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Peevie Steevie : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Thursday March 7, 2024

Peevie Steevie

By Steve Eskew

Recently, my therapist nearly nodded off while I was explaining the complexities involved with my various pet peeves.

I was indeed peeved with her disinterest and asked in an acid tone, “Would you like some toothpicks to prop your eyes open until the session is over?”

“What I would *like*,” she said, “is for you to answer the question without pontificating: Tell me in one sentence — what’s the origin of your preposterous pet peeve obsession?”

I groaned. “Okay. Two words: toy hog.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Simply put, I was nine months old and my older brother habitually grabbed every toy I ever played with. I eventually reacted by pulling out a handful of his hair. ‘Nuff said?”

The therapist glowered at me pityingly and submitted that such a memory borders on delusion, that someone else must have told me about the incident and I’ve simply imagined my maniacal fury.

My latest pet peeve? Know-it-all therapists.

As a mild-mannered reporter, working for a struggling Metropolitan scandal sheet, I'm too refined to relate to picky people's puny pet peeves such as gum popping, tailgating, ice-crunching, line cutting and chronic bellyaching.

The peeve that infuriates *me* the mostest would be a another person's presence when I talk to myself — especially when I truly believed I was talking to *them*.

I want the rapt attention of my listener, the attention a self-proclaimed legend deserves. Then why, pray tell, do I invariably attract an audience of daydreamers during my most profound metaphysical speeches?

Recently when I was sitting with my family during breakfast, I was yakking profusely about what I considered a supreme issue.

Believe it or not, my family ignored my blather and munched away at their porridge. Humph! Obviously what I was saying was too sophisticated for their palates.

Picking up my plate and coffee, I politely excused myself and headed to an uninhabited room where I resumed in solitary the brilliant tête-à-tête I had sadly been having only with myself.

When asked why I left the room, I shouted: "No big deal, but when I talk to *myself*, I want to be *alone*."

Everyone yelled in unison: "Thanks Dad!"

Very funny.

Okay, moving on. The humor writer in me nurses a major irk about TV humor writers. They all but take the day off when writing about drunks, babies, animals and pregnant women.

I'm referring to the non-thinking, stereotypical, disgusting discharge of body fluids associated with those particular types. For instance, do writers always need to bring up the subject of diapers? What else does a baby do? Think!

And, could comic writers please skip the morning sickness references regarding pregnant women?

Furthermore, do drunks and animals routinely need to be portrayed as vomiters and/or those who perform toilet rituals?

When will writers create a fresh approach for such subjects?

Writers! Stop going for the obvious. Show some creativity for once instead of stereotyping sickening scenarios.

Bravo to the writers of the 1980 movie, *Nine to Five*. In one scene, the comedy features a heavysset black janitor, wheeling her cart to the men's room.

The audience knows that the scary sight of a dead body awaits her in there. Everyone is expecting a bug-eyed, hysterical Stepin Fetchit reaction. Instead, she turns on her heels and yells with sophisticated reserve, "We got another stiff in the men's can."

Once in my desperation for forcing writers to cough up an original approach to familiar scenarios, I issued a class assignment: I instructed my students to write a short comic essay about a drunk, a pregnant woman, a baby and a cat.

The only rule? "Not even the suggestion of a secretion can be mentioned. Not even a tear, a wet lick or a bead of sweat."

Well, dear readers, it grieves me to admit it, but without all of the sickening stereotypical secretions, none of my students' stories were remotely funny.

So, wrong again, Peevie Steevie.

Hmmm. So there's an authentic truth in some stereotyping. Who knew?

No wonder Jerry Seinfeld and other standup comics refuse to do college campus gigs. Nowadays such institutions demand boring political correctness.

In defense of stereotyping, a colleague of mine declared that, if there weren't so many people befitting a particular type, it wouldn't be stereotypical in the first place. Huh?

Okay, I must admit that, in all honesty, some piece of me wishes that the *Nine to Five* writers would have dropped their politically correct approach and gone with a Stepin Fetchet response for the janitor's plight.

After all, Stepin Fetchit's stereotyped roles made him Hollywood's first successful black actor.

As for my brother, the former toy hog, he got the message and has never since peevied Steve — except obsessively forming his fingers into alien antennas and holding them behind my head whenever I'm having my picture taken.

Even my know-it-all therapist thinks that's passé.

— Steve Eskew

Thank God Liberal Arts courses are so easy. Even retired businessman Steve Eskew received a pair of master's degrees in both dramatic arts and communication studies from the University of Nebraska at Omaha after he turned 50. When asked to take over a professor's theater column at *The Daily Nonpareil* in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Steve began a

career as a quasi-journalist. Narrowly by the luck of the Irish, this led to numerous publications including theater and book reviews, profiles and Steve's favorite genre, humor writing. Check out his new humor blog, [ESKEWPADES](#).