

An Invitation to Contribute

I recently received some sincere, but brutal criticism from a regular reader in the form of a book review. Brutal criticism is the most useful type you can get, although I confess I prefer getting it in a private email than an online review. Some of it is worth a response and discussion. The rest of it simply represents a limitation of any blogger- when you get personal you can only share your own experience rather than that of someone whose life is quite different from your own. This blog, however, has a great mechanism for overcoming that limitation- about 1/3 of the posts I run are [guest posts](#). More on that in a minute. First, I'm going to post the relevant sections of the review (I left out the nice things she said about the book/blog) with my comments:



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So why only three stars? [WCI] just rubs me the wrong way, probably unintentionally.

It's definitely unintentional. Why would someone want to rub someone else the wrong way intentionally? At any rate, three stars are better than one!

Constantly referring to spouse/wife, as opposed to simply "spouse" and he never includes "husband" or "partner." Perhaps his view is that physician families always consist of two parents and two or three kids in a nuclear family. Even in Utah I am sure there are diverse and nontraditional families, and the undercurrents in his book and blog would be perhaps uncomfortable for them.

I'll try to use "spouse" and "partner" more frequently. But I don't have a husband! There are certainly plenty of diverse and non-traditional families in Utah, although I'm confident the numbers pale in comparison to large cities on either coast given that I haven't seen a case of sickle cell anemia in years. Obviously I don't think physician families always consist of two parents and 2.2 kids. In fact, I don't know anyone with 2.2 kids. ☐

He castigates people to move to low-cost areas but never addresses the reasons people might need to live in a bigger city (diversity, for example.)



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I'm not sure how to address this any more than that people who choose to live in [a location with low pay, high taxes, and a high cost of living](#) will need to spend less money on something else-like retiring early, buying toys, paying off a mortgage early, taking expensive trips etc. The reason(s) someone may choose to live in an expensive location are largely irrelevant to a personal finance blog. I really don't care if it is to take care of an elderly parent, to have a unique aspect in a practice, to be near a cultural group, for the quality of schools, for nice weather, or for "diversity." If you want to get rich fast, then you need to make a lot of money, spend very little, and invest the difference wisely. If you want something else, that's fine too. Most physicians can still

afford to have a reasonable life even in an expensive place.

He occasionally addresses childless readers but never female-headed households, single parents, couples that are not married etc. He does not address folks who have to work part-time due to family concerns.

Most of the topics I address don't care much about how many kids you have, your marital status, or how many hours a week you work. Personally, as someone who works 28 hours a week at one job and perhaps about the same at my other job, I think I know a lot about part-time work!

Additionally, he has very few women guest writers on his blog and seems to dismiss lower pay for female physicians as largely a myth. It would be great if he would try and reach a wider audience. Maybe this is his world in Utah, but it would be more welcoming if he realized that the rest of the world is often different.

Having lived and practiced medicine in several states and on four continents, I'm quite aware the world has a great deal of variety. However, let it be known that every single guest post submitted to this blog by a female regular reader or financial professional has been published and I have solicited at least a dozen more that were never sent in. I wish this reviewer, who is clearly intelligent, who is a talented, articulate writer, and who obviously has a useful viewpoint to share would have sent in a guest post, rather than just added a book review complaining about the lack of them! I also can't figure out where I ever mentioned anything about lower pay for female physicians or the lack thereof. (If someone knows, please point it out in the comments; I probably ought to address it.) I don't doubt the averages do show lower pay for female physicians, since they show that for nearly every profession for reasons that are [widely researched, debated, and published elsewhere](#). However, I've never been part of a practice where

that actually occurred. My female colleagues and I were/are all paid exactly equally in residency, in the military, and in my current partnership.

There are several assumptions in both the blog and book that may make this book less than useful for certain kinds of docs. [WCI's] discussions of retirement investing seem to assume that his audience has the option to save 55k yearly in retirement accounts through work. For employed physicians this is rarely true....

I will readily admit I think many docs would often be financially better off in an [ownership](#) rather than an employee situation, at least from a retirement plan standpoint. An independent contractor can easily set up [an individual 401\(k\)](#) (\$53K in 2015, perhaps \$55K in 2017), a [personal defined benefit/cash balance plan](#), personal and spousal (sorry, not partner unless partner has his own income) [Backdoor Roth IRAs](#), and a [Health Savings Account](#). An employee may be stuck with only a non-matched 401(k) or 403(b) (\$18K in 2015) and a backdoor Roth IRA. If that's all you have, and you aren't interested in picking something up on the side, and you need to save more than \$23,500 per year (\$30,500 if 50 or older), then you're going to have to use a [taxable account](#). That's just the way Congress has written the law. Of course, there are benefits of being an employee too- like not having to pay for your own benefits and having your employer [pay half of your payroll taxes](#).

However, I don't see how this readily admitted bias of mine actually makes it hard for employees to learn about how they should invest for retirement. The only topics I can think of adding would be how to build around a lousy 401(k), which is covered daily on [The Bogleheads forum](#) and how to invest in a tax-efficient manner in a taxable account, which I cover frequently.

