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# BELLA



NAPLES BONITA ESTERO



RANDY JONES & PEGGY POST

## WORDS *with* FRIENDS

THIS FAN-TURNED-FRIEND OF THE MODERN ETIQUETTE MAVEN CELEBRATES THE GIFT OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

**3** SUMMER SIZZLING LOOKS TO BEAT THE HEAT

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# Taking *the* Gloves *off*

OUR INTREPID REPORTER IS SURPRISED TO DISCOVER THAT A WARM FRIENDSHIP LINGERS LONG AFTER THE INTERVIEW IS OVER.

STORY BY RANDALL KENNETH JONES

**According to legendary author Emily Post, “Whenever two people come together and their behavior affects one another, you have etiquette.”**

What better reminder of the impact that etiquette and manners have on lasting friendships?

I met Peggy Post—Emily Post’s great-granddaughter-in-law—through a mutual friend. My original goal was simply to interview her for a business column.

With the showcasing of “class” as my journalistic reason for being, a meeting with Peggy Post of The Emily Post Institute was on par with my film-student son’s desire to hook up with Steven Spielberg. Of course, the fact that I was about to come face-to-face with the nation’s guardian of manners and etiquette added significant stress to the equation—a certain kind of “White Glove” anxiety.

“Will I embarrass myself?” “Will my stomach start to growl?” And, perhaps most horrifying of all, “Will I accidentally place my elbows on the table?”

Fearful of keeping an Emily Post-successor waiting, I arrived at Barnes & Noble 32 minutes early. I proceeded to select a table, move, select another, move, and select yet one more, and move again. (After all, a lady deserves to be seen in her best light.)

Then, just in case, I pulled out a sanitized handy wipe and cleaned the table again.

Now a bit more relaxed, I ordered coffee. (The size, I think, was “Gargantuan”—Starbucks always confuses me.)

At this point “Murphy”—the guy with the “Law”—managed to wriggle inside my head and taunt me: “If you don’t finish that *now*, you’re going to end up knocking that hot coffee into Peggy Post’s lap.”

Seventeen seconds later, my “coffee bowl” sat empty.

Shortly thereafter and just minutes before Peggy’s anticipated arrival, my absurdly quick intake of “Gargantuan” coffee seized control of my bladder and the men’s room was—of course—upstairs. After all this effort, was Peggy Post destined to arrive without a proper greeting?

In a scene reminiscent of “Dick, Jane and Sally,” I jumped into action: Run. Go. (Wash hands!) Run. Return.

LEFT: WHEN RANDY MET PEGGY, HE FOUND A TRUE, FUN-LOVING FRIEND.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLIE MCDONALD :: CHARLIEMCDONALDPHOTOGRAPHY.COM  
HAIR BY SANDI DARLING, RUNNING WITH SCISSORS :: MAKE-UP BY CAROL BUCCI, CB STUDIOS  
SHOT ON LOCATION AT TOMMY BAHAMA

Sit. Yes, I pulled it off just in time to “calmly” greet Peggy Post as she walked toward me.

Bypassing my extended hand, Peggy gave me a warm, natural smile and an even more heartwarming hug. No white gloves, no stylish hat, no animated birds circling above her head;



Peggy Post is the featured speaker at The Naples Press Club luncheon on Thursday, May 22, at 11:30 a.m. For more information, please visit [naplespressclub.org](http://naplespressclub.org).

just a lovely yet unpretentious woman with the innate ability to light up any room she enters.

In truth, Peggy Post is used to meeting nervous people.

With the 1922 publication of the book *Etiquette*, Emily Post would forever be known as the official matriarch of social conduct and the original figure identified in the Pop Culture catchphrase: “What would Emily Post do?” Today, as author and co-director of The Emily Post Institute, Peggy’s life revolves around answering that very same question.

Peggy Post is the author of more than a dozen etiquette books. In addition, she writes a monthly column in *Good Housekeeping* magazine and a bimonthly online wedding etiquette column in *The New York Times*. Her media appearances include *Oprah*, *Dr. Phil*, *The View*, *Live with Regis and Kelly*, *Today*, *Dateline*, VH1, and CNN.

Though the words “manners” and “etiquette” may conjure up fears of a burgeoning behavioral brouhaha, “nervous” is the last reaction Peggy Post wishes to elicit. Emily herself was

an advocate for making people comfortable regardless of the situation.

