



John Brizzolara wrote for the Reader from 1989 to 2013. John died in his sleep at Father Joe's Villages on October 11, 2016. He was 65.

Brizz Lives

A Fear of Cold and Dark

One theory (and I am no anthropologist) is that the sun-worshipping cult of Southern California has a genuine, underlying fear of the cold and dark. This may well be born of the cold, long winters from which we have emigrated or, in the case of the native San Diegan, a fear of the little known. I am among the former, having arrived from Chicago via New York, but my superstitions are more along the lines of what I call a duty-free set of Catholic sensibilities.

NOVEMBER 4, 2009

Loosening Family Ties

I imagine this will appear sometime around Thanksgiving, which usually involved large, mostly Italian family gatherings in my youth. I dreaded these occasions. No amount of turkey or pumpkin pie could ameliorate the sense of discomfort I would experience at the noise, arguments, subliminal disapproval of other family members. At times, hardly subliminal.

NOV. 11, 2009

Get Married (At Least Once)

My son will turn 33 this August, on a Friday coming up. It is a significant age for a man, at least in Christianity, and it is one-third of 100 years. He was born in 1977 in New York City at Beth Israel Hospital. It was the summer of Sam; that is, David Berkowitz and his talking dog. A blackout occurred in the city that summer. I got married that summer as well.

AUG. 4, 2010

Old and in the Way

For well more than a decade now I've wondered, What are we going to be like as a country when over half of us are doddering oldsters? The picture is shaping up, all right; and probably its first major manifestation is the health-care boondoggle. It is clear that to some degree my peers and I really did assume we were not going to get old. On some level, we bought a kind of Peter Pan voodoo that would sprout from happy mushroom thoughts or wheat grass and good vibes or solar-powered Orgone boxes and macrobiotics.

MARCH 16, 2011

John Brizzolara's Last Column

"Hey, brother. Can you give me a clean pee sample?" One neighbor, whom I don't know from Adam, came to my door one night with a small, transparent container and (without introducing himself) asked me, "Hey, brother. Can you give me a clean pee sample?"

I stood there for a good while with a look on my face that must have resembled a pole-axed flounder, and the guy (turns out his name is Turrell) says, "I'll give you five dollars."

Reaching behind the door to the kitchen table, I picked up my weekly med dispenser with about 30 pills for AM and about the same for PM. I showed him the contents and told him, "Can't help you, man. I take, like, 40 Vicodin a week, Percocet, let's see..."

MARCH 21, 2012

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