



A Personal View

...by
Marcia
Byallick

"The dark uneasy world of family life—where the greatest can fail and the humblest succeed."

Randall Jarrell

The knowledge we were armed with when we took over the business of creating a family came from a weird potpourri of sources. There was glorious television supplying the fantasy complete with moms who wore aprons and high heels, dads who stooped down for delicious hugs when they walked in the door after work, and weekly lump-in-the-throat solutions to all problems. Then there was our individual histories growing up, supplying the lists of "nevers," "don'ts" and "must not repeats." And finally, in addition to the stiff, too proper sounding advice of experts, was a mysterious combination of gut instincts and innate judgment calls that superseded them all. We grew up believing that a family, if done right, would be the important touchstone for each member to return to—to be recharged and renewed. We assumed that children are to be loved and valued at the highest level of priority. So how did we arrive where we are today—where happiness is having a big, loving, considerate, close family—a hundred miles away?

I feel terrible when I see statistics saying that nearly 50% of today's young women will be childless or have only one child. Although I never really bought into the 1950's family being as monolithic or as happy as portrayed (Ozzie and Harriet homes were fewer than one third of all households even back then), there was something everlasting about seeing marriage as a social obligation designed for economic security and childrearing. Today marriage is more the path toward social fulfillment, a voluntary relationship which individuals make and break, "trading up" at will. We are raising families amidst dramatic, unparalleled changes in our whole social structure. The sexual revolution, the Ms-fication of women and a divorce rate that's quadrupled in 30 years came upon many of us after we already started our families—and I think has led to strange and scary consequences.

Today four year olds are microwaving their own snacks. We, the dutiful, obedient, conforming children of our parents have different goals for our kids. We want them self reliant, showing initiative and accepting responsibility. We know that if they are to succeed in today's complex world they'd better be independent and quick thinking. So we ask them since babyhood what they want to do next, what they want to eat and what they want to wear. And then we wonder why, when archaic phrases like "cause I say so" pop out of our mouths, we're ignored. I remember how hard it was for me to make decisions as a young woman. For the first time without benefit of the years of practice given to our kids, I took a long about choices and opinions. I took a long while before confidence replaced uncertainty over the simplest of decisions. Yet I worry about a generation of aggressive, competitive cut throat adults, isolated and alienated, replacing my shortcomings and fears. And the more I read about the

healing power of love (Bernie Siegel et al), and that all disease is ultimately related to the lack of unconditional love (the most powerful known stimulant of the immune system), the more I worry about where the trends I see toward more self-ish parenting will lead.

I've met a lot of people in my life but have yet to meet one who regards himself/herself a great parent. They might be confident about their professional skills or their proficiency as child, spouse or friend, but when challenged about their ability to parent, there's an honest bottom line uncertainty. Because ideally, a great parent should yield a happy, successful kid. One to whom we didn't pass down our own fears and limitations. One to whom self-esteem, the grade we give ourselves on some personal internal scale, does not fluctuate from day to day

with each mistake or defeat, but is rooted instead in a positive, forgiving acceptance of who she is.

It's just so hard. I have no difficulty loving unconditionally. I just run into problems when I rate my child a 93 and she sees herself a -4. I try hard to accept her truth and respect her individuality ("OK, so you're tired after sleeping 12 hours." "Yes, you're right. I have no right to tell you you have no right to feel like that..."). I pray that my not-too-subtle expectations are not prison terms, sentencing her to prove me right regardless of her true abilities. And I hope that the litany of my fears (drugs and AIDS, drunken drivers and rape, nuclear war and leukemia) do not turn her off completely to the idea of ever creating a family she will love so dearly that worry is something she'll have to live with like freckles and love handles for the rest of her life.

"A man can't get rich if he takes proper care of his family."

Navajo saying

So what if the numbers show that fewer persons are marrying and they're marrying later, and they're having fewer children and they're getting divorced more often. I have to believe that reports of the family's demise are as accurate as those reports of Broadway's demise—just the current dismal compilation of numbers and statistics, completely disregarding what makes this human existence worth living. I know we live in a world so insane we need to designate April Child Abuse Prevention Month. But I also know it's never been less cool to find close, stable families outmoded, old fashioned or irrelevant.

In fact they're the one thing in this whole world I can understand envying. **TWD**

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I'd finally reached that time in my life when I felt more confident than indecisive, more capable than powerless. It took ten years of consciousness raising, some scary risk taking and loads of support from friends decades more advanced independence-wise, but I'd arrived at a comfortable place. Constantly lamenting how limited and inaccessible men's sweetest, softest parts are even to their own consciousness, I felt strong and lucky to be a 1990's L.I. woman. Then last Thursday happened, hurling me back to utter helplessness, teaching me the meaning of my grandmother's alternately knocking on wood, and spitting out "pooh poohs" whenever life seemed too good to be true.

I have a 7:15 a.m. exercise class on Tuesday and Thursday mornings that I feel quite heroic attending. Whenever I force myself to do something I hate—eating oat bran, dealing with the Motor Vehicle Bureau, confronting an angry anomaly, I reward myself by feeling virtuous. I drove home from class in one such puffed up mood; heart aerobically fit, body sweaty, mind relaxed. Always one to find comfort in routine, my morning regimen is planned down to the moment. In the hour I have at home before I leave for work, I have coffee, read the paper, shower and make my lunch. As if computerized, I walk into the kitchen, turn on the coffee maker, cut up some strawberries to put in four ounces of cottage cheese, and peel off my wet leotard and tights.

That morning, I busily wrote a note to my daughter—and took out chicken to defrost for dinner—all the while parading barefoot in my underwear. As I sat down to breakfast I heard a light rapid tapping noise. I ducked under the table wondering whether it was the garbage men or the gardeners I had exposed myself in front of. On all fours I peered out to find no one outside. Feeling foolish, I promised that after that day I would not walk around the house in my underwear ever again. As I sat down once more to drink my coffee, a noise (not unlike the sound a fighting lobster makes in a pot of boiling water) began again. I knew it couldn't be our six-year-old Balinese cat who since he's been declawed, meanders around silently. Maybe he was trailing something in his mouth, I thought, knowing that his favorite chomping activity—involving sneaker shoelaces, wrist bands and thin leather straps adorning pocketbooks and boots—sounded nothing like the tapping fingernails I heard. If it was a mouse in the pantry, I refused to look, clomping instead heavily up and down the kitchen floor, utilizing the coward's way of scaring those eight ounce furry monsters back where they belong.

What my bare feet scared up was more than I bargained for. Racing furiously around and around my legs, was the fastest, hairiest raccoon I ever seen. He was chasing the cat, housebound since birth and positively joyful interacting with a fellow four footer for the first time in his life. I stood frozen as they blurred by brushing my ankles. All I wore were my reading glasses sliding half way down my nose and my underwear. And all I felt was a heart beating with a fear I would have imagined reserved for that one moment of life before a painful death intercedes.

"Every problem has a solution," our old handyman used to say, going over our bi-monthly list of appliances, fixtures and furniture that were critically ill. I would've given him two months salary to be present with his solution just then. I was afraid to open the door because I was sure my cat, a virgin to the outside world, would follow Mr. Raccoon right out the door. Images of teeth marks—deep rabid teeth marks sunk into me and my cat were all that filled my head. I couldn't call to my neighbor getting into his car right next door because I was half naked. And I'd never survive the wait till the exterminator would come. I did the only rational thing left open to me. I called my husband at work.

In an office about four miles from home, I knew he'd be in session, but I also knew I had to be more stressed out than whoever he was listening to. Until that moment I'd spent 22 years pompously scolding wives who bothered husbands with pseudo emergencies at work. After two rings I heard the dreaded "I'm not in the office now, but if you leave your name and a brief message..." "Bob, it's 8:35," I said, doing my best impression of a sane, in control human being. "I need your immediate feedback on a mini-crisis. Don't worry, everything's OK. I just need to speak to you." I felt mature not scaring him, and more in command having done something concrete about my predicament. The two critters got bored racing the small circle round me as a maypole and started up my walls. Across my ceiling. Behind my refrigerator. Through my intestines.

I called again, "Honey, it's 8:47. There

seems to be a raccoon in the house that I can't figure out how to get back outside. I don't know how he got in—and although I'm sure Ermine would love to adopt him (tinny chuckle), I'd appreciate some suggestions from you. Please call back as soon as you hear this message." Then I sat down. In my own wonderfully comfortable, cozily familiar home. Early on a sunny Thursday morning. I'd turned into a spineless coward willing to sell my first born to remove a chubby raccoon from my living room. The two pals made their way up and down my fireplace. Across the bookcase. Under the couch. Dumb Ermine playfully swatted the raccoon's tail and I stopped breathing, waiting for the demon creature to take his revenge. "He'll die of rabies. What'll I tell the kids? Better yet would I be this paralyzed if he were playing with them? Could I protect them any more successfully than I did their cat?

