

The Incongruity Factor: Random Answers Without Questions

Tom McCormick

(Ed. Note: This is a transcript of an interview Mr. McCormick had with himself. He reports that the interview, on the whole, went smoothly and conformed, in general, to accepted theories of communications.)

T I understand that this is an anniversary of some sort for you?

M Of some sort, yes. I have been with Extension for 17 years, 4 months, and 3 days. As of this time, of course. The anniversary changes daily.

T I suppose that you've seen many changes through the years?

M No.

T Would you explain that?

M No changes. That seems clear enough.

T I mean there must have been changes. New TV shows come on every fall, baseball fires managers, Liz gets married, the president—

M I'm talking about AAACE, our organization.

T I'm glad you brought that up. Do you consider it a professional organization?

M That's my point.

T I beg your pardon?

M At the first AAACE meeting I attended, members were discussing whether they were professionals and whether they were regarded as professionals by others on campus.

T And your reaction?

M I still don't understand the question.

T Which means?

M You must be allergic to clear English. I believe that anyone actually worried about being regarded as a professional should carry his lunch in a briefcase, wrap his trash in the *N.Y. Times*, and leave a birdwatcher's manual on his car seat.

T Very practical suggestions. Do you have any others?

M An empty bicycle rack on the car and a clever bumper sticker or two should do it.

T Do you have any clever sayings you could recommend?

M Bring Back Plastic is my favorite but there are many possibilities. They take time, you know.

T I understand. What other sameness, or lack of change, have you noted?

M The AAACE contests. They've been under review longer than Congressional ethics.

T And you have an opinion?

M Yes.

T Which is?

M We could save space if you'd phrase your question accurately the first time. But to get on with it, I feel that all of us want ribbons, lots of them. We're simply trying to develop a system with larger jackpots. Of course we hate to admit this.

T And you have a solution? I mean, what's your solution?

M All of us should judge our own entries. Then we'll write to the contest chairman and tell her how many ribbons we'll need. The system is very tidy.

T Definitely. But what about the critiques, the learning process, professional growth?

M Someone else in the office would be glad to tell us our faults if we spiked the coffee with truth serum. I'm told that vodka doesn't leave a breath.

- T** Very interesting. I'll pass on your idea to the Standing Committee on Contests. Do you have any more non-suggestions?—I hope you don't mind a little humor.
- M** Humor is fine as long as it doesn't appear in a professional journal; people won't take us seriously. But I do think a new member would be well advised to make a study of reasons for selling publications. That's always in demand.
- T** Don't you mean a study of whether to sell publications?
- M** No.
- T** What do you mean?
- M** You're hurting me. What I mean is reasons for selling publications. No one wants reasons for not selling publications. The money is on the other side of the see-saw.
- T** Any final observations?
- M** Your recorder is about out of tape. But certainly new members should be prepared to speak on ten ways to help the director make his decisions, the unavailability of specialists, media sessions vs. general meetings, and observed differences between the motel and the convention brochure, other things being equal.
- T** Thank you. If you don't mind my saying so, don't you think it's strange that you've been interviewing yourself, even if it does commemorate your 17 year, 4 month, 3 day anniversary? Why didn't you wait for someone else to ask you your opinions?
- M** I thought they'd never ask.