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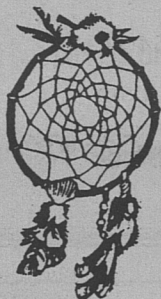
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Naked Curiosity

By Dennis Scott-Bush

Truth or Consequences

We never liked David.

Our friend, Jane, had arranged for my partner and I to meet her fiance, David, so we could give her our opinions of him.

We met, we chatted, we lied.

She asked what we thought of him. I recall my response clearly. "He seems to make you happy and that's the important thing."

Do friends want to hear what we have to say or want us to say what they want to hear? Had we allowed Jane to make her own decision without our negative reaction or were we afraid that our honest comments would cause hurt feelings?

Jane married David in a lovely ceremony that Martin and I attended. About a year later, they divorced and many of Jane's friends heaved a collective sigh of relief. We wanted the best for her, yet, we hadn't had the courage to tell her we never thought David came close to that mark.

As I cut David's face out of a photo of him and Jane, I vowed to never take the spineless way out, again. When a friend asked me to weigh in on his or her choice of significant other, I would shoot from the hip.

Friends whose new beaus or girlfriends have been subjected to nothing short of interrogation by me, since then, can attest to the thoroughness of my resolve.

I meet, I grill, I tell the truth.

The whole truth and nothing but the truth? Well, not exactly.

I do pose tough questions and press for answers that are reflective and honest not just glib banter. But, when asked for my verdict, I haven't always been a model of integrity.

Liar, liar.

If I were wearing pants, they'd be on fire.

Liar, liar. If I were wearing pants, they'd be on fire.

My friend, Mike, met a new man, several months ago. They'd already been happily dating for quite a while, before Mike had the courage to subject himself and Anthony to dinner and inquisition across a table from me. Anthony held his own, during the persistent probing, and received my hearty seal of approval. I was delighted to be able to tell Mike, "Anthony is a keeper," and mean it.

The situation was less pleasant and I was less candid with my friend, Carla, after chatting with her would-be girlfriend. This woman was no diamond in the rough. She was just rough. I didn't like her. She made my skin crawl. I wondered what Carla could possibly value in this charmless woman. I prepared myself to call it like I saw it. But, when the time came, I heard myself spinning the truth to deliver a response that Carla wanted to hear.

When confronted with a friend's hopeful face, is there no end to how easily we become weasely?

My seeming inability to steer clear of the occasional cowardly lyin' is much on my mind. After ending his long-term relationship, my friend Tom is newly single. And, while he's not ready to leap into the dating pool, right away, that time will come soon enough. I want to be ready and I want to be a good friend. I



want make a preemptive strike, if need be, rather than kvetch after the fact.

We're active participants in our friends' lives and that includes interaction with their companions. As long as these people are in relationships with our friends, we'll be hearing about, socializing with and, perhaps, even vacationing with them. The possibility of a sitting next to one of the said-I-liked-you-but-I-really-don't folks throughout a lengthy dinner party or sporting event looms heavily over my head.

If the future happiness of a friend isn't sufficient to warrant a factual review, isn't the preservation of one's own sanity enough motivation for candor?

Jane found happiness. She's gotten married, again – to a man Martin and I genuinely like – and they recently celebrated their second anniversary.

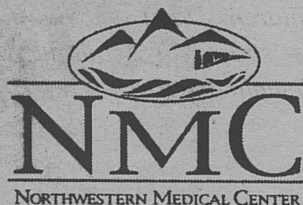
Mike and Anthony are still together; Carla moved on to another woman, and Tom is handling the single life with relative ease.

Through it all, I keep the photo of Jane with the space where David's face used to be on our refrigerator to remind me that friends deserve veracity.

Sometimes, what those closest to us don't want to hear is exactly what needs to be said.

It's a matter of truth or consequences. Telling the truth can help spare the consequences.

Dennis Scott-Bush has always been curious and is often naked. His work has appeared in publications throughout the country and his partner, Martin, took the photo that accompanies this column. E-mail may be directed to NakedCuriosity@aol.com.



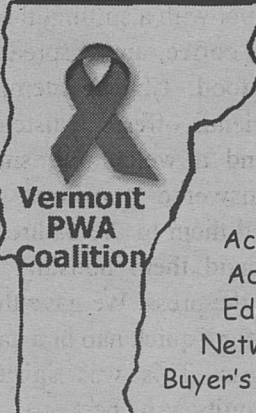
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