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lyn for the two-hour workshop at 8:00. Afterwards, he'd hang out in midtown until the 3 A.M. train left for Boston. He'd catch a few hours of sleep aboard Amtrak, then go straight to work and shower there.

What grew from that was an active performing career as a politically oriented standup comic, whose first home base was the Comedy Studio at the Hong Kong Restaurant in Harvard Square. (He had to pay dues, of course, like performing in places where "you were required to bring 10 people in to get six minutes onstage—a \$15 cover plus a two-drink minimum. My friends got tired of showing up, so I would offer to pay their way. You end up paying \$25 apiece in order to perform—for free!") He eventually worked with Laughing Liberally, a New York-based politically themed comedy collective, and has also played many conferences, like those of Netroots Nation. ("I'm a conference

whore now," he says.)

Besides self-publishing three humorous books, Thurston, in 2006, helped launch Jack & Jill Politics (www.jackandjillpolitics.com), a blog that offers "a black bourgeoisie perspective on U.S. politics." He confesses that burning so brightly on five hours of sleep per night—and consecutive weekends in Austin, Boston, and Amsterdam, for example—has one downside: he gets "pretty ill" every 18 months or so, including one bout with tuberculosis. Even so, he says, "I really do think I'm among the top 100 most fortunate people in the world." He hopes to have children, and to emulate his comic heroes, including Dick Gregory, George Carlin, Whoopi Goldberg, and Jon Stewart. "The point of being funny," he says, "is in having something to say."



Visit harvardmag.com/extras to hear excerpts from an audio interview with Baratunde Thurston.

Chapter & Verse

Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

Jane Arnold is searching for a story about a destitute family who own a Stradivarius. When the son tries to sell the violin, the pawnbroker tells him, "I told your father a long time ago this is a fake." The boy goes home and tells his mother he has decided that having the violin is as good as money in the bank, and he won't sell it yet.

Ernest Berge seeks the exact reference where Sigmund Freud refers to our ability to learn about normal functioning from extreme cases.

Constance Martin asks for the author, title, and/or origin of a song containing the lines, "You are my Rose of Mexico/ The one I loved so long ago..." They come from a waltz that was "new" around 1909, and these lyrics might be part of the chorus.

"in Harvard balance" (July-August). Robert S. Hoffman writes, "The phrase 'to die in Harvard balance' is a variant of the phrase 'to die a Harvard death,' which I've heard and used fondly since starting medical training 35 years ago. We physicians on the West Coast use it

all the time. Possibly the first phrase is an East Coast variant. As the questioner correctly states, it is applied to patients whose labs and other data are normal but who die anyway. It appears on first glance to satirize academic physicians, Harvard providing handy examples, who are concerned only with the intellectual and technical aspects of practice but have little if any interest in the patients or their fate. If the lab results are normal, this proves that the care was top-notch no matter what happens to the patient. My sense, however, is that when we use the phrase we are not really targeting academicians, toward whom most of us bear no antipathy. Instead we use it to express and slightly relieve our frustration when we do everything right but the patient keeps getting worse or dies. I have no idea who first used the phrase. Probably some medical resident 50 years ago who will remain anonymous but forever be immortalized in the conversation of stressed-out physicians everywhere."

Send inquiries and answers to "Chapter and Verse," *Harvard Magazine*, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138, or via e-mail to chapterandverse@harvardmag.com.