

FROM THE HEART

A Magazine of Arts and Opinions

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Coming Out of a Small Town

By Is

I grew up in a New York upstate community under 20 thousand people. I am not sure when I realized I was gay, but apparently most of those around me were quite aware of my differences and made no bones to show their disdain in my presence. I came from multi-racial family, and we had our own interpersonal issues. However, somehow I stood out, and both sides shared their disapproval with some animosity. So it was with great anticipation that I was accepted at a college in NYC after graduation from Lynch High.

New York City was a different world, and I was 18 (legal drinking age) and my number in the draft was at the end for Viet Nam...a major scare for many of us. The U.S. had a lottery in 1964 for the draft by birthdays. I was accepted at the Fashion Institute of Technology on a full scholarship I was awarded at my high school graduation. I discovered who I was and who I wasn't in the early years. I spent most of my summers as a youth in the City with an aunt and an uncle, my father's sister and brother.

My Uncle Emerson brought me to the school. My aunt refused to get out of the car. Then the college was a two year school with one dorm. Now it's an entire

NYC block. ..amazing! Since the college confused my name, I was listed in the girl's dorm, Nagler Hall, across from the school. No room at the inn. So 16 boys and Dr. Tidwell, our mentor and resident chicken hawk, lived at the Walcott Hotel for my 1st year. When I arrived at the hotel, the manager called my roommate to come meet me in the lobby. His name was Frank, a 6'1" German Jew from New Hampshire...a gifted designer. My uncle literally turned quite a few shades lighter and then went red. Frank was dressed in a white shirt, sleeves rolled up to the elbow, a jean pair of short shorts, Jesus Christ sandals, and smoking a Sherman cigarette in a cigarette holder as long as my arm. He had long curly hair over his eye. My uncle asked if I was sure if this is what I really wanted, and I nodded through my laughter, that the decision was made. This was my coming out party. Frank

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

PUNS

It is said that the ability to make and understand PUNS is the highest level of language development. Here are the top 10 winners in the International Pun Contest. (Thanks to Russ McGrath)

1. A vulture boards an airplane, carrying two dead raccoons. The Stewardess looks at him and says, 'I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger.'
2. Two fish swim into a concrete wall. The one turns to the other and says, 'Dam!'
3. Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly, it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it, too.
4. Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, 'I've lost my electron.' The other says, 'Are you sure?' The first replies, 'Yes, I'm positive.'
5. Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal? His goal: transcendental medication.
6. A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After about an hour, the manager came out of the office and asked them to disperse.
But why they asked, as they moved off. 'Because,' he said, 'I can't stand chess-nuts boasting in an open foyer.'
7. A woman has twins and gives them up for adoption. One of them goes to a family in Egypt and is named Ahmal. The other goes to a family in Spain ; they

name him Juan. Years later, Juan sends a picture of himself to his birth mother. Upon receiving the picture, she tells her husband that she wishes she also had a picture of Ahmal. Her husband responds, 'They're twins! If you've seen Juan, you've seen Ahmal.'

8. A group of friars were behind on their belfry payments, so they opened a small florist shop to raise funds. Since everyone liked to buy flowers from the men of God, a rival florist across town thought the competition was unfair. He asked the good fathers to close down, but they would not. He went back and begged the friars to close. They ignored him. So, the rival florist hired Hugh MacTaggart, the roughest and most vicious thug in town to 'persuade' them to close. Hugh beat up the friars and trashed their store, saying he'd be back if they didn't close up shop. Terrified, they did so, thereby proving that only Hugh can prevent florist friars.

9. Mahatma Gandhi, as you know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail and, with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him (Oh, man, this is SO BAD, it's good) a super calloused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.

10. And, finally, there was the person who sent ten different puns to friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.

Genius

The first day home from school, little Milton's mother ran out eagerly to meet him.

"So what did you learn?"

"I learned to write," said Milton.

"On the first day already you learned to *write*? What a genius! So what did you write?"

"How should I know?" said Milton. "I can't read."

