

Alberto Stuff

First, let me say in Spanish, “*Alberto esta un pieza de trabajo.*” A piece of work.

I first met him on a bus going to San Miguel de Allende on a tour. He wore a Boston Red Sox hat which he subsequently lost. There are seven demerits to any Sox fan who loses a Red Sox hat, but the poor guy was in mourning for his loss. So I bought a replacement in a *tianguis* somewhere, probably previously worn by a leper in heat. “Greater love no man hath.....” etc.

We visited a monastery that apparently had specialized in self-flagellation in previous centuries. Apparently Alberto decided I qualified for the sanctity of old monks who beat themselves silly with whips, so in the middle of the bus on the way home he kindly presented to me in front of the entire bus entourage, a miniature device which I carry with me to this day. As a result, with two exceptions I will discuss later, as anybody who knows me can attest, I am by far the holiest person in this room and I will fight anybody who disputes my claim.

Alberto is a Cubano transported to Boston. His fluent English has peculiarities, though. For example he would call this fine gathering, a “potty”. The way he says it is indistinguishable from what baby’s are trained to do. Nevertheless, in context, I can usually tell what he actually means. But not always. Depends on the Potty.

He sends me all kinds of email messages. He goes by the e-pen name, “El Loco Loco,” or ELL. I go by the name “Donaldo, El Pato Tonto” or DEPT. One I got awhile ago starts out like this and is probably typical:

Why men are never depressed. .Men Are Just Happier People-- What do you expect from such simple creatures?

Your last name stays put. The garage is all yours. Wedding plans take care of themselves. Chocolate is just another snack. You can be President. You can never be pregnant. You can wear a white T-shirt to a water park. You can wear NO shirt to a water park. Car mechanics tell you the truth. The world is your urinal. You never have to drive to another gas station restroom because this one is just too icky.

You don't have to stop and think of which way to turn a nut on a bolt. Same work, more pay. Wrinkles add character.

People never stare at your chest when you're talking to them. New shoes don't cut, blister, or mangle your feet. One mood all the time. Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat. A five-day vacation requires only one suitcase. You can open all your own jars.....and so on.

His email ends with, "You can do Christmas shopping for 25 relatives on December 24 in 25 minutes. No wonder men are happier."

I'm sure all the women in this room agree with Alberto. Uh-huh!!!

Politics. We, like Alberto, are what are commonly known as "Commie, pink-o, bed wetting, tree hugging, shameless, bleeding heart liberals." Alberto, on his way, say, to Boston for a visit, will go, if necessary, via Borneo Air with seven stops, before he will take a plane that goes to Houston airport. Anything named "Bush" is to be avoided at all costs.

We go to La Tasca often, usually when the Tall Boys are there, and sometimes his friend Marcello and Grace are there too. If you have never seen Alberto and Marcello do the tango, you have not experienced life to its fullest. Quite probably the ugliest tango ever invented, it nevertheless proves my contention that Alberto is a piece of work. Of course, I have no idea what it says about Marcello because I don't know him well enough, but IQ comes to mind.

And since I brought up dancing, it is a wonder to watch Alberto on the dance floor. First of all, let me say I admire the footwork, the energy, the complete dedication to hogging the entire dance floor no matter how large or small. I have seen him deck a dozen unsuspecting dancers who inadvertently decided to share the space with him.

The problem is this: for awhile it's okay. Everybody goes out to the dance floor at more or less the same time and wait for the music to start. Alberto starts out in low first gear, sucking the other dancers into a feeling of complacence and safety. Then he shifts into second. Several couples nearby decide they have danced quite enough, thank you, but most remain, poor, deluded fun seekers, totally unaware of Alberto beginning to shift into third. Finally, when he cranks into supercharger turbo mode, bodies start flying all over the dance floor, people commence to scream in panic, a mob fleeing towards the exits in sheer terror, Alberto gracefully grinding around with Graciella at around mach 3.

Great theater, but I would suggest watching in comparative safety, very near an exit. At La Tasca, we usually sit at the table just in front of the lake parking lot for easy getaway should Alberto nod at Graciella sideways towards the dance floor.

Oh. Before I forget. I want everyone to know that I have submitted Graciella to the Vatican for canonization in her lifetime for putting up with Alberto. She is *muy sanctificada*, no doubt. Cardinal Guido Luigi sent me an email saying that she is a shoo-in. They voted 571 to 0 just this morning in her favor. Wait!!! This just in!!!! Apparently Cardinal Guido Luigi nominated Valerie too.

Like I say....Alberto is a piece of work. But also, I should not finish before saying both he and Graciella are incredibly compassionate people, working with children all over the lakeside area, helping orphanages, giving their time tirelessly. We are gratefully their good friends....At least we were before I read this tonight. *Feliz Cumpleaños, Amigo.....* Notice I accented the ñ properly. For those who don't know better, it is entirely possible to wish somebody here a happy a-hole.