[EZ Speech Writers No. 14945]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Practice talk by Frank Schuck before the [name of club].

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

GOOD [MORNING/AFTERNOON/EVENING] LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . .

I’D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU THIS [MORNING/AFTERNOON/ EVENING] ABOUT “TELLING THE TRUTH THROUGH HUMOR.”

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, WRITERS AND PHILOSOPHERS AND TV TALK-SHOW HOSTS AND THE LIKE, HAVE BEEN TELLING THE TRUTH THROUGH THE USE OF HUMOR, GETTING THEIR AUDIENCES BOTH TO LAUGH AND THINK AT THE SAME TIME. LIKE WHEN MARK TWAIN OBSERVED THAT “A RUMOR CAN MAKE ITS WAY HALFWAY ROUND THE WORLD WHILE THE TRUTH IS STILL PUTTING ITS BOOTS ON.” OR WHEN HE OBSERVED THAT “MAN IS THE ONLY ANIMAL THAT BLUSHES — OR WHO NEEDS TO.”

I’D LIKE TO SHARE THREE OF MY OWN FAVORITE TRUTH-THROUGH-HUMOR STORIES WITH YOU [THIS MORNING/AFTERNOON/EVENING], ONE FROM THE WORLD OF BASEBALL — MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE SPORT; ONE FROM THE WORLD OF COOKING; AND FINALLY A WONDERFUL STORY FROM THE WORLD OF THE OPERA.

NOW, AS I LOOK AROUND THE ROOM HERE, I’M PRETTY SURE THAT NONE OF YOU HAS EVER HEARD OF A BASEBALL PLAYER — A CATCHER — BY THE NAME OF MORRIS (“MOE”) BERG, WHO PLAYED 15 YEARS IN THE MAJOR LEAGUES DURING THE NINETEEN-TWENTIES AND ‘THIRTIES. BERG WAS AN OKAY CATCHER WHO SOMEHOW MANAGED TO REMAIN IN THE MAJORS FOR A DECADE AND A HALF. HIS LIFETIME BATTING AVERAGE WAS A SEMI-RESPECTABLE .243, AND HE PLAYED FOR FOUR MAJOR LEAGUE TEAMS — THE WHITE SOX, INDIANS, SENATORS, AND BOSTON RED SOX.

ANYWAY, IT WAS CASEY STENGEL, THE FAMOUS MANAGER OF THE NEW YORK METS AND YANKEES, WHO ONCE SAID OF MOE BERG THAT “HE IS THE STRANGEST MAN WHO EVER PLAYED THE GAME OF BASEBALL.”

NOW, STENGEL DIDN’T SAY THIS BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT MOE BERG WAS JEWISH, ALTHOUGH THAT IN ITSELF WAS QUITE A RARITY IN THOSE DAYS. NO . . . THE REASON STENGEL THOUGHT BERG SUCH STRANGE DUCK WAS THAT MOE BERG WAS A GRADUATE OF BOTH PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ***AND*** THE COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL — AND BACK THEN, YOU COULD PROBABLY COUNT ON THE FINGERS OF ONE HAND THE NUMBER OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYERS WHO HELD EVEN *ONE* COLLEGE DEGREE, LET ALONE TWO!

HE ALSO READ 10 OR 11 NEWSPAPERS EVERY DAY.

HE ALSO SPOKE SEVEN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, INCLUDING GREEK, FRENCH, AND JAPANESE.

HE WAS ALSO ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR PANELISTS ON A FAMOUS RADIO SHOW BACK THEN CALLED “*INFORMATION* *PLEASE*.”

BUT PERHAPS STRANGER THAN ALL OF THIS FOR A MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYER: MOE BERG WAS A SPY FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT RIGHT BEFORE WORLD WAR TWO!

DURING A GOODWILL TOUR OF AMERICAN BASEBALL ALL-STARS TO JAPAN IN 1934, BERG STAYED BEHIND WHEN HIS TEAMMATES LEFT, AND SECRETLY BEGAN FILMING DIFFERENT SITES AND FACILITIES ALL AROUND JAPAN. HE TURNED HIS “SIGHT-SEEING” FILMS OVER TO THE O.S.S. — THE PREDECESSOR OF THE CIA — TO SEE IF HIS FOOTAGE DISCLOSED ANY USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT JAPAN’S GROWING PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.

WELL ANYWAY, IT WAS DURING HIS LAST STINT WITH BOSTON IN THE LATE ‘THIRTIES WHEN ONE OF HIS RED SOX TEAMMATES TOLD THE GUY SITTING NEXT TO HIM ON THE BENCH — AFTER WATCHING BERG STRIKE OUT FOR THE THIRD TIME IN THE GAME: “BY GOD, MOE BERG CAN SPEAK SEVEN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, BUT HE CAN’T HIT IN ANY OF ‘EM!”

