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Digest
Motion
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53rd year: Over 30 million copies bought monthly in 13 languages

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Advice primarily to advise

Commentary

Is The Romance Genre in Danger of Being Accused of Creating, Trafficking In, and Distributing Pornography?

By Brenda Wilbee

On November 11, 1988, the citizens of Bellingham, Washington, passed an anti-pornography initiative. While the motivation behind the passage of this initiative is admirable, the constitutionality of it causes me — a writer, teacher, and editor in the Pacific Northwest — grave concern. Similar initiatives have been passed in other states but then have been struck down in the courts as unconstitutional. Will this happen in Bellingham as well? Or will the initiative stand and the chilling effect of censorship gain a foothold in the literary world?

As an author and teacher, and as the Director of The Literary Service Agency, I am a plaintiff by invitation of the ACLU in the lawsuit filed against the City of Bellingham.

My purpose is not to eradicate or hinder constitutional endeavors to stop the prolific spread of violent pornography that we are being faced with today. It is a crime against women and children to sexualize them in any form: physically, emotionally, and verbally. It is a hideous fact that today we are faced with the ugly reality that one of the biggest industries in our country is that of filming the rape, torture, and murder of women and children. I can in no way condone or support such activities.

But by throwing away our constitutional right to express these realities through the written word, film, art, and speech, is jumping from the frying pan into the fire. It certainly does nothing to ease off the heat.

In Bellingham, the highly controversial issue revolves around the initiative's vague definition of "pornography." Not only is it vague, but it reaches far beyond the *Miller* decision handed down by the Supreme Court.

The romance genre as a whole has consistently been accused of being nothing more than "soft porn" and under these definitions, those accusers can now take us to court on a civil basis.

More fiction sold today is romance. Harlequin sold 200 million books in 1987. This is six books a second, or five stacks of books as tall as the New York Trade

Center sold daily. Ninety-nine percent of the authors are female, as are 99% of the readers. There are a lot of us at risk.

As a historical novelist and a national feature writer on issues that concern the victimization of women, I do not see how it is possible to write about women in any historical era, including the present, without depicting them as subordinated, and often through violence. The subordination and violence against women has long been established and is a widespread fact of our culture. We all write of it. But is it pornography?

For example, in a historical saga I am currently working on, the cast of characters includes a preacher's daughter, Grace, and her twin sister, Odessa, who was separated from Grace at birth. The book deals with the era of the Underground Railroad and the exodus of railroads into the West from 1853 to 1893. During that time, about the only way a woman could have her separate economic identity apart from marriage, was to be a prostitute or a kept mistress. Odessa is a kept mistress, living in St. Louis where senators, congressmen, and U.S. Presidents in our history were known to keep their mistresses. Her relationship with her lover is explicit.

The explicit sex scenes are in so way "isolated parts or passages" of the book (as granted me in the initiative). They help to develop the book's theme; they are not fillers thrown in just to make a hot sell. One of the central themes is the schizophrenic life Odessa must live in order to maintain her station on the Underground Railroad while at the same time maintaining her position as the mistress of a man who benefits by the status quo. Her sexual subordination to her lover is integral to the plot — and to the theme.

A second theme is that sexual exploitation also occurs within marriage. Grace, properly married, is brutalized emotionally, sexually, religiously, and physically — the status quo of too many women in our history and in the present. Again, the explicit, sexually violent scenes of her relationship with her husband are not "isolated parts or passages." They are the warp and weave of the book.

Pornographic? By the loose wording

of the Initiative, yes. But what my story really is, is simply the story of women's history.

At the University of Washington in Seattle I teach a course on how to write romance novels, which includes how to write graphic sex. I encourage my students to read D. H. Lawrence and other writers of controversial, erotic works. I make money by editing romance manuscripts and introducing authors to agents who in turn sell such manuscripts.

