

NYC AIDS



"So you're a lesbian, eh? Gee, it certainly is a shame about what's been happening in Beirut."



MICHAEL

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7/8/78 -- EQUALITY

Although I've never really thought of myself as one, I have, on occasion, been labeled a male chauvinist. One night, some months before we were married, Karin and I were discussing the topic. She told me that, while I may appear to some people to be a male chauvinist, I really wasn't. She said I treat everyone equally badly. If I'm to be called anything, it's "disrespectful."

And while I don't consider myself chauvinistic, I've discovered over the past months that there was a certain innocence in me that made me seem chauvinistic. Up until very recently I couldn't really see the need for the feminist movement, MS magazine, and the ERA. I had always thought of women as being equals and didn't understand that there were people out there who treated women differently than men simply because they were women.

Karin and I were both brought up in an atmosphere where the husband/father was the primary wage-earner and the wife/mother's duties were mostly household. Even so, Karin's mother worked during most of Karin's childhood, and I was raised by my mother, who spent most of the time as a single parent. As such, I never really learned what it was a husband/father did that was any different from a wife/mother.

Karin and I were blissfully unaware of our ignorance until shortly before we married, and we have continued to learn about the injustices inflicted by the world. In the past four months we have made purchases, gotten loans, and signed contracts that depend on our income for payment. In all cases I have been asked about my job, my income, and my position, to see if we were qualified. In most cases information about Karin has been taken as secondary. Even before they know what Karin contributes to our household, it's treated as unimportant.

At the present time we haven't been able to come up with a good solution to this problem because, as "luck" would have it, I earn the majority of the income, and most of what we do is based on what I bring to the household. By whatever stroke of fate, I have gained the training it takes to get a good job, and until we can get Karin through college, or business school, or whatever training she finally chooses to take, it will remain that way.

But what if fate had turned the other way?

Another prejudice we have faced is that of names. Before we were married I asked Karin if she wanted to retain her maiden name. For reasons of her own, she chose to take my name as hers. So now when we try to get bank accounts and the like, we usually wind up with them in the name of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Bracken, as if Karin no longer legally exists. We have fought all of those instances, and have succeeded in 98% of the cases where it's happened. (Besides that, I prefer to be called "Mike" and I detest being called "Mr.")

We have gotten the feeling that the instant Karin and I were married she ceased to exist as an individual, and we have been trying, in our own small way, to fight that stupid prejudice impinged upon us, and especially upon Karin. It's a battle that will be fought for many years to come, but one which we hope to win.

We married as equals, and we intend to remain that way until we die.

7/9/78 -- YOUR CASH IS NO GOOD, SIR. WE ONLY HONOR MAJOR CREDIT CARDS.

Credit cards are a sore spot with us. We really don't want them, and don't need to buy anything with them. If we can't pay cash for it, we've decided we probably don't need the item (excluding, of course, such huge items as a home). However, society has become so credit oriented that cash has become nearly obsolete.

For most of the two years I'd had checking accounts before our marriage, I had nothing for identification beyond my driver's license. While stores were sometimes reluctant to accept my checks without more I.D., I never had one refuse. Later I discovered that a gasoline credit card would be more convenient than always worrying about carrying cash (I carry very little), and so I obtained one. For a year the combination of driver's license and gasoline credit card sufficed as proper identification.

I have recently noticed a trend by stores to refuse to accept checks without a "major" credit card as identification (Mastercharge, Bank Americard, etc). This has become most noticeable since Karin and I obtained a joint checking account and began writing bigger checks.

Although I really don't understand how a Mastercharge card can better identify us than our driver's licenses, we have reached a point where we must obtain a major credit card just to be allowed to pay cash for the things we want. We don't want any more credit cards because we don't want the temptation to be there before us. We have seen and heard of many people who over-spend themselves because of the ease of credit cards. They get it, use it, abuse it, and wind up in debt. We don't need those problems.

Our solution to the problem has been to refuse to patronize any store that won't take our checks hassle-free. We have voided checks and walked out of stores the instant they start to give us trouble. If they don't want to take our checks, they obviously don't want our business.

The oddest thing about all this are the places that give us the hassles. We tried to buy \$30 worth of records at a record store and they wouldn't accept a check that "large" without a "major credit card." And yet, only a few weeks earlier we'd written a check to a car dealer and driven a '78 Rabbit off the dealer's lot.

He never asked for identification.

3/16/79 -- Letters

The last MICHAEL sparked a number of letters that were interesting to me. However, because of the nature of them I've decided not to print them. For the most part they are very personal, and had I been the one to sign my name to them, I probably would have slapped a DNQ on them. Instead, a listing to let you know your letters were received.

