

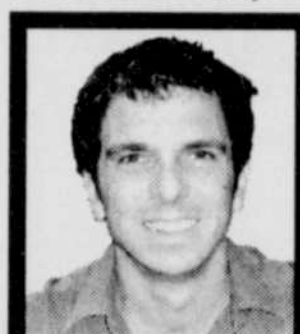
HUMOR

Back to the future

What's new in Jersey

Like Gov. Jim McGreevey of New Jersey, I, too, am a gay American, although I think it makes us both sound as if we just sashayed out of some gay shtetl in Eastern Europe, belting out the score to *Yentl*.

But that's neither queer nor there. Because I'm also a New Jerseyan, I've been following every sordid detail of the McGreevey scandal with keen interest (that is, until *Survivor* finally started and my empty life once again had meaning). That the governor of my birth state is corrupt comes as no surprise; most



The Gospel According to Marc
by Marc Acito

of us Jerseyans think of *The Sopranos* as reality TV. The big twist here, of course, is that the gov had a homo security adviser.

Now, I don't know if Golan Cipel is queer (I certainly haven't slept with him), but since McGreevey is way cuter I'm inclined to believe the sex was consensual. Which is probably why I'm not making a career in law enforcement. I mean, I'm the guy who thought the Beltway sniper was hot.

Then there's David Miller, who claimed McGreevey wasn't the only one to invade Golan's tights. Miller also claimed to be a CIA operative with ties to al-Qaeda and warned that terrorists would blow up the Essex County Courthouse. Then he flapped his arms and flew back to Cloud Cuckooland.

Originally Miller was identified as an adjunct professor at Montclair State University,

but apparently this looney tune makes his living deciphering secret messages from the mother ship. As for the real Professor David Miller, he reportedly received several interesting phone calls from U.S. Rep. Ed Schrock.

Interestingly, the crazy David Miller attends the same synagogue as Charles Kushner, McGreevey's top donor. You might remember Kushner as the guy who paid a prostitute to seduce his sister's husband and videotape it in retaliation for his brother-in-law testifying against him in a fraud investigation. The tape will be judged later this month on *America's Scummiest Home Videos* by a celebrity panel made up of Paris Hilton, Tommy Lee and Rob Lowe.

As it turns out, I was back in the Garden State the day the gayvornor came out, though I swear I had nothing to do with it. (I certainly haven't slept with him, either.) No, I was there to celebrate my aunt and uncle's 50th wedding anniversary.

I approach these family events with a certain amount of trepidation. In a reversal that proves my family does everything backward, my father's generation, which came of age in the 1950s, is decidedly hipper than many members of my generation, who seem determined to live in the '50s. So it's my peers who end up shouting "Abortion is murder" before storming out the door, or insisting that my partner and I not discuss being gay in front of their little darlings.

We are the forbidden fruits.

So going to family gatherings gives me that same feeling I got when everyone in the Cheney family took to the stage at the Republican National Convention except poor muffled-diving Mary, who sat in the shadows with her partner. It reminded me of those weddings where Floyd and I sat in the corner while the straight people all did the Macarena. Or in my family's case, the Macaroni.

I can't know for certain whether McGreevey's coming out had anything to do with it, but I noticed immediately that attitudes seemed to have shifted. Even the abortion-is-murder guy told me he thought the problem with the governor wasn't his sexual orientation but his McGreevous lack of judgment. Then he went on to tell me he thought lesbians were really hot.

As McGreevey himself said, "If any good is to come from this episode...it is that New Jersey and increasingly America recognizes that sexuality is an individual imprint and not a statement of competency and capability."

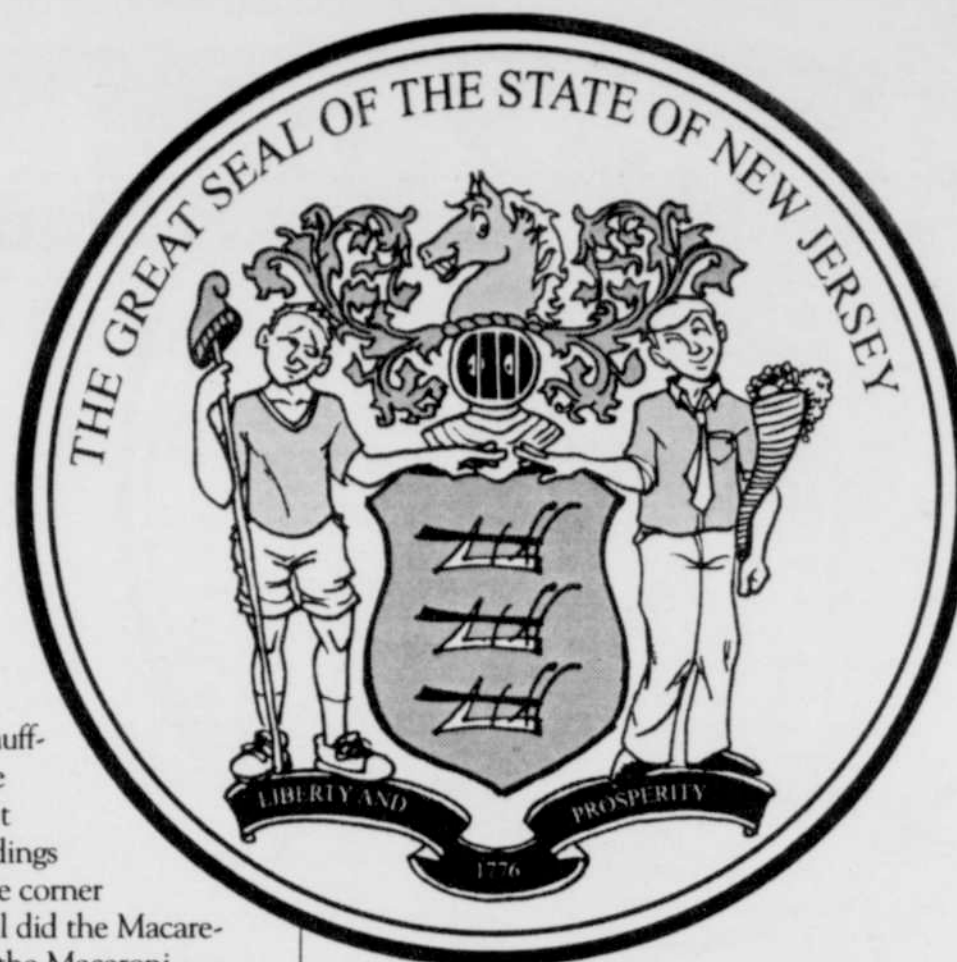
Fifty years ago, my uncle's mother objected to him dating my aunt because his family is Polish and mine is Italian. Ditto for my Irish aunt, whose mother asked my olive-skinned

uncle if he would please wear a hat in the summer so his skin wouldn't get so dark. (Remember, 1954 was the year it took a bunch of activist judges to integrate schools.)

Fifty years later we can laugh about it, thinking how inane those prejudices were. And as I stood with my partner eating sausage and peppers, a warm, optimistic feeling came over me. Fifty years from now I bet we'll all look back at this McGreevey mess and say: "Do you remember when there was all that fuss about people being gay? Wasn't that STUPID?"

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

MARC ACITO is the author of *How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship and Musical Theater*. Write him at www.marcacito.com.



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