

Book Club Envy

Last night I had a strange and bizarre feeling. For the first time in my life, I wished that I was a woman. No, I didn't have a yearning to wear baby doll, black , see through lingerie (not to say that there would be anything wrong with this, of course). No, I did not want to go shopping for shoes and purses (although my sisters-in –law might welcome the company). You see, I was wishing for womanhood so that I could join the Riverbend United Church Book Club

Each month a group of women from our congregation meet and discuss a current novel, drink wine, and eat cheese, pastries and other delicacies. The club has met at our house a couple of times. It is a very classy evening. While Fergus (my faithful dog companion) and I are banished to the basement for these events, we occasionally creep up stairs and peek into the living room. What a sight! All these women, sitting in a circle, laughing, joking and making insightful comments about their most recent book club reading. One night, in fact, they had author Judy Schultz join them and talk about her novel “ Freddy’s War “. I have read this book and have a lot of unresolved questions: Why did the book have to have such a sad ending? What was so wrong with the nice guy RCMP constable? Why didn't she inject more gratuitous violence into the battle scenes? Why did so many of the beautiful girls in high school treat me as a total reject? (This last question has nothing to do with the novel but I thought that I might just work it in.)

The women's book club is so great and I really feel excluded. Now, I anticipate that many of my male readers will come to an obvious conclusion – “ Let's set up a men's book club “. No, this just wouldn't work. First of all, we would need to find a night that didn't conflict with any major sporting event – a near impossibility in today's TSN world. Next, we would probably discover only a very limited number of books worthy of the club's attention. Once we had worked over Zane grey's “ Riders of the Purple sage “, Andy McNab's “ Brute Force “, and C.S. Forester's “ Ship of the Line “, we would have pretty well exhausted our reading list. Finally and most importantly, we men are not really all that insightful when it comes to human nature, behaviour and motivation. Our book club discussions would probably revolve around such details as “ Could a rocket propelled grenade really shoot down an armoured MI 24 Hind helicopter?” or “ What would 2000 silver doubloons be worth in Canadian dollars?”, instead of more relevant questions such as “ Is violence the best way of resolving conflict “ or “ Is Piracy really a good career move for the middle aged man?”.

Anybody who can recall his or her grade VII literature class will realize that females are much better in exploring and discussing the human condition. This fact was driven home many times over in the course of my former career as a health care executive where most of my colleagues were female. We men are just not that good at figuring out why some people act the way they do. Two years ago, I took a road trip to Kelowna with my mother, sister and niece and learned more about life, sex and the human condition than I ever imagined existed. It was kind of intimidating. I have never blushed or laughed so much in my life!

Still, I really do envy the evenings my wife gets to go to book club.

Somebody called Charles Jones once wrote – “You are the same today as you will be five years from now except for two things ... the people you meet and the books you read”.

Book club envy. It's killing me!