

Divorcees battle loneliness and gloom

By CINDY JACOBSON
Special to The Battalion

One toothbrush is thrown in the bathroom drawer, and now it only takes one plate to set the table. He took his pipe and Nikes, she took her needlepoint and electric hair- curlers.

It's called divorce from the "D" for depression to the "E" for emptiness, almost every divorced person knows the devastating effects a divorce causes.

Ann Brinkley, ex-wife of network

newsman David Brinkley, said, "Divorce is a rotten thing to go through — and rotten to live with after it's finished."

So far this year, 784 Brazos County couples have purchased marriage licenses. Yet last year, 528 couples filed for a divorce, 441 of which were granted, according to the files in the District Clerk's office.

IF THIS TREND continues, for every two marriages in this area, there will be one divorce.

What are these divorced people saying?

— "I had a vision of being the perfect housewife. I planned to go to school, work part-time and keep house. I was going to be everything," Jean said.

— "My wife and I began to lose touch. I work offshore with Gulf and she's a nurse. I was talking ship; she was talking nursing. And neither one of us gave a damn about what the other one was saying," Bob said.

— "He was irresponsible. I paid the bills, controlled the pocketbook and decided what to buy. I was even earning the highest salary," Laura said.

THERE YOU HAVE it. Three common causes for the high number of divorces: unrealized expectations, a lack of communication and a lack of role differentiation.

The three divorced individuals above asked to remain anonymous, but their problems are so familiar that the average couple has already been introduced to these phenomena.

The first divorcee, Jean, is a 25-year-old student at Texas A&M University. After being married for five years, she and her husband decided that their marriage had failed.

"He just wasn't ready to be married. He still wanted to run around with his friends, plus there are so many young people around here to run around with," she said.

"I WANTED to be married. I wanted companionship above everything else," she explained.

"At first, we did a few things separately. Then it got to the point where we never saw each other. He went out with his friends and I stayed home — feeling like some kind of martyr," she said.

"He would probably say that I was a horrible housekeeper, but I couldn't go to school, work and keep house too unless he helped. But he had never been taught that. He felt that women should handle all the household chores," she said.

In formulating her early visions of married life, Jean never anticipated difficulties in fulfilling her house-

hold obligations, nor had she expected her husband to have a different interpretation of marital commitments.

AS HER EXPECTATIONS waned, so did her marriage.

RESULT: Divorce.

Two middle-aged men were sitting at the bar in the Ramada Inn, drinking scotch and water and smoking Winstons.

"I spend a lot of time in bars," the man minus a wedding ring said. "I do that because I'm lonely. I'm look-

A SMILING 27-YEAR-OLD woman was sitting at the bar in Fish Richard's Half Century House.

"What do I think about divorce? I think it s---! I don't even want to tell anyone that I've ever been married. It's like a Scarlet Letter," Laura said.

"I was married for three years. I was the bread winner and decision maker. My husband didn't care if I took care of everything — he was too irresponsible," she said.

still not emotionally equipped to withstand the rigors of divorce," he said.

Edwards said that it takes about a year to get adjusted to new lifestyle. During that year, divorced individuals will confront some of the most difficult times in their lives.

For Jean, divorce meant giving up her family.

"When you've been married for five years, you and your husband become a little family. When he

much money they are paying them," she said.

"They may be sad on the inside, but on the outside, they make a joke of it," she said.

Laura, the 27-year-old divorcee said that some women start drinking a lot and begin looking for a new man.

"They try to find someone fast to reassure them that they still attractive to men," she said.

Edwards recognizes these and warns against them.

"Some people go through a kind of adolescence. They engage in sexual smorgasbord. At that time they don't value themselves much," he said.

"Divorced persons may be involved in many superficial relationships just to avoid the feeling of being alone," he said.

YET THERE ARE some ways to cope with divorce. The most important thing to do is discover yourself — realize your own self-worth.

"A counselor helped me set my goals," Jean said. "I was longer the wife of a man with his Ph.D., but a rather a woman working on her Master's."

Laura found herself going to auto repair stores herself and changing out tires for her car. She was learning that she was capable of doing odd jobs and the house as any male she knew.

Jean and Laura also depend on various projects to keep their minds off their divorce — leaving less free time to think about being alone.

EDWARDS SUGGESTED involvement in community organizations and activities could be a effective way to cope with divorce.

Some groups, such as Fish Without Partners, deal specifically with the needs of the divorced.

"Divorce recovery groups help people understand what is happening to them," Edwards said. "Individuals can find consolation in sharing their feelings and finding that other people are experiencing the same things."

William C. Lipsey, a local attorney said that in Texas, a living together can break up into any legal complications they enter into a legal bond, a joint checking account.

If a couple is married by common-law, however, they can file for divorce to settle child custody support and property matters. They are unable to settle the matter of court.

To be considered married common-law, a couple must — Cohabitate.

— Have the mutual intent to marry; consider themselves married even without written contract.

— Present themselves to the public as husband and wife.

HOWEVER, EMOTIONAL THE dissolution of either a cohabitational relationship or a divorce have the same impact.

Michelle speculated that the relationship with Phil ended. The effect would be as devastating as a divorce would.