9:01. The answering machine once more. "Ok, Bob, this is now a four alarm emergency. I'm really not handling this very well. Let me tell you what I'm doing. I'm going to make a run for it and try to get upstairs. Then I'm going to lock myself in the shower. I will be in the shower till you knock at the bathroom door and tell me that dirty disgusting animal is out of the house. If you get home within the hour, I'll be washing my hair. If it's noon, I'll probably be shaving my legs. But whenever it is that you arrive to rescue me be it 4:00 this afternoon, you'll find me in the shower."

At 10:11 my hero opened the bathroom door. With huge sweat stains under each arm, brandishing the kitchen broom like a sword, he freed me and my wrinkled fingers. To his everlasting credit, he didn't say a word. I definitely owe him a large one.

Happy Valentine's Day, my hero. **TWR**

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My husband is a psychologist practicing

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Getting Even

I have a neighbor who keeps a dozen eggs right next to him on the front seat of his car. His job requires that he be on the road a lot and he's come up with a unique way of getting back at the careless and rude drivers who cut him off, forget to put on their turn signal or stop short for no reason. Rather than suffer from migraines or high blood pressure, he calmly pulls up right next to them, opens the carton, rolls down his window and, with expert aim, throws an egg at their windshield. Then he slowly raises his window and drives off.

He never sticks around to see the driver's reaction, the sweet fruits of his revenge, but he's satisfied as he goes on his way, that he's gotten even.

I've always fantasized about getting back at the arrogant, insensitive, hostile, incompetent people who complicate my life. As a child, I remember envying the boys who always seemed to get revenge more easily because they had "guts" and I didn't. Once, in fifth grade, the boy next to me managed to puncture a tiny hole in the milk container that was on the teacher's desk. By the time she noticed, it'd leaked all over the extremely important tall and narrow attendance book, whose graph paper pages recorded not only our absences but all our test grades for the year. It was my first glimpse of revenge, neat and clean. Our teacher was, in truth, an awful woman and every one of the 33 of us in that classroom had enough reason to silently rejoice.

In adolescence, I remember the car being used as the boy's vehicle for retribution. Nasty bosses, cranky old men and members of opposing teams got the air let out of their tires or a banana stuck in their tailpipe or if the offense was truly dreadful, the whole side of their car scratched with a key. The girls would only cry or gossip viciously about those who wronged them.

But lately I've been hearing some wonderful/awful stories of women exacting revenge. Mind you, these are not the classy maneuvers of a Katherine Hepburn, but they do get the job done.

One woman I know had it with her pompous, selfish show off of a father-in-law. He had intimidated her husband and hurt her two daughters' feelings one time too many. So, just as he boarded the plane for a very important business trip to Japan, she called to report his credit cards stolen. Although she wasn't there to witness the embarrassment and inconvenience, she still relishes picturing the scene.

To punish a friend who'd hurt her by spreading untrue stories about her in some kind of a boy-related crisis, the 14-year-old daughter of a friend of mine put Saran wrap over the toilet at a mutual friends house where a whole group was building the freshman float for homecoming. She knew this girl wouldn't use the downstairs bathroom where everyone was working because she was phobic about people "listening." With the permission of the girl whose home it was, she waited to exact her pound of flesh. The girl came downstairs after a long 20 minutes, wearing too-tight, too-short sweatpants she borrowed from the nine-year-old brother living there.

But my favorite story happened to a friend who used guts and a flash of brilliance (if a little on the low brow side) to

get back at a deserving menace. She and her husband were vacationing in Cannes with their friends. Next to them, on the beach, was a couple who spoke only German. This woman ranted on to her husband about the loud Americans, the showiness of their jewelry, and the probability of their being (ugh!) Jewish. Of course she felt free enough to babble on, never dreaming my friend's husband understood several languages, German among them. For five days my friend endured the haughty looks and bigoted remarks of this woman. (Of course, she pumped her husband constantly for a translation of what they were saying, not wanting to miss one horrible word.) On the last day the woman and her husband went into the water, leaving a camera on

their lounge chair. My friend got up, grabbed the camera, pulled down the bottom of her bathing suit, assumed several lewd positions and snapped four quick shots. Then she put the camera back. "I can't stop picturing that dame going back to Dusseldorf and developing that roll. I hope it was one of those 60 minute photo places so the guy can look her straight in the eye," she says, absolutely glowing as she tells the story.

I'm still waiting for my perfect opportunity. I can imagine cleaning my bathroom floor with the toothbrush of a miserable gym teacher my daughter once had, and returning it before he uses it again. I daydream about tying up and hanging upside down from the ceiling (remember Dabney Coleman in *Nine to*

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Five) every snotty salesperson and lying garage mechanic I come across. But I don't know if I'll ever go after my foes a la *Carrie* or *Heaven*. If not, I can always take the *Talmud's* advice, "Living well, it is the greatest revenge." TW2

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A
Personal
View
...by
**Marcia
Byalik**

My husband is one of the most competent professionals I know. He is respected for his intelligence and compassion, admired for the muscles hundreds of hours of lifting hundreds of pounds have earned him, and loved by his family and friends for his generosity, kindness and wonderful sense of humor. He has a memory that amazes, calling up camp color war songs, old telephone numbers and the entire roster of any New York football/basketball/baseball team in the past two decades. His eye-hand coordination makes him a master of *Nintendo*; his quickness a formidable racketball opponent. But something weird happens to this superior being when he pulls into the driveway. It's as if there's a sign above the garage that says, "You are home now. Escape from excelling. Leave your competence behind."

Inside the house he moves slower and can't hear so well. He forgets where he put the channel changer and starts to sweat if a high hat bulb has to be changed. He forgets (after countless reminders) to put out the garbage, bring the luggage up from the basement, bring his old clothes to Good Will. In short he's transformed, as are most married suburban males, into one afflicted with HAPHS—helpless, absentminded, preoccupied husband syndrome.

It took a while for me to realize there was method to his mindlessness. After years of hearing "How am I supposed to know that's where you put the mayonnaise...the pliers...the umbrella...or 'I guess I'll never figure out how that paper towel holder...coffee maker...new litterbox...works,'" I've finally accepted this seeming mental deterioration for what it is, the primal scream of the needy adult male. The mournful cry of this species is "Honey, can you help me out here?" The members are distinguished by their inability to locate most anything they need. They appear to be looking but they don't see. Likewise you'd swear that they're listening but they don't hear. And they have a strange aversion to giving you their undivided attention. Ask your man to look at you when you talk to him instead of sharing him with the TV, a newspaper or sleep, and the disdainful look you'll get will tell you you're branded demanding and vain. Except of course if the conversation concerns the sprinkler system, a car accident or the death of a loved one.

As able as they are to discuss the nuances of a perfect pitch or adjust a stereo so minutely that only the dog might notice, this acute awareness of the surroundings is strategically self serving. I've seen brilliant negotiators and perceptive psychologists walk into a kitchen thick with tension and notice nothing

amiss; I've seen men who thrive on cut-throat power struggles give it their best shot and lose to a ten year old's request for an unreasonable extended privilege or an absurd expensive firm. I've seen men who make life and death decisions, who control multi-million dollar companies, walk around the supermarket, list in hand, hollow eyed and paralyzed in front of the detergents. ("She said *Tide*. What size? In a powder? A liquid?") They look almost pitiful, Phi Beta Kappa though they may be, as they silently pray that no patient/client/customer/colleague come upon them in this state.

I think the 90s will see subtle changes in HAPHS. Our husbands are more conscious of life at home than our fathers were. At least they don't sit around watching TV wrapped in a bath towel when their kids' friends come over. This generation of man is much more aware of

the importance of staying in shape and maintaining a weight that's healthy. He knows that men who never cry or show weakness are not sturdy-as-an-oak role models but strong candidates for leaving this earth decades earlier than those more attuned to what they're feeling. The number of men I know who cried at the scene in *Field of Dreams* where father and son play an emotion laden, long overdue game of catch attests to the sadness they almost universally feel about the distance they felt from their own fathers. And most telling of all that the coma is lifting are the statistics showing that in 1975 27% of men were present at the birth of their children, while in 1985 80% were in the delivery room, complete with breathing instructions, camcorders and tears.

