

LAST CALL



Going to the John? The iconic statue has stoically born the brunt of a golden-shower tradition at a certain ivy league university.

Wicked Pissah in Hahvahd Yahd

By Gabi Gage

As a native Somervillian, and token townie freshman at Harvard, the idea of peeing on the famous John Harvard statue seemed a natural fit for me – an act of spirited resistance for my people and the most inviting of the three tasks that Harvard students must allegedly complete prior to graduation.

But by the time graduation rolled around, it felt more like a bizarre undertaking, one I had neglected in my more spirited days. As I weighed the pros and cons, a variety of troublesome thoughts emerged. Where are the cops? Was that a camera flash? Gee, John looks quite comfortable sitting in repose, book in hand... perhaps a little too comfortable, immediately followed by the age-old question I never imagined myself uttering on the eve of my graduation from Harvard: Am I about to pee on a statue of a man defecating?

In a few months, Harvard's class of 2013 will celebrate their final night as undergraduates. As they eagerly await the commencement festivities – the monocled man on the white steed, the top hats, the Harry Potter robes and centuries worth of pomp and circumstance – many of them will embark on this same task.

With destiny and liquid courage on their side, they will sneak quietly into the esteemed Harvard Yard. They will hoist themselves upon the statue of their beloved school icon, John Harvard, with the aid of obliging compatriots.

In this final moment of serenity and reflection, these young men and women will release on fair Harvard all they have to offer on this eve of eves – a golden shower of their finest 3 a.m. urine. Now, they are ready to graduate.

For generations, the John Harvard statue has stoically born the brunt of Harvard tradition. Juxtaposed with unsuspecting tourists completing their own ceremonial task – rubbing John Harvard's toe for good luck – the urination tradition might seem a cruel joke. Yet for many Harvardians, it serves as the easiest of the three quests to complete prior to graduation, which include the naked run known as primal scream and "getting busy" in the stacks of Widener Library.

Deemed the "statue of three lies" by generations of nameless tour guides, the statue credits John Harvard as the university's founder in 1638, when in fact Harvard was founded in 1636 by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Finally, it does not actually depict Mr. Harvard, but a puritanical-posing student who sat for sculptor, Daniel Chester French.

The golden shower tradition is one in a long line of abuses and pranks fair John has been subjected to over the years, including

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various adventures with "body painting," decorative reimagining and my personal favorite – the MIT prank which seamlessly transformed John into the Master Chief character from the video game Halo.

The sensible modern individual might pose the question, "Why pee on what appears to be your school's mascot?"

Whether it's due to social pressure to subscribe to secret society traditions, a favoring of antiquated aesthetics "I like to pee on old things," an act of rebellion against Ivy League patriarchy, irony, or purely motivated by bodily function, depends on the student.

For the faint of heart, perhaps a new tradition is in order. Imagine students and tourists alike visiting JFK's old dorm room to rub his lucky paperweight. As it turns out, this "paperweight" is actually a urinal cake preserved only by the fortitude and natural charisma of JFK's own excreta. Yes, the ceremonial rubbing of the ceremonial urinal cake seems just right. Or perhaps a naked match of cricket using Teddy Roosevelt's favorite kidney stone (he seems the type) is all the more fortuitous?

For now, students will continue to urinate and tourists will continue to rub, whilst Fair John Harvard dreams of a day when Harvard ingenuity will raise another iconic crimson man or woman to take his place on the throne. ☺