Since the passage of this initiative, and the worry that it could spread from city to city, I find that as I write, teach, and edit, I am thinking more than ever how people will interpret my writing and my teaching, and whether it will be viewed as harmful. I worry that I will be accused of "trafficking in pornography" or forcing "pornography" on a person by distributing sexually explicit romance writing and other kinds of novels. I worry, and yet the reality of what I write is polarized from my worries.

C. Day Lewis says: "We do not write in order to be understood, we write in order to understand."

Why, then, have women so consistently been brutalized by men? Why are we still the victims of a brutal pornographic multi-million dollar industry? Why has the situation become so critical that we are willing, in the passion of a moment, to throw out our constitutional rights in the hopes that we can stem the tide?

My main question, and the question we should all be asking, is this: How can we write about history or trace the evolution of the consciousness of women, without creating fictional scenes that show women as subordinated? And, if we cannot write about the reality of such rampant subordination, how then will we ever be able to change that reality?

Brenda Wilbee is an author and director of the Literary Service Agency. For more information about the Bellingham Initiative, write to her at 4507 Lakesway, Bellingham, WA 98226.

Personal Experience

relaying an experience you yourself had

COMFORT TO PASS ALONG

by Brenda Wilbee Kent

She was angry and bitter. How could God do this to her?

It was the last Monday of the old year when my doctor put his arm around my shoulders, hugged me to himself and said, "I'm sorry, honey. We ought to be hearing a heartbeat by now. I think the baby is dead." As the old year died, I carried a worse death within me.

The sun set on the year gone by and my depression deepened, darkening the last ray of God's sunshine. To me, God faded too and I was left to struggle alone.

son and had confided to me once that she'd never been able to have a second child. Long ago she had given up hope, and now, finally to

compassion and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles."¹ I only had to look at her peaceful eyes and warm smile to

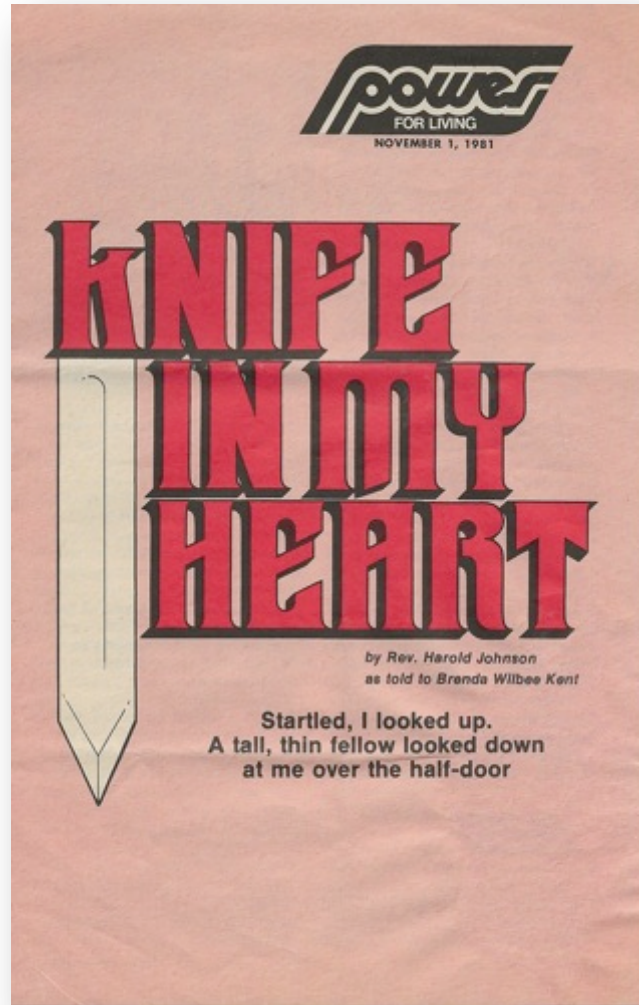


away my sorrow. It was then that I recalled reading about a short conversation between Corrie ten Boom, as a small child seeing death for the first time, and her father, a man of profound wisdom. "Father sat down on the edge of the narrow bed. 'Corrie,' he began gently, 'when you and I go to Amsterdam—when do I give you your ticket?'"

