

The Mid-Life Suburban Strip-Tease Crisis

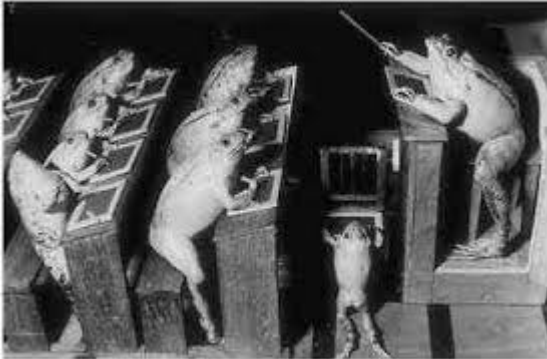
by Con Chapman

It started out as just another Saturday night dinner party in the suburbs. Conversation ran the gamut from our kids to our septic systems to our kids to home values, then made a hairpin turn back to our septic systems. Who says the suburbs are boring?



And yet, once we'd finished dinner and had mellowed from the wine, our little group of friends grew reflective. We started talking about our “bucket lists”—how we were going to spend the remainder of our years before we lapsed into senility. Now that we were all empty-nesters, we had time on our hands to do—something.

One woman said she was looking into starting an inner-city charter school and asked my advice. Since I've been involved with two that failed, I told her I was like a C student in high school biology class and she was the frog—did she really want me to get my hands on her pet project?



Frogs in biology class

Her husband was looking into a fantasy baseball camp—a chance to play with the Red Sox heroes of his boyhood. Another guy was taking guitar lessons. Next at the table was Sally—a Ph.D. with a good job at a local university, doing interesting work in public policy. What's your dream? somebody asked.

"I'm already working on it," she said, with a smug little smile forming on her mouth. "I'm taking stripping lessons."

"I love re-doing old furniture," another woman said.

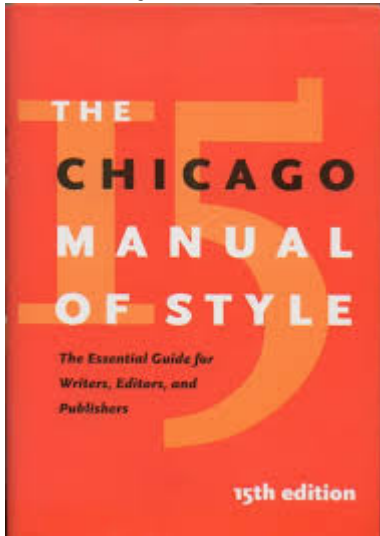
"Not that kind of stripping," Sally said. "Strip-tease dancing."



If the stereo and the dishwasher hadn't been running and if I hadn't succumbed to a burp at that moment, you could have heard a crouton drop on the all-wool designer rug beneath us.

"Are you serious?" a woman named Tori finally said.

"Sure, why not?" Sally said. "I love to dance, and it's a legitimate sub-genre found in many cultures. In different countries it goes by the name of *raqs sharqi*, the Dance of the Seven Veils, the Hoochy-Koochy." That's Sally—even her conversation follows the Chicago Manual of Style for footnotes.



Chicago Manual of Style: Don't take off your clothes without it.

"I hear burlesque is making a comeback," I said, trying to defuse a potentially awkward situation. I watched Tori to make sure she wasn't already texting her scorn around town under the table.

"That's right," Sally said. "It's offered in adult education classes . . ."

"The term *adult* is used loosely," her husband added in a joshing tone.

" . . . and there are dance troupes that specialize in it."

"You know," I began, seeking to add a little regional historical perspective, a gift that my friends never cease to be bored by, "Boston has a long and proud tradition of burlesque, notwithstanding the efforts of the old Watch & Ward Society to keep it 'Banned in Boston.'"

"Really?" a man asked, stifling a yawn.

Scollay Square

"Government Center used to be called Scollay Square, and its strip joints were famous throughout New England."

"You two seem to be the strip experts," Tori said, and not with any hint of approval.

"I'm having just one teensy problem," Sally said.

"What's that?" someone asked.

"I can't come up with a stripper name—every stripper needs a professional stage name."

"*A nomme de strip?*" I asked helpfully.

"Yes," Sally said. "I'm afraid all of my imaginative powers are exhausted by the required training in bumping and grinding I've undergone."

I looked at her with disappointed surprise. "You don't know about the Quik 'n E-Z Stripper Name Generation Formula?" I asked.

All eyes turned towards Sally, and I thought I noticed her reddening in the face. "Why . . . no." You could tell from the looks of skepticism around the table that people were beginning to have some doubts about the extent of Sally's preparation.

"It's easy—as the name implies," I said. "You take the name of your first pet . . ."

"Okay . . ."

"Then the name of the street you grew up on. Applying it to myself—and I wouldn't ask you to subject yourself to the rigors of the process unless I, like Madame Curie, had exposed myself to it first—my stripper name is 'Buffy Broadway.'"

"Neat," said Todd Pinsky, a former fraternity rush chairman who was always willing to play games at social gatherings. "I guess I'd be . . . Lady Liberty."

"Cool," said Tori's husband, Jed. "I'm Poodie Magnolia."

Everyone laughed except Tori, who was still having trouble wrapping her brain—deformed by years of Calvinist theology from Presbyterian Sunday School—around the concept.



Buffy!

"I think we need to hear from the woman who's actually going to be *using* her name," I said, trying to keep the conversation on a non-judgmental tack. "How about it, Sally?"

"Well," she hesitated, "I guess I'd be Bimbo Thirteenth Street."

"Hold it," I said, stepping in as umpire. "The ground rules of the Quik 'n E-Z Stripper Name Generation Formula are that if you would be stuck with a numerical or alphabetical stripper name, you're allowed to use a cross street."

Sally had to think about that for a moment. "Obviously there were two—one on either end of the block. Can I pick the one I like best?"

"No fair," Tori said emphatically. She was a stickler for rules when we played croquet, too.

I reached in my pocket to check the Official Rules of Stripper Name Generation. "Let's see—here it is. 'Section 7.3, Selection of alternate names in the event of multiple cross-streets or pets in a litter.' If you have first-letter alliteration with the 'b' in 'Bimbo,' use that first."

"No—that doesn't work."

"Then you are free to use either one."

"I'm Bimbo Fox!"

