

WIVES AND MAPS /1/ GETTING LOST

At last, there is a **reasonable** scientific explanation for the **inability** of women to read maps: **according to** research it has **something to do with** the female hormone. **Which** means I was wrong, it's not just stupidity like I always thought.

A couple years ago, I described my dear **wife's** navigation **skills** in this column, which **caused** a certain **amount of hostility** in the Kemp household. But that is not going to **stop me from describing** them again.

Here is what happens **every time** we **find ourselves** together in our car. **Suppose** we are **heading** south, **with** me **at the wheel** and her beside me, and she **reaches for** the map in the glove compartment. The first things **she does is** she turns the map **upside down**. Then she says: "**Take** the next turning." "Right or left?" I ask. It is a **pretty reasonable** question **if you ask me**, but it always **makes her sigh, as if** it is the stupidest **thing anybody could ask**.

My wife turns the map the right way up, then upside down again. Then she looks at her hands **to see** where her wedding ring **is**, because **this is the only way** she **can tell** her left **from** her right. While she **is doing** this, she loses her place on the map. When she finds it again, she **points to** the right, and shouts: "Left!" **By this time** we have long gone **past** the turning.

I have **lost count of the number of times** we **have gone through** this during our 20 years of marriage. But it **has become even** more **frustrating lately**, because there are two children in the back seat - the 13-year-old and the 15-year-old - **both of whom** read maps **far more competently** than their mother. This is **for** the simple reason that they are male.

I **would love** to ask my wife: "**Why don't you** just give the map to George, and let him **take over**?" But I **am afraid to do so**, because I know this would **lead to** a **furious argument**. "**Are you saying** a child can read a map better than **I can**?" **Obviously**, I don't **want that to happen**. Not again.