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IS SEX DEAD?

Future historians of social trends, morals and mores may well record that August 2, 1982 marked the day the sexual revolution of the 1970s died. That was the day when Time magazine ran its sensational cover story on "Herpes: Today's Scarlet Letter."

As a result of that single news story, it became "in" for establishment media to discuss the disease effects of the sexual revolution, especially the incurable (herpes) and the fatal (AIDS) varieties. The Time expose also made it "in" to admit the connection between disease and sin, the costly results of "the Pill, Penthouse Pets and porn-movie cassettes," and the relationship of virtue/virginity/health/happiness.

The profiteers of playboy-style sex and spectator sex fought back with two main counterattacks. They rant and rave at what they call the "excessive fearmongering" and "moralizing" of the Time article, and they've attempted to make Herpes chic by suggesting that practically everybody has it. That was the message of ABC's two-hour (and well named) drama called "Intimate Agony."

Those who aren't yet convinced that the sexual revolution has shifted into reverse or low gear should read the "Living" section of the March 27 Chicago Sun-Times. It's called "The End of the Sexual Revolution; Where has all the free love gone?"

This feature starts: "Ten years ago people were asking whether God was dead. Today they're wondering the same thing about sex.... 'Recreational sex' is taking its lumps. In its place, experts argue, are words like love, respect, commitment and exclusivity."

Then follows a "signs of the times" collection of items showing that "sex as we knew it during the '70s has passed away." The listing is too informative to be confined to Chicago-area readers only, so I will summarize some of its points.

Playboy magazine admits that a survey of its readers shows that people with meaningful sexual relationships (such as married people) are more satisfied with their sex lives than those who participate in "one-night stands." A survey of Yale University students reveals that 50% now claim they are virgins (whereas only 25% claimed that in 1976). Princeton students cancelled the showing of an X-rated film on campus.

Ladies' Home Journal admits that a survey of its readers shows that only one in five ever had an extra-marital affair. Cosmopolitan magazine (a major promoter of the sexually-liberated woman) admits that a survey of its readers shows that now sex is "too casual and too difficult to avoid and that they themselves, and perhaps all women, had become pawns in a revolution engineered chiefly by men."

Different voices now appear on the talk show circuit. A former Look magazine senior editor is peddling his new book called "The End of Sex"; he describes his new discovery that "sex is an idea whose time has passed" and is being replaced by "High Monogamy" (a long-term relationship based on voluntary commitment to erotic exclusivity). Also appearing on the talk show circuit is the author of a book called "The New Celibacy," which proposes that we take a vacation from sex and try celibacy in order to experience the joys of life without bothersome sexual tensions.

The Sun-Times feature includes a good critique of Hugh Hefner's impact on America since he launched his campaign to rid people of all guilt about sex outside of marriage. It says that newspaper files contain only one or two authority voices who spoke up against the "mindless bill of goods" that Hefner was selling at fantastic profit.

Hefner successfully marketed the notion that man's self-gratification is the highest good and, in the playboy world, he need assume no responsibility for the consequences of his sexual liberation. Hefner conveniently failed to mention the pregnancies and the heartaches caused by the carelessness and the selfishness of irresponsible playboys. But Playboy's stock is down today.

Other current articles corroborate the Sun-Times' obituary of sex. Another metropolitan newspaper reported that Esther Glass, who taught sex education in the New York City public-school system for eight years, says, "They're interested in virginity, and instead of dating in couples they're going out in groups." Dr. Philip Sarrell at Yale, who teaches a course in "Topics in Human Sexuality," says he has been pressed by popular demand into giving a lecture on virginity in his course "Topics in Human Sexuality."

"Chariots of Fire", with more religion than sex, won last year's Academy Award for the best picture. And, on the New York Times best seller list, Leo Buscaglia's "Living, Loving and Learning" has replaced Alex Comfort's "Joy of Sex." May the costly "free sex" R.I.P.