

Bill Becker Roast (by John Siegfried)

While rushing to this event I passed an old friend who asked where I was going in such a hurry. I told him I was going to a roast. He asked if I was the roaster or roastee? I explained that I was supposed to be the roaster. He said “that’s hard work.” I replied: “Not if you knew this guy.”

What can you say about a man who is admired, revered, and loved by everyone? Whose research is respected by all scholars, and whose dignity and ethical standards are beyond reproach. Well, I can start, by saying there is no such man here today.

Last night at one of the receptions, I heard from a confidant that Bill’s afraid nobody will remember him when he’s gone. Well, simply not true, not true, not true. Just quash those fears. Bill, I can think of numerous reasons you’ll be remembered. Unfortunately, it would not be appropriate for me to provide details in the mixed company present today.

Anyway, Bill, don’t worry about what people think of you. After all, they don’t do it very often.

And, when they have a mental lapse, and do think of you Bill, they like to do it from a distance. Bill has been visiting South Australia fairly regularly for about 15 years now--ever since his colleagues started to take up an annual collection to help him buy tickets to more distant destinations for the summer break and his leaves of absence.

I’m sorry to say that not everyone we invited is here today. Because of that, we received a number of congratulatory telegrams for this event—from people congratulating themselves for thinking of an excuse to not be here.

And, I want to take this opportunity to recognize Sue Becker, because behind every successful man is a thoroughly surprised woman.

And, now, for some warm fuzzies from your friends in economics education Bill. Your friends here are like home. Home is the place where you can say anything you like, because nobody listens to you anyway.

Bill has been an editor for the *Journal of Economic Education* since 1981, first as the Associate Editor for Research, and since 1989 as the General Editor. Bill was rejecting papers that didn't cite him sufficiently before some of the people in this room were born! But, at least the younger people here stayed awake after a few drinks at the cocktail receptions last night. Bill, you know you are getting older when happy hour is a nap, and a pillow seems more inviting than a Manhattan on the rocks.

Anticipating his sail into the sunset, Bill has been starting to clean out his office at Indiana University. The bottom left drawer didn't have much in it. Some used stage coach tickets from Bloomington to the AEA meetings in Chicago, a slide rule, and a draft copy of the Social Security Act.

Bill is a remarkable guy, but he is starting to slow down a bit. I don't know how he got to be over the hill without ever getting to the top.

I really like Bill. A lot of people say I have no taste, but, nevertheless, I really like him. Once he called me up to ask me to negotiate a sensitive matter for him because I have more tact. I went home that evening and told my wife about my assignment. I had to take her to the emergency room because she could not stop laughing at the thought that there is someone with less tact than me.

I looked up tact in the dictionary. It says it is the ability to close your mouth before someone else wants to.

Actually, Bill once told me he wishes his mouth had a backspace key.

In anticipation that many of today's speakers would describe Bill's accomplishments, I have arranged with the ASSA convention manager to ask several medics to standby, just in case, since one of the recently discovered symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's accomplishments are terribly important.

In my view, Bill's foremost achievement has been to publish research about economic education in a wide array of general interest journals—the *Journal of Human Resources*, the *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Economic Inquiry*, the *Southern Economic Journal*, the *Journal of Economic Literature*, the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Australia's leading journal, the *Economic Record*, the *Eastern Economic Journal*, *Economics of Education Review*, and the *American Economic Review*—twice. In recognition of this work, as well as that which he has published in more traditional outlets for economic education research, Bill was awarded the Henry Villard Research Award for outstanding research contributions to economics education by the Council on Economic Education in 1987, and in 2003 the Bower Award for contributions to economic education that have been exemplary. These are richly deserved awards for someone who has made enormous contributions to the standards and rigor of economics education research.