Letter from the Editor

Katie Perry

A Woman’s World

Last week, some of my dad’s family came down from Vermont to visit, which means - you guessed it - the family albums came out in full force. It’s always fun to look at pictures of your parents from back in the day. You know, the photos of your dad when he was young, with his hair down to his shoulders, and the pictures of your mom with her glasses on, which inevitably, you’re bound to come to your parents’ wedding photo. My parents have a painted version of theirs on the wall at home, so I didn’t even need the album to come out. I just happened to notice what I usually take for granted because of the photo fest that took place earlier in the day.

I was struck that my parents’ wedding photo is that, in it, my mother is younger than I am. She got married when she was 19, a fact that’s mind boggling to me. Now, don’t worry. I didn’t develop old maid syndrome and begin hunting down a husband when I realized that I’m in an unmarried 20-year-old college student. The recognition did make me think of how times have changed, however, beyond increases in the price of a stamp and a loaf of bread.

When my mother met my father, it was common for women to get married right out of high school. Most weren’t headed to college, nor were they career-bound. Becoming completely dependent on women’s traditional roles was to be expected. Therefore, of course, the culture was different then, and women were prepared for marriage much sooner than women are today, but, still, the idea of being married at 19 is unfathomable to me. I can barely manage my own life. Pair me up with a husband and, heaven forbid, kids right now, and you’ve got the perfect recipe for disaster, if not divorce.

I can remember a few years ago, one of my friends of mine said she wanted to get married by 22, I wrinkled up my nose and asked an astounded, “Why?” I mean, who in their right mind would want to do that? As far as I know, she’s right on track with her plan, engaged at 20, and for her, I suppose it makes sense. As far as I’m concerned, though, no one I’ve even met has been able to do that. I’ve had a few years. I fully expect to still be deciding if I want to be a wife, mother, career woman, or all of the above. Frankly, while I’m still figuring things out, the last thing I want to do is settle down. I think most of us are better off adopting the not-until-i’m-good-and-ready philosophy anyway.

The disparity between my friend’s point-of-view and mine does bring up something important to point, however. The progress of the equal rights movement is what’s made her life choices seem outdated to me. Certainly, feminism has had its benefits in claiming equal rights for women. After all, there’s no reason why women don’t have a career of their own if that’s what they want to do. There’s no problem per se with what women didn’t have the option. Now, do they. But shouldn’t we respect it when a woman chooses to be a housewife rather than a C.E.O.? I think the negative part of this particular cultural revolution is that we don’t.

Last semester, for one of my seminars, I was required to read “Preschool in Three Cultures.” It’s an interesting sociological study about the differences in preschools of the East and West, but the main topic of the book isn’t what I want to point out for the purposes of this column. The pertinent passage relates to the modern dilemma many mothers face: “Even if a mother, after some difficulty, manages to locate a good preschool for her child, she inevitably feels a sense of problem and pressure exist that women didn’t have the option. Now, do they. But shouldn’t we respect it when a woman chooses to be a housewife rather than a C.E.O.? I think the negative part of this particular cultural revolution is that we don’t.

The local Worcester environment does nothing to help the situation, either. Although there are a few nurseries here, many parents feel that the nursery is not good enough for their young age. So, of course, the culture was different then, and women were prepared for marriage much sooner than women are today, but, still, the idea of being married at 19 is unfathomable to me. I can barely manage my own life. Pair me up with a husband and, heaven forbid, kids right now, and you’ve got the perfect recipe for disaster, if not divorce.

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