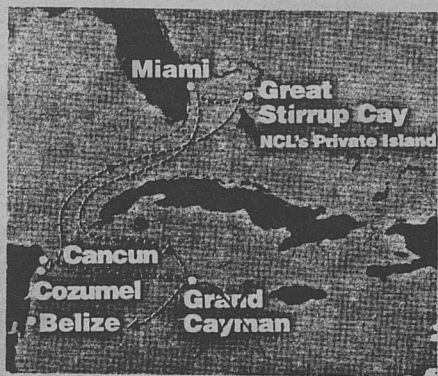


# The Way We Pay: Reflections on an Atlantis Cruise



BY PAUL OLSEN

After the ice storm of 1998, I was looking forward to my winter vacation away from the cold of Vermont. This year my friend Brad and I decided to go on an all-gay Atlantis cruise. What's not to love about the prospects of 900 gay men (and 12 lesbians) "cruising" through the Caribbean for seven days? The ship's planned itinerary included stops at Grand Cayman, Cancun, Cozumel, and the Bahamas. Even before we set sail from Miami, the trip appeared to be jinxed.

Before arriving in South Beach we found ourselves in the middle of an international incident. "After great deliberation, the joint ministries of the Government of the Cayman Islands have voted to deny landing rights to the M/S Leeward", wrote the Cayman Islands Government's Minister of Tourism Thomas C. Jefferson. "We cannot count on this group to uphold the standards of appropriate behavior expected of visitors to the Cayman Islands" Jefferson concluded. As comedian Mark Davis (of NBC's "Fired Up") said on the ship, the "great deliberation" was probably a bunch of fat guys sitting around talking about how much they hate gay people. As far as upholding moral standards, Jefferson was right. A ship full of gay men cannot uphold the moral standards of

the Cayman Islands. Gay men don't launder money! As a result of this incident *Out & About*, the national gay travel magazine, has called for a travel boycott of the Cayman Islands. Personally I think the whole Cayman denial was a clever marketing scheme on the part of Atlantis President Rich Campbell. Curiously the cruise didn't fill until after the Cayman controversy made international headlines. (As he was busy chasing Asian passengers Campbell was unavailable to talk with this reporter.)

Belize was substituted for our Grand Cayman stop. And apparently the story of the Mighty Leeward made the international press. In Belize the holy rollers turned out to protest our visit. These people, who claim to be close to God, actually threw bricks at our busses. People in Belize also have a strange custom of waving with their middle finger extended. Seems to be an odd way to welcome visitors. It really was an educational trip. Once we got beyond the God Squad, Belize was quite beautiful. Nice ruins, fabulous diving, lush jungles and great rum punch.

Cozumel was also a nice spot but a little too commercial for my taste. It's like visiting one big Pier 1 Imports store. However, once you get out of town the beaches are great, as

is the tequila. Our visit to Cancun was also canceled. Seems the water was rough and docking would be risky. The Mexican port of Playa Del Carmen was substituted for Cancun. While docked at Playa Del Carmen the ship was overtaken by a swarm of bees around the pool. I mean thousands of them. I figure they were probably looking for their queen. An interesting note: muscle queens are afraid of bees.

Life on the ship was interesting. The Norwegian Cruise Line crew was great. Shocked at times, but great. Atlantis cruises seem to be a cross between Tea Dance at the Boatlip and a floating 456. Lots of dancing, cocktails, aerobics, theme parties, attitude, and plenty of high drama on the high seas. One queen had a fight with her lover and literally jumped overboard. As a result of this idiocy we were woken up at 4:00 a.m. with the captain announcing "Code Oscar, Code Oscar, Code Oscar". That must be maritime language for fag overboard. After pulling him out of the water they kicked him off the ship. Seems to me that they should have just left him in the drink. Speaking of drinks, the cruise was all-inclusive except for drinks. My bar tab wasn't all that bad. Good thing I didn't make this trip ten years ago. I used to be able to drink a lot more.

While the concept of briefly visiting countries for a few hours to be waited on by the natives felt like American imperialism, overall the Atlantis cruise was fun. The Atlantis team is friendly (and cute) and there are plenty of activities to occupy your time

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# PROGENY

The Birth Of A New Column

Columnist - Barbara Dozetos

About nine months ago, the volunteer in charge of volunteers on the Planet Out web site announced that several new message boards (a.k.a. bulletin boards or news groups) were going to be set up. She wanted to know what topics we wanted to see that weren't there already. In my fools-rush-in mode, I suggested gay parenting. I wanted a place where gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, all of us could come together and talk about our kids or even our lack of them. Turns out, I was not alone in this desire. Everyone loved the idea. Now, who should moderate the board?

