

SHELL SHOCKED

The Benefits of Being Dim

By Art Stevens

To not be very bright can be a blessing in disguise. If you come across such a person you're likely to feel sorry for him, be sensitive about what you say to him and thank your lucky stars that your mind works far differently. Sound somewhat snobbish? Well, just listen to the conversation I had recently.

I was at a Sanibel social event and was introduced to Nick. Nick looked like everyone else but really wasn't like everyone else. Nick was, shall we say, not all there? I started the conversation by saying that my wife and I had just attended the performance of a Broadway show at the Barbara Mann. He said "Oh, I know what's playing there. Isn't it 'The Book of Morons'?"

I thought he was joking. I let out a giggle and said, "Hey, that's funny. But I'm sure you mean 'The Book of Mormon'. But good try though." He then said, "Isn't the show about a group of morons and imbeciles who go to Africa to try to get the natives to play basketball?"

Was he still kidding? "No," I said. "The show is about a group of Mormons who go to Africa to try to convert the natives. It's a very funny show."

He thought a moment and said, "Maybe I'm thinking of another show. I might be thinking of 'Fans of the Opera.' That's the show where someone wears a mask and when he takes it off you can see he's really Clark Kent."

Was this guy putting me on? Is he really that stupid? I immediately corrected him. "No, that show is called 'The Phantom of the Opera.' And the main character wears a mask because his face is scarred."

He said, "No, that was a movie called 'Scarface' starring Al Pistachio. He plays a Cuban gangster who goes around shooting people for no reason at all. He keeps saying 'let me introduce you to my little friend.' I think Pistachio won an Oxbar for that movie."

"Don't you mean 'Oscar'?" I suggested." "No," he said. "Oscar is the name of a sardine," he suggested. "I eat it all the time with mayonnaise and lemon. But what do you think of President Albania?"

I was totally unclear about what was going on. Was he putting me on or was he just out of touch? Was he just forgetful or downright stupid? So I asked him point blank: "You're just making all this up, aren't you? You can't have gotten all these names wrong. I think you're pulling my leg, aren't you?"

He said “Why would I want to pull your leg? You’d fall down if I did that. But if I pulled anything it would be my tie because it’s choking me. By the way, did you ever live in Brooklyn?”

“Why would you think that I ever lived in Brooklyn?”

“Because in Brooklyn they pull people’s legs all the time. It’s a street sport.”

I was trying to recall who introduced me to this guy and why I even got into a conversation with him in the first place. It was obviously a set up. But how could anyone be this out of touch with names and events? I looked at my watch and told him that my wife and I were in a hurry.

He promptly replied: “Why is everyone in such a big hurry when I get into a conversation with them? You’d think that I had the turkey pox.”

“Don’t you mean the chicken pox?” I gently suggested. He replied, “I once had the kraut. That’s the disease where your big toe hurts a lot. “

“That’s gout,” I said.

“Gout is a fish. I often have blackened gout at Tambers.”

“That’s Timbers,” I said.

“Timbers is what you shout when you chop down a tree,” he said. “Have you ever chopped down a tree?”

“It was good meeting you, “I said. “I hope I run into you again.”

“You want to run me over? I hope you have a very small car so that my pine won’t be snapped.”

I was still entrapped by him. “Don’t you mean spine?” I asked.

“Spine is the name of a soft drink. I usually have it on the ricks.”

I barely escaped with my vocabulary intact.

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