

Introduction

In the last 15 or 20 years I have been approached by a number of people with the same question: How do I become a Mohn? Having been a Mohn for over 38 years now, I feel that I can offer certain insights into becoming a Mohn or becoming more "Mohn-like." It is important to remember that while there are aspects of Mohnness that are attractive and seemingly worthwhile, being a Mohn is not an easy task and occasionally requires a price that many are not willing to pay. Any Mohn will tell you that there have been times when they'd just as soon be, say, a Johnson. However, since we have good reason to believe that we would be constantly annoyed by any family other than our own (for Mohns the grass may be greener, but we're not about to be taken in by that ploy), there's never been an actual instance of Mohn conversion. Also, while there has, until now, been no guide or handbook for being a Mohn, any Mohn can tell you what we are and what we are not. Unfortunately, traditionally these sorts of explanations often occur at highly inopportune moments (e.g., while getting ready for guests to arrive, while trying to discipline a child, or while eating a chocolate cake).

The primary purpose of this document is two-fold: 1) to provide anyone who is considering becoming associated with a Mohn some information to use in his or her decision, and 2) to provide anyone who is already associated with a Mohn some explanations of habits and behaviors that may still be causing some concern or consternation. Another purpose of this primer is to provide background information to anyone who is interested in the philosophical underpinnings and day-to-day methodologies of what it means to be a Mohn. There are those who may be interested from a purely theoretical or research standpoint; this primer will certainly be useful for those individuals who are simply seeking knowledge. One additional use of this primer may be as a potential mechanism for inter-generational communication with those who might loosely be referred to as "Mohns - The Next Generation." There may be times

when explaining the actions of a parent, child, or aunt is not easily communicated. So You Want To Be A Mohn: A Primer may be used in conjunction with a variety of other media (e.g., pictures, videotape, audiotape, recipes) to describe attitudes and attributes that are not otherwise easily or comfortably discussed. There may be times when a child feels somewhat "odd" or "out of place." This primer can obviously be of great value in assuring the child that what he or she is feeling is not only typical, but probably appropriate.

Social Interaction

Mohns typically have a love/hate relationship with society. While Mohns certainly obey laws and adhere to societal dictates, there is a tendency for Mohns to demonstrate a certain degree of contempt for society in general. Much of this contempt stems from a rigorous upbringing wherein expectations for appropriate behaviors or performance or interactions with others were strictly enforced and encouraged. This strict exposure to clan expectations has created a situation in which Mohns often feel superior to almost everyone else because they have familial and self-imposed standards for excellence that usually exceed any standards imposed by some other source. For example, Mohns will typically react with some amount of respect for anyone in a position of authority. However, this respect is constantly being re-evaluated based on demonstrated abilities. So, if the person in authority is worthy of respect, Mohns will follow that person's lead and encourage others to do so. If the person in authority is not worthy of respect, Mohns will defer to the authority, but will dismiss that individual as being an appropriate leader and simply do things the way they want to do them. The double-bind situation here is that quite often the way Mohns want to do something is the right way (i.e., it is logically considered from every possible angle through a series of "if, then" prospects and is the most effective, most efficient, least costly way of proceeding). Since Mohns will often rigidly, but politely, continue to work in the way they have decided is right, and since this way is usually wisely considered and effective, they often eventually get their way. Unfortunately, this typically means that they will have more work to do because they will be "given" the "opportunity" to continue the project that they've

already begun. Mohns are quite often deeply ensconced in informal leadership, as well as formal leadership, roles. The formal leadership roles are occasions for continual soul-searching. The informal leadership roles are occasions for deep and abiding resentment.

