

The day started well, and in days hence people would observe that there was irony in this. For Paul M. Johnson, at least in retrospect, it started almost too well – “I don’t know but today seems kinda odd / No barkin’ from the dog, no smog” as Ice Cube examined in ’93 – but who’s going to question a spring in their step? Certainly not Johnson, who lately had been able to make out the words “dead end” on the signs leading to his current job in the drearily sunny cultural desert known as Phoenix. He’d take what he could get.

But, as with all life-altering moments, this one hit without warning. It hit sharply, with frightening precision. And Johnson knew things would never be the same – all the clichés he usually abhorred fit to a T. They fit like a glove. They fit the bill, and Johnson was fit to be tied.

“Ham-tastic.”

The term – indeed, in Johnson’s purist mind it couldn’t be called a word – appeared in a proof for an ad that Johnson had earlier written for one of his agency’s clients, a low-rent casino in Carson City, Nevada. The casino, not the kind where you’d see Charles Barkley doubling down, was giving away hams leading up to Easter. Johnson had written an appropriate ad the prior day but, as was his wont, included “extra” headlines for his own amusement. The kind of droll he’d scrape off the top of his head that was meant for internal entertainment purposes only. The details aren’t important, Johnson insists, but “ham-tastic” charmed its way from the account team to the client and into the ad. And now it stared cheekily at Johnson, who was neither charmed nor hungered by it but, instead, horrified.

“That moment was when I decided to find something new,” said Johnson as he casually munched on a ham sandwich. “I’d like to work at a proper agency, one with adults. Or at least one with little kids who have adult brains. Either way.”



CURRENT TITLE: COPYWRITER. CURRENT LOCATION: PHOENIX, ARIZONA. WHAT HE WRITES: STANDARD PRINT ADS, CORPORATE VIDEO SCRIPTS, BROCHURES, NEWSLETTERS, WEBSITE COPY (INCLUDING SEO), PRESS RELEASES, DIRECT MAIL COLLATERAL, SALES SHEETS, E-BLASTS, BRANDING BOARDS, RADIO SPOTS, RFP COPY, MISSION STATEMENTS, STANDARDS GUIDES, LETTERS (INVITES, SOLICITATIONS, PITCHES), AND ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT HIM TO. WHAT HE LIKES DOING: WEARING SHORTS, EATING RICE, MAKING FUN OF HIS FRIENDS, CREATING ALTERNATIVE NAMES FOR LEMONADE SUCH AS “SWEET LEMON DRINK” OR “YELLOW ORB FRUIT ADD-SUGAR BEVERAGE,” READING STUFF, DRINKING STUFF, AND PRETENDING WITH HIS SON THAT THE TWO OF THEM ARE ROGUE HUMANS WHO JOINED A PACK OF COYOTES.