

Tryon Daily Bulletin, Thurs., Apr. 16, 1992

How Can He Get Away From 'Serious' Writing

by John Bergman

You have to understand that for nearly 30 years I did some pretty serious business writing.

In one shareholder report, it fell to me to explain why the company's accounting system was being changed from LIFO (last-in-first-out) to FIFO (first-in-first-out), or maybe it was the other way around, in language so clear that Aunt Bessie wouldn't raise the question at the Annual Meeting. I wrote the copy, but don't ask me to explain it.

Another time, I didn't get to bed at all that night as I put the finishing touches to the business plan presentation that was to kick off a two day meeting the next morning. I dozed off along about chart 35.

In another part of my job, I sometimes wrote speeches for other people on subjects ranging from the binary relationships of infrared spectroscopy to the purchasing manager's thoughts as to how the costs of raw materials would interact with next year's consumer spending trends.

And you think you had problems.

Then one agonizing afternoon, when I was at the very height of my creative writing prowess, I spent two laborious hours haggling over the words in a press release with my company president. What survived that interesting session was three short paragraphs of absolutely meaningless copy.

Then I retired, knowing, blessedly, that in my new life I would never again have to do any serious writing on impossibly tight deadlines. But what I

didn't take into consideration were the stern demands of civilian life:

"I am editor of the neighborhood association newsletter and it has to be mailed TODAY," my wife tells me, tossing a tattered envelope of scribbled notes my way.

At first thought the task seems beyond me, but then I dug down deep inside, hoping that my life's experiences would somehow enable me to cope with this latest crisis. And it did, we made our deadline and those lucky newsletter readers read all about their new tennis court regulations, next month's work day, and the children's cookie party. Mighty serious stuff I was dealing with.

Then, I was given my next assignment. In not more than two hours, I was told to have at church a crucial item for the bulletin that, at that very moment, was going to press.

How did I do it? It was a miracle at work.

Next, I was summoned before my management and ordered to write a skit that was to go into rehearsal in two days. Again, the task seemed impossible, but I took it on:

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Many of our northern friends are disappointed in life as they find it in this part of heaven.

NORTHERNER: It is OK here, but back home, the shopping, restaurants, and fishing are all better, the... (interrupt)

SOUTHERNER: Well, we sure would hate to see you all leave, but why don't you just go back to where you came from?

NORTHERNER: Are you kidding, I HATED it there... Anyone like to buy a used snow shovel?

Alright, so it's not Neil

Simon, but he doesn't have my deadlines.

I have never known such pressures, and will they never end?

"Here are the minutes of last month's meeting and they don't have to be mailed until THIS AFTERNOON," she, you can

guess who, smiles sweetly as she hands me some more of her scribbles that I am instructed to translate into cogently reported, beautifully typed copy.

At least at work I could close my door and curse the management.

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