

The Great Greenwich Village Pubcrawl of 1987

The Great Greenwich Village Pubcrawl of 1987 began in the Broadway Lounge of the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City. The new Marriott Marquis is where the old Astor hotel used to be, and the circular Broadway Lounge overlooks Times Square eight floors above the street.

The Broadway Lounge is a revolving bar which turns in a counter-clockwise direction at varying speeds. The last time I was there the floor revolved pretty quickly, but during my first visits it moved like the minute hand on a clock; stationary to the naked eye but turning inexorably nonetheless. I first encountered the Broadway Lounge in July of 1986, during what MTV called "Liberty or Death Weekend," when I spent an afternoon and most of the evening up there with some people from HA Bruno. We were all getting soundly pissed on the various mixed drinks which were brought to our table in a seemingly endless supply, due primarily to Bruno's excellent credit with the Marriott.

When we found our seats at the Broadway Lounge, they were under the windows near the southern wall. Three vodka-tonics later we were 180° opposite where we had first sat down. When I noticed this I became extremely nervous, then leapt to my feet shouting, "What the hell's going on here? Stop this goddamned thing at once!" I attempted to cuff a passing cocktail waitress and climb over several other seated patrons to get out of the bar, but Damon and Richard got up and wrestled me back down into my seat. They seized a shot glass of ice-cold syrupy Stolichnaya from a neighboring table and shoved it up under my nose. I knocked the filthy thing back and ceased from that moment to worry about the revolving Broadway Lounge, though I did get a little agitated later when scenes from David Wolper's grotesque and tasteless Statue of Liberty Celebration, which was taking place at that moment less than five miles away, appeared on the overhead television screens.

The next summer, the Broadway Lounge held no horrors for me. By the time matinee crowds spilled out onto 7th Avenue that fateful Sunday in September I had spent countless inebriated hours on that great spinning plate, drinking untold numbers of vodka-tonics and consuming frightening quantities of the Marriott's unique and nourishing cheese crackers (which were, mercifully, free of charge for drinking customers). I was a well-recognized veteran of the Broadway Lounge, and because the various persons from whom I typically cadged drinks always paid amply and promptly, I was a popular fixture as well, at least as far as the management was concerned.

That day Jimbo and I had become fed up with the tedium of booth setup for our respective companies and left the Javitts Center for the cool hospitality of the Broadway Lounge at around 3:00. We felt mean and ugly, and decided to walk back to Times Square from 12th Avenue through the noise and stench of the stale asphalt jungle of Hells Kitchen. By the time we found our seats in the revolving bar 20 minutes later we were tired and thirsty, and demanded immediate attention from the waitress in very loud voices.

We had been in New York for three days, and were wrangling with a creeping exhaustion which threatened to result in complete systemic breakdowns in both of us before the show even started in two days. It was imperative, we decided as we collapsed into the deep maroon chairs and ordered three drinks apiece to begin, that we break the wave of trade show fatigue which threatened to claim us before the real partying began in earnest Tuesday night. An Event was definitely in order, immediately, tonight, one highlighted by revolting excesses and terrifying depredations rendered upon the citizens of this debased and forsaken city. We could see no other alternative.

We also had to find someone to pay for these drinks. The Broadway Lounge is very cavalier about running up drink tabs on people. Long experience has taught them that if they serve enough drinks to a table, eventually someone is going to become so bent that he'll pay anything they ask. Within a half hour Jimbo and I had run up a \$75 bill by sucking down five drinks each, and we were only getting started. It was critical that a fish was found before the tab got much higher.

About 4:00 our prayers were answered when Lono Pituitary showed up and sat with us. He was my techie then, and to this day can always be counted on to do the British thing and pay for lunch, dinner, the bar tab, taxi fare, your car rental, an abortion, whatever. He chain-smokes like an Arab, and conversations with him are punctuated ceaselessly with terrible phlegmy back-cracking coughs which echo like pistol shots, especially when you make him laugh, "Ha, ha, ha, ha, -- HACK, CHACK, HACK, CHACK, WHEEZE, HACK, HACK!!" The three of us started discussing women, I think, getting more and more boisterous as the conversation developed. Lono P pulled out his American Express card and called for another round of drinks.

Ten minutes after Lono P sat down Stagg Meander appeared in the midst of much cheerful yelling and slapping of backs. He was living in Sumatra at the time, and remains a huge bearded guy who gets along with most people who aren't dickheads and has friends in every city in the world I've ever visited with him, except Boston, where he usually struts around provocatively in bright yellow and purple Lakers t-shirts. He drinks like a tuna, gambles like some dissipated example of faded European nobility, and casually ingests many mind-altering substances of the sort proscribed by virtually all US law enforcement agencies. He is a good man to have standing by in hazardous situations, when a special weirdness is required to confuse the enemy and make good your escape. Stagg sat down and we shouted at the waitress for another round of drinks. Jimbo drank Jack Daniels over ice, Lono P sipped at gin or some such foul swill, Stagg was an inveterate addict of White Russians, while I stuck to the venerable and time-honored vodka-tonic.

