

Impatience fuels frozen fury

If patience is a virtue, it's just one more virtue that this girl doesn't have.

I hate to wait. I mean, I really, really hate to wait. It has become a problem. My increasing lack of patience is making me dangerous to myself and to others.

I once thought I could control my weakness with long breaths and slow repetitions of counting to 10, but I was wrong. Recently at a local grocery, I came close to becoming the perpetrator of an attempted murder with a box of frozen cauliflower.

It started out innocently enough. I was perusing through the fluorescent-lit aisles, mulling over whether I wanted "Rotini and Cheese" or "Macaroni and Cheese." (Variety is the spice of life, you know.) I moved from one artery-clogging item to the next until I spotted the white-trash version of hors d'oeuvres, pizza rolls!

There they were ... cheesy, chewy, saturated with animal fats and preservatives, and I wanted them. I would donate organs for pizza rolls. But in front of the two frost-covered freezers that held my cheesy confections stood two women. Their ages and descriptions don't really matter. All that does matter is that for a mere moment, I felt an animalistic urge to tear off their arms and legs and beat these women with their own limbs.

For 10 or more minutes, while I stood shivering in the frozen-food section eyeing my square-shaped snack foods, these women held a sort of Geneva summit dealing with Marge's new hairdo and Blanche's new recipe for vegetable cheese soup.

"I use the California-style vegetables in my soup. I just love Bird's Eye. They're so fresh," said



Heather Lampe

Blanche.

"I prefer the Jolly Green Giant myself. The way he stands all virile and potent, looking like a masculine piece of asparagus ... wouldn't I like to steam him," replied Marge.

Okay, this isn't the exact conversation, but it did have something to do with cheese soup and Marge's new perm.

But not once did they notice me standing there with my 150-pound basket of groceries. I kept waiting for them, hoping one of them would look at me and think, "Oh my, maybe we should get out of this ravishing young woman's way. She is busy, and she doesn't have time to stand in a grocery store all day. She seems to be angry. Her eyes are bloodshot and watering, and there seems to be a white foam coming from her mouth. Why, it appears at any moment she could lunge across the popsicles and physically harm us."

It never happened. When I noticed my hair graying, I ended up squeezing between them and their vegetables to get my rolls.

My impatience followed me to the check-out counter, where I proceeded to get in line behind a middle-aged shopper who had yet learned to count. Standing in the 20-items-or-less aisle with my six items, I noticed that the counting-impaired individual in front of me had nearly 40 items. (I counted.)

By this time, I was so irritated

that I sat my pizza rolls on the gum rack, spouted off some obscene language and left. It may have seemed rash, but I'm the type of person who drives over the curb out of the drive-thru line if it takes too long.

My impatience also strays into other areas of my life. People more than 75 years of age are quite familiar with my middle finger. I like to wave to them with it when they drive 15 mph in a 40-mph zone. I also have nice relationships with women who fail to see the green light (after it's turned 3 times) because they're applying war paint at stop lights.

I like to blame Western society for my give-it-to-me-now-I-can't-wait affliction. Look at what its done to us. Commercials have given us all attention-deficit disorders. It is almost impossible for us to stay interested in anything for more than 2 minutes. Why do you think we have a 50 percent divorce rate? If you can't sit through two minutes of an Alka Seltzer advertisement, how are you supposed to deal with years of matrimony?

As I have proven, fast food isn't even fast enough. We want it, and we want it now. People don't wait for anything anymore. If you don't want to wait to get a letter, you can have it faxed. If you can stay interested in marriage for more than 5 minutes and want to try it, they now have drive-thru wedding chapels.

Anything that we used to wait for is now available on the computer. Hey, they're even developing grocery-shopping over the Internet.

Anything to get away from Marge and Blanche.

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Talk show trash taken to the limit

No one knows exactly why Scott Amedure decided to go courting on the Jenny Jones show. Why does anyone go on these shows, baring their heart's desires and their life's disappointments to strangers?

"He led a troubled life," says his brother Frank. Last year, some men had beat him and smashed his truck. Once he was missing for two months. But for whatever reason, on March 6, he decided to expose himself as the "secret admirer" of Jonathan Schmitz.

