

THE JOPLIN GLOBE
REFLECT

11A

Sunday, August 29, 2004

Coming soon — ‘Last Amish comic survivor makeover!’

Among the accomplishments of which I'm most proud are things I haven't done.

For instance, I've never been divorced. I accomplished this impressive achievement by not getting married. I could have said "I do" to several wrong guys by now, but the last thing the world needs is more ex-husbands walking around, so until a right guy asks, I count my single status as a win-win situation.

Also, I've never gotten a tattoo. No offense to those who do have them, but I have yet to see one that didn't appear to be an impulse buy. My forbearance has spared me having to explain to others why having "I love Jerry Orbach" indelibly etched on my thigh seemed like a good



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idea at the time.

And, perhaps most impressive of all, I've never sat through a single episode of "reality television."

I'm not knocking those who watch this rubbish — we all have our guilty pleasures. Mine are People Magazine and Ben & Jerry's Coffee Almond Fudge — not necessarily in that order.

I just think the term "reality television" is misleading, so they should call it something else, like "People Who Will Bark For A Dollar" television.

Take for example the "makeover" shows (OK, I have caught snippets while channel-surfing). Some poor damsel's "before" photos convince producers that she is just unattractive enough to need a makeover; but not so unattractive that she can't be fixed. She spends months being treated to lots of plastic surgery — and invariably seems surprised that surgery actually HURTS.

There are the requisite intrusive and gory shots of her swollen and bandaged face (and body) post-surgery, and finally the cheesy "reveal" event, where all her loved ones ooh and

ahh over her miraculous transformation.

Am I the only one who finds all this fuss demeaning to the "makeover-ee"? Family and friends go ON and ON about how amazing she looks, the underlying message being that she must have been a truly sorry-looking hag before. Boy howdy, that's the way to make a girl feel pretty — let her in on what everyone has been saying about her behind her back.

Another so-called reality situation is the fish-out-of-water show, in which, I am told, rich girls play poor, or farm kids move to the city, or the cool mom trades places with the sensible mom. Gee, do you think the farm kids will find Los Angeles a little weird? The suspense is killing me.

Finally there are the "survivalist" shows, to which a male friend of mine is tragically addicted, and which apparently exist to put people in dicey situations and see how they handle themselves. Drop them on an island with only tree bark and bird poop to eat, and watch the fun begin.

The hurdle to my willing suspension of disbelief is that for every sunburned competitor, there are 20 cameramen and audio guys, so the

idea that they are cut off from civilization is a stretch. A contestant with any brains need only bring enough cash to bribe stagehands into sneaking him the occasional Milky Way.

The most absurd part of these shows' premise is that we are witnessing how "real" people behave in "real" situations. Hell-OOOO! I don't know about you, but boy, if I had a nickel for every time I found myself on an island with a bunch of strangers. ... And do they honestly expect us to not notice that the presence of cameras actually alters people's behavior? Or do we think these jugheads go clothing-optional to impress only each other?

Now, if they just handed each participant his own video camera, and the crew left the island and came back a week later and aired the results, you could almost legitimately call that "reality" television. And what TV producer wouldn't love having a dozen different camera angles of the tribe voting on which self-absorbed whiner to cannibalize?

Seriously, even I would TiVo that. *Marian Kelly resides in Seneca, is a standup comedian and writes a column for this newspaper.*