Stagg announced that there was a jazz festival of sorts that night in a number of select bars in Greenwich Village, and that we had to make immediate preparations to go there with him and two old friends of his he ran into that afternoon at the Moroccan Embassy. I wanted to know why the hell he wasn't at the Javitts Center with me in the afternoon, "You bastard," I screamed, "What were you doing at the Moroccan Embassy?" But Jimbo and Lono P shouted me down, demanding more information about the jazz festival, a potential Event for the evening.

It was some kind of informal thing spread all over the Village. We had only to get our asses down there, then schmooze around from bar to bar, catching the latest riffs of a 70-year-old musical style that was fading fast into the loathsome triple-Z funk now found on most Los

Angeles FM radio stations. As an Event, the Village jazz festival offered enormous potential for severe psychological and physiological self-abuse on so many levels it made my head reel. It was exactly what we needed to pull ourselves out of our brooding pre-show despondency, and I could feel my adrenal gland quickly escalating chemical production in anticipation of the evening's promised outrages, winding me into a hormone-crazed knot. I wanted to know when we were leaving and Stagg yelled, "Soon! Soon! When my friends get here," then ordered another White Russian. We all fell then to angry complaining about the state of modern popular music, and also why it was that Republican administrations seemed lately (since 1968) to find it necessary to staff themselves with thugs, gangsters, blackmailers and other criminals, becoming executive-level goon squads of violent hustlers and extortionists.

Before too long the discourse degraded into a shouting match between Jimbo and Stagg about the weirdest and most dangerous places either of them had ever "done it." By this time I was so far gone I had only a groping shadow of an idea of what they were saying, but it was still a very good show, with Stagg constantly leaping up and thrusting his chin into Jimbo's face, shouting vulgar points of view at the top of his lungs. Jimbo would hop to his feet and scream back at him, then both of them would pound on the tiny plastic table and scatter tasty Marriott cheese crackers all over the place. Somehow, Lono P and I found the proceedings immensely entertaining and hilarious, because both of us were whooping and screaming ("Ha, ha, HACK, CHACK, WHEEZE, HACK, HACK!!") and slapping our drinks around, offering absurd suggestions and arcane historical references as loudly as possible.

One by one the tables adjacent to ours emptied of patrons, so Lono P and I seized the vacant chairs for use as footstools and finished off the dregs of the abandoned drinks and delicious Marriott cheese crackers. Soon my wife showed up at the Broadway Lounge, and Stagg immediately went upstairs to his room to eat some powerful drugs. My wife sat down and ordered some iced tea or a coke or something, acted as if she was offended by our antics and conversation, and was roundly ignored by all of us for the rest of the evening.

By this time Jimbo and I were teary-eyed, screaming at each other about an especially funny all-night overtime session at IPG, an Orange County photo lab where we both once worked with Stagg. The core of this side-splitting tale was a nonsense song we made up that night when we were 17 mind-numbing hours into our shifts, delirious with fatigue, about nose-hairs. Naturally a stirring rendition of this rousing ballad was in order, for the benefit of the remaining patrons of the Broadway Lounge, so we stood up and lit into it at excessively high volume, smashing our drinks together and strewing alcohol and ice everywhere, while Lono P coughed his rattly laugh and watched the inert walls of the bar slide silently by.

Presently, after three or four goes at the Nose-Hair Song, I spotted Stagg making his glittery-eyed way through the eighth floor lobby towards us, so I grabbed Lono P's shoulder, hissing, "The tab, get the tab!" I pulled Jimbo with me as I stepped over a chair, upsetting the table and the residue of our revelries, and Stagg staggered through the scattered bar patrons to the entrance to the Broadway Lounge. I had to step over a few seated people, but this was okay since I stand about 6'5" tall, even drunk. Jimbo tried to follow my steps over the chairs, but he fell over them instead, and it was taking us a lot longer to get to Stagg than I thought it should have. Suddenly it seemed that the revolving bar was picking up speed, and I had to get off it at once, before it was too late. I panicked, left Jimbo to his own fate, and began falling over people

myself, tall as I am, screaming, “Sorry! Sorry!! Look out,” making my way as quickly as possible to the narrowing entrance before I was cut off, or worse, cut in half by the glass wall of the revolving bar as it caught me in the gap after a horrible alcohol-induced miscalculation. It was like a bad dream, shoving my way through outraged drinkers in a do-or-die race with the revolving glass wall (which, I learned the next day, was actually connected to the stationary part of the wall and didn’t move at all), until I finally reeled across the gap to Stagg, clutched onto him and began shouting, “Lono P’s still in there! We gotta get Lono P out!”

