

NO RESPECT

(A Father's Day Meditation)

Rodney Dangerfield became a stand up comic at age 19. He failed! Then he became a singing waiter for 9 years, but was fired. Then he gave up show business and started selling aluminum siding to support to support his wife and family. He later said that he was so unsuccessful that when he quit his job he was the only one who knew it. He began a new career in the 1960's working as a salesman during the day and a stand up comic at night. Finally he hit upon a stage persona that made him famous. Unfortunately, most men could easily relate to Rodney - "no respect". The catch phrase, "I can't get no respect" became an integral part of his self deprecating routine. In 1981 he was awarded a Grammy for his album "No Respect". He died Oct. 5, 2004, and his tombstone reads: "Rodney Dangerfield . . . There Goes The Neighborhood".

In a way, the fame of Rodney Dangerfield provides a sad commentary on American society. The fact that so many men can relate to the theme of "no respect" says something sad about America. Rodney's jokes would not have been funny 200 years ago. Men like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams were deeply respected. School children were taught to admire, respect, and emulate our "Founding Fathers". Every school used history books that made sure each student understood how important these men were to the founding of our great nation.

Then came a deliberate, but subtle omission, of historical information about America's godly heritage. Later these American heroes came under attack as slave owners who lived profligate lives. Paul Lussier, for example, has written a book titled "The Last Refuge of Scoundrels" in which he portrays our founding fathers as nothing but a gaggle of self serving egotists. Even worse, a new Visitor's Center in Washington D.C. cost tax payers \$621,000,000. The over budget government waste is a minor problem. The real problem is that our tax dollars are being used to rewrite our history. For example, the Visitor's Center states that our national motto is "E Pluribus Unum", (Out of Many One). Our real national motto is "In God We Trust". But references to God and our religious heritage have been systematically expunged.

But rewriting our nation's history is only part of the problem. Jim Dobson, in his book "Bringing up Boys", points out at least four sources of pressure today that are attacking manhood. # 1 - The Women's Liberation Movement. # 2 - Gay activists. # 3 - Mass media. # 4 - The internet. Those of a previous generation did have had a positive image of men in general and fathers in particular. TV programs like Leave it to Beaver, or Bringing Up Father, reflected societal thinking at the time. Today, unfortunately, fathers suffer from negative propaganda that is so much a part our American media. Fathers are routinely depicted as balding buffoons, child molesters, and individuals who deserve no respect. No wonder Rodney Dangerfield was so popular.

The idea of a special day honoring fathers is credited to Sonora Smart Dodd. Her father was a Civil War veteran who raised his six children as a single parent. At her urging the YMCA in Spokane, Washington observed the first Father's Day on June 19, 1910. Though a series of presidents and prominent men supported Father's Day, it was not recognized as an official holiday until 1972 under the presidency of Rich Nixon.

Like most of you, I had a wonderful father. I think of him almost every day and miss him more than words can say. The idea of giving him "no respect" is out of the question. Even if the Holy Bible did not command me to honor my father, I would eagerly do so with great enthusiasm and no hesitation whatsoever.

The sad legacy that made Rodney Dangerfield a famous man did not happen overnight. Neither will it be corrected in a single day. The greatest journey, as you know, begins with a single step. So we don't have to change Hollywood to honor our fathers. We can do that every day of our lives. We don't even have to change the politically correct criticism of men that has become fashionable in this generation. We can give respect to our fathers right now! We can even honor any man we choose. So, to all our fathers, please have a HAPPY FATHERS DAY!