

Happy Father's Day, Desmond Hatchett

✘ Well, if you don't know who this upstanding citizen is, let me introduce you. This is 33-year old Desmond Hatchett, who has the distinction in the state of Tennessee of fathering 30 children with eleven different women.

In my day, there was an expression that it was easy to be a father, but hard to be a daddy. In today's vernacular, this guy is nothing more than a "babydaddy" or, in other words, according to the Urban Dictionary, a sperm donor.

In 2009, he had 21 children which means he had nine more children since then. He had no problem revealing that at some point he "had four kids in the same year, twice." He's got a "very long and serious criminal history" that includes "multiple assaults, multiple thefts, aggravated assault, multiple evading arrests, and several driving assaults," according to a probation violation report. He has also been collared on narcotics charges and has shown "contempt for the rules of probation and of the court." In fact, his rap sheet runs 14 pages.

This recent headline story is so wrong on so many different levels.

Let me start by addressing the women who voluntarily agreed to "couple" with this guy. What kind of a woman would allow someone like this to be the father of her child? They were not married to this guy. With all the multiple births in one year, they had to have known he was bedding other women. They had to have known about his criminal history. They had to have known that he works a minimum wage job and wasn't likely to be around to support their child(ren). Whichever women had more than one child with him should be doubly ashamed of

herself because she had already known that he wasn't providing for the first child.

In a recent Gallup Values & Beliefs Survey, only 40% polled thought having a baby outside of marriage was morally wrong. Fifty-four percent believed it was morally acceptable. I'm in the 40% minority and I'd really like to hear from anyone in the 54% who thinks it's morally acceptable for this one unmarried man to populate an entire classroom by himself.

He now has the gall to ask the state of Tennessee to give him a hand with his child support payments. He works at one job, receives minimum wage, and his baby mamas receive about \$1.49 a month after the split of his child support which wouldn't feed a goldfish.

This kind of despicable behavior, lacking in all personal responsibility, dignity, self-respect or common sense, is allowed to flourish in our society because, generally, it is no longer shameful to have children born out of wedlock (as it once was) and is even more accepted in the black community where 72% of black babies are born to unwed mothers.

Statistics have shown that "children of unmarried mothers of any race are more likely to perform poorly in school, go to prison, use drugs, be poor as adults, and have their own children out of wedlock."

I can't even imagine the mindset of someone like Desmond Hatchett who not once, not twice, but thirty times has impregnated a woman with no sense of personal responsibility. I don't ever want to understand this type of behavior but I would venture a guess that he's living his own reality tv show. I pray that these 30 innocent children, created by their parents' thoughtless behavior, will skip a generation and become productive, dependable and capable members of society.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

Fathers – Then and Now

✘ My parents had me and my brother late in life (but not by today's standards). When I was born in 1951, my father was 46, my mother 38. By 1960, my father was a widower raising an 8-year girl and a 10-year old boy on his own.

As a child, I adored my father and wanted to marry my "Prince Rochus" and often regally extended my arm instructing him to kiss my hand just as any Princess would request of her subject. Of course, he indulged my childhood fantasy.

I've no doubt that my strong work ethic comes from him. I remember him leaving every evening around 6 p.m. to go to his baking job at Ebinger's Bakery in Flatbush. I don't remember him ever taking a day off. On Saturday nights, he worked a second job in the bakery below our 4-room railroad flat. After my mother died, he needed to be home at night so he changed his shift and I vividly remember him getting up at 4 in the morning to leave for work so he could be back home when we returned from school. I remember waking up and feeling sad and wondering why he had to leave in the middle of the night. He died too soon in 1972, just eleven months after he retired.

He was a simple, decent man with a gentle soul and good heart who was ill-prepared for the task of raising two children. But my father had something that made him rise to the challenge – dignity and love for his children. We grew up and, through education and hard work, have become successful professionals.

I can't say that our lives were reflected in the television shows that were so prominent in the 50s. We didn't live in the suburbs and we weren't middle class, but, I miss those

shows that depicted fathers as strong, loving, figures who worked to support their families. Fathers were the head of households while the women welcomed the role of being the heart of the family.

I grew up with Donna and Alex Stone watching the "Donna Reed Show" and with Jim and Margaret Anderson on "Father Knows Best." Of course, there was Ozzie & Harriet, Leave it to Beaver, and Margie Albright who was raised by her widower father in "My Little Margie." All the fathers in these shows were honorable, decent men whose worst flaw was forgetting a birthday or arriving late for dinner after working overtime and forgetting to call home. These were men who took their responsibility seriously as fathers and they were seen as caring and loving and respected by their tv wives and children.

As the decades went by, there continued to be respectable portraits of fathers in other television sitcoms such as The Patty Duke Show, The Brady Bunch, The Courtship of Eddie's Father, Happy Days, Family Affair and, of course, I Love Lucy. Even Jed Clampett of the Beverly Hillbillies, who was not an educated man, always doled out common sense to guide his family through life's trials and tribulations. Again, the men occupied an esteemed place within the family unit.

But as the years passed, something happened that caused fathers to be unnecessary fixtures around the house, superfluous to the family, and the butt of far too many jokes. Fathers depicted in the "slobcom" Married with Children and in King of Queens, According to Jim, Everybody Loves Raymond, and Malcolm in the Middle are described as "deadbeat," "immature mentally," "lovable but lazy," "childish," and "someone who avoids any responsibility."

If sitcoms are a reflection of society, we're in a very sad state of decline because fathers are routinely depicted as buffoons and wimps who are just taking up space in the home.

Rather than representing fathers as sniveling spineless creatures, they should be portrayed as strong, responsible men who take their jobs as fathers and husbands seriously even in comical situations.

Perhaps this evolution of men's decline in stature on television resulted from the decline of viewing men as integral, necessary components of the family. Despite the fact that men are essential to the creation of a child, more and more women are choosing to eliminate men as quickly as possible after his initial participation in the process. When a man, for instance, has no say over whether a woman has an abortion, his position in the family is rendered moot.

You might say I'm stuck in 50s TV Land where a mother and father were the accepted ideal family, and, you'd be right. But, if it could be done in the 50s, why can't today's sitcoms show strong, noble fathers instead of immature little boys dressed in men's clothing who are incapable of tying their own shoelaces.

I'll admit I'm also stuck with the obviously out-dated notion that not all men are buffoons, as reflected in today's sitcoms, but are responsible, hard-working fathers who contribute to the family and should be admired. Bottom line: I'd choose Ward Cleaver over Al Bundy any day.

To all the men out there who are wonderfully mature, loving, responsible, providers for your families, Happy Father's Day!