Part of being happily married has always been learning to do things you'd

rather not do, simply to please your mate. For years when women brought just dinner to the table (not money, education and careers) they were more amenable to putting up with HAPHS. But just because we've changed, it doesn't follow that our husbands (babied and catered to by their moms) come to us needing to be cared for or about any less. I've recently read that a good predictor of your own level of health is to look at your spouse's health habits, that most long married couples have almost identical cholesterol and blood pressure readings. They are similarly over or underweight and similarly satisfied with life. Their emotional and physical well being becomes ours as well. And so we'll see them through the fog of HAPHS for at least the remainder of this lifetime. After all its one of the things we do best.

Happy Fathers Day.

TWR

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PageThree

You Can't Live With 'Em

It was one of those occasions in my life when the whole concept of husbands and wives ever being on the same wavelength at the same moment in time seemed like an impossible dream. You know the feeling—you're talking to the man you've committed to sharing this life's highlights and heartaches with, ostensibly, your best friend, your partner, your lover, when you run right into the Bermuda Triangle of gender miscommunication and you wonder who this hairy mammal who sleeps beside you really is.

Last month, as a twenty-third anniversary present, my husband surprised me with a four day vacation to Club Med in Paradise Island. Since I'm a believer that time away together is a better gift than any "thing" I could think of, I was delighted. We each packed lighter than we ever had before and escaped for a long weekend of sun, piña colodas and late afternoon naps. It had been almost four years since we treated ourselves to hours of lazy, unscheduled quiet time, and we couldn't wait to leave.

The weather was perfect, the food incredible, the crowd was varied and interesting. After we experiences our initial pangs of Type A angst ("I should be playing tennis, taking aerobics, learning to scuba dive..."), we settled into our roles as beach bums. Since my adorable teenage freckles have since mutated into pre-cancerous nevas just waiting for some sun to come into their own, I sat with my sunscreen, my books and my hat (looking very much like Katherine Hepburn in *On Golden Pond*) while my husband snored away. Since half the beach was filled with topless European lovelies, I scarcely minded his going unconscious. At least we were together.

The last night we made reservations for the restaurant where we were able to sit at a table for two (unlike our other meals where we ate at a table for ten). After a delicious dinner, I thought we might stay up "late" (past midnight) and maybe even go dancing. Over coffee my husband said, "I heard that they're showing the Giants-Forty-Niners game on Satellite TV in the disco. Would you mind if I watched for a while?" Football. In the Caribbean. Life indeed was not fair. I knew how important this particular showdown was and I knew I had no reason, except for wishing he'd rather be with me, for saying no. So I smiled said, "OK, just remember you owe me one," (he now owes me 2,543), and let him go.

I found a young single woman I'd met earlier, and we both took a seat near the water and had a drink. A half hour went by. I was fine but started to get a little edgy. Suddenly two young men walked over and asked if they could join us. Perfect, I thought. Bob'll come back and see me sitting with another man. That'll teach him.

The men, lawyers from Cincinnati were nice looking if a little on the bland side conversation-wise.

After another half hour I felt a hand on my shoulder. "Hi, I'm Bob," my husband said, leaning over me to shake hands with the others. I looked up with an innocent smile, searching his face for a reaction. I didn't expect rage, but mild concern would've been nice.

Instead he said, "Well Marcia, since you're OK, would you mind if I went back to watch the last quarter?" Not a smidgen of jealousy. Not a trace of worry. I was devastated that just because I've been his trusted companion for almost a quarter of a century,

he thought of me as a sure thing.

We talked about it afterward. I couldn't understand how he could be so blasé, so confident that I'd never be interested in anyone else. He couldn't understand why I'd be upset that he has the utmost faith in me. Why should he be threatened because another man found me attractive? It was amazing that every woman I told understood completely. If the situation had been reversed, I know I would've reacted differently. I wondered if I was sitting with one of those amazing looking GO's if the same thing would've happened.

The whole episode was one of those epiphanies where it becomes

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clear that we just have to accept what we can't change. At least I got him to admit that he used his best I-bench-press-260-pounds-three-times-a-week handshake on my companion by the sea. That made me feel a little better.

TWR



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SLAYING ANOTHER DRAGON

As soon as I heard that the marketing of my new book involved appearing on live TV twice in one week, I copied down a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt on five post-its and stuck them up on my bathroom mirror, my steering wheel, my bulletin board, the refrigerator and the TV Guide. "You must do the thing you think you cannot do," it reads. And so I did.

My partner Linda Saslow and I appeared on *Good Day New York* and *Sony Live* to promote our book, **The Three Career Couple...Mastering the Fine Art of Juggling Work, Home and Family**. Everyone around me found this opportunity totally exciting. "Enjoy it," my friends exclaimed. "They get CNN in Bosnia," shouted my daughter. "I'll put it on the in-house channel. The whole condo will watch it," said my father. To me, happiness has always been accompanied by quiet

"I wouldn't be fair if I didn't say it was a kick getting made up after Liz Smith and before Henry Kissinger."

nerves. Any experience where the question, "What's the worst thing that can happen?" can be answered "You can sound stupid, look ugly and reveal who really are to everyone you've successfully fooled up to this point, plus countless thousands you've never met," promises not to be one of my Kodak moments.

I've never been a center stage kind of person. It's probably one of the reasons I find the process of writing — solitary and faceless — so satisfying. Some people actually blossom with attention. They sparkle in the camera's eye, becoming more brilliant as the size of their audience increases. I envy them. My discomfort stemmed in no small measure from the fact that I was, because I co-authored a book, to be regarded as an expert, the answer woman — when all I was was a chronicler. (Not to mention, what if the skirt I wore hiked up too high and I gave the viewing audience a little Sharon Stone action?)

The day before we went on, a production assistant called to go over the questions we would be asked. I prepared creative time saving tips and cute anecdotes, practicing, as I showed, a conciliatory tone explaining that men might possibly be more awkward than selfish, more uncomfortable than lazy — and that's why they don't do their fair share at home. On the first show they changed commentators and the format (smart, alecky young man instead of warm, nurturing young woman — four minutes instead of 10); on the second show, where I coerced my poor innocent husband (who sweated under those lights like Albert Brooks in *Broadcast News*) to appear as well, the questions were all purely personal (one of which, "Is there any-

thing Bob does that you particularly enjoy?" left me speechless). Both appearances offered no opportunity to reveal scholarship or integrity.

You'll think I'm exaggerating if I tell you I was the sickest I've been in a decade — complete with 101° fever, puffy, dripping eyes and red under-nose crud at 8:40 a.m. when our turn came to go on the air. (Linda just ran to the bathroom eight times in an hour — there's a woman who can disguise her stress in front of the camera). I wouldn't be fair if I didn't say it was a kick getting made up after Liz Smith (on Channel 5) and before Henry Kissinger (on CNN). I learned that green rooms (aptly named for the

complexion of its occupants) aren't green, that they're obviously not anyone's decorating priority, and that the time spent in them is almost pain producing in its tenseness.

A long time ago I read that anxiety is "the space between the 'now' and 'then'." My reward for surviving till the "then" is a combination of incredible relief mixed with the knowledge that my life probably wouldn't have ended if I was asked a question I couldn't answer. It's all image over substance, packaging over product, in the world beyond Waldbaums.

While I probably won't ever face it without dread, maybe next time it'll be without a fever.

A PERSONAL VIEW

MARCIA BYALICK



*Come keep us company when we do our book signings on L.I. (The publicist promises this'll all be over soon.) We'll be in Bohemia at **Borders** on June 10th at 7:30 p.m., at **Barnes and Noble** in Carle Place on June 16th at 7 p.m. and at **Borders** in Levittown on June 18th at 7 p.m.*

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BLUE SUEDE SHOES

In the midst of a snow storm last month, for a period of time not exceeding 15 minutes, I illegally parked my car in a handicapped parking spot...and used my friend's expired permit to avoid getting caught...and had my car towed away. Judge Wachtler, Katie Beers' moms' — even Pete Rose — have nothing on me in the shame department. I'm even telling you in hope the humiliation will dissipate with each reader who recognizes that the same teeny, scuzzy, lazy, manipulative game that's in me might live in her as well.

I don't remember the last time in my life I felt the red faced, heart palpitating emotion of shame. Whenever it was, whether I was found to be a liar or a cheater or a thief, the memory is repressed. But the sickening no-way-out feeling I experienced last month was definitely one I lived through (albeit barely) before. Without excuses (maybe just a few extenuating circumstances) here's my tale of guilt, the gift, as Erma Bombeck says, that keeps on giving.

