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STAND-UP

401K COMEDY

Anthony Spano is anything but shy and retiring

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BY ED KAZI
COMEDY CORRESPONDENT

STORYCHAT: Post Comment

Comedian Anthony Spano began his career as a retirement specialist. That is, until the retirement company retired him. No problem. The sudden layoff presented a golden opportunity to pursue his first love: stand-up comedy.

For Spano, it turned out to be a perfect fit.

"I realized that I truly didn't want to wear a suit and tie no more," explained the Jersey City native, "I hated being reprimanded for cracking jokes at our bi-monthly meetings. I hated the back-stabbing atmosphere. Comedy has back-stabbers, but thank God, comedy has no meetings."

Spano shares stage time with Mike Marino all weekend long at Uncle Vinnie's Comedy Club in Point Pleasant Beach. And please keep your annuity questions to yourself.

KAZI: How did growing up in Jersey City influence your comic sensibilities?

SPANO: Every day was a comedy. From the crack addicts to the junkies, every day was a new day to behold. Jersey City was a cornucopia of characters and just like any city, people love to imitate anyone and everyone. If you couldn't handle the ribbing you weren't allowed to hang out. Today you get arrested and fired for words. Man, everyone in Jersey City, Brooklyn and Philly would be in for life!

KAZI: Laurel and Hardy or Abbott and Costello?

SPANO: Abbott and Costello, hands down; Lou Costello being Italian from New Jersey, come on! They were much funnier. I mean, they did a movie with Frankenstein and the Werewolf and made that funny. As a kid, I couldn't remember a Sunday without those guys and then pasta at 1 p.m.

KAZI: What is the absolute worst gig you ever had?

SPANO: Ah yeah, it was a dart league that wasn't really a league. I don't think there was even a dartboard come to think of it. It was an excuse for the regular drunks who never ever left the bar to get drunk. These guys never left the establishment. They wanted the comedians to make fun of the crew that lived in the bar. Hey I am not scared, I am from Jersey City, but it was like performing at a prison.

KAZI: Do people always expect you to be funny, even at moments when you are not supposed to be funny, like when you're at a wake?

SPANO: Yes. They expect you to make them laugh. Sometimes they are trying to outdo me. That I don't like. That is disrespectful, especially at a wake. At an Italian wake, there are a lot of weeping hecklers.

KAZI: What advice do you have for an aspiring young comedian?

SPANO: Stay away. I am trying to make a living. Go to school get a degree, then your master's, then a second, and don't stop and go for a third. Fewer comedians equal less competition.

KAZI: Anything you'd like to add?

SPANO: Please visit me at anthony-spano.com. Come and visit, say hello, view my schedule.

*E-mail **AsburyKaz@aol.com**.*

Anthony Spano is at Uncle Vinnie's Comedy Club in Point Pleasant Beach.

ANTHONY SPANO
with Mike Marino — 10 p.m. today and Saturday — Uncle Vinnie's Comedy Club at Ferrara's Restaurant — 520 Arnold Ave., Point Pleasant Beach — (732) 899-3900 or www.uncleviniescomedyclub.com — anthony-spano.com

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