

**Ripped from the obituary  
pages**

# **GOD'S CUSTOMER SERVICE CALL CENTER**



**D. R. Cruikshank**

TITLE

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# God's Customer Service Call Center Dedication

*In memory of: Ronald J Peterson, April 12, 1945, to  
August 25, 2012 and Joseph Kozlowski, February 19,  
1946, to June 9, 2006*

*Partners in life; soul mates forever.*

## Epigraph

*“For Gay men, growing up in the 1950s and 60s, every  
day was a walk down the Franklin Trail.”*

*~ D. R. Cruikshank*

## Front Cover

The cover picture of Ron and Joe was taken on one of the many cruises we enjoyed together.

## Introduction

This story originally appeared in *The Franklin Trail* at the end of the Men's Group Therapy Session where I was being challenged as to my sexual identity. I ended the session by letting Andy—a name I gave to my alter ego—out to play. This introduction was not part of the original story.

When we moved to Arizona, Mary Jo's brother, Ron, and his partner, Joe, moved with us. We bought a house together and lived there for six years, until Ron and Joe decided to build a new home about twenty miles away, in Cornville, AZ.

Joe died from diabetes a month before they were scheduled to move. I was in Boston, training a software engineer to be a database engineer when I heard the news from Mary Jo.

“Should I come home now?” I asked.

“Ron, is okay. The service will be this Saturday, no need to rush.”

I left on Friday and caught the flight to Phoenix. During the flight I jotted down a few notes. At the service Ron gave an excellent eulogy. There were tears, some sobs and maybe a smile or two.

After Ron finished, there were a couple of other people who spoke. The facilitator asked if there was anyone who cared to share their thoughts. I looked around and no one was getting up, so I did.

Ron and Joe had made several friends in the community. They attended many events, some of which Mary Jo and I attended, many I did not, mainly due to my frequent traveling. Mary Jo was a regular at the hair

salon where Ron worked. I would have Ron cut my hair—the one that grew out of place.

Ron was a very popular guy. Sometimes he introduced me to some of his colleagues, or perhaps to a client, but to many of Ron and Joe's friends I was a stranger. I took this into account as I began my eulogy.

“Hello, my name is Dan. Many of you might have heard Joe describe me as Mary Jo's other asshole.”

Ron almost fell out of his chair. I kept going.

“Mary Jo and I are probably the straightest, most conservative couple in the world. Living with the most liberal gay couple in Sedona, and that is saying a lot, was not easy. We learned that there were many topics of conversation that should be forbidden at the dinner table—politics, current events, religion, work, just about everything that regular people might talk about.

In fact, eventually there were only two topics that would not invoke rage, threats of violence or physical dismemberment—the weather and poop. When we weren't talking about thunder and lightning, we were discussing the weather.”

Mary Jo fell off her chair.

I said a few more things that kept the laughter going. When I finished Ron gave me a hug. I had to repeat the performance in Minnesota, for family members.

I remember Ron carrying an urn containing Joe's ashes onto the plane. As Ron was taking his seat in the front row, he turned to me and said, “Don't let anyone tell you that Joe and I never traveled in first class.”

We told Ron that he could stay with us, but because of the memories, he moved out anyway. He lived alone for another six years before he passed away in 2012. I also

eulogized Ron, and again, I had to repeat that performance in Minnesota. Ron didn't fly first class that time.

Our dinner conversations greatly contributed to the dialogue used in this story. If Mary Jo and I have any regrets, it would be that we never had the chance to watch *Modern Family* with Ron and Joe.

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I am sure Ms. Therapist is the reincarnation of God's female prototype when God flow-charted the Procreational Sex App. Someone thought it was a great idea to put her in a room full of men with sexual dysfunctions. It was easy to tell that for five, out of six men in this Men's Group, the App was working as intended. The sixth man was on the phone with God's Customer Service Call Center.

*Andy! Speak!*

"Hello. My name is Andy and I will be helping you with this call. To whom do I have the pleasure of speaking with?"

"Ummm, I would like my name to be Anonymous."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Neemus. What is the reason for your call?"

"I believe I am having trouble with the Procreational Sex App. I think it may be malfunctioning."

"I am sorry to hear that, Sir. Can you be more specific, Mr. Neemus?"

"Well, I am in a men's group consisting of six men, a psychologist and a female therapist. The other five men,

in the group, are ogling and drooling over the therapists breasts while I'm wondering who does her hair."

"I can certainly help you with that problem. First, I need to ask you a few questions. Will that be okay with you?"

"Yeah sure, I guess."

"Great. First I need to know some information about your penis. Would you describe it as an 'inny' or an 'outty'?"

"I'm not sure what you mean?"

"Forgive me. Let me put it another way."

"I wish I had a nickel for every time I've heard that."

"Well, I certainly backed into that one. So, when your penis is flaccid, can you see the Fireman's Helmet?"

"Yes, I am circumcised."

"Excellent, we call the 'outties,' First Responders. Next, I need the model number. It should be on the top side of your penis, starting below the helmet."

"Okay, I see it, ME."

"Hmmm, it should be at least nine alphanumeric characters. Try stretching your penis. Perhaps the entire number will appear."

"Okay. Oh wow."

"Yes, like Silly Putty when you stretch it. If you press it on newspaper, it will pick up the writing. Makes for interesting bedtime reading, if you catch my drift."

"Here you go: M I D I K S T 9 E."

"I heard you say, my dick is tiny. Is that correct?"

"Yes, M I D I K S T 9 E."

"Okay, I need to do another test. I am going to say the names of two famous people. You respond with the name

of the person you admire and/or would like to be friends with. Ready?"

"Yes, I am"

"This is the first of three: Lawrence Welk or Isaac Hayes?"

"Lawrence Welk."

"Interesting."

"This is fun."

"Here's the next one; Liberace or James Brown?"

"Liberace."

"You're doing great, just one more, Rock Hudson or Little Richard?"

"That's a tough question. Ummm, Little Richard?"

"Good answer, it was a trick question. I would accept either one. It would appear Mr. Neemus that, based on your model number and answers your penis is intended for recreational purposes only. The Vaginal Access Component, or VAC for short, is not provided with this model. In your case the Procreational Sex App is working as intended. Is there anything else I can help you with?"

"No, not at this time, I guess."

"Well, okay then. If you don't mind answering some questions about the service you received, then please stay on the line for a short, two-minute survey."

## Musical Accompaniments

### Aretha Franklin

“I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You)”

This is my all time Aretha favorite. I chose it for this story because of the title. It is very provocative. Before I wrote the story I didn't have the song assigned yet, but I knew I was going to get it in somewhere.

### David Bowie

“Let's Dance”

This is my favorite song by Bowie. Ron was a big Bowie fan. After Ron passed, we found a CD containing several pictures that someone took when Ron was performing at a hair show, doing what he loved. I created a photo album in Apple Photos and set it to music using the song “Fame” by Bowie.

### The Bar-Kays

“Holy Ghost”

This song did not appear in the original playlist. I added it after writing a new version of my introduction to Ron at Mary Jo's apartment. I wanted to pick a song that epitomized the life style that Ron represented. It could easily have been “Staying Alive” by the Bee Gees, but that wasn't my style. I went with the Bar-Kays and this song. I try to cue it so that it plays immediately after I read *Andy Out* at the end of the new story.