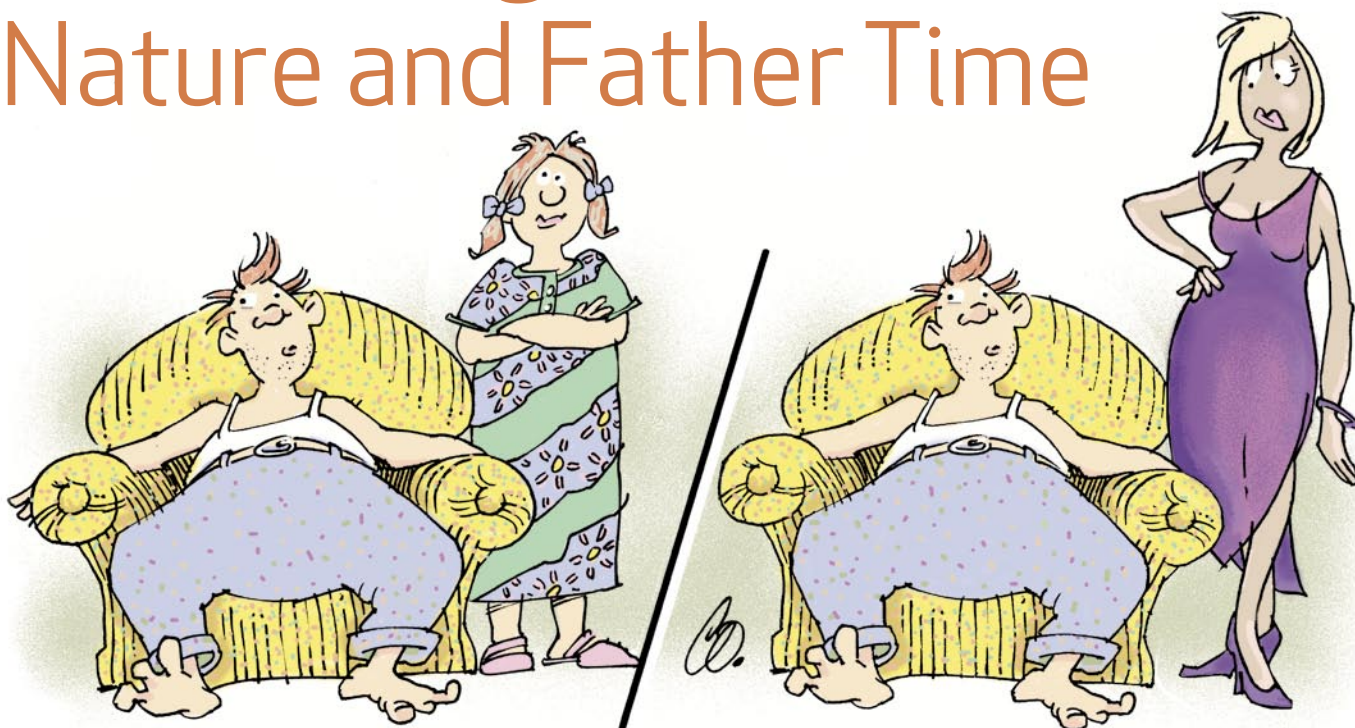


The War Against Mother Nature and Father Time



Obviously, it is too late to point out the solution to population explosion lies in teaching people the value of good breeding as opposed to fast.

→ Robert D. Horseman, DDS

ILLUSTRATION
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Just recently, the population of the United States topped 300,000,000 people. This has occurred when half of the world would like to see the other half get off the Earth. As various acerbic pundits have noted throughout history — George Bernard Shaw, for example, snarked, “The world is populated in the main by people who should not exist.” Even William Makepeace Thackeray opined as early as 1859 that “if people only made prudent marriages, what a stop to population there would be.” He died in 1863 before this could be implemented.

Obviously, it is too late to point out the solution to population explosion lies in teaching people the value of good breeding as opposed to fast. Although the aim of birth control is to make the population less dense, our high birth rate is producing people faster than our cars can decimate them, even on holiday weekends.

On a brighter note, the population explosion is not an unmixed evil.

Look what it has done for Toys “R” Us, Sony PlayStations, television, and that portion of the shoe industry formerly known as “sneakers.” Consider that approximately half of the U.S. population is female. Almost without exception, that 150 million is going to be dissatisfied with its physical appearance sooner or later, probably sooner if Hollywood and the modeling industry continue to have their way.

