

Remember me?

Talking yourself out of an embarrassing situation isn't so hard



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For a moment, I thought my prayers had been answered.

Last week I was sitting in my usual pub. My favorite bartender, John, had just delivered a fresh, frothy beverage when she walked up.

I had turned to talk to my friend Nick when I noticed this extremely attractive woman standing there smiling at me.

No, really, she was. At me. Yes, really. Anyway, then she asked that horrible question.

"Aren't you (A.L.) Forkner?"

Ooo boy, I thought to myself, I guess I'm gonna get capped for that Amnesty International column after all.

Then I realized it was much worse than that. She used my real name, instead of my initials. In other words, she really knew me from somewhere.

"Uh, yeah," I answered.

"You went to Central High, right?"

"Yup."

By now, I was totally confused. I had no clue who she was. Of course, since she was beautiful, I handled it in true Forkner fashion. I made a fool of myself.

"You probably don't remember me," she said.

God bless America, I fielded that question smoother than Derek Jeter from deep in the hole.

(Ladies, ask your boyfriends. It's not kinky.)

"I'm sorry, I don't. But God do I wish I did."

Aww yeah, move over Shaft, there's another bad mother in the house.

(Editor's note: Smooth as burlap,

and just as chafing.)

Anyway, where was I?

Oh yeah, so she starts naming all of these people I knew in high school. This just served to worry as well as confound me.

I felt horrible. A pretty girl doesn't come up and start talking to me every day. Now that one doesn't run from me in fear, I can't remember her to save my life.

That's when she asked the scariest question that a man can hear.

"Didn't you used to date. ..."

With a gulp of fear (and beer) I replied, "Yeah, I'm guilty. You're not her roommate or anything are you?"

We've all been there. Someone who knows you starts to talk, and you haven't the faintest clue who they are.

When it happens, you do have a few options.

Option one: Lie like a White House press secretary.

Pretend that you're glad to see this person. Treat 'em like life-long pals.

Helpful lines include: "How long has it been," and "You still living over on, oh I can see it, what was it called again?"

This is the most commonly practiced method. It's usually the safest too. Safest? That's right, picture this scenario.

A girl comes up and starts to talk to you. You're drawing a blank as to her identity.

You decide to tell the truth and admit that you don't know her. So she pulls a pair of boxers out of her purse and asks, "Remember these? You left 'em hanging from the fire escape last week."

Definite social faux pas.

Option two: Feign brain damage.

Look at the person blankly and drool. Facial tics are a nice touch, but hard to keep up for long.

Helpful lines include: "Heh, heh, you said butt" and "Neil, did you eat your Chunky soup today?"

For some, this will be easier than others. However, it's a tad demeaning and embarrassing.

This is a bad choice if the person



turns out to be the company representative who interviewed you hours earlier.

Option three: Pretend to be exhausted and not thinking clearly.

Blink heavily, and rub the bridge of your nose. An imprint of your wrist-watch on the side of your face adds a little authenticity.

Helpful lines include: "I'm sorry, I'm so tired right now I can't remember who I am," and, if she's really pretty, "I've been putting in so much time at work, I'm beat. Why I chose to be a surgeon and a lawyer is beyond me."

If this works, you're either hitting on Jenny McCarthy or someone even more stupid. So this method also helps to weed out the truly brain-damaged.

Option four: The Witness Protection Program approach.

The minute they say your name, jump up and get your back to a wall. Look around nervously and grab a fork for defense.

Helpful lines include: "I'm not him anymore," and "Did my editor send you?"

This can be a real turn-on to a lady who likes danger. But be careful. It might be an ex, and who wants to give her any more ammunition?

Final option: The truth.

This is the path for me. Gutsy, but honorable. Look the person right in the eye and admit that you don't remember them.

Helpful lines include: "I'm sorry, I can't recall right now," and "Boy, that sixth Guinness really did a number on me."

Yes, it probably lowers your chance for romance. But it's better than hooking up with a psychotic ex.

What happened to me? Turns out I was OK. The minute she told me her name I remembered her fully.

The worst part was, I had a crush on her in high school.

Just cut me some slack, OK? I haven't seen her for seven years. People do change.

For example, this lady (I won't print her name because I don't want to damage her reputation by linking her to me) has changed a little bit.

I'm sure she's the same ol' Sara (oops!) on the inside. But on the outside she went from a 7.6 on the Forkner scale to a 9.1 rating.

(Assuming, of course, her "cool as Dennis Miller with a martini" personality hasn't vanished.)

I mean, look at all the changes I've gone through in seven years.

I'm pitifully single, broke, 20 pounds heavier, and my eyesight's gone to hell.

That's just my luck. She gets even better looking and I turn into Al Bundy.

Now if you'll all excuse me, I'm going to be studying my old yearbooks.

I want to be damn sure I don't blow this chance again.

