

The Cost of Companionship and Commitment

One of the purposes of putting out this newsletter every month is to *put in* articles or stories that hopefully will give one pause to think, reflect, analyze, discuss and to understand. News about vacations, jobs, your kid's first tooth, recipes (does anyone try them?) and jokes are interesting and important. But what keeps me motivated to publish this thing is the opportunity to share from my heart and soul, and to provide a forum for all of *you* to do the same. You may not agree with some of the things I say, but at least you know from where they come, and I believe that you all appreciate the openness I try to exhibit. I also realize that this penchant for baring my soul is not everyone's cup of tea, that privacy prevails when it comes to sharing our lives with each other. But we are family, and that bond we share should allow us to open up, take a chance, and be a bit more transparent than we might be with others. This is not the place to air grievances between spouses, or reveal intimacies that would embarrass, but it *should be* a place we can come to give and take of the well we call family. I say this as a preface to the topic I chose to write about, a topic that has been very much on my mind of late.

At what cost do we seek companionship and commitment? If you've been married for many years, you know what those costs have been. If married for a few years, you are discovering them, and if not in a relationship, then you might be wondering what exactly they would be, and whether or not you can or want to afford them.

Sometimes, when we struggle with our relationships, we can question our decision to enter or stay in those relationships. Perhaps it is the fear of being alone that is greater than the inconvenience of staying committed when you'd rather not.

Being with someone "until death do us part" is a long time, let's face it. I know that this requires a helluva commitment that some, but not all, people are capable of making. All of us know the feeling of the grass being "greener on the other side of the fence." All of us know that sooner or later, the pizzazz and the magic of being in love wear off, and it needs to be replaced by a true and mature love, if the relationship is to succeed.



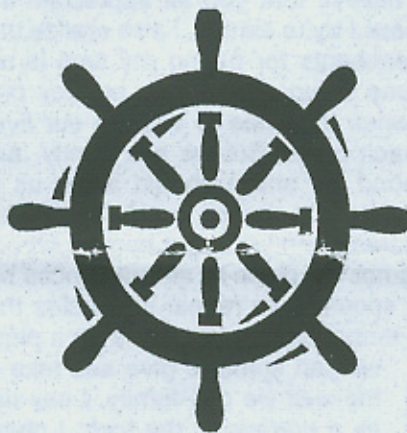
I think for me, I have this problem that I seem to want what I don't have, and tire of that what I do have. When I find myself in a relationship, subconscious forces go to work to sabotage it, trying to convince me that this isn't right for me, that I am getting deeper into a big mistake. What happens is that I don't give the relationship a chance to grow, for the love to develop. I look around at friends, family and acquaintances and see people breaking up and divorcing, or staying together unhappily, and that has a cumulative affect—I don't want to go through that kind of mess and pain! Being single, and relying on friendships with simpler expectations, as well as learning to thrive on personal time alone, seems like a more attractive alternative to a commitment I don't know I can keep. On the other hand, that need to have a special companion (the Latin word is *companis*, meaning to "break bread with", a kind of relationship Jesus showed with his disciples) is a hunger I crave to satisfy. Thus comes the conflict, and the question as to whether the cost of companionship and commitment is within my budget.

Certainly the joys and happiness of hav-

(Continued on page 5)

Tidbits From Texas

I have never made it a secret that my life centers around my family and my home. My entire focus is with those under my roof, as I have plenty to focus on. With responsibilities for kids ranging from 6 months to 20 years of age, there is plenty to keep me busy with their individual needs and cares. While this a shared load, between myself and Frinee, we each take a different look at our roles in this household. Tradition, mixed with modernism, composes our division of labor, as Frinee plays the role of more direct dealings with the details of the kids, and I contend with the overall structure of our lives. My children know their father better than many do nowadays, since I am home nights and weekends, and do not tie myself up with activities involving only myself. As most parents know, having kids is a responsibility that involves immense self-sacrifice, and this is a concept not fully realized until you experience it. As a child growing up in any size family, you only get the childish point-of-view, and that usually is one of trying to get what you need. No need to give of yourself yet, to any real significant degree. But when you marry and be- phasis shifts from one of that of placing those changes tremendously. your own desires, inter- you can fit them into everyone else's have maintain a healthy bal- must have their own means that, in order to your kids, you grown wants must have some pursuable, because ance in nearly every see a healthy and happy set of parents in order for them to follow suit and become normal and well-adjusted children. As a parent, we walk a fine line between guiding our children down the right paths, that is, giving them room to grow and to discover their own selves. Our children cannot learn all there is to know about life from their parents, rather, they must learn a great deal more on their own, with the foundation of goodness instilled in them by us, the parents. One must learn constraints that are more beneficial to the kids, otherwise they will not learn to survive in this world on their own. This can be extremely difficult, because you, with all your experience, can see the correct decision to make, and they sometimes choose the wrong direction to go. But, we all know that experience is the best teacher, must allow them to make those decisions, and for them to deal with the consequences.



