



The Keynote Chronicle

Humor News from Jan McInnis
Co-Star of the Baby Boomer Comedy Show.

800-492-9394

www.TheWorkLady.com • Jan@TheWorkLady.com



Comedy Wisdom

While giving a commencement speech at a college graduation, Steve Jobs said something that has become one of my favorite quotations (I'm paraphrasing): *Life does not make sense until you look at it backwards.*

How true! And as a comedian who got her start 18 years ago in comedy clubs, I've spent some time looking back at all of the unsolicited advice, opinions and comments people have expressed to me over the years. And what's funny is I've found some gems that, though awful at first glance, turned out to guide my career (and life!) because I listened to what the person was really saying. Now that I make my living doing humor keynotes and comedy shows for associations and corporations, it's fun to look back on the comedy club wisdom and what I learned from it.

"You ain't got any of them 'thinkin' jokes,' do ya?"

This was not so much a question as a warning, and it came from a bar owner who apparently was afraid that his crowd would go "a-thinkin'." (And maybe realize they shouldn't be sitting in a bar every night?) Back in my early years of comedy, we comics did bar gigs – called "one-nighters" – to fill in the financial gaps when we weren't booked in comedy clubs. The crowds at these gigs were rough not only because a lot of the patrons had begun drinking at noon, but sometimes the bar owner didn't even tell the people there was going to be a comedy show. He'd just turn off the Monday night football game and send the comic up! Isn't that a great idea? NOT!

What I learned: Stick to my goals. I'd like to say my "thinkin' jokes" gig was a hit, but it wasn't; they wanted dirtier humor. That 30 minutes on that stage felt like *three hours* but by sticking to my guns and not changing my act for those types of groups, I eventually found my niche in the association/corporate arena. If I had changed my act to pander to that crowd, I'd still be doing bar gigs.

"Don't bring the waitresses back to the condo!" These were the signs posted all over the comedy condos where we comics lived together for the week of shows. (Yes, I had the *privilege* of rooming with 20-something male comedians who liked to party.) The club owners posted these warnings because of what generally happened when a comic got "too cozy" with a waitress: the waitress fell in love, the comedian moved on to another city the next week, and then the heartbroken waitress quit. It might make for a good Julia Roberts movie, but it's lousy for running a business.

What I learned: Don't mess up on the little stuff. While I never had a dating issue with the waitstaff, I understood what the club owners were *really* saying– you may be funny, but that's not the club owner's only concern. I know I'm funny, but I also know I also got booked because of the things I *didn't do*.

"Because I saw what happened to you." I heard this from a friend and former comedian. Even though we both started out at pretty much the same time, I moved on to bigger gigs while she faded out of comedy. Years later, I ran into her and asked why she stopped doing comedy. Without hesitation, she answered, "Because I saw what happened to you." She heard about the hard one-nighters (see above "thinkin' jokes") and it frightened her away.

Spotlight

Jan's Keynotes:

- *Finding the Funny in Change* - Learn to use humor during change to diffuse tense situations, kick off tough topics and facilitate communications.
- *Finding the Funny in Communications* - Learn how to use humor in your business communications to connect with clients/coworkers, sell your product/idea/service, get people to listen to you and be memorable.
- *Hilarious Hosting* - Keep your audience engaged and keep the program running smoothly on schedule with Jan as your emcee.
- *Cubicle Comedy* - Clean, customized comedy focusing on work, family and day-to-day life.

A few of the groups Jan is presenting her keynotes to include:

- New Jersey Health Information Management Association
- Park View Medical Center fundraiser
- Alabama APSE

Feel free to pass this newsletter along and refer me!

What I learned: Don't let someone else's experiences scare you away from your journey. I assured her that things are going great now: the one-nighters are (thankfully) over, and the crowds actually like my "thinkin' jokes!"

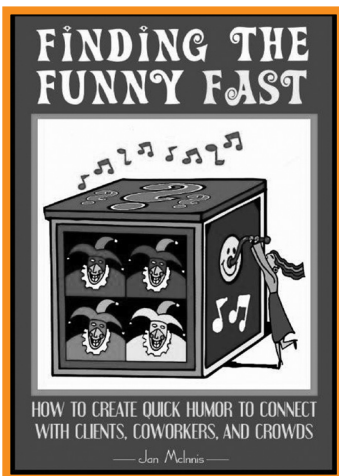
"Don't worry about being stuck as an emcee." This was probably the best career advice I ever got, and it was given to me from veteran comedian Lord Carrett (his real name!). The emcee spot is for new comics and it's the bottom of the comedy ladder: low pay and no prestige. So many comics push to move out of that spot as fast as they can into a better paying position (feature or headliner). Unfortunately, they don't have the stage presence or material to do well in those spots, and so they end up being labeled as a mediocre act or not getting booked at all. Lord told me to stay as an emcee as long as I could stand it while building a strong act, and then I'll have the tools to make a good living at it. I followed his advice, and like clockwork I zipped up through the comedy ranks.

What I learned: Use your time at the bottom to get good. Whether you're emceeing, going to school, or starting on your second career, the bottom is a great learning/bettering yourself ground because there's no pressure . . . okay, financial pressure, but that's why they invented ramen noodles!

"I don't hire women comics." This was written in a letter to me, sadly, by a woman club owner! If I worked at a "regular" job, I'd be sipping margaritas on a beach in the Caribbean with the money from the lawsuit right now. But alas, comedy has different rules that you must follow if you intend to work in this tight-knit community. I did end up working her clubs because I asked her why. It turns out that she didn't use female comedians because the comedians have to share a hotel room, and she wouldn't book two women for the same show (another issue for later!) so I'd have to share with a guy. I told her I had friends in the area that I could stay with – problem solved. I got work.

What I learned. Don't take something at face value. Some people are just bad communicators, so you have to dig a little deeper to find out what they *really* mean, and maybe it's not what you thought it was.

Yes I've heard all the weird, whacky and wonderful advice there is, and I know there'll be more before this ride ends. So next time you hear some bad advice, take a minute to give it some "thinkin'" and maybe there's a gem of wisdom in there after all!



Jan has shared her customized humor keynotes with thousands of associations and corporations. She is also the author of "Finding the Funny FAST; How To Create Quick Humor To Connect With Clients, Coworkers And Crowds," and she was featured in the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post for her clean humor. From a recent client: "Our group really enjoyed the (communications) presentation and the chance to laugh - sometimes at ourselves. I think Jan highlighted so many great ways to fit humor into our jobs that we often don't consider (and) some very effective strategies for using humor in appropriate ways as professionals."

Baby Boomer Comedy Show – Jan and Kent Rader co-star together in the *Baby Boomer Comedy Show* for theaters and corporations around the country. This is a hilarious 90-minute laugh-fest, with clean humor on topics that the "boomer generation" can relate to - family, kids, work, do-it-yourself projects, dieting, aging and all. Check it out at www.BabyBoomerComedyShow.com to see when they're coming to your town, or contact them to book the show at your event!

THE BABY BOOMER COMEDY SHOW IS APPEARING AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

- Clayton Opera House, Clayton, NY, June 13
- Fountain Inn Civic Center, September 28
- Greenwood Community Theatre, September 29
- Carlsbad Village Theater, November 10

"Thank you for bringing The Baby Boomer Comedy Show to the Carlsbad Village Theatre. Baby Boomers is a very enjoyable comedic flashback of history for those who lived it, and for their children who shared part of it. The audience related well to the Show's all-inclusive non-stop humor. Excellent feedback!"

Tom McMahon, Owner, Carlsbad Village Theatre