Work

Mohns love to work. Or, more precisely, Mohns love to hate work. Mohns like nothing better than an opportunity to appear superior and helpful at the same time; work fills this need. Work is one situation where Mohns are required to interact with others in order to accomplish a project or product. This particular type of social interaction typically makes Mohns very satisfied, yet frustrated, bitter, and resentful. Although these reactions may seem to be paradoxical, for Mohns they are actually quite closely linked. This is the "yin/yang" attribute of Mohnness that many non-Mohns find to be tremendously confusing, yet endearing. It is also the case that for Mohns many events that are not readily perceived as "work" fall into the work category (e.g., fun, any sort of group interaction, lunch with people you haven't seen in a while, holidays, etc.).

The seemingly paradoxical relationship Mohns have with work outlined above not only describes how Mohns feel about work; it also reflects how work, or more specifically co-workers, feel about Mohns. Most Mohns will have an excellent working relationship with co-workers, colleagues, and customers. However, this excellent relationship is typically tarnished by the extreme unease most co-workers feel about Mohns. Should co-workers have the least amount of insecurity about their positions or ability to advance, this insecurity will be heightened by the presence of a Mohn. While, on the one hand, co-workers will rely on Mohns to provide necessary information, creative problem solving, keen insight, exemplary communication among all interested parties, a strong back (or shoulder), and a comfortable, good-natured camaraderie, they will also occasionally be afraid that: 1) this person will leave, and, 2) this person will stay. It is sufficient to note that working relationships with Mohns are usually fraught with conflicting emotions. This has also been found to be true of other interpersonal relationships with Mohns.

Interpersonal Relationships

See also "Work" and "Leisure Activities."

Leisure Activities

Much of society will question the Mohn concept of leisure activities. This is understandable. While assimilation into the wider society often defines leisure activity as partaking in some sort of group activity involving rules and an object that is thrown or hit, this is not the case for Mohns. Mohns do not like to be defined by a group, unless that group is made-up of other Mohns. Also, Mohns tend to eschew leisure activity rules as mundane, poorly defined, or silly. In addition, throwing objects is seen as having certain negative connotations (e.g., putting someone's eye out or sore muscles). Leisure activities for Mohns, therefore, tend toward more singular activities that can be done while lying down. Activities falling into this category include napping, watching television, watching movies, eating brownies while watching television, or eating brownies while watching movies.

While the above-listed activities might involve only one person, they certainly can also include a number of people. However, if a number of people are included in these leisure activities, Mohns will only truly enjoy this "group" activity if the majority of other participants are Mohns. Mohns often find these activities annoying if other participants do not understand or readily grasp the underlying rationale for the activity. For example, if you are one of the individuals participating in the watching of "Aliens" and the eating of brownies, it is not appropriate to say things like, "What happens next?" or "That Ripley character is kind of masculine, isn't she?" or "This reminds me of 'Solar Babies'." These sorts of comments will be met with polite responses from the Mohns participating while they are actually making fun of you behind your back in ways too subtle for you to notice (i.e., one second eye contact and the flicker of an eyelid can speak volumes). Also, you will never be actively encouraged to participate in this activity again. This may seem severe and unfair, however, it is an unwritten rule and must be obeyed.

Unwritten Rules

Mohns have many unwritten rules. The list that follows is a partial list of unwritten rules that you may want to remember. It is important to note that this is only a partial list. Should you require a complete list, please consult the Mohn with whom you are associated for more information. However, due to the possibility that the Mohn with whom are associated may prefer to not discuss this list, it is advisable to consider another Mohn who might be used as a potential resource. If you are male, you may want to consider conferring with a female Mohn. If you are female, you may want to consider conferring with a female Mohn.

1. If people are coming over for dinner (lunch, breakfast), make way too much. You'd rather have too much than too little.
2. If you arrive way too early for an event, say you're there to help.
3. If you stay longer than others, do the dishes (or at least straighten up a little).
4. Always appear to already know what anybody else is going to say.
5. Stopping in should typically be preceded by a telephone call and it is best to be careful. about stopping in around any meal time, unless you are bringing food. But still call.
6. If you are watching a movie you have never seen before, sit quietly, pay attention, and don't ask anyone else any questions.
7. If you have questions, wait until the movie is over, but don't ask any questions that imply that you didn't understand.

