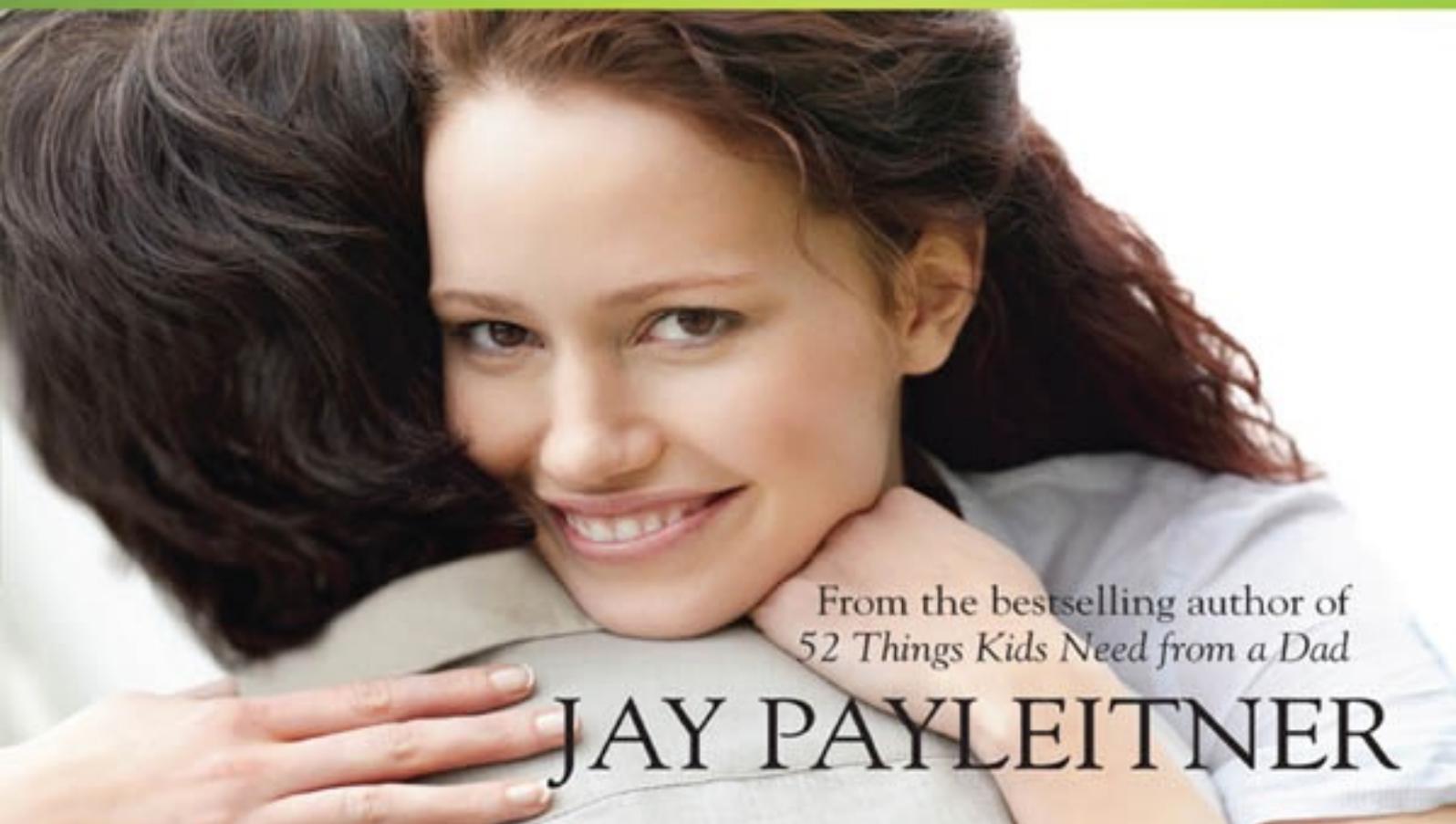


What Wives Can Do
to Build a Stronger Marriage

52 THINGS
HUSBANDS
NEED FROM
THEIR
WIVES



From the bestselling author of
52 Things Kids Need from a Dad

JAY PAYLEITNER

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Endorsements

Praise for *52 Things Husbands Need from Their Wives*

“My husband and I were on the 15-year plan...taking almost 15 years before we began to understand one another. I wouldn’t recommend that plan for anyone. Instead I would wholeheartedly recommend Jay Payleitner’s book *52 Things Husbands Need from Their Wives*. Wives—read it, apply it, and begin today to understand the man in your life.”

