

Guest editorial

The unmarried marrieds

Not long ago a famous movie actor got a surprise. He had been living out of wedlock with a certain woman for many years and finally tiring of her company, kicked her out of the house. The woman sued, claiming that she had been his de facto wife and was therefore entitled to a handsome settlement. The court agreed and the actor was ordered to pay up.

We don't know if the decision will affect the popular custom these days of dispensing with marriage vows prior to a couple's setting up housekeeping. But we would think it would give men, the primary beneficiaries of such arrangements, reason to hesitate. The great thing for men about the "new morality" (which is identical to the old immorality) is that it enables them to enjoy all the comforts of wedlock without being inconvenienced by the attendant responsibilities.

Life for free-thinking bachelors has long been an oversold business. It is a life filled with nights of loneliness simply because women frequently choose not to remain on call. Also, when a brief affair has ended, the bachelor must then go to the trouble of finding a new partner, and traditionally most women have not been satisfied to grant favors without some serious talk about the future.

But when "living together" became fashionable a few years ago, bachelorhood became much more manageable. If a woman was willing to move in with the man and was ostensibly as contemptuous of wedding bells as he, his problems were solved. He had acquired the companionship and multiple services of a mate without pledging in any legal way either the depth of his fidelity or the durability of his affection.

Why so many women have agreed to such cohabitation, however, is somewhat puzzling. Partly, we suppose, it's the reassurance offered by modern birth-control methods, especially the pill and legal abortion. Partly it's the naive trust that takes the form of blind trust in the male animal, her altogether understandable credulousness when she contemplates his whispered words of love. And partly, the arrangement can seem much more attractive than living alone or with a female roommate.

But what happens when the man says one evening: "It's been great, baby, but I think it's time for you to leave." Or even more interesting, when he tells her what a fellow in Washington recently told his unwed mate of 11 years: "I don't know how to say this but I've met somebody else and we're going to get married." (That unwed mate, by the way, is now struggling back from a nervous breakdown).

We decided to do a little empirical research on the subject and asked some cohabiting women why they have consented to live for years with a man who probably will never marry them. All the women questioned are intelligent and, as the kids say, "cool."

The responses included:

"Even if it ends at least I've had these great years with him."

"We both retain our independence and can leave any day — we don't feel trapped as married people do."

"Every day we voluntarily stay together proves our love."

"Formal marriage is a primitive idea historically mandated by the church and the state for their own purposes."

Our next sentence, before we thought better of it, was going to begin: Putting traditional morality aside . . .

But frankly we see no reason to put traditional morality aside, although we are by no means certain our attitude represents the consensus these days. Almost all cultures and religions, no matter how much they may disagree on other matters, have regarded sexual intercourse as something deserving serious and sublime regard, both because it is the instrument of new life and because it is the ultimate act of human intimacy.

We have seen no evidence that that conviction has — suddenly, magically — lost its legitimacy.

But many people these days, especially those who came of age in the 1960's, and later, have comforted themselves with the notion of "situation morality." That convenient idea permits each person to decide if his or her conduct is morally right or morally wrong. And a startling number of liberal clergymen have encouraged the trend, which makes one wonder if they are in the right line of work. Their remarkably tolerant lesson is that if an act doesn't "hurt" anyone else, then it's okay. They have abandoned the concepts of essential good and essential evil that are at the root of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic moral code. And throwing that moral code out the window is throwing out quite a package.

So we think men and women who live together though unmarried are self-evidently behaving immorally by all but the most recent pop standards. They are engaging in behavior that has been rejected by society for dozens of centuries, not only because it violates the deepest human sensibilities about physical love but because it is impractical.

And it is especially impractical for the woman who, because of the love burning in her heart (or for reasons less poetic) agrees to a living arrangement that is hugely convenient for her mate but is of dubious long-range value to her. But significantly, the arrangement may be of increasingly dubious value to the man, too, now that a California court has decided — marriage license or not — she's your wife, buster. — DETROIT NEWS

The chain letter



TOM McINTYRE

Our woman's editor got all shook up last Friday.

She received a chain letter in the morning mail.

"Now who in the world sent me that thing?" she wondered aloud.

The letter starts off "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and he will acknowledge by lighting the way."

"This document has been sent to you for good luck. The original copy is from Easter Island. It has been around the world nine times. The luck has been brought to you (and) you are to receive good luck within four days of receiving this letter."

Well, all of that sounds fine, but the letter also warns "not to send money" and to get rid of the letter within 96 hours.