I had a 10:30 appointment at a local university to drop off a resume and an outline for a proposed class. I wasn't really nervous because at most, what would be demanded of me that morning was a firm handshake and some confident eye contact. The real work was in a manila envelope and wouldn't be judged till I was long gone. On a clear day, it takes about 20 minutes to get to the school. This particular morning the weather was iffy when I left the house (wearing brand new navy suede shoes), flaking lightly when I pulled away from the drive-through bank window (after waiting 15 minutes for the one car in front of me to get done, leaving me 7 minutes behind schedule), and snowing thick and furious in that wet, big flake kind of way that doesn't stick but looks and feels ominous. I arrived at the school at exactly 10:30. Right in front of the building I had to go to was a small faculty/handicapped parking lot. What seemed to be a half mile away (but was probably half that distance) was student parking.

By way of background information — I hate people who park in spaces reserved for the handicapped; those self centered, insensitive creeps top my list of pet peeves. But this was different. In the 10 seconds it took me to swing into the closer lot, take an expired permit out of my glove compartment left there by a friend last summer (and never before used), I had done a quick pro/con list to rationalize permission to park there.

Pro

1. I'd be no more than 15 minutes.
2. The lot had many more empty handicapped spots.
3. It was snowing very hard — handicapped people probably wouldn't dare to venture out.
4. I would be late if I parked properly.
5. Everyone else I knew in my position would do it.
6. I was wearing blue suede shoes.

Con

1. It was the wrong thing to do.
- James Thurber said that humor is emotional chaos remembered in tranquility. The picture of me slipping my way into the building and sliding my way back 16 minutes later to...an empty spot — and trudging my way to the transportation building (a legitimate half mile away) to reclaim my car, might be funny next year but I'm not laughing yet.

"Your permit expired," said the man in the brown uniform behind the desk, holding up both a photo of my car parked under the handicapped sign and the permit I'd put on my dashboard. (They were in my car!)

"I'm sorry," I said. "I know. I was only gone for a few minutes..."

"I have to give you a ticket. I'm sorry," said the man. "That'll be \$25.00."

I was grateful it wasn't more. I pulled out my checkbook and then I realized...my name...the name on the permit..."Can I give you cash?" I asked.

"Sure," he said, warming a little, "but we'll also take a check."

"No, I'd rather pay you in cash," I said, palms sweatily pulling one twenty, two singles and three dollars in change on the narrow counter that separated us.

He looked at me strangely, counted the money, stamped my receipt and said, "OK, now all I need is your license and you'll be on your way..."

This is the moment humiliation turned to shame. He looked at my license then at the permit.

"Whose permit is this?" he said. He looked like he wanted to spit at me.

"My friend's," I answered stupidly.

"Get her out of here," he said to a guy standing near the door. "Just take her to her car," he added, not even looking at me. I get chills just remembering the disdain in his tone.

So what lessons did I learn, I thought later, scrubbing blue dye from the soles of my feet. I will share them even though you already know them and won't listen either till you're smacked upside your head.

A PERSONAL VIEW

MARCIA BYALICK



1. Experience is the name we kindly give to our mistakes.
2. Just because you do what's right 99.9 percent of the time doesn't give you permission to behave like a scuzzball ever.
3. If the one thing in the con column is "This is the wrong thing to do," don't. Your mother taught you better.

You've got better things to do than wait in bank lines.

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CHANGE IS GOOD...RIGHT?

Whenever my kids express anxiety about a new beginning, I give them my rap about how change is the only constant in this world, how it enhances our ability to grow and become, and how only through experiencing risk can we take advantage of new opportunities. Change is normal and natural, I lecture, and it's not true to believe that security only comes with maintaining the status quo. Now it's time for me to practice what I preach.

"Beginning over again forces me to face the familiar boding feeling that's always accompanied uncertainty in my life."

This, the 84th column I've written for *TWR*, is my last. I'll leave it to others in this issue to mourn the end of our publication; I'm having a hard enough time dealing with how this unexpected mid-course correction is altering the direction of my life. Rightly or wrongly so much of our sense of self is associated with our sense of job. If the job no longer exists, can a crisis in self-esteem be far behind? Where else can I put my feet up and dissect the vagaries of compliments and excuses, lies and secrets? What will I do with the anger I vent monthly about supermarkets and VCRs, parking tickets and cosmetic advertising? Sharing with you what I laugh at and what I fear, what I cherish and what I believe in any other forum will never be the same safe place.

Working for a woman, along with women colleagues, collaborating with incredibly talented women writers and writing to a wonderfully supportive audience of women has made me more appreciative than ever of the power, intelligence and generosity of our sex. Jane Gilin has shown me, through eight tough years, that determination and grit and an 80-hour work week will get you to the finish line every time. Joan and Judy, Isabel and Linda, Helen and Barbara and of course founding editor, Carol Weiss, have made me look good for years and I will treasure their wisdom and their friendship always. And you, the readers, have kept me honest, had patience with my whining and demonstrated by your support that you too believe in putz genes, soulmates and the thrill of finding out how infinitely more capable we are than we ever would've believed.

Beginning over again forces me to face the familiar boding feeling that's always accompanied uncertainty in my life. Ignorance shines blindingly in new work situations and the

risk of failing to learn new tasks quickly is very real. While I fear the isolation and the discipline demanded of a full time at-home writing career (not to mention whether a hundred calorie yogurt and a fruit will do for lunch when I'm two feet from the refrigerator and nobody's around...), that's what I'm planning to do. I have to attack two books I've written which need some serious sprucing up, and hopefully begin work on another. During October and November, I'll be teaching a six-week Saturday morning course at Hofstra University on writing the personal essay. The opportunity makes me nervous, but I'm hoping it's the good kind of nervous — the kind that leads you to do your best.

Perhaps I'll search for another home for this column. I never did get to write the piece called "Thigh Anxiety" that I've been scribbling notes on for two years, or the one on passions that aren't bad for your health, or my ideas on intimacy in the year 2000. There's the story I never got to tell you about my neighbor's near death experience and one I wanted to share on what it takes to sleep at night when your daughter takes an apartment in the East Village. My life without you as my sounding board will be different indeed.

To learn is to change. But the most valuable thing I've learned these last few weeks is the beauty of what doesn't change. My respect and admiration for the dozens of people who've

A PERSONAL VIEW

MARCIA BYALICK



worked for *The Women's Record* through the years. My love and gratitude to those close to me who shared wittingly and otherwise the details of their lives with 40,000 of you. And the certainty that sometime, somewhere, hopefully soon, we will all meet and share and commune again...

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Page Three

I Believe...I Think

Aside from reading my horoscope in the newspaper every day, I didn't think I had much invested in the hokey land of the occult. My nature has always depended on a scientific, rational and objective examination of evidence to forecast events or make decisions. I'm willing to loosen up when discussing romance and chemistry and destiny and all that good stuff, but when it comes to sun signs and biorhythms, faith healers and crystal balls, I'm a confirmed skeptic. Then last month, while visiting my friend in Northern California, I had my astrological chart done. It was a birthday present from my friend who also avails herself of the services of a herbalist and an acupuncturist. (I remember when she smoked Marlboros and ate Big Macs.) I'm here to say that after my reading, I'll not be so quick to smugly dismiss what I can't for the life of me explain.

Twelve million adults admit they've changed their behavior based on an astrology report. Seventy four percent believe in heaven and hell, 50 percent in E.S.P. Forty-one percent accept that there's life somewhere else in the universe, and 25 percent are convinced that U.F.O.s exist. In my own life I confess to sitting in an audience and being intrigued by the psychic powers of performers who move things across the room, or tell you what's in your left pocket. Twenty years ago I bought a glass pyramid (solely because I loved the way it looked) and found the claims of the craftsmen who made it to be true: objects do stay sharper and don't rust if placed inside. When I was in sixth grade, my two hands scooted across a Ouija Board to spell out R-O-B-E-R-T in answer to the name of my future husband. I was horrified because the only Robert I knew then was constantly picking either his nose or his pants out of his tush. Lo and behold, I'm 23 years married to Bob. Finally, I've read about near death experiences with fascination and try to convince myself that there's something to that tunnel and white light, because it makes it easier to get through each day.

I walked into my appointment expecting to see some combination weirdo-gypsy-charlatan in a darkened musty room reeking of incense. I wasn't sure whether he'd have a burning, piercing stare or a vague, informed look, but either way, I was prepared to be uncomfortable. What I didn't expect was a handsome, bearded young psychology professor from Berkeley (Ph.D. from Stanford, six years post-graduate study in India) who sat next to a computer which had been fed my birth date, time and place before we arrived. He held up a four page computer print out and quietly explained what the position of the planets and stars told him about me. Totally against my will, I was impressed.