Rod E yder, Craig Anderson, Harry Andruschak, J. Owen Hanner, Lee Pelton, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, D. Gary Grady, Gil Gaier, David Govaker, Fred Jakobcic, Ronald M. Salomon, Craig J. Hill, Bill Bridget, and A. D. Wallace.

PATRICK MYERS

EIGHT BALL IN THE SIDE POCKET

"More Than A Footnote" in *KNIGHTS 20* describes the death of Fort Bragg Fandom. In some ways, though, Fort Bragg Fandom has yet to die, and "Eight Ball In The Side Pocket" is one of the reasons why. Patrick Myers started writing this piece in early 1976, just before Fort Bragg Fandom began falling apart, but he never finished it. It languished in my files, not to be rediscovered until mid-1978 when the last of my personal files and belongings were delivered from Tacoma, Washington. In my excitement over having received files of my writing that had been unseen and barely remembered for nearly a year, "Eight Ball In The Side Pocket" was glossed over. I again tripped over the article shortly after finishing up issue 20 of *KNIGHTS*. It might have made a good companion piece to "More Than A Footnote," but was rediscovered too late.

I suppose the appearance of "Eight Ball In The Side Pocket" marks the very last article ever written by Patrick Myers, and the very last article printed that was written by a Fort Bragg Fan, about

Fort Bragg Fans, during the heyday of Fort Bragg Fandom.

What follows is the article essentially as I found it in my files.

-- Mike Bracken

"Red ten on the black jack."

"Huh?" I said.

"Red ten on the black jack. See?" Mike said as he moved the card over.

"Would you quit kibitzing?"

"Just thought I'd help."

"I don't need your help."

"Okay. Okay," he said as he turned back to his book.

Mike's parents weren't home and we sat in the kitchen listening to a moderately loud Alice Cooper album. His dog was sacked out on the couch and snoring loudly. I took another sip from the glass of chocolate milk that sat to my left and turned over another card.

"Damn it," I said, knocking the cards off the table.

"Jesus Christ, Pat. Control yourself," Mike said as he jerked his head up with a

start. "What's wrong, now?"

"I'm bored shitless. Is there anything good on TV?"

"Not tonight. Why don't ya read a book or something?"

"I'm not in the mood to read."

"Well, then, write something."

"I'm not in the mood to write," I said, staring at the wall.

"Well, at least pick up the cards and put 'em away."

"Yeah, okay," I said, bending over to retrieve the scattered deck. Just then the phone rang. Mike reached around the room divider and answered it. Mike uttered a few yeses, a no, and a maybe before turning to me.

"Would you like to go shoot pool with Joe?" he asked.

"You got the money?"

"No, but Joe does."

"Okay then."

Mike spoke into the phone, "We'll be over in a few minutes." And then he hung up. "You got all the cards picked up?"

"Yeah," I said.

"What's that one?"

"Where?"

"Under your foot."

"Oh. Heh. Sorry." I bent over, picked it up, brushed it off, and put it in the pack. Mike turned the stereo off and herded the dog into the bedroom. I shut the kitchen light off and we stepped out the door into a cold, wet rainstorm.

We rushed down the steps and climbed into Lemon Heap, a 1965 Grand Prix who was sitting patiently in the mud, his license plate askew as the result of Mike's first wreck. Mike turned the key and tapped the gas as Heap sputtered into life.

"When did you put the pillow between the seats?" I asked, noticing the change in Heap's interior appearance.

"A couplea days ago."

"Don't ask stupid questions."

"Oh," I said as Mike pulled out of his driveway. I fiddled with the radio as we drove out of the trailer park trying to pick up something on the broken antenna.

"You won't get anything til we get closer to town," Mike said as we turned left on the highway heading into town. A half-mile or so down the road we turned off the highway, then we turn again into Joe's driveway. As we pulled up, Joe came loping out of the house. I opened my door and leaned forward so Joe could climb into the rear seat of Mike's car.

"Onward, ho," Joe said as Heap began to sink in the mud of Joe's front yard. Mike gunned it, the tires spun for a moment spraying mud all over Joe's car, and then the tires caught and we were off.

II

"Eight ball in the side pocket," said Joe as he lined up with the cue ball.

"Which side pocket?" asked Mike.

"The left one."

"Your left or mine?"

"My left, damn it! Now shut up while I concentrate." Joe eyed the eight ball and then turned his pool cue until the bend was towards the floor. He tapped the cue ball lightly and it rolled forward, past the eight ball and into the side pocket.

Just then the door opened and in walked a girl with the looks of an adolescent Playboy bunny.

"Migod," Mike whispered to me. "look at the kabobos on that chick."

"I see, I see," I said as I followed her with my eyes.

"Don't stare," Mike said to me.

"Stare? Who's staring?"

