

Memories of Reno

Reno, NV is truly a great pit of debauchery in this United States. It is a hole that will entrap any with a weakness, a fault, a human trait allowed to surface. It is a place vacant of morality.

Reno is not even the best place for debauchery. That distention, at least in the US, belongs to Las Vegas. Reno is debauchery junior. It is not even the best of places to become fucked up.

But it was in Reno that I found myself. The bus ride had been pretty fucking cool. I sat next to some hippy dude for part of the trip who gave me a weaved-hemp token and smoked me out at some tiny place whose existence depended in its entirety on the Greyhound stop there. In Sacramento, I bought a pint of cheap whisky and spent the rest of the trip sprawled on the amazingly vacant rear seats of the bus, getting drunk and writing Paul Simon-esque poetry about Americana.

Pete met me at the station. My first question was if he had any booze.

"Liqueur stores are open at all times here.", he said.

So, the first thing I did in Reno, Nevada was walk to one of 30 or so all-night liqueur stores to buy a half-gallon more of the cheap stuff.

Reno is a weak weak town for anyone with half a brain. It took me about a week to find a job. I'm sure I could have accomplished this even more quickly, but the liqueur stores were open 24-7-365. It took me a week to find a time I wasn't too hung over to look.

Pete, Gloria, Isaac, and I were staying at his mother's house, this tiny home located almost directly downtown. Becky, Pete's mother, as an angel of a woman, or so said Pete, and was pretty much cool with whatever. Either that or we were really good at hiding complete drunkenness from her. I don't remember which one because I was constantly wasted. All the casinos were within walking distance. The 30 or so all night liqueur stores were too. For a short time, it appears I had found heaven.

A week before I started work for a telephone call center, selling cell phones, 9/11 happened. Pete walked into the study, my residence, and said I had to get up. Something in the way he said it, I realized I wanted to get up, no matter how hung over I was. I walked in to see two smoking towers on the television screen. The first tower fell a few minutes later.

All who were alive past the age of 5 and not senile remember where they were that day. I was in Reno Nevada.

After about a week of selling cell phones, I got a promotion to the call center's IT department. It was the first promotion I had ever received. It was about a month before I fucked that up, again the booze, so I found another job. It was the first time I had been able to do that, also. Reno was a cake-walk in my professional life.

When I arrived in Reno, Allison and I had about a month and a half of hand-fasting marriage left. Each of those days was horror. I don't remember a day I didn't drink, I don't remember a time I wasn't depressed, and there was not time during those dark days that I did not ache to be near my wife. On the final day of the year-and-a-day, at midnight, I went to what Pete and I called, "The Illuminati Meeting Grounds", a series of fountains located across from the local chapter of the Freemasons

(spooky); due to the sound made by the falling water, a perfect spot for midnight clandestine meetings; to throw her ring into the fountain. In some sub-conscious way, it worked. I have been free from her influence ever since.

Excell Telecommunications was a pretty cool job. I was a member of the very first set of trainees for a new "line group" - land lines. In non-call center speak, we were the first wave of call-takers for the group selling ye olde standard telephone service. It was in impressive class. David Salls (Salls), Christina, Dave, me all became valued members of the call center staff. There was Shanna who used to try to get me to fuck up calls by grabbing my nipples, and Maria, a middle-aged woman who showed me my first Virginia Slim.

Being the first of a line group is trial by fire. I took either the first or second call the call center took for local telephone service. I remember it well. The first thing I did was put the customer on hold. There was not policy in place for what she needed done. So we invented one, on the spot. It was cool.

First Salls, Dave, and Christina, then me invented the Local Telephone Service line group for the Reno call center of the Excell Telecommunications corporation. Salls and Christina taught the first two classes, I, the third. Salls, Dave, and Christina invented the escalation procedure. When Salls left, Christina and I ran it. I ended up teaching about half the "Associates" on the floor at one point. In truth, we ran the place. We thought at least that we were indispensable.

It should be noted at this point that describing one's professional triumphs is hardly the stuff of great and important writing. The second volume of my memoir is hardly this. No great knowledge it to be gain by reading about how I helped to create a call center line group. The telling of my life's history would not be complete without it, and it should be noted that 3 years of my life, my time in Reno, has been condensed to one chapter. Finally, one of my great accomplishments stemmed directly from my time at Excell. Thus, it must be told, though I don't blame my reader's potentially glazed eyes at this point. I will pick up my transcript now.

One of my classes was exceptional. In it were a number of really interesting people. Doug and his daughter Brandy were in that class. Doug became a true advocate for me after hearing that I received no additional funds or official prestige for my responsibilities as SME, "Subject Matter Expert" for the class. I was not one to lie to those Associates learning from me. Where there was no policy in place for a problem, I would say that. When asked if I had good benefits, in diplomatic speak, I would say "No."

"Excell has yet to find the resources to buy its workers health insurance."

Brandy loved me. She would make eyes, bat those lashes. She was pretty, with a body to die for. Once, at the end of class pot luck, she began staring at me, not to be dissuaded. Her father sat nearby. I looked back at her, swung my eyes in both directions to see whom else she might be focused on. No one behind me.

"Um, why are you staring at me?"

"You're fascinating to look at."

At this point any normal male would have jumped, father nearby or not. As it has been demonstrated at length before, I am not a normal person.

I turned to her father and said, "I think your daughter has a crush on me.", thereby ruining any chance with Brandy, but scoring with dad. I wouldn't be surprised if that was part of the reason he organized what he did.

At the cake and graduation ceremony, each of the "graduates" was named, and a photocopy of a diploma was given. Then the teachers were announced, and then the SMEs.

When they announced my name, "Dameon", I stated using my pseudonym at Excell, the entire class rose and gave me a standing ovation.

When I was young, after the events of January 14, 1994 as explained in the first volume of my memoir, I promised myself three things. First, I would graduate from college with a degree in Theatre. Second, I would get published. Third, someday I would receive a standing ovation. It was a curious solution to my third promise to myself, but this was the moment I fulfilled my first of my promises. I, as of the writing of this memoir, have yet to achieve the final two.