Life is really a series of periods that we go through: childhood, young adult, middle-age, and then the senior years, with everyone varying through each stage. Right now, I feel that I am going through my longest period, one of child-rearer, having left behind my selfish years a while ago. It is a rewarding time of my life, filled with the joys of watching my own flesh-and-blood start to grow up, becoming individuals of their own, as well as a trying time when these same kids test the limits of freedom (as well as my patience!). To me, though, this is the only way to go, and I look forward to them growing up and making me very proud of the persons they will become. Whatever influence I can expend now, will pay off later, when they have learned what they can contribute to this world!

Just Between Us

There is no stronger connection than the bond between father and son just born into this world. With all pardons to my daughters, I cannot say that the same link exists with them as it does with Gregory. Little girls are so cute and precious in their feminine ways, with their dresses and their tresses so numerous in style. But with a son, there is this unmistakable sameness that we both share. Perhaps I view him as the next generation of my own self, or perhaps I know what lies ahead of him in this world—what a man goes through as he grows up and discovers what his life is intended for. Whatever the inherent reason for my feelings of overwhelming closeness to him, it is there. The last time I felt this bond was approximately fourteen years ago, when my

life was so very different than now. The joy in making him smile, or laugh, warms the heart, but it is when I rock him to sleep in my arms, as I hum to him, that I am overcome with a love so strong, so indestructible, one that will see no end; it is then when I know my role to be played in this world. Being a father has many rewards, starting with being able to hold your son when he is so small, when you know that your arms protect him from all harm, and he senses some of that security. Seeing my other son so much grown up makes me know that this little bundle of joy in my arms at night has a destiny to reach many years down the road. My role is to prepare him for a life of his own some day, but for now, I can give to him only a fraction of the happiness that swells my heart to bursting with his sweetness. I love my daughters, but there is no stronger connection than the bond between father and son!



HAPPY

Frinee (31) on Sept. 10
Sherwood (55) on Sept. 18

many happy returns!!

BIRTHDAY!

Postcards from America

DEVIL'S TOWER NATIONAL MONUMENT
Wyoming

Not much for your newsletter, but... Kelly and I had the greatest (and shortest) two weeks of the year so far. 6 days backpacking in Montana wilderness and seeing America like Paul Simon sang it. Now we're back and looking for a house together. Getting out of this dump ASAP. The job still sucks but I'm a little less stressed because of our vacation. You should see the rolls (7) of pictures I took with my new Minolta—FANTASTIC!! Next vacation...skiing the Rockies, but I'm not in any hurry for winter. Moving is going to be one royal pain in the _____. Do you want a free piano? The next one I buy will be electronic and synthesized and sampled. For now—

Mark

(Note: Mark, if you send one of your best photos, I will put it in the next "Breeze".)

P R E T Z E L S

The History of Pretzels

About 610 A.D., an imaginative Alpine monk formed the ends of dough, leftover from baking bread, into strips and folded them into a looped twist to represent the folded arms of children in prayer. The tasty treat was offered to the children as they learned their prayers and thereby came to be called "Pretiola"—Latin for "little reward."

For centuries bread dough remained the basic ingredient of pretzels which, when baked, were soft, but unfortunately highly perishable. As demand for pretzels increased, it was learned that they could be baked into a harder form which not only made the pretzel more appetizing, but also improved its keeping qualities.

With Midlife, New Priorities and a Mourning of Lost Youth

By JOAN KELLY BERNARD
NEWSDAY

Okay, so I'm 46, as are many of my colleagues, give or take a few years, and the looming 50th birthday is a subject of consuming interest to us. We, the leading edge of the postwar Baby Boom—stuck with the label like an 80-year old still called Sis or Babe—are now entrenched in middle age.

As if on cue, we are being buried—excuse the allusion in books about the transition from 40 to 50 to 60 and beyond. Among them there is, of course, the heavily publicized "New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time" by Gail Sheehy (if you haven't seen her on at least one news or talk show you haven't been paying attention).

So what do these books have to tell us? First, that there are awakenings, some gradual, some rude, that come with age.

"The main point of this whole genre is there comes a day when you wake up and something aches or somebody dies and you realize you're not young anymore," says Elizabeth Kaye, a journalist and contributing editor to *Esquire*. "That's the core moment." For Kaye, who is 50, that moment

came in her 40's when she "realized I was embarrassed to tell people how old I was.

"My resume held up if I was 30, but it seemed a little bit lacking for somebody of 40," she says. "I knew I had become too old to be precocious. . . . I was trading on youth when I could no longer trade on it."

"We grew up on a cult of youth," says Terri Apter, who is 46 and a social psychologist and fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge. "We didn't realize that older wasn't optional."

