



# Small Town Sexy

by Bill McConnell

*FLYMF* January 2006, The Tapping Your Internet Issue, Volume 3 Issue 1

I used to live in a fairly small town. It's not as small as Inbreederton, Kentucky, which has a population of 580, and whose town motto is, "No Cousin shall be left untouched." It's also not as large as Yerbootyville, North Carolina, which has a population of 7,000, and whose town motto is, "Pork fat, schmork fat, give me more bacon."

No, my formerly small town was somewhere in between these two. It had its quirks and its odd people, but these gave it a kind of sexy quality. I know this because I am a sexy bastard and I wouldn't have lived in a place that didn't contribute to my being a sexy bastard, which is why I now live in Idaho.

Now that's a sexy state. There's nothing like a russet on a cold winter morning to put a girl in the mood. Anyway, I had to move here because corporate America remodeled my sexy small town and transformed it from a transcendental enclave of organic-food eating, non-leg shaving, hippie-sex fiend twenty-something females into a metrosexual mecca of retail chain stores that attracted nothing but overweight, stroller pushing, middle-aged suburban mothers who wear workout clothes while carrying a bag of McDonald's hamburgers and a Diet Coke.

The first sign of disintegration in my town happened when my old café haunt, Midge's Coffee House, closed down. The first of about forty-seven Starbucks to invade my beautiful small town went up in about a week, and Midge's closed up soon after. So now I hate going into Starbucks.

First, I hate their coffee. It's like the Communist Party bought all of the world's coffee and made it all taste like horse apples, then drove everyone else out of business, and told us their coffee was superior only after we had nothing else with which we could compare it. Second, buying stuff from a Starbucks' barista is no easy task because Starbucks has forced me to change the way I speak.

If I'm in line, I can't just order a medium coffee. If I walk up to the counter and say, "Excuse me, miss, may I please have a medium coffee?" the girl looks stupefied. Her eyes roll up into her skull. I know she's thinking, trying to recall where she has heard this word before. Medium. It's a hard word, I know. Eventually, she snaps out of her apoplexy and tells me that Starbucks doesn't have medium-sized coffee. They have tall, grandé, and ventí. At this point I usually pull out my pocket tape recorder, take a few verbal notes on the effectiveness of offering localized lobotomies to today's retail worker, and walk out the door to the Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf across the street.

I ask the same question to the girl working behind this counter, "Excuse me miss, may I please have a medium coffee?" She shows signs of the same apoplexy I witnessed at Starbucks. Eventually

she tells me that she doesn't understand this word medium, but that I can have a twelve, sixteen, or twenty ounce cup of coffee.

Again, I take out my pocket recorder and verbalize quite loudly how I envision sex between her and her boyfriend. In my best Jimmy Stewart imitation, I comment on the two of them doing something dirty. I say, "I know it's only medium sized, baby, but it's how you steer the ship that counts." In my head, she answers back in her best Katherine Hepburn imitation, "It's not medium, honey. It's grandé." If I were at Midge's, this routine would have assured me of a date with one of the local granola crunching hippie sex-fiends, but here at Starbuck's, in front of these suburban toddler chasers, I'm just another freak.

Midge's Coffee House was one of the first places that helped me increase my stature as a sexy bastard. Midge's was owned by a guy named Midge, which is actually short for midget. His real name is Joe, but no one calls him that. He used to work at the bikini bar at the other end of town as a midget mud wrestler on Wednesdays, which also happens to be dollar taco night. He was laid off, though, because the wrestling ring was a little too deep, and they kept losing him in the mud. So he took his savings, and he opened this café.

In its heyday, when it made money, tiny hand over tiny fist, Midge thought he was too good to ever acknowledge his short stature. Whenever anyone dared to call him Midge to his face he punched them squarely in the knee cap. I used to work for Midge, but he fired me because I hosted an after-hours party, complete with a DJ and open bar. I did keep a copy of the key to the café's front door.

My favorite activity I used to do with Midge was to sneak snapshots of him with my digital camera. I would blow the photos up and paste them onto cardboard cutouts that stood slightly over six feet tall. I would usually let myself into his café on weekends and secure the cardboard version of Midge in the corner so he would see it bright and early when he came into work on Monday mornings. He never realized I was the culprit; the customers enjoyed it, though, especially the sexy hippie ladies.