"I sniffed a few times, considering this. 'Why, just before we get on the train.'

Experience

relaying an experience someone else had



Profile

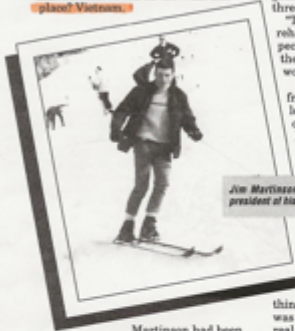
focus on someone significant

PEOPLE IN SPORTS: Jim Martinson

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

by Brenda Wilbee

Remember the old nursery rhyme, "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall!" In 1968, Jim Martinson fell off the wall. The place? Vietnam.



Jim Martinson, Class of '66, was president of his high school Ski Club.

Martinson had been on his way to the Olympics. The most competitive of four brothers, sports was his world. He did it all, but downhill skiing was going to take him to the top. At 21, he was unstoppable.

Enter Vietnam. "I was there six months," Martinson recalls, 22 years later. "I was a sergeant. I sent four guys up a hill to get supplies from a helicopter coming in, then decided to go with them. Someone stepped on a Bouncing Betty. It blew me through the air.

"I remember panicking. I jumped up..." he pauses. "When I looked down, my right leg... it was almost all missing. The back of my left knee was riddled with shrapnel..."

Martinson's buddies were dead. Someone hustled him into the helicopter. Da Nang was 20 minutes away. He remembers rain falling into his face... the moon... the ER tent... losing consciousness while passing through the canvas flap into darkness. He woke up six days later in Japan.

"I looked down," Martinson says. "No me. There was nothing left." Both legs had been removed just above the knee. Frustrated and scared, Martinson

kept busy trying to get well, fighting pain. In a matter of weeks they shipped him to Fort Lewis, WA. "I'd gone from six feet, 178 pounds, to three-foot-two, 114 pounds.

"There were 60 other amputees in rehab, and when I came out, I [expected everyone else to have] lost their legs. But there was the whole world, walking."

For Martinson it was downhill from there, but not on the skis he loved. Shy, unable to cope, he quickly turned to humor. "Outside I was all jokes. Inside I was fury, rage, bitterness."

He turned to drugs and fancy toys. "VA supported my one-way road to hell. For two

years I used my compensation money to buy the big stuff: boats, cars. I bought a canary-yellow Corvette. I

thought if I had everything, I'd be happy. But I was getting nowhere, the real me was lost in chaos. One night I told my friend I was going to wrap my Corvette around a tree and just end it all."

Martinson's friend told him it was better to live than to die.

In 1968, a buddy caught Sgt. Martinson in a solitary pose in the jungles of Vietnam.

A few days later, Martinson saw a woman go into the house across the street. She was his neighbor's cousin, and her name was Kathy.

Kathy was also a Christian, and she brought into Martinson's life a love and acceptance he'd never known before. On June 2, 1971, they were married, and his life, by the grace of God, turned around.

Martinson went back to school, first at Green River Community College in Auburn, WA, to study business, then to Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, OR, to study his new and sustaining faith. He went on to work as a hos-

pital chaplain. Then, because kids had always been his first love, he switched over to youth ministry. It made all the difference in the world.

"These kids," Martinson says, "did not see me as half a person. They saw me complete and whole." In 1976, those supportive and energizing kids told Martinson he was getting fat and challenged him to enter the Sound To Narrows race in Tacoma.