As Peggy said to me that day, “It’s all about building relationships based upon trust and respect.” I knew this before, but coming from Peggy, its impact was much more powerful despite its profound simplicity.

## Like Emily, Peggy is an advocate for making others comfortable in every situation.

Before I knew it, two delightful, disaster-free hours had passed. Time filled with probing questions, spirited answers, laughter, more coffee, and yes—even dueling table elbows. It had become increasingly more obvious that Peggy and I were, as my Grandma Jones used to say, “two peas in a pod.” In fact, our visit flew by. If I had committed an egregious etiquette faux-pas, Peggy would have never said a word. “A guest never points out the bad behavior of their host.”

CREDIT: SABIN GRATZ

CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES/THINKSTOCK

Once home, as I reflected on my personal relationships—those that have stood the test of time—one common theme emerged: a respect for each other’s work, passions, and beliefs. Perhaps this also explained why so many of my long-term friendships originated in the workplace.

What’s more, had I just experienced an extraordinary interview with one of our nation’s foremost thought leaders or had I, in fact, enjoyed a simple cup of coffee with a new friend?

Thankfully, the latter—being with a friend—is what I recall the most.

As Emily once wrote, “Certainly what one is, is of far greater importance than what one appears to be.” While many superlatives can be used to describe Peggy Post, more than anything, she is disarmingly genuine and delightfully “normal.” For Peggy and those responsible for Emily Post’s legacy, of primary importance is remaining relevant and applying Emily’s core principles to the “norms” of today.

Now, as our professional relationship has evolved into a deeper



### Dr. Phil on Peggy Post

Dr. Phil emailed his take on my friend, Peggy Post: “When I need an expert on manners, there’s one person I look to and that’s Peggy Post. She is down-to-earth, commonsensical, and has a great way of delivering her message. Peggy has also taught me a few things about manners, for which my wife Robin is forever grateful.” (When Robin is mentioned, you know Dr. Phil means business!)

friendship, I view Peggy in a more complex light: She accepts my faults—of which there are many. She knows I am likely to get over-excited during a spirited conversation and interrupt her. She understands I will invariably lean in during dessert and deposit my elbows on the table while making a point.

Best of all, my friend Peggy Post teaches me to celebrate my authentic self. Because, when all is said and done, Peggy looks for the “good” in people and not just signs of “goodness” in their actions.

Today, as I consider how best to react to life’s various hurdles, I no longer just look to Emily Post for the answer. Knowing that friends should ultimately bring out the best in each other, I simply ask myself: What would Peggy Post do? 🙌

Marketer, publicist, writer and speaker Randall Kenneth Jones is the creator of *RediscoverCourtesy.org* and the president of Naples-based *MindZoo*.

## Peggy Post: On the Etiquette of Friendship

True friendship actually does operate by a few, mostly unspoken rules. Here, Peggy weighs-in on the most important:

1

### ACCEPTANCE

Feeling comfortable enough to be authentically true to oneself is key. A friend is accepting, through good times and bad.

2

### RESPECT

Friends might be different. They might have varying backgrounds or different outlooks—yet they are still friends. They are greater as a unit than alone. They appreciate one another’s viewpoints and input.

3

### INTEREST

A friend is a listener and is interested in you. It’s not “all about me.” Friendship is a two-way street. A friend is interested in the other person’s life.

4

### SUPPORT

A friend is there for you as a shoulder to lean on and a confidante.

5

### TRUSTWORTHINESS

Friendship is based on trust. A true friend is someone you can confide in, without worry that your trust might be compromised.

6

### ENJOYMENT

It’s not just about “fun.” Friendship is really about that easy feeling of being together. Some friends enjoy the same things; others simply feel comfortable being together. Friends enjoy each other’s company.

7

### ENGAGEMENT

Friends keep the spark going. They are alert for cues, for key events in each other’s lives. A friend often does kind things for a friend, whether it’s celebrating a special day or event, resolving a disagreement, reciprocating a kindness in some way, or simply calling to say “hello.”

8

### GIVING AND TAKING

Friends find a way to reach out and to receive. They share with each other. There’s almost a magical cue between friends that enables each to let the other know, “I’m here for you” and “I’m glad you’re here for me”—throughout life’s ups and downs.