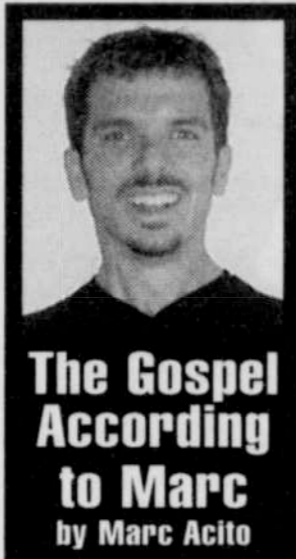


HUMOR

Acting your age
In praise of Palm Springs

Every winter, Floyd and I leave rainy Portland and fly south for a chance to see that thing we keep hearing about—what's it called again? Ah, yes, the SUN. We go to Palm Springs.



The Gospel According to Marc
by Marc Acito

I love everything about Palm Springs. I even love the airport, which was built in the 1960s in that modern *Jetsons*-like way that people thought the future would look like but doesn't. I love how we de-plane right onto the tarmac, instead of being hustled through the cattle chute. And I love standing at the top of the stairs, my eyes adjusting to that fiery ball in the sky (what's it called again?) and indulging my secret fantasy that I'm Jackie Kennedy just arriving in Dallas.

I admit it's bizarre (particularly when you consider how badly Jackie's day in Dallas turned out), but I can't resist imagining myself in a pink Chanel suit as I give a little wave to the bewildered baggage handlers below.

Floyd and I stay at InnDulge, which is aptly named. Unlike some gay clothing-optional resorts, InnDulge is sexy without feeling sleazy and is, most importantly to a Chatty Cathy like me, very friendly.

What's more, you can discover all kinds of things about men when you see them naked, not the least of which is whether the carpet matches the curtains, if you know what I mean.

This InnDulgent combination of nudity, homosexuality and alcohol quickly leads to so much room-hopping it's impossible to keep track of who is with whom. Even if you dispense with names and simply refer to people by city (as I do), you still need a flow chart to keep score.

"OK, Milwaukee's in with San Diego, right?" I ask Floyd as I return to my chaise like someone who's missed part of the game while at the snack stand.

"They've just brought in Cleveland and Atlanta," he says. "Wow," I say. "An orgy." "Not quite," says Boston, who's lying next to Floyd. "It takes five to make an orgy."

"Really?" I ask. This is news to me. "Absolutely," he says, authoritatively. "What they're having is a *forgy*." Who knew this trip would be so educational?

Unfortunately, the weather turned cold and cloudy this year, which meant the hot tub got so crowded it began to resemble Man Soup. With no sun to enjoy, Floyd and I caught up on our moviegoing.

First we went to see *Cold Mountain* but were thoroughly distracted by Nicole Kidman's strangely immobile forehead. It was as if they'd cast one of those big stone heads from Easter Island. But even worse was Cher in the Farrelly brothers' *Stuck on You*, the title obviously referring to her nose, which looked like it had been spackled in place.

Thank God for Diane Keaton, who was totally natural-looking and simply luminous in *Something's Gotta Give*. But Floyd and I weren't interested in her romance with Jack Nicholson;

we wanted to see her end up with the hunky doctor played by Keanu Reeves. Actually, we wanted to see *ourselves* end up with hunky Keanu Reeves, if only to give the boys around the pool at InnDulge something to talk about.

At the other end of the age spectrum, we also saw *Peter Pan*, which contained so much sexual tension between its 12- and 13-year-old leads I was worried the vice squad was going to swoop into the theater and arrest us.

I found it an interesting coincidence that so many of the movies we saw in Palm Springs got us thinking about aging. You see, in Palm Springs you're either gay or gray—or both, which is partly why I love it so. I'm 38 years old, but in Palm Springs I'm not even a chicken yet. I'm more like an egg.

So while I typically hang out with my peers at the video bar Hunters, I always make a point of stopping in first at the Rainbow Cactus Café, a place that skews so old, some call it the Rainbow Casket. It's unkind but true; they ought to post a sign at the door: "Must be at least 55 to enter."

According to Tim Bergling's fascinating study on ageism in the gay community, *Reeling in the Years*, older and younger gay men are like "Italian salad dressing in the fridge. You can shake us all you want, but eventually we'll lift, separate and retreat to separate halves of the bottle."

But not in Palm Springs, which is perhaps the only place in America where a

mature man can walk into a bar, order a Metamucil Martini and feel proud to act his age.

And that, my friends, is The Gospel According to Marc. ☐

MARC ACITO's first novel, *How I Paid for College*, will be published in September by Doubleday. Write him at marc@marcacito.com.



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