

FATHER BASHING ON FATHER'S DAY (IT'S HATEFUL AND IT'S BORING TOO)

by Francis Baumli, Ph.D.

Dear Editors,

In his Father's Day editorial (June 16, 2013), Webster-Kirkwood Times editor Don Corrigan tried to be insightful, shrewd, and funny, but failed on all accounts. He wrote how, on Father's Day, fathers have to put up with "rants" and "snarky" remarks. They "get no respect," have always "taken it on the chin," and Fathers Day itself is a "crook." He then made the pronouncement that "insulting daddy has become an American media pastime."

After then pointing to various comics which insult men, Corrigan, exercising what no one would call scholarly rectitude, went on to gleefully rant about a survey done by Visiting Angels. No mention was made of the methodology, scientific rigor, or reliability of this so-called study. However, this did not prevent Corrigan from citing, even extolling, their conclusion: that 1 out of 3 children would choose Mom over Dad were one of them needing to move in during their declining years. Dad's liabilities? He is more likely to make

inappropriate remarks, is more sloppy, more lazy, has worse hygiene, and he even hogs the TV remote.

Corrigan did not tell the rest of the story. Do these statistics mean that 2 out of 3 children would prefer Dad over Mom? Or that most would prefer neither, with only a small percentage preferring Dad over Mom? Corrigan's reporting here was neither clear nor thorough.

If Corrigan cared to do some rigorous (rather than slapdash) research, he might have read The Hazards of Being Male by Herb Goldberg, or Father and Child Reunion by Warren Farrell, or the book I myself edited (available at the Kirkwood Public Library) Men Freeing Men. In these books, replete with studies that are well-researched and statistically sound, Corrigan would have found that the faults and virtues of moms and dads, young or old, pretty much even out. Also, if Corrigan would pay attention to what is going on in the media (as I do), he would have noticed that the media trend toward male bashing (and father bashing) has steadily decreased over the last 15 years, and in the last 3 years has virtually disappeared. As an illustration (of course I would not term it statistical evidence), note the cover picture gracing the very same issue of the Webster-Kirkwood Times in which Corrigan's execrable editorial appears. The title for this large picture is, "Fishin' With Dad In Des Peres." There is no accompanying story,

but the caption says it all: This father “got a jump on Father’s Day” by taking his son and nephew fishing.

Anyone who managed to read Corrigan’s editorial to the end realized that, despite his indignant grandiloquence about how the media unkindly assaults daddy on Father’s Day, he proceeded to do exactly that. He warned fathers to trim their nose hair and, while they’re at it, trim their ear hair too. They must be sure to keep food stains off their BBQ aprons while wearing the necktie they got last Father’s Day. Also Corrigan reminded “dear old dad” to keep his hands off the TV remote. Then, with snarky sarcasm, he ended with, “Oh, yeah, Happy Father’s Day ... “ and the reader was left with but one impression: Here is one of those “old-school” writers who thinks his every foray in the direction of humor succeeds in achieving one more belly laugh, or, in this case, an adolescent thigh slapper.

I am writing this on Father’s Day. I guess this means I’m not lazy. I won’t be trimming my nose hair or ear hair or addressing hygiene issues since I am already well-groomed. And I won’t be hogging the TV remote since our home doesn’t have a TV. (We do, however, have about 10,000 books, which may be part of the reason our son graduated from Kirkwood High in 2009 as class valedictorian.)

Speaking of my son, he and his mother are patiently awaiting me. They want to celebrate me. Our daughter just phoned (she lives 125 miles away) to wish me a Happy Father's Day. I am quite confident that if ever I get old and infirm, either of them would be just as glad to take me in as they would be to take their mother in.

As for Mister Corrigan, he is a man who clearly hates men—which makes him, de facto, a masochist. I don't know if he is a father, but if he is, then he has a long way to go in the self-esteem department.

Allow me one last remark about Father's Day: Even if it were true (though it isn't!) that, in the sum total of things, fathers don't stack up to mothers in their children's eyes, wouldn't it nevertheless be obvious that they do have at least a few fine qualities? And that some have many very fine qualities? If so, then couldn't fathers be allowed even one day, out of 365, to be honored without having to endure an editor's self-indulgent insults?

Misandrosy (that's man-hating, in case Don Corrigan doesn't know) makes for easy writing. It's a quick way to get the responsibility of one more editorial out of the way. Hating is easy. Responsible writing, backed by responsible research and careful thinking, is difficult.

But since Don Corrigan chose the easy route, maybe in a few weeks he could do another such editorial, this time one that indulges in gay bashing. Next it could be racism. And next year he could poke fun at mothers on Mother's Day. If hating is the easy route he prefers, then Corrigan can take on the sacred American institution of motherhood. We then would find out how much blustering eloquence he can successfully muster, and how much backbone he really has, as a writer and as an editor.

But now, if I may be excused, I'm going to go join my family for dinner. I won't be wearing a necktie. And maybe I can somehow make it through the meal without uttering inappropriate remarks. This won't be easy, since I'm not in the best of moods, after the way Don Corrigan insulted all men (this does include me) who are fathers.

*(Written on Father's Day, June 16, 2013.)
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(This article was submitted to The Webster-Kirkwood Times for publication. They did publish it, but in truncated form. The original document—as it here stands—is well over a thousand words long. They would publish no more than three hundred words of it, so their published result felt compressed, awkward, incomplete. I here present the unexpurgated version.)