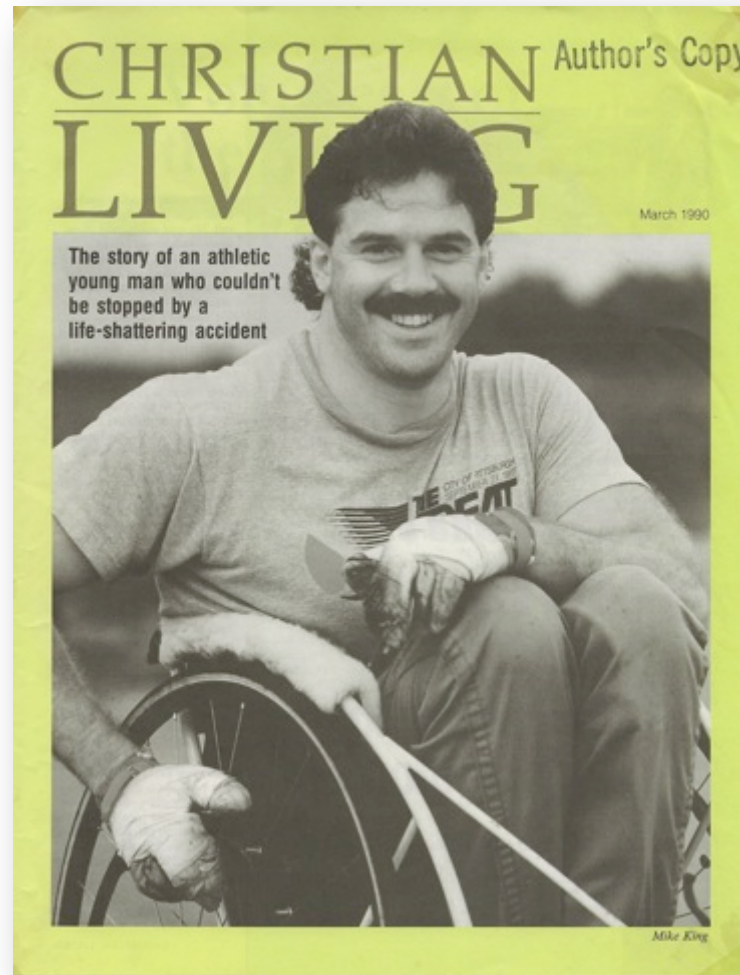
It took him an hour and a half on a miserably hot day to complete what seemed like 7.2 miles of sheer climb. But he did it. He crossed the finish line. "It was a wonderful feeling," Martinson says. "It was the old me. I was racing again, only I had a new goal: to get back into shape and to win."

He set to work, lifting weights, talking to the back roads of Puyallup, WA, and, as his children came along, frequently pushing with a little one perched on his lap. But at 45 pounds, his chair was



Feature Profile

feature of someone significant



News Feature

significant or unique news



Protest speaking out



Editorial

personal opinion re: significant event, policy...

The source of violence

Re: Steve Adenau's "Impose more death sentences" (Feb. 27 Herald, Page E2):

One needs only to see "In The Name Of The Father" to understand why a society can't impose death upon its citizenry. We can't always trust authority to act within the law.

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Lord Acton). Recent Republican presidents have proven the point. The answer, while elusive and difficult, is not more death sentences.

But, if Adenau's solution to violence is short-sighted, his reason for violence is horse rubbish. Children of single-parent breeding programs . . . ? Amoral individuals who have no constraints taught them by both loving parents . . . as God intended? Excuse me?

Statistics are consistent: One-half of all wives are beaten at least once by their husbands. Women leave these men (God's intention?) to avoid violence, not spawn it. We are succeeding.

My teen-agers ("amoral and without constraint") are on the honor roll, excel in sports and are active at church; my oldest graduated eighth in her class at Sehome and attends SPU on a presidential scholarship.

Before you blame violence on children of single parents, go to the source — violent men who need help, not death.

Brenda Wilbee
Bellingham

Bellingham Herald
Sun. Mar 20/94

Informative

relays some sort of information

Why does one Seattle Pastor think you should change jobs every seven years?

.....

