

HOW OTHER PEOPLE BECOME CRANKY AND ANNOYED

Second Thoughts

By J. B. Leftwich, Columnist

The Lebanon Democrat

8 November 1995

In the title role of the motion picture, *Father of the Bride*, actor Steve Martin expresses his dismay and consternation at having his daughter's allegiance turn from father to soon-to-be-husband.

He vents his frustration in a supermarket where he is outraged because wieners are packaged in six-packs and wiener buns are package in eight-packs.

Standing in line ahead of me last week was a long-time acquaintance whose husband recently retired from a responsible position in which he faced and solved many problems and in which he daily made important decisions.

"Tell me, why do all men become crankier as they age?" she asked, relating how he is irritated with trivial problems which previously had not bothered him.

"Age is only part of it," I said, trying to sound wise and authoritative. "A change in job or family or community status can exacerbate this condition," I added. ("Exacerbate" is much better word than "intensify" or "aggravate" if you are trying to sound authoritative.)

Then I explained in my most professional voice the condition besetting her husband.

"You see," I said. "When he was in daily contact with other people, they helped him absorb his frustrations. And he was facing much larger problems in his profession, so he had less time to dwell on picayune annoyances."

She smiled, said she understood, but wanted me to define "exacerbate."

"Thank heavens, this is an ailment women don't have," she said.

"You don't have the problem because you are oriented to your home," I said, growing wiser as I delved deeper into the human psyche. "But today's women in professional and industrial jobs are likely to face the problem when they retire."

I do understand her husband's problem. And, as the father of two married daughters, I understood Steve Martin's frustration. But thank heavens I have not become contrary and cranky.

Come to think of it, I do get annoyed when I buy a Fluidmaster – the assembly that contains the float in many commodes. You see, you must buy the whole assembly just to get the part you want. This drives me up the wall and I want to vent my ire on the

manufacturer who forces me to buy and toss aside merchandise I don't need. I recognize his nefarious scheme. It all has to do with the "bottom line."

And batteries. You have to buy four triple A batteries just to get one. And small fuses. I once drove four miles to A. B. Rental because I didn't want to buy a package of three for \$1.50, A. B. sold me one. (Counting time and gas, the savings were not all that great, but I didn't have to throw away two fuses.)

And telephone menus. I steam every time I have to sit, sometimes up to 21 minutes listening to canned music and waiting to get through to a live voice.

But what really gets my blood pressure up is having to buy deposit slips when I order business checks. And the back sides of the stubs are preprinted with a lot of gook that interferes with the notations I make. In addition, check printers frequently change the style or color. That really sends me into orbit.

The last time it happened, I stormed into the office of the bank president – a friend of mine – and voiced my complaint. He calmly said his bank did a lot of business with the check printers and he would do something about it.

And he did. A few days later, he called.

"I was able to get the color you wanted, but I couldn't get the plain stubs or get the deposit slips eliminated, he said.

"And you will have to buy the binder which comes with the checks."

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