

Vince Conover...a Character Study....or the Study of a Character

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Vince Conover came to Knox Street during the rent up. He was an original, a one of a kind.. about 5 foot 8, early 40's, black, well-coiffed, with an easy going style and a big smile. He lived with Charles Thomas, sharing a one bedroom flat, as they were both gay men, though Vince was not the sort of gay you knew just by looking or talking to him.

Vince always was working an angle... there was barely a month that went by when he wouldn't stop into my office with some item that must of "fallen off a truck". One month it would be sneakers, "steve, I got these really nice Nikes", showing me the latest Michael Jordan model. "Not your size, let me see what I can do". I never bought any of his wares, tempting as it was, but he kept offering, and over the months I saw clothing, steak knives, electronics, and assorted items too numerous to mention.

Then one day Vince stopped with his cousin's high school diploma. Vince was offered a job as an apprentice painter for a local construction company, but in order to be in the union, as it was a union shop, he needed a diploma...and Vince didn't graduate from high school. The dilemma of the diploma...I remember the name on the diploma was Rashon Conover, and Vince asked if I could match the type, do a little cutting and pasting, thus providing him the needed document for the job. An ethical dilemma for me, but thinking about it, hell, he wasn't applying to be a cardiovascular surgeon, it was for an apprentice painter, and I wanted to help the tenants get jobs. So, I went to work, matched fonts, did a snipping here and there, and proudly awarded Vince a high school diploma. Probably should have framed it for him. Any way, he got the job, lasted about 2 months, and was fired, for what, I didn't know.

One of the local's, Maggie Mitchel, came into my office one cold winter day, and said Vince was working as a butchers apprentice at the local Price Chopper. And for his friends, he was giving a "discount". She had bought some steaks, which Vince had coded on the butchers scale as hamburger, thus saving her a shitload of cash. And according to Maggie, he was doing this for all his friends. Maggie strongly urged I go to the market and take advantage of Vince's largess, though I never did. I guess my ethical standards, although frequently compromised in that job, prevented me from taking advantage of the latest angle. Anyway, Vince didn't last long there, as he was fired from that job after about a month.

In fact, during the years I was employed by Knox Street, I would guess Vince had easily a dozen different jobs, of which the longest lasted about 3 months. I remember one day he came into the office and asked if would help him write a resume. Oy. But given my compromised ethics, I put it together for him. It could have won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. The only truth was his name and address. But it helped him get a pile of jobs... all short term, but hell, at least he was working.

Perhaps the coup-de- gra, the piece de resistance, was the day Vince burst into my office in a shiny, sparkling, iridescent purple suit, complete with yellow vest and matching flowered tie. My first thoughts was he must have joined the circus, perhaps as the ringmaster, maybe a clown, but

not being too much of a fool, I let him speak first. Besides, he was so excited, with that big wide grin on his face. "Steve, Steve, I got married. Just today, and I made 500 bucks" "Holy shit, Vince, tell me about it, I had no idea you were even dating. What's her name"? Vince took a step back.. " I'm not sure" I paused. Took a breath, and asked "will she moving into your apartment? . No, Vince slowly shook his head, Charles wouldn't like it, and besides, I'll probably never see her again". You know where this is going....Ying Wah, Zing Chan, or whatever she may be named, married him, so to speak, mistakenly, for citizenship purposes, and for Vince, it was an easy \$500. But I would've loved to have been an invited guest to that wedding.

Since I left Knox St, I've only heard from a former colleague about Vince's whereabouts. She calls him Vince Coniver, an aptly suited name, and he continues to work the con and the angle....and always with a beaming smile.