"Brenda, when you get finished with those transcriptions I want you to call the court reporter and set up a time for that deposition next week. Then call the courthouse to find out when I'm supposed to be there for the Smith case, and do only side two of the tape, and be sure to make three copies, one for . . ."

I remember staring at the stack of legal files beside my IBM Selectric, hearing my attorney boss's voice going on and on, thinking bleakly, almost hopelessly, *What am I doing here?*

"Oh, and Brenda!" he bellowed from his window-walled office across the hall to my small cubicle, "When Mr. Kelly comes in, two coffees!"

Newsweek reports that as many as



one-quarter to one-third of us in the "Baby Boom Generation" hate our jobs. A Bureau of Labor statistics analysis confirms this, finding that in one 12-month period, one-third of us transferred to another occupation. Job counselors are now saying that we average three career hops in our life, upping their business by about 20 percent in the last few years.

This is a drastic change from a generation ago. In our parents' day you simply got out of school, grabbed the bottom rung of the corporate ladder and started to climb. Jobs weren't supposed to make you happy, they were supposed to earn you money. Slipping off the ladder (or jumping off to catch a new one) was considered personal failure — or worse, lack of character.

So what's happened to us, the Wallys and Beavers of this generation? Are we undisciplined, drifting, always chasing the elusive dream? Are we forever scrambling for just the "right" job, never settling down to "the business of life?" Why can't we be like Dagwood instead of coming off like Doonesbury? Isn't the Protestant work ethic good enough anymore?

No, according to Frank Burnett, Assistant Executive Director of the American Association for Counseling and Development. He says that today "men and women think more in terms of a career than a job. . . . Personal satisfaction from work is often more important to them than financial reward."

Somewhere along the line we've acquired the notion that rolling out of bed on a Monday morning and hitting the freeway is supposed to mean something. For the Christian this translates into some heavy soul-searching to determine how tuned in we are to being all that God desires us to be.

.....

So what's happened to us, the Wallys and the Beavers of this generation?

.....

Bruce Larson, senior pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Wash., and author of sassy books, is a man who believes strongly in change. "I've come to believe it would be a good idea for everyone to change jobs every seven years. I especially recommend changing jobs if you're a great success in your present job." A strong statement. But Bruce has a couple of reasons for saying it. One is that he believes God is calling us



"WALLY" AND "BEAVER"
Tony Dow stars as "Wally" and Jerry Mathers stars as "The Beaver" in the half-hour comedy series "The New Leave It To Beaver" from Universal Pay Television.

Fall 1986 21

Nostalgia

remembering something gained from the past



Inspirational

Cross between Personal Experience, Advice, and Essay. Most always short. A symbol or metaphor is almost always used.

Happiness Within

By Brenda Wilbee
Bellingham, Washington

Unfair ... My Way

A girlfriend once sent me a cartoon. The first little guy said, "Life is unfair." The second little guy said, "Yeah, but I wish it was unfair my way for a change!" She'd sent it because I was feeling sorry for myself because of a job I didn't get.

Interestingly enough, a few days later, an insurance salesman came by to see if he could provide me with a better medical plan. He was astounded that I paid fifty dollars a month for premium coverage. "The cheapest I can do is two hundred forty-five dollars!" he said. From my perspective, fifty was steep. But two hundred forty-five?

"I've never even heard of that company," he went on. "You sure they're legit? Do they ever pay out?"

I told him how much, and he nearly fell off his chair. "How you lucked out, I'll never know."

Yes, sometimes life is unfair. Yet, occasionally, life is unfair my way. Like when I put my hand in my pocket and found fifty dollars I'd forgotten about. Or when I fell behind in a class in graduate school and my professor, who knew my circumstances, excused me from the work and gave me an A anyway. I definitely was on the receiving end more than I had realized.

So now when I get bogged down in feeling sorry for myself, I take three minutes for self-pity, then start recalling how many times life has been "unfair my way." And I thank God.