Maybe Amedure thought that the spotlight would provide a warm glow of safety. Maybe the applause of a studio audience, the recognition of viewers, would provide an understanding venue.

Jonathan Schmitz apparently went into this event unaware. He went for the kick of it. For the trip to Chicago, for the chance to be on TV, for the harmless joke of being on a show about secret admirers. Why not?

When he saw his friend Donna Riley in the studio, he assumed that she was the one. When it turned out to be Amedure, the 24-year-old Schmitz sat politely and said that he was heterosexual and not interested.

In the etiquette of talk shows, the guest is supposed to go along with the joke, to be the life of the surprise party. He doesn't tell them to take the candid camera out of his face. He is a good sport. But three days later, Jonathan Schmitz snapped.

Whether it was homophobia or humiliation, the anxiety of waiting for the show to air or the follow-up note from Amedure on his door, the Michigan man bought a 12-gauge shotgun and five rounds of ammunition. "I just walked into his house and killed him," he told the 911 operator. "He was after me day and night."

This murder sounds like a perverse subject for another talk-show shocker: "Can A Talk Show Be An Accessory To Murder?" Or: "What Happens To The People After The Show Is Over?" But the shock is that it didn't happen sooner.

Back in 1992, Geraldo once had a father and daughter on his show talking about their incestuous relationship. Later, the father kept calling up and telling the staff that he was thinking about killing his daughter.

Since then, trash TV has expanded enough to turn the daytime schedule into a waste site of abnormality and amorality. Guests arrive, carrying their ex-husbands and excess baggage, their pathos and their problems.



Ellen Goodman

Then they are summarily disposed of.

We never know what happened to the 12-year-old star of a Gordon Elliott show entitled "My Child Is Underaged And Over-sexed." Or what happened after the reunion staged by Sally Jessy Raphael between four daughters and the father who deserted them 20 years ago.

If talk shows were old-time carnivals, the ringmasters would have some understanding of the performers, some obligation to their ongoing side show. But in a world of revolving guests, the talk show's "guests" are temps, one-night stands sent back to live their lives as best they can.

Jenny Jones didn't put the shotgun against Scott Amedure's chest. She is a former stand-up comic and before this murder, she worried about her guests: "What do we do with the feelings that come up?" But every host, producer, booker, knows that when you deal in surprise, shame, embarrassment, you may also get rage.

Talk shows in the 1990s are like quiz shows in the 1950s. The old quiz shows tricked viewers into believing they were witnessing the real thing, brains in action. The new talk shows trick viewers into believing they are watching real emotions in action. They trick guests with the belief that life and its problem can be resolved in one public hour.

Jenny Jones never knew Scott Amedure's history or Jonathan Schmitz' breaking point. The TV match made between a "secret admirer" and the unwilling, unsuspecting object of his affection was as rigged as any quiz show.

It was rigged against real life. Rigged to treat emotions like entertainment. Rigged to deal with the feelings of strangers, casually, between commercials, with an eye on sweeps week. And now with this gruesome murder, we know that the show was also rigged for disaster.

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Powerful or pretty — pick one

Hillary, what can I say. I feel for you.

Just the other day my son Justin called me a "fat butt," and he's not even a registered Republican — yet.

And yesterday a couple of teenage boys actually barked at me while I was out walking the family canine — future United States Senate material, no doubt.

So don't take it too hard.

In case some of you haven't heard, Spy magazine played a bit of tomfoolery on a group of freshman Republican senators and posed as a publication for GOP teens. Reporters then asked the group if they thought Hillary Rodham Clinton was pretty.

"She's not my type," said Sonny Bono of California. (Just who IS your type, Sonny?)

"She's not a dog, but I — you know — she's not gorgeous. I'd give her a five," said Steve Chabot of Ohio. (Aren't you going to wait for the swimsuit competition, Steve?)

Robert Ney, also of Ohio (Is there something in the water up there?) said he thought Clinton was attractive. But not being able to leave well enough alone, he went beyond pretty, to comment, with a giggle, on the first lady's figure. "She has big hips, but I can't say that."

Sorry, Ney, you already did. Gaffe. Gaffe.

