

Your presence is requested as we celebrate our divorce



The Bronfmans have decided that their divorce party does not need to be an angry affair.

Postmedia News/Files

Sarah Boesveld, National Post · May 16, 2011 | **Last Updated: May 17, 2011 8:01 AM ET**

The invitations to Charles and Bonnie Bronfman's latest fete are embossed and formal. Guests of the Canadian-born business magnate and his architect wife are asked to wear proper business attire for the fancy event — a night of cocktails and party chatter in New York City. And before signing off on the invites with “Fondly, Bonnie and Charles,” they tell guests how much they look forward “to continuing these relationships with everyone.”

Charles and Bonnie Bronfman, you see, are getting divorced.

While angry divorce parties between friends have taken root recently, it seems neither in the well-heeled couple needed the cathartic thrill gleaned from stabbing a cake formed in the likeness of the former partner.

Instead, the philanthropic Bronfmans, who insist they are better off as friends, are taking the rare step of throwing a joint gathering to bid adieu to their three-year marriage, one that began with love at first sight and ended with a fork in the road paved by completely different interests, the couple told *The New York Times*.

“Our differences were in everything we do. We thought those differences could mesh, but we found out the opposite. So we thought, why not tell our friends and thank them for helping us out?” said the 79-year-old former chairman of Seagram Company, whose fortune was largely gleaned from the family liquor business his father Samuel built from the ground up.

A spokesperson at The Andrea & Charles Bronfman Philanthropies foundation said Mr. Bronfman was unreachable for comment Monday.

But observers are already suspicious of the seemingly civilized split, wondering if this is just a case of sugarcoating a pill that is really very bitter. “She must have had a great prenuptial,” one socialite told the *Times* anonymously, in reference to Mr. Bronfman’s worth pegged at US\$2-billion by *Forbes* magazine. Family affairs haven’t been smooth sailing lately either. Mr. Bronfman’s son Edgar Bronfman Jr. was convicted of insider trading this year and has had other business problems in the past. His nieces Sara and Clare have been involved with controversial self-help hypnosis group NXIVM (pronounced Nex-ee-um), which has a decidedly cultish appeal.

Others question whether the move is a bid to maintain the couple’s social standing among New York’s who’s who. Those

uncomfortable with the idea of a party question whether a divorce should be celebrated at all.

Any suspicions and anxieties ought to be checked at the door, divorce consultants and lawyers say: This break-up party is something to be admired.

“If you can part and be friends and celebrate the time you spent together, I think that’s a fantastic result,” said Dan Couvrette, publisher of Toronto-based [divorcemagazine.com](#). He has published articles about divorce ceremonies, at which only one divorcee is normally present. Friends and family often attend to help celebrate their loved ones’ entrance into singledom.

“This isn’t a natural occurrence,” he said. “Usually, it’s ‘I hate your guts.’ ”

There are many legitimate reasons for publicizing a split to begin with, says divorce coach and lawyer Deborah Mecklinger. It helps couples and families with children dodge nagging questions from friends about how the marriage dissolved, they say. And it helps set the tone for friends who often feel they must choose camps when a couple splits, that they have to cut off contact with one of the parties involved.

“I do think you can really nip a lot in the bud by [throwing a party], by letting people know they don’t have to pick sides,” she said. “Everybody can be invited to everything. I think everyone likes a good dish of dirt though.”

Some of her clients have held barbecues and brunches to announce the end of their marriage. Others have sent a mass email sent from both partners to help set the tone and tell everyone at once.

For Gloria Allred, a prominent California lawyer who’s seen her share of messy divorces, the Bronfmans’ joint divorce party is a “creative” way to come out as a divorced couple.

“Why does parting have to be ugly? Where is it written that everybody has to say it can’t be done in a way that’s positive?” she asked from her office in Los Angeles.

While she wouldn’t surmise beyond the couple’s provided reasons for the break-up, she said she would understand any desire to maintain their social standing.

“I’m sure he wants to maintain a positive image just because of who he is. He is a businessman, he is a philanthropist,” she said. “Reputation and image are very important. It takes a lifetime to build a reputation, it takes one catastrophic event to destroy it.”

Deborah Moskovitch, a divorce consultant in Toronto and author of *The Smart Divorce* says it looks like the Bronfmans are having fun with the prospect of divorce — something a colleague of hers did when he held a divorce party

after he split from his wife five or six years ago.

“To the 100 special friends,” she said, in reference to the Bronfmans’ do, “They’re saying, ‘We’ve got this great mutual respect. It’s just another reason for a party.’ ”

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TROUTACIOUS

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8:18 AM on May 17, 2011

I would expect nothing less from the Broftmans. They continue to disgust society at large. My question is why the National Post feels a need to publish this trash?

WGRII

Score: 1

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8:30 AM on May 17, 2011

"Any suspicions and anxieties ought to be checked at the door, divorce consultants and lawyers say: This break-up party is something to be admired."

Divorce consultants and Lawyers say. Right. And we all know them to be the guardians of decency and virtue, right?

Divorce is a tragedy and not worthy of celebration. This is nothing more than a publicity stunt with the egregious side effect of glorifying divorce as an ordinary part of life. Tell that to ANY child of a divorced set of parents.

Garbage.

 1 reply

ALPHAMEL1

Score: 2

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8:58 AM on May 17, 2011

They should be celebrating Charle's success in spiriting his multi-million\$ Family Trust to the US when he moved there without paying the required taxes on it while his Liberal Government friends and CRA looked the other way.

My ex is a Polish immigrant goldigger who took me for a merry ride. I still hate her guts - after 9 years!

AMANDA PHIPPS

Score: 0

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9:20 AM on May 17, 2011

Divorces get messy, just look at the comments, all seemingly bitter divorcees and some say rightly so. You plan, dedicate and vow that decision will be until you die. When that is not fulfilled but you are still on that path, it is devastating. You are still you apart from your significant other or rather your ex. Why shouldn't you discuss the demise of the marriage, come to terms and appreciate one another, the time that you had. Taking responsibility for your own role in the matter doesn't hurt either and yes you always played a role whether you consciously intended to or not. Anger can only truly exist when you actually have strong feelings. Anger is often a masking feeling for what is truly the underlining issue. It's ok to feel sad, hurt, betrayed, or even down right livid, all perfectly natural but to hold on to such hate, anger and negativity will only bring you down. Carrying that weight can get rather heavy. I'd say allow yourself a bit of time before you spring a party but do make the split up cordial, be honest with yourself and others. I could imagine how a party similar to this fashion could help the children feel more at ease to know that it doesn't change the amount of involvement by either parent. Being peaceful about the split and working together in compromise might just save you a ton of money in the long run. Not going bankrupt from a divorce and maintaining, maybe even improving sanity are worth celebrating and throwing a party in itself.

MIKEMURPHY

Score: 1

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9:48 AM on May 17, 2011

Most people don't celebrate failure. Would Bronfman have a party to celebrate a bankruptcy?

The parasites like DivorceMag, so called Divorce consultants and Lawyers would like it as it puts more money in their pockets and raises, in their own small minds, the stature of a couples failure to stay together.

There is a huge difference between being civilized and throwing a celebratory party.

IMSMART33

Score: 0

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3:03 PM on May 19, 2011

Firstly, I believe Edgar Jr. is Edgar Bronfman's Sr 's son not Charles's son
There are no children issues from this marriage, no child support, so that is not a road block,
If they tend to agree to disagree on various major issues and yet respect each others rights to do so
it could make staying married so much more difficult, so the one thing they agree on is to divorce and be happy,
so they are celebrating their agreement to seperate.and enjoy life, with respect for each other,