



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

The Summer of Women

Here on the Figure 8, it is the summer of women. I admit to difficulties in the transition. For lengthy seasons in this life I have operated altogether outside the influence of women, marooned entirely alone on the desert, for instance, or crammed into warships with a battalion of humorless leathernecks. And if anywhere there truly is a man's world, look no further than the Marine Corps berthing spaces on-board naval shipping: It is like living in a bobbing jar full of angry hornets.

But this summer my daughter is here. An adult now, she is training and studying for the demands of the hard career she has chosen, and together with my wife they have — either by accident or design — embarked on an aggressive plan for my re-education and re-integration.

I am being “main-streamed.”

Thus far, my faulty grocery-shopping strategies have been corrected. I now understand that the shortest distance between two points is not, after all, a straight line, but rather a meandering, philosophical, ingredient-reading, chatting, back-tracking, calorie-counting,

and randomly deviating course between the sour cream and the salad dressing.

I have been wrong about that for years.

Also, there are certain things that must never go in the dishwasher, ever, under any circumstances — for reasons that are apparently classified. This is also true of the microwave. And, alarmingly, there are strict procedures and protocols involving various detergents and temperature settings on the washing machine.

In my own defense, I have always done my own laundry. For years I just used shampoo because I couldn't see any reason to buy 10 different kinds of soap. I mixed colors and washed everything with warm water. It worked. I have now learned that this was bad behavior.

“I haven't simply turned in my man-card and given up.”

I think I still have the dogs on my side, but ultimately they are, as well as the colt, eunuchs, which isn't helpful when I try to build a coalition of men to defend my less-considered tendencies.

And it isn't just my wife and daughter who look at me sideways. Elsewhere on the rancho there are two agitated mares, seven attitudinal chickens, and a lunatic barn-cat — all of them serving to remind me of Karen Blixen's marvelous line from “Out of Africa”: “You know you are truly alive when you are living among lions.”

Women, I think, have

consistently failed to realize and exploit their full powers. Women stand poised on the very precipice of world domination. It's likely they always have, and even more likely that they already know this. I don't know why they haven't yet — unless it is because they'd just rather not.

Please don't misunderstand me. I haven't simply turned in my man-card and given up. I resist this new wife-daughter axis daily, in guerilla fashion, occasionally and weakly resorting to a rather juvenile kind of muttering under my breath. Which is probably better than caterwauling and throwing fine china at the menials like Richard Burton on a three-day bender in St. Tropez.

Meanwhile, when the women in my life blast off to yoga and I am allowed to peek at the news, I see that the President of the United States continues tweeting like a 6th-grader who just swallowed a lemon, and the entire state of Illinois has been downgraded to junk status.

A strange summer, indeed.

I'm exaggerating all of this, of course. But it does raise a poignant question: what would I do without these lovely women that I love? I have some ideas, none of them good, and most of them involving strange visions of myself wandering aimlessly through the Nevada desert in torn trousers and ratty slippers, looking like a bald, piratical hybrid of Harry Dean Stanton and Edward Abbey.

The truth is, I am enthralled and grateful daily, and despite the corrections — some harsher than others — of my attitudes and behaviors, I am in full admiration

and appreciation for the women in my life. While it is true that they occasionally drive me to the slippery edge of total insanity, I wouldn't change a thing.

I feel like the speaker in Jim Wright's poem “A Blessing,” who is approached by horses in a spring pasture. Their world, he knows, is entirely their own. “There is no loneliness like theirs,” he says, accepting that there are things about them he will never understand. But even across that gulf, they have walked over and welcomed him as a guest, and he longs most to be amongst them.

He stands admiring them for the longest time and then, suddenly, realizes that his love for them is so encompassing, so joyful, so powerful, that “if I stepped out of my body I would break into blossom.”

And so it is these warm summer evenings, with the dogs napping and shadows stretching across the grass, when we gather on the porch to unwind the day and find each other again, that I listen to my wife and daughter quietly talking and laughing, and watch them when they don't know it, and feel every cell in my body beginning to bloom.

Family of driver crushed by tree sues

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The family of a Washington man killed when a tree fell on his car in the Columbia River Gorge seeks \$2.2 million in a lawsuit against the State of Oregon.

The suit filed Wednesday in Portland asserts the Oregon Department of Transportation has a duty to maintain trees along Highway 30, and the tree that crushed 27-year-old Jorge Figueroa showed obvious signs of decay.

The Covington, Washington, man and several relatives visited Latourell Falls in two cars on June 28, 2015. The tree fell shortly after they left the parking lot of the popular tourist spot.

The suit says Figueroa's wife was seriously hurt in the incident. His mother-in-law and 1-year-old daughter were also in the car, but escaped injury.



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