

Like most liberals, I'm still feeling pretty shell-shocked from the election—or, as I like to call it, the Crusades. Apparently Mary Cheney came out of hiding and saw her shadow, and now we have four more years of Republicanism.

In an effort to stave off despair, I flew straight to Palm Springs for Gay Pride. (Since even a drag queen's troweled-on makeup can't withstand the desert heat in June, Palm Springs Pride is held in November.) My purpose was to sell copies of my novel, which, in case you've missed all my other shameless self-



The Gospel According to Marc
by Marc Acito

promotion, is a comic tale of disorganized crime titled *How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship and Musical Theater*.

I stayed with my friends Joan and Randy, the inspiration for my column on Cool Straight People and whose obsession for mid-century furniture borders on a fetish. Joan and Randy live on Arenas, also home to a barber shop so overrun with Streisand memorabilia it's been rechristened the "Barbra Shop." One morning a big bear of a guy in leather chaps was getting his back shaved while singing along to a video of "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever."

Locals pronounce Arenas so that it rhymes with "a penis" (appropriate, given the proximity of the bars). But I can't say Arenas without thinking of Uranus. There's just something

distinctly Cole Porter-y about the idea, and I find myself humming to myself:

*You say Arenas, and I say Uranus.
I like the penis of that Greg Louganis,
Arenas, Uranus,
A penis, Louganis,
Let's call the whole thing off.*

I know; it's frightening how I occupy my brain. Anything to keep my mind off of a Bush-nominated Supreme Court.

I ventured over to the Pride festival, which exuded a distinctly small-town county fair atmosphere, no doubt accentuated by the country-western dancers two-stepping while the makers of all manner of rainbow-themed crafts hawked their wares. I swear, it was like Gayberry. All that was missing was a low-carb pie-eating contest.

Then I went to Hunters but, having left Floyd at home, did no gathering. I did stuff a few bills in the G-string of a go-go boy, however, who responded with a weary look like, "Another gay...another dollar."

The next morning I rose for a jog and was struck by how empty the town seemed. An alien landing in the deserted streets of Palm Springs could easily have come to the conclusion that the entire planet was populated entirely by Latinos with leaf blowers.

I grew concerned there'd be no one to be

proud with or, more importantly, sell books to. (I may be gay, but I've got my priorities straight.) Then, like some kind of gay Brigadoon, the city magically filled with people.

In that moment, a beacon of hope blazed through my election-fogged brain. "Queer up," I thought. "It's not the end of the world."

You see, if there's anything to be learned from the Religious Reich, it's the power of mobilizing. This election came down to less than 4 million votes. That's how many people watch *America's Next Top Model*, and they were probably just as well-informed. Don't let that big red map fool you. Wyoming may be 60 times larger than Rhode Island, but Rhode Island has twice as many people.

We are making progress. Even that man in the White House admits that civil unions are necessary—something that wouldn't have happened if we hadn't pushed for full marriage. And young voters are on our side, too. Those conservatives who say "there'll be gay marriage over my dead body" are, well, probably right.

It's ironic that our national response to attacks from religious fundamentalists is to allow our country to be hijacked by religious fundamentalists. For all its blather about moral values, the Religious Wrong fails to understand that denying one set of citizens equal rights is the most immoral injustice of all. Every time I hear one of them speak against us, I just substitute the word "gay" with "black" in my

Mourning in America

Making gay while the sun shines

head and remind myself how ashamed of themselves these people will be in just a generation.

To paraphrase the words of Barbra Joan, the patron saint of Democrats, "On a queer day you can see forever."

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

MARC ACITO's book is called *How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship and Musical Theater*. Perhaps you've heard something about it. Write him at www.marcacito.com.

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