

Did We or Didn't We?

Isn't it strange how customs, mores and the raising of kids change from generation to generation? Isn't it odd how old-fashioned we become to our children? How utterly impossible their behaviour may become to us? And yet this has been mankind's story throughout the ages.

Today's youngsters can't believe that our generation abstained from "going all the way", or, at least it wasn't made public knowledge. If an "accident" occurred, we and our parents were shocked beyond belief. And the culprit was sent away "till her time came", and the baby was adopted.

Now if sexual contact has not occurred, we are equally shocked, even though we may not condone it, and the poor pregnant mother is given support from all around. All this in one short generation.

Back in 1975 my fiance and I found ourselves in a very confusing situation with or for my mother. Ed and I lived (separately) in Berkeley California, and my family lived in Chicago where the wedding was to take place. We planned to drive the 2000 miles in his spruced-up golden Hudson.

My mother was really agitated about this state of affairs. I really think that she would have hired a chaperone for us, if such a person were available. She admonished me that in no way was I to share a room with my fiance. She was also concerned that if we did not stop to sleep, we would be overtired and have an accident. She really did not know how to keep us celibate until the proper words were spoken. It was obviously very important to her, and equally hilarious to us.

We assured her that all would be well and to stop worrying. What could the poor lady do? She was beside herself.

About a week before the wedding, we leisurely started our drive across two-thirds of the continent. Certainly her problem did not concern us. The only thing which we worried about was what we were going to tell her, for she would certainly question us closely.

We had a lovely trip. Crossing the Rockies was awe-inspiring. Then the hot boundless desert, where we stopped in Salt Lake City for a dip in the Great Salt Lake. Quite an experience. We floated so high that most of our bodies were quite dry, it was not really very pleasant. This was followed by a run into the fresh water showers before the salt caked on our skins.

We bought and ate long laces or whips of licorice, and ate it from both ends to see who could get in the first kiss. By the time we reached our destination we swore we'd never even look at that black stuff again.

It was mid-summer, and extremely hot, air conditioning was a dream yet to come, especially in cars. We opened all our windows, and I dangled my feet as far out as they would go to cool them off. We took dozens of photos, none of them memorable.

As we had planned we stayed in motels two or three nights (one or two rooms? you may ask). Did we or didn't we? We traveled through miles of desert, corn fields, cattle pastures, small towns with interesting churches, and lots of dogs chasing after us, barking and baying as if they had never seen such a vehicle before.

"Did you stop overnights or did you drive through?" was the first question heard on our arrival.

"No, Mom we drove straight through".

"Oh you poor kids, you must be so tired, you'll go to bed very early tonight. Ed how could you drive so far without sleep? Are you sure you didn't stop?". So Ed reassured her that we had stopped one night in a motel anyway.

"I hope you took separate rooms". Then he changed his story and I changed mine, until we could hardly remember who was supposed to say what. We never gave her a straight answer, and she held her head in her hands and was in a real flap. "What will I tell my friends, and what will they think?" Over and over.

Her next announcement was that she had reserved a room in a hotel for Ed, because, of course, we couldn't put him up in their large apartment. She made sure that there were no shenanigans under her roof.

A couple of days later the proper words were said, and papers signed, and we were permitted to sleep in one room, in a hotel chosen by her. Before we left Chicago for home in California, we stopped to say goodbye and thanks to my parents. As mom said goodbye to us, we knew she was still worried. I wonder what she did say to her friends. Or whether they bothered to ask.

These days I would never dream of asking such questions of my daughters. I take it all for granted. What difference do a few words from a minister or judge really make?

Will they or won't they? Did we or didn't we?



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