

ARRIVISTE PRESS



READ. LISTEN. EVOLVE.

Hold Your Head Up, Martha

Editor Incarcerated (a.k.a. Mr. Anonymous)

Ever since her troubles began, it seems as though everyone has been taking a shot at Martha Stewart. She is an inviting target, I suppose, because she is, reportedly, some kind of a jerk. This may or may not be true. A lot of people say it based on what they read in the newspaper, but they really don't know for sure. I have met a number of people who have been excoriated in the media and who turned out to be not as advertised.

The Reverend Sun Myung Moon, for instance, whatever his faults may have been, was always a perfect gentleman when we bunked next to each other at FPC Danbury. The Rev did a nice bit, too -- minded his own business and didn't make any enemies. He wiped tables after meals in the chow hall and shot eight ball in the evenings. In the afternoon, he used to sit in the lotus position under a pine tree and read the Wall Street Journal. Though it was his habit to direct several friendly nods in my direction every day, the only words he spoke to me in over a year were work-related: "Salt on the left, pepper on the right." (At least I think they were work-related. Twenty years have passed, but sometimes I still wonder if there was a hidden meaning there, and the Rev was trying to tell me something.)

It is not my intention to join those who are kicking Martha Stewart while she is down. That sort of behavior isn't appropriate for anyone but a professional wrestler or an employee of the Justice Department. Besides, Martha Stewart doesn't need any help to feel bad. What she is going through right now is the worst part of the whole crime-and-punishment procedure. By the time the courts and the media get done chewing you up, a nice quiet prison can feel like a respite. I'd be willing to give odds that at this moment Martha Stewart is clinically depressed.

So instead of becoming part of the mob, I'd like to report how convicts view the whole situation, at least the convicts here where I am. I'd also like to offer a bit of advice in the form of an open letter. I know that she is familiar with those.

The following are the results of a highly unscientific and probably inaccurate survey conducted among an unrepresentative sample:

Eighty percent of the convicts polled did not understand why it is a crime to sell a stock after your broker calls you to tell you that it is getting ready to go in the tank. The most common response was "Isn't that his freakin' job?" A Wall Street guy had to explain to them that while practically everyone who buys or sells a stock does so because they think they know something, if it can be proved beyond a reasonable doubt that they really do know something, that's insider trading.

Two-thirds of those polled expressed the opinion that even if Martha Stewart is technically guilty of a crime that they don't understand, the feds are selectively prosecuting her. The specific reasons varied. They are: because she's famous (52 percent), because she's a woman (2 percent), because she's not a man (4 percent), because she's not part of the good old boy's network a la Ken Lay (2 percent), because she's from a working-class background (2 percent) -- until I got this response I had no idea that we had a revolutionary here -- and because she's Polish (4 percent). A full 98 percent of the guys who would talk to me about this expressed the opinion that they wouldn't mind having Martha Stewart for a bunky.

My advice is something that I overheard while waiting for a phone from a guy who was talking to the wife of one of his cousins who had apparently just been arrested:

Dear Ms. Stewart,

When you get arrested by the state, get the best lawyer you can, because there's a chance you might beat it. If you get bagged by the feds, get a public defender and take the deal. You're better off saving your money for the commissary, 'cause they ain't tryin' to lose. Hold your head up, Martha, and good luck.