

# Making lemonade

*'Dysfunctional' family inspires comic*

By CARL HAHN  
LIFE staff

Walking up to the house near Westward Ho, there's a distinct aroma of yeast emanating from the garage and the ground outside.

Before the smell even hits my nostrils, though, Camilla Jones is already explaining that one of the boys was trying to make some home-brew. She caught him and made him dump it out this morning, but it's just part of life when you live like hillbillies, she says.

"Dumb made the hooch, and Dumber had already tried it out," she says in her raspy voice. "They were gonna try it out on the cats first, but they couldn't find any."

It's another life episode that's bound to be part of the routine next time Camilla the comedian hits the stage.

Camilla (rhymes with Pamela) rarely has to look beyond her own life to find fodder for her comic ramblings. In fact, she's been praying to God to call it quits with the new material.

She can already work with themes such as having divorced parents, being a mother of four teenaged boys, being divorced, dating, having a stroke, having heart surgery and having an elderly father move in.

Enough already.

"I divulge all of the dysfunctional stuff," she says.

"It's all just making fun of my own life, so it's not like I'm being cruel or mean to others."

She admits that her 71-year-old dad is embarrassed by his daughter's professional comedy, and refuses to hand out her business cards, but that doesn't rate high enough for her "give a s-factor."

"I tell him, 'You turned me into this because we were raised in a dysfunctional home.'"

At the same time, she notes that you can't spell "dysfunctional" without "fun."

"Probably 80 per cent of families are dysfunctional anyway."

That's probably why she gets such good response from audiences. It's been only eight or nine years since they've been able to share her laughter in defence of her sanity.

But she's been able to amuse herself all her life.

Camilla grew up west of Bowden and was a torment to teachers, despite being valedictorian of her graduating class.

She'd be one of the first students finished exams, then start getting the rest of the class into trouble.

"The teachers just hated me, because those poor bastards weren't done writing their tests yet."

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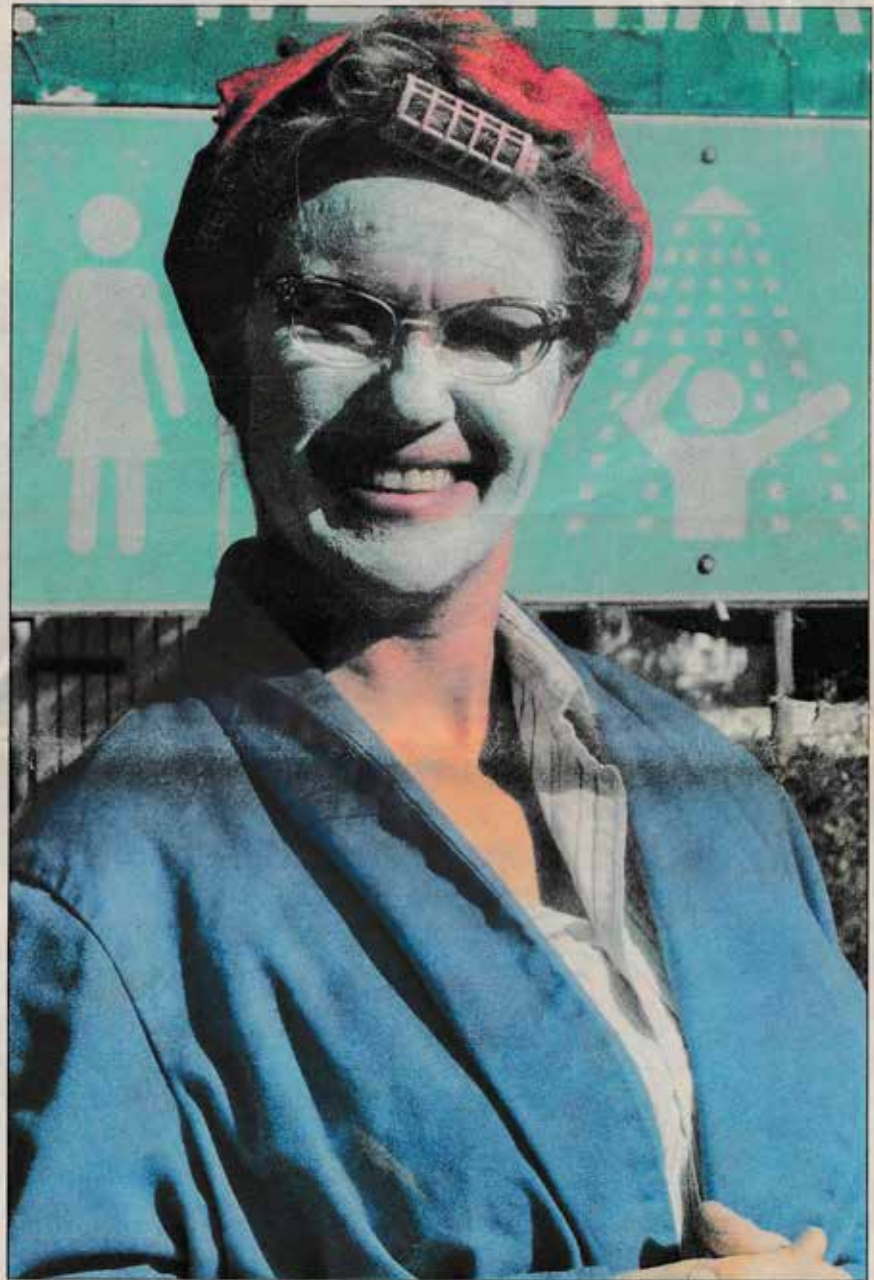