Considering the advantages and disadvantages of cohabitation would these people repeat the course of action?

JOE SAID YES. "I have feelings about living with a care about. And in regard to past experience, I feel that I'll be from it and I'll feel more secure relationships in the future. I made a mistake and I learned from it. The mistake wasn't living with Joe, the mistake was the relationship."

ANOTHER COMMONLY STATED advantage of living together as opposed to marriage is the hassle-

to our families and friends that we are making a commitment and we plan to do our best to work at it.

"When you live together, you make a commitment to each other, but not to anyone else."

Any skeptics in the crowd? Yes — parents, to name a few.

Michelle's mother asked, "But what will you tell your friends?"

And Phil's dad remarked, "Well, you know sex isn't all there is."

JOE'S PARENTS DISAPPROVED of him living with his fiancée, but he tried to be as open with them as possible about their relationship by discussing with them any questions they may have had.

As to be expected, most churches take a stand against cohabitation. Dr. Kenneth Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church in Houston, said some people live together because they believe it to be less costly and less confining. Also, they think they are less likely to be hurt.

But in Chafin's opinion, that does not justify cohabitation. He said the couple will experience the same adjustments and problems as a newly married couple. The major difference is the quality of the relationship.

"The casual relationship doesn't work out the way people expect it to most of the time, because it lacks three important ingredients: permanence, commitment, and love."

Michelle said, "I want to get married because it will be more than me saying to him, 'I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you,' but rather it will say

ing for friends — companionship; nothing more than that.

"Why did my marriage bust up after 27 years? Because we lost touch. I'm a seaman and my job kept me away for months at a time. My wife and I developed different interests," Bob said.

"FOR INSTANCE, I love sailing. I enjoy sailing. I enjoy taking my son to sailboat races, but my wife never wanted to go along. The other families there seemed to have a common bond, while I felt out of place without my wife being with me," he said.

"And another thing, she always belittled my job — but that's because she didn't know what my job was about," Bob continued.

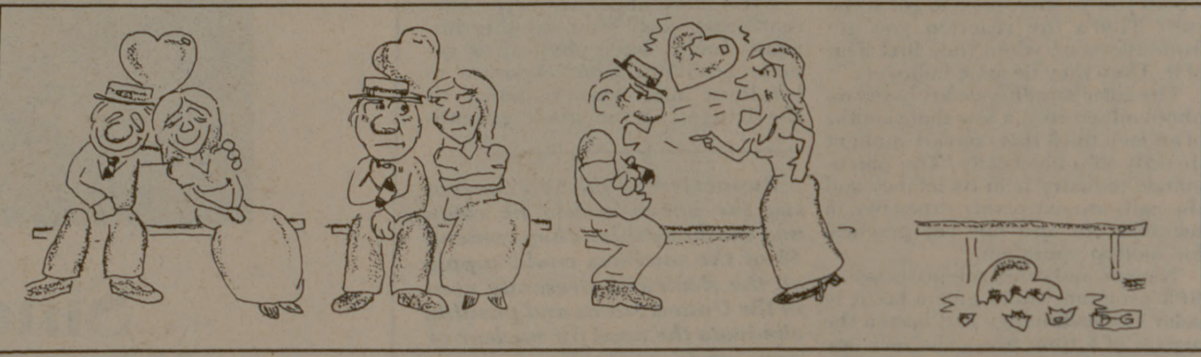
What's the problem here? This couple lacked communication. He did not listen to his wife talk about her work and she did not care to know about his. They had their own jobs, hobbies and interests and never discussed or shared any of them.

RESULT: Divorce.

Hundreds of individuals are finding themselves in this similar situation. Some people turn to family and friends to help them get through the rough times and others seek professional counseling.

Local psychologist and marriage counselor Dr. Tom Edwards has talked with many couples contemplating or undergoing divorce.

"PROBABLY, THERE IS nothing more devastating to a person than divorce. Although divorce is very common and generally accepted in our society, people are



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"Quality First"

Cohabitation for testing, convenience

By CINDY JACOBSON
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Living together — a test or a tease?

MANY COUPLES VIEW cohabitation as a testing period before marriage and some people view it as sharing space and sex.

One 25-year-old, Joe, said that while some people may only think cohabitation is convenient sex and a way to save money, the experience proved to be beneficial for him.

Joe and his fiancée agreed to live together before marriage to test their relationship and learn everything they could about each other before they made the final commitment.

After six months the couple decided they were incompatible and the engagement dissolved.

YET JOE MAINTAINS that cohabitation was a positive educational experience for him. "I learned some things about myself that I had never realized before, and I found out what it was like to live with someone — to be responsible for them," he said.

Another couple who decided to live together found the arrangement comfortable and the end result was successful. In fact, they are getting married next April.

Initially, they had not considered marriage as their ultimate goal. Their primary reason for living together was convenience.

Phil and Michelle said, "It seemed natural to live together since we were constantly together anyway. It wasn't practical to keep two separate apartments."

ARE THERE advantages to cohabitation?

MICHELLE SAID, "I want to get married because it will be more than me saying to him, 'I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you,' but rather it will say

to our families and friends that we are making a commitment and we plan to do our best to work at it.

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