

Guy Thing

Men and women are more different than I ever imagined as a young man. Back then, I thought my wife and I agreed on everything. Fifty years of marriage has shown me otherwise.

Certain traits must be stamped into us according to our sex, and then translated into seemingly unrelated interests like pretty clothes or the need to burp out loud. I don't know why I like guns and fast cars and my wife probably doesn't know why she loves shoes and jewelry. The differences between men and women surely engender an endearing fascination with each other, but they also cause a lot of arguments.

You can disagree with me if you want. Everyone does. But there are certain topics that men and women will never agree on. I can't tell you how many times in my life I have been halfway into a discussion or quarrel with a woman ... usually my wife ... when I realized I was slogging down a road that went nowhere.

"I don't know why I'm having this conversation," I might say, "a woman wouldn't understand."

"Oh, I understand perfectly," she would say, and then announce her opinion and wonder why I disagree. "If you understood perfectly," I'd say, "you would agree with me!"

Yesterday a rather liberal lady friend and fellow volunteer asked me about my attraction to taking my black powder gun with other guys into the woods and shooting at targets nailed to trees.

"As if they were British Redcoats and you were General Washington's best sharpshooter," she said.

She thinks only government workers should have firearms today and can't see a reason why the rest of us should ever own a gun. All we do is shoot at each other or Bambi.

"It's a guy thing," I replied, dismissively.

"No, you don't," she said. "Don't use 'guy thing' with me. That's all in your head. Give me a better answer."

"Well," I said, "I like holding power in my hands ... and excellent craftsmanship. Pulling the trigger and hearing the flint strike the frizzen. The spark lights the powder and there's a tremendous KA-BOOM! Smoke swirls around me as the 50 caliber ball I molded the night before tears through leaves and pounds into the target. It is simply awe-inspiring. It's wonderful."

She sat there looking at me over the tops of her glasses, obviously unimpressed. Then she said, "Anything else?"

"Yes," I said, groping for something further. "Before the long ride home, I like pissing up the side of a tree as high as I can before I pack everything up. I used to be a champion at that."

"OK," she said, turning back to her work. "It's a guy thing."

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