

PROFESSOR PEDANTO ON "SHOWBOAT"

A Radio/Stage Play

By

Eric Coble

PEDANTO ON "SHOWBOAT"

RUDMAN

AND NOW, IT'S MY PLEASURE TO RE-INTRODUCE A FAMILIAR FACE ON OUR PROGRAM. YOU MAY REMEMBER HIS ASTOUNDING ANALYSIS A FEW YEARS AGO OF THE FREUDIAN SLIPS IN "OKLAHOMA" AND WHAT HE CLAIMED WAS PROPAGANDA FOR THE UNITED NATIONS IN "THE SOUND OF MUSIC" - WELL, HE'S BACK WITH A NEW BOOK ENTITLED "THE DICHOTOMY OF YIN/YANG TENSIONS AND THE PRESCIENT PHENOMENA IN THE HIERARCHICAL PEDAGOGY OF MUSICAL THEATER - ANOTHER BRIEF SURVEY" - PLEASE WELCOME, STRAIGHT FROM A STINT AT CAL-TECH - PROFESSOR ERUDITE L. PEDANTO!

(APPLAUSE)

ERUDITE

THANK YOU. ALWAYS A PLEASURE, I'M SURE.

RUDMAN

SO I HEAR YOU'VE STIRRED UP QUITE A CONTROVERSY OVER YOUR INTERPRETATION OF "SHOWBOAT", PROFESSOR.

ERUDITE

SOMEBODY HAD TO. YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE TUNE "OL' MAN RIVER"?

RUDMAN

OF COURSE.

ERUDITE

WELL, CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THAT SONG IS NOT JUST A LAMENT. IT'S A BIOGRAPHY. AND MORE THAN THAT, IT'S AN INDICTMENT OF THE ENTIRE TOBACCO INDUSTRY.

RUDMAN

WAIT, WAIT, WAIT. LET'S BACK UP HERE. A BIOGRAPHY?

ERUDITE

MY RESEARCH HAS TURNED UP THE FACT THAT THERE WAS INDEED - AND PERHAPS STILL IS - AN OL' MAN RIVER. KERN AND HAMMERSTEIN CLEARLY KNEW OF HIM.

RUDMAN

REALLY. WHAT WAS HIS FIRST NAME?

ERUDITE

DE MISSISSIPPI.

RUDMAN

OF COURSE.

ERUDITE

IT'S ALL RIGHT THERE IN THE SONG - "DERE'S AN OL' MAN CALLED DE MISSISSIPPI."

RUDMAN

SO WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT "DE MISSISSIPPI RIVER"?

ERUDITE

IT'S VERY, VERY WIDE. HO HO. A LITTLE JOKE. MISSISSIPPI. VERY, VERY...

RUDMAN

YES, BUT TO GET TO THE POINT...

ERUDITE

WELL, AS I SAY, IT'S ALL IN THE SONG. FOR INSTANCE WE KNOW HIS OCCUPATION. "HE DON' PLANT TATERS. HE DON' PLANT COTTON".

RUDMAN

SO?

ERUDITE

SO WE'RE NARROWING THE FIELD.

RUDMAN

THEN WHAT DOES HE DO? BESIDES "JUST KEEP ROLLIN' ALONG"?

ERUDITE

EXACTLY. MR. DE MISSISSIPPI RIVER WAS A GIANT IN THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY.

RUDMAN

I BEG YOUR PARDON?

ERUDITE

"HE JES' KEEPS ROLLIN', HE KEEPS ON ROLLIN' ALONG". CIGARETTE AFTER CIGARETTE. AND IT'S BEGUN TO AFFECT HIS MEMORY AS WELL.

RUDMAN

THIS IS ALL BEGINNING TO AFFECT MY MEMORY. WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

ERUDITE

WELL, EVEN HIS NAME. "DE MISSISSIPPI" IS ACTUALLY BASED ON THE TIMALEAN WORD "MISSOSLOOPEE" WHICH ROUGHLY TRANSLATES AS "I'M SORRY, I'VE FORGOTTEN YOUR NAME" OR "MY MIND IS AS THE BOWLING BALL", AND NOW, AS WE HEARD, "HE MUS' KNOW SUMPIN'", BUT HE DON' SAY NUTHIN'. HE DON' PLANT TATERS, HE DON' PLANT COTTON, AND DEM DAT PLANTS 'EM IS SOON FORGOTTEN." CLEAR LAPSES OF MEMORY CAUSED BY OVERDOSES OF NICOTINE.

RUDMAN

I'M FLABBERGASTED.

ERUDITE

WELL, THERE'S MORE FLABBERGASTATION WHERE THAT CAME FROM. FOR INSTANCE, THE PRICE OF MY BOOK - A PHENOMENALLY LOW \$29.95 FROM BANTAM...

RUDMAN

YES, BUT DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER REVELATIONS? MAYBE HOW SNOOPY FROM "YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN" WAS ACTUALLY JOE CAMEL IN DISGUISE?

ERUDITE

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. BUT I WILL TELL YOU THIS: OBVIOUSLY THE NARRATOR OF "OL' MAN RIVER" IS TRYING TO KICK THE HABIT. NICOTINE PATCHES ARE NOT WORKING FOR THIS YOUNG MAN. "AH GITS WEARY AN' SICK OF TRYIN'; AH'M TIRED OF LIVIN' AN' SKEERED OF DYIN'". BUT WHAT DOES THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY, IN THE FORM OF THIS AGING, FORGETFUL DE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, DO? DOES HE LISTEN? DOES HE CARE? NO, HE "JES' KEEPS ROLLIN' [CIGARETTES] ALONG."

RUDMAN

WELL, THANK YOU FOR ANOTHER EYE-OPENING FACTOID, PROFESSOR...

ERUDITE

KERN AND HAMMERSTEIN PREDICTED THE CURRENT ANTI-SMOKING FERVOR 70 YEARS BEFORE ITS TIME! IT'S ALL IN MY BOOK - \$29.95 FROM BANTAM...

RUDMAN

THANK YOU, PROFESSOR...

ERUDITE

YOU'RE WELCOME. NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME - I HAVE TO GET TO NEW YORK FOR A TAPING OF "DAVID LETTERMAN". I'M GOING TO EXPOSE THE SONG "SINGIN' IN THE RAIN" FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS: A BALLAD ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING AND THE POLAR ICE CAPS!

RUDMAN

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PROFESSOR ERUDITE L. PEDANTO!

(APPLAUSE)