It is a moment to be mourned, Kaye argues eloquently in her deeply personal memoir. "The book is about the fact that life has a lot of sadness in it and that things that matter most are often the things we can least control, and that is sad," says Kaye. "And we learn to live with it. That doesn't mean it isn't sad."

Kaye says that reassurances in books and articles about the extended youthfulness of older people today denied her feelings of grief. "I'm the kind of woman who feels really bad if I lose a sweater or sunglasses, so am I not allowed to feel bad because I've lost my youth?"

Still, these observers tell us,

with the awareness of age and, let's face it, death, comes the impulse to rethink our priorities and scale down our expectations. And believe it or not, some of us might find we not only survive but prosper. As Kaye writes in her book, "I've always been one of those people who does better on a deadline."

One of the main messages of midlife is that life is filled with limitations, and the sooner we accept it, the better off we'll be.

"We are the generation that came up with the phrase 'having it all,'" says Kaye. "It's a grotesque and deluding notion. The fact is there is this point we mourn all these things we'll never accomplish."

But there are consolations. "I think entering midlife is a shock that finally subsides," she says. "What you realize is not that you settle, that you find out to your great surprise that you don't have to get everything you want to be really happy.

"Not because we give up," she adds. "Or fold our tents or just collapse [but] because we are a surviving creature. . . . adaptable. . . with a tropism toward the light. That is what we are."

DOWN TIME

What do you like to do in your down time? You know, your leisure time, spare time, own time. Personally, I like to spend it doing a variety of things, such as fooling around on this computer, going to the gym to work out, riding my mountain bike at the beach, going out for drinks with friends, doing laundry (sigh!).

When you work hard all week, you need a hobby or activity to unwind and get your mind off of work. What kinds of things do you do in your down time? Let me hear from you and I will print them in the next newsletter.



(Continued from page 1)

ing a companion, or significant other, can add value to life. They can bring one closer to God, as they reflect the ability to love so deeply that at times it hurts. What would life be like if not for the opportunities to share love with that someone who is more special than anyone else in this world? Luckily, I have had the experience of loving someone else so deeply that it hurt. It hurt in both good and bad ways. The good way was that I learned how capable I was of loving so deeply, and when we weren't together, how much I missed him. But it the pain I felt when I lost that relationship was like a knife cutting through my heart. I grieved that loss for a year, but time took care of the healing, and so I moved on with my life. And I wanted that experience of being in love again! Over the past several years, I have looked for it and have yet to find it. There were times I looked too hard, when I shouldn't have been looking at all. (That old saying is true—when you aren't looking for it, it will find you!) Now I am questioning the cost again, and wondering if I am willing to pay it. Am I capable of commitment, and if not, can I be willing to rely on friendships alone to get me through life? All this questioning of late has made me realize again that I need very much to have God, and specifically, Jesus in my life. I know that I have forgotten this, after my years in the seminary. It was all-too-easy to get wrapped up in this world, to worry about a career, future security, and material trappings.

So, what about the struggle to stay committed, to be or to have a companion? For some, the signs are there (whether we choose to recognize them or not) that say it's over, that it's time to make a change. Commitment may or may not be lifelong. Who says it has to be? For others, it is in the struggle that necessary growth can happen. It can be the stimulus to get in touch with one's soul, so that the relationship can deepen to a new level. Whatever the decision we make, there is a cost attached. Nothing in life is free, and nothing of real value demands of us no cost. I guess I need to take the time to evaluate and make the decision that would allow me to either embrace commitment and companionship or to accept the fact, if it's inevitable, that I cannot do so. Either way, it needs to lead to an inner peace. A peace that supports a happy and fulfilled life. There by the grace of God go I.

it's coffee talk!

SAW THIS IN THE PAPER: Wanna be happy? Don't compare yourself to others, says a UC Riverside study. Happy people judge their success on their own merits; unhappy folks rank themselves and love it when others perform worse.

IN THE PROMOTION DEPARTMENT: Starting

the day after Labor Day, I will be in charge of a new department at Costco. I am out of the Front End and now the Night Operations Manager, and my department is what we call, "Majors", short for Major Appliances. This is the department which sells the electronic equipment, appliances, tires, cd's, and other stuff. I am eager to start there, and have several ideas that will allow me to put my own stamp on the department. There will be new challenges, and new stresses, but I am glad to have the change of scenery. My hours will roughly be the same, starting in the afternoon until past closing. So, I am excited....

LABOR DAY was celebrated by a quiet morning (after an evening barbecue) and going over to Mark's folks' house for an afternoon dinner with my roommates.

DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, but I am getting sick of the courtroom antics of the trial lawyers in the "Simpson matter", as Judge Ito calls it. They squabble, fight, and call each other names, wasting the jury's time and the court's time. They ought to stop the nonsense and finish their cases, so this thing can go to the jury, which is growing increasingly impatient with the whole process. Can't say that I blame them.

Just Wondering...
What happens to an "18-hour bra" after 18 hours?