Photo by CARL HAHN/LIFE staff

Camilla Jones has turned the downside of life into a standup comedy career.

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## Comic: *Raised four boys*

Between SAIT, Olds College and the University of Saskatchewan, she earned a degree in animal health technology, and married her high school sweetheart, Terry.

They split up a little more than four years ago, but they still maintain a united front in raising four boys, now aged 14 to 17.

"I always joke and say they're nine months and 20 minutes apart."

Camilla had helped develop an RV park, worked as a dairy inspector, and built a "massive" home business that "just about killed me" before she moved into professional comedy.

On a dare she entered the Search for Canada's Funniest New Comic and reached the finals.

Rather than going for the comedy club circuit, she decided to go it alone.

Working mostly conventions and corporate functions, she's built a business through word of mouth that is her primary source of income.

In that time she's only had one show bomb, she says.

An agent from Calgary who throws her occasional work had sent her to a little town near Brooks.

From the opening lines it felt like she had accidentally walked into a different culture, and it went down downhill from there.

She noticed one woman in the audience praying for her.

Only one couple laughed all night, and she found out later their house was for sale and they were getting out of town.

Camilla called her agent later and was told the reason she got that job was because no comedian who had been there before would agree to go back.

The more serious bombs have been the ones landing in her personal life, but she keeps a sense of humour to get through them.

When she had a stroke in January, she recalls thinking, as she lay in a puddle of her own urine, that it was rather ironic after all the jokes she'd made about the Lifeline "I've fallen and I can't get up" commercials.

When told half of her brain was effectively dead, her response was that was OK: she only needs half a brain because she lives so close

to Sundre.

She just doesn't want to lose the other half or she'll have to move to Caroline, she adds with a wicked laugh.

Her stubborn streak has helped her recover better than 90 per cent of her mobility, she estimates.

She gets good exercise beating up four teenaged boys, she notes.

She's trying to raise them to respect women — or at least damn well fear them.

In July, she had her first heart surgery to correct the problem that led to the stroke.

Life seems to be rebounding, but whatever comes, she's ready to make a joke about it.

That's the message that she tries to send through her comedy routines, she says.

When people hear what she's gone through, maybe their own lives won't look so bad anymore.

"Is this really going to matter when you're 80?" she asks.

"It's just life.

"That's the way it goes.

"You just gotta learn to laugh at it and move on."