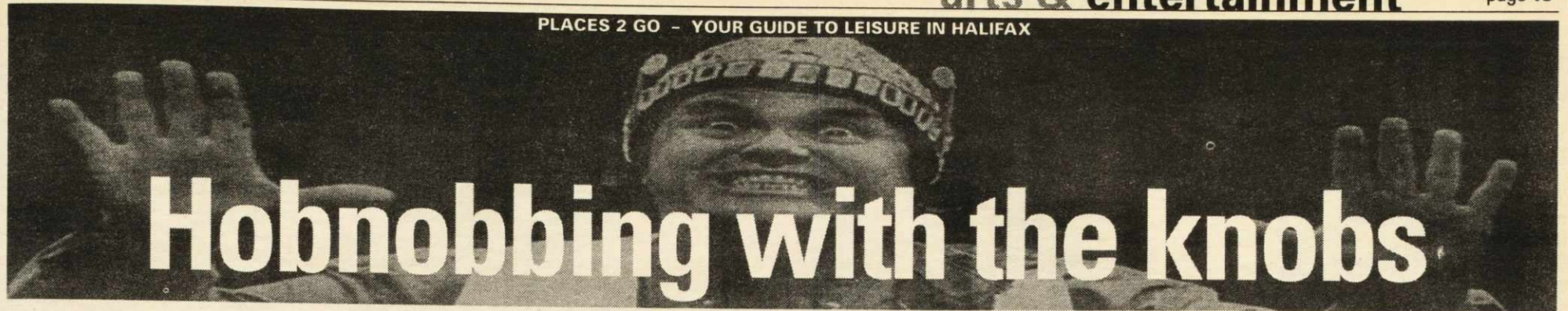


PLACES 2 GO - YOUR GUIDE TO LEISURE IN HALIFAX



# Hobnobbing with the knobs

BY JOHN CULLEN AND  
ANDREW SIMPSON

**The Economy Shoe Shop and  
The Diamond**

The friction of my fresh-pressed khaki Dockers was starting a fire between my legs, while my button down Tommy Hilfiger shirt choked my yuppie-wannabe neck. Andrew looked even worse — fully decked out in pseudo-intellectual tweed. We were en route to the Economy Shoe Shop to listen to some poetry.

As my European loafers scraped the pavement, I practiced my lines on Andrew.

"I swear, I only had a couple of doubles in the clubhouse. Besides, that old woman shouldn't have been driving her cart in the parking lot...there should be a maximum age limit on golf courses you know...it costs a fortune to have bodywork done on a Beamer."

But Andrew wasn't listening. "Where's my pipe?" he asked, patting his pockets. "I made a point of buying fresh tobacco yesterday, expressly for this event."

I made a sympathetic grunt, but I was secretly glad he'd forgotten it. Andrew often fumbles his matches, and I didn't want some flaming ball of tweed interrupting the poetry.

We were now "in" character, ready to see if we could hack it in the intellectual/yuppie world of The Economy Shoe Shop — Andrew as a bumbling academic, and me as an arrogant moneybag.

Soon, standing inside the front door of the bar, we admired the ambience: arches, balconies, painted ceilings, cast-iron patio furniture, dim lighting, and a gi-

ant fake tree.

"Well," said Andrew in an overly loud voice that announced his intention to be heard by more than just me, "this is where all the sharp minds come when they want to dull their thoughts with a cold beer." He chortled as if he'd said something clever.

"You're an ass," I said. "And if you've got any more of those pre-recorded witticisms saved up, keep them to yourself."

"Look," retorted Andrew. "I'm a man of letters and my bounty is words and thoughts. Unlike you, my intellect extends beyond my credit limit."

Andrew was a bit grumpy; it seems he had expected a standing ovation for his banal observation. We sat down and received approving looks from yuppies and intellectuals alike.

Off in a dimly-lit corner, I noticed a ridiculous looking pair of Arts editors from a certain campus newspaper. One of them was quivering under a table in a fit of delusional paranoia.

"See them over there?" I asked. "Philistines," said Andrew derisively.

"Yeah, let's avoid those beer-swilling curs," I said. "I wouldn't even let them caddie for me."

We quickly forgot about the curs and were again lost in the depth of our own conversation when a waiter approached.

"Hail ye, oh bringer of Dionysian treasures, fetch me a goblet of your finest port, lest my thirst go unquenched," said Andrew.

"I'll bet you go to Kings," said the waiter with more than a touch of condescension.

"What's your name, boy?" I asked, casually removing a \$50 bill from my wallet.

"Ralph, sir."

"Ralph, huh? Well let me tell you something about respect, Ralph. You see, you gotta respect people like me and my friend here (Andrew smiled stupidly), cuz we got money. And if you don't respect money, it just might blow up in your face." And with that, I lit the \$50 on fire and threw it in his face.

"Get me a martini, Ralph... with ice."

"It seems they need some help with their help," Andrew added, to the applause of no one.

The neighbouring table seemed to have been paying attention during this fiasco and one of them, dressed much like Andrew, ventured her opinion. "Looks like they need some help with their help," she said.

Andrew let out an excited yelp, and there was a blur of tweed as he deserted me to schmooze amongst the relative safety of similar beings. Depressed by Andrew's fickle nature, but comforted by my money, I sat and waited for my drink.

After the manager arrived with the martini and some semi-sincere apologies for Ralph's behavior, the Arts-curs lurched towards my table.

"We gonna write about you," said the tall one with the nerv-

ous twitch.

"Yup," agreed the quiet one. They were both hammered, having abused the bar's "free beer for media" policy.

"But 'cha know what?" continued the tall one. "We gonna make most of the article up, cuz you guyz iz so phony."

"I suppose that's fair," I answered. "But then, of course, you'd have to portray yourselves as the runny-nosed luses that you are...just to be fair, of course."

"Always do," said the quiet one, and with that they were gone.

I realized that two drunken fools had just gazed deeper into my soul than I had ever dared. Slowly, I rose from my chair and with a mixture of joy and remorse, screamed at whoever would listen.

"I just wanna be me! What's so bad about me?"

"Ooh! Performance art!" someone exclaimed, and there was a smattering of applause as people misunderstood my intention.

Andrew was still rambling to his new friends.

"While the search for the meaning of life remains elusive, I, with a little help from my old

friend, Sigmund Freud, have discovered the meaning of puberty..."

I grabbed him by the tweed and started dragging him towards the door. "Andrew man, I'm sorry, but this is for your own good — those people are pretentious fools and you've bought into it like some petty child."

But Andrew was livid and failed to see that I was doing him a favor.

"Unhand me you presumptuous little mole. What makes you think that I would share your superficial epiphany. I'm a lexicon of truth and knowledge. My capabilities reach beyond the imagination of your ineffectual, cherry pit brain. I know everything worth knowing and it's a tragic burden that I don't carry lightly. So why don't you and your hedonistic Arts editors crawl back into the hole from whence you came. Don't you understand that I'm as deep as..."

I finally wrestled him out the door, and laid a firm slap across his face.

Andrew paused, looked rattled, and continued meekly, "...a puddle... I'm as deep as a shallow, little puddle. And so (motioning inside) are they. I guess I got carried away."



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