

# Owego native mines comedy gold in California

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Have you heard the one about the teacher's son from Owego who ended up being a stand-up comedian?

It's a story with a lot of punch lines — but it's no joke.

Paul C. Morrissey's stock-in-trade is observational humor that's witty and sarcastic, and he's laughing all the way to top billing at comedy clubs in California and around the nation. Recently he released his first CD, *Good Seats Still Available*, which was recorded during a 2004 tour.

People who knew him as a teen are sometimes surprised when they find out he's now doing stand-up comedy, Morrissey said.

"I was always the guy who liked to bust chops with people I knew really well," he said. "But since my dad was a teacher, everyone always says, 'He was so quiet.'"

Morrissey traveled a roundabout route from high school to the stage after his 1991 graduation from Owego Free Academy. He played as a starter on four college basketball teams (Hartwick College, Broome Community College, Binghamton University and SUC-Cortland) and earned degrees in literature and rhetoric as well as communications.

His dream of being a sports journalist led him to California, where he worked at a television station in Chico.

Along with reporting on high school

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To check out some of Paul C. Morrissey's comedy or to purchase his CD, *Good Seats Still Available*, go to [www.paulhasawebsite.com](http://www.paulhasawebsite.com).

football games and other local sporting events, Morrissey would often cover community events such as yo-yo festivals, Halloween parades and holiday parties. The news-on-the-edge reports he turned in remind him of what *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* does today — except it was all real.

"Luckily, I had a news director who really liked it, because I didn't make fun of people," he said. "It was making the best of a chili cook-off."

Around the same time, he discovered the world of comedy clubs and soon attended an "open-mic class" taught by comedian Karen Anderson (now a writer on Ellen DeGeneres' talk show). It was there he caught the stand-up bug.

On New Year's Day 2000, Morrissey gave two weeks' notice at his TV job and headed back to Owego. He worked as a substitute teacher at OFA while traveling to comedy clubs in the region. Then, in 2001, he enrolled in a graduate program in New York and spent evenings honing his stand-up act at clubs.

Among his gigs from this time were a Binghamton convention for the moth-



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ers of twins and an opening spot for comedy musician "Weird Al" Yankovic in Big Flats — both of which required him to "go clean" with his jokes.

"I got a pep talk from Weird Al's tour manager that if I said anything offensive, they'd turn the microphone off and I'd get tackled offstage," Morrissey said.

He met his future wife at a comedy show in Albany, and she helped to convince him to move back to California.

Two years later, he's enjoying life in Los Angeles, especially the opportunities there to do writing apart from his stand-up act.

His other projects include one-minute "sports rants" that he's shopping around to radio and TV stations and a pilot script for a sitcom about a small-town TV station.

To mine his "comedy gold," as he likes to call it, Morrissey keeps about 25 notebooks where he'll jot down ideas. Sometimes the ideas even get organized on his laptop.

"The problem is when friends tell you things, and they think you're working out material for your act," he said.

Onstage, Morrissey likes to draw his laughs from everyday life, touching on situations such as finding the perfect woman, watching late-night cable TV or getting a nose-hair trimmer for his birthday. He stays clear of politics, religion and doing impressions but does like to interact with the audience, often with unexpected results.

While *Good Seats Still Available* is R-rated humor, it's not vulgar or merely a string of profanities. It's about wordplay and commenting on life's annoyances in ways that audience members only wish they could.

A big part of Morrissey's philosophy is making sure things stay fresh.

"A lot of people, they get their act, and that's what they do. I like trying out new material all the time," he said. "That's what keeps you honest."

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