



by Ned Hickson

## Dignity is Easier to Swallow with Hot Sauce

Within our lives there are certain moments that inspire a deeper understanding of ourselves. I experienced such an epiphany yesterday morning during a quiet moment of introspection; crouched in the backyard; sprinkling dog poop with hot sauce.

To clarify, I was not attempting to create the world's most disgusting Cajun appetizer. According to a book on canine behavior, this would train our dog to avoid eating his "leftovers." It was in that moment, while clutching a bottle of Tabasco and try-

ing not to be seen by my neighbors, I came to realize that somewhere along the way providing our dog with decent manners had become more important than maintaining my personal dignity.

How did this happen? I'm a 42-year-old man who survived the diaper phases of two children — both of whom were heavy eaters. I've had my share of high profile, low-dignity diaper changes, one of which required quick thinking, commando-like precision, and a paper plate. I've sat across from my then three-year-old son at a busy restaurant in downtown San Francisco, handed him a cheese stick appetizer, and watched him yak up what appeared to be everything he'd consumed since graduating to

solid foods. I tried to salvage the situation by waiting for a lull in gastrol activity and then racing him into the men's room. And let me just say had the rest rooms been clearly marked, we probably would've made it. What got me through those times, of course, was knowing, as a parent, I could look forward to eventually becoming an embarrassment to my children once they entered middle school. However, as I crouched over Stanley's latest pile with my Tabasco bottle at the ready, one thought kept running through my mind: You can't embarrass a dog. Particularly one with questionable intelligence. This meant I had either (a) matured to the point of not caring what others

thought of me based on their own one-dimensional perception, or (b) succumbed to the realization that the last of my dignity had been wrung out into a mop bucket in San Francisco. In either case, it meant I had moved on to a new phase in my life. A time that will eventually prepare me for my later years, when I'm secure enough in myself that the opinions of others — or even the basic rules of traffic — no longer matter. However, reaching that level of self assuredness is still years away, which is why, after noticing I'd been crouched over the same pile for several minutes, I quickly sprinkled it and moved on.

As far as I can tell, Stanley is no longer interested in his "leftovers." I know

this because he has stopped coming in from outside and standing with his tongue in the water bowl. At the same time, it's proven to be a trade-off since I can't put Tabasco on my eggs without getting queasy. The important thing is that the experience has allowed me to achieve some personal growth thanks to a few moments of introspection about fodderhood.

- You can write to Ned Hickson at the Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR. 97439, or visit his website at: [www.nedhickson.net](http://www.nedhickson.net)

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