—**Kendra Smiley**, speaker and author of *Do Your Kids a Favor...Love Your Spouse* and other books

“As wives, we can choose to be encouragers for our husbands just as much as we can choose to be discouragers. Jay Payleitner gives us the inside scoop on what every husband needs. His biblically based perspective and end-of-the-chapter takeaways make this book a practical relationship builder for any couple.”

—**Karol Ladd**, author of *Positive Life Principles for Women*

“Jay’s giving away our secrets, and we thank him for it. This is an insightful read, directed to women but educational for all of us, and a practical, user-friendly tool for any wife wanting to better understand the creature she’s joined to.”

—**Joe Dallas**, author and speaker

“Very to the point of what a woman needs to know about her man. After reading these 52 insights, you will better understand that your spouse isn’t so weird after all.”

—**Emilie Barnes**, speaker, author, and founder of “More Hours In My Day”

“As military families we spend so much valuable time apart from one another. Knowing how to give my husband what he needs—together or apart—is a treasure. On behalf of all wives, thank you, Jay, for your insight and transparency on the one true gift we all can share—love.”

—**Tara Crooks**, cofounder of Army Wife Network, coauthor of *1001 Things to Love about Military Life*

“Husbands, step up to being the spiritual leader in your homes. Start by seeking first the kingdom of God over your own kingdom, and cherishing your wife. Then give your wife a copy of this book by Jay Payleitner. I guarantee you that your marriage

will be for the glory of God.”

—**Harry W. Schaumburg**, DMin, author of *Undefiled: Redemption from Sexual Sin, Restoration for Broken Relationships*

“This little book is a treasure trove of wisdom and advice for any woman who wants to understand her husband better. Simple (just like your husband) in its approach, it gives an excellent snapshot of what’s inside the heart and soul of a man. I highly recommend it!”

—**Rick Johnson**, bestselling author of *Becoming Your Spouse’s Better Half* and *How to Talk So Your Husband Will Listen—and Listen So Your Husband Will Talk*

“Wives, you have great power to help your husband feel confident as he faces life’s battles. And your encouragement can be a huge asset to him becoming a great husband and father. Jay’s *52 Things Husbands Need from Their Wives* will help you understand your man.”

—**Carey Casey**, CEO of The National Center for Fathering and author of *Championship Fathering*

“Jay has done it again. He continues to give us unique insight into building strong family relationships.”

—**Dan Seaborn**, president and founder of Winning At Home, Inc.

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HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

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Cover by Left Coast Design, Portland, Oregon

Cover photo © Yari Arcurs / Shutterstock

Jay Payleitner is represented by MacGregor Literary Inc. of Hillsboro, Oregon.

52 THINGS HUSBANDS NEED FROM THEIR WIVES

Copyright © 2013 by Jay Payleitner

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Payleitner, Jay K.

52 things husbands need from their wives / Jay Payleitner.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-7369-5485-3 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-5486-0 (eBook)

1. Marriage. 2. Marriage—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Wives—Conduct of life. 4. Husbands—Psychology. I. Title. II. Title: Fifty-two things husbands need from their wives.

HQ734.P3169 2013

306.872'2—dc23

2013012426

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To my bride, Rita—for loving me despite, through, and because of all my faults.

Acknowledgments

I need to thank all the women over the years who have modeled the art and science of being a wonderful wife.

My mom, Marguerite. My sisters and sister-in-law, Mary Kay, Sue, and Chris. My daughters-in-law, Rachel, Lindsay, and Megan. And my own awesomely awesome bride of more than three decades, Rita.

There are also quite a few other women I know who are divinely supportive wives. I am thinking of dozens of Rita's girlfriends from church and the community, from among those sitting in bleachers and volunteering at school, and from the neighborhoods in which we've lived. Also, I've come to really appreciate the wives of all the guys in my men's Bible study groups over the years. Some of you I may have never even met, but your husbands speak well of you!

