

Hair Color and Gender Don't Determine IQ

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At a recent luncheon meeting with a group of friends known as “Four Blondes and a Barb,” the topic arose — as it often does — of dumb things we have done. Margie, whose blondness masks a superior intellect, actually admitted to dialing a phone number on her TV remote control. “I was under stress,” she insists.

While I haven't yet committed that particular dumb act, I could have one-upped Margie by telling her about the time I spent 20 minutes unsuccessfully searching for my car in a monster mall parking lot. I was actually walking to a phone to report it stolen when I remembered that my vehicle was in the shop and I was driving a rental car.

Those acts notwithstanding, we flaxen-haired females get a bum rap because it's not hair color and gender that cause humans to do dumb things. Take, for example, non-blond husband Ray who swears that his dumbest act was listening to a financial planner (also a non-blond male) whose fiscal advice consisted mainly of three words: “Just sit tight.” On occasion, when referring to our swiftly declining mutual funds, he assured us: “They will go back up.” And Ray and I are convinced they will — just as soon as hell freezes over.

When it comes to dumb acts committed by anonymous experts, I need look no further than my computer. Have you ever used Word's grammar check? I'm pretty sure that some dark-haired foreigner — way smarter than I am in everything but the English language — was in charge of that program. The suggested corrections to text make so little sense that I've been tempted to accept each correction offered just to see what sort of idiocy the final result turns out to be! My guess is it would be similar to Mark Twain's sad tale of a fishwife written in English with German rules (“Hear the Rain, how he pours, and the Hail, how he rattles; and see the Snow, how he drifts along, and of the Mud, how deep he is!”).

It's human nature to be delighted when experts screw up. No exception to human nature, Ray loves to tell the story of the time the river intake for the water plant he managed was blocked with tons of sand, seriously reducing the water flow. Ray suggested that workers be detailed to backhoe the sand out of the way. His superior summarily informed him, “You aren't an engineer.”

So a group of engineers — not a blond or female in the bunch — went to work on a plan. They buried dynamite charges in the sand, set them off and blew out most of the windows in the nearest building. Sure, that in itself was pretty dumb, but what made them look like absolute morons was the end result of their grand plan.

Q: Do you know what happens when you blow mass quantities of sand straight up into the sky on a windless day?

A: It comes down right back where it started from.

The next day, the workers who weren't replacing windows were using backhoes to move sand away from the river intake.

Ray has another dumb story — actually, he has many — from his six years as a police officer. Another officer and Ray were driving to the scene of an emergency when they crashed into a car that initially stopped, then crossed in front of them at a traffic light.

“Didn't you see our flashing lights? Didn't you hear our siren?” queried Ray of the shaken, but uninjured, driver.

“Yes.”

“Then why did you pull out in front of us?”

“The light turned green.”

My mother has a favorite story about a dumb act by a deliveryman. Finding no one home and apparently worried that someone might steal the package, he conscientiously placed it out of sight. Then he taped a boldly lettered sign to her front door. “I hid your package behind the bushes.”

No one presumes guys — including blond ones — are ditzy. But even on those rare occasions when my mind is complimented, my blondness tends to temper the praise. For example, I recently was told by a male acquaintance: “You appear to be very intelligent . . . with just a hint of blond.”

I think I'll phone him and chew him out . . . if only I can remember where I put the TV remote.