

ST. PAT'S DAY ... **LOSING MY RELIGION**

I wonder if you have heard of St Pat's day. You may know that it **has something to do** with **the** Irish. It does. It is also a lot of **college** students' **favorite holiday**. **Why is that?** I'll explain that **in a little while**. First I'd like to tell you how **it all started** and how **it is celebrated** today.

The celebration **originally came from** Ireland and **pretty much** explains why **there are** no snakes in Ireland **anymore**. You see, people believe that **this** holy **guy named** Pat **drove** all the snakes **off the** island some time in the 5th century. **As a result**, every year **the Irish** celebrate the day **that** Saint Patrick **performed** that **miracle**. But do not **make the mistake of** thinking the holiday is **some kind of** religious **event**. No, it is a holiday **more like** Mardi Gras. In some **larger** cities **they** have big parades and **everyone** drinks **lots of** beer. Green beer.

There is one college town that is **famous for doing a great job of** its St. Pat's day celebration. It is **this** engineering university in Rolla, Missouri. People come **from all over the country** to **see the students party**, but **the truth is** that the celebrations aren't **as good as they used to be because of** some problems they had. I **happened to be** there **the year** they had **those** problems, so let me **tell you what happened**.

On the **very** first day of the festival all the students go out and paint **a bunch of** the streets green. **No kidding**, they **literally** paint **whole** streets green. It is the **route** of the parade, **I guess**. The town **used to** let the students do **whatever** they wanted during St. Pat's but they **don't anymore**.

There are these **huge dormitories** and they have **giant** parties **all week** and students **from all over** come to Rolla. The hotels **get filled up** and the town is **kind of like** Mardi Gras for a few days, but not **as** big. **Still**, it **gets pretty** crazy **with** all those students drinking endless **amounts** of green beer.

Then they have the **contests** I should tell you **about**. Groups of students **compete with each other**. **Like** they have these contests where the groups **all** try to drink **the most** beer **within** a certain **amount** of time. Or they have one contest **where each** person tries to drink a mug of beer **as fast as they can**.

Some of those guys are **amazing**, they drink the beer as fast as it **pours down** their throats. And **without spilling any** because that's **part** of the rules – you **can't** spill beer **all over the place while** you're drinking it. If you **do** and you **get caught**, **everyone is allowed to** pour green beer **all over** you. **Actually**, they **aren't** but **wouldn't** it be cool if they **were**?

There is one contest I would pay **large amounts of** money **to see**: the **puke for distance** contest. **Now**, I would never **take part in** this **myself**, and I **agree** that it is a **disgusting** contest, but I **simply** can't stop **laughing** when I watch it. **What happens is** that these guys **take turns** drinking a beer, then they **stick** their fingers **down** their throats and puke **as far as they can**. They have to stay behind this white line **when puking or** they are disqualified. A referee with a measuring tape **actually** measures **each** contestant's **effort**. **Some** job, huh?

I was **amazed at** this one big fat guy who **reminded me of** a pig, and who seemed **proud of looking** like **one**. **Anyway**, this guy slammed a beer and puked **twice as far as** the **second place guy**. He had style, **too, kind of like** a discus thrower. He drank the beer, **leaned forward** with his big feet just **barely** behind the line, made this terrible sound **as** he puked, **like** an elephant, and the green stuff **shot** about twenty-five feet. The crowd **roared**.

All of the contestants get two chances, and **the second time** the pig guy **did even** better. He won **at** twenty-eight feet and seven inches. The announcer said the guy **had beaten** the **all time record by about** two and a half feet. The crowd **went wild**; the pig guy slammed a beer and puked **all over** the crowd and a **riot broke out**. Everybody was throwing beer **on each other** and fighting, it was terrible. I had green beer **all over me**.

But that wasn't **the problem I mentioned** before. The main problem that year was that **a couple of** students **apparently** died **of** alcohol poisoning and the university was criticized **for allowing** such contests to **take place**. The newspapers **mentioned** the **puke for distance riot** and **some** other bad **incidents**, so the university and the town **cracked down on** the festival. They even **banned** the puke for distance contest. That **made me sad**.

The next year the festival was not **as fun**, there were **too many police** and too many new **regulations**. I never went again **after that**. **Still**, you should **go see** a St Pat's day festival **if there is one** near you, because you would **definitely** enjoy it.