

Shirley Whittington



Clothes maketh man, but they maketh woman crazy.

From the day Adam donned the fig leaf, men have seen to it that the business of dressing every day is painless, streamlined and simple. Women have always known this about men, and have admired them for it.

Ever since Chopin's girlfriend started borrowing his pants and cigars, we females have been nipping things from the boys' side of the closet—shirts, sweaters, wooly socks and trousers. If you're smart enough to choose a mate the same size as you are, you can double your wardrobe at a single stroke. Love (with a person whose size approximates yours) means never having to say, "I haven't a thing to wear."

For several years now, chic chicks have shown up at posh parties wearing tuxedos—duds which were formerly exclusively male. I know stylish women who buy their shirts, sweaters and even some footwear in the boys' department. Everything there is better made and less pricey than similar stuff in a fancy boutique.

Further proof of how sensible men are about clothes lies in the plethora of pockets with which the dressed male is equipped. Fully suited, the Squire has about eight pockets in which to stash stuff. A man never has to dump his purse on the table to find his glasses or his check book. A man in a three-piece suit is a human filing cabinet.

There is really only one area where men's good clothing sense falters and that is the necktie. Although women will tie one on from time to time, they draw the line at wearing a diagonally striped tourniquet day after day.

Right now I am totally preoccupied with clothes. I'm preparing for an Armed Forces study trip which includes Germany (cold, rainy, inland) and Cyprus (hot, sunny, seaside). Because my host is The Military, I must look neat and tidy at all times. My well-pressed, immaculate versatile all-weather and all-purpose wardrobe mustn't exceed the fifty-pound baggage limit. And—I must carry my own bag, as well as camera case, tape recorder and that everlasting shoulder bag.

This has thrown me into a frenzy of mending, patching, altering, cleaning, trying on

rejecting and discarding. All day long I walk around the house talking to myself. Do the brown shoes really go with the white pant suit? Should I take a beachrobe or a bathrobe or both? Do I need a hat? What if it rains? How much does an umbrella weigh? Should I get a poncho? With a hood? What colour?

(This, so far, is just basic clothes anxiety. I'm allowing myself a full day for the nervous breakdown relating to mascara, jewellery, scarves, gloves, moist towelettes and portable clothelines.)

Last night I decided to consult the Squire, who because of his sex, is an expert on clothes.

"If I wear my brown coat," I said, "it will be too hot for Cyprus but it will go with my good dress unless I wear the blue suit but then I have to take heels and a full slip and that white blouse that wrinkles so easily. Or maybe a blazer would be better but it won't match my white pants—honey, are you listening?"

"Whatever you decide will be just wonderful, dear," said the clothing expert.

A few clothing remarks

"But you haven't answered me!" I said, on the edge of hysteria. "What would you take if you were going?"

"I'd just wear my suit and throw in some socks and underwear and a couple shirts and sweaters—you know."

I sure do. And guess who would pick up the suit from the cleaners, press the shirts, fold the sweaters and match the socks?

Yessir. Men have clothing all figured out. They avoid tight skirts, perishable pantyhose, crazy shoes, slippery stoles and those tiresome little evening bags with no handles that hold nothing bigger than an aspirin.

I read the other day that men are even flirting with the notion of abandoning the zipper, that unreliable and dangerously toothed closure.

The latest fad is the rugby pant, a baggy trouser which has an elasticised waistband and no opening in the front.

These are very comfy and you aren't likely to get your shirt tail caught in anything. Women have been wearing them for years.

In that regard at least, there are no flies on us.

Bill Smiley



People keep on asking me, "But what will you do when you retire?" It's always asked in the same, rather petulant way, suggesting that I will immediately become senile, die of sheer boredom, or succumb instantly to some unknown disease.

These ideas are gross canards, implanted in people whose retirement is far in the future, often by Jewish writers who have an overwhelming sense of guilt because they put their old man in a nursing home when he interfered with their lifestyle. They didn't dare try to put their mothers away.

In the first place, it's none of their business. Maybe I'll grow a beard, get drunk for three months, take a twenty-year-old mistress, never wear a tie again, and write dirty poetry.

Maybe I'll turn into a clay-footed pillar of the community, serving on committees, running raffles, trying to teach young hoods that a past participle is more important than a past bank holdup, and attempting to beat the toughest game in town—Death.

Maybe I'll cultivate my own garden, as Voltaire suggested. Perhaps I'll do all the things my mother tried (tried is the key word) to prevent me from doing: swimming on Sunday, hanging around the poolroom, drinking anything but tea (she had a few drunken uncles).

Maybe I'll kick up my heels entirely: go

around barefoot; use a lot of four-letter words; never change my underwear; leave wife in pitiable financial circumstances; buy a raincoat and go flashing in the park.

Before you call in the Mounties, take a deep breath. I'm not likely to do any of those things, or only a few. It happens in novels, but not often in real life. I'll probably just go on being Bill Smiley: confused, angry, happy, lazy, hopeful, pessimistic, sweet, sour, greedy, generous, stupid about some things, bright about others, good grandfather, a lousy husband, a so-so father, an illiterate scholar, an observer of the trivial—you name it; I've got it.

The possibilities of retirement, of course, are boundless, and fascinating. My wife is scared stiff, because I'm difficult enough to dominate on weekends, let alone the forever that is retirement.

On the very rare occasions when we exchange heated words (three or four times a week), I have the trump card. I merely say, "O.K. You take your blank house and your blank car and your blank bank account (that requires a careful tongue) and I'll take my pension and move into a boarding house."

