Since last June I have been obliged to laugh with seeming glee whenever some waggish friend hails me with cries of, "Hello there, Prudence." My friends are convulsed by the thought that perhaps a million or more people must think of me each day as a little old lady, presumably a dear old one, while they know that for 39 years I have been a cigar-smoking newspaperman working as a New York police reporter covering fires, murders, gang wars, and from time to time interviewing stars of the stage, screen and TV. Not only my friends but absolute strangers, too, are bewildered by the thought that a grizzled, somewhat portly man with a basso profundo voice should be using a name which is so decidedly feminine, and even prissy, and that such a man should be writing about cooking.

The other day the phone in my office rang, and I picked it up and said, as I generally do, "Goldberg." (That's my name, after all.) There was a second's silence, and then a feminine voice said, "I'm sorry, I must have the wrong extension. I'm calling Prudence Penny." I sighed and said, "This is she." There was another silence and then the voice said, "I don't understand." So I explained that I, Hyman Goldberg, am the author of the cooking column which is printed under the name of Prudence Penny. With disbelief apparent in her voice, my caller hesitantly said she would like to French-fry a three-pound chicken and she wanted to know what kind of batter to use. "Two cups of flour," I told her, "two teaspoons of baking powder, one-half teaspoon salt, two eggs and one-and-one-half cups of milk." When she had finished writing all this down, she said, with doubt strong in her voice, "You sure? This isn't some kind of joke, is it?" "Madame," I said, "I swear by Brillat-Savarin, by Escoffier and by Howard Johnson, this is not a joke."

In a restaurant where I took my wife to dinner a few weeks ago I had somewhat the same experience, but this time face to face with a disbeliever. I had just eaten a dish which was new to me. The menu called it "Breast of Capon, Mai Rose." I knew that it had in it May wine, cream and the yolk of an egg as part of the ingredients for the sauce, but I wanted to have the precise measurements so after I paid the check, I asked to see the maitre d'. The name of the restaurant is not essential, but it is one of the better and more expensive ones in Manhattan.

"I am Prudence Penny," I announced when he arrived, smiling at me with that peculiar mixture ofunctuousness and frosty superiority affected by such people.
For 39 years I covered fires, murders, and anything else that grabbed my imagination.

PRUDENCE PENNY

in swanky joints. Immediately his expression changed. His face mirrored disbelief and, perhaps, dislike. My wife giggled wildly as I explained the situation to the man. It took a long time to convince him, but I finally did, and he got the recipe for me from the chef.

My metamorphosis into Prudence Penny came about when a lady named Vaudine Newell, who had been food-and-cooking editor for the New York Mirror for about 25 years, died suddenly one night. A couple of weeks later, upon hearing that the job had not yet been filled, I asked Selig Adler, managing editor of the paper, if I could have it. He laughed. “What the hell,” he inquired gently, “do you know about cooking?”

I told him something of my secret life as a cook, and then he said that the editor of the paper, not he, would have to make such a momentous decision. So I sought out Glenn Neville, the editor, and asked him for the job. He laughed.

But when he became convinced that I wasn’t joking, he said the publisher of the paper, Charles R. McCabe, would have to pass on my request. Neville told me to write a letter to the publisher telling my qualifications and my philosophy of how a cooking column should be written.

The publisher apparently did not laugh. The day after he received my letter he called me on the phone. “About that Prudence Penny job,” he said, “let’s have lunch about it.” So we had lunch and, perhaps, dislike. My wife giggled wildly as I explained the situation to the man. It took a long time to convince him, but I finally did, and he got the recipe for me from the chef.

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Prudence Penny's recipe for an axe murder.

- Lizze Borden Soup

3 pounds mutton
1 tsp. salt
1 parsnip
1 turnip
3 small onions
3 quarts cold water

Do you have a warm feeling of kinship for our fellow citizens of our sister state to the north of us, Massachusetts? If you do, perhaps you would like to memorialize a day famous in that commonwealth's glorious history by making a dish which has great significance on this day.