The Italian Loan

An Italian walked into a bank in New York City and asked for the loan officer. He told the loan officer that he was going to Italy on business for two weeks and needed to borrow \$5,000 and that he was not a depositor of the bank.

The bank officer told him that the bank would need some form of security for the loan, so the Italian handed over the keys to a new Ferrari. The car was parked on the street in front of the bank. The Italian produced the title and everything checked out. The loan officer agreed to hold the car as collateral for the loan and apologized for having to charge 12% interest. Later, the bank's president and its officers all enjoyed a good laugh at the Italian for using a \$250,000 Ferrari as collateral for a \$5,000 loan.

An employee of the bank then drove the Ferrari into the bank's underground garage and parked it.

Two weeks later, the Italian returned, repaid the \$5,000 and the interest of \$23.07. The loan officer said, 'Sir, we are very happy to have had your business, and this transaction has worked out very nicely, but we are a little puzzled. While you were away, we checked you out and found that you are a multimillionaire. What puzzles us is, why would you bother to borrow \$5,000?'

The Italian replied: 'Mingha, where else in New York City can I park my car for two weeks for only \$23.07 and expect it to be there when I return?'

Ah, the Italians... Bada Bing - Bada Boom

Thanks to R LaRocca, who got it from L Calandrino, who got it from C Caputo, so please don't think I'm making up anti-

Italian jokes. It's great to see that Italians can make fun of themselves. We all—Italians and otherwise—need to do that.

Jim

We Are Not Alone

Our stories may all be different, but yet they are often all the same. We are in a daily fight for our lives, a fight against an enemy that threatens to destroy us, t-cell by t-cell. We fight back with the tools we have, the skills we've learned, and we adapt with each passing day and experience. In all, we share one common thread - We are not alone!

Maybe you tested HIV+ very recently; maybe you've known it for some time but this is the first time you've reached out for information or support. The Damien Center creates an environment where people can gather to share information, experiences, and make new friends - friends who understand what it is like to live with this disease.

There's no need for you to handle this by yourself. You are not the only person in our community facing this. Just hearing how someone else has adjusted to living with the virus can be enough to help you realize that life is still good, that you can still have love and laughter. We are not alone. And neither are you.

By Perry Junjulas Executive Director of the Albany Damien Center and person living with AIDS. Reprinted in part from *The Body Positive*

Automatic Aeroplane

The world's first fully computerized airliner was ready for its maiden flight without pilots or crew. The plane taxied to the loading area automatically, its doors opened automatically, the steps came out automatically. The passengers boarded the plane and took their seats.

The steps retreated automatically, the doors closed, and the airplane taxied toward the runway.

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen," a voice intoned. "Welcome to the debut of the world's first fully computerized airliner. Everything on this aircraft is run electronically. Just sit back and relax. Nothing can go wrong ... Nothing can go wrong...nothing can go wrong...."

My Dog May Be a Genius

My dog may be a genius,
and in fact, there's little doubt.
He recognizes many words,
unless I spell them out.
If I so much as whisper "walk,"
he hurries off at once
to fetch his leash...it's evident
my dog is not a dunce.

I can't say "food" in front of him,
I spell *f-o-o-d*,
and he goes wild unless I spell
his *t-r-e-a-t*.
But recently this tactic
isn't working out too well.
I think my *d-o-g* has learned
to *s-p-e-l-l*.

By Jack Prelutsky

From the Heart is published at the Albany Damien Center to provide a way for the guests, staff, friends and volunteers of the Center to share their interests and their creative talents with others. Poems, jokes, op-eds, photos, drawings can all be included. They should be submitted to Jim Masters, who is serving as the working editor. Perry Junjulas will be the editor-in-chief, and what can and cannot be included will be finally decided by him. Nothing can be included that might out someone who does not want to be outed, nor can anything be included that might insult or harm anyone.

To submit items for future publication you can send them to Jim Masters by e-mail at jmasters002@nycap.rr.com. Or call him at 459-7827 to arrange to have him get them at the Center.