There would be a line of thirty customers waiting for Midge, who would arrive and see this six-foot version of himself through the store window. He would turn all red too, and he could really cuss up a storm. Eventually, he would get inside and kick the cutout, which would fall over on top of him; his two tiny legs would struggle as the cardboard cutout pinned him down. I always loaded the top with a little weight so he would have to struggle to get out from under it.

Eventually, I would step out of line, where I would have been watching the entire time. By being gracious and helping a midget in need, I would usually get a date with some hottie, which only

proves that I'm a sexy bastard after all. Some people thought it was homoerotic to see that big cardboard Midge grinding away on top of the midget Midge. Personally, I always thought it looked more like a Saint Bernard humping a Dachshund. A person would never get a show like that at Starbucks.

Midge would also get upset when I would pick him up, twirl him through the air, and ask him if he could do any circus tricks. The last time I was in his place, I picked him up, right after ordering my morning coffee, and tried to balance him on my head. I was trying to impress this redhead that I didn't recognize. I sort of accidentally dropped him, though, which scared him a bit, and he punched me in the face on the way down. My eye is still slightly tender from where he drove the frame of my expensive eyewear into my cheekbone. I didn't understand the problem, though. Everyone knows midgets are all carney folk and circus performers at heart.

Midge hated sharing with people that he could juggle, dance, sing, and call out customers for carnival rides with the best of the carnies. He just didn't like owning up to the fact that people like me, who have him pegged for the carney he secretly is, will want the occasional circus trick, dance, or song before giving a tip for a gourmet cup of coffee. I mean, if Midge were to make for me a martini, or a gimlet, or arrange a date between me and his hot midget sister, well I would consider tipping at that point, but I'm not tipping anyone for pouring me a cup of coffee, even if it is gourmet coffee, unless I get some kind of carney trick out of it.

These corporate stores are ruining small town America. Sure, Wal-Mart can employ hundreds of people that no one else wants. They use special-ed kids, and old people with Alzheimer's disease to direct customers through the aisles. I mean, this old guy, whom I call Alzheimer Eddie, greets me every time I walk into Wal-Mart. I always ask him which aisle my Mr. Coffee water filters are located on. Then I always end up yelling at him for forgetting which aisle it is. But he's always smiling about two seconds after I yell at him because he forgets that I just chewed him out. I'll do this yelling bit five or six times in a row. I yell, he smiles. I yell, he smiles. It's great fun.

And the special-ed kids, well, all I ever do is walk up to them and say, "High Five." They're so quick to slap my hand. It makes me feel good, too. Once I yelled, "Hey Jimmy, high five." That kid was so excited. He jumped up and tried to slap my hand, but he lost his balance when his crutches didn't want to cooperate. I feel good that he wants to please me though. He tries really hard. And acting like a humanitarian might be good for my sexy bastard image. I do have to hand it to Wal-Mart for ingenuity, though; they employ two groups of people who will never be able to unionize because they can't remember what they don't like about their jobs.

Corporate America's largest drawback is its lack of hiring standards. Not only do Jimmy and Alzheimer Eddie get to have a job, drunks and homeless people do as well. In Wal-Mart, the

aisles smell like stale cheese, until it dawns on the senses that the stale cheese smell is coming from some old homeless guy named Tim. I used to know Tim when he wasn't homeless. He and I used to go to church together before the local parish was swallowed up by the giant Calvary Chapel that appeared in a bolt of lightning and rumble of thunder one day. Back then, Tim smelled a little better, more like communion wine and Swiss cheese. Now he smells like processed cheese spread and cheap vinegar. God has surely forsaken Tim. I almost feel bad for carrying around a red plastic cheese spreader and asking him for crackers.

The only positive aspect to a Wal-Mart is that they are open twenty-four hours a day. One particular night, I stood in line at the Wal-Mart simply because it was the only place open at 3:00 a.m., and I needed to purchase a new fishing license and a new hunting rifle for a trip I was thinking about planning at some point in the next few years. I mean it: Wal-Mart is great for buying guns at three o'clock in the morning. I was looking at shotguns when a couple of guys with ski masks in their pockets took a place in line behind me. They were talking about going to the 7-11 after buying a shotgun and a pistol, which started me thinking that a Kit Kat bar would taste good, but I had to go home and try to think about places where I could shoot my new twelve-gauge at some fish.