If I played you the tape of my hour with him (included in the fee), I think you'd agree that I was very careful not to divulge any details of my family, my career, or my social life that

he could latch onto and draw conclusions from. Before I walked in, he'd already written that I excelled at writing and needed help with asserting myself. He noted that my mother had "left her body" (nice way of putting it, I thought), that four months ago I began a project that I'd been working on intensively (just when I started my second book), and that there'd be some reshuffling in my family relationships next year (my home becomes an empty nest in September). He told my friend she'd just completed a brutal and healthy 10 year cycle. She'd been diagnosed with breast cancer in 1981 and has survived repeated bouts of chemotherapy and a bone marrow

transplant. He "knew" my relationship with my mother had been "pure and simple" (words I used to describe it myself) and hers with her mom, uneasy and problematical. While I'm not rushing out to buy my healing stone (to protect me...), I cannot deny I'm pleased he predicts satisfying career success, and I'm not looking forward to 1996 (when mean old Saturn is going to make my life a lot tougher).

As I give up my status as a dispassionate non-believer, I'm breaking in my space as one who has faith in some hoogie moogie. My convictions didn't include Big Foot or flying saucers or ghosts, but they might make room for

A Personal View Marcia Byalick

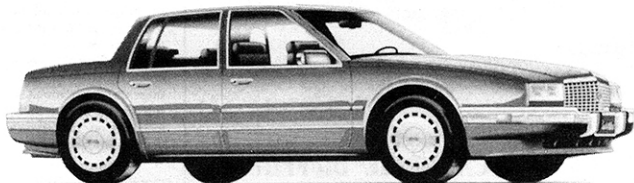


a deadly accurate experience with E.S.P.—or an occasional miracle. Besides, anything twice as many women as men believe in has to be worthy of consideration. **TWD**

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DON'T GET MAD, GET ULCERS

"Many of our problems with anger occur when we choose between having a relationship and having a self."

— Harriet Goldhor Lerner

I got out of a car service taxi at the end of my first-ever business trip to Chicago and paid my fare plus the 15 percent gratuity to a 78-year-old driver who got lost both coming and going to my destination. His incompetence caused me to arrive 30 minutes late to a TV taping and race red-faced and panting with less than two minutes to spare to board the plane home. He didn't apologize. I gave him a \$22 tip. He didn't acknowledge the incredible stress he caused; I didn't show how close I was to strangling him from behind.

snarl, what pushes our stress buttons, that defines us.

I've scanned my body for the signs of repressed anger over the last five days and came up with these five ridiculous and revealing (either I really trust you or I'm crazy) things that make me nuts. My stomach tightened and I said nothing when:

1) I stood like a fool in a darkened movie theater to let some woman take the seat next to me and she stopped two seats before she got to me and chatted for way too long to someone in the row behind us.

2) My daughter's friend broke three dates in a row with her and annoyed as I was, I was still warm and

welcoming on the phone when he called.

3) A friend asked me several questions about an upcoming vacation and then made me feel so foolish when she very obviously didn't listen to my answers.

4) I sneezed three times at dinner and no one in my family said God bless you.

5) A neighbor saw me on TV and said, "Gosh, those book people are running you ragged — you looked so tired on the show..." (To be fair, this was said by a man who can't be judged as harshly as a girlfriend).

Someone once said, "a good indignation brings out all of one's powers." After 46 years of silently hat-

A
PERSONAL
VIEW

MARCIA
BYALICK



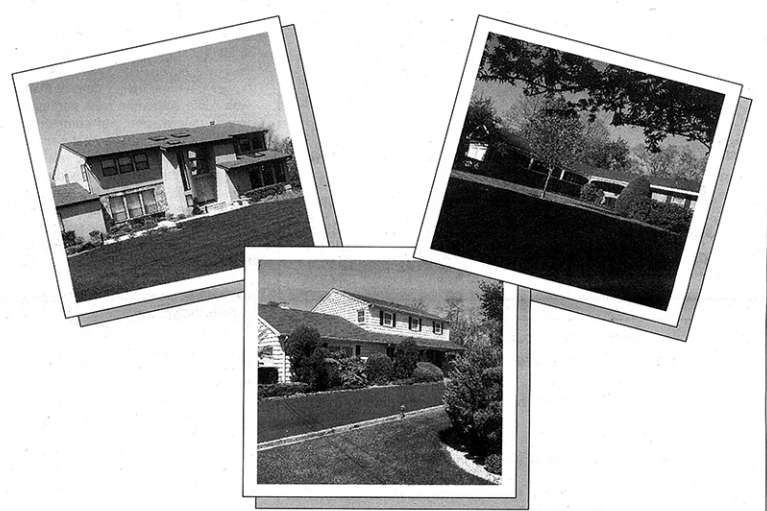
ing myself for not responding to the real live people deserving my anger, it's time to show off the hard earned power I'm finally realizing I possess. I'm a million miles from going for the jugular, on the way to slamming a door and rapidly approaching, "I have to tell you how I feel when you do/say that." Wish me luck...

"My problem is not suffering fools gladly but forgiving them and then hating myself for being such a wuss."

I was as angry as I ever get — and I swallowed it whole. I told myself that he was old; that it wouldn't help to start yelling; that I was running too late to get into a "thing" — but although each excuse was valid, none was the reason I didn't confront him. I said nothing because I'm the worst at expressing anger. My problem is not suffering fools gladly but forgiving them and then hating myself for being such a wuss.

I'm not alone. Few people know how to show their anger appropriately. Some internalize it (my cop out of choice — I am a teeth grinder extraordinaire) and have it ooze out in bad moods and icy silences, usually directed at an innocent party (one's children serve this function very well). Others lose it, scream and get scary looking, raising their potential for heart disease to its highest limits. Then there are those who are angry before they open their eyes in the morning, sure that the day ahead is full of nitwits lying in wait to screw up their lives. They preemptively strike out and emotionally mangle every doorman, cashier, waitress or cab driver unlucky enough to cross their path.

I forgive anything if the perpetrator of my anger is truly sorry. I can overlook stinginess (it's how they were raised...), lateness (accept what you can't change and schedule your next appointment 15 minutes earlier) and unreturned phone calls (I'm guilty too. If I don't write it down I'm useless). What drives me crazy are life's minor matters of manners and expectations. And I've learned it's what makes us



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That's what friends are for."*

Burt Bacharach &
Carol Bayer Sager

A prerequisite of the sweet and loyal friendships teenage girls enjoy is that each of them likes and dislikes the same things with equal energy and passion. When I was 12, my friends and I shared a favorite book (*Double Date* by Rosamund Du Jardin), a favorite crush (Sal Mineo—he looked sooo forbidden), a favorite song (*Theme From A Summer Place*) and a total disdain for boys with red hair. We spent Saturday afternoons either splitting combination plate #8 at the neighborhood Chinese restaurant (we all agreed it was the best choice out of the 12 offered), or wetting our pants mimicking the matron at the Rugby Theater. We poured bottles of beer over huge wire rollers to give our hair body as we practiced "strolling" in front of *American Bandstand*. As long as we were inseparable, we were defended; protected from the slings and arrows of the rest of the "uncool" world. I was lucky enough to learn early the wisdom of Aristotle that "without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods."

As we grow older our friends do more than satisfy narcissism and our criteria for choosing them expands. The love, support and trust are still there but they no longer have to agree with all we say. I believe that women are uniquely blessed with the ability to reach out, open up and let in friendship. Finding soul sisters combats the loneliness inhabiting the corner of each of our hearts. I'm not discussing here the women whose lives you intersect to simply share a block or an interest. They serve a definite function and enrich our lives, but when I speak of friendship, I'm talking about a level of intensity, a level of needs answered, that is far deeper.

What makes a friend is far more than her opinions. You allow a friend to see you in your slippers, at your most human. She thinks you're funny and laughs at your jokes. She's nice to your parents, kind to your children and cold to whoever's unfair to you. She'll be the first to forgive you, warn you, hug you and the only one to end plain-old-everyday conversations with "love you."

She's a tree that gives shelter, a malleable piece of a jigsaw that fits cozily into whatever space you need to fill. And although distance or circumstance might alter the frequency of the time you're able to spend together, true friendship continues to maintain its intensity and sustain its intimacy throughout life's changes.

Alone Again

As I sit in a crowded room,
I feel again alone,
I've felt this way before it's nothing new.

As I sit amongst many others, I feel again alone,
These people are not my friends we do not talk.

As I sit there is chaos,
I feel again alone,
I go into a world that no one else can see.

As I sit here my mind wanders,
I feel again alone,
In this world the only thing to be, is me.
Now I sit alone, with no one near to see,
And yet I am content,
Alone in my world with no one else but me.