Graceful strength

Scarlets should be given more respect for the demanding role they fulfill



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Many people believe that the Scarlets are just a variety of cheerleaders.

Cheerleaders they definitely aren't. The cheerleaders and the Scarlets are both part of the university spirit squad, and both groups are very talented, but very different.

The Scarlets are a skilled dance team and probably are some of the most athletic and finely toned women in all of the university's athletics.

Most people realize athletes work very hard to stay in shape and at the peak of their performance. But a common assumption is that the Scarlets don't have to work as hard as other athletes because, well, they're not athletes.

Wrong answer.

The 16 women on the Scarlet dance team each work hard to be great athletes. I know how much time and dedication goes into being a Scarlet because I live with one of the women on the squad, Sarah

Reichmuth.

Every day, Sarah is either at practice for two hours, lifting weights, in aerobics class or spending extra time at the Campus Recreation Center.

I have to admit that even though I know how much time and energy Sarah devotes to the dance team, I didn't fully understand the difficulty of being a Scarlet until I tried out myself last May.

I was nervous, but hopeful because of my gymnastics and dance background. Boy, was I surprised to see about 60 women show up for the first day of tryouts.

There were women practicing leaps and turns I had never even tried. Some women were bending their bodies in ways that my body wouldn't allow me to, even if I had wanted.

The tryout was an experience to say the least. The talent in that little room was tough. Many of the women had taken dance lessons for more than a decade and had been dance camp instructors for years.

So, as you probably guessed, I couldn't compete with their experience. I was cut the first day. It had been a dream of mine since I was little to be a Scarlet, so I was disappointed that I wasn't to be one of the squad members.

But I can definitely say that I now know a small part of what it takes to be on the university's dance team.

Each woman devotes a lot of time to the Scarlets, like any other athletes would to their sports. So what really bugs me is that the Scarlets don't

seem to get much recognition for all their hard work.

Because the university dance team isn't an NCAA sport, it often is unrecognized as an athletic team by newspapers, students and the university as a whole.

For instance, I bet that not many of you know that last year the Scarlets didn't get to enjoy their spring break in Florida or South Padre, but instead spent their week here in Lincoln. The week was devoted to preparing for the National Competition in April. Tony Gonzales, the Scarlets' choreographer, came all the way from California to help the women perfect their two-minute dance, for about five hours a day, all week.

Gonzales only helps the dancers for a few weeks out of the year. In between his visits, the Scarlets make up their own dances. They work on their national routine for weeks before he arrives.

At the National Competition in Daytona Beach, Fla., the Scarlets had their sights set on the championship. Only one day of the trip was spent at the beach.

The women practiced every moment possible until their performance. "We practiced in a parking garage, at the airport and on the bus," Sarah told me.

With an almost flawless performance in the finals, the Scarlets finished three-hundredths of a point behind Brigham Young University.

Though the women were disappointed, second place is hardly some-

thing to scoff at. The Scarlets have seen a steady rise in their finish at the competition every year.

Three years ago they finished 10th. Two years back their finish was third. Last year brought the second-place trophy to the team. All that's left is number one in 1999.

Even though the Scarlets display poise and talent, they don't always get to perform at athletic events. When the Husker football team traveled to play Oklahoma State in Arrowhead Stadium, the dancers barely received last-minute approval to perform at the game.

Once the Scarlets were allowed to attend the Oklahoma State game, they were informed that they had to find their own rides to Kansas City. I feel that transportation should be provided for the dancers to every game because the Scarlets are part of the university's athletics.

According to the women on the squad, dancing is an athletic performance that is emotionally demanding. The Scarlets learn new dance routines at every practice.

Not only do they have to remember every dance, but they must be able to perform each one without many days' practice.

I once took three weeks to learn one dance that I performed in high school, and it still was far from perfect. I really admire the fact that the Scarlets are able to learn quickly and remember so many dances.

Dancers also have to be very flexible and have very good control. On

top of all that, the Scarlets always have to look good. They must always remember to smile, and keep their bodies straight and tight while performing.

But I doubt that anyone would argue that the Scarlets don't always look good.

Hillary Johnson, a third-year veteran of the squad, says the Scarlets have worked hard to change their team image at games and around campus.

"After we got third place at Nationals in 1997, we decided to change our team image so that people would notice how good we are," Hillary told me.

The Scarlets began by throwing out their outfits that included skirts. The dancers wanted to be set apart from the cheerleaders as another part of the spirit squad. Now the women wear black pants whenever they dance.

The Scarlets are one of the best dance teams in the nation, if not the best this year. We need to appreciate them for more than just "a bunch of good-lookin' women," as I have heard so many people say.

Their talent is amazing, and their dedication never-ending. So don't laugh the next time someone says that dancers are athletes.

The Scarlets are some of the best examples of fine collegiate athletes. They deserve recognition for being skilled dancers, and once that's realized, it isn't so bad for people to appreciate their good looks too.