

THE UNLIKELY LOOK ALIKE

I'm waiting for my big break. I figure in a town like Las Vegas where gambling is legal and the cards, dice, roulette wheels and one-arm bandits cannot distinguish colors, even a black guy from Mississippi has the same chance as "Eric The Red" might have had to hit the big jackpot.

Each time that some establishment has a drawing for anything where the only thing any contestant has to do is sign his name on the dotted line, drop it in the slot or what not and wait for some little innocent to come along, reach in and read off the name of the lucky winner, that my chances are just as good as any.

I don't know a whole lot about odds-making or whatever it's called, but I do at least understand that the greater the numbers of participants/chance takers, the more likely it is that I won't win. However, that's true of everyone so I take my chances right along with the rest of them.

Over the past eighteen years or so, I've tried every raffle, shot crap, played blackjack, poker, tonk and even, on a flush slow Wednesday back in '76, Bacarrat. I've always been lucky but it's always been bad luck. I've either lost or not won, depending on what the circumstances were. In the face of constant losses I have never felt a moment's remorse--no regrets. I took my chances right along with everyone else and the overwhelming numbers on each occasion came out the same as I -- losers.

Some of those losers did not fully understand games of chance. When they did not win at a free bingo game, an automobile raffle, a television giveaway or a free trip for tow somewhere, they would be disappointed. If the stakes were a bit higher, they would become depressed and if they risked their own money on the roll of the dice, the turn of the card, the point spread of a ball game, the outcome of a horse race or the winner of a boxing match, some would go so far as to steal to replace their losses. Others would beat up somebody that they knew they could beat

up--spouse or children and if the stakes were really high, they might steal a gun, murder their family and then kill themselves.

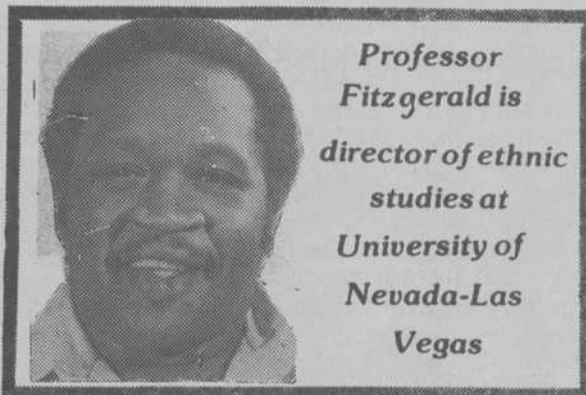
I never did any of that. I took my chances, lost, rolled up my sleeping bag and once again waited for my big break--the day that I would be able to say: "Eureka, I've hit the mother lode." That has been what has kept me going--not far--but going just the same.

I've recently had my name on approximately one hundred entries in seventy-five sweepstakes for a trip to Hawaii, another to Tahiti, for a Runnin' Rebel Coupon Book, and a trip to Disneyland. I stalled out on a 0 64 in a bingo game, I've pulled the handle on every one-arm bandit in the Valley, tried doubling my paycheck and lost it afterwards twice as fast, and I've shot crap more often than I can take one and the bottom line shows deficit spending. I can't keep a life saving to save my life but I never feel despondent because I know that my chances of winning are as good as the next fellow's.

Maybe I ought to update that sentiment. You see, for a few days I was on a real blue-bummer. Depressed, forlorn, wistful, out-of-sorts, irritable, proceeding straight through melancholy and rapidly approaching contemplating purchasing a first class ticket to San Francisco on United Airlines and hope that they're really ready when I am, grabbing a Checker Taxi upon my arrival there, directing the driver to take me to the middle of the Golden Gate Bridge, giving him the last few coins of the realm, getting out and just jumping the heck over the side into oblivion and an eternity of shoveling fossil fuel in hell.

You may wonder: "Why would a mild-mannered university professor as handsome as I, seemingly everything to live for, contemplate doing such a thing? I have a good position, am looked up to by those shorter than I, I eat well--or at least a lot--as anyone can see, travel to some of the world's great destinations--Kingman, Yuma, Needles, Baker and a lit-

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald



Professor Fitzgerald is director of ethnic studies at University of Nevada-Las Vegas

tle place that I'm sure you've heard of -- Truck Stop. Why would I go to the great city built by "the stuff that dreams are made of" and jump off into Neptune's lair?"

Well, I'll tell you. After a

lifetime of living in a society where there are only two places where true equal opportunity could be found--Hawaii Five O (there it doesn't matter who you are - young, old, ugly, beautiful, male, female, black, white,

red, brown or what -if you break the law, McGarrett is gonna say: "Book him, Dano") and gambling, where everyone has an equal chance of winning, I had discovered in recent days that it was no longer true for the latter. You see, over at Arizona Charlie's place they were having an "Arizona Charlie" look-alike contest. The winner was to receive \$200 bucks. I could use \$200 bucks. If I didn't get it, I would get along without it, but I could really use \$200 bucks.

All week I had had a feeling -- a feeling that my luck would change with the next contest and what happened? Ha. It was a contest for a look-alike for a white guy named Arizona Charlie. I guess I had been feeling badly.

Yeah. My luck changed alright. It got worse. There were only two things that would keep me from taking that trip-- the trip to San Francisco--and they were going ahead and entering that look-alike contest and winning the \$200 bucks or getting the solemn pledge from the solemn pledge-givers that they would never again run a contest which aces out a whole segment of the population. After all, what will people think? What can they think? Now I know why I didn't get to play the part of Moses in the Cecil B. DeMille production of the Ten Commandments and why Charlton Heston did. Not that he was a better actor, but Cecil had a notion of what Moses looked like and I did not fit that notion.

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