

The Back of My Book

By Dennis Knight

I expect to receive offers from all the big houses in New York for my new book, "I Ate the Coconut", and the one I choose will need a paragraph about me for the back cover. It will be difficult to condense my glowing renaissance in a few lines. I will urge the publisher to praise with moderation, titillating the buyer and causing her to take the volume straightaway to the cash register. (Parenthetically, I'm certain many of my buyers will be women because the glossy cover will feature my alluring Hemingway beard.) To that end, I have drafted a letter to my prospective publisher:

My Dear Mr. Schuster (I just know it will be Schuster):

Thank you again for your enthusiasm in bringing my little tome to press, and I am happy to have selected you and Simon over those big talkers at Random House. I know you are the fellows to get the book on shelves all over the country, and in due course, around the world.

You have asked for some liner notes, and I modestly oblige. First, I have decided not to mention the Medal of Honor. I know it will soon arise, but I desire to sell my book only on its many merits. I am just happy for having saved on that embattled night the lives of so many of our young soldiers, potential book buyers all.

In the same vein, we should not emphasize my career on the dramatic stage. Yes, I brought down the house at the latest Tea Time event, but that was an exclusive audience my adoring public will never be privileged to join. The thrills they need will be delivered in the words of my book. Which makes me wonder, should we be thinking about a trilogy?

Mention if you must my triumph at Carnegie Hall, but please play it down. The reality is I only handled the conducting and the clarinet riffs, and of course I took that long drum solo when poor Krupa got the hiccups.

I don't know if potential readers will care that I dabble in oils, either. Perhaps it will suffice to drop in the words, "Sistine Chapel" and maybe depict a scaffold. For that matter, my Oscar is but a statuette, and that Pulitzer thing is not worth mentioning at all.

Well, Mr. Schuster, I know I am asking you to hold my thunder, but it is but puffery. To summarize the Great Me, I modestly suggest to you the words of my dear friend, Doris Day:

"No actor I ever performed with had such public appeal. He was as masculine as any man I've ever known and as much a little boy as a grown man could be--it was this combination that had such a devastating effect on women. But there was nothing of 'the King' about his personality. Just the opposite. Utter simplicity. Uncomplicated. A man who lived on a simple, down-to-earth scale."

Come to think of it, Schuster, maybe that should go to the front cover, along with the beard.