Bad things have happened to people, according to the chain letter, who have broken the chain. Some guy named Don Elliott received \$50,000, but he lost it because he broke the chain. Even worse, General Welsh died six days after receiving his letter. "He failed to circumvent the prayer."

But the general received \$775,000 just before he kicked the bucket. At least he died rich.

It appears that he (or she) who hath continued passing the letter reapeth great rewards. But, lo, he that hath cast the letter asunder has soon found his ownself plowed under.

"What should I do with this letter?" Elizabeth asked.

"Throw it away," I advised.

"I don't know. It sounds threatening to me."

"Don't be foolish, woman," I said, my best chauvinism showing.

I have decided to prove once and for all that these chain letters are stupid, foolish and a waste of time and money. I threw Lib's letter away.

Now, if nothing bad happens to her in the next week, then we will know just how ridiculous such chain letters are.

Lib said she mentioned her chain letter to B. S. (Sonny) Peeler Jr. and that he commented about one he had received some years back.

"I didn't keep the letter," he said, "but I wish I had."

Sonny said he didn't remember the exact wording in the chain letter, but that it was something to the effect that people who did not break the chain had had very good for-

tune in meeting and marrying beautiful women.

"If I had made 20 copies and sent them on, who knows. I might have ended up with 30 or 40 beautiful wives," he said.

Now Sonny is a living example of how breaking the chain can cause bad luck. You see, Sonny has never been married.

Us married guys really feel sorry for Sonny. Imagine, having to live life as he pleases, coming and going whenever wherever he pleases, not having to answer to anyone if he stays out late.

I tell you it's a rotten shame what Sonny has to put up with.

Guest columnist



five o'clock shadow

By CHARLES H. DEAL

Most people are easy marks for the some 50 organizations poking into the recesses of their private lives. Just asked for it, you'll whip out all sorts of private data on your life, information that's freely traded between agencies with sometimes frightening results.

Often the collection process defies state or federal law. Putting together your private background data is easy because you oblige by scrambling for a social security card, driver's license or else volunteer your pay scale, place of employment and the name of your favorite banker.

Federal and state agencies are often first to break laws written to protect privacy.

When President Gerald Ford came to Hickory on the campaign trail, only newspeople who provided social security numbers in a background check were admitted in his presence. Illegal.

Lenoir-Rhyne College uses social security numbers in checking off students who eat in the dining room. Illegal.

The American Red Cross at a bloodmobile visit asks a social security number of each donor. Illegal. Simply answer they have a choice of blood or the social security number and the request evaporates.

Even private business is prone to poke for background information. Buy a coil of solder at Radio Shack and the smiling salesman will write up the ticket. He always asks for your name and address. That's none

of his business — or that of the Tandy Corp. — so tell him to "make out the ticket to cash." If he wants a first name, tell him "Johnny." But don't give an address.

If a store requires your fingerprints and/or photograph to prove your identification, tell them to buzz off and put the purchase back on the shelf. A driver's license or credit card is enough.

It's bad enough for people to sell your name for a bundle of cash to be used on someone else's mailing list, an often occurrence between magazines and catalogs, but the practice goes much deeper.

Credit information is often exchanged, including your weekly salary. Some of the data passed along may be inaccurate and could result in your not getting a job or losing some benefit you are entitled to.

Correct facts may be taken out of context and misinterpreted or used against you.

The national privacy act has stopped some of the abuses, but, as noted, often a national agency is first to fracture the law.

Social security cards are to be used only for social security and taxing purposes. It is permissible for the county to use these numbers to separate two people with the same or similar names. But that doesn't mean you are required by law to furnish that number.

Unless you mind your own business — with some diligence — someone else will.

READER DIALOGUE

Likes poets corner

To the editor,

In response to the poem "Myself", I find it so true. Every person should be able to look himself in the eye and say "I am proud of myself. I have done my best." But so many people have no respect for themselves, much less anyone else.

Certainly you cannot hide from the things you have done. So I am sure their conscience bothers them.

I wanted you to know how much I enjoy reading "Poets Corner." This one touched my heart and brought home truths. Keep putting them in the paper.

BETTY B. HUGHES
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We need to take more time for ourselves

By BOB CAVIN
Special To The Mirror-Herald

Each morning for the past six years, Dr. Pearl Berlin has left her Jamestown home around 6 a. m. for a two-mile jog before getting ready for work.