8. If you are watching a movie that you have seen before, either sing along when appropriate, recite dialogue along with the characters, or make fun of it.
9. Chocolate is best when accompanied by milk.
10. Low-fat ice cream is an oxymoron.
11. Teasing in front of family is appropriate; arguing in front of family is not.
12. Teasing has limits.
13. Always be more polite than anyone else.
14. Often be upset by other people's rudeness, but never say anything.
15. Keep your mouth shut and your ears open if you don't know what's going on.
16. Try to appear gracious when judging others.

Female Mohns

There are those who are of the opinion that female Mohns are moody. This is untrue. Female Mohns simply do not like to be annoyed. Examples of behaviors likely to annoy female Mohns are: asking questions about the location of things, asking questions about having enough food, asking questions about having too much food, asking leading questions about chocolate, saying anything at all regarding "housekeeping style," saying anything at all regarding appearance that doesn't begin with, "you know, you're really beautiful..." Female Mohns do not like to know where things are. It isn't that they don't know where things are, they just don't like to have to feel responsible for knowing. Female Mohns typically worry a lot about what is appropriate, at least on the surface. Therefore, any question or comment related to entertaining or

housekeeping that has any potentially negatively construed connotations will likely be interpreted as criticism. It is important to avoid any exchange that is likely to be interpreted as criticism. This is not a threat, merely a well-intentioned recommendation. A closely related issue has to do with female Mohn self-image. While the lack of a positive self-image on the part of Mohn females may be a minor issue, it can very quickly become a major issue unless handled tactfully. Telling a Mohn female that she is beautiful at least once a week can go a long way toward minimizing any potential issue. If you don't think she's beautiful, then what the heck are you doing hanging around anyway? On the other hand, Mohn females are tremendously hard-working, tremendously forgiving, and tremendously worth any perceived trouble. However, it would be best to never refer to any Mohn female as requiring any kind of maintenance (i.e., "low-maintenance" or "high-maintenance"). Mohn females do not take kindly to being labeled or maintained.

Male Mohns

Male Mohns are actually very similar to female Mohns in many respects, thus defying many gender stereotypes so prevalent in our society today. Mohn males are often larger and more muscular than their female counterparts. They also usually have more facial hair. There are those who are of the opinion that male Mohns are uncommunicative. This is untrue. Male Mohns simply do not like to be annoyed. Examples of behaviors likely to annoy male Mohns are: asking questions about the location of things, asking questions about having enough/too much food, asking leading questions about chocolate, saying anything at all regarding "housekeeping style," saying anything at all regarding appearance that doesn't begin with, "you know, you're cute as a button and yet astoundingly virile ... " Male Mohns do not like to know where things are. It is unclear as to whether they do or do not know where things are, but it is highly preferable to not ask them. Male Mohns typically worry just as much as female Mohns about what is appropriate. They are also just as susceptible to interpreting innocent remarks as criticism. However, the difference is that they will often initially pretend that they haven't heard you, rather than respond immediately. This is why

Mohn females appear moody and Mohn males appear detached and unresponsive; it's mostly a timing issue. Mohn males have been known to take great pride in their appearance and seek quite a lot of reinforcement regarding their shirts and ties. This is quite possibly due to the conflict they feel regarding their deep-seated longing to be "dapper," coupled with their fear of admitting this need or unwittingly using this term in the presence of other males. This is actually the basis of most male Mohns' inner conflict and can explain many of their seemingly incomprehensible behaviors.

Mohn Humor

Mohn humor has been described as "odd," "whimsical," "profound," and "goofy." The present-day Mohn humor can actually be traced to several sources, some of which are not Mohn. This is a startling revelation and may be disconcerting to many younger Mohns, but it's true. The etymology of the current Mohn humor is a synthesis of traditions, stemming from the "Nelson influence," the "Mallery influence," and, of course, the "Mohn influence." There has been an attempt to also link Mohn humor to the Tonsager influence; however, due to the dearth of humorous Tonsagers, this link has never been firmly established. In order to accurately examine how these comedic influences may have converged in what we now refer to as Mohn humor, it is necessary to analyze Mohn humor in its discrete parts.

