

# FROM WHERE I SIT

## JOHN COONEY

### My Dog Has Fleas

I come from a musical family. And, though singing was never my strong suit (I'd rather be run over by a truck than attempt a solo), I did feel obliged, as a small conscientious boy, to do my tuneful best with a musical instrument. Any musical instrument. I avoided my dad's ancient violin, but could often be found plonking away on our old piano ... clanking away on the spoons (my sisters were always better at this) ... wheezing away on a borrowed piano-accordion ... or strumming away on one of several ukuleles that lived at our place.

**P**laying a musical instrument's a bit like riding a bike, I suppose. You never really forget. And I proved that true, several months back, when a couple of grandkids got ukuleles for Christmas. They brought them out when we came to visit, and (to my grandkids' amusement) I lost myself briefly in a little nostalgia-session – reliving some long-forgotten memories, recalling chords I had last played half a century ago, and strumming along on those four nylon strings like it was only yesterday.

I even remembered how to tune the thing, with that famous, never-fail “*my-dog-has-fleas*” ditty. The grandkids couldn't believe it – and I was mildly amazed myself!

In the weeks that followed our visit, our youngsters got pretty good on their ‘ukes’. With the help of their parents, they found websites that gave easy-to-follow lessons ... they practised chords that I'd never dreamed of ... and they mastered



songs like *Somewhere Over The Rainbow* (as popularised by that ukulele-playing Hawaiian with the catchy name: Israel Kamakawiwo'ole).

In fact, the next time we called in, we were treated to a sit-down ukulele concert that soon had us standing up and applauding.

But the next chapter (which you've simply gotta hear) was told by their father ...

**A**ll four kids were in the car that particular afternoon when he popped in to the local supermarket.

TIME IS A GREAT HEALER, BUT A LOUSY BEAUTICIAN.

He found a park right near the main entrance. He explained that he would be gone "no more than a few minutes" – and lectured them (as you do) to "stay in car – or else!" and "under no circumstances get out!" They smiled in agreement and promised to be good, and he left them – venturing forth down the aisles in search of the required items.

While at the check-out counter, he happened to glance up – and spotted some small heads through the shop window. He immediately identified those small heads as belonging to his children, and, completing his purchase, he headed for the exit with grim thoughts of punishment and torture running through his mind.

As he stormed through the self-opening door, ready to bite some small heads off, he stopped, struggling momentarily to take in the scene that greeted him ...

His kids were lined up on the footpath, like the Von Trapp family from *Sound of Music*. Ably backed by big brother on his ukulele, they were singing *Somewhere Over The Rainbow* to a small crowd of appreciative shoppers.

They were **BUSKING!**

**THORT**



And (wait – there's more!) coins were being tossed into the upturned cap which the oldest boy had thoughtfully placed on the ground in front of them!

Their poor father didn't know whether to laugh or cry. And, more than a little embarrassed, he bundled them and the ukulele back into the car as soon as the song came to an end.

**T**o cut a long story short, my grandkids made \$6.30 that afternoon – \$6.30 in five minutes! Not bad, eh? And on the way home they discussed how the proceeds would be split. \$1.50 each seemed fair ... with the extra 30 cents going to the littlest one, their five-year-old sister, because (they decided) "she'd looked so cute!"

Upon hearing the story, their grandfather's heart swelled with pride. My grandkids aren't just musical – they're entrepreneurial, too!

Beat that!

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GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER/EDITOR IS PLEASED TO REPORT THAT HIS GRANDKIDS HAVE GONE ON SINCE TO RAISE \$100, BUSKING FOR THE LOCAL SPCA. LOOK FOR THEM ON A FOOTPATH NEAR YOU ...

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***My neighbour knocked on my door at 2:30am this morning. Can you believe that – 2:30am?! Luckily for him I was still up playing my bagpipes.***