



Consolations of Bachelorhood on Father's Day

Here we should note that celibacy means merely the state of being unwed and does not necessarily mean that the celibate one is chaste — is not, in other words, living the “good life” according to the Playboy philosophy, finding an abundance of playmates, and enjoying “the pleasures of sin for a season.”

However, Johnson, I am reasonably certain, had the chaste celibate in mind when he said, “celibacy has no pleasures.” Either that or he believed guilty pleasures don’t count. Men and women of Johnson’s day did not so easily wink at sinful pleasures.



Nowadays “sin for a season” is celebrated in motion pictures and in song. “Mrs. Robinson” was the hit recording that came from the even bigger hit movie, *The Graduate*, in which an older woman, though married, seduces the boy next door, a recent college graduate. “We’ll Sing in the Sunshine” was a hit record of the Sixties that seemed to sum up the “Easy come, easy go” attitude toward sex and love celebrated by the popular “Playboy” culture.

So it would seem the unmarried adult male is leading the enviable life, jumping in an out of love or “whatever” as the spirit — we will not say what spirit — moves him. That might be true if all single males hit like Ted Williams, who hit .344 at the ballpark and is rumored to have batted .670-something away from the diamond. But for those of us with lower batting averages and less exciting lives, bachelorhood is often a boring, lonely, and dreary calling.

So I was pleasantly surprised when an old friend, himself a father and grandfather, called Saturday night for apparently no reason other than that it was Fathers’ Day eve and he wanted to extend his best wishes to an aging, childless bachelor. It was a kind and welcome gesture.

And it got me to thinking about why I am a bachelor. I suppose it is the same reason why I never became the center fielder and clean-up hitter for the Boston Red Sox. Baseball, like love, is a demanding, all-consuming sport with exacting standards, and the Red Sox, like the women I have known, had other plans. And far better candidates. And in affairs of the heart, I was too much inclined to swing for the fences. You know, go for the gorgeous gal for whom there is entirely too much competition. I was like Dobie Gillis, stubbornly pursuing the uninterested Thalia Menninger and overlooking the available Zelda.

“But Thalia,” the resolute Dobie (played by Dwayne Hickman) pleaded to Miss Menninger (Tuesday Weld) in the sitcom of the late Eisenhower era, “I appeal to you!” She looked at him, smiled sweetly and explained patiently, “No, Dobie, that’s just it. You *don’t* appeal to me.”

And so it was with yours truly and the lovely young ladies of my schoolboy and early manhood years. Despite all my appeals to them, I simply did not appeal to them. As Neil Diamond put it, “Had a dream and it filled me with wonder; she had other plans.” Life went on, *Oobla dee, Oobla dah*. And I grew old,



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facing the near certainty that they still won't love me, still won't want me, "*When I'm 64.*"

The same may be true of some lovely bachelorettes. Did Tuesday Weld ever marry? I'm not sure. She may have been waiting for a proposal from Elvis Presley or Steve McQueen. I have heard Linda Ronstadt sing the poignant, "I Never Will Marry." And I believe she never did. It could not have been for lack of opportunity. Not only is Miss Ronstadt a rare and magnificent talent, she was, in her prime, a woman of breathtaking beauty. When Linda sang, "When Will I Be Loved?" it is a wonder that, depending on the size of the audience and the number of males in it, she did not get 2,500 to 5,000 volunteers at each concert.

So when will she be loved? Don't ask me. I'm not worried about Linda Ronstadt. When will I be loved? Likely never, though I would still consider almost any offer. As Miss Ronstadt has sung, "Love Has No Pride."

But neither does it have unlimited patience. And when you are not with your ideal, patience is definitely limited. I remember once going to the home of a young lady to pick her up for a dinner date and when we got into my car and I turned on the engine, the Red Sox game came on the radio. I turned to her and extended her a courtesy that I had expected would be a mere formality.

"You don't mind if we —"

"Yes!" she said at once. "Yes, I do mind!"

Well, excuuuuse me! No Red Sox on my car radio that evening. It spoiled the entire evening, dinner included, for me. I was silently aghast at her effrontery. To come between a man and his Red Sox on a first date! Back home alone, I thought I should have driven the car back up her driveway and ended the date before it started. A man's Toyota is his poor man's castle, after all.

On another occasion I was at table with a lady who insisted on repeating, over and again, the same question, which she mistook for a conversation starter: "What're ya thinkin' about?"

"Nothing," I told her honestly. She would not take "nothing" for an answer.

"Sure you are!" she insisted. "You're thinkin' about somethin'. What're ya thinkin' about?" She kept that up so long that I still don't know why I didn't tell her that I was thinking I might prefer the company of someone who was not so insistent on knowing what I might be thinking about.

A similar "conversation" took place years earlier when I was still in college. I was in the campus pub with a professor, a good friend, and a co-ed who was determined to find someone thinking deep thoughts. She passed over me, an unlikely candidate, and even the professor, to focus on my melancholy friend, a young man known for silent, anguished broodings, which he sometimes penned as poetry. The pretty co-ed was unwilling to await the next edition.

"I'll bet you're thinking deep thoughts right now, aren't you?" she said expectantly.

"No, I'm not thinking about anything in particular," my friend said.

"No, no, I can tell, you're thinking deep thoughts." She, too, would not take "no" for an answer, so my friend finally gave in to her demand for deep thought.

"Yeah, Sue," he said at last. "I'm thinking really deep thoughts."

"I knew it!" she fairly squealed. "I just knew it!"

I am no worthy opponent of Dr. Johnson, but I do find some pleasures in celibacy. There is pleasure in



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coming home and shutting the door behind me and locking the entire world out. There is a depth of pleasure in a degree of peace and quiet that a man with a wife and children or grandchildren in the home and hundreds of channels on each of two or three or more TV sets will never know or has long forgotten. Call it selfish if you will, but there is a peace almost divine in a sanctuary in which you are not required to share the bathroom, the computer, and, most importantly, the thoughts of your own mind — where there is no one to say, “What’re ya thinkin’ about? Yeah, ya are. You’re thinkin’ about somethin’, I can tell.” Or “You’re probably thinking deep thoughts now, right?” Yes, I am.

I am thinking that Hell, or at least Purgatory, must be full of such questions.



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