Daily Grandpa
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Humor

tough to write, easy to sell

a teller tells all

by Brenda Wilbee Kent

When I started working in a bank, I had never had a checking account, and debit and credit were merely words that rhymed. No one then knew that I would one day end up losing the bank \$1,200.

I hadn't wanted to go to work, but my husband

went back to school to study accounting, and someone had to earn the money. I started my days at one of Arizona's larger banks for the grand salary of \$373 a month.

My trainer was Kathy White, and she did her best. She gave me the third degree for everything I did, questioning each transaction so that at night they became my nightmares.

"What ID did you get?"

"Do you know this check? Is it any good?"

"Why did you question a Circle K paycheck?"

"And, for heaven's sakes, why did you question John Smith? He's an auditor for the bank."

I quickly learned that if I was to survive I needed to learn who had clout and who didn't. John Smith did. (Some of these names, such as Kathy White, are real; others, including John Smith, are not.)

Smith told my operations officer that I was ignorant and totally incompetent. How was I to know that he and his wife were getting along just fine, that he hadn't forged her signature and that he wasn't about to abscond with her savings?

They gave me my own window anyway. And so with a personal vendetta against auditors, along with a smile pasted to my face, I went to greet the public alone. Well, not entirely alone. I had Molly.

Molly Wiggins had the window next to mine. She liked to talk, to the customers and to me, but more to me. It bothered her when I counted my

ones wrong and she was quick to point out when I bundled my twenties backwards. She told me how to arrange my money drawer and when my teller warnings were getting sloppy. The fine points of banking I definitely owe to her. I went home each evening with more Molly Wiggins stories to tell my husband.

Not that I bored him with just Molly. There was Rose who like to paint her fingernails blue "so the cute ones would take notice." The only difference I saw was that the handsome lawyer from upstairs quit writing her cutesy notes on the back of the withdrawal slips.

Mary was my favorite teller. Her claim to fame was that she liked to laugh, and to get married. But after the third time around, or was it the fourth, she said, "No more."

Of all my fellow employees, I liked my boss best. Norma Schenfeld was my operations officer. She taught me the finesse of dealing with the public, when to apologize profusely, and when to say, "Go to Valley Bank."

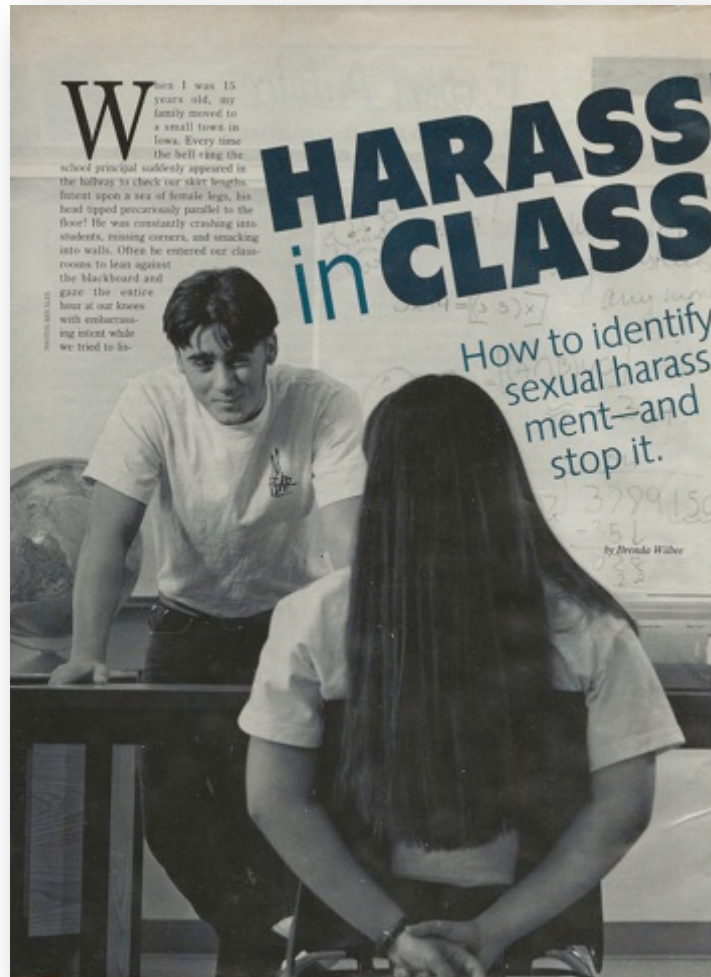
At times she could be a real witch. One Halloween she came to work draped in black. She wore a wig of long stringy hair topped with a tall, pointed black hat. The first thing she did was scare away a little old lady and her Social Security check when she opened the doors for business.

