



Forward Progress

Welcome the New Year with a trip down Memory Lane

By Kelli Wheeler

Let's take a moment, shall we, to compare how much things have changed (progressed exponentially, thank the good Lord above and the feminist movement) in the last half century.

A friend of mine, who thought he was being especially hilarious, e-mailed a purported article from a 1955 issue of "Housekeeping Monthly" titled "The Good Wife's Guide." Yes, ladies, groan with me simply at the title.

Although Snopes.com, an urban-legend-debunking website, revealed the piece to be a hoax, it was a "relatively accurate reflection" of a woman's role at the time. Below is an abridged version of this unfortunate revival. You'll find the 1955 "standards" for a happy home in italics with the 2008 model underneath.

Have dinner ready. Plan ahead. This is a way of letting him know you are thinking about him and are concerned about his needs.

I'm thinking about him alright. Thinking he needs to get his tooshie home to tag team with these kids and I hope he's bringing some take-out with him.

Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh looking. He has been with a lot of work-weary people.

He's about to be with some more work-weary people. If he wants ribbons, heels and pearls, he ponies up for a nanny and a housekeeper, otherwise be happy to hit me on a shower day.

Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.

If walking into a house of fighting kids, ringing telephones, overflowing e-mails, delayed dinner and a frazzled wife isn't interesting enough for him, I'd be happy to switch duties with him to give him the excitement he's looking for.

Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house before your husband arrives.

As if I haven't done that 15 times already. To clear away the clutter, I'd have to get rid of the kids.

Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Catering to his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.

No, catering to my comfort will provide him immense personal satisfaction. Especially if he wants a little hubba hubba later. And

unloading the dishwasher would really light my fire.

Prepare the children. Take a few moments to wash their hands and faces, comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes as well. Minimize all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer and vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.

If he wants a quiet house, he best not come home. And because of that

time he asked, "What did you do all day?" he will always have a little taste of what I do all day. Noise and bedraggled children included.

Be happy to see him.

I am happy to see him. The reinforcements have arrived.

Greet him with a warm smile and sincerity in your desire to please him.

I can do the warm smile and a smooch. The desire to please him is pushing it.

Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Don't greet him with complaints or problems. Let him talk first—remember his topics of conversation are more important than yours.

I don't need to greet him with complaints or problems. I've already called him about a dozen times at work to talk about my day and have him patiently listen. And if he thinks bemoaning the evening commute trumps a backed-up septic tank, by all means, the (disgusting) floor is yours.

Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day.

And count it as major that I changed the locks on the doors.

Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and, as such, will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.

And I have every right not to marry a man who believes this hogwash.

A good wife always knows her place.

Yes, in the 21st century. Let's raise a toast to modern wives being equal partners with balanced and realistic families.

Boy, am I glad to be in the here and now of the 2000s. If I was a woman of the 1950s, real or fabricated, I think I would have been permanently drunk on cooking sherry or permanently single.

Kelli Wheeler lives in Arden Oaks and is a mother of two. She can be reached at kellimwheeler@aol.com. Check out her website at kellimwheeler.com. ●

