

Elizabeth Zappa

### The Zappas go to K-Mart

Do you remember the Biblical story of Jesus being lost and found in the temple? For three days his parents, traveling in separate caravans, thought Jesus was with the other parent.

What happened here is kind of like that.

I grew up in a family of eight. This meant a house with two parents and six kids, in addition to the two dogs, a cat, and the occasional lizard, bird, frog, hamster or goldfish. Disorder was normal, which explains why my 4-year-old brother's clothes got left behind in the cities on our family vacation to the Black Hills in 1998. Thus we found ourselves at the K-Mart in Sioux Falls. All eight of us, with kids ranging in age from nine months to 12 years.

I'm not sure when or why we split up, but at some point there were two groups of Zappas trekking through the store that day.

When we all finally met up in the men's clothing section, it was realized that the little 4-year-old tike was not with any of us. As the parents yelled at my older brothers and they defended themselves, a voice came on over the loudspeaker:

"Attention K-Mart customers: Will the parents of Timothy Francis Bobo Zappa please come to the service desk? The parents of Timothy Francis Bobo Zappa to the service desk, please."

Let me take this moment to clarify something. All of us kids have nicknames, courtesy of our parents (mostly my dad). Some are normal: my brother Joe's nickname is simply the Italian word for Joseph, "Giuseppe." Some are weird: One of my sisters was nicknamed "Buddha Baby" because she was such a chunk as an infant. Somehow Tim ended up with "Bobo," and whenever we called him by his full name this nickname was tossed in for good measure.

Because of this, and unknown to us, my 4-year-old my brother legitimately thought “Bobo” was part of his real name.

Upon hearing the name “Timothy Francis *Bobo* Zappa,” there was an instant debate over who should be forced to go get him. Who was going to take responsibility for the little blonde kid whose parents were cruel enough to stick “Bobo” in his name? A good 3-5 minutes of heated discussion eventually resulted in the parents’ retrieval of their lost son, but the look of reluctance as they made their way to the service desk has left a lasting impression on us older kids.

And poor innocent Tim, completely unaware of his little mistake, greeted them as if nothing big had happened. In fact, he was perfectly content when my parents got to him. He had been given a red sucker and was talking cheerfully to the security guard.

Ever since then, my parents have done better keeping track of their little ones. I’d like to say they’ve done better with nicknames but Maria, the baby in the family, accumulated a nickname longer than John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt.

I think my parents should be thankful they never lost “Maria Kathleen Pooky Chop-chop Pooh Bear Tigger Babes Zappa” in a store.