"You are."

"Oh, sorry."

"Don't be," Mike said. "I'm doing the same thing."

Joe turned to see what we were looking at and dropped the cue stick on his foot, his eyes wide with shock. He stuttered once and muttered a deleted expletive that sounded much like, "hot, damn."

She went over to the juke box, dropped a quarter in and bent over the song listing. Her short skirt hiked itself far up her buttocks, and her unteathered breasts pressed up against the glass on the front of the juke box.

"Stick your tongue back in your mouth," I whispered to Mike as he began to slide to the floor.

She straightened up and punched three songs. The juke box whirred and then blarred out a Carpenter's tune. She turned toward us and Joe quickly picked up his pool cue and asked, "Who's turn?"

"Nobody's," I said. "You lost already."

"Oh," he said, dropping another quarter into the money hungry mouth of the pool table. The balls clattered loudly down to the end of the table where Joe began to rack them up.

Mike was still staring, so I nudged him in the side. "Huh?" he said, coming out of it, "Did you see the kabobos on that chick?"

"You already said that."

"Oh."

"You're first."

"You guys go ahead," Mike said. "I'll sit this one out."

"Hokay, if you say so."

The small building was empty save for the four of us. She was playing a pinball machine, Joe and I were playing a game of pool, but were doing much worse than usual, and Mike was sitting on a bench staring as she continually bent over the pinball machine in an effort to keep the ball in play.

Mike breathed heavily as spittle ran down his chin. The song ended, the juke box whirred, and a Billy Preston ⁴⁵ began playing. The pinball machine clanged as points built up. Occasionally the cue ball would strike another ball and make a clack. I became less interested in the girl's looks and more in the reaction it was causing in Mike.

He began to shake and his eyes were bulging from their sockets. He twisted in his seat trying to make himself comfortable. One last ting and the last pinball fell through the receiving end of the pinball machine. She puckered her lips in a girlish pout and again turned towards us.

"Have one of you got a quarter I could borrow?" she asked in a sweet lilting voice.

"Uh, yeah," Mike blurted out before either Joe or I had a chance to realize what she'd asked. Mike dug into his pocket, pulled out a handful of change (and all along he'd been feigning destitution) and handed her a quarter. She parted her cherry-red lips in gratitude and turned back towards the pinball machines. Her breasts swayed and her bottom wiggled as she moved over to the nearest machine.

The juke box whirred again and another song began to play. Mike slowly sashayed

over to the pinball machine next to her and dropped in a quarter.

"Looks like we're gonna walk home tonight," Joe whispered. "Mike did this to me once at the bowling alley.

"I ain't gonna walk home," I said.

"Don't worry about it. If anything happens, I'll call my mother."

"Okay," I said, bending over the table.

"My name's Mike," he said, bashing a flipper. "What's yours?"

"Linda," she said.

I snickered as Mike shifted a little closer to her and Joe belched. Mike gave us a dirty look over his shoulder and pounced on the flippers a few more times.

"Live around here?" Mike asked.

"Yes," she said, smiling.

"How come I haven't seen you around before?"

"Dig that approach," I said in an aside to Joe.

"I just moved into the area a couple of weeks ago."

"Oh."

The juke box whirred and was silent. Mike let the ball he was playing play itself and dropped a quarter into the slot of the juke box. He quickly punched a series of buttons and caught the ball in play on the pinball machine. Again the juke box whirred and out blarred Elton John.

Linda's bottom wiggled as she smacked the flippers and Mike's eyes were on her more than on his pinball. "How'd you get here?" he asked.

"My mother dropped me off."

"Think you'll need a ride home?" Mike asked huskily.

She looked at him. "No," she said slowly.

"Oh."

Joe gagged on a laugh and I knocked the cue ball off the table.

Her last game was over and she stood looking at Mike play his pinball machine. I leaned against the wall and watched Mike. Linda leaned over and rubbed her breasts against Mike's arm accidentally. He mistook her action and reached around and stroked her thigh. Her hand was in action immediately and she slapped his face, sending his

wire-rim glasses across the room. She stormed from the room and out into the drizzle.

Mike stood there looking at us, his face red, his hair in his eyes, with an expression of bewilderment.

-- Patrick Myers

And so Fort Bragg Fandom ends. Patrick Myers was a pseudonym whose existence is best described in "More Than A Footnote" in KNIGHTS 20. "Eight Ball In The Side Pocket" was presented here out of a sense of loss. While most of the tales written by Patrick Myers were fiction, they were based on events that happened to the Fort Bragg Fans, and I still retain fond memories for those days.

I guess now, finally, I can let some of those memories fade. Now, perhaps, I will be more able to accept the fandom of today, and my fan associations of today.

-- Mike Bracken

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