That usually makes her trot out into the kitchen and start making a pumpkin pie or something. She knows the boarding-house is right across the street, and all I'd have to do is pack a bag and my typewriter, and there I'd

be, fifty yards away, watching as she sank into genteel poverty, unable to pay the gas bill, the taxes, the plumbers and electricians and TV repairmen and all the other ghouls who haunt us.

But I think she's planning counter-measures. It's a bit like the Russian KGB and the U.S. CIA. We respect each other, but we plot. She's been buying tools hand over fist, and can repair practically everything except her husband. She's talking about taking some music pupils again (a secret source of income?).

Well, to get back to retiring. When I look across the street at my neighbor, cutting grass or shovelling snow, or patching his roof, I don't worry about dropping dead three weeks after I retire. He quit teaching about twenty years ago and could probably wrestle me to the ground with both hands tied behind his back.

Another neighbor climbs high ladders and fixes things while I cower at the foot, holding the ladder. He's retired. Another plays golf while I sit on the back lawn, contemplating the birds and my arthritic foot. He's retired. Another retired teacher, two blocks away, skis in the Alps for four months in the winter while I plod through the snow to teach, for the twenty-second time, that Macbeth would have been a pretty decent sort if his wife hadn't been so greedy.

Your retiring writer

And, of course, what it all boils down to is that I'm not even retiring, which confounds mine enemies and friends alike. I am merely ceasing the teaching of school.

When the war ended, I retired from being a fighter pilot. When I'd had enough, I retired from the weekly newspaper business. Now that I've had a bellyful of teaching, and all the trivia that goes with it, I am not retiring, but beginning a new career.

I plan to write. Not letters, which I never seem able to get around to. Not Harlequin romances, though I think I could rattle off some good ones. If my sense of humor didn't get in the way. Not great fiction, dealing with little people re-discovering great truths, spinkled with symbolism and sensitivity. Not penetrating poetry, though I can rattle off a pretty dang good poem, on order.

No. None of that derivative stuff for me. I'm going to write the messages on greeting cards. I hear there's good money in it, and any idiot could improve on what is now offered. The difference is that mine will be personalized. And they will be twenty bucks a throw.

How about this for a sympathy card, on the death of a loved one?

Sorry I couldn't be with you when

I knew you had a special yen

For more hi-jinks with good old Dave

With Abner cooling in the grave.

Kindness to animals begins here...

BY IRMA GARSIDE

During my reading the other day, I came across a line in large type: "Kindness To Animals Begins With Children—Try It" This was from the Children's magazine "Fur and Feathers" which is supported by humane organizations across Canada. One interpretation I put on this quote was—start teaching children how to be kind to animals and they will be a great aid in promoting respect for all forms of life.

We do have support organizations for birds, fish, and animals. They operate to protect, and to maintain the welfare and continuing existence of the different species. The task of the humane societies has been to rescue, to prevent and investigate abuse and cruelty, to care for strays, losts and founds. They also provide shelters, humane euthanasia, spay neuter clinics and information ser-

vices. But what about adequate educating?

Early founders of the humane movement considered humane education a vital concern. Quoting from Toronto Humane, it was supposed by now that "a truly enlightened humane public was just around the corner." But not so. There was "evidence of a total lack of respect and understanding of the animals of this world." People were ignorant of the needs and natures of animals. The society, after researching, concluded that humane education in the school systems was the key to the resolution of the increasingly pressing issues. They felt that "to cause a permanent change in attitudes and values, a student's exposure to humane education must be ongoing."

The Toronto Humane Society has produced a Humane Education kit entitled "Urban

Critters." It is for Grades 3-6 but can be adapted to almost any grade level.

School educators worked with humane educators. Ministry guidelines were observed in writing this six-week course. The kit consists of a teacher's manual, a master copy for student workbooks, two posters, and an educational game.

Glancing through the manual I found fascinating material and will touch on a few topics. Under the heading Domestication, there is a delightful story of cave children first approaching dogs. Then from "Pet Problems are People Problems" you read sensible suggestions to alleviate.

There are answers to, under what circumstances can a strange dog be approached and how. Sketches of dog poses show the positions dogs take to communicate.

"Wild Animals" discusses which ones are

wild and treatment of them in urban areas. A story tells their way of life.

The Society states that it does not seek to impose values but rather to provide an informational context for the development of the child's personal values. I purchased one of these kits. \$15. Although I don't have a classroom, I do have a number of young acquaintances. There are times when I am at a loss as to how to get across a humane idea. "Don't do that" halts a questionable act but neither teaches nor has any carry-over.

I spoke to the Education department of Ontario Humane. By this spring they expect to bring out a curriculum on humane education suitable for more senior grades.

Later I hope to be able to report advances made in other countries regarding humane education.

More than 3,000 registered with CEC

Canada Employment Centre in Midland filled 55 regular and casual vacancies during the month of December. C.E.C. manager Don McNee in his monthly report indicated that this figure was slightly lower than forecast but not unexpected.

McNee said that traditionally December is slow with few hirings taking place. Most manufacturing firms shut-down operations during the Christmas-New Years Week. The mild weather also had an effect as the lack of snow did not provide casual work for our snow shovellers.

At the end of December there were over 3,000 persons registered for work with the local Centre. (This does not include

450 RCA employees who were employed until Dec. 31.)

McNee said that CEC staff spent two days during December at the RCA Plant registering the employees for employment and Unemployment Insurance. By doing so he said "We were able to provide on the spot service to the employees, get all the necessary information, and hopefully will be able to process the insurance claims with a minimum of delays."

The report made mention of the fact that the age of the workers registering was getting older. Where previously the largest number on unemployment were under 24 years of age the largest number is now in the 24 to 44 age bracket.