Beyond my family, individuals who have contributed directly to this project include Geri Fuehring, Gary Sanders, Randy Burggraf, Bob Anderson, Dave George, Dennis O'Malley, Dick Graff, John Hrivnak, John Waters, Mitch Belon, Tom Pate, Terry Jones, and Ron Basar.

Strategic encouragement and support came from fellow author Karol Ladd, my agent Sandra Bishop, and my colleagues Carey Casey and Brock Griffin at The National Center for Fathering. I also cannot say enough good stuff about Paul Gossard, Terry Glaspey, Bob Hawkins Jr., and the entire team at Harvest House Publishers.

I am more than grateful to the pastors and event planners who have invited me to encourage, laugh with, and challenge diverse groups of dads and husbands. I have no idea whether this book—for wives—will lead to my speaking in auditoriums in which I am the only male. Yikes.

Finally, of course, to our heavenly Father, who created marriage as the perfect building block for families, neighborhoods, communities, nations, and our world.

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About the Author

The National Center for Fathering

Make Your Commitment to Championship Fathering

Asking You to Trust Me

I love strong, confident women. My wife, Rita, has always been smart, virtuous, and forthright. Her confidence came after realizing how much she had to offer as a mother and as an advocate for strong families. Today she's an alderman sitting as one of ten council members for a city of about 35,000 people. Rita is the best mom in the world as well as a new grandmother(!), and she makes me a better man.

I have three daughters-in-law. Rachel, Lindsay, and Megan proved they were smart when they chose to marry a Payleitner man. And every moment we spend together as a family reveals an expanse of unique gifts and abilities in each of them.

My one daughter is stunning in her ability to stand up for what she believes and state her case. Rae Anne is beautiful, courageous, and tenacious. She's currently at West Point. Need I say more?

I love these women unconditionally. They each have strengths I do not have.

As you dig into this book, you're going to find that I am a cheerleader for marriage, for husbands, and for wives. God's design for perpetuating the human race is nothing short of a miracle. It's a man and woman who commit to each other for life, work side by side, and sacrifice for each other. Such is the building block of healthy families, neighborhoods, communities, and countries.

As much as I believe in marriage, this was actually a difficult book to write. Because it requires me to talk to women. Usually that's something I enjoy doing. But I'm not just chitchatting here. I'm speaking into their lives, supposedly telling them what to do. In my earlier book, *52 Things Wives Need from Their Husbands*, I felt quite comfortable coming alongside men and saying, "Come on, dude. You know what your wife needs. Stop being a selfish jerk. Just do it. Be the man. Be the husband your wife needs." In my natural tone, no guy is going to be offended by that.

But I can't use that tone with women I don't know. I can't say, "Hey babe, just give your old man what he wants." Yikes. That sounds creepy, doesn't it?

So I figure the first step in gaining your trust is to introduce myself. Hi, I'm Jay. I'm a dad of five and husband of one. And a new grandpa. I'm 55, which seems young sometimes and old other times. In high school I wrestled and did some acting. I was a Sigma Pi at Illinois Wesleyan University. After college, I worked some crazy jobs. (Chapter 5 tells that story.) I married my high-school sweetheart, and we live in the same town where we met. My dad passed away two years ago and I miss him. Mom is settled in to a retirement center. We go to the big nondenominational church on the edge of town, where I volunteer at AWANA and other youth stuff. For our kids, we've cheered and applauded hundreds of games, matches, and concerts and also loved on ten foster babies. I think this is my eleventh book, and I still love hearing from readers and speaking at events.

So there. I'm just a regular guy who looks at old truths in fresh ways and applies them to marriage and parenting. Following in my established tradition, I present 52 things your husband may (or may not) need from you. Worth noting, three or four of these are actually flip-flopped chapters stolen from my book written for husbands. Same issue and same point of potential conflict, but seen from the opposite perspective.

With any luck several of these short chapters will help you connect or reconnect with your husband, which makes it worth my effort and worth your investment of a few hours and a few bucks. If not, let me know. And if I say something boneheaded, let me know that too.

Signed,

Your new friend, Jay

What no wife of a writer understands is that a writer is working when he's staring out the window.

—BURTON RASCOE

A Husband Needs His Wife...

To Slide Over Next to Him

A husband and wife are driving down a country road. They're a few years older than you are now. He's behind the wheel. The pavement and cornfields are passing by. She breaks the silence with a sigh and says, "Remember when we were younger and we used to sit right next to each other in the car?" "I remember," the husband replies after a moment, "but you know, I haven't moved."