Perhaps Spy magazine overstepped its bounds. But then again, maybe it's time we debate the pretty vs. powerful issue and decide once and for all which is more important. Or do we have to choose?

Is a critique of one's looks a prerequisite for a visible position in politics? When was the last time the media had a field day over Newt Gingrich's less-than-granite jawline,



Cindy Lange-Kubick

his dinner jacket or his Phil Donahue-copycat coiffure?

Someone once said, "Better that a girl has beauty than brains, because boys see better than they think."

Seems Rodham Clinton has acquiesced to the political winds of change and decided that appearing is preferable to doing — softening not only her hairstyle but her politics as well.

News of her latest endeavors center on a mother-daughter get-together in Egypt and redecorating the Blue Room instead of revamping operating rooms. She's gone from policy-making to homemaking.

A recent People magazine photograph shows Ms. Clinton, arms stretched heavenward, looking ecstatically aloft at a particularly pleasing paint job at the White House.

"My one hope was that we could create a more blue feeling in the room, but not make it so blue that it would be dark and shrink the room, especially at night," Clinton told the press.

Yes, I have a dream: the perfect shade of indigo.

But who can blame her, really? In a culture gone mad over appearance, Hillary's revolving hairdos and the front-page media commentary on her personality, looks or lack thereof, are as common as wolf whistles at construction sites and

facelifts in Beverly Hills.

And what a bizarre dichotomy for our daughters. When the most powerful woman my daughter can think of is Madonna, the person she'd most like to emulate is Cindy Crawford and the message she gets from the world in general is to succeed and look damn good doing it, life in the year 2010 doesn't seem real promising.

Unfortunately the missive that seems to have implanted itself in the minds of most young girls, like silicon gel in the Hollywood Hills, is if the going gets tough, take care of your fingernails and your bustline first, finance and biochemistry later.

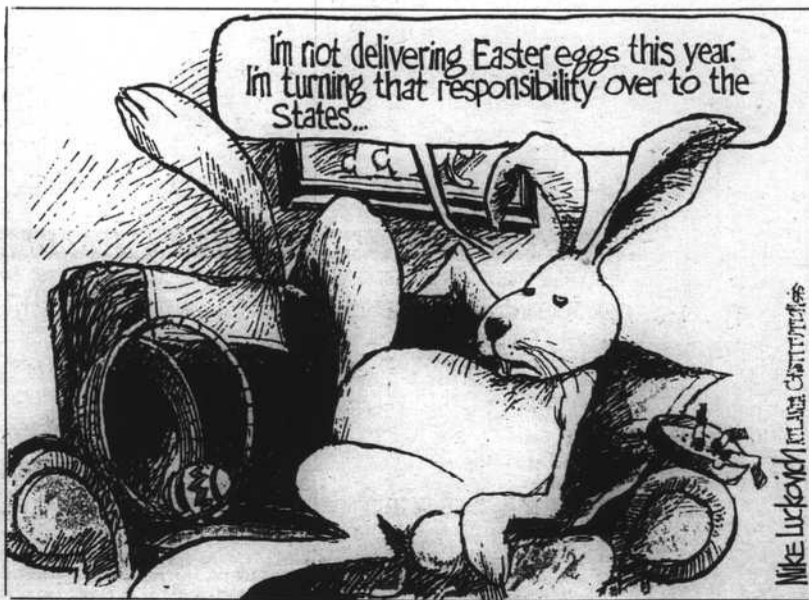
(Many grown women succumb to this philosophy as well. A friend who ran into an old schoolmate, now possessing her doctorate, had this commentary on the encounter: "She'd put on a lot of weight, and she looked old." The message: her brains sapped her looks, and who cares about success if you have to lose your waistline to get it?)

So the verdict is in. Take your pick, Hillary, powerful or pretty, homemaker or health care advocate. We're not about to let you do both.

And the next time my son mutters "fat butt" at me behind my back, I'm thinking of you and Congressman Ney, Chabot and Bono. (Don't you think Sonny looks cute with his foot in his mouth? I'd give him a six if it weren't for his scrawny bird legs.)

By the way, Hillary, I just painted my kitchen white, and it really makes the room seem bigger. And it's a lot easier on my eyes when I open those darn medical bills.

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Mike Luckovich