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**COMMENTARY**

BY MARTY DAVIS

**Advice and consent**

Publisher seeks semantically safe sanctuary in search for personal growth (navigator, shmavigator—she's looking for a therapist)

An ongoing theme in these commentaries of late has been my emphasis (read: obsession) on planning for the future, planning for change and planning to plan, plan, plan. Recently it has been brought to my attention that such a need for planning could possibly be construed as (gasp! horror! shock!) my having "control issues."

Oh no, please, say it ain't so! Not me! Control issues, surely not. I just like to plan, be prepared, be ready—you know, be in control.

Oops! Truth be known, I don't always have to plan things to death. In fact, there are times when I absolutely cherish the notion of having nary a whit of a plan. At least once a year, more often if I plan properly, I take off on a weeklong journey of adventure with my beloved gas-eating, import-smashing, fire-breathing, stay-out-of-my-way Ford Explorer SUV. The absolutely singular mandated plan of these adventures is that there be no plan whatsoever.

Last year I pulled out of my driveway with the vague notion in mind that I was headed off to see the great national parks of southern Utah. A few days later, I found myself happily wandering the back roads of Glacier National Park...in Montana. I couldn't even begin to tell you how I got there, which roads I took, which towns I saw or even where I stayed. It was just a week of go with the flow and see where that flow takes you.

Each and every year these trips bring me immeasurable happiness and joy. My total, absolute lack of planning allows me the freedom to visit wondrous places, meet kindred souls and see sights that no one would ever actually plan to see.

The tool for these trips is my cherished collection of maps. I love my maps...they tell you everything—where you are, where you ought to be, and how to get from the former to the latter. They are effective and nec-

essary tools for charting the mazes of unfamiliar territory. They can help you avoid being lost and, if and when you get lost anyway, they show you the way to where you should be. They are the navigator, the guide, they assist with the journey. They help you arrive safely and in one piece. They enhance the journey.

I've recently come to realize that I need to incorporate more aspects of these annual trips into the routines of my daily life. While I'll probably never have the freedom of starting each morning without knowing where I'll be at day's end, I have come to believe that each day should include a little more flexibility, a little more openness, a little more ability to change

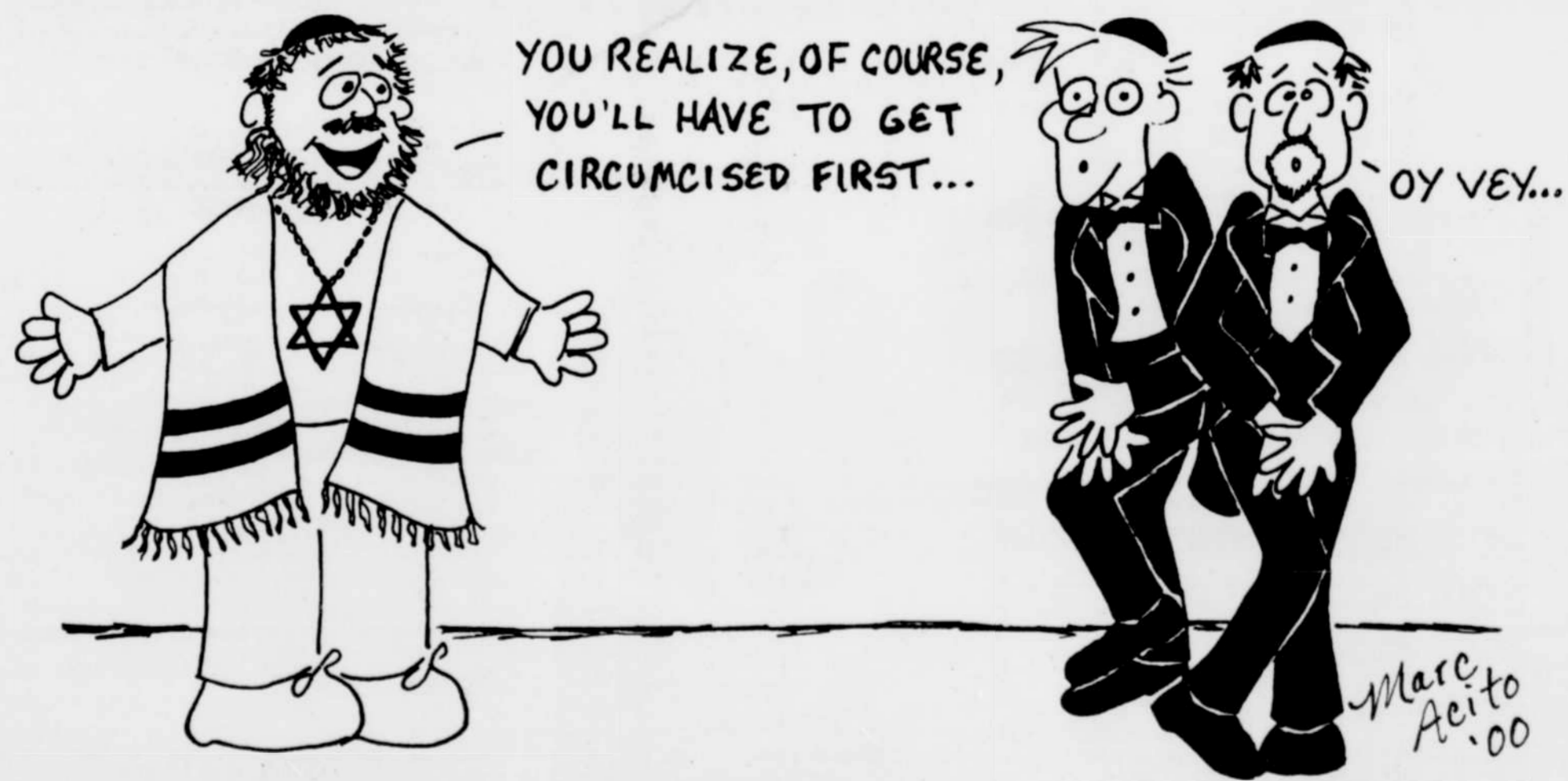
course willingly and, most importantly of all, recognition that I must, now and then, allow others to join in the journey. And when I'm feeling lost, or perhaps not entirely comfortable with where I am, that's the time to consider bringing aboard a tool, a guide, a navigator.

While there's little need for an actual road map for the routes and routines of day-to-day life, I have concluded that even though I don't need a map I still require the guidance of a navigator of a different nature. I know where I am, right here and now, but just like the trip to Montana I can't really tell you how I got here. And most important of all, I realize that I have no idea where I am headed...and certainly no clue as how to get there—wherever "there" turns out to be. And so, with the reluctance of many a lost traveler, I'm finally going to stop and ask for directions. I'm going to get some help with mapping out the route of my life.

Many schools of thought agree that we get to make our life's journey only once. I want to make my one trip the very best it can be. I suspect that there are a few rough roads ahead, a few detours, a bit of doubling back and lots of curves and switchbacks. I'll keep you posted on how the trip is going—where I'm at...am I having fun...am I there yet?



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