

1982 WAS A GREAT YEAR! CAN 1983 BE ANY BETTER?

Well fans, I was wrong again. The world didn't end on schedule this past year. The great depression delayed its arrival till next year while the stock market hit a record high. And along with the world, I grew older, fatter and more prosperous. Now, I'm 'staying the course', as they say, and predicting a fabulous 1983. So, now, you have real cause to worry. I'm almost always wrong.

But before I get to the juicy stuff, let me give you the ordinary, run-of-the-mill news---the kind normal folks scribble on the back of those hokey religious Xmas cards. My health is great. My spirits are soaring --the manic phase of my manic-depressive personality & life--. My business is literally exploding. I can't keep up with it. Everyone else is sinking or barely staying afloat but at the Uplift we're still kissing their asses and the money keeps pouring in. I'm virtually working a seven day week. David Combs closed his uptown shop and came back to help me run mine. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

I got no holiday this past year. John Klar has become socially friendly and helps me buy at the major markets but has undertaken a new career in lampmaking at a much larger lamp factory in Brooklyn. So, I have been jolted out of my lethargy. It was once again me and my shop against the world. The result? Sales up over 30% for the last 11 months. So far, sales for December are nearly double those of a year ago. It's good to be shaken and challenged. It makes you feel good to see yourself tested and to pass the test. I'm tempted to say we're 'staying the course' but since I voted straight Democratic this past election, I'm afraid such rhetoric is misleading.

Meanwhile, back home in my hi-rise by the river, life has taken a dramatic turn for the better. John Klar says I've "ended up with the maid and the little boy without marrying a bitch." David Combs says the environment is insane--so insane, in fact, he moved out a few weeks ago for the umpteenth time to go live with a friend in Brooklyn.

My middle-class, middle-aged compatriots say my lifestyle is "most unusual." Some think I've flipped my lid. Well, if I have, then madness is happiness.

I've taken in two roommates. One is a 37-year-old black transvestite hooker with an arrest record going back to 1963. That's Malcolm, but everyone calls her "Marsha." The other is a 19-year-old blond male stripper from Baltimore who hasn't been arrested for hustling, yet.

It all began, appropriately, last New Year's Eve, or was it New Year's Day, when a dancer at a midtown burlesque house came bouncing out in a pair of diapers with two pink balloons pinned on his behind blowing a horn like crazy. I knew I had to meet him.

I gave him my card and a few days later he stopped by the shop, being a Christopher Street runabout and an early-blooming gay activist himself at the age of sixteen in Baltimore. I, of course, being weak of mind, tried to lure him to Hoboken but he was flush with money from a week of working at the strip show and that first evening turned into a marathon "how-to-make-a-lamp" session. Three and a half hours later, with only a little help from myself, he had built a strange but quite nice lamp.