

# SANDY DAYS, SALTY NIGHTS

## Out, damned spot

ArtisHENDERSON  
sandydays@floridaweekly.com



before they were out of college, each was the other's first and only sexual partner.

He would be worried, he said, if he knew another man had "paved the way," so to speak.

"I'm actually kind of obsessed with it," he admitted. "Like Lady Macbeth." "Lady Macbeth?"

"Yeah. If my wife had been with another guy, I would think about it all the time. Like Lady Macbeth and the blood on her hand." Here, he got theatrical. "Out, damned spot. Kind of like that."

This set my mental wheels turning. Could this obsession be true for most men? There's an old maxim that says when a woman gives out her number of past boyfriends, you have to multiply that number by two to

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get the real amount (as opposed to guys, where you have to divide the given number by two). I wonder, then, if this habit of camouflaging the true number of past relationships evolved from women's desire to placate men on this front, to assuage the male ego and let a new lover think he's one of only a few that have "walked this path" (as it were).

Of course, for every rule there's an exception (it's this unpredictability that makes dating so daunting, and yet so fun). When a friend signed-up for eHarmony, she received a number of possible matches. "Lisa" chatted back and forth with one guy that had great potential: he was athletic, successful, and outgoing. As part of the eHarmony compatibility

process, each had to list the top five most important qualities in a mate. My friend chose honesty and respect, among others, from the 100-plus list of options. The bachelor? "Sexual experience" topped his five. Unlike Jacob, Lisa's beau wanted a woman with a few lovers under her belt.

With such radically different expectations, is there a common moral to these stories? Of course, and it is: optimal past experience ultimately comes down to personal preference. Some people like blonds while others lust after redheads; some want a person that knows his or her way around the bedroom while others want to be the first and only to claim that territory. In this, as with all things romance-related, honesty is the best policy. Be up-front from the get-go, and it will save everyone a lot of theatrics down the line. ■

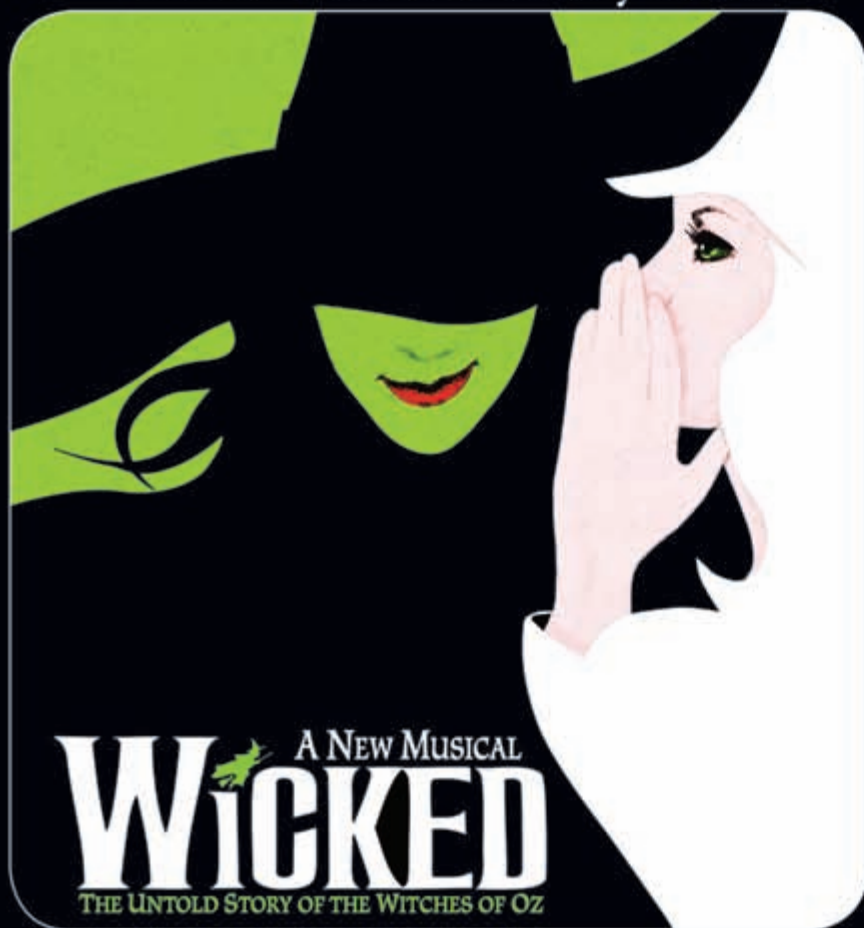


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