The most recent victim in my small town's battle with corporate America was my favorite art gallery, Maude's Numbers and Colors, which was replaced by a Thomas Kinkade gallery. Thomas Kinkade markets himself as a "painter of light." Maude, on the other hand, marketed herself as a "painter by numbers." She bought the canvases from some mail order paint-by-number place in Jersey. She painted them according to the instructed color scheme. The only problem Maude had was that she was color blind in her left eye, so for her to actually paint the painting correctly, she had to squint with her left and focus with her right eye.

Sometimes that left eye would get tired and open up and then purples became blacks. Greens became blues. Reds became browns. She turned out some bold stuff when that happened. Maude didn't sell too many paintings, though, as most people found it cheaper to buy canvases from the same place in Jersey and paint the pictures themselves. She could paint without numbers, too. She asked me to pose nude once. I asked her if she had a canvas large enough to preserve my image. She told me she had a medium sized canvas, which would do just fine, and I told her that anything other than grandé was out of the question.

Before I left this particular small town for good, Archie's Books and News fell victim to small town corporate management. Archie was this cigar-smoking, cognac-drinking Italian who always had a habit of coughing and spitting right when I needed to ask him a question. One time, while trying not to stand too close to Archie, I read this article about a man who taped conversations of everyday people and would later use them in inappropriate situations. This started me thinking about how I could do that too, which is why I have a pocket tape recorder today.

A perfect situation arose about a month after I bought the darn thing. My wife was pestering me for a divorce because I had gambled away fifty grand at the track. She moved out, but I kept tabs on her. I followed my wife to a hotel. I knew that she was meeting her lover. I called the hotel lobby and asked for her room number while she met this old guy for a drink at the bar. I raced ahead of them up the stairs and entered their hotel room with a door key I swiped from a cleaning lady.

sexy bastard; it's just that someone's finally put a Starbucks in the shopping mall down the street from my new house.

I hid under the bed. Once they showed up and proceeded to get busy, I pulled out my recorder and captured all of the grunts and groans and give it to me hard baby's that were shouted out during the next sixty minutes, which by the way, had me impressed. Then at our divorce proceeding, right when the judge was about to tell me what a shmuck of a husband I was for losing fifty grand on the ponies, right when he was about to strip me of my all of my material wealth, he asked me if I had any last words. I whipped out my pocket recorder and played back all those grunts, groans, and spank-me-hard-babies for the judge, who recognized his own voice on the tape, and then gave me everything.

When I wanted to buy that magazine for that particular article, Archie puffed his cigar, sipped his cognac, and spat toward the floor. His nasty spit missed the concrete and landed on my shoe, which was made of an expensive off-white canvas. He was a real character, though. He told me once that he was secretly hiding from the mob, that he had testified against one of the big bosses back in New York, and was running this newsstand under the auspices of the witness protection program.

I taped that conversation, too, and sent it to the mob boss in question. It wasn't too difficult to find him with the advancements in the Internet these days. I'll bet those mobsters got a laugh out of that one. I sent it because those shoes that Archie spat on cost me two hundred bucks. Tobacco spit on off-white shoes doesn't add to my image as a sexy bastard. Two weeks after sending the tape recording out, Archie closed up shop. I always thought it was due to the new Border's Books that opened down the street from my house, but now that I think about it, it might have had something to do with that tape I sent.

I now live in Idaho, but I wish that things could revert to how they used to be, because I want my small town back. What I can't find in the midst of these corporate stores is Midge, Archie, or Maude. I mean sure, Archie is probably wearing concrete slippers at the bottom of the Hudson right now, but I still miss the guy. Without them, I'm just another metrosexual living in suburbia. I'd rather be a sexy bastard in the middle of nowhere than a suburban metrosexual stuck following around a stroller and carrying a man purse. And when Midge, Maude, and even Archie closed shop, my small town was ruined. So I moved.

I probably won't be meeting any chicks tonight in my new Idaho small town. I have a bad feeling. It's not because I'm no longer a