There is an old saying, "There's always two sides to a coin." Nowhere is that more true than at a bank. On one side there are the crazy employees, the kind who fall for a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill (with George's face on it) and then pass it off again without knowing it.

continued

How-To

explanation of a process



Explanation

answering a question

PART II
WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE CHANGING CAREERS?

There's an old joke that goes like this: "I don't know what I'm looking for, but when I find it, I'll be one knee." It's a fitting motto for the growing trend of "career hopping." Why aren't we content to plug in to a job and go for the gold watch? Are we a fickle generation? Are we job-hungry to make "responsibility a virtue?"

■ **The corporate ladder isn't as easy to spot anymore.** Because of the explosive technological advances within our society, jobs are ever-evolving and are being created faster than we can possibly keep up. Gone are the days of following a job's footsteps and the grocery store business. It's not a choice between chemistry or medicine for career exposure, it's the day of "20 Flavors." Sometimes we grab the wrong thing on the ladder and end up with hickamick because when we should have chosen blueberry swirl. Accepted reality, "America prepared" by college guidance officers, they like Baby Boomer Generation often succumb to family pressure or social advice



from ladders and scramble into fast jobs that fit with their talents or interests.

■ **The ladder is hickamick.** Not only are there more jobs out there modifying the waters and giving opportunities for "career hopping" choices, but the great old ladder — once an April 4 — is getting hickamick. There is only so much to eat at the top, and there are only two ways to get past the hickamick — wait until somebody further up the ladder hickamicks, or J.M.P. Who looks like a job-hopper is like a culture on a perch anyway?

■ **The ladder has a new look.** The corporate ladder is spinning circles and turns, rather like a fancy ice cream social. The well-favored, one-direction climb is a thing of the past. It has evolved into an obstacle course complete with hurdles, walls and boxes. There's no amount that is safe. This means we have to develop a whole new set of muscles, not just the ones needed for the sprint. It is not of the new strength and agility, but out of the start of realization that the "career hop." It's not a "take this job and shove it" mentality, but rather a choice for growth that parents might have taught us. "You made your bed, now lie in it," but we're saying, "What's wrong with changing the sheets?"

could well see that mistake. Not a girl might miss writing the great upper fourth God And for us. "The ladder are more. The point is that that sure believe more about their success in being about the ladder and better in our lives.

"Sheryl Forbes studied opera for seven years, singing nationally and climbing her way to the top while holding down a full-time "career" job as an editor with a nationally known. At 30 years of age she transferred to the still small town that would later take a career risk, the quiet but prestigious job and headed for Germany, alone, where she hoped to gain the required European experience in order to "make it big."

"I quit my job," she said, "because I asked myself the question — when I'm old, will I have lived the life I wanted to live? Will I be satisfied that when I get there, I found that I didn't like Germany. It rained all the time. It was depressing. I was competing against the same people I'd competed with before. I missed America. And I found out that to be an opera you have to live to eat, and talk about singing. I like to eat, and I like to talk about singing, but I like the other things."

When a car runs out of oil, the engine blows. When the ability to be creative is gone, our lives "blow."