Progress brings with it an increased appreciation of beauty wherein Mother Nature confronts Father Time. Trying to improve on one while fooling the other has become a major industry rivaling that of the production of lawyers.

As far as the other 150 million is concerned, it is going to go quietly bald, pot-bellied, liver-spotted, and wearing pants that badly need the services of a tailor to take in the seat. This, in spite of efforts to make after-shave lotions smell like Marlboro County.

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In the not too distant past, the word “cosmetic” conjured up a vision of jars, tubes, and sprays all plainly labeled “In case of swallowing, induce vomiting and call your doctor immediately even though your chances of speaking to him are nonexistent.” Today, cosmetic is conjoined at the hip with the word “surgery” and labeled in very small print with the warning “In case you are not fully loaded, call your banker immediately as this is not a covered benefit.”

To ensure the TV-drugged populace does not lose sight of the Big Picture, a show called “Extreme Makeover” has become wildly popular. The premise: a bunch of friends singled out a female member of its group. They surreptitiously took a picture of her just as she stumbled out from a terrible night with three sick kids and submitted it to the producers of “Extreme Makeover.” The producers agonized over hundreds of applications sent in by other so-called friends and selected the raw material most likely to justify the “extreme” portion of the show without stretching the budget too much.

The winner was then surprised at home to learn that her friends secretly thought she was such a woofier and before she could express her gratitude adequately, she was whisked off to stand embarrassed before a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon in her generic underwear. On the show, the surgeon surveyed — narrowed-eyed — more bare skin than you are comfortable witnessing.

In accordance with professional standards of “measure twice, cut once,” the bodymeister drew significant lines and circles all over her body with a felt-tipped pen, giving a sort of torso-by-Picasso

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effect. This panorama, he explained in a running commentary, was to be his canvass to rectify the effects of genetics, age, and perhaps too many visits to the onion dip. Ms. Makeover was appropriately stunned at all this attention, which was more than old George at home has given her in the last decade.

After she and the nose guy chose a pert, but authoritative nose, the bosom guy zeroed in on the material and size of the projected balcon. Implant people determined the chin and cheekbone dimensions, then it was off to the dentist. Of particular, but disappointing, interest to dentists everywhere was that the average treatment planning for “Extreme Makeover” participants seemed to call for a cornucopia of extractions, implants, veneers, bridges and partials, but editing made it all appear to happen at once shortly after the bib was applied.

Nearly six weeks later, still sporting raccoon eyes, a bandaged nose and an astonishing advance in cup size, Ms. Makeover flitted all along Rodeo Drive, reveling in the full attention of an assortment of buff youths with blender-styled hair and six-pack abs. They were enthusiastically debating the effects of swatches of cloth in the latest colors, fussing over whether to go with the pixy cut or a popular version of the just-got-out-of-bed hair style. The eye guy gave her green contacts, so there was that to consider by the pluck, wax, and painting crew.

Finally, it was back to the plastic surgeon’s office where staff eagerly awaited the removal of the bandages. It was a dramatic moment for all as the camera zoomed in on what to a casual observer looked to be the victim of an abrupt encounter with a brick wall.

“Well, what do you think?” beamed the surgeon, handing her a mirror as the last bandage was peeled away. Perhaps it was just skillful editing, but invariably, this butterfly emerged from her chrysalis, and burst into tears at the sight of her reflection. She pronounced herself as absolutely thrilled with the results, in spite of the lingering presence of bruises and swelling that made her look as if she were overmatched in a cat fight. It all concluded on a highly emotional note of doctor/patient hugging, and we segued to her triumphant arrival back home where her family and friends had gathered, all dressed up for their first shot at national TV coverage.

As she materialized from behind the curtain and strutted toward them in her Versace gown split to the thigh, twirled, and revealed her brilliantly white new teeth, you had to admit — she looked like a million bucks or close to it. Whatever misgivings the friends had were washed away in a tsunami of tears and an avalanche of hugs. Husband George, stood there with his comb-over and original face, and suddenly realized he had a new woman, one that holds promise of high maintenance compared to the previous model.

What has all this to do with the population explosion? Precious little except to remind you 150,000,000 ladies in the throes of your discontent that we’ll get to you, one makeover at a time. Be patient. ■■■■