

Columns

Marital advise based on 30 years of experience

I've been married now for 30 years. Not all at once. I've learned a lot about what to do and what not to do. And I'm still learning.

I'm not holding myself up as an expert on marriage. Lord, no. But I have made a few observations that other guys may find helpful if they're considering taking the plunge.

For instance, did you know that clothes belong IN the dresser, not ON the dresser?

Plus – hold onto your hat – they should be folded first. Wait, there's more. When putting clothes in the dresser, socks go in one place and underwear goes in another.

After they've been worn once (yes, just once), they go in what's called a hamper, not on the floor.

And when they get washed, they get separated. Yes, the washer will hold all the clothes

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



at once, but they don't go all at once. See that dial at the top of the machine that reads "regular, permanent press and delicates?" That dial turns for a reason.

In our next class, we'll learn why clothes of different colors get separated and why we don't use bleach on colors. We'll also learn about fabric softener sheets.

But let's move on to the dishwasher. You can load it, and you should load it. Just

don't congratulate yourself on your fine job of stacking the dishes. There is only one correct way to load the dishwasher, and it's not the way that you did it.

You can try to learn the correct way. You can discuss it and debate it, you hapless, silly man. But don't. You don't have to win every argument.

That doesn't apply only to loading the dishwasher. Before you engage in any discussion that has the potential to es-

calate, ask yourself: Do I like sleeping in my own bed? Do I like sleeping indoors? Do I like being able to get to sleep at all? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then let it go.

Pop quiz time. You're reclined in your easy chair watching television with your wife and you feel a little hungry. What do you do?

If you answered "get up and get myself a snack," lose 10 points. If you said "wait till my wife gets up to use the restroom and ask her to bring me back a snack," lose 20 points. If you said "ask my wife to get up and fetch me some chips," subtract 50 points. If your phrasing included terms like "off your butt" or a disparaging nickname, call your lawyer.

If you responded "stand up and announce that I'm getting myself a snack and can I bring

you something while I'm up," give yourself 10 points and smile knowing that you're going to get to sleep in your own bed tonight.

Let's move on to the "do you like questions." You'll get a lot of them. Do you like this dress? Do you like this hairstyle? Do you like this recipe?

Acceptable answers are "yes," "I love it" and "if you like it, I like it." Wrong answers include "no," "not really," "I'm not sure" and "whatever." Catastrophically wrong answers include "I hate it," "I like it as much as I like a root canal," "it would look better on your sister" and "it's not as good as my mom makes it."

This last go-around, I've been married for 8 years, and it's as blissful today as it was the day we said "I do." But I work at it.

I make the bed most days

when I get out of it, which includes fluffing her pillows. I still clean the toilet after I've used it. And I don't eat the last morsel of anything just in case she wants it. There's an ice cream sandwich that has been in our freezer since last summer. It's probably petrified by now.

All of these things are extensions of the same thing: I'm thinking about you.

It's relationship math. When you're married, one and one makes one. But the one is not singular; it's plural. Remember that and you'll be fine.

© Copyright 2022 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblin-man.us. Forgetting the math can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Regard your marriage as singular and you soon will be.

Retail service not what it used to be

I was 7 years old the first time my mom allowed me to go shopping by myself. Even though I had been walking through the downtown square, on my way to school, for two years, I had not been given permission to stop at any of the stores. To this day I can recall her last words; "make sure you get the receipt and have the shop lady put your candy in a sack."

At my first job, the main point of training was customer service, fold the merchandise neatly before placing it in the shopping bag and make sure the customer leaves the store with the receipt. These teachings followed me throughout my retail career and when I became a store owner and manager those lessons were passed on to my co workers and employees. As an adult customer I still follow my mom's teachings, at least until this past couple weeks.

I have to say that I am appalled at the retail training and service we are experiencing now. A couple months ago was the first of many retail incredulities I have experienced; after paying cash for a purchase the clerk told me that the card machine had a question for me. It asked if I wanted my receipt and/or did I want an email receipt. What a stupid question, I thought; of course I want to leave the store with a receipt. What if someone accused me of stealing and I had no proof of purchase?

Not long after the above

mentioned experience, after I paid for another purchase, the clerk gathered my two items and handed them to me without a shopping bag. I will admit to being momentarily shocked but I politely asked for a bag and commented that I would not like to be accused of shoplifting when exiting the store. These experiences have happened repeatedly over the last couple months and I am really worried about this trend.

Most stores have security cameras and many have them trained at the checkout stands but having reviewed security tapes before, you can't always see exactly what is taking place.

One tape I was asked to review clearly showed the customer was reaching for her receipt but the clerk was positive about her side of the story, which was that she had put the receipt in the bag. After watching the video numerous times we could finally see that the cashier had accidentally dropped the receipt while reaching down to place it in the bag but the receipt had fallen to the floor.

Shoplifting procedures are so much different than when I was working. As I understand it, the store employees can't approach the customers and ask if they want to pay for merchandise they are taking out of the store.

I can't tell you how many shoplifters I have caught in the act and I never hesitated to engage them when in the store or on the sidewalk. We did not

have cameras to back us up, only our eyes and the fact that we caught them with the products on them, with no receipt.

Many years ago, while shopping in Walkers Super Market in Charleston, a man was seen by three different people, placing a package of meat in the waist band of his pants and one of the customers went to the manager to tell him what she had witnessed. The manager walked up behind the man and removed the meat package and held him by the arm until the police arrived.

Another time at IGA, a man walked out of the store carrying a bag of charcoal without paying. The manager followed him out of the store and a chase ensued whereupon the manager tackled the customer and sat on him while waiting for the police.

As I understand it, neither of these practices in catching the thief can be done today. I guess we are just supposed to let the crime happen and hope for the best.

