

POINTS OF VIEW

Trust becomes buzzword for pop-psych industry

Deep in everyone's heart lies at least one secret ambition so personal and deep-rooted that it is revealed only to our closest and most trusted companions. It is the kind of private fantasy which must be kept concealed from all of those people in our lives who would mock us openly if they knew the sordid details.

Truly, the ultimate sign of trust in someone is to share these clandestine longings with them, knowing they will either bond souls with you or laugh you into terminal embarrassment.

It used to be thought that these fantasies were the sign of a warped personality, but that notion was laid to rest during the pop-psych heyday of the '70s. The cultural gurus said it was normal to have these hidden thoughts. It became fashionable to not only acknowledge them, but to celebrate them with reckless abandon. We were supposed to live free of behavioral restrictions and barriers and bare our souls for all to see in an unbridled orgy of truthfulness. Emotional liberation would be ours if we dropped the facade of control and trusted our brethren with our fragile daydreams.

Intimate disclosures

Of course, like most of that decade's psychobabble, you knew this was garbage the minute you exposed your essence to some under-enlightened jerk who ground it under the heel of his or her shoe. We all had to learn to pick our spots to get the full desired effect of our intimate disclosures.

Still, once it became common knowledge that we all had fantasies, it also became big business to pander to these prurient wishes. Millions of romance novels and "adult" magazines began to be sold each year. Hugh Hefner built an empire around the carnal dreams of the subscribers of Playboy, and it's not because they read the articles.

I don't mean to imply that all fantasies are lewd or unsavory. Many people fantasize about wholesome, respectable things like being an athlete or famous musician. Some people dream about fancy cars or big houses. We've all got our own special thing.

My hidden passion is power tools. I only own a few of the basics, and I've never been able to make anything



GARY BELANGER

other than sawdust, but I am absolutely fascinated by the vast array of tools and gadgets available for the serious woodworker. When I see the assortment of saws, shapers, sanders, clamps and so on, I take off on a flight of fancy to a spectacular workshop where I work with other artisans to craft exquisite wooden furniture. Only after I put blade to wood, my colleagues promptly throw me out of the workshop, putting an unceremonious end to my imaginary visit.

Despite my ineptness at the use of these devices, I still long for the day when my garage is stocked with lumber

and alive with the rattle and hum of furniture making. I still grow warm at the sight of a snug-fitting mortise and tenon joint, and I love to feel the heft and smoothness of a fine quality power tool. Yes, this sounds kind of weird to me, too.

I suppose this one is fairly harmless, as additions go. I don't spend any money on it, and I can indulge in it in public without fear of ridicule or incarceration. The biggest drawback is the time I spend wandering through the tool departments at the mall. My wife always waits patiently as I check out the specs on those babbles, but she will never let me buy any of them for fear I will have little-bitty hand pieces flying all over the place.

OK fantasies

The psychology folks say the fantasies are OK as long as they don't interfere with our daily lives. At one point, I thought I needed to join a support group (I joined the PTA because I thought it meant Power Tools Anonymous), but I'm happy to report I've got it under control now. In fact, I could quit anytime I want. I'm just not ready yet, OK?

It's one thing for an adult to engage in this kind of activity, but you've got to watch out for the signs of it happening to your kids. It may start out small at first, maybe a couple of router bits in a shirt pocket, or a Black and Decker catalogue under their mattresses. Then before you know it, you start smelling sawdust on their clothes and you find a thickness planer under their beds.

The important thing is to get out into the open and share it with others who have similar fantasies. There is nothing to be ashamed of. We all need to be more open and understanding about these things.

Now, if you'll please excuse me, I have to strap on my tool belt and don my safety glasses. It's almost time for the New Yankee Workshop to come on. I heard that the host will be trying a new radial arm with a stacked dado-head cutter.

I'm so excited.

Gary Belanger, a Redford Township resident, is a member of the Redford Union Board of Education and a real estate salesman. His column will appear periodically.

Media will bite into culture shock in Arkansas

With Bill Clinton about to be president, I'm just waiting for the national media to discover Hot Springs. For the last 12 years, these guys have had it easy on the weekends, spending their time in southern California with Reagan or in Maine with George Bush.

Those are pretty sexy places compared to Hot Springs, Ark., where once you get past a couple of hotels there isn't even a decent bar.

But there's an upside, the media will be forced to discover America. Neither California nor the east coast qualify.

There has been some speculation about what kind of house Clinton will use as a hometown White House. And that speculation is well founded.

Chances are that a mention of Rancho Mirage in Hot Springs would conjure up visions of a barbecue restaurant instead of an estate.

But Hot Springs isn't without its charm. There are mountains, lakes and some of the best barbecue around. In fact, one restaurant, McLards, is a landmark of sorts. The producers of the television show Evening Shade use an old photo of it in the beginning of the show.

And of course the barbecue is pork. If you took an animal's carcass and split it with a knife along the Mason-Dixon Line, the pig would fall on the southern side.

But there's a down side to the national media discovering all this.



JEFF COUNTS

Chances are we'll soon see lifestyle stories on pig eating, bourbon drinking, pickup truck driving Southerners. Remember Billy Carter? Whiskey drinking white males again.

And then as with Jimmy Carter, the ultra liberal folks will discover that a southern Democrat isn't the same species as a northern fish-eating, white wine-drinking Democrat.

Having barbecue sauce on your tie just isn't politically correct around dreaded ultra liberals who were the first to turn on Carter, opening up a flesh wound for the also dreaded conservatives.

The irony here is that southern white males seem to be the only Democrats able to capture the White House. And these are the guys whose ancestors killed the Indians, stole their land and then enslaved blacks to do the work.

Just listening to Clinton, you can tell he's afraid to be branded as Bubba

Billy by the media. His Arkansas accent has been tamed. When he says oil, it doesn't sound like "awl," when he presses on something, he doesn't "mash on it," and it's a photo opportunity, not "let's go out and make a picture," as they say in Arkansas.

Perhaps Clinton's verbal gymnastics will work for a while, but chances are the ultra liberals will get a taste of pork barbecue in Hot Springs and start going after him.

We can only hope they choke.

Jeff Counts is the editor of the Plymouth and Canton Observer Newspapers and is a stark raving madman when it comes to barbecue.

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