

The Gray Lady Has Jumped the Shark

✘ I don't read the New York Times on a regular basis. I may check out a story here and there just to reinforce my belief that, while it may be considered the "newspaper of record," it's still just a part of the lamestream media. I've often hoped they'd call to sell me a subscription so I could say I don't own a bird and, therefore, am not in need of a birdcage liner, but that hasn't happened yet.

While the paper's motto continues to be "all the news that's fit to print," I dare anyone to explain to me why the next story is fit to be told anywhere other than on a third-rate reality tv show.

I heard about the December 17th article appearing in the Weddings/Celebrations section's "Vows" column while watching "Red Eye," which, by the way, is the funniest late night show on television. Anyway, the article describes the recent marriage of former New York WNBC reporter and anchor, Carol Anne Riddell, and John Partilla. The article describes in detail how these two met, fell in love, married, and created one big happy family with their respective children.

They met in 2006 in a pre-kindergarten classroom. Their children went to the same upper west side school. Ms. Riddell described Mr. Partilla's dynamic personality, "He doesn't walk in, he explodes in." Similarly, Mr. Partilla describes Ms. Riddell as a kindred dynamo. "She's such a force. She rocks back and forth on her feet as if she can't contain her energy as she's talking to you."

Sounds great, doesn't it? Well, they both had spouses. The two families became friends, shared dinners, Christmas parties and even vacationed together!

This is the tripe the NYT chose to publish: "But it was hard to ignore their easy rapport. They got each other's jokes and finished each other's sentences. They shared a similar rhythm in the way they talked and moved. The very things one hopes to find in another person, but not when you're married to someone else."

When I read that Mr. Partilla "didn't believe in the word soul mate before" but he does now, I was ready to toss my cookies. When he made that sophomoric statement, did he ever consider his ex-wife, the mother of his children?

The article goes on and details the anguish each suffered and how horribly punished they felt. "Why did someone throw him in my path when I can't have him?" I thought this was the type of drivel daytime soap operas were made of.

We were given the details about how they eventually told their spouses, their separation, their wedding in the clerk's office and subsequent "small ceremony in the presidential suite of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel." According to Ms. Riddell, her "kids are going to look at me and know that I am flawed and not perfect, but also deeply in love. We're going to have a big, noisy, rich life, with more love and more people in it." Wow, I know I'm touched.

Have we, as a society, sunk so low that even the NYT, the supposed "newspaper of record," finds it newsworthy to set forth the sordid details of this alliance? Sure, people split up every day. Some even meet new people while they're married to someone else. But who would reveal, and what newspaper would publish, the intimate details of the destruction of two marriages and two families?

These two, obviously narcissistic, individuals feel compelled to bear their souls and describe in detail their sordid relationship. But what would make the NYT decide to publish this "fairy tale" piece? I'd like it to re-visit these two

utterly selfish human beings in five years to see if their hot monkey love is still in play. My guess: I doubt it.

I skimmed through the 139 published comments. While there were a few "we shouldn't be judgmental" remarks, and a few good wishes for their happiness, I didn't see too much support for the NYT publishing the Riddell/Partilla exposition. One woman whose ex-husband left her for a woman she considered one of her closest friends wrote, "to sugar-coat the destruction of two marriages by telling this story in the Vows column, I find appalling." Ditto.

Like I said, I don't regularly read the NYT, and I have no idea about Devan Sipher, who starts off his article by asking "what happens when love comes at the wrong time?" But, regardless of my opinion of the NYT, I don't get why it would stoop to the level of a Jerry Springer to publish such an exposé. After reading about these two self-centered individuals, I'll venture to guess that their ex-spouses are better off without them. But I'm sure that's easy for me to say. I wish them and their children all the best.

I get that these two obnoxious people found one another. What I don't get is why the editor of the NYT thought their shameful story should be told. But, if you do, God bless you.