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**Subject:** Re: Misplaced priorities

The NYE anecdote is relevant only to our previous discussion, re: division of labor in married (or long-lived) couples, and the accompanying atrophy (on the part of one spouse or another) of skills that are more pronounced in one's partner. The scene: Vincent's On Camelback (mine and Carolyn's favorite upscale restaurant -- home of the famed Taco Tower appetizer and unbelievably delicious raspberry or chocolate souffle desserts -- visits to which are generally reserved for special occasions) The time: last Wednesday evening (August 12, 1998) We have just finished dinner, the splendor of which was somewhat dimmed by finding out that Taco Towers are off the menu until the fall (especially heartbreaking to one Arizona Joe, who has been known to have one order as an appetizer, and then another as a main course...), but redeemed in no small measure by an exquisite raspberry souffle dessert. Carolyn pays, as always since 10/96, but Joe does his part (as always) by calculating the tip (Carolyn has done no math since she and Joe started dating in 11/88). Joe and Carolyn rise from the table, Joe flushed with gastronomic contentment. We near the exit where the host(ess) prepares to bid us adieu. Carolyn suddenly stops, as if struck by a bolt of inspiration, and squeezes Joe's forearm to the point where he almost cries out. With a Rauchian look of prescient triumph on her face, she turns to the host(ess) and says: "Are you taking reservations for New Year's Eve 2000?" Joe barely has time to begin to be embarrassed by what he assumes is an absurd question when he is shocked to hear the host(ess) reply: "Why, yes, we are." The Freeman/Rauch couple duly makes its reservation and sleeps peacefully that night knowing that even if, as a fascinating article in a recent edition of Wired suggests, the nation's (world's?) power grid collapses on Jan. 1, 2000 and the death of civilization thereafter ensues, we will go out on a very fine gastronomic note. Now I ask you -- given the actuarial tables and the fact that I am 8 yrs. older than Carolyn to begin with -- why I should ever trouble my mind with a logistical, scheduling, or domestic organizational detail for the rest of my natural days? I appear in these matters to be in good hands... After hearing a more confused oral -- scratch that -- verbal version of this same episode, Kevin deflated my argument somewhat by positing that, even if I weren't married to Carolyn, it would never have occurred to me to make a reservation for dinner 16 1/2 months in advance, and therefore the incident can't really be cited as evidence of atrophying life-management skills on my part (the old "you can't atrophy what you never had to begin with" argument). He is right, of course, but nonetheless you surely see my point? Joe

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