Melanie Hope
Age 14

You tell your neighbor you're exhausted because you didn't sleep all night; your friends at work that you didn't sleep because you had a fight with your husband; and your closest friends that you didn't sleep because you caught your husband in a lie. The friends you see each day hear about your car troubles, your kids' teacher, the awful man who came to fix your washing machine. Their "ask ask" is like a verbal cuddle which enables you to face life's next hurdle. You don't have to discuss major, heavy, down and dirty issues to feel your friends' support—just being aware of their capacity to understand and willingness to listen makes the day easier.

To keep these precious relationships healthy, they must be kept in constant repair. Negligence and silence can cause their demise, and the honesty demanded can sometimes be tricky. You don't crit-

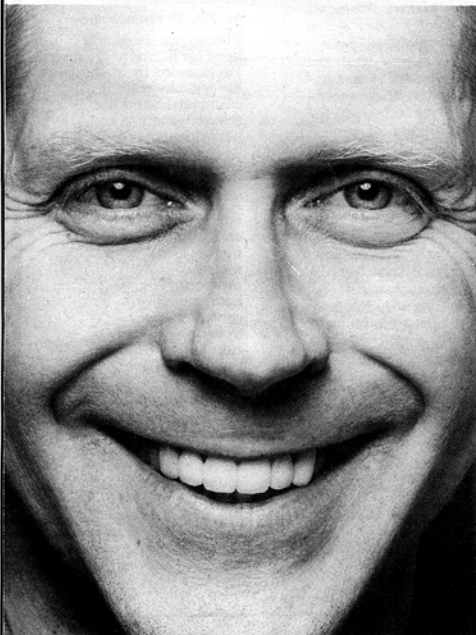
cize their husbands, judge their other friendships or discipline their kids—that's what their mothers are for. And you pay the price of loving, as you suffer their ill health, divorce and financial problems along with them.

I consider the debt I owe my friends inimitable. Their gentle (and not so gentle) prodding got me to experience for the first time a mammogram, a leg waxing, an arthroscopy, a writing course. They've sent me flowers, made me chicken soup, written me poems and even donated a urine specimen when I "couldn't" on line for the N.Y.C. teacher's health exam. In the last weeks alone it was a friend who helped redesign my bedroom, made a big deal about my losing ten pounds, shared the loneliness of our firstborn's leaving for college, remembered to ask me how I felt on the second anniversary of my mother's death. When I battled a raccoon in my liv-

ing room, the moans, gasps and hysterics I was sure would greet my retelling the incident got me through the terror.

Whenever I think about pigs or pelicans, Brian Boitano or Truman Capote, '57 Thunderbirds, or Mayan ruins, I think of the friend whose peculiar passions they are and smile. I've always thought that the most self-indulgent thing I could think of doing if I had untold wealth would be to take this diverse group of wonderful women who have added such richness and texture to my life on a three week cruise on the Q.E.II. So, (without sounding too much like Fred the Furrer) Nanette, Judy, Susan, Aileen, Jane, Gail, Isabel, Linda, Renee, Sherry, Bonnie, Jill, Dale, Carol—and my sister Karen—thank you. You are most appreciated, admired and loved. And if you ever read that numbers 15,18,22,36 and 45 win the lottery—start packing!

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Whether it was Dorothy clicking her heels chanting that there's no place like it, Bing Crosby crooning about its glory at this time of year, the clergy extolling its virtues as the birthplace of charity or my three-year-old nephew believing his rivals any castle, the press about home has always been reverential.

It's at home that we learn what comfortable means, what security is, what familiar feels like. It's there that we show off our rules and set tasks and indulge experiment, be wild. If our behavior meets with disapproval, it's to be expected; we know deep down no reaction could be awful enough to make another place more desirable than home. But the same times that have turned our summers warmed by a sun known mostly for dispensing wrinkles and cancer, into seasons of syringe-filled seas and disease-bearing tics have changed if not the essence, then our expectations, of home. Home on Long Island, 1988 style, has sacrificed much in its quest to satisfy what appears to be our ever-expanding basic needs. Like a person who means well but tries too hard, our homes, however comfortable, just miss, leaving us vaguely dissatisfied and more than mildly nostalgic.

Missing from our lives is the fabled vestige of domestic tranquility—the front porch. This appendage was once invaluable for feeling a part of the neighborhood. Sitting there you could legally see "what's doing." You got to know who liked to entertain, who had close family ties, who hung around with a bad crowd. You waved your kids goodbye from there, and sat patiently to welcome them home. Before we isolated ourselves in hedge-protected backyards (formerly good mainly for clotheslines), we knew the names of the ice cream man, the knife sharpener, the mailman. Now, on a block with five houses, I know just two of my neighbors. My home could be anywhere, its 60x80 plot no longer defined by what surrounds it. A home's value is determined not by its people but by its proximity to the expressway, the on-paper success record of its school system, the way it holds its property value. Without homey about these criteria.

The treats, surprises and savored memories of my childhood are just about obsolete in today's home. In a customized world where even dog food comes in a "light" variety (for those canines valiantly fighting the battle of the bulge), home is expected to immediately satisfy most urges. Ice cream and popcorn, the latest movies and video games, all things I eagerly spent lovely time looking forward to, are available today as staples. As a matter of course we outfit our children's rooms with TVs and phones, CDs and computers. We separate them, put them in their own self-contained boxes and then wonder why they're poor sharers. We give up opportunities for intimacy for what we've perceived as the good life. Our reward for working hard to supply this private environment filled with a myriad of plugged-in gadgets, is a vague sense of alienation. After doing everything right, we somehow fall short of our goal. By denying our kids the experience of delayed gratification, we also deny them the delicious experience of anticipation.

The homes most of us grew up in were occupied much more of the time. They reflected the personality of their mistress, smelled of her: her cooking, the starch she put in her curtains, the wax she used for the floor. The pride she felt in her home was clear, rewarded and appreciated by other women who visited. Now fabrics don't wrinkle, floors don't need wax and meals are rarely cooked long enough to smell good. Frozen foods and prepackaged gourmet delights, all miraculously

zapped in the microwave, free Mom to explore life outside her home. Household maintenance tasks are made easier by nifty contraptions like the Dust Buster, and ersatz fabrics that make cleanup a relative breeze. Mom's absence however, makes a home feel more like a house. Without her there as its ever-present center, the empty air feels cooler. Important conversations take place on the phone, not around the kitchen table, as everyone follows his or her own busy agenda.

Today, houses are built with smaller time-saving kitchens and larger luxurious bathrooms. Space to exercise replaces space to write letters; an area to store video tapes is more important than shelves to house books; more jacuzzis are built than fireplaces; more answering machines are sold than sewing machines. There's such an emphasis on

the home satisfying each individual's leisure time needs, that it's not unusual to find five family members spending an evening in five different rooms.

Yet as much as I lament the demise of the homes of the Bradys and the Cleavers, the most important minutia, remain. Somewhere in some obscure nook and cranny is a drawer stuffed with baby shoes, photos of our inexperienced, yet unlined faces, telephone bills from six years ago. It's still only Mom who can find the cornstarch, the picture hooks, the plastic covers for the outdoor furniture. Somewhere is a drawer that only someone in your family can close, a running toilet only your family can silence, a clock set for a time only your family runs by. Home is endearing not for its beauty but its distinct uniqueness, not for its perfection but its lopsided off-centeredness that

so comfortably fits its inhabitants. Home is also still where the heart is. Home is the only place you can go to the bathroom with the door open. It's the place you can negotiate in the dark without mishap. It has the best bed in the world. Others might call stained areas on the arms of chairs, on the floor in front of the kitchen sink, on the steps, worn out: to the family it's worn in. No matter how many communes anyone invents, and how successful they appear to be, the family at home always creeps back. No matter the expense and aggravation involved with furnishing, repairing and maintaining it (and the relationships within), the price is worth it.

Here's hoping your home lives up to its reputation this holiday season. For in the end, the home is also where they understand you.

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BYALICK

— at Her —

BEST

“Friends Forever”

One of the reasons I'm glad I was born a woman is that we're blessed with an innate recognition of the importance of friendship. Of course, men have friends, too, but except for the years before they're 21 and after they're 65, most male relationships languish at the bottom of their priority heap. Women need the nourishment they get from their friends too much to ever ignore them. No matter how much money and power and professional satisfaction she attains, regardless of how many kids, hobbies and significant others she nurtures, a woman without friends is not a happy camper. The down side occurs if at 47, we lose one, as I just did, after sharing a 13 year battle against breast cancer, a completely unjust and wicked opponent. Then the loss is numbing.

