

Names & Games

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"THE NECK'S BROKEN. THE BRAIN IS USELESS. WE MUST FIND ANOTHER BRAIN."

R.I.P. ANGRY YOUNG MAN

SEPT. 10, 2001 - AUG. 30, 2002

Sorry, but it's just impossible.

The Angry Young Man cannot leave the newspaper. Not now. I've spent too much time developing my explanation for the guy, and while I'm damn tired of delivering it in its various forms, I'm just too close to getting it right, to communicating it to Angry Old Men in fewer than 700 words, that I can't believe he's outta here as of today.



Gene therapy

GENE COLLIER

Rossi, we hardly knew ye. Or barely knew ye. Or Hardley Barely, who won the Oscar and one of those inexplicable Page 2 comparisons against, I believe, former Bucco shortstop Sammy Khalifa.

So that's it? Now it's former Post-Gazette hipster wiseass Rob Rossi, is it? Not a bad media label (it beats botched home castration victim Rob Rossi), but come on. We get this news right on top of the demise of the annual Blue-Gray Game? That's just cruel. Just bleeping cruel. And don't get me started about Post-Gazette editors dropping this shell right into the middle of the Wild Things postseason. Savages.

(And while we're at it, can you believe the annual Blue-Gray Game couldn't get a title sponsor? Isn't American Musket lookin' for a suitable vehicle?)

The whole mess makes me hark back (linguistic engineers continue the research needed to one day allow us to hark forward) to my first conversations about the Angry Young Man, and to reflect upon how far they've come. Don't say nobody warned ya.

Early exchanges went typically like this:
Perplexed reader: "What's with that Rob Rossi?"
Kindly sage columnist: "What's with him?"
PR: "Yeah, I mean, what the hellzee tawking abah?"

KSC: "Talkin' 'bout freedom."
PR: "Freedom?"
KSC: "That's right Free-he-he-dom. He will fight for the right to live his writer's life on Page 2 in any way he so chooses."

This solved nothing, of course, but only brought both of us unneeded additional contempt. But as someone who is himself apt to be misunderstood (I know, you're stunned), I could empathize with the Angry Young Man. Thus I was compelled, one might even say obligated, to explain and support his mission, even if his mission was merely an opaque attempt to get laid.

PR: "What's Rob Rossi trying to do?"
KSC: "Trying to give part of the sports section a little different spin."

PR: "How?"
KSC: "Well, for example, he and his buddies go out and, you know, rap with the Miss Pretties."

PR: "What?"
KSC: "Chat with some honeys."

PR: "What?"
KSC: "Make time with some dames; am I getting any closer?"

PR: "What are you tawkin' abah?"
KSC: "I don't KNOW what I'm talking about!"
PR: "Ya mean girlies?"

KSC: "Yes, Myron, yes!"
Seems to me that when the Angry Young Man started the Page 2 project of edgy interviews, irreverent comparisons and impassioned rants, there were just two ads for strip clubs in the section. Now there are six, seven on a good day. Coincidence? I think not. And if people didn't get him, it wasn't from his lack of candor. I mean really, Rob, do I need to know that you're pretty much always going home alone?

And yet questions persisted. Frustrations grew.
PR: "Ya know the prawn with that Rob Rossi?"
KSC: "There's a prawn, I mean, a problem?"

PR: "I mean, I think I see what he's tryin' to do. But it doesn't make sense."
KSC: "Oh and everything else in the paper makes perfect sense? Does it make sense that we spent most of the summer with daily health and status updates regarding the availability of Armando Rios like we were waiting for Roy Hobbs? Have you read my column lately. Isn't that nonsensical more often than not?"

PR: "You have a column?"
In a final desperate lunge at understanding the Angry Young Man, I concluded the mystery must lie within the nature of the emotion itself, somewhere near the essence of anger. Or something.

Wading into a film library, I watched "Angry Harvest," set poignantly in the German occupation of Poland. I watched "Angry Joe Bass," set poignantly in Native American culture during a long argument with the government over fishing rights (how could I make that up?). I watched "The Angry Red Planet," set poignantly on Mars and, in fact, so bad it was good.

Finally I watched "Twelve Angry Men," in which Henry Fonda stalls a jury from railroading a young suspect, and that's where I found it. The answer to the whole Rob Rossi issue.

PR: "That Rob Rossi, I don't get it!"
KSC: "Have you ever heard of Henry Fonda?"
PR: "Sure."

KSC: "Then you're not supposed to get it! You're too damn old to get it. If you got it or I got it, it wouldn't be any good. Just like opera."
PR: "Oprah?"

KSC: "No, opera."
PR: "Oh, where it ain't over 'til the fat lady sings."
KSC: "Right, and today there's a big fat Miss Pretty singin' like it hurts."

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Ted Crow/Post-Gazette

Relatively Meaningless: Memories

This Angry Young Man is one of the few residents of your village who understood that sports are not sacred. You would do well to remember that.
— Mr. Soccer

He never did understand that, in this neck of Truckville, the standard pick-up line is: "So which do yinz guys drive, a Fehrd or a Chivvy?"
— The Big Picture

He either showed remarkable commitment ... or a remarkable need to be committed.
— Mocha the Madman

Angry will be remembered with fondness for three reasons: 1. Bob Walk; 2. frequent Tom Petty lyrical references; 3. Lisa Guerrero (Page 2 never looked better).
— BlueShirt

The first time he wandered into the sports department, my thoughts were, "Great, another long-haired, foul-mouthed, know-it-all punk." AYM was all of those and more.
— Speed Racer

Wasn't this Angry Young Man related to He Hate Me?
— T. Campman

Not four horsemen, no, but five. And today, upon his demise, it can be safely told: They are War, Famine, Pestilence, Death ... and Angry.
— The Guy In The Stands

He proved you can't disrespect the Mayor on his hill, especially when he's in his office.
— The Large Bird

In the past four days, I've gotten six speeding tickets, and I blame Angry. I'll be driving 55 on 279 for the rest of my life.
— The Man