

AASP stands up for rights of singles

At the end of a recent Tri-Cities event, a married woman in my party surveyed the room, scrutinizing the crowd, and remarked, "Well, there certainly are a lot of unescorted women here." Because that night I was with a gentleman friend, she no doubt felt safe in commenting on the women alone.

What I was thinking, however, was that at most events, I, too, am one of those "unescorted women." What do married women expect those of us without a resident escort to do? Stay at home the rest of our lives?

Perhaps married women, such as the woman I was with, are just lucky to have that full-time escort, they have extraordinary forbearance or perhaps they are doormats, the likely distinguishable traits separating the married and the unescorted.

Many women, however, simply never found the right guy. Many thought they'd found Mr. Right, but he turned out to be Mr. Wrong. Woman also outlive men.

At any rate, many women unwilling to be walked over are likewise unwilling to stay tucked away until the obligatory escort comes along to put them in the light of society's approving eye.



People, Box 65756, Los Angeles, CA 90065.

Serendipity, no doubt, if not providence.

This organization AASP seeks to do for singles what AARP has done for senior citizens — promote the well-being and civil rights of a group of adults by giving voice to a previously unrepresented constituency.

Until AASP, no national organization had made marital status discrimination and the rights of single people its top priority. But now AASP files legal briefs in important test cases. It works with the media to change public opinions. It provides testimony when legislators need information about marital status discrimination and advice to elected officials and corporate and leaders about the needs of singles.

In Tennessee, 40.8% of the population is unmarried. Eighty million unmarried adults live in the United States.

Despite these large numbers, society continues to stigmatize people who are unmarried. Single adults are viewed with suspicion and considered selfish. Divorced people are thought of as failures and persons of weak character. Couples who choose domestic partnership rather than marriage are frowned upon. Single parents are considered handicapped.

Years ago in Johnson City, for example, when I became a single mother, the mother of my older daughter's best friend no longer allowed her daughter to play with my daughter.

When benefit compensation is considered, singles are paid roughly 25% less than married workers. Many landlords discriminate against singles. Most insurance companies lump the unmarried into one high risk category and charge higher premiums, stereotyping singles rather than considering individual lifestyles. Credit discrimination still exists.

Mainly, marital status discrimination contributes to the notion that a person must be married to be complete.

Yet a person does not have to be married to be a successful and contributing member of society and, certainly, not to be happy. What's more, self-worth does not hinge on marital status.

Marital status, consequently, should not hamper civil rights. Nor should respect and dignity be withheld from the unmarried. And the unescorted should be welcomed.

Any adult may become a member of AASP by making a tax-deductible contribution of \$10 or more. Knowing the social pressure for everyone to marry, AASP promotes freedom of choice of individuals in their pursuit of happiness, and that means going out to Tri-Cities events unescorted.

Nellie McNeil is a Kingsport resident.

Join AASP

The American Association for Single People is a nonprofit and nonpartisan association promoting equal rights for unmarried adults, couples, parents, and families.

AASP is the only national organization which makes ending marital status discrimination its top priority.

We are a national voice for unmarried workers, consumers, taxpayers, and voters.

UnmarriedAmerica.com — our website — is the most authoritative source of information for and about single people on the Internet.

Count me in. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:

[]\$10 []\$25 []\$50 []\$ ____

Name _____

Address _____

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