...and he gives short shrift to what may be major issues with private 457s, the option beyond the 401k for employees.

I haven't written a lot about 457s, but I have written about them. The main issue with [a private 457](#) is that if the hospital goes out of business, your retirement account disappears since it is accessible to your employer's creditors. Unless my employer was really in bad shape, I'd probably still use a 457 available to me, but it would be the first money I spent in retirement.

He gives bonds, bond funds, and munis short shrift and minimal treatment (although he has thankfully changed his assertion that there is no place for munis in a physician portfolio) possibly because he has access to the G fund for his portfolio and thus little interest in bonds.

This is where I got really impressed with the reviewer, who has clearly read a great deal of my writing. I am guilty as charged to most of this particular criticism. My [initial post on munis](#) was critical of them for the reason that at the time I wrote it, I bought into the belief that bonds should preferentially be in a tax-protected account. I subsequently realized/learned that [probably isn't true](#) for many of us. And if it isn't true for you, and you're in a high tax bracket, well, munis (and [I bonds](#)) are what should compose a good chunk of your fixed income. I recently had a big post about [muni bonds vs bond funds](#) and did a lengthy review of a [book about nothing but bonds](#). My [own portfolio](#) is nearly 100% tax protected, and the [G fund](#) does make up a large chunk of my fixed income. That certainly isn't a reason not to write about bonds. I don't own [whole life insurance](#), and I write about that all the time.

Finally, he seems to assume that most people want lots of stuff but need to restrict themselves so they do not retire

penniless. This may well be true, but others are really not materialistic but really want freedom very young (those of us who believe the boat owns us, not the other way around.) For those physicians this is not the right book or blog.

Maybe I'm biased, but I think it is safe to assume that MOST people do want lots of stuff, or at least the newest shiniest stuff. And I certainly do think that those who want lots of stuff need to restrict themselves so they don't retire penniless. I find it rather funny, however, that I'm now seemingly being accused of being a spendthrift. The usual criticism, at least until the recent posts on "[Loosening the Purse Strings](#)," is that I'm way [too much of a cheapskate](#). In fact, until 2014, the most expensive item I had ever bought brand new cost a very low four figure amount. I'm not exactly a flashy materialistic guy (although I confess, I did buy the boat.) The truth is I don't care what you spend your money on. If you wish to be financially independent early, then spend your money on investments (I know I've spent a lot on them in the last 10 years.) If you want to be debt free, then use your earnings to pay off your loans. If you want a boat, then [spend your money on a boat](#). If you want a fancy car, or fancy vacations, or to give tons of money or time to charity, then you can also do that. You can define "the good life" however you like. But you can't do it all; there simply isn't a limitless supply of money, even for doctors. Saying this isn't the right blog for you if you prefer to retire early instead of buying a boat seems a bit of a stretch, especially since the blog's author could retire (if he wanted to) in about the same time period and on the [same income as Mr. Money Mustache](#) (whose blog you might enjoy if your main financial goal is to retire in your thirties and live on less than \$30K a year for the last 60 years of your life.)

This is a great book for the right audience- a beginning investor, preferably male, with a traditional family who lives in a low to moderate cost state. Others may need to

look elsewhere for advice on their particular situation.

Ouch! Readers, help me out here. If you are female, have a non-traditional family, or live in a high cost state, send me a guest post about how your financial situation is unique and how you have dealt with your unique challenges. I certainly don't want this to be a blog that is only appropriate for traditional physician families in the fly-over states. Personal finance is both personal and financial. Blog readers in general love posts that reveal a little bit about the writer and the personal aspect of finance. It makes it easier to relate to the information and think about our own lives in a little bit different way. But I can't write something personal about a situation I haven't lived. I have to rely on you, dear reader, to do that. If you would be willing to share your story, here are the [guest post guidelines](#). Here are some possible topics that would be great for a guest poster to address because I will never be able to do so effectively:

- 1) Unique financial aspects for dentists, attorneys, accountants, pharmacists, mid-levels, small business owners, veterinarians, podiatrists, optometrists, and two physician couples.
- 2) How to be successful financially despite living in a high-cost of living area
- 3) How to make sure you (as a female doctor) are paid what you're worth, no matter your gender
- 4) How to deal with the financial aspects of divorce
- 5) The financial aspects of being a single physician parent
- 6) Financial upsides and downsides of living with an unmarried partner
- 7) Estate planning or asset protection issues for singles or

unmarried couples

8) How to open your own single physician/dentist/attorney practice

9) Financial issues of DINKs (Dual Income No Kids)

10) Estate planning when you are single without kids

11) Taking care of elderly parents living nearby or in your home

12) Going from an ownership practice to an employee practice or vice versa

13) How to get decent investment returns while still complying with Sharia Law

What do you think? How else can this blog be more inclusive? What other topics would you like to see a guest post on? Comment below!