

Jayne Through The Looking Glass
Laying Waste To The Tip-Of-The-Iceberg Effect,
And Becoming a Truth Seeker, And A People Lover

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“Be willing to look past what you think you see. There, you will find the truth, and experience the reality of human existence, and the beauty that lives there.”

Life is a mirage. Rarely is what or who you see a true representative of what is really there. We have become a people of masks and misrepresentations. We have also become a people who, in bandwagon fashion, routinely attack others, rarely understanding much about the person, or people we are attacking. We have learned that angry verbal attacks, social bullying, and political division can act as a catalyst that deceptively convinces us that we have a voice, and in misguided fashion, that we are influencers.

Membership has its privileges, and the protection of the community is essential. To stand alone can leave one open to attack, and defenseless. The safety of the crowd provides inclusion, and acceptance. We need that. It provides a semblance of power, and the illusion of the fight for social justice, and the bigger picture. We all want to feel as though we matter, and that in some small way, we are significant.

Belonging and social integration, regardless of what must be surrendered to maintain membership, is crucial. The safety of the crowd has given way to a herd mentality, which is often void of critical introspection, and rational understanding of the bigger picture. We, unfortunately, have a tendency to base our criteria for membership on curb appeal, and contrived optics. We rarely, if ever, look beneath the surface. Collectively, we disregard the fine print. Today’s worldly influencers are masters at creating social and political mirages. They can lure you into a world that is enticing, but so often, empty.

Following the crowd, and being part of the influencers’ agenda makes you feel as though you belong. The trendsetters have you believing that you are actually members in something you firmly think you believe in. Unfortunately, few of us ever take the time to look beyond the initial presentation, and try to understand what is really happening. The predilection to accept unproven and poorly researched information leads to emotional reactions, often void of the intellectual processes which are necessary to understand it. Those quick-triggered reactions

can be hurtful to the targets of our criticism. We have become imperceptive ambassadors of anger and pain.

As we blindly follow the trends, and those who we believe are setting them, we have become slaves to our own propensity to not look beyond the surface. This happens, not only with regard to social issues, but as we harshly judge others, long before we understand who they are. Membership comes with promises, curb appeal and optics; glitter and lights; hello Hollywood! Soon, however, the promises are exposed, the optics fade, and the glittering lights go dim. Hollywood isn't accepting members of the herd. If we are going to survive, we need to learn to go deeper, and find the real meaning not only in the social\political world, but of more importance, in each other. It's time to realize that until we learn to understand, love, and accept each other, as the sacred individuals we are, we will live, and eventually die, in the mirage.

I was only a very young boy when Marilyn Monroe stole the hearts of a nation. Monroe was typecast as a sex symbol, and played the role well. It was an alter ego she had to master if she was going to survive in the Hollywood studio system in the 1950s. Comments about Marilyn Monroe at that time had very little to do with her intelligence, or her humanity. All were focused on her body, and the way Hollywood coerced her to use it. She became a master at deception, and misdirection. Her survival depended on it. It, however, eventually consumed, and destroyed her.

I remember my father sitting me down to telling me the person I was seeing was just a character that she played, and beneath that tinsel-town impersonation was a real person. He made it clear that I should look beyond what I saw, and spend some time learning about that person. He said that when I did, what was being shown to me would become very small, and that learning about someone else as they really are, was the way to treat people correctly. Norma Jean Baker died of a drug overdose in 1962. My father used her death to show me what the loneliness caused by others' inability to understand who she really was did to her, and how alone she must have felt as a result.

During that time, another American sex symbol was taking center stage. Jayne Mansfield, like Marilyn Monroe, was an intelligent sensitive person, who was typecast as a sex symbol, and viewed as nothing more than that. There was little focus on her reported ability to speak five languages, her high IQ, and her training as a classical violinist and pianist, not to mention her love for her family. We never

know the more intricate details of someone's life, until we take the time to look a little deeper. Making judgments based upon appearance, and other often insignificant variables, usually leads to conclusions that are inaccurate, inappropriate, and hurtful.

A child of eight years, I, following my father's lead, decided to look past Jayne Mansfield's persona, and find Vera Jayne Palmer. When we take time to do so, a person's intangibles, and the more personal parts of their life, begin to take shape, dispelling the superficial public avatar, and exposing the beauty that lies deep inside each of us. As I looked deeper into this beautiful soul, something wonderful happened. I discovered more about the wonder that lies in all of us, and this very special woman. Even at the age of 10, it began to transform me into a person willing to look. That may have been the best gift of all.

As fate would have it, on the evening of June 29th, 1967, the world lost Vera Jane Palmer. That loss would set the stage for an event that would become life-changing, for me, and set a new direction for the way I would live my life. Following her passing, Jayne Mansfield was interred in Fairview Cemetery, in Pen Argyl, Pa., beside her father Herbert Palmer. Pen Argyl was approximately three miles from my own home in Roseto, Pennsylvania. It was time for me to go beyond simple newfound understanding of the woman, and do something for her. This is what happens when people are willing to take a loving, deeper dive into another's life.

So, on July 3rd, 1967, I, along with a close friend, decided that we would take our bikes on the three-mile journey, and attend Vera Jane's funeral. Since we knew a back way into the cemetery, and also many of the homeowners near the cemetery, we were able to get close enough to view the proceedings. Life changed for me as the service progressed. What began as simple admiration for a public figure, grew into and enhanced understanding of that person, and finally, a life-to-life connection, distant as it would be, and void of fanhood. I became a truth seeker, a people lover.

It's funny how life can progress. The beautiful woman behind the sex-symbol avatar, changed my life. The simple decision to transcend the superficial, and make a commitment to know someone better, grew out of the willingness to look past the sex symbol, and find the woman. What we typically see in another person, is usually the tip of the human iceberg. It's time for us to embrace the willingness to give others a chance to show us who they are, and to do so without fear of ridicule

and pain. Speak ill of, and to no one. Be willing to be a person who looks deeper. Be willing to look past the visual, and give others a chance to shed their protective avatar. It's not only about understanding who people are, but also about learning to understand who you are. Be a truth seeker, and give others that chance. Become a people lover. Love everyone. When you do, you will redefine the entirety of your existence. In the process, you may find your own candle in the wind. God bless you, Vera Jane Parker!