

DREAMLAND TV

Building Committee

As per that great philosopher, Yogi Berra, "It's like déjà vu, all over again."

The night before the important Building Committee meeting, Pastor Anderson nervously made notes of everything he thought should be covered in the final planning session before engaging an architect to expand the church facilities.

Pastor Anderson and his wife, Becky, had just gotten home from a delicious meal at Vernal and Doris Magnuson's in celebration of Vernal's sixty-sixth birthday. Doris fixed her famous roast duck à l'orange, a treat served on the rarest of occasions. Vernal's birthday certainly qualified as such an occasion because with the way she and her husband fought all the time, nobody thought Vernal would make it to sixty-six. At any rate, Pastor Anderson had at least three helpings of the duck, something he would later regret, as he forgot that

duck always made him dream the weirdest of dreams.

When he finished the last of his notes, he got ready for bed and slipped under the covers next to his wife. Being exhausted from the day, the good reverend fell asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. Somewhere in the next seven hours, the duck paid him a visit.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,” said Sam Slumber in a hushed tone. “I’m reporting to you for Dreamland TV Network tonight. We’re interrupting your sleep for a special broadcast from the parish hall of St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, where the Building Committee has gathered for an important planning session. We join them now, already in progress.”

“Uh, thank you for that inspiring introduction, Pastor Anderson,” said Elmo, the President of the congregation and a goofy-looking character wearing a tall green hat with floppy black ears. “As you all know, this meeting is necessary to gather all the requests for building space by the various

groups within the congregation. I believe we should hear from the Trustees first.”

“All right,” said Ted, the Hardware Man and chairman of the Board of Trustees. “The Trustees don’t really have any space needs in the new building, as we will gain space in the old building when construction is complete. However, we do request the right to address any technical issues that the architect brings to the table. Regarding the space we will gain in the old building, I would like to propose that we upgrade our power system to a 3-phase power grid with a megawatt turbo booster. Add high decibel woofers and tweeters to the sound system and we should be able to out blast any church in the county.”

“Uh, we will certainly give consideration to that, Ted,” said Elmo. “Yes, Rocky, did you have a question?”

“Yeah, man. I move that we prevent the Trustees from installing any of this equipment themselves.”

“I second that,” said Calamity, Outreach chairwoman.

“Uh, all in favor, say aye.”

“Aye,” they said in unison, except for one.

“Uh, Elders, do you have any space request for the new building?”

“Yes, Mr. President,” answered Vinnie. “Speaking for my ... ah, associates and fellow elders, Sal, Bruno, and Vito, we would like to request a small room in which we could conduct, ah ... counseling sessions, so to speak. We don’t need much. Maybe a chair or two, some padding on the walls, and maybe some soundproofing. Yeah, soundproofing would be good.”

“Thank you, Vinnie,” said Elmo. “Your request has been noted. Uh, Rocky, the council received the request from the Board of Education that you so graciously submitted in writing. There have been a few, uh, questions raised about the need for an air compressor and lube pit in the new Sunday School room.”

“Man, what kind of regressive thinking is that?” complained Rocky, current motorcyclist and Board of Education chairman. “How am I supposed to make certain that these kids get a proper theological education if we don’t have the tools to

foster that hands-on approach to all the physical laws that our Creator gave to us?”

“Uh, let’s see, Altar Guild, did you have any request for additional space in the new building?” asked the President.

“Yes, Mr. President,” answered Phyllis Roberts, a demure librarian in the public sector. Handing Elmo an immaculately typed page, the spinster quietly sat back down.

After reading the Altar Guild’s requests, Elmo said, “Uh, okay, Miss Roberts, uh, I need to clarify your request here. Does the Altar Guild really feel that a wet bar and pizza oven are essential for preparing everything for the altar on Sundays?”

“Yes, we do, Mr. President,” she answered in a quiet voice.

“I see that you also have a need for a disco-strobe light system. Have you cleared the feasibility of that with the trustees?”

Ted, the chairman of the Board of Trustees, stood up and gave a big two thumbs up to the project. Then he went over to Miss Roