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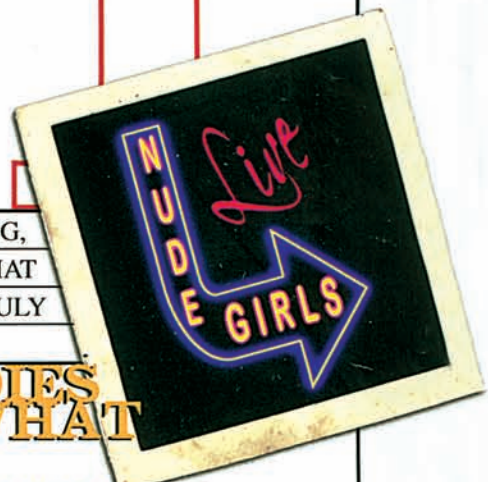
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MEN'S NIGHT

By
Jeff Mustard



WHEN BUDDIES BOND, WHAT REALLY GOES ON?

"MEN'S NIGHT OUT." THE PHRASE ALONE CONJURES UP ASSORTED IMAGES: GUYS DRINKING, SMOKING, PALING AROUND, DOING "GUY THINGS," TALKING ABOUT "GUY THINGS." WHAT EXACTLY ARE THESE "GUY THINGS" AND WHAT EXACTLY IS "GUY TALK"? WELL, TO TRULY UNDERSTAND THIS, WE MUST GO BACK TO THE ORIGATION OF "MEN'S NIGHT OUT."

Somewhere in Africa a few millennia ago, a cave man was putting the finishing touches on hanging a leopard-skin over a recently acquired double-boulder rock couch from Cave-Rooms-To-Go, with interest-free financing for 3,000 years, on a cave wall for his cave wife. Then, suddenly, there was a banging sound at the entrance to the cave. It was Og. Og was here to get his friend, Na Nu. Og to Na Nu: "Uh, uga, buga, ga, ga, ga." Which translated to, "Get your club, we're going hunting." Na Nu to Og: "Buga uga, ya, ya, ya." Which translated to: "Thank God, I was wondering when we were getting out of here, she's driving me nuts."

MEN, IN SEARCH OF MEAT – AND OUT OF THE CAVE

And so, in search of meat, new loin cloths for the women and an excuse to get out of the cave, off the men went. Out on the trail, a few nights out (or back then a few weeks)

for laughs with the guys, some guy talk and some good hunting. This, officially, according to completely anonymous anthropologists, was the origination of "Men's Night Out."

Fast forward a few millennia and, the truth is, very little has changed. Whether single or married (but mostly married), men still have the urge, the need, the primal necessity to get out and hunt, to bond, to grunt to one another, to grab their clubs and go hunting (or golfing as the case may be), grab their pool cues, their bowling balls, a stack of cards or a stash of cigars; they will grab anything to get out of the house, so they can put down the hammer from hanging that knitted quilt grand-nanny gave the wife, or girlfriend, to hang on the wall over that cheesy contemporary couch from Rooms-To-Go.

THE DREADED STRIP CLUB

Let's get one popular idea about guys' night out out of the way from the start. Guys night out might include a stop at a strip club. That's what "most people," (read "women") think anyway when they hear about "men's night out," so we might as well not disappoint them.

The fact is, the strip club is usually only the preferred destination when "men's night out" is the launching of a "single male friend" into another world (some even think another universe): the world of marriage. And then it is the requisite domain of the bachelor party. After all, what better way to wring out every last bit of desire to be with another woman than by parading a bevy of bare beauties in front of the soon-to-be groom, reminding him of fidelity until "death do us part." Guy Lombardo would be hard pressed to fire up an inspiring soliloquy before sending a player out into a field like that, explaining, "Look son, they might be beautiful, but they're your enemy, you cannot touch, a lap dance is strictly forbidden, it would trigger a foul that could hurt you forever, and especially that lovely woman of yours who's waiting to be your wife." Talk about an inspiring send off; it's no wonder he's a world icon.

A NIGHT OF DECADENT CONSUMPTION

The alcohol consumption at this type of men's night would be comparable to marines pulling into port after six months at sea – gargantuan. This of course is intended to partially blur, or better yet completely obliterate, the entertainment and events of the night. After all, alcohol and an enormous amount of it is an exquisite excuse for not remembering what happened. If you can't remember what happened, you can't be guilty about something, nor can you be accused of something. Okay, well, maybe you can be accused of something, but if you can't remember it, well, you can't remember it. So, it's a win-win all the way around.

But Men's Night Out happens a lot, with a lot of friends, married or not, and the events and situations that unfold during these other assorted men's night out evenings during the course of the year may vary. Perhaps they don't involve strip clubs, and maybe they usually involve liquor. It depends upon the men, the night, the venue, whether it's an "occasion" being celebrated, like a "divorce party" in which case we'd be right back at the strip club, welcoming our friend back from his trip to the other universe, the Guy Lombardo speech having been for naught.

THE BONDING PROCESS

So what kind of bonding goes on during men's night out? Well, the significant factors influencing "guys' night out" and the actual bonding banter, along with advice requested and that tendered, has a lot to do with the general age(s) of the guys, what they do for work, and of course their preferred venue for the night. We can draw some general observations and conclusions about men and men's night out. Bowling alley bonding would be different than cigar night bonding given the stereotypical, but somewhat valid perception and preconceived notions of "bowling guys" compared to "cigar smoking" guys, with "bowling guys" being more "blue collar" than the "white collar" cigar smoking guys. But as a clear point of record, it's entirely possible that bowling guys could be cigar smoking guys too, although it's much more likely they are cigarette smoking guys. Bowling alley bonding might be similar to poker night bonding, although poker night bonding could be comparable in some respects to either ball game bonding or billiard hall bonding. Discussion about love life, or lack of it, having a girlfriend or wife, or what one is doing right or wrong to get one, are all valid topics for guys' night out bonding banter.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CRITICAL ISSUES OF THE DAY

There might also be discussion concerning the critical issues of the day, the news headlines, and the latest breakthroughs in technology that affect people, countries, and for that matter, all human kind. This is possible, but not likely, especially during bowling night bonding. Was Einstein really a genius, was Freud really the father of psychology, was Justin Timberlake really the father of Britney Spears' child? Was Geraldo Rivera's venture into that vacant vault everything it was cracked up to be? Should you laser hair off your back or use wax? Pluck nose hairs or use the special shaver extender? Is a guy's girlfriend, or wife, really hotter than the girl on this month's cover of *Maxim*?



THAT IS PART OF THE BEAUTY OF GUYS' NIGHT OUT. ANYTHING GOES, WHICH SOMETIMES MEANS YOU AND YOUR PALS ARE PLAYING CARDS, AND NOT DOING ANYTHING BUT JUST, PLAYING CARDS.



These are questions of significance that can only be pondered during men's night out.

LIVELY DEBATE VS. EXTENDED SILENCE

Sure, men's night out is all of these things and more, including lively debate about cars (which is the best, fastest, coolest,) and sports (from baseball and soccer, to tennis, basketball and football – who is the best, the worst, biggest blunders and why "their team" got robbed). Also there would be plenty of discussion about who has the latest techno toys – from iPod to the advantages or disadvantages of the Blackberry over the Trēo.

During guys' night out guys can be involved in extended lively debate on any one of these topics, or just as easily sit comfortably for extended periods of silence, discussing nothing, one of the reasons they left the cave, or rather the house, to begin with.

That is part of the beauty of guys' night out. Anything goes, which sometimes means you and your pals are playing cards, and not doing anything but just playing cards. You're bowling and doing nothing but just bowling. You're sitting and smoking cigars, drinking a scotch, and doing just that – sitting, smoking and drinking.

It is critical to understand this, for men and their guys' night out forays, simply the engagement of the act, meaning participating in the "bonding experience," is the glue of guys' night out. The mere fact that they are "out" with their buds, doing an "activity" *per se*, is really all that counts. It is entirely possible for guys to have guys' night out and not one thing of consequence be discussed. Nothing personal, no business, no how's the wife, the girlfriend, work, the boss, your future. Although, it is entirely possible, and quite likely, that there would be griping about alimony, rising gas prices and receding hair lines.

The mere act, and fact, that no one is probing or questioning you about "anything" is exactly what makes men's night out men's night out; it remains as much a part of the male DNA as when we were hunting wooly mammoths. It's the reason we originally left the cave and it's the reason we still go out to hunt, play cards, billiards or bowl. ♦