It's a story from way before seat-belt laws, but the sentiment still carries a bushel of truth. Men—the good ones like your husband—travel down the road of life with a sense of purpose and focus. We're not out drinking every night. We do our best to bring home a paycheck and be a good father. An affair is not an option. Neither is divorce.

Admittedly, sometimes on the road of life we're preoccupied with getting to the next destination. We watch for speed traps, get miffed at other drivers, and monitor the vehicle's performance. Sometimes we get distracted by a billboard, slow down to see the wreckage of someone else's accident, or take our eyes off the road to watch an eagle swoop over a canyon lake.

But our deepest need on this very real journey is for our bride to slide over close and tell us—just once in a while—that we're doing a good job. That we're appreciated. That you look up to us and need us.

I know that's not easy. Women today are even more distracted than men. You're receiving mixed messages and sending out mixed signals. Your husband wants to give you everything your heart desires, but he's not sure what that is. Some days it's a satisfying career, some days it's a houseful of babies. When you get a \$3000 bonus or commission, we don't know whether to suggest a new washer/dryer or a week in Aruba. Would you rather we cleaned the carpets this weekend or took you on a picnic? Do you want us to be more sensitive and watch more chick flicks? Or would we be more attractive to you if we got a Harley and a bad-boy tattoo?

While you're sorting out your fantasies, we're just two feet away and hoping you'll ask us to join you in the journey. We want to partner in your dream. We can be your own personal cheerleader or your sidekick or your shining knight...if only you would slide next to us and tell us what you want.

So how did we get here—two feet and two miles apart?

Think back not too long ago. Remember that boy you married? The handsome young man who caught your eye. The boy you wanted to kiss, but demurely let him make the first move? The boy who taught you to love in brand-new ways. Romantic

love. Committed love. Crazy love. Eternal love. Silly love. You may be thinking, *Where did that boy go?*

Ladies, he's right there. That boy is inches away. He's looking down the same road and going the same direction. He's committed to sharing your life and sharing your bed. By the way, he's asking the same question. *Where did that girl go?*

Women of strength and courage, don't be shy. Slide over and let him put his arm around your shoulder. You can even ask him to pull the car over. Look into his eyes, maybe for the first time in a long time. Tell him you're glad you married him. Tell him you need him.

Be the girl. Be the boy. Expect no less than to make each other's hopes and dreams come true.

Takeaway

You did not marry to live separate lives.

“Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away.”

—SONG OF SONGS 8:6-7

A Husband Needs His Wife...

To Know His Likes

Here are some things I like: down pillows, sock monkeys, petting doggies, warm feet, a good chopped salad, grilled pork chops, strawberry-rhubarb pie, my entire family all around one table, my entire family all in one pew, bookstores, boxers, brick sidewalks, holding hands with my wife, stopping on the stairs with her one step above for a kiss, comfy jeans, campfires, well-formed quotations, meaningful song lyrics, “The Star-Spangled Banner,” watching my kids compete, beef jerky, black Sharpies, bending paper clips, a good pair of scissors, finding a piece of Scripture that applies to a real-life challenge, lying in the grass on a sunny day, strolling a flea market or art fair with my wife, son, and daughter-in-law, etcetera.

It’s fun to think about the stuff that makes me smile, satisfies a deep need, or moves my heart. I’ve never before created such a list. It feels a little decadent, a little selfish. But really this list is a gift to my bride, Rita. She is already well aware of most of my likes (and dislikes). But some may surprise her. When she sees this list—printed here for all the world to see—that will instantly strengthen our relationship. At least it will if she chooses to use the list to her advantage.

Now some of you are thinking the best way for Rita to use any item on this list is as a bribe or a trade-off. “If she makes Jay pork chops and strawberry-rhubarb pie, then she can spend the next afternoon at the day spa.” “If she makes sure Jay has a supply of paper clips to bend, maybe he won’t notice the dent in the garage door.”

