

A Toast to the bride and Groom

Era: Circa 1989

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So Jim and Wendy are entering a state of holy matrimony.

I wonder if they know what they're in for...

Or understand the glorious tradition that they're representing.

I hope they've thought about this matter. It's no longer necessary, after all, to get married. The United States census bureau has coined a term to describe Americans living without benefit of wedlock. We Canadians might like to adopt it. Holy POSSLQuity. POSSLQs are 'persons of the opposite sex, sharing living quarters'. I read about it, and you can too, in Ann Landers column, May 13, 1989.

For those of you who aren't aware, Jim and Wendy's romance started the day they met on the beach at Wasa Lake. Wendy was wearing a bikini. I don't imagine that she was aware that her garment was named after the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific where the H-bomb, Bravo, was dropped during 1954. That particular bomb was a real hum-dinger - yielded 15 megatons rather than an expected six. Jim didn't stand a chance.

Of course, the two of them were on cloud nine after they met - for at least a couple of months. They didn't analyze their feelings about cloud nine, but the U.S. Weather bureau did. Quite a few years before, the bureau divided clouds into classes and each class into nine types. Cloud nine is the cumulo-nimbus cloud that builds up on hot summer afternoons and can reach heights of thirty to forty thousand feet. You might say that Jim and Wendy were - right out of it.

Then there was that first kiss. We can picture it, Jim and Wendy puckering up on a park bench.

Andy Lockery at the University of Winnipeg figures that the pleasant little past-time of kissing started when our ancestors passed food from mouth to mouth. Sort of chewed the stuff up and sent it along as a sign of endearment.

Of course, not every anthropologist is quite so speculative. Dr. Vaughn Bryant at Texas A and M University, says the first written records of kissing come from Northern India where people initially rubbed noses. Later nose-rubbing developed into lip-rubbing.

The good old Romans practiced three types of kissing. One was called salvium. It was the equivalent of the French kiss and we get our word for saliva from salvium. Romantic, hey?

For Wendy, I'm sure, one of the biggest problems in getting married is giving up her status as a spinster. Before the spinning wheel was invented during the 16th century, one woman could supply only enough yarn for one man - probably the man she was going to marry. With the

invention of the spinning wheel, she could supply enough yarn for twenty weavers. She became a spinster and gained economic freedom that had never been possible before. She didn't have to get married. In this sense, Wendy gives up far more than Jim. He's only a bachelor.

Still, Jim doesn't seem to mind. For the last year, all of his friends have been saying, "the bigger they are, the harder they fall". His friends were borrowing the expression from 'Ruby Roberts' Fitzsimmons. In 1902, 'Ruby Roberts' was about to enter the ring with James Jeffries who was a much bigger man. Clichés aren't always true. Big guy Jeffries won. In the case of Jim and Wendy... well, Jim is on his feet and it's a good thing or he would never have made it to the church.

I assume you noticed that Wendy was wearing a hat (veil) and Jim wasn't, as they stood at the altar. Jim was true to a tradition that dates back to medieval ages, when knights raised their helmets so that royalty could recognize them. Women were never knights, so the custom of removing one's hat in a building developed only in relation to the male sex.

According to First Corinthians in the Bible, Wendy would have been morally at fault if she had not worn her hat, for "every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head..." Something about the head of every man being Christ and the head of the woman being the man. Never did really understand it.

As a society, we've been a long time breaking free of these ideas. Wendy knows this and that's one of the reasons why she chose to marry Jim. She knows that Jim doesn't operate according to the rule of thumb. According to Eugen Lupri, a sociologist at the University of Calgary, the original rule of thumb came from a Carolina State law. The law limited the thickness of a stick that a man could use (to beat his wife) to the thickness of his thumb.

Jim and Wendy are in for some good times. They have their honeymoon to look forward to. I certainly hope that Jim exercises more discretion on his honeymoon than did Attila the Hun.

It was a custom in ancient times for a newly married couple to drink a potion containing honey every day for the first thirty days of their marriage - a moon. Apparently, Attila the Hun was more interested in the honey than the moon. According to legend, he drank so much of the potion that he died of suffocation.

All in all, the bride and groom of by-gone days didn't have life so good. At one time, guests used to sneak into the bride and groom's chamber, steal the couple's stockings, and try to throw a ringer on the noses of the hapless couple.

By the fourteenth century, the ignominy of this had been reduced somewhat. The guests only rushed the bride at the altar and tried to get her garter.

I suspect that Wendy will give up her garter willingly within the next few hours. Maybe even toss it for the young men in the crowd. Unfortunately, her garter won't have the same symbolism today that it would have had even fifty years ago. I suspect Wendy wears panty-hose.

You can see that there's a lot of hocus-pocus associated with a wedding. That's not surprising because many North American weddings take place in the Christian church and the Christian church is responsible for the original hocus-pocus. During communion, bread and wine is supposed to become the flesh and blood of Christ. The minister or the priest holds up the bread and says, "This is the body." The latin for the phrase 'this is the body' is "Hoc est corpus".

Not surprisingly, some conjuror came along and distorted hoc est corpus into hocus-pocus. Just as well we don't take ourselves too seriously.

As for Jim and Wendy - I'm reminded of the competitions that the Negro people held when they lived on plantations in the Southern United States. Couples would dance around a cake and the winners, the most graceful pair of walkers, would "take the cake".

Jim and Wendy, I want to propose a toast - to you and your cake.



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