Before my friend Fanny died (she was Jill for 42 years till she changed her name to fool the Angel of Death), I always comforted myself when death came close with a vision created by a quote I'd read which compared the first minute after death to the first minute after awakening from a bad dream. But when River Phoenix, Federico Fellini and Fanny all died on the same day last Halloween, I revised my vision. Instead I pictured the three of them meeting on the tram to Heaven, like the one in Albert Brooks's movie *Defending Your Life*. What more could you wish a girlfriend than a seat for eternity between young, blond sex appeal and brilliant, creative intelligence? She'd be the first to say, “Nothing that happens is an accident.”

Recently the inspirational, hilarious book she wrote detailing her experiences as a woman alone navigating her way through diagnosis, two mastectomies, a bone marrow transplant, experimental treatment in Russia, wholistic help in San Francisco and cutting edge drug programs in Tennessee, was finally published. My wild and crazy, gorgeous red-headed friend would've been a book publicist's dream. Without an ounce of morbidity or a shred of self pity, Fanny turns our worst nightmare into an heroic adventure where the gifts of sunsets, shopping and sex are worth risking and stretching and gambling it all.

I love this life as much as anyone, but without the support of my husband and children, I doubt I'd find the “oomph” to keep trying so hard to stay here. What my friend Fanny taught and I vow to Crazy Glue to my consciousness is that wonder and beauty and wisdom and laughter exist everywhere; we just have to stop perverting about the potholes, the lines at the Motor Vehicle Bureau and the damn ten pounds that separate us from a far more perfect self.

Fanny might not have fooled the Angel of Death, but she wrestled with him pretty well for years. When ten of her closest friends gathered in Detroit to meet for the first time at her funeral, what we all shared was an awe for the intensity she brought to the phrase, “quality of life.” In Fanny's memory and for the 1.5 million women who will be diagnosed with breast cancer in this decade (and those who love them) we each promised to do what we could to get Fanny's meticulously researched, miraculously funny message out to those who could learn from it.

“What are you going to do without me?” she asked about ten days before she died. Thanks to the wise and loving words in *How Am I Going To Find A Man If I'm Dead?* (Fanny Gaynes, Morgin Press), I gratefully won't ever have to find out.



BYALICK

— at Her —

BEST

Happy Is As Happy Does

If you told me ten years ago that I could have delicious, low calorie, non-fat frozen yogurt every night and watch any Woody Allen I desire at any time, I'd have told you I'd be one happy woman. If you told me in February that I'd be finishing up two books, that each had to be rewritten not once, but twice, and that I'd have summer enough left to take a walk on the beach and read magazines in the same month they're on the stands *and* see Barbra Streisand...I'd have sworn that would do the trick—happiness indefinitely. Yet, here I am, still cranky and suffering from the 'people are starving in China' syndrome...how dare I not feel happy more often?

The older I get, the more elusive, fleeting and mysterious I think real happiness is. If I'm honest, I probably have experienced about six minutes, 45 seconds of pure bliss in my entire life. Fifteen seconds here, ten second there, when an unadulterated appreciation of just how good life can be flows through me from head to toe. We think that if Ed McMahan rings the bell, or we lose 20 pounds, or we get that award or our kids achieve that success, that happiness will be ours. It might.

But a moment later, your feet will hurt or the person next to you will say something stupid. The feeling soars, then dissipates quickly.

I find that I'm closest to approaching "happy" when I'm either anticipating an event (an evening debauching with old friends, celebrating a milestone) or when I'm freed of anxiety after a scary task is completed. (Sitting down after speaking to a large group, telling an intimate someone "No."). Happy is finally getting to a bathroom after travelling 25 miles to the next rest stop. Or finding your wallet after you were sure it was stolen. The spark of happiness that ignites inside me most often is fueled by a word spelled r-e-l-i-e-f.

I decided to look carefully at the people I know who seem to spend more time happier than the rest of us. No surprise that they are not the owners of more luxuries or the enjoyers of more creature comforts. What they do possess is lots of interests, loads of things they're enthusiastic about and an attitude that exudes the proverbial zest for life. They definitely produce more happiness than they consume.

Happy people tend not to worry about things they can't control. Growing older, global warming, and second hand smoke are not topics they dwell on. They are not the people with the least tragedies, but they are the one who accept more gracefully what they can't change. They waste little time feeling guilty, aware that it is the best of times and the worst of times all the time. And they are grateful they are not much more unhappy than they are.

If you think me a bad person for being unappreciative and whiny, understand that I feel blessed and lucky most of the time. I'm just a stickler about how I define being happy. Before you berate me, go through your phone book and star the people you'd categorize as being content. They'll be the ones to whom happiness is never a destination or a goal, but an optimistic, generous, almost spiritual outlook. Stay close to these people. An attitude that thrives on the pleasure it gives out might just be contagious.

Beat The Clutter

Declare war on your desk on January 9, 1995! Imagine being able to conquer the mountains of memos on National Clean Off Your Desk Day. According to British comic John Cleese of Monty Python fame, who has a workplace training video on the subject, you must learn to do four simple things to purge your desk permanently from disorder: 1. Act on it 2. Pass it on 3. File it and 4. Junk it. His video, *How to Clear Your Desk: The Paper Chase*, may be rented for \$250 by calling 1-800-553-0091, ext 313. Be sure to mention National Clean Off Your Desk Day for a 20 percent discount before February 28th.

Having It All?

According to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, it has taken men almost 50 years to finally concede that a woman's life isn't all that easy. In April, 1946, when a Roper Starch Worldwide Survey asked men whether men or women had an easier time in present day America, 46 percent of the men felt women did. This is in stark contrast to the August, 1993 study which revealed that only 22 percent of men still felt that women had it easier. On the other hand, when women were asked the same question, 41 percent felt men had it easier in 1946 compared to 63 percent in 1993. Only 13 percent of women in 1993 thought their sex had the better of it compared to 33 percent in 1946.

When it came time to examine the belief that working women employed full time had a more interesting life than women who chose to be full time homemakers, 39 percent of the men and forty-two percent of the women in the 1993 survey responded affirmatively.

TWR Commentary: Roper finally confirms what we've known all along, although there is some satisfaction in realizing that men are finally acknowledging our life style choices.



BYALICK — at Her — BEST

Doing It By The Book

It's rare to come across a married person bragging about her extraordinary sex life as it is to find anyone honestly recapping a fabulous adolescence. Soulmates and sisters and best friends might even be privy to how much you weigh and how much money you have in the bank, but how many times a week...nah. That's why we're all so incredibly curious. And why studies like "Sex in America: A Definitive Survey," done by the University of Chicago and SUNY at Stony Brook, create such a frenzy of interest.

Sex is an art practiced by amateurs. The 90s on-the-job training consists of videos and underwear ads and perfume commercials and self-help books, all not so gently giving us the message that the undignified way we go about "it" bears little resemblance to theirs. Having grown up at the same time (but in a parallel universe) that the sexual revolution loosened and freed millions around me, I believed that while I might be lucky and healthy and loved and successful, my sex life was Betty Crocker dull.

But now the 1994 survey is out. And I find that endless, fascinating, varied sex is as much a myth as exhilarating and fabulous New Year's Eve and warm and wonderful Thanksgiving dinners. Most surveyed averaged sex once a week and one third have sex only a few times a year—or not at all. More than 80 percent have had just one sex partner or no partners in the last year. Eighty-five percent of women and 75 percent of men are faithful to their spouses, and lo and behold, it's the married folks who are swinging more often than the single folk!

I know I wasn't the only one relieved. At the doctor's office, I perused *GQ* and *Esquire* and saw an equally neurotic and vulnerable male readership treated to "Strong Legs and Great Sex" and "Stay Young, Smart and Sexy." An eight page feature on the penis made me realize it was not just us girls who grew up with not enough information about "down there."

The new study vindicates me. Even if I'll never be a woman who "when she raises her eyelids it's as if she were taking off all her clothes" (Colette), I can still be part of the "in" crowd. Today, when my generation puts "emotion in motion," the rewards are likely to be stressfree, comfortable satisfaction. With no World Series, no more Lt. John Kelly, no heroes at all, the security of nesting with a life partner, as uncontroversial and unkinky as he may be, sounds sexy. It not the numbers, the inches, or the bodies that define a successful married sex life. It's the cuddles.

It's All In The Cards

Instead of playing poker in the back room, maybe the guys from the old boys' network should be playing a card game with the Gender Deck, which deals exclusively with issues of gender differences, sexual harassment, and sexual orientation in the workplace. The 180 card deck encourages participants from companies to explore diversity issues at work. Selling for \$99, it is produced by Multus, Inc. of San Mateo, CA.