You may even be thinking you should make a list for your own husband so you can use it to con him, distract him, or bribe him into giving you some of the things you like. But that’s not it at all. No doubt, it’s popular to play the game, “If I give him what he likes, he’ll give me what I like.” But that is no way to run a marriage. The goal is to fully integrate the idea of “two becoming one.” A verse that appears in the Bible three times—Genesis chapter 2, Matthew chapter 19, and Ephesians chapter 5—reminds us that “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

United as one flesh? How does that apply here? Maybe think of it this way—*If I give him what he likes, it gives me joy as well.*

Making sense? No? It makes total sense to me, but perhaps that is because I started this chapter out with a list specific to my likes. Many of those items are linked to a connection I have with Rita. Such as when we stand and sing the national anthem. When I catch her eye and we smile across a campfire. When we sit in a pew with our five kids, three daughters-in-law, and grandson between us; we may be literally 20 feet

apart, but we're closer than ever. When I'm about to sign something and she brings me just the right black Sharpie. When she lets me have the good down pillow.

I'm pretty sure that if you make a similar list for your husband, it will all be clear. Don't just do it in your head. Get out a yellow pad or open a new Word doc and just start thinking about what makes your husband smile. Or ask him to make the list with you!

Now even though my list is public knowledge, I urge you to keep yours private. There may very well be a few items that really shouldn't be seen by anyone but you and him. As a matter of fact, I left a few of those things off my list. They're between Rita and me.

By the way, don't forget to make a list of your own to share with your husband. I know he'll appreciate it. It may come in real handy on Christmas, Valentine's Day, your birthday. Or maybe later today.

Takeaway

There are things you know about your husband that no one else in the world knows. Which means you are the best person in the world to fill his needs and desires. Which makes marriage different than any other relationship in the world. All part of God's plan.

“When you love someone, all your saved-up wishes start coming out.”

—ELIZABETH BOWEN (1899–1973)

A Husband Needs His Wife...

To Expect Some Flaws

I refuse to assemble Ikea furniture. I load the dishwasher wrong. I leave newspapers scattered on the kitchen table. A cup of caffeinated coffee after 6 p.m. will keep me tossing and turning in our shared bed until 2 a.m. According to a recent MRI, my knees need to be replaced. I'm not as patient as I need to be. I like my mom's chili better than my wife's. I like dairy products, but they gurgle my tummy, with unpleasant results. I have sharp toenails.

In other words, I am not the perfect husband. As a matter of fact, I have dozens more flaws that I'm not going to reveal in these pages. To be clear, we're not talking about any of the four A's—abuse, adultery, addiction, or abandonment—which go way beyond the definition of “flaw.” Each one of those challenges is a type of brokenness that needs repair. We'll wrestle with some of those issues in later chapters, and more than likely they'll require some professional counseling.

But my flaws—and hopefully the flaws exhibited by your dear husband—don't fall in those categories. Instead, we're more likely to be an occasional thoughtless jerk, pompous blowhard, selfish oaf, lazy bum, or unappreciative dolt. You're occasionally frustrated with us, and rightfully so. But if Rita has been able to put up with me for more than 30 years, I'm thinking you can do the same for the slightly dented package you married.

First, I must say that even though I began this chapter with a partial list of my flaws, don't begin making a similar list for your husband. If it's short, you'll feel bad for judging him. If it's long, you'll stir up feelings that can be very counterproductive.

My recommendation is to wait until one of those minor shortcomings comes to the surface and then deal with it in one of four ways.

Choose to overlook. This is really not as hard as you may think. If once in a while he forgets to use a coaster, wipe his feet, or lower the toilet seat, is it really that big a deal? Is the rare minor infraction worth an evening of tension in the air? If it's a longtime habit and he's slowly improving, don't pounce on the occasional slip-up. And, if he has dairy allergies or a receding hairline, please cut him some slack.

Choose to mention with love. You hate nagging even more than we hate hearing you nag. So—when possible—figure out a way to tell us your desires or point out our flaw in the sweetest way imaginable. Make it a game. Put a positive spin on your instructive instruction. We'll get the message.

“Sweetie Pie, I will make sure we have plenty of your favorite cold beverage on

hand if you'll promise to drop the empties in the recycling bin. Deal?"

"Your mom couldn't come over to make chili tonight, so you're going to have to endure my recipe. But I did get the saltines you like. Okay?"

A word of warning about trying to change your hubby with words that sound positive but really aren't. That can quickly turn into passive-aggressive behavior. If you're making demands through clenched teeth, don't kid yourself. You're not smiling, you're attacking. And that never works.

