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Conversations in the ladies' restroom can pay off

By WENDY FARRACE

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Allow me to let you in on a little secret of sociology. Men make deals on the golf course, but women make deals in the restroom. Men watch each other's game. Women monitor time, process, application of cosmetics, and dialogue. I call this the phenomenon of the Potty Mouth.

When I was single, I used this to judge co-workers and would-be pals, and to assess the general social condition in women's facilities. I learned a lot about others' lives from the sacred discussions held therein.

In New York City, I learned before motherhood of the sadness mothers feel as their babies grow older.

In San Francisco, I learned that the table of giddy gals across the restaurant from us was a lesbian bachelorette party, and boy, could they ever party.

In Boston, I learned of a friend's troubled marriage and family situation.

In New Orleans, I received expert career advice from a senior consultant.

And in Stockton, an old friend heard me reveal how wildly in love with Robert I was. I told her I'd follow him anywhere. Because of that conversation, he and I were married six days later and are building a special life together.

However, the revelations and sociological observations that cause such intense introspection or elation are quickly squelched when a 3-year-old boy is inserted into the dynamic. The paradigm of the Potty Mouth takes a dramatic turn and all of the discussions once interesting and profound are suddenly inappropriate.

For example: We enter the Galletto facilities. It is later in the evening. Jacob is silent. I prepare the area for him. Enter three women from the bar. They are talking about their dates. They are extremely impressed. I am alarmed at the direction their talk is taking (although as a single woman, I audibly shared



Wendy Farrace

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similar observations with my gal pals in the facilities).

Oncology nurse, out

I consider speaking up to protect my son's virgin ears when a little boy's sincere little voice asks, "Mommy, are you going pee-pee?"

Well. This is the revelation women don't have to share in the facilities, because we meet there for dual purposes and one of those is never discussed. It's a social rule, and my son has broken it. No need to politely inform the women that there's a child listening to their every word.

Now the sounds of laughter fill the room, echoing in the special way restrooms do. Lovely. Thank you, Jacob.

"Mama? Are you OK, Mama?"

"Shhhhhhhh Jacob, please."

"But, Mama, are you going potty still, or can we go see Daddy now?"

"Jakey, you aren't supposed to talk so loud in the potty." (See? Social conditioning starts early. That's why men go to the golf course to talk -- no mothers to shush them.)

"I'm sorry, Mama. Mama, you're my girl."


"Awwwwwwwwww!" echoes around the room. The women from the bar are now in love with my son.


And so am I. I think I would endure just about any kind of humiliation to feel the kind of elation I feel when Jacob says something as wonderful as that. In one instant, the embarrassment is gone and we emerge to wash our hands triumphant.


I smile proudly at the women from the bar. I know they are there that night to work on obtaining what I have. A remarkable boy who has mastered the highest form of Potty Mouth discourse, and a fantastic man waiting for us in the restaurant whose nuptials to me were secured after a supposedly "secret" Potty Mouth discussion.

Yes, in the sociology of women's restrooms, many mysteries and secrets are shared and learned. I happen to be living proof of the power of the Potty Mouth.

Farrace is a Modesto resident. She has served as a visiting editor on The Bee's editorial board.

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