

Relocation

BY JOEL SAMBERG

“Funny, You Don’t Look Like a Moving Man...”

You know you’re asking for trouble when you question a comic about relocating. There’s a 98 percent chance that you’ll be a guinea pig for new material, even if you’re on deadline for some serious journalism.

“The most important thing I learned about relocating,” poses long-time comic star David Brenner, “is to color code all your moving boxes for each room in your new location, and then make sure you hire movers who aren’t color blind.”

“The most difficult thing about relocating many times,” responds another popular comic who performs under the name Vinny Badabing, “is running out of people to borrow money from.”

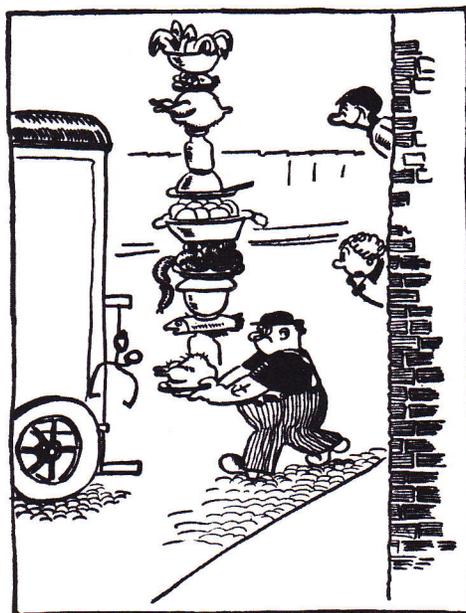
MOVING MATERIAL

Constant moving and temporary relocation are part of the territory in the lives of most comedians, but as difficult as it can be, they use their stock in trade to weather the emotional ups and downs. “Every aspect in life is different for comics than for other people,” Brenner says, “because we see the humor in just about everything—including packing, moving and re-packing.”

But despite that, comics do try to eventually figure out the right, best, and most sensible ways to make their moves or relocations work to their advantage. After all, they’re people, too. They have to find things to wear, make things to eat, and welcome family and friends, just like the rest of us *unfunny* people (well, we may be funny, but we don’t get paid for it).

Dave Reilly, who used to own several New England comedy clubs before taking to the road himself, says that the more questions you ask about your new place and your new location before you get there, the better off you’ll be. “There is always a little stress before a move,” he adds, “but when you do all the research you can do, the easier it will be on your stress scale.”

Like most comics, Reilly, now based out of Connecticut, is on the road three to four days at a time. “The road becomes your home, and the front seat of your car becomes your La-Z-Boy.” And that’s just another reason why having a comfortable place that you like in a location that you don’t mind at all is of such great importance for comics. There’s enough stress in their lives without having to add a bad relocation to the mix.



PAWN STARS

There are plenty of other good tips offered by these non-lethal wiseguys. Badabing says that having a garage sale prior to relocating is a wonderful idea. “Get rid of your old stuff. Ask yourself, do I really need to keep the Incredible Hulk bed sheets?”

“Use a reliable mover,” offers comedian Jonathan Freger. “I was moving from Washington, DC to Los Angeles and the movers called me from Las Vegas to say they would be arriving two days late. I had visions of them pawning my furniture. Those were two very scary days.”

Freger also suggests never relocating to a place just because you *think* it will be better there. “Have a really good reason for the move,” he warns.

To that point, Brenner bristles with concession and recognition. “I moved from New York to Aspen to ski and have fun,” he explains, “and then from Aspen to New York to *stop* skiing and have fun. Then back to Aspen to ski again, and then from Aspen to Los Angeles, because a girlfriend talked me into it. Then from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, to get away from L.A.”

Unlike most of us, however, comics can make their relocation trials and tribulations pay for them by including the topic in their act somewhere along the line. Badabing recalls that during a recent move, he leaned his golf clubs and a Les Paul guitar against the moving van. “I went inside for a fraction of a second, and when I came out they were gone. I’m looking for a guy who plays both golf and guitar. Alice Cooper is the prime suspect. Then, I slept in my car in a church parking lot and woke up to find myself in the middle of a Christian Fun Fair.”

TWISTED HUMOR

Nevertheless, different areas of the country react to relocation stories in different ways, as Freger well knows. While staying for a time in the Midwest, he came up with a tornado joke that he began to include in his act. “It kills ‘em in Oklahoma, but it never works in New York.”

And if a sense of humor doesn’t get them through a particularly rough move, there is always the possibility that neighborliness will. “I had just relocated next to a meat market,” explains Badabing. “I went in to get some veal cutlets. The owner handed them to me and said, ‘No charge. Welcome to the neighborhood.’ So forget the newcomers club and forget the welcome wagon and everything they do for you. Free veal cutlets will be the best thing you will ever get for moving.”