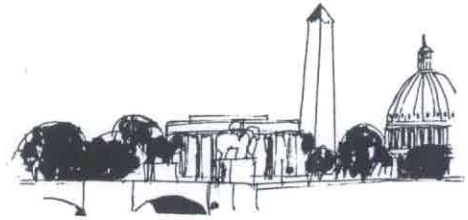


Capital Comment



A Visit with Jack Ruby

Ukie Sherin, a comedian who frequently appears at the Shoreham, was a close friend of Jack Ruby's and visited him, in fact, in jail. He's also a friend of Morrie Siegel, the sportswriter, so we asked Morrie to take down what Sherin said, next time they talked. Here's what he said:

I knew Jack Ruby about—I imagine around ten years—and I got to know him a little better breaking in a club right across the street from Jack Ruby's. In between shows I'd come over to Ruby's club sometimes to help him out when his MC was sick. As a matter of fact, he offered me a job quite a few times, but I didn't want to go backwards to working back in burlesque again. He was a very avid Kennedy fan. He kept saying to me, Kennedy is even bigger than Roosevelt.

I don't know whether you knew this or not, but Dallas was really anti-Kennedy and anti-Johnson. They felt that Johnson had double-crossed them by going for the Vice Presidency. He was supposed to oppose Kennedy all the way and run for President, and then on the second ballot suddenly he decided to run for Vice President. So any joke anti-Johnson became a very big popular thing in Dallas.

But getting back to Ruby, who was still a big Kennedy man, in the club one night somebody was saying something anti-Kennedy and they threw him out bodily.

But the joke I used to do, which got me in a lot of difficulty, was about Lyndon Johnson. I said, you know, I said, "If you notice that Kennedy is arriving here next week into town to make a few speeches, you'll take note that there'll be no bodyguards, there'll be no secret-service men. He can come to Texas without worrying about a thing. Because the people in Texas are smart. Nobody's going to shoot him, because if you shoot him, Lyndon Johnson becomes President." And this became a big thing. I used to get almost a standing ovation—that's how much they hated Johnson. So naturally, after this thing had happened, I don't think it was a half-hour after the thing had happened, maybe an hour, sometime in the afternoon, anyway, they found me—first time I was in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and questioned me about the joke that I was doing.

Who's they?

This is the FBI. They said we'd like to know did you make this joke up, or did somebody give you the joke, or what made you—? And I told them that the joke had been used from Lincoln. Even with Eisenhower. It was the same joke that you keep switching. I explained that to them, but they still wanted to check out every little detail.

They asked me for about two hours questions about Jack Ruby. Is he a Communist? And what sort of a guy is he? I said he was a loner, and I even gave them my version of what I really think happened.

What is it?

Well, I mean I felt that Jack Ruby just wanted a little publicity. I don't think the guy wanted to shoot him—I mean kill him. I saw Jack with the hand up in the air and all that bit and I thought it was another one of his stunts.

He always wanted to do nice things, always wanted to get publicity. He called me many times to say, you know, "How can I get in the newspaper?" You know, get a little thing—how can I do something nice. If you saw him with five or six people, you knew he was picking up the tab. He said, "Do you think if I made a big stink about those . . . impeach Earl Warren things, would

that get me any publicity?"

He was very kind to the police—he ran out of his way to get them sandwiches and things and invite them up to the club. He was not a—what do you call them?—a hustler for the broads, a solicitor.

What were the circumstances which prompted your visit to Ruby in the Dallas jail?

Well, I was playing in Palm Springs and I got a call from one of his lawyers who told me Jack had been asking about me because we had known each other for a long time. He said Jack kept saying that Yuke knows me and would believe me when I say I didn't do the thing on purpose.

So I did go back. It was during the Texas-Oklahoma weekend, back in October 1964. On my second night the sheriff came in and he said, "Hi, nice to have you back, and incidentally, Jack Ruby would like to see you." And I was flabbergasted because I didn't think he had any visitors. I had written to him quite a few times, but never got any answer. The sheriff said, "You can see him, but you can't bring your wife—no newspapermen, but you can see him. You'll have to talk to him through iron bars, but he asked for you. As a matter of fact, he said you're the only guy in



"I guarantee you they'll never write a book called 'The Wit of El Presidente!'"

town that can make him smile and he hasn't smiled in a year."

And so I went up and visited with him, and it did make him smile. It was a sick kind of a smile, because you know me, Morrie, anything to get a smile. So I said to him, "Jack, you remember a year ago—you used to call me and say get me a plug in the paper? You don't need me anymore, you got all the publicity you want."

And he smiled, but he didn't seem to want to smile. He kept saying I wish we could turn back the clock and forget the whole incident. And that's what he would say every time I'd get back and say, "Gee, what possessed you to . . ." He would change the subject and say, "It's something that I want to forget—it's a whole big mistake." And sometimes he would laugh and start talking Jewish. Sometimes he spoke so fast that I couldn't understand what he was trying to say.

I can remember him almost whispering and telling me in Yiddish to be careful what I said and who I talked to because they are out to get all Jews. I asked him what they meant by "they" and he said I would find out.

Finally he wound up saying, "What time is it?" And I said it's about four-thirty. In Dallas they really impound your car on Commerce Street if you leave it there between four and six, and he was more concerned about me getting my car than he was about. . . . Here was a guy facing the electric chair, but he was concerned about the police impounding my car. . . .

Carpool Consensus

A carpool which daily makes the commuter run from Maryland to the District has developed what it refers to as the Rosenthal Theory of Increased Government Employee Efficiency. It is named after the member of the pool who originally propounded it, but it has been modified and polished by all members, three of whom are Government employees. We present it here, without editorial comment:

(1) Reduce all federal salaries across the board (including President Johnson's) by 25 percent.

(2) This will cause the 25 percent of federal employees who really work hard and do a good job to quit in disgust because they were already being underpaid to begin with and were staying only because of dedication and loyalty.

(3) The remaining 75 percent are the ones who are just feeding at the public trough and will stay on for any wage as long as they don't have to work or assume responsibility.

(4) Fire that remaining 75 percent who by their actions have marked themselves unfit.

(5) Hire back the 25 percent who quit and give them a 50 percent wage increase.

The results will be a smaller, better paid, and more efficient work force in the Federal Service. It is the feeling of the carpool that should the President be one of those who stays on, he should not be fired because the Vice-President will have quit.



They Should Have Listened

"The graves are filled with the wisdom of afterthought. . . ." So goes an old Italian proverb. However, many people in Italy and elsewhere are still wondering whether the catastrophic floods of last November could possibly have been avoided. The many *ifs* do not replace what has been lost, Cimabue's Christ, the frescoes, the old manuscripts, the properties of so many Florentines. But one more *if* should not pass unnoticed, although it reaches so far back that it might appear presumptuous to try to establish a connection between today's tragedy and yesterday's unheeded genius. And yet, Leonardo da Vinci, this giant of mankind's scientific and artistic evolution, had devised a complete flood control plan for the Arno River valley shortly after 1500. If implemented, the project would have prevented the natural disasters of centuries. Leonardo planned to connect the major cities of Tuscany—Florence, Pisa, and Pistoia—by means of an network of canals which would have made the Arno navigable. They would have provided water during the dry summer months, while a system of dams and locks would have kept the level under the danger point during the winter. Leonardo had gone even one step further: He had visualized full economic exploitation of waterways and dams; in other words, the principle of having the flood control works pay for themselves. He even built a mill, on his father's land near Vinci, to grind herbs. The mill operated until 1905, according to one of the foremost students of Leonardo, Dr. Raymond Stites, Assistant to the Director of Educational Services in Washington's National Gallery of Art. Italy's loss was our gain, though. Dr. Stites told Arthur Morgan, the designer of the TVA flood control and power system, about Leonardo's plans, and some of his innovations are in use today. Unfortunately, the Arno did not benefit.

\$0.00 (Tax Deductible)

We see no reason why we shouldn't believe everything the National Geographic Society tells us. If ever there was a stickler for exact information, the Society is the stickliest.

For example, signs in the Society's im-

pressive Explorers Hall at Sixteenth and M inform everybody that the earth revolves around the sun in 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46½ seconds—that the deepest dive ever made was to 3,028 feet (by Dr. Beebe)—that the highest balloon ascension ever made was to 72,395 feet (U.S. Army)—et cetera.

On a recent stroll through Explorers Hall we were therefore touchingly full of trust as we looked at a sumptuous model of "The Nation's Planetarium." A sign on the model proclaimed that it would be "the world's largest planetarium, built on the banks of the Potomac."

Then suddenly the Society put the touch on us. "Contributions (tax deductible)," the sign continued, "can be sent to The Washington Planetarium and Space Center, c/o the Riggs National Bank."

We were about to reach for our checkbook when we noted a sort of P.S., which read as follows:

"Funds required for construction, \$000,000."

Relieved and elated, we resumed our stroll through Explorers Hall, humming the tune of "Stardust," at peace with ourselves and with our pocketbook. After all—and we had the National Geographic's word for it—we had just contributed the full sum required for construction of the world's largest planetarium.

You don't get to do that every day.

Intelligence

There is a sign beside a pathway in front of the CIA's Langley Headquarters which reads:

SLIPPERY WHEN ICY

"Banned Books"

Do those big, brash, foot-high letters spelling out BANNED BOOKS in the show window of the Discount Book Shop, 1342 Connecticut Avenue, give you a feeling of *déjà vu*? If so, it's not surprising, for the sign was there for a few weeks last August, bugling its provocative come-on, or come-in, message.

The unusual display created quite a stir in the midst of the American Legion Convention in August—and that was exactly what it was intended to do.

This January, the two Bobs who run the shop—Bob Bialek, the owner, and Bob Ball, the manager—decided to do some impartial cold-weather needling of the general public. They gathered together the same carefully selected books they had displayed in August—every one of which had been banned at one time or another—and put them back in their window, along with cards explaining the banishment history of each one.

Unsurprisingly, the books included—and include now on the re-run—*Ulysses*, *God's Little Acre*, *Sanctuary*,