

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and

By Art Buchwald

There is so much bad news in the papers lately that when a bit of good news happens, we'll all grab it like a bobbing life preserver.

Last week the news that seemed to warm everyone's heart was that CBS News had been conned out of \$10,000 by a man who claimed to know where Jimmy Hoffa was (in a cement coffin 20 feet below the surface of the water off Key West, Fla.).

CBS could have survived the financial loss without much difficulty, except that The New York Times got hold of the story and gave a detailed account as to how the

network was taken. This embarrassed CBS no end because until then they hadn't considered the fact that being euchred out of \$10,000 by a con man was a newsworthy event.

That evening after the network belatedly admitted it had been taken for

Capitol Punishment

a ride (to Key West of all places), a group of us were discussing why it gave us so much pleasure to read and hear about CBS's misfortune.

Each person in the room had his own idea as to what really happened. This

was mine.

Mike Wallace, Morley Safer and Dan Mather of the "60 Minutes" show all are dressed up in skin diving suits ready to go over the side of the "33 Tipster" which CBS has chartered to locate the most sought after missing person in America.

Pacing the deck nervously are Don Hewitt, the producer of the show and Richard Salant, President of CBS News.

Salant speaks to them. "Gentlemen, today you are going to make history. Through the miracle of electronic journalism we are going to raise Jimmy Hoffa from the depths of the waters off Key West. I have a map here which I bought from an old Cuban sailor in a bar,

You Are There On the Scene

which shows the exact location of Hoffa's cement coffin. The sailor swore to me that the map has been in his family for six generations. He sold it to me for \$10,000, which as you know is a steal. We are anchored in the exact spot where the cross on the map is. Good luck and God Speed."

Wallace, Safer and Rather are lowered into the water with a cameraman. Hewitt is manning the telephone. In 10 minutes Wallace announces he's on the bottom. "Do you see the coffin?" Hewitt yells.

"No," says Wallace. "There's nothing down here but an old Spanish galleon loaded with gold coins and ingots of silver."

"Damn, we'll move a little north," Hewitt says. "Rather, do you see anything?"

"There's something here that looks like a coffin, but it's metal, not cement. I'll open it."

"Is it Hoffa?" Hewitt asks excitedly.

"No, it's just a bunch of old Aztec masks and Inca statues covered with diamonds, emeralds and pearls. Should I bring them up?"

"Of course not. We have to find Hoffa... Safer, where are you?" Hewitt is shouting.

"I'm about 30 feet from what looks like the treasure room of some sort of a pirate ship."

"Do you see any cement coffin?"

"Wait, I'm standing on one."

Salant grabs the telephone. "Is it Hoffa?"

"There's some writing on the coffin, I think I can make it out. It says 'Judge Crater slept here.'"

"That does it," says Salant in disgust. "We were taken by a dirty old con man. Everybody come up."

Hewitt cries, "How could someone do this to CBS? We'll be the laughing stock of show business. What are we going to do for our show next Sunday?"

Salant says sheepishly. "Why don't we re-run the Haldeman interview?"

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