

# Let us see our newest in-law

**Bill Hall/Lewiston Tribune**

When your children are dating and looking for love, many of you - their parents - are also dating, though one step removed. You are looking for someone lovable enough for your kid. That's the code of the hills.

Your son or daughter or their cousins or your grandkids are either online or out there in the night seeking somebody to marry.

The New York Times reports that one in 10 of America's searchers for romance have signed in to online dating websites. They are not merely looking over the contenders in search of a partner. If they are astute and considerate, they will also eventually run prime candidates past you, the elders.

And yes, we elders have some rights in the matter. At least when a promising relationship ripens to its fullest and sweetest, we deserve the courtesy of getting a peek at leading hopefuls. Anything else would verge on electronic elopement.

Sooner or later, when you Romeos decide this is the one, you need to let us know - if not by showing the winner around the family face to face - but at least let us see online pictures of the dude or the darling. Let us study the face and the personality and the beliefs of the contender.

No longer in this society do we seniors choose a marriage mate for our young relatives. Few of us are foolish enough anymore to dictate the selection of a new in-law. And that's how it should be. I never did understand elders arbitrarily choosing the pairing partner for their offspring. In this era, we are no longer the deciders. Thank you, cupid.

It is our descendants and their spouses who must live together through all the days and all the years as one half of a pair in the amalgamation that is marriage. So who are we, the dictatorial old goats who were once leaders of the family pack, to cast the one and only vote for the proposed merger?

It's not more than about three or four generations since many parents used to make those wretched declarations of telling a child that he or she must never marry a candidate who is the "wrong" race or religion or political persuasion. Those bossy days are mostly over.

How would you like it if your parents made you marry a rabid Republican or a daffy Democrat or some other close-minded twit who mistakes politics for religion?

The old ways of parents telling their children who they could marry died several decades before I came along. And today, few among the elders in a family would tell a son or daughter who to love.

That doesn't mean that the parents and assorted other elders on both sides of a potential merry merger don't have some rights in the matter. At the very least, when a marriage or other sorts of pairings seem to be bubbling closer to a potential pairing, we have a natural curiosity as to who we will be sitting next to each year at Thanksgiving dinners.

On the other hand, the possible new son-in-law or daughter-in-law will also want to look us over. Curiosity is a two-way street (or perhaps I should say a two-way bridge) across which the two lovers and their two families will meet and, with luck, learn to like each other.

After all, the lovebirds might think they alone are getting married, but in many ways the families also get married in a semi-formal way. More often than not, they learn to like and respect each other enough to feel sort of freshly wed themselves. Most marriages that get off to a good start usually turn into one big puddle of compatible genes.

But if things get touchy at first, I have a recommendation:

Silence, please!

Discuss neither politics nor religion until we all truly get to know each other.

Or if you converse, do so in a civilized fashion; talk about summer days and sunsets and what good and kind children both of our families have so proudly produced.

Recently, we have been given the pleasure of our new son-in-law, José. So we gather around the turkey table, sitting among José and his brothers and sisters. They are fresh gravy on our lives.

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