



## **MARK BRAZILL**

### **HOLLYWOOD COMEDY WRITER, CREATOR OF "THAT '70'S SHOW"**

Mark Brazill was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1962. He started delivering papers when he was 13. At 16, he lied about his age and got a job at a dog food factory, Ralston Purina, but they fired him when they discovered how young he was. He (barely) graduated from high school and that was all the formal education he wanted. For a while he worked as a dishwasher, waiter, cook, parking attendant, salesman, and more.

When he was 19, Brazill moved to California, where he lived on the border of Mexico and sold cars at a Volvo dealership in Chula Vista. He quit to become a comedian in 1984. He had stage fright and a slight speech impediment but that job is a compulsive endeavor if one feels the calling.

He joined the WGA at 29, when Dennis Miller hired him to write for his talk show. He went on to write for "In Living Color" and "3rd Rock," and then created "That 70's Show." He quit the 70's to build a ranch in Ojai and raise cattle but eventually moved back to LA. He has written on over 1,000 episodes of television and some films, and still does stand-up and writes.

He lives in Santa Monica with his partner, Elea, who was born in Paris and is an actress as well as a writer/producer and a delightful soul. They have two dogs, Mitzi and Pickles.

His life will be complete if the Buffalo Bills win the Super Bowl.

# Slouching Towards the Deity

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I've had a complicated relationship with God and even the concept of God. I heard stories from the Bible in church almost every morning for eight years, until I was thirteen. I hated it at the time, but eventually I came to love the stories. And somehow, even in my particularly dark atheist period, I retained their lessons.

I turned away from God after my divorce. I begged God to make things work but obviously, God had different plans. Sadly, my anger made me rebel and deny God's existence when I needed God most. But fortunately, too much of my foundation was built on rock and my own nature began to abhor that vacuum.

I've come to believe that God's will isn't a mystery; it's what's happening, has happened, and will happen. Doesn't that take some of the pressure off? Albert Einstein said, "*I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own – a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty.*"

I believe he's correct. All anyone can say of God is subjective; it's all opinions. If we had undeniable proof, we wouldn't need faith and I believe faith is imperative, especially when God's will doesn't sync with our own. Even in my angriest moments, I still thought God believed in me, whether I believed in God or didn't.

When things happen, I try to pause to allow a little grace (the God moment) to come in before I react and do something stupid. It doesn't always work. Haruki Murakami said "pain is inevitable but suffering is optional." God is in every moment that we allow God to be in.

I'd see homeless people and wonder why God would allow that. Then a voice inside me said, "why do YOU allow it?" I believe we're an extension of God. Can I change the world with two dollars for someone who's hungry? Yes. Large or small, kindness is kindness. Water drops dripping onto a stone will eventually break it.

I see holy men in all religions as having a purpose in our evolution. And any God you can believe in is your God, so be it. I dreamt of Buddha once. He was huge and bronze, sitting on top of a mountain. As I made my way toward him, I complained that the climb was slow and difficult, and he laughed, saying, "*I know, but you want to get here, don't you?*" My answer is yes. I see God's existence every day in acts of bravery, kindness, decency, and charity. I see God in the stars, the earth, and all God's creatures.

Those Bible stories taught me story construction, which helped me to become a writer. In hindsight, the divorce was best for everyone, and so it goes. I have to try to love God and God's will, and even when I hate it, if I just keep climbing, I believe I'll receive God's grace.