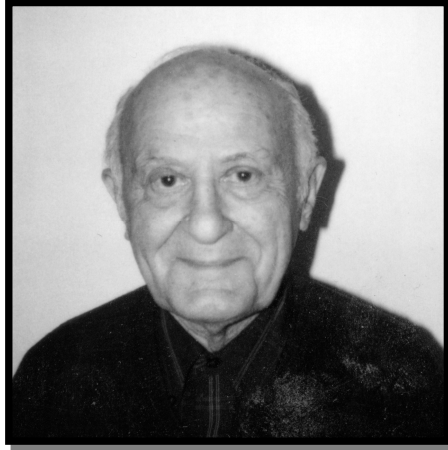


Meet Louis Weinstein



Born in South Philly, “Big Louis” says, “I lived all over, drove a yellow cab nights, worked as a chef in restaurants, was a single dad, raised two kids, lived in Hyde Park between Roosevelts & Vanderbilts, and neither one invited me to dinner.” At one point in his life, after his marriage ended, Louis decided to follow “his new love” across the country. Both kids and a cat accompanied him in the car. Alas, the romance did not work out, and Louis returned to the East Coast. Back to Philly, he began acting, snagged the part of Willy Loman in a production of “Death of a Salesman,” a part he relished. Three years ago, after living back in Los Angeles for quite some time, he began acting. He’s been in a Jim Carrey movie, a number of commercials, has played in a host of television shows including “West Wing,” and is constantly being called for auditions. He’s always a delight at our Spoken Word shows, and we figure it’s only a matter of time until we can say, “We knew him when.”

CAFE MONTANA

By Louis Weinstein

My daughter and I are sitting in the Cafe Montana in Santa Monica. There is an aura of yuppie self-contentment. The fine food, the elegant table settings, the paintings on the wall, the pleasant conversations between friends, the first-class clothes, all complete that aura with a pervading sense of great satisfaction. Just behind my chair on a shelf is a speaker with Rodrigo's "Concerto De Aranjuez" carrying me into a totally different setting.

I'm in love again. I have made an initial, tentative, hopeful contact and I am already fantasizing. My *senorita* dances out there in front of everyone, sensuously swaying, rose in teeth with inviting glances that all realize are only for me. The haunting, second movement conjures up fireplaces, sandy beaches, margaritas.

"Dad, Dad, Daaad! Come on, snap out of it and for god's sake, how many times have I told you to keep your mouth closed when it's full of food! It's really revolting."

I am trying to play the guitar with one hand while tearing off the buttons from my madonna's blouse. Who the hell is this strange kid anyway, and why doesn't her father teach her some respect?

"Dad, I was telling you about my trip to the art museum's new exhibition that YOU asked me about. The new building leaves much to be desired, but the painting by..."

I am standing by the next table as my señorita of the exquisite face has finished dancing. She had told the maitre d' that she must thank the chef (me) for presiding over such an excellent meal.

Bowing with a slightly formal, "Señora, I..."

"But no, señor, it is señorita."

There is a God!! "Señorita, may I suggest you complete the meal with some slightly warmed almond brandy and ...?"

"Dad, for heaven's sake, everyone is looking at you. You're holding your tie inside your buttered roll."

"Yeah, yeah, and I've told you a million times that you would finally agree with me that a lot of modern art is just a bunch of hype. Millions of dollars for a Mondrian, or whatever his name is? All that for seven black lines and a red blotch. In my opinion..."

"In your opinion, in your opinion? You have never had an opinion in your whole life; all you've ever offered are pronouncements from on high. The gospel according to St. Larry. You, you, with your usual inexperience and your uniformed decrees."

My daughter is usually most interesting to listen to but doesn't she see my love, my true love at the other end of the ballroom, slightly turning her head as she starts up the grand staircase? My madonna beckons with an almost pleading nod to me that can only mean, "My love, I can wait no longer. Quickly, discreetly, follow me now!"

As she starts up to paradise I turn to my table, now full of fellow uniformed cavaliers, and give my excuses. As

I hasten to her need, I hear the usual, “I don’t understand what he’s got but this happens every time.”

“Sir! Sir, Sir! Please excuse me sir!”

“Yes, yes, what is it?”

“The young lady who was here with you said to tell you she had paid the check, gone home and she will call you later this evening.”



Louis’ daughter Kate just a few years back.

CHURCH ON FIRE

By Louis Weinstein

After writing about the games we used to play on the streets of row homes in Philly, someone in the class reminded me of two I had left out but not forgotten. One was Hide and Seek and the other, a different form of the same game, was Kick the Can.

One kid was It. On the street and at night, to help not being seen where we hid, we put down an empty soda can upright. Then one of us kicked it as far as possible, and as one kid ran for it and turned his back to put the can back where it came from, we scampered to hide. He then had to go searching for us, and when he recognized someone he had to get back to the can, put it into its original spot, and touch it before any of the other kids ran out from hiding to kick it again. If the It kid made it in time, then the kid he'd found just sat down 'til it was over. If he got back in time for all of the kids, then the first one caught was the new it person.

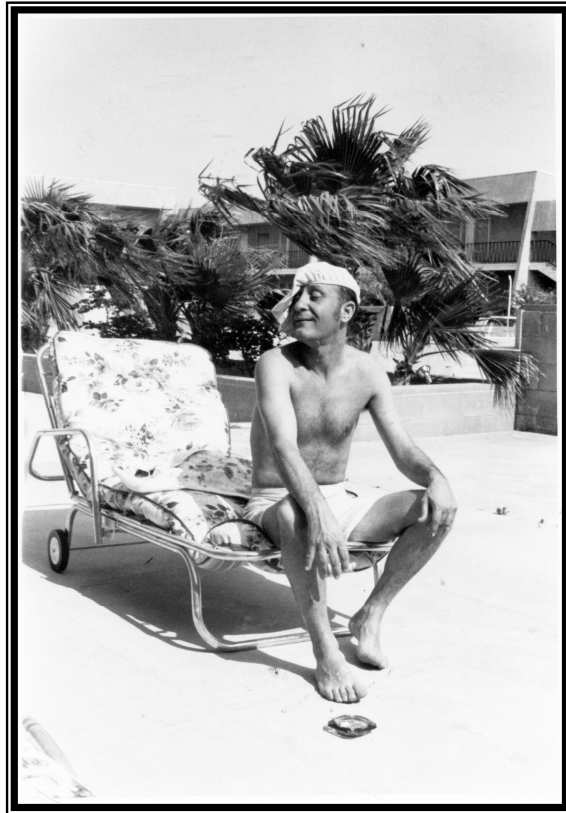
Well, we drummed up a new version we called Church on Fire, and it only applied to a new kid who wanted to feel he was a member of his new gang. We told him he was It and that before one of us kicked the can, he had to close his eyes and slowly, slowly count up to ten while we hid, and only then could he search for us. But also before opening his eyes he had to holler out to us the words, "Church on Fire!" At the end of that game he would be part of the gang. Of course he said yes.

Well, the new kid did what he was told, only when he closed his eyes and started to count not one of us moved. But zippers were pulled down and buttons opened and when he shouted, "Church on Fire!", with

his eyes still closed, we peed on him and put the fire out.

Never one feeling of hurt or you name it from any new member. They were all just so pleased to be accepted.

From a class prompt adapted from school year prompts in “How to Write Your Memoirs”: “What kinds of things did you do with friends back when you were in school? Did anything they do stand out in any way?”



Self-described “Clown Prince” Louis
in earlier days