

Summer Conferences in a Nutshell

by your raving reporter. . .

After reading Seinfeld's book.

I have to tell you this... I missed Seinfeld.

In the nineties when Seinfeld was changing the way Americans laugh, we were in Kiriat Shmona, dodging Katyushas, raising kids, fighting the overdraft, dodging kids, fighting Katyushas, and raising the overdraft.

High technology was setting the video to record *Shelly Duval Fairy Tale Theatre* while we were at work. Or *Gabby and Debby* so I could have my own copy. There was Channel 1, the Educational Channel and Middle East TV, where we could watch the original 1960's Star Trek every afternoon. Digital books were the ones you turned the pages with your fingers. The occasional cool Israeli, who knew I was into humor, would try to steer the conversation to Seinfeld. Sein who? Feld wha?

So now we watch the episodes in jumbled order on Israeli TV after CSI, and we'll never really appreciate how the Kramer character develops as the series goes on. One day my grandchildren will ask for help for their history of television course and I will be useless.

Yesterday I was in the principal's office and a copy of Sein Language (Jerry Seinfeld's book of bits) fell into my hands. Nobody could explain how it got there. So I'm reading it.

The problem with reading Seinfeld is that after a few pages you start talking like him.

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I attended the conference of Academic English teachers last week. After 30 years of ETAI, I figure, let's live a little. It's called FACET, which stands for, Let's Face 't: Our students don't know English. It was held reasonably near my house, in Carmiel at Braudie College. I love it: Be Rowdy College. How you going to get the students to concentrate on the lectures with a name like that?

. . . And they gave me one of those plastic clip-on thingies and it said:

Mr Barry Silverberg.

I was very pleased that they included the title Mister. Here I am, with a beard and moustache, wearing a blue shirt and a tan pair of pants, and to clinch the outfit, a Kippa. But for all you

conference attendees who are challenged by visual clues, that isn't enough. So step right up, folks, make no doubt about it, just read my card, and you'll see: I am definitely a Mister.

This actually worked pretty well, because there were no mishaps. Unlike ETAI, which I attended a few days later. At ETAI, they give you a sticker and one of those little plastic clip-on thingies. You have to write your name yourself. Whereupon I wrote my name on the sticker, and then realized I couldn't get it in to the clip-on thingie.

. . . So everyone is rushing around with their names stuck on their chests, and nobody bothered to write Mr, Mrs or anything else.

You'd think that would be enough to tell the boys from the girls, however...

I was in the bathroom when this woman boldly walks right in, she's coming in so fast that when she puts her brakes on she's past the (occupied) urinals. She can't just walk out, she's come too far, and she's got to brazen it out. So she takes the stall next to me and says, Shoshie, those shoes are you!

The problem with these stickers—The problem with these conferences-- is that people come up to you and greet you enthusiastically-- HI, BARRY!! You have no idea who they are, but – do- they- really- know- you –and- they'll -be insulted- if- you- don't- remember OR did they just read it off your chest?

Then you have about 1/3 of a second to scan their chest—like you're a human QR card reader, and answer back Oh,HI -- _____ (paste name off chest here) -- HOW YA DOIN' without missing a beat.

One woman gave me a big HI BARRY, and I know I knew her – she gave me half her tuna sandwich in ETAI 2008—but what's her name, what'sersname, scan chest quickly; no name tag; scan again, by this time it's getting obvious. AAAAARGH!

She explains... It's too embarrassing to have everybody looking up here; so I stuck it—she shows me-- down here!

Summer Greetings From Barry S