

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“I Think I Have More Friends Online Than I do in Real Life”

The email said, “John has added you as a friend.”

I wasn't aware that John was looking for a friend. In fact, I didn't even know who John was. As a Facebook n00b (newbie), I was just learning how to respond to this technologically advanced process of making friends. I clicked on the link for more information and saw a photo of John. His face didn't ring a bell nor did his not-so-helpful description: John Smith, Dayton, OH

I'm not the paranoid type, except when it comes to snakes and the IRS (IRS) which, coincidentally, fall into the same Genus in Linnaeus's Hierarchy of Taxonomy, but I wasn't sure I wanted to be friends with some guy in Dayton who might turn out to be a humophile (people who prey on humorists). At the same time, I've learned from my daughter that your Facebook virility is measured by the size of your friends list. When John's request came in, my friends list was at 1. So I reluctantly clicked “accept” and was instantly BFF (best friends forever) with John from Dayton. I just hoped he was low maintenance.

Friendship is not what it used to be. In my youth, I had real friends. I remember arguing with my neighbor about who had the most friends. For the friend to count, you actually had to have regular contact with them. Acquaintances like the Fuller Brush Man or that weird guy who was always hitchhiking didn't count. It required effort and focus. But I was up for the challenge.

In college, my latent introverted-ness awakened. I didn't want any more friends. I couldn't handle the responsibility of conversation. I think it had something to do with one too many fraternity parties where I was thrust into a crowd of people I didn't know and forced to engage in beer mingling. The conversation always went something like this:

“Great band, eh?”

“Yeah.”

“They rock.”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah.”

It was too hard. And on top of my mingling dyslexia, I seemed to owe all my friends money. So, I stopped collecting friends altogether.

Today, it's different. You can collect cyber friends by the thousands and you never have to talk to them. You don't even have to know them. And yet, interestingly, you find out more about them than you know about your own SO (significant other).

After I created my Facebook page, or more accurately, after my industrious 17-year-old daughter Caitlin at \$15 per hour created my Facebook page, I uploaded my profile information: Married, funny, charmingly handsome male with way too much disposable time. Seemed accurate.

I was then ready to collect friends. All I had to do was click names and invite them. It was like high school all over again. “Mary, do you like me? Y/N.”

The cool thing about Facebook though, is that once you're friends with someone, you get to see all of their friends. So, I could reach out to all of my friends' friends and grow my own gaggle of friends exponentially. BTW (by the way), I'm up to 61 friends and counting. Of course, that's a drop in the bucket compared to my daughter's highly selective list of 167 friends, her friend Molli's 349 friends and John in Dayton's 18,891 friends. LSR (Loser).

But, I must say that my new friends take far less energy. In the old days, I traded baseball cards, played pool and paid good money to maintain friendships. Today, I do nothing and get more friends every day. If I'm feeling particularly frisky, I can even write something on my friend's “wall” (graffiti on their Facebook page) solidifying that relationship forever. Of course in cyberspace, everybody sees everything that everybody else does. So they not only see what I write, I get to see what they write. Good spelling is a must.

One of my first friends on Facebook was my daughter. And yes, she regrets it. When I posted my plans for a new tattoo, she went into exile for a week. However, then I saw what she wrote on her best friend's wall. It said, “How about those boys we saw at the Town Center.”

The next evening over dinner, I casually asked, “What boys at the Town Center?”

She rolled her eyes. Score a victory for the cyber savvy old man.

Facebook may be somewhat superficial and less of a commitment than friendships in the old days. But I've never been so popular. LOL (laugh out loud).

Until next time, just humor me.

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