Salt mutton, place in kettle and let stand ¾ hour to bring out flavor. Pour in cold water, let stand for 1 more hour. Bring to boil, then simmer 3 hours. Biet up excess fat with paper napkin. Add vegetables, simmer for additional hour. Taste for flavor, add seasoning. Refrigerate overnight. On August 4, 1892, in Fall River, Mass., Mrs. Borden served this delicacy to her stepdaughter, Lizzie Borden. Mrs. Borden and her husband were found, later that day, axed unto death. She had served the soup cold, with a side dish of bananas. For breakfast.
At home in Brooklyn, Prudence adds a hearty slug of sherry to kasha for half a dozen colleagues.

Europe. By the time my father came out of the hospital he found, to his astonishment but also great pleasure, that my mother had a flourishing business going. He promptly rented the flat next door, broke down the walls separating them and installed more tables. After a few years he was able to rent a store with a street entrance and opened it as a restaurant seating about 75 people. My two brothers, two sisters and I all helped. I was an expert salad man and chicken-liver chopper at the age of six.

Once he got into the restaurant business, my father set about learning it. Pretty soon he knew everything my mother did about cooking, and blossomed out into a wonderfully daring and inventive cook, developing pleasing and exciting variations on the traditional Russian-Jewish cuisine.

It wasn't until I left my parents' home in the Bronx more than 30 years ago—I'm 55—that I had an opportunity to try my own hand at cooking in the languages other than Russian-Jewish. I had become exposed to other cuisines earlier, when I went to work as a copy boy and then as a police reporter at the age of 16 for the New York World, long defunct. I also worked for the New York Sun, defunct.

New York Telegram, defunct; City News Association, defunct; the newspaper PM, also defunct. And now the New York Mirror, defunct. This morbid necrology is giving my new editors on the Journal-American pause to think.

In my letter to Glenn Neville, editor of the Mirror, I told how I had become proficient in cooking in French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and many other styles, including, of course, American. I mentioned the hundreds of recipes I had collected and invented over the years and submitted several sample cooking columns. The first cooking column of mine that was printed began like this:

"There was this woman in The Bronx who bought two live chickens and kept them on her fire escape to fatten them. Sadly, one of them became indisposed. So she killed the healthy chicken to make soup to bring the one that was ill back to health. Here's her recipe for . . ." And then I gave a recipe for chicken-in-the-pot.

That recipe excited a lady in Montclair, N.J., who wrote:

Dear Miss Penny, Your recipe for Chicken-in-the-Pot came in real handy tonight. My mother-in-law came over to have dinner with my husband and I, and he's always praising his mother's cooking all the time—and I

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followed your recipe and he said in front of his mother that he had never tasted chicken-in-the-pot as delicious as what I had cooked. His mother has been bugging me ever since we have been married and you gave me the nerve to tell her to go fustigate herself.

The readers of the Mirror, and now of the American-american, obviously are a sophisticated lot, for they seem to have taken in stride the rather violent changeover in style from the old Prudence Penny, who wrote with deadly seriousness about food. Some have written to say that it is good to laugh while cooking, which is something I have always believed, for food is a great joy, and anything written about it certainly should not be drearily dull.

In addition to writing the food column for the Journal-American seven days a week, I still interview actresses. Both are full-time jobs. But I am cursed—or maybe blessed—by an inability to sleep for more than three or four hours at a stretch. For years, just as some people require less food or booze than others, I have been cursed—or blessed—by an inability to sleep. If I had tried to test anything that is new to me before I print it. But anyone who has been cooking for a long time—and professional chefs have told me this too—can tell by reading a recipe almost precisely how it will taste.

So, occasionally, I will print a recipe for something I have tried out, but which I know will be good. Confidently, I often print recipes for foods I do not like for all but which I know that many of my readers will like, I will try almost anything, and I have tried out, but which I know will be good. Confidently, I often print recipes for foods I do not care for at all but which I know that many of my readers will like, I will try almost anything

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