Before I knew it, I was being called Mother Superior or Mommie Dearest, depending on how the day was going, and meeting an incredible group of people. I don't care about the legends and rumors. If you want to keep a mixed-gender group of queers from in-fighting or even shamelessly flirting, ask them about their kids.

And it came to pass that I discovered *Out in the Mountains* and Chris knew an eager writer and volunteer when he saw one. One thing led to another, and here I sit writing the first installment of a monthly column on gay parenting.

I obtained my daughter's permission to write this. I warned her that there would be times when I just wouldn't be able to stop myself from sharing stories about her, but she gave me her seal of approval. The child is not particularly shy. Anyone who was at Pride in Burlington last year may remember a little girl in the front of the Bread and Puppet boat. All you could really see was the top of her head and the flag she was waving, but she was there. That's my baby. I digress already.

I'm no expert. I am merely a lesbian writer with a child. Those are my credentials. I will be sharing the products of my research on specific topics and thoughts on my personal experiences here. This is not going to be an advice column.

What it will be is a forum for a wide range of topics that concern us as parents. Although much of it will have a gay slant, there will be some topics that are just plain parenting. I love to dig around libraries and talk to the true experts. Give me a suggestion and I'll run with it.

In the next few issues I plan to write about the ways we become gay parents: Artificial insemination, adoption, heterosexual relationships, relationships with people who are already parents, etc. This seems like the natural place to start. From there, who knows?

You are witnessing a birth, or, at least, a beginning. Actually, I suppose this is only the labor pains, maybe still just the embryonic stage. Well, anyway, it's well past conception. And it shall be called 'Progeny.'

## THE MOSTLY UNFABULOUS SOCIAL LIFE OF ETHAN GREEN

BY ERIC ORNER

**...Trouble**  
On Tap...

**Panel 1:** Ethan is at a bar named 'Jo-Jo's'. A sign above the bar says 'Jo-Jo's Jo-Jo's'. A speech bubble says: "We reJoin our Hero working on his next cocktail at Jo-Jo's, where Buck tends bar, a tired club that's been in business since conquistadores first settled the state back around 300 B.C."

**Panel 2:** Ethan is talking to a woman at the bar. She says: "Shouldn't you be at work? I mean you just took 4 personal days for that Montreal trip." Ethan replies: "No! Problemo Buckmeister-I called in sick again. Faked that chicken flu everyone's clucking about." The woman says: "Get it? Clucking?" Ethan replies: "Aye, posh me another." Ethan falls off his barstool.

**Panel 3:** Ethan is talking to another woman. She says: "EETH, THE THING ABOUT JOBS IS YOU GOTTA SHOW UP OFTEN ENOUGH FOR PAYROLL TO CUT YOU A PAYCHECK WITHOUT BEING ACCUSED OF EMBEZZLEMENT." Ethan replies: "...So how was Montreal anyway? How was me?" She replies: "Y'know he was very pleasant. Low key..." Ethan replies: "Did you sleep with him?" She replies: "UH-UH... NOT AT ALL? NOPE. REALLY?" Ethan replies: "UH HUH. WOW."

**Panel 4:** Ethan is talking to a woman. She says: "I DON'T TRUST HER." Ethan replies: "YEAH, I KNOW, & ETIENNE'S THE OILIEST THING THIS SIDE OF THE CASPIAN... I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T GET INVOLVED WITH THESE PEOPLE AGAIN... OH WELL. 'HICK' C'EST LA VIE."

**Panel 5:** Ethan is talking to a woman. She says: "SPEAKING OF INVOLVED, WEREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO MEET DOUG? I THOUGHT HE'S GETTING BACK FROM THAT FISHING TRIP THIS AFTERNOON?" Ethan replies: "OHMYGOD I FORGOT!" Ethan falls off his barstool.

**Panel 6:** Ethan is at home. He says: "Nice fish. BASS?" A woman replies: "WALLEYED PIKE." Ethan replies: "BET IT'S GO GOOD WITH A LITTLE MAYO and PICKLES." The woman replies: "IT'S STUFFED." Ethan replies: "Too bad."

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