Choose to turn a negative into a positive. This response allows you to be proactive. Take his lemons and make lemonade. If he prefers his mom's chili recipe, don't get mad. Instead, vow to find a recipe even better than your mother-in-law's. If he constantly loses his car keys, give him a key fob with a remote locator as a gift. If he dozes during Sunday-morning sermons, try attending Saturday-evening service or find a church with a more relevant teaching pastor. When his flaw vanishes you can take half the credit. After all, you're not adversaries, you're partners.

Choose to cherish. Have you ever met a widow who talks about her beloved husband's flaws with a slight smile and a twinkle in her eye? She actually misses the boot prints across her kitchen floor and the whiskers in the sink. She would give anything to feel the irritating scratch of his rough beard on her cheek. Don't expect to cherish your husband's flaws until at least a couple decades of marriage. But Rita and I laugh about how so many of the little things that once caused boorish conflict are now endearing quirks that we truly hold dear. If you've been married just a few years, that's probably hard to believe. But stick it out and you'll be amazed at how a lifetime of loving commitment can change your perspective.

Wives, did you notice that each one of those action points begins with the word *choose*? That's right. When conflict arises, quite often you have a choice to make. When you finally realize your husband isn't perfect, your best course of action is to take a few steps back and remember your vows: "For better or worse." Then carefully choose your course of action. For now, your husband's behavior may not be part of the "better." But if his "worse" happens to be a dirty sink, forgetting to call, or socks on the floor, then you're the luckiest bride this side of the Mississippi. Right?

Takeaway

Your husband is not your problem to fix or project to finish. But if something he does is really irritating, you need to figure out a way to let him know. He really does want you to be happy. The trade-off might be that he'll work hard to change some of his imperfections, if you'll work just as hard to put up with some that cannot be changed.

"The Lord works through deeply flawed people, since He made so few of the other kind."

TIMOTHY B. TYSON (1959–)

A Husband Needs His Wife...

To Condone His Man Cave

I don't have a man cave. At least not in the traditional sense.

Frankly, I'm a little jealous of any guy who has one of those classic basement testosterone laboratories featuring leather sofas and recliners, a massive TV, neon logos, posters of leaping running backs, free flowing beverages, and a pantry filled with chips and salsa. If your husband has such a room and lives anywhere in the Chicago area, have him invite me over for the next Bears-Packers game.

All he has to do is dial 630-377-7899 and I'll pick up.

That number rings in the closest thing I have to a man cave. It's my home office, just six steps off the kitchen. The room is the perfect size for pondering, writing, and warehousing my eclectic collection of stuff. Mostly books. Shelves and stacks of books. There's a laptop, printer, phone, and fax machine. A bulletin board with a hundred pushpins puncturing multiple layers of schedules, photos, personal reminders, ideas, and memories. Beneath and behind my desk is a collection of ancient artifacts, including ten-year-old phone books, CDs, cassette tapes, and even some reel-to-reel tapes from my early days as a radio producer. Office and mailing supplies overflow in one corner. Several elementary-school art projects made by kids who are now in their twenties somehow have become part of a permanent exhibit in daddy's office. A smattering of sports equipment, tools that should be on my workbench, once-sacred theater props, and vocal recording equipment fill in any and all gaps. And, yes, I still own a Rolodex.

It's not really a man cave. But it is my sanctuary. And it is a mess. I've long ago given up cleaning it for guests. We just close the door. And I am more than grateful that Rita is okay with that.

You see, Rita likes a clean house. She has a place for everything and she likes everything in its place. For the most part, I agree. More than once in a while, I'll pitch in and vacuum a few rooms, tackle a sinkful of dishes, and wash a few windows. My specialties somehow ended up to be sweeping porches and scrubbing toilets. In more than 30 years of marriage, I think I've done 90 percent of the porch sweeping and 99 percent of the commode scrubbing. But I am no hero.

What I am is grateful. My office/first-floor man cave is a wreck. I admit it. And Rita doesn't rag me about it. When guests are due, she'll gently close the door. In return, I honor her need to have the rest of the house neat and tidy.

Sometimes—especially when I'm preparing to tackle a big project—I'll spend an entire day reorganizing my office and tossing ancient file folders and audio elements,