

'Second niece' gives her side of story

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

You heard from Margaret Early a few weeks ago. Now you can read Jane's side of the story! By way of introduction, let me say that Jane — the second of my nieces — is a junior at Canisius College, a thoroughly delightful person and a joy to her uncle.

Whether she is a credible commentator in this instance, I leave to your gentle judgment. While you make that judgment, I am off to Washington for a three-day meeting of the Administrative Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Will be back to you next week. Now... Jane!

Through the years all the people who have subscribed to the *Catholic Courier* have been fortunate enough to have access to "Along the Way," written by my uncle. I write now in defense of my sisters and

myself; we have been unfairly represented by our "poor uncle."

Usually, he has the exclusive benefit of this column, but today one niece has been given the pen and there are a few things that need clarification. My only problem now is where to start.

As a little girl, I remember going to the airport every summer to pick up Uncle Matt who was coming home from Rome for a six-week stay. My sisters and I would get very excited as the time drew near.

We loved going to the airport because it was a lot of fun. We would all (at least all of us who could walk) go to the huge window at the end of a hallway in the airport and watch the planes. With hands and noses pressed firmly against the glass, we patiently awaited the arrival of our Uncle Matt.

When he finally arrived, six weeks of fun started. Uncle Matt would have a blast teasing his poor little nieces for six whole weeks! He would throw us from the shallow end in to the deep end of the pool. He would find us after he went running and demand a great big wet-and-sweaty hug.

But most tormenting to us was that he would not start the car to take us for ice cream until we answered the question, "Who's in charge?" Of course we would all yell "Grace is!" (because that's what she told us) and laugh until our "poor uncle" asked again.

We were a smart group, so we agreed

that Uncle Matt was in charge — until we got our ice cream. Then we would tell him we changed our minds and Grace was really in charge the whole time.

Uncle Matt has teased all of us all our lives. We all have an occasion in mind that we'd just as soon forget — if Uncle Matt would let us. For me, it's the blueberry tarts I made for Thanksgiving when I was a child. I was very young and, of course, they were terrible. Uncle Matt will never let me live it down.

I am now 21-years-old and every time the family gets together Uncle Matt asks if there are going to be any blueberry tarts made by Jane. He even threatens to stay in Rochester if I make tarts!

During my teenage years I thought he would let it go, but I now understand that I will have to live with this kind of ribbing for the rest of my life. That's OK though because someday he'll forget to ask about the tarts before he comes and I'll have them at home waiting for him!

Uncle Matt not only likes to pick on his nieces, he likes to get his nieces to pick on each other. Margaret is the perfect example. Every time Uncle Matt is with three or four of us — minus Margaret of course — he asks "Who misses Margaret, raise your hand."

Uncle Matt is the only one with his hand up at this point so he laughs and says, "You guys are terrible! What's wrong with Margaret?" Of course, nothing is really wrong with Margaret but we would not want to disappoint our Uncle Matt by not offering an explanation.



And it's not just Margaret that Uncle Matt does this to. I just found out that Uncle Matt has asked this about me in my absence. For some reason Uncle Matt finds our reactions to his question hilarious and he takes great pleasure in asking it whenever the opportunity presents itself. So, I guess I should not expect to be exempt from his antics when it comes to inciting us against each other. I'm not surprised!

For other examples of how Uncle Matt teases his nieces just ask him one of these questions:

- Whose hair is the fullest and curliest?
- Who's his most gorgeous niece?
- Who's in charge?

He'll tell you the answers and laugh at the thoughts these questions bring to mind. We love you Uncle Matt. Peace to all.

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