THAT’S TELLING IT LIKE IT IS!

I ALSO LOVE THE STORY OF THE LITTLE girl WHO was watching her mother make a BEEF roast ONE DAY. She cutS off the ends, wrapS THE ROAST WITH string, seasonS it, THEN setS it in A roasting dish BEFORE PLACING IT IN THE OVEN. THE LITTLE GIRL politely askS her mum why she cut off the ends of the roast. AFTER SEVERAL MINUTES OF REFLECTION, HER Mum replieS, “WELL, that’S the way that YOUR GRANDMOTHER ALWAYS DID it.”

That night grandma cOmeS OVER FOR dinner and BOTH THE LITTLE GIRL and her mother ask GRANDMA WHY she ALWAYS cutS the end off of the BEEF roast before cooking IT.  grandma THINKS FOR A BIT, THEN replieS, “WELL, THAT’S THE WAY MY MOTHER ALWAYS DID IT.”

Now, *great*-grandma IS quite old and liveS in a residential nursing home, so THE LITTLE GIRL, her mum and grandma GO OVER to visit her and THEY ask ***HER*** The same question, DESPERATE TO LEARN THE SECRET BEHIND THE OLD FAMILY TRADITION OF COOKING ROAST BEEF. Great-grandma lookS at them a bit surprised, and WITHOUT HESITATING AT ALL said, “WELL, I CUT THE END OFF So it’LL fit in the PAN, of course!”

THAT’S TELLING IT LIKE IT WAS, IS, AND APPARENTLY ALWAYS *WILL BE* RIGHT!

FINALLY, I WANT TO TELL YOU A LITTLE STORY ABOUT SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, WHO WAS A VERY FAMOUS ENGLISH CONDUCTOR AND THEATRICAL IMPRESARIO BACK IN THE LATE EIGHTEEN HUNDREDS AND EARLY NINETEEN HUNDREDS. AND I WON’T ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEE YOU THAT IT’S ONE HUNDRED PERCENT TRUE, THOUGH SOME VERSION OF IT EVENTUALLY SHOWED UP IN THE PRESS.

ONE DAY, HE WAS CONDUCTING REHEARSALS FOR A MAJOR PRODUCTION OF VERDI’S OPERA, *AIDA*, AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IN COVENT GARDEN, IN LONDON. AND I MEAN IT WAS A ***MAJOR*** PRODUCTION — CAST OF A HUNDRED, HUGE STAGE SETS AND PROPS, FABULOUS COSTUMES, AND — TO TOP IT ALL OFF — A LIVE ELEPHANT THAT WAS TO APPEAR IN THE OPERA’S FAMOUS TRIUMPHAL MARCH SCENE [SUGGEST YOU LEARN IT AND HUM A FEW BARS HERE].

WELL, JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT CAN POSSIBLY GO WRONG AT THAT REHEARSAL GOES WRONG. PIECES OF THE SET KEEP FALLING DOWN OR FALLING APART. SCRIMS START FLYING UP AND DOWN FOR NO APPARENT REASON. SEVERAL SPOTLIGHTS BLOW OUT. THE SINGERS ARE CONSTANTLY MISSING THEIR CUES. THE ORCHESTRA SOUNDS LIKE THEY’D ALL JUST ROLLED OUT OF BED 10 MINUTES AGO. A NUMBER OF EXTRAS KEEP RUNNING INTO EACH OTHER ON STAGE. AND TO TOP IT ALL OF: THE ELEPHANT, WHO’S JUST BEEN LED ONTO THE STAGE BY ITS HANDLER, DECIDES THAT THIS WAS PRECISELY THE RIGHT MOMENT FOR HIM TO TAKE A HUGE, GIGANTIC — ONE MIGHT SAY ELEPHANTINE — POOP RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STAGE!

AT THIS POINT, BEECHAM CALMLY PUTS DOWN HIS BATON, WALKS UP TO THE THE ELEPHANT, LOOKS HIM IN THE EYE, AND EXCLAIMS: “*TERRIBLE* MANNERS . . . BUT AHHH, WHAT A CRITIC!”

THAT, SIR BEECHAM, IS TELLING IT LIKE IT IS!

IN CLOSING, I’D LIKE TO REMIND EVERYONE OF ONE OF THE KEENEST OBSERVATIONS THAT FRANCIS BACON EVER MADE: *“Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humor to console him for what he is.”*

THANK YOU.

**# # #**