The 53-year-old professor in the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro calls her daily run "my mental relaxant."

Dr. Berlin, as well as many other women who began jogging for physical fitness, has found that the mental benefits derived from a daily exercise program of running to be equal to the physical benefits.

"Jogging is something I do totally for myself," she explained. "It keeps my mind clear and it helps me cope with the problems that pop up in everyday life."

"I'm not trying to make the Boston Marathon," she added. "I jog because I enjoy it and because it adds something to everyday of my life."

More women could discover the mental and physical benefits of jogging or any other exercise program if they would only take the time, according to Dr. Karen King, an assistant professor of HPER at UNC-G.

"Last year, I had my health class take a survey of 840 people to find out how many of them got at least 15 minutes of exercise a day," she said. "Over 80 percent of the people interviewed said they did not, and the reason most of them gave was that they just didn't have time."

"Job pressure has become the dominating thing in our lives," Dr. King pointed out. "But we need to take time for ourselves. Time to get away from the stress

"Job pressure has become the dominating thing in our lives. But we need to take time for ourselves. Time to get away from the stress of everyday work . . . That's one of the things I like best about jogging — the time alone." — Dr. Karen King, assistant professor, UNC-G School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

of everyday work. Time to just be alone. That's one of the things I like best about jogging — the time alone.

"When I started jogging last June, it was easy to say 'I don't have to run today,' but now I take time because that 15 minutes is about the only time all day long I have totally to myself," commented Dr. King, 35, who runs an average of two miles a day, six days a week.

It's important to note that not all people who jog do it because they like it.

Take Jan Donahue, physical education instructor at UNC-G, for instance. She began running two miles a day on her 30th birthday last June. She admits that for her, "The only good thing about jogging is getting finished."

Why does she do it? "Jogging gives me a sense of well-being and personal satisfaction," she explained. "Everyone needs some sports."

"Unlike swimming or team sports, you don't have special equipment beyond a good pair of running shoes, you don't have to make plans with someone else, and jogging doesn't take a lot of time to get good results," she explained.

Kaye Moody, 33, another instructor of HPER at UNC-G who runs between three to six miles five times a week, added that running can help women improve their self-image.

"On the whole, the average woman does

not get much exercise," she said. "At one time, our lives depended on our bodies, but now most of us can't even walk to the neighborhood store."

"Running could help women improve their self-concept about their bodies and themselves as a person."

Unfortunately, many women who begin jogging in an effort to lose weight give up in frustration when they not only don't lose weight from jogging, but they gain extra pounds.

"Running makes you hungry so you eat more," explained Dr. Berlin. "Jogging can be used to supplement a diet for weight-loss, but the only way to lose weight is to eat less. AJogging alone just won't do it."

"However, jogging is good for firming up flabby muscles and making you look trimmer. But as far as losing weight is concerned dieting is still the best way," she said.

As in most exercise programs, it's important to get off to a good start and that means a trip to the doctor, according to Dr. Berlin.

"Anyone who is beginning any new exercise program after being inactive for a long period of time should begin in a doctor's office," she recommended. "A doctor can give you a good idea of just how strenuous a workout you can stand."

"When starting out a jogging program, I advocate a walk-run schedule," she said.

"For instance, you might jog 50 paces and then walk 50. Gradually, you will be able to eliminate the walk altogether."

"The important thing is not to start off thinking you'll jog a mile everyday, or that you'll lose 50 pounds, or that it will be easy," Dr. Berlin warned. "Jogging is hard work at first, but it does get easier as you get used to it."

Lung pain and fatigue are the two factors that cause most women novices to quit jogging before they ever really get started, according to Jane Nugent, a 32-year-old doctoral student in physical education at UNC-G who runs between 35-55 miles a week.

"Many women are just not as active as they should be and when they begin jogging their bodies are not prepared for the stress and strain of running a long distance," she pointed out.

"So they start out trying to run a mile, and a couple hundred yards down the road their lungs start burning and their legs start hurting," Miss Nugent said. "At that point, many novices just quit."

"If they would just stick it out and get over the initial shock of getting started, jogging could open a whole new world for them and eliminate a lot of tension, stress and frustration that build up from day to day," she added.

What's your opinion?

We want to hear your opinion on things of interest to you. Address all correspondence for this page to Reader Dialogue, Mirror-Herald, P. O. Drawer 782, Kings Mountain, N. C. 28086. Be sure and sign proper name and include your address. Unsigned letters will not be published.

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