

## The Vomiting

by Bill Zam

My brother wanted to know when I would write about the vomiting.

Truth is, I wasn't going to write much about my wife's pregnancy at all. Many of my friends don't have kids, and neither do three of the four people that read this column. I didn't want to be the guy at a party full of singles talking about how full his baby's diaper was that morning. Unfortunately, it's inevitable. You end up discussing your kids in one fashion or another. For those of you with children, I hope the references ring true. For the rest of you, let's get down to something to which anybody can relate: hurling.

I don't mean "hurling," the British sport which is essentially rugby combined with baseball, minus protective gear. I speak of something much more violent and disturbing. Ladies and gentleman, I give you...*hyperemesis gravidarum*.

Hyperemesis gravidarum is not for the weak of heart; so if you're timid or happen to be eating something, turn away now. It is, however, for the weak of stomach. In fact, hyperemesis gravidarum is about weak stomachs. More accurately, stomachs that require an exorcist.

Perhaps you've never heard the term. Lucky for you, I took three years of Latin in high school. Though not consecutively. I took one year of Spanish in between because I liked saying *biblioteca*. It's just plain fun. Try it with me: *la biblioteca!* See? Don't you feel happier already? Pardon me. Apparently, my issue with changing subjects did not end with foreign language class.

I was about to translate a medical term. *Hyperemesis gravidarum* is essentially an advanced state of morning sickness, which, as any woman who has had morning sickness will tell you, is a misnomer. Roughly translated (meaning I didn't really look it up), "hyperemesis" comes from the Latin *hyper-*, meaning "excessive" and *-emesis*, meaning, "to come forth or out," as with your lunch. Even those of you without a Latin background may realize that *gravidar-* is the root of the word "grave," meaning "serious." Serious enough to kill you and put you in one. I can't quite remember what the *-um* part meant in Latin, but most likely it was short for "Um...can somebody please call the cleaning lady?"

If you think I'm invoking the restaurant scene from Monty Python's "The Meaning of Life," you're correct. Like the waiter played by John Cleese, my job is to stand at attention, unperturbed, as my wife plays Niagara Falls. Unlike Cleese, I can't run and hide behind the plants and wait for the explosion. I have to stand by politely with the napkin for nine months. That's a lot of spewage.

Remember that time in junior high, when your friends offered you \$10 to chug an entire jar of pickle juice? Or in high school, when you drank so much at Jay's house that you barely realized somebody was coloring your face with a blue magic marker as you clung to the toilet for dear life? Or that time at college, when you first tried vodka and Sprite slammers, and ended up drinking beer out of a girl's shoe before unsuccessfully trying to dribble a basketball down the steps of the UConn library? [Wait for it...*la biblioteca!*] Hyperemesis features more vomit on a daily basis than all of those incidents combined.

Of course, as my mom and the police both well know, these are only hypothetical situations. The point is that my wife's condition is hyper-high on the Not Fun Scale. If you have had food poisoning, done too many keg stands or even had morning sickness, I truly do feel sorry for you. However, this just isn't the same thing.

This pregnancy is the (yikes) second time my wife and I have been through this. People try to be helpful. "Maybe she needs fresh air" (insert Family Feud "X" and buzzer here). "Maybe she should take a cold shower" (XX). "Maybe it's only in her head" (XXX!). This is the absolute worst

bit of advice we have received. If it were all in her head, it wouldn't be all over the carpet! Please don't call and tell her it's psychological. In fact, please don't call at all because (you guessed it) answering the phone makes her throw up.

I warned you this article would be disgusting, but I guarantee you I'm leaving out the *really* nasty details. I won't get into the infamous hosing-down-the-garage story or the fact that the hyperemesis is exacerbated by ptyalism, which believe it or not is an actual medical condition characterized by excessive spitting. If you don't believe me, go to *la biblioteca* and look it up. Suffice it so say that you will never see me drinking out of a red Solo-brand plastic cup.

We have tried everything: saltines, small meals throughout the day, eating while lying down, bubble gum, lemons with sugar, drugs, ginger ale, ginger tea, ginger root, Ginger Rogers. Nothing works.

I know that much of this article has been about how unpleasant it's been for me. It seems that I spend 90 percent of every column vilifying the people and situations around me and 10 percent reassuring the reader that I'm really a nice guy. In keeping with that theme, let me promise you, in no uncertain terms, that I've got it easy compared to my wife. She describes the symptoms as "the worst hangover you ever had" or "that feeling right before you throw up" – all the time, for nine months. She keeps wishing she could "get off the boat." I can't begin to tell you how it kills me to watch the woman I love suffer this kind of trauma, and I'm doing everything I can to alleviate the pain and mental anguish.

If you haven't noticed, in my family we alleviate pain by laughing our way through it. A classic family story features my mom and her four siblings, laughing to the point of tears, rolling out the door of a limousine – at their father's funeral. They all loved him dearly, but their way of enduring the sadness of the loss was to joke about the good times and remember him in life. The trick is knowing when to draw the line. For example, chuckling in the limousine is OK, but pointing at a casket and guffawing is not generally considered proper decorum.

Following that etiquette, I will not read this article to my wife until *after* the pregnancy is over. She just wouldn't find it funny now. Plus, I need the extra time to finish building my underground bomb shelter. If she still isn't amused, I figure she'll be so weak from the delivery that I'll be able to outrun her to the trap door.