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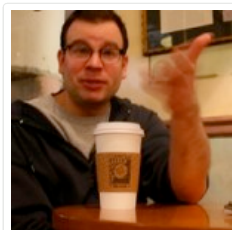
MICHAEL HUMPHREY PAST IMPERFECT

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Remember to be funny: An interview with Adam Wade

Storyteller [Adam Wade](#) wastes no time announcing he's from New Hampshire. It's his way to alert audiences that he's a little different for New York City, despite living here 11 years ... he's nice. That affability has made him a force at the storytelling slams organized by [The Moth](#). He's won 15 times in six years, including two GrandSlams.



Comedian and storyteller Adam Wade

Wade came to New York to be a NBC page, turning that humble start into regular appearances on ESPN Classics and Comedy Central's "Tough Crowd." But his monthly one-man show at [Theatre Under St. Marks](#) is most reminiscent of his Moth appearances. The show is a blend of storytelling and video that not only leaves you laughing, but also makes you think about the power of memory and the emotions it evokes. (Mainly it's funny, just to be clear.) "The Adam Wade From New Hampshire Show: Tales of Life, Love and Little League" continues this Monday at 7 p.m. and runs the second Monday of each month throughout 2010.

Why do so many people tell boring stories?

Mainly people take too long. There's only so much time an audience will give you, no matter who or how famous you are. I've seen some famous people at The Moth go on and on and people zoned out. (*He wouldn't go on the record about who they were.*)

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ABOUT ME

About 10 years ago, this lady in her 80s told me a childhood story about the day her mom tied her to a post on the porch. It was punishment for riding her tricycle past the curb at the end of their block. In the middle of the story she said to me, 'Wait, mom didn't tie me to the porch, she tied the tricycle to the porch. I just remembered that.' I've been fascinated by memory ever since.

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To make a living during those 10 years, I wrote about religion, politics and people for The Kansas City Star and National Catholic Reporter. I also delved deep into memory by teaching over 2,000 retired Midwesterners how to write their life stories. Now I am putting those two things together -- I'm reporting on memory from science, social and personal perspectives. I am also earning my

Is it the experience itself or the delivery that makes a good story?

Finding those little details is what makes it work. It's the ultimate compliment when someone says, 'I remember when you told that story about the girl rubbing up against your leg and you said, "You remind me of my dog Brownie." And she got mad and you said, "Brownie got hit by a peanut butter truck, that still haunts me."'"

How did you get involved in the Moth?

One of my jobs was a production assistant at Colin Quinn's show on Comedy Central a few years back. One of the guys there said, 'You're a great storyteller, you should try the Moth.' It took me about a year, but I finally went. And within a year I won my first slam.

The Moth's reputation has expanded well past New York City now. Does that bode well for your career?

A few years ago I was talking to this casting agent for a show and I mentioned the Moth. You think she would have a pulse on what's going on in New York. When I walked in a few weeks later and said hello to her, she said, 'Good luck with the Mole.' Very humbling. Then I went back to driving a truck for the show.

Hopefully she knows about it now.

I should look her up.

You missed your college graduation to come to New York and start applying for the NBC page program. Did it help?

My dad, who's a principal at a school, said, 'If you do this, you need a jump on the competition.' Sometimes I think it would've been nice to go to graduation, but while they listened to some speech about the future, I was on a bus headed for New York.

What do you think about Kenneth, the NBC Page on '30 Rock?

I feel a personal connection with the Kenneth character, a bit naive and gullible, but goodhearted, loyal and struggling upward, hopefully.

That innocence seems to be the secret of your success at the Moth. Are you acting naive or is that genuine?

I'm pretty much myself up there, amplified a little bit. But it works because people respond to showing your vulnerabilities. We don't want stories about perfect people. My life's not a Penthouse forum. 'I built this bed with my roommate who's a model and then we had sex.' It's not like that.

So talking about living in a basement in Hoboken is one way to show you're life's not perfect.

I liked to call it a garden apartment sometimes, yeah. I don't live in a basement apartment anymore. As of two years ago, I'm above ground.

Are the stories you tell completely true?

I would say they're 90 percent true, there's some condensing, but most of it is

MA in Journalism at NYU.

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On memory champions



THE NEW YORKER



true. I have points I want to hit, but as I'm telling a story details will come out, details that give the story its character.

Do you worry about running out of ideas?

Not really, because you keep living life. Sometimes, a day or two before a show, something just pops in my head. There's a story I did about Peaches, my cat, who my parents always said was in love with me. She decapitated mice and brought them to the door and they used to say that was how she showed her love. I thought about that two days before a show and I ended up winning with that.

Other than the cat murdering for you, did you have a happy childhood in New Hampshire?

I'm very close with my parents. I never went through a rebellious stage. So when I said I wanted to go to New York, they thought I needed to get something out of my system. But there was nothing in my system. I just had an idea for what I wanted my life to be and that was here.

You wear a shirt on stage that simply says, 'Wade.' Why?

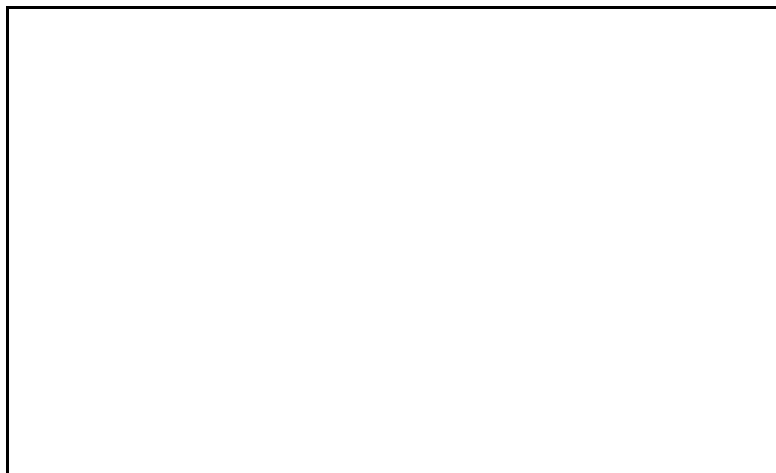
My grandma had the idea. She said, 'You have to let them know who you are.' A friend said he saw one in Central Park one day.

Other people have 'Wade' t-shirts?

When I was a page I was wearing my shirt and a stagehand said, 'I want a Wade shirt.' I just ironed four letters on a gray t-shirt. He paid me ten bucks, I made it for eight and had two bucks left over.

How many shirts are out there?

I would say over 200 by now. My parents came to New York a few years ago and, on a tour of NBC, they saw four people wearing 'Wade' t-shirts. They thought I was a big deal.



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