

starstruck

As a teenager, I absolutely loved the band Blondie, even if I thought that lead singer Deborah Harry (and blonde, to boot) was named Blondie. Whether the rap fest that was "Rapture," the naughty word in "Heart of Glass" or reggae hints of "The Tide is High," the songs gave rise to a harmless, but serious crush on an older woman who could play it soft or rock it out.

Fast forward to 1997, a cocktail party before a big concert in Lawrence, Kan., the following day to honor William S. Burroughs, then the grand old man of American Letters. Standing in a kitchen, trying to wear my journalist hat, I'm approached, in turn, first by Michael Stipe of R.E.M., asking where the silverware is (it wasn't my house, so I just started pulling open drawers), and then, trumpeted by angels, Ms. Harry, who's looking for a place to smoke a cigarette. I gladly escorted her to the porch.

Though I had interviewed some famous folks before and met several others, this one was different. I figured the best approach was just to get the fawning out of the way. "You know, your music meant a lot to a young boy growing up in Kansas," I stuttered. The response: "I hope it didn't include too much perversion." Ummm.



MEETING FAMOUS PEOPLE CAN
BE AWKWARD, ESPECIALLY IF YOU
ACT LIKE A GIDDY SCHOOL GIRL

BY MARK LUCE

The conversation went uphill from there and the next night backstage I got a "Hello, darling" and the rock version of the air kiss.

I write this not to name drop, but to pose a question: What do you do when you meet someone famous? I would contend that what I did with Ms. Harry was a mistake. I should've just talked to her like a normal person because, well, she's just a normal person, and so is everyone else famous that you meet. Some you may find to be unbelievably friendly if you don't act all wide-eyed. Others you may find to be insufferably lame and

egocentric, at which point, one simply recedes into the background. One must always keep in mind, though, that meeting such folks doesn't mean you're cool, it means you might have cool stories.

My biggest story yet, without question, was meeting President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore at a Rose Garden ceremony. I had a great line rehearsed about my generation and restoring faith in government. Of course, I choked in the presence of the two men, offering but a handshake and a weak "It's an honor, sir."

Through the years I have been lucky enough to meet a handful of folks who would qualify as famous, many from artistic and literary circles. But I have not, like *Golfdom* Editor in Chief Larry Aylward, been playfully knocked around a bar by Pipino Cuevas, the former welterweight champion who fought Thomas "Hitman" Hearns.

I also have never met George Brett, the former Royals third baseman who was my undisputed boyhood hero. He lives here in Kansas City, and I am sure someday I will run into him somewhere.

Here's what I shouldn't say, but probably will anyway: "I named my cat after you when I was seven."

Mark Luce is a freelance writer in Kansas City, Mo., where he really isn't stalking George Brett.

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