Customer courtesy, policies and procedures are not an old fashioned notion but the considerate way to do business and I find most of retail a big disappointment. Relaxed dress code is another of my pet peeves. Call me old fashioned but shorts and tank tops are not proper business attire as far as I am concerned, unless you are in a clothing store which sells these items and you are modeling them for the day.

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



I can't argue much with jeans because even back in the 1970s we allowed our clerks to wear them on casual Friday but I put my foot down when ripped and shredded jeans became the fad. I just feel like no one in retail takes pride in their stores anymore and that is a real shame. OK, my rant is over.

On a gardening note: my tomatoes were a big failure this year. The vines on the cherry and pear patio tomatoes are leggy and the tomatoes are tasteless. The one yellow tomato plant that survived has one tomato on it and I doubt that it will last long enough to ripen.

The odd thing is that I bought all new moisture control potting soil in hopes to get a good crop. I sure hope the farmers markets have a good supply of yellow tomatoes as I have a new recipe for yellow pear tomato jam which I am excited to try but I have decided to make the recipe with regular yellow tomatoes. I found the recipe on the "My Northern Garden" by "Mary Schier" website. Mary writes and gardens in Minnesota and I have enjoyed reading her site this year.

Leamington, Ontario, Canada

is considered the tomato capital of Canada and the largest growing operation in North America. There used to be a "Heinz" company factory in the town but now the tomatoes are made into "French's" ketchup.

We have stopped at many roadside stands in the area on our way to the Pelee Island Ferry; on the island we would hike and have a picnic lunch which always consisted of fresh tomatoes, sliced homemade mozzarella cheese and fresh baked bread from a local bakery. To this day tomato and cheese sandwiches are my favorite way to eat summer tomatoes.

If you would like a real taste of summer I suggest you try this simple fresh tomato soup recipe. Stew six quartered tomatoes with your favorite herbs. I like to use dried celery leaves, onion powder, salt and pepper. After the mixture had reduced and the tomatoes are soft, place them in the blender or use an immersion blender in the stew pot. Add one cup of cream and stir well. That is all you need to really enjoy tomato soup.

Enjoy the fruits of your labors.

Yellow Pear Tomato Jam

• 4-6 cups pear tomatoes, cut in half with as many seeds removed as is easily possible.

- 1 lemon
- 1 orange
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 package of pectin
- Nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, salt

Prepare the tomatoes and place in a large pot. Grate the lemon and orange zest into the pot, then remove the pith and put the flesh of the lemon and orange in the pot, add a good shake of nutmeg, cinnamon, a dash of salt and cloves. (Heavy on the nutmeg, light on the cloves.) I also added a half cup of water, too, because things were looking dry. Add the pectin, stir, and heat until boiling, stirring occasionally. Dump in the sugar all at once, stir until mixed, and let it boil for 10-15 minutes. It will get thickish. Meanwhile, prepare your canning jars and lids and get a big pot of water boiling on the stove, preferably canning size. Put the jam in the jars, wipe rims, apply lids, and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes. (If you don't like to can, you could probably freeze the jam as well.)

This jam is like a marmalade because of the orange and lemon and the spices. Very good on toast or on a bagel with cream cheese. <https://mynorthern-garden.com/2008/10/01/yellow-tomato-jam/>.

Easy chicken casserole can be scaled for size of dinner party

When I first started this column, a friend who asked to remain anonymous gave me this chicken recipe that is super easy to make. You don't have to brown the meat or chop up anything! I have made it many times for company, and I always get compliments. I frequently make it for just my husband and me. It is so easy to change the amounts to make more or less servings. I printed it several years ago, but I think it is worthy of being printed again.

Chicken Casserole

4 to 6 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
1 canister Stove Top Chicken stuffing

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



4 to 6 slices Monterey jack cheese (can use shredded cheese)
1 1/2 cup butter, melted
1/4 cup white or pink wine cooking spray
salt and pepper

Spray bottom and sides of 9x13 casserole dish. Lay chick-

en on bottom of casserole. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Place 1 slice cheese on each piece of chicken. Sprinkle 2 Tbsp dry stuffing mix at a time on each chicken. Drizzle melted butter on top. Drizzle on wine. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 to 55 minutes until bubbly and dressing crumbs crisp.

For the above recipe, I buy a canister of Chicken Stove Top and measure out whatever I need. I am a huge fan of stuffing, so I always put on more than this recipe calls for! If you don't have wine on hand, it's okay to skip it.

I am reprinting a dessert recipe from several years ago because it's just that good! This is one that cannot be ahead of time because you want to serve it still warm from the oven. It is easy to whip up even if you have company. This is chocolaty gooey cake best served with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Hot Fudge Cake

1 cup flour

3/4 cup sugar
6 Tbsp cocoa, divided
1/4 tsp salt
1/2 cup 2% milk
2 tsp baking powder
2 Tbsp vegetable oil
1 tsp vanilla
1 cup brown sugar
1 3/4 cup hot water

Mix flour, sugar, 2 Tbsp cocoa, baking powder and salt. Stir in milk, oil and vanilla till smooth. Spread in 9" square pan. Combine brown sugar and 4 Tbsp cocoa. Sprinkle over batter. Pour hot water over but do not stir. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Serve warm with ice cream.

Note about the above rec-

ipe. When I make it serve to company, I premeasure and mix the dry ingredients. Then it's quick and easy to add liquid ingredients and pop into oven.

If you have a recipe to share, please send to letscook!@heraldpubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Please tell me something about your recipe, did you create it yourself or was it passed down from grandma? If you would, please include your town as this is printed in a number of papers in Illinois and Missouri. Thanks, and Happy Cooking!