10 Easy Steps

a variant of How-To

“READ BEFORE YOU LEAP”

(Ten Steps of Encouragement for the Career Hopper)

1) **Appreciate the big picture** instead of just the brush stroke. I watched an attorney once who got up from his desk, walked over to a Boston fern in his office and said, “This is how ----- views life,” then stuck his whole head in the bushy fronds of that fern! I saw immediately what he was talking about. You don’t get anywhere in life if you’ve got your eyes focused only on what’s directly in front of you.

2) **Be willing to abandon the “American Dream”** in favor of your own personal fantasy. Think big. Imagine great things. Pastor and author Bruce Larson says, “When you expect great things for yourself or others you are setting forces in motion that work toward producing those great things.”

3) **Overcome other people’s expectations** and learn to listen to your own. Too often we get bogged down trying to figure out what everybody else wants us to be. Discover what *you* want to be, then overcome your need to defend your goals. Jerry Falwell, in an interview with *Christianity Today*, was asked how he dealt with negative criti-

cisms. He said that he has learned not to operate from the defensive anymore, but from the offensive.

4) **Have a mid-life crisis.** If you’re 30 and looking down the tunnel of 40, lean into it. Don’t panic. Take a good look. It’s a time to take stock and analyze where you’re going while there’s still lots of track left.

5) **Ignore any alumni publication** that shows everyone looking happier than you feel. It’s an illusion.

6) **Avoid the paralysis of procrastination.** Don’t wait until tomorrow, a better time, or until the cows come home to make some needed changes.

7) **Take responsibility for failure.** Let’s face it, no one is going to bat a thousand. Taking risks leaves all sorts of room for failure. Turn failure into something good. As a famous theologian said, “You

“You can’t grow a good tomato until you first lay out the fertilizer.”



can’t grow a good tomato until you first lay out the fertilizer.”

8) **Don’t feel guilty.** If you are, chances are good that you’re thinking about (or listening to) the wrong people. Turn up that inner voice and cut out the outside interference.

9) **Let go of the fear that binds.** Remember playing on the monkey bars? You had to let go of one bar before grasping the next. So it is with just about everything in life. No one ever gets anywhere by hanging from both arms, feet churning, scared of the puddle (or concrete) beneath.

10) **Quit feeling inferior or inadequate for the job once you’ve decided to make the move.** Satan loves to come along and taunt, “You can’t do that! You can’t sing opera, you can’t write a book, you can’t pastor that church, you can’t counsel hurting people, you can’t do any of those great and glorious things! You’re only a fig picker from Tekoa!”

Consider the source before you waste too much time putting yourself down. It may be true that you’re just a fig picker, but look what the fig picker from Tekoa (the prophet Amos) did. And Jeremiah, and Moses, and Gideon, and Elijah, even poor Jonah! “When God gives you a mandate,” says Bruce Larson, “believe that He is able to accomplish through you those things that need to be done.” The Bible says, “He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)

What more encouragement do you need than that?

Interview

a written record of an oral conversation



Q and A

variant of Interview



Q and A

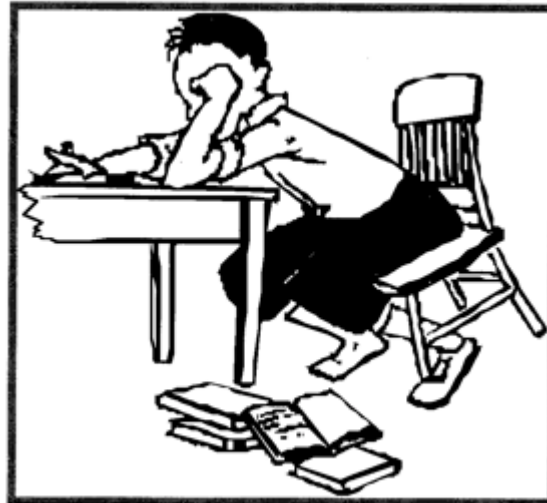
variant of Interview



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Work!