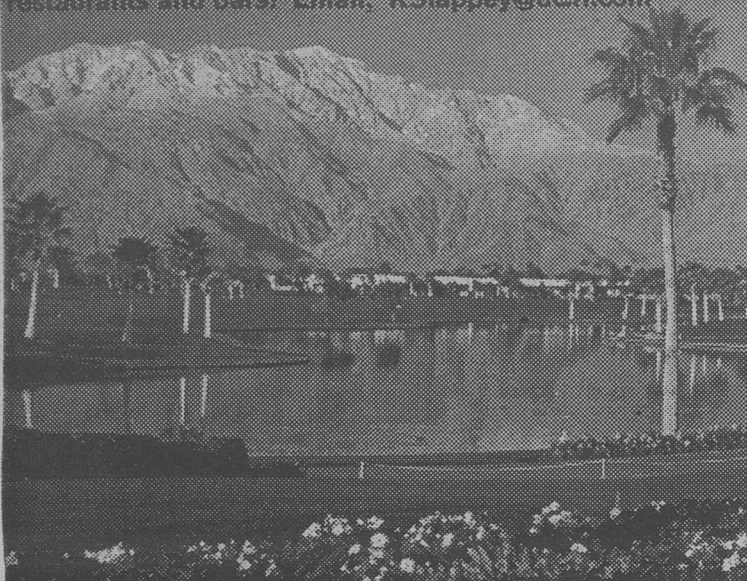




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Tongue in Cheek: The Measure of the Man in the Age of Viagra™

It's fascinating how for so many, many years I've heard everyday, ordinary straight folks talk about how they think being gay is all about sex. Well, obviously, it isn't. But isn't it odd that any straight people would ever dare to say that at all — when the biggest new drug in years to hit the market (pun intended) permitted men to get a proper erection for sex.

And that another drug, Levitra™, has now sprung into the same market. And that yet another drug will soon pole vault in to rival these two — and this third one has the advantage of being effective for a full 36 hours. In fact, in Europe, they're already referring to this drug as "the weekender."

Now, I don't know about you, but I don't want an erection for 36 hours. How do you walk around — go to the grocery store — pick up the dry cleaning? Though, for that last chore, I suppose it would provide extra hanging space.

So let's re-cap. In the space of a few years, not one, but three "erectile dysfunction" drugs appear on the market, and not a single cure for cancer has made it through. It looks to me like heterosexuals are focused on nothing but sex.

Need more proof? I can just look at my email for that. Every day, I get email offers for all manner of drugs and devices to increase the size of my penis. The ads all say that the women in my life will just be ecstatic if I do. Since, in my case, the idea of my mom, my sister, and my best friend getting excited over the increased size of my penis is a bit disturbing, I'm having to assume that these emails are aimed at straight men. Either that, or face several more years of therapy.

In my same email in-box each day, I get all sorts of emails that say they are from hot teenage girls wanting sex with me, if I will only visit their websites or call them on their 1-900 numbers. Again, I've a feeling that these are aimed at straight men, and I'm just the lucky beneficiary of their largesse.

But aside from the apparent total sex focus of straight culture revealed by these emails, there's another profoundly interesting conclusion. Follow me closely

kevin
isom

here (just not too closely, please).

It seems that, from all the multitude of penis enlargement ads, a lot of people must think I have a small penis. But from all the hot teenage girls wanting sex ads, it seems that a lot of hot teenage girls want to have sex with me. There was only one conclusion: Hot teenage girls like men with small penises.

I was dumbfounded when that hit me. Talk about schizophrenia in the culture! So in gay culture, there's a focus on pecs and abs and penile endowment. In straight culture, they just can't make up their minds!

Imagine how all this must affect the world at large. If penis size is the new measure of the man, then does that mean that Alan Greenspan is lowering interest rates to feel powerful because his deposits are too small? Are blowhards like Bill O'Reilly and Al Franken just disturbed because they make hot teenage girls very happy indeed? It's a rather disquieting thought.

I'm actually beginning to miss the pre-Viagra™ days. I never needed to know how happy Bob Dole made Elizabeth. I'm amazed when I watch the television ads that tout a guy appearing different to his friends and colleagues, all because he's gotten a prescription. "New haircut, Bob?" "Have you been working out, Bob?" "Did you get a raise, Bob?"

Are we not to be disturbed that taking a drug that gives one a knotty oak should make everyone else around sit up and take notice? Isn't this just rather sick? I don't WANT my assistant at the office to know that I'm pleasantly perky. Particularly if I still am, because I took "the weekender" mid-Saturday afternoon.

It's also fascinating to me that the focus here has been almost

uniquely on the male accoutrement. Yes, I've read that it's "more difficult" to do anything to assist those poor, un-stimulated women out there, but that just doesn't ring true. And what of all the women married or involved with men who are out there drugging up? Is it a case of, "Come on, honey, rev up those engines, cause I'm ready for take off! Yes, I know you don't feel like getting out of the starting gate, but it's not my fault the drug companies are focused on selling to me!"

At least with gay folks, both men can take the drug — or both women can leave it alone. Though I suppose that, given that women enter their sexual peak later in life than men, it might be for the best that older men can now have

**I don't want
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the rock-hard fortitude of their former selves.

It's all just too confusing. But one thing is clear. It's hard to take the measure of the man, in the age of Viagra™. ▼

Kevin Isom is the author of *It Only Hurts When I Polka and Tongue in Cheek and Other Places*, available at bookstores and online. He may be reached at isomonline@aol.com or www.KevinIsom.com.



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