Fill Her Up

So many condoms, such little time! How can a woman give herself the best protection against HIV-1 and STDs? According to a joint study conducted by the Mariposa Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and UCLA Medical Centers, certain condoms were more effective in preventing viral leakage. Those ranked in order as affording the greatest protection were #1 Mentor (Circle); #2 Ramses Non-Lub (Schmid); #3 Ramses Sensitol (Schmid); #4 Gold Circle Coin (Circle); #5 Gold Circle (Circle); and #6 Sheik Elite (Schmid). Ironically, due to business buy-outs, the top ranked form of Mentor condoms from this study is no longer sold.

Those condoms which offered the **lowest levels of protection** against STDs and HIV-1 included the following: Contracept Plus (National Sanitary); Trojan Ribbed (Carter Wallace); Trojan Naturalube Ribbed (Carter Wallace); and LifeStyles Nuda (Ansell).

Insider Report Commentary: Are you questioning why this type of information appears on page 3? While the myth may be that successful women are driven by work alone, we know otherwise. We're a wonderful mixture of business and pleasure, and this information may save your life!

Recent research in the *Academy of Management Journal* indicates that women, when they move up the corporate ladder, are given less opportunity than men to exhibit their abilities. Because they are less likely to make the important decisions, respond to outside pressures, and juggle responsibilities, they are more likely to lack the experiences that would propel them beyond the glass ceiling. This finding points to more subtle forms of discrimination than previously acknowledged and may explain why female executives report feeling more stress on the job than men.

Source: *The New York Times*



A Lesson From My Daughter

One of the truest things my mother ever said was that it's impossible to feel good when your child feels bad. I can't remember how I felt before Carrie called, but I know it was a good deal better than I felt after I hung up. My 20-year-old daughter who had landed the best internship in the city of New York had just been told she was in danger of losing it, not because of her work or skill or ethics or manners, but because of her attitude. She was too confident, curious and overstepped the boundaries of low woman on the totem pole. And it was all my fault.

I listened to my broken-hearted daughter berating herself for not blending in better, for not realizing that interns blessed with such a glamorous opportunity were expected to be a lot grateful and more than a little intimidated. It was unbecoming behavior, her superior said, for a junior in college to make herself so visible. I should have warned her. It was my job to tell this child (whom we nicknamed "Reckless Abandon" when she was four) that just as important as initiative was in the first few years of working in the vain-eat-vain world she chose, was the ability to play the game. Kiss butt. Don't initiate any conversation with people three or more rungs higher up the ladder than you are. Never get too comfortable.

It's not like she would've listened to me anyway, I rationalized. If she listened to me, she wouldn't even have applied for the position. (It's too much of a time commitment, you have the wrong major, they must get 100 requests for every opening...the stuff my mother taught me.) But if I said it even if I wasn't obeyed, I'd have done my "mommying" duty. Most of what I tell my kids, how to sit on a subway toilet, how to thump on a melon, how to interpret what Daddy really means, is recycled information anyway. In phone conversations lasting long enough to grow corn, I tell them a '90s version of what my mother told me. I hit bottom this winter when I actually said to my 23-year-old daughter, "My hands are ice cold. Don't you think you should put on your gloves?"

I'm painfully learning to relinquish the teaching of the rest of life's lessons to the cold, unloving outside world. On a rational level I know I couldn't have prevented Carrie's comeuppance. In fact, now that it's over, I'm relieved her first rejection in the business world has passed. Like chicken pox, she won't suffer through the same experience ever again. Neither will I. It takes some getting used to, this loss of the ability to make everything better. For years a note to the teacher, a cup of hot chocolate, a kiss on the boo-boo did the trick. Then came boys and sororities and colleges and bosses, all of whom were proving to be mighty foes for my no longer magical hugs. I'm convinced that whether your current state of mothering is a love-hate thing, a hate-hate thing, or even a love-love thing, it's always going to be a tough-tough thing.

My story, thankfully, has a happy ending. Carrie was asked to return to her job. She was reinstated after the loveliest note of apology to her supervisor - equal parts contrite, grateful and determined to do better. She mailed it before I heard it, but I wouldn't have changed a word. It was perfect. Exactly what I would've suggested. And because she said she knew that, she knew it was the right thing to do. It would be piggy to expect anything more.

BYALICK
— at Her —
BEST



Love That Endures

Like thumbs, written language and portable fax machines, enduring love is unique to humans. Born of fierce desire and a fire which makes separation impossible, love that survives through time never grows old. We might wrinkle but the trust, good humor and respect that define stable marriages grow stronger with the years. That a man and a woman, each essen-

tially solitary and fundamentally different, can make the transition from "love, honor and obey" to "commit, compromise and ignore" — and live to tell the tale — is in itself one of life's miracles. Although they might have met by chance, there's more than luck involved in negotiating the maze of unrealistic expectations and power struggles life presents. But for those who hang on, even far from blissful equality and way down the road from "happily ever after," it's still a better place to be.

I think more myths exist about long-term satisfying marriages than there are satisfying marriages. I remember reading — and believing — Shakespeare's sonnet that "love is not love which alters when it alteration finds." Wrong. Love is nothing if not

triple jointly flexible. One day you're a demanding, selfish shrew, the next a soothing, caring Florence Nightingale. The pendulum swings, 90% give, 10% take, and vice versa. You lean, I lean; kiss, kill; disgust, pride; anger, hugs. "Love is blind," especially love aged to maturity. After a few decades, what we have isn't necessarily what we see. Years of devotion tend to blur and transfigure gravity's toll on the skin that hangs from under your arm and peeks out of your underwear. Enduring love also dulls your sense of taste. It's amazing the corny remarks we grow to find endearing, the wisdom we find on WFAN (all sports radio), the way we accept behaviors less intimate others have never seen on two-legged creatures. Whoever said husbands and wives come at last to look alike was

probably not referring to the uniqueness their individual histories have written on their faces, but to what happens to people when their tolerance, compromising and settling to the limits of human endurance, have softened their features.

When "old" love begins, men fall more readily, more passionately than their mates. *Twice* as many married men than single men report being happy. Their desire for companionship grows with the years. Where at first they fear being smothered, trapped for eternity (believing since they're born that they're "a good catch" and once caught they're "done for"), in later years they want their idea of intimacy and commitment (often unacknowledged and unexpressed) to last forever. Where men believe things just resolve spontaneously and are happy to leave it at that, their wives are available to describe, dissect and explain their conflicts any time day or night. This might be a function of marriage defining a woman's whole history rather than it being "just" an integral part of life as it is to her husband.

The long-term marriages of our parents and grandparents managed to survive without classes in communication and problem solving skills. In the years when only one in 25 women never married (as opposed to one in eight of those born in the mid-1950s), unions that survived depended on advice like this found in the 1808 *The Married Lady's Companion*: "It is in your interest to adapt yourself to your husband, whatever may be his peculiarities." One hundred and fifty years later the *Ladies Home Journal* in its "Can This Marriage Be Saved" column offered: "Amy was largely responsible for Joe's infidelity. She never took the time to be a wife." Twenty more years down the road Helen Gurley Brown scarcely improved the situation with her ideas of cheerful and happy submission. And the 1980's trend of blaming most women's problems on the emotional cripples they call men, offers little constructive advice. Today's women are unwilling to accept in a husband less

than they'd accept in a friend. Men who can't love or talk or listen or be supportive aren't good enough. And so although the rules might change, the degree of difficulty remains the same.

What do all long married couples have in common? Tolerance, patience and good humor seem to be the key words. More important than love is forgiveness, more meaningful than what's said is what's left *unsaid*. What counts is not the differences that arise with the years but how those differences are handled. At some point I think you just accept what you can't change (snoring, football, long toe nails, her brother). In exchange for someone to count on, we'll do with sporadic passion; for undying loyalty, we'll compromise our heads off. Relaxed compatibility in itself becomes sexy. To be understood is more valuable than to be adored. To win an argument is not as important as remaining friends.

On the hours (or days) you question if you love that unshaven guy scratching the bottom of his feet in front of the TV, it's important to remember you could never love anyone at whom you couldn't laugh. Likewise, she's also the one who's seen you at your ugliest, your worst, your truest — and she's with you still. Just as your partner can irritate you quicker than anyone else in the world, their presence in times of stress can soothe and fortify like no other.

And no discussion of love that endures can ignore the role of luck. Think of all the things you didn't know when you make this all important decision and realize how incredible it is that he turned out half as good as he is. How fortunate you both did your growing in the same direction, how remarkable that your unique code of looks and language based on secret shared perceptions of life's events still makes you giggle. An apple a day might keep the doctor away but a kiss and a laugh from the best friend who lops his leg over yours each night makes growing older worth the price. **MC**