and ill-concealed hatred. Ward notices this but no matter how much he tries to be nice to Beaver, Beaver just will not budge. Beaver now merely tolerates his father's presence. He goes about his life, outwardly okay, but inwardly is counting the days until he can leave the household and get as far away as possible from his stupid father.

The day after Beaver graduates high school, he enlists in the Army. This shocks Ward and everyone else in the family. Beaver packs his bags, says goodbye to his brother Wally, kisses his mother June goodbye and leaves, deliberately shunning Ward who is at work.

Ward comes home. June tells Ward that Beaver is gone. Beaver left a letter in an envelope addressed to Ward. Ward opens the envelope and reads the letter. The letter says, "Dear Dad, You took away my car and proved that you are the skunk that Eddie Haskell said you were. Now I am away from you. You are the biggest hypocrite on the planet. It is fathers like you that make the world such a nasty place. You conceal your nastiness, but it is there, a part of you. The meanest drill sergeant bawling me out will be like music to my ears compared to the lies that comes out of your mouth. I do not know how mother can stand you, but that is her problem. All I know is that I am away from you and that is how I want it to be. If I win anything else, I will make sure NOT to tell you. Your son, Beaver."

Beaver stays in the army, makes it a career, becomes an officer, moves up the chain of command. By his fifteenth year in the service, he is a colonel commanding a brigade. He got married, has a wife and two children, a boy and a girl. In the ensuing time, he had no contact with his family. He wants nothing to do with them. He has written them off. Wally tried to contact Beaver but to no avail and then stopped trying.

June went into a deep depression, and Ward, being clueless, senses that something is wrong but just can't quite figure out the source of the problem, which hits him. He knows that Beaver hates him but can't figure out why. Ward reasons that he took away Beaver's car because he was too young to own a car. There is nothing wrong with that. Then one day Ward runs across Eddie Haskell, who by now is a successful standup comedian who has crafted his cynicism into a comedy act. Eddie tells Ward that he screwed up with Beaver not because taking away the car was the wrong thing to do but because by doing so, he showed Beaver that he was a bigger rat than Eddie who Beaver thought was the biggest jerk in the world.

Ward is shaken by this revelation and goes to car dealership and buys a brand-new Chevrolet, fully loaded, and has the car shipped to Beaver's current location, an army base in Washington State. Beaver is shocked when one day he finds a brand-new Chevrolet in front of his office. Attached to the Chevrolet is a note addressed to Beaver. It says, "Dear Son, it's been many years since we have talked. I know you have never forgiven me for taking away what was rightfully yours. I thought I was acting in your best interests. Anyway, to make it up to you,

I have bought you this car. I know it isn't the car that you won but I hope this will do as a replacement. That's it. Take care. Your father. Ward." Beaver stares at the letter, smiles, goes to his office, picks up the phone and places a call to Ward Cleaver in Nowheresville, New York. The end. That is how I would have re-written the script.

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