

THE RARY PAGE

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breadwinner of the household. Needless to say we were broke most of the time but we didn't need much to survive. Harley on the other hand only ate the very best duck feed and even though my Mom had agreed to pay for his supplies we felt that as his mothers we should be the ones to support him. Then came the day the feed ran out, it was only three days before pay day but what were we supposed to feed him in the mean time? The first day we crushed up stale crackers and that seemed to be okay for him but the second day we were out of choices and left with a really hungry and loud duck. In desperation Marci and I went through all of the cupboards while Jackie was scouring the back yard hoping to find something he would find edible. We finally hit pay dirt... a can of creamed corn stuck in the back of the cupboard! We knew that there was corn in his feed so this would be perfect, so what if it was creamed corn, he would love it.

Does anyone know how ducks eat? It is simple really, they use their bills as shovels, tilt their heads up and pour the food down their throats. Imagine now a bowl of creamed corn... being tossed up... and thrown... all over... everything. I think maybe two kernels may have made it into his mouth but the rest was all over Harley, his mothers and every inch of his room. It was at that point that we realized it was time to swallow our pride and call Harley's grandma for a loan.

One afternoon I came home and I didn't hear my welcome quack and the little patter of webbed feet. After searching the house I concluded that he must be on a drive with my sister. It had been a hard month for all of us and we had finally decided that it was time to split up the family. Jackie and I found a small apartment in the city and Marci was going to move back in with the folks. Unfortunately we still hadn't found a place for the baby to live. What do you do with a duck in the city? As I sat trying to find a solution I heard my sister pull up and opened the door to Harley jumping into my arms shaking like a leaf. She had decided that she would take him to a park we used to go to when we were kids and see if he might not want to live there. He spent the afternoon playing with the kids and eating out of everyone's hands. Marci thought she had finally discovered the perfect solution so she left him in the park playing with all of the other humans. As she turned to take one last look at her son she found him surrounded by ducks and geese. They were pecking and hissing at him while the small children screamed and ran to their parents. Marci went tearing across the park, shoes flying, screaming at the top of her lungs "GET THE @#%*! OFF MY DUCK". She rescued him before any real physical damage had occurred, but not before Harley had his first taste of the real world. We all knew that he thought he was human but never realized that so would all of the other ducks.

So what did finally happen to our wonder duck? Well, his grandma was able to find him a home on a farm with two kids and another duck that thought she was human as well. At least that is what our mother tells us and it feels good to think that he is happily swimming in his pond with his family, not dripping in a tasty orange sauce. All I really know for sure is that Marci, Jackie and I will never be the same, we learned so many lessons from Harley, but he also made it possible to laugh everyday in some of the most desperate times I have ever know. More importantly, if we wouldn't have adopted our smoke sniffing duck, we might not be here at all.

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When an individual is kept in a situation of inferiority, the fact is that he does become inferior.
Simone de Beauvoir

When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him whose?
Don Marquis

Dear Uncle Mike,

I don't have a problem, I have a situation. I'm a divorced and long time single man of fifty-four. A lady with whom I was involved two years ago has moved back to the area. Aside from the necessary acrimony during the breakup, we have maintained our friendship. Neither of us want to start up again, living together is out of the question, but since neither of us was seeing anyone else, we started having sex occasionally. We see each other once or twice a month and are both satisfied with the relationship. The situation is that I have started seeing a woman.

Last week she asked the inevitable question: am I seeing anyone else? I told her no because strictly speaking I'm not. We've only know each other three months and I doubt it will turn into a long lasting relationship. My old friend is no threat to her and I see no reason to rock the boat. I'm not a complete scoundrel and realize that I'm being less than open and honest but I can't see any harm to anyone by continuing to enjoy both friendships. As I said, I don't have a problem. I intend to follow my own feelings regardless what you say but I am interested in your opinion and am sure your readers would be interested in the situation too.

Doug

Dear Doug,

With all due respect, there is a problem. It's you. You're lying to a woman who, silly as it might sound, trusts you to tell her the truth. On Uncle Mike's block this makes you a scoundrel. You either live the truth or you don't. If you don't, you're harming everyone. The relationship you've carved out with your old friend seems the very one you're emotionally and ethically equipped to handle: one in which your only responsibility is to show up with your hormones and a bottle of cheap wine. On behalf of men everywhere, we'd love to meet you behind the barn and show our appreciation for making our relationships with women more challenging than they already are.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I read your column all the time. Don't you have any problems? What are they and what advice do you give yourself?

Sandra

Dear Sandra,

No, Uncle Mike has no problems. He has situations he's eager to have go away. Some of these are, in the truest sense, old friends and teachers. His favorites involve what Alfred North Whitehead called "the error of misplaced concreteness" which Uncle Mike oversimplifies into "the making of mountains from imaginary mole hills". Time is the greatest teacher and, over the years (many of them liberally peppered with unpleasantness vile and various), two truths have dawned on Uncle Mike: things are rarely as serious as they seem and they're not often about what they seem to be about. Problems are symptoms: effects whose cause is always lack of clarity. Whenever Uncle Mike finds himself mired in a swamp of self pity or attacked by the slaving beasts of his karma, his advice to himself is always the same: understand the teaching. Once he manages this (a process involving repeated pain and sadness and prolonged thinking), the situation changes. As if by magic, the inappropriate thoughts and actions that crippled him are reduced to manageable limps which on good days just make Uncle Mike laugh and shake his head. The idea, or so it appears, is to see the human comedy as a well crafted riddle meant to amaze, entertain and

enlighten us. This makes our mistakes every bit as amusing and informative as our successes; the bottom line always being, if we're not getting smarter, we're missing the point. The smarter Uncle Mike gets, the more he realizes that if he has faith, causes no pain and loves without lust for result, his life becomes more pleasant. Uncle Mike likes pleasure very much.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I'm sixteen. My boyfriend dumped me and I can't forget about him. We go to the same school and hang out at the same places. I feel horrible when I see him. What can I do not to feel this way?

Chrissy

Dear Chrissy,

Uncle Mike suggests you find other places to hang out for a while and do what you can to avoid running into this person at school. At the risk of sounding like a bumper sticker, time heals all wounds. When this sort of thing happens to Uncle Mike, he eventually says to himself: "Stop moping, nitwit." There's nothing wrong with bemoaning the loss of a love but it does tend to wrap you up inside your head and numb your ability to notice other opportunities to love. Things change, my young friend, and people change along with them. If you see some mistakes you made that contributed to the fall, remember them. Aside from that, just accept that the young man is gone. Promise yourself to do nothing stupid to try to get him back. Invoke your pride and remind yourself you're not chopped liver. If he didn't appreciate you for who you are, someone else will. Learn what you can from your pain and remember who you are. There is no error in loving. The error comes from expecting your love will always be returned in the form you had in mind. There's someone else who's ready to love you. Be curious who it might be. There's much to learn about love: enough, if you pay attention, to fill a life time.

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Simone de Beauvoir

When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him whose?
Don Marquis

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