The Nelson Influence

It is currently believed that the "Nelson influence" has largely contributed to what is often labeled as the "goofy" aspect of Mohn humor. This belief is based on the observation of two Nelsons with whom the Mohns have interacted over the period of many years. Warren Nelson is certainly goofy. There are few that would argue this point. Although Gladys Mohn (Nelson) attempted for many years to disguise her goofiness under a mantle of stoicism and manners, we now have conclusive evidence that not only is she presently goofy, she has, in fact, been goofy for quite some time. Case in point: very few individuals find the word "shoehorn" funny. For no apparent reason, Gladys finds this word funny. Ergo, Gladys is goofy.

The Mallery Influence

The "Mallery influence" in shaping the present Mohn humor is undeniable. This influence can typically be witnessed in Mohn exchanges that demonstrate the use of irony, satire, and an essentially acerbic wit. The "Mallery influence" has certainly contributed to both positive and negative uses of Mohn humor, and can be directly traced to Grace Nelson (Mallery), known for her keen mind, sharp tongue, and complete contempt for anything plebeian. This aspect of Mohn humor often arises during heated discussions or after drinking too much coffee, and can prove a chilling experience for those who have only heretofore observed Mohn humor as goofy. The "Mallery influence" can best be described as the "dark side" of Mohn humor; it has succeeded in capturing the hearts and minds of intellectuals and eccentrics on numerous occasions, but can be deadly in the hands of the wrong person (see "Mohn Females").

The Mohn Influence

If the "Nelson influence" has contributed to the goofy side of Mohn humor, the "Mohn influence" has directly impacted the whimsy of this humor. The term whimsical is defined as: "given to whimsy or fanciful notions; capricious: *a pixyish, whimsical sprite of a fellow...*" Many offshoots of Mohn humor (e.g., interest in the bizarre, fascination with science fiction and fantasy, fixation on the comical aspects of spontaneous human combustion) are merely variations on the "Mohn influence" theme. The "Mohn influence" can be most immediately traced to Wallace Mohn, but has also been evidenced in Ruth MoM, Ralph MoM, Elvira MoM, and "Babe" Mohn. Wallace Mohn attempted to re-direct this tendency toward whimsy by assuming the guise of society's dictates and becoming a stereotypical "good man." However, he was only partially successful in this attempt to off-set his natural inclinations. Wallace Mohn substituted conservatism for spontaneity, but could never completely relinquish his interest in or feeling for the odd, the silly, and the quixotic. This penchant for the unusual and the

fanciful has become a deeply ingrained portion of the present-day "Mohn humor," and appears to be a tradition that is likely to be passed from generation to generation.

Conclusion

So Want To Be A Mohn: A Primer has been a completely unauthorized account of certain characteristics and qualities that define what a Mohn is and what a Mohn is likely to become. This primer has been intended to inform and enhance the understanding of the Mohn clan. It can be argued that the best way to understand this phenomenon is to experience it. This is possibly true, but the experience can occasionally be troubling or unnerving for those who have not been sufficiently prepared. The most appropriate conclusion for this remarkable topic is probably best summarized by Mark Twain's remarks on friendship in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*: "The holy passion of friendship is so sweet and steady and loyal and enduring in nature that it will last through a whole lifetime, if not asked to lend money." Being a Mohn is not so much a condition or a predisposition as it is a philosophy. To do truly good work is our hope. To be truly good people is our cause. To be truly worthy of our name is our mandate. To continue the tradition of multiplicity without duplicity is our manifest destiny. Mohn - it's not just a name. It's a way of looking at the world that demands more of the world than the world is likely to give. It's an idealism based on pragmatism and a theology of realism and grace. This is the most basic unwritten Mohn rule.