

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“A Picture’s Worth 750 Words”

It’s 9:45 p.m. I’m imprisoned in the Chicago O’Hare Airport. My column is due and I have a blank computer screen in front of me. I don’t know what I’m going to write about. So, I glance around the airport to see if I can get any ideas.

A stern, but respectful, ticket agent has just informed us that a storm is coming our way bringing quarter-size hail. Now, that’s odd. Hail has always been the size of golf balls. When was hail given monetary value? And who determines this? Is there a system at the National Hail Center where, in conjunction with the Federal Reserve Board, new storms are given a currency exchange rate? Lucky for us the hail isn’t the size of the Susan B. Anthony dollar or there might be a state of emergency. Of course, we could always run to Canada where the dollar-sized hail would be about 30% less damaging. Quarter-size hail is funny but I probably couldn’t write an entire column on it unless someone was able to use it in a vending machine.

Across from me, a woman is stretched over three seats, dead asleep, until someone nearby dropped what sounded like a large box of cymbals, metal pots and kitchen utensils. The poor woman leaps to her feet thinking she has missed her flight. Now *that’s* funny! She shakes the arm of the woman next to her who calms her down by telling her that the flight is delayed due to hailing quarters. The woman, who doesn’t speak much English, has a bewildered look on her face. But seeing that no one else is panicking, she goes back to sleep. I’ll bet she couldn’t sleep so easily if it the hail was the size of golf balls. But that’s for another column. I’m not seeing 750 words out of her unless she starts snoring loudly or drools on another passenger.

Next to sleeping beauty is a man yelling at his computer. Now here’s a piece of work. He looks normal enough but when he talks into the computer, he reminds me of Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*. After watching him through the corner of my eye with my head is turned so it looks like I’m not really looking at him, I figure out that he’s actually using his computer to make phone calls through some sort of wireless connection. It already freaks me out that people walk through airports talking to invisible friends on wireless earpieces. I’m not ready for Stephen King on a laptop. What’s even weirder is that every few minutes, he takes a drink from a Robitussin bottle. I change seats and check him off the possibility list. If I wrote a column about him, I might get run over by a possessed car on my way home from the airport.

Next to me is the best possibility. It’s one of those angry travelers. Every time the ticket agent announces a new delay, he jumps up and says, “Hey! Can it get any worse?”

Then he storms over to argue with her as if his verbal discontent might actually cause the hail to stop falling in mid descent. I could watch people like this all night. This guy lives for conflict. And his face is getting redder and redder by the minute. He looks like he might explode. Just for fun, I wait until he gets back to his seat and then pretend to make a call to my wife. I say, "I just heard they may cancel our flight." He jumps back up, says, "My God, Can it get any worse?" and stomps off to confront the ticket agent again. I know it's cruel, but I'm only hours away from my deadline and need ideas.

I feel like I'm on the verge of something big when the ticket agent announces that our gate has now changed. The angry guy says, "Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse." and rushes off to complain. The sleeping woman wakes up and starts searching for quarters. Her friend guides her to the new gate. And Jack Nicholson marches off carrying his laptop like a lunch tray yelling that yes, he can still hear his caller. I gather my things and head to Gate 23 pondering the situation.

Time is running out and among all these characters in the airport, there doesn't seem to be enough for a column. Or does it?

Until next time, just humor me.

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Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.