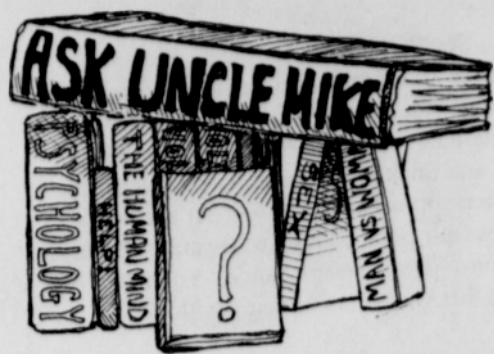


Dear Uncle Mike,

Quite a spell ago, I made an innocent inquiry of a Seaside cafe employee (former mayor of same). From that moment I perceived a decided stiff and cold shoulder. I simply asked for the distance to Cannon, and could I expect to have a non-excessive walk to there. My question to you, Uncle Mike, is this: have there been 'words' between Seaside and Cannon Beach?

David L., Portland



Therapy Page

Sometimes A Great Lotion

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Dear Dave,

Not so many lately. The little they had to say to each other has long since been said. The relationship between Seaside and Cannon Beach has found its own level, a level Uncle Mike would characterize as mutual loathing, and communication between them now is almost entirely by rumor. All for the best since, aside from being populated by air breathers, few municipalities have less in common. Cannon Beach enjoys (or, if you're from Seaside, wallows in) an artistic tradition dating back several decades, a tradition currently preserved by a vacationing class willing to pay \$200 a night for a motel room and buy objets d'art at prices exceeding that of a good used car. Seaside has bumper cars, corn dogs, and street crime and thinks anybody who doesn't is an artsy-fartsy wuss. Reconciliation isn't likely. Cannon Beach is much too busy being at one with itself to discuss things with people who drink coffee without Mexican chocolate sprinkles and wear t-shirts that say rude things. Seaside would sooner drive its Camaro into a tree than party with those who read the New Yorker, sniff wine corks, and use big words. It was a kind universe that placed the towns nine miles apart. A kinder one wouldn't have built a road between them.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I have a woman friend I've known for several years. We've been close since we met but lately we're getting closer. We're both in our mid forties, I'm single, her marriage is sucking big time. Over the years, we've talked about other people crossing the line and how our friendship meant so much to us because we didn't. Now it looks like it might, or at least could. I've always thought her husband was a jerk, so there's no loyalty issue there. She just needs someone and I care about her, maybe more than I realized, or in a deeper way. I don't expect you to solve my dilemma but I would be interested in your thoughts.

Leaning in Astoria

Dear Leaning,

Basically, Uncle Mike just has one. The woman is married. That her marriage is troubled and her husband a jerk are details, not extenuating circumstances. It also doesn't matter that, given your feelings for each other, you'd be making love instead of rooting around like a pair of weasels in heat. It doesn't even matter that the comfort and compassion you could give might deepen both your friendship and her marriage, although this plot development is more common in cheap novels than real life. All that matters is that this woman made a vow and your only option as a friend is to do everything in your power to help her keep it. If her marriage is over, she needs to get out of it. If not, she needs to get on with it. What the two of you need to do is reaffirm your vows of personal integrity. In the meantime, light a candle. Every time you have lascivious thoughts about your friend, hold your hand over the flame until you can't stand it. It's an old technique guaranteed to steady the will.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I just started reading your column and I think I'm in love. Are you married? Do you have a girlfriend or something? Are you heterosexual? Would you like to have dinner and drinks?

Amy J., Portland

Dear Amy,

Uncle Mike is glad you read his column and even more glad that you're in love. Uncle Mike is a great fan of love. Along with playing poker, it's the glue that holds him together. Is Uncle Mike married? Only to the few principles he has left. Is Uncle Mike heterosexual? Devoutly. Unless you count the night when, after several hundred gin and tonics, he grew suddenly fond of a female impersonator. Does Uncle Mike have a girlfriend or something? Uncle Mike is too old to have a girlfriend. It makes his friends worry. Uncle Mike does have 'something' but, being shy, he declines to say what it is. Would Uncle Mike like to have dinner and drinks? Sadly, since we've never met, neither of us could hope to know. Perhaps, if you dropped by on visiting day, we could sit in the game room and talk.

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