“It’s okay,” said Stagg, “He’s with your wife.”

“Never mind my wife, I wept, “Who’s gonna pay for the drinks?”

“To hell with that,” said Jimbo as he wobbled off the treacherous spinning bar, “Where’s this jazz festival?”

“We’re ready to go,” replied Stagg, brushing me off his body, “But first I have to introduce my two buddies.” He waved his arm towards two more huge guys standing a couple yards off, evaluating the scene for themselves, and introduced them as Dan Something and Rodney Okay, a couple of dangerous drug-eaters Stagg knew from his college days. I looked down at their feet and noticed they were both hovering several inches off the floor, then nudged Jimbo silently and pointed at the phenomenon. Stagg said it was okay, Dan and Rodney had just come back from an intense three-hour mushroom-gobbling session at Columbia University, so there really wasn’t anything to worry about. In fact, Stagg was more concerned about Jimbo and myself, and said we both looked ready to erupt into senseless and spontaneous violence at any moment. “I think it would be far too hazardous to allow you guys to ride with Dan and Rodney in a taxi,” he said, “We’ll have to take the subway.”

We slipped through the Times Square throngs like a band of tall pin-striped guerrillas, occasionally knocking over flimsy Three Card Monty tables and treading upon the counterfeit watches spread on the sidewalk. We were bewildered by the subway station itself, and would probably be staggering around down there still if we hadn’t been assisted to our platform by a little gnome of a man from Queens. We sniggered over the tokens and took turns holding onto Lono P, who was leaning out over the tracks to feel the wind on his face. When our train came we piled into it like drunken sailors, which we were halfway on our ways to becoming.

There was a frightened-looking middle-aged Puerto Rican man sitting across from me. Jimbo got up and grabbed his dingy plaid shirt, shouting, “How about that Bernie Goetz? Now there’s a guy who means business! Carries a gun onto the subway, great!” Jimbo’s face was inches away from the man’s own, and he swayed as the train bumped over the tracks, gripping the poor bastard’s shirt to remain standing. He continued, “Are you packing? I am!” He motioned to the rest of us, “We all are! I’ve gotta Colt Python .357 Magnum in my coat pocket.” He began to shout out into the car at large, “My buddy Stagg over there’s carrying three CS tear gas grenades.” He suddenly seized the Puerto Rican, who looked pale and very near death, with his other hand. “You can never be too careful,” he leered, “These subways are teeming with pimps and dagos.”

Then Rodney Okay jumped up and said, “Here’s our stop,” and grabbed Jimbo away from the man, while my wife grumbled, “Thank God,” or something to that effect. Stagg was busy whisking what he thought were big green spiders from his shirt, muttering, “Where’d these

goddamned spiders come from?” while Dan Something sat with his eyes screwed shut and his teeth bared and I bitched about the rancid subway smell to Lono P, who giggled distractedly.

We got off the subway in Soho somewhere, where the clean straight streets and avenues of Central Manhattan mutate into the mangled chaos of Greenwich Village, the Bowery, and Wall Street. On the sidewalk outside the subway station Jimbo spotted a small cigar stand, so we all rushed in and ogled over the display of luscious Caribbean cheroots. Everyone except Lono P and my wife bought swollen overpriced stogies. The unctuous Cuban who ran the shop assured me that the five-dollar selection I picked out was “hand-rolled on the warm brown thighs of Dominican virgins.” We lit up and proceeded into the Village followed by an eye-watering cloud of acrid cigar smoke.

The first Jazz Festival bar we came to had a ten dollar cover charge, so we moved on down the street. Before long it became evident that all the Jazz Festival bars were all demanding outrageous cover charges, and the only way we were going to hear any jazz was if we all broke down and forked over at least ten bucks apiece, which we couldn’t charge to our employers because we wouldn’t get receipts. Then there was the hideous prices such places would charge for drinks to consider. Our beleaguered minds boggled.

Finally we came to a place that wanted fifteen dollars per person just to get in. Because my wife was along, it would have cost me thirty smacks. “You crazy greedheads!” I shouted at the gigantic Italian bouncer who was manning the door, “Are you out of your goddamned minds? Thirty bucks! You filthy swine, you shit-eating vermin!” I was really pissed off, “Where’s your goddamned manager, you ugly wop?” Stagg pulled me away from the bouncer while Jimbo started shouting, “Who the hell you calling a wop, you bastard, I’m a goddamned wop!” and Lono P and my wife proceeded down the street pretending they weren’t with us. A half-block away I was still shouting, “Thirty bucks! The fascist reptiles! Who do they think they are? To hell with these jazz bastards, let’s go get something to drink.”

We found a nearby bar populated with students or some similar such swine in dress shirts and jeans, and their vapid-looking women with names like Babs and Bootsy. These sorry young scions didn’t like the looks of us at all, but we ignored them and found a small table in a corner near the window. Lono P went up to the bar, hawked loudly, let out a resonant belch, and ordered two rounds of drinks for us while Rodney Okay marauded around the tavern in search of empty chairs. Stagg was beginning to feel extremely violent, and was thinking of maybe going back to the last place and stomping that huge bouncer. Naturally, I encouraged him, but Jimbo got nervous and said something about there being a Raiders game on that night. Stagg suddenly swung around to Jimbo and yelled, “What? The Raiders? Good gibbering God, that’s right, it’s Sunday night!” He stood up and shouted at the bartender, “Hey, where’s the goddamned TV around here?” to which the bartender, a man of refinement, answered, “Go lick a dog’s ass till it bleeds, dickhead.” Stagg was about to leap over the table to go for the bartender when Lono P appeared suddenly at the table with an armful of alcohol. Stagg seized a White Russian and knocked it back at once, then called out, “Yo, Pituitary, see if these uncultured Yankee bastards have any Anchor Steam!”

Of course, the uncultured Yankee bastards had never heard of Anchor Steam, so after we consumed our second round of drinks Stagg hissed, “Let’s blow this dive.” We all immediately got up from our chairs, but Dan Something moved too fast and fell backwards in his, grabbing

for support some insipid coed who was sitting behind him. She went down with him, but not before she kicked over the table at which she and three dopey girlfriends were engaged in spirited argument about whether Cher or Meryl Steep was the greatest actress who ever lived. The three girls shrieked as their beers splashed over them, while the first girl gurgled in surprise and Lono P said, "Hey!" Most of the nearby students jumped up out of their seats. In a moment the refined bartender was making his way around the end of the bar and Stagg reached down to help up Dan Something, who was slipping in the beer and grabbing onto the coed's left breast in a sloppy attempt at getting any purchase at all. She began to squawk and Lono P kept saying "Hey!" Jimbo took sudden command of the situation and hurled my wife and Rodney Okay towards the door, then bent down and grabbed Dan Something, who had mistaken Stagg for Alabama Governor George Wallace and was fighting him off, shouting "You racist bastard, get your bloody hands off me!" I helped Jimbo get Dan Something to his feet when Stagg suddenly noticed the bartender coming toward us. He shoved a nearby student over a table as a diversion and pushed the rest of us out the door. On the sidewalk, Lono P was sniggering and giggling like a lunatic, and we pulled him with us as we ran down the street and around a corner.

[Editor's Note: At this juncture, Mitcho's narrative becomes confused and disjointed, reflecting, perhaps, his extremely advanced state of inebriation by this point in the proceedings. As far as can be determined for certain, the Gang got tossed out of two more bars after Jimbo and Stagg began ordering really dangerous things like tequila and rum, before settling into a place called The Peculiar Pub. There they all watched the Raiders game while drinking a stupendously vile Zimbabwean beer, and Jimbo would bet everyone at the bar on the outcome of each Raiders drive. There also seems to have been an incident near Washington Arch involving a cantaloupe, since at one point Stagg clearly screams, "No you sick bastards, not with the goddamned cantaloupe!" though it is not at all clear what activity Stagg was protesting. The coherent portion of the narrative resumes with Mitcho's reflections on the night of horror, from the vantage of the following morning in his hotel.]

I awoke from the Great Greenwich Village Pub Crawl of 1987 snug in my bed at the Marriott Marquis, 32 floors above Times Square. Amazingly, I was not hung over, owing principally to my abstinence the night before from any chemicals or substances stronger than vodka and tonic water, neither of which cause hangovers in me. I rose, belched, showered, dressed, and went downstairs to meet Lono P in the Howard Johnson's across 45th Street for breakfast, only slightly more bleary-eyed than usual.

I got off very lightly. The last I remembered seeing of Jimbo was outside the Peculiar Pub, when he jumped onto the passenger side of our cab as my wife and I sped away. A post-mortem of the Event proved that was also just about the last thing Jimbo himself remembered of the evening. He recalls only obscene murky fragments of scenes of further depredation, then waking up the next morning staring up at the drain-pipe of an unfamiliar bathroom sink in the Sheraton on 7th Avenue. His mouth tasted like Drano, his body felt as if he had been viciously stomped by a gang of speed-crazed Malaysian kick-boxers, and the white of one eye was a deep and solid crimson. "It was that beer," he still raves, "It was virulent poison." He crept painfully out of the strange hotel room and endured a brutal and debilitating hangover for the next 48 hours.

We never heard from Stagg after that, until early in 1988 when I received a postcard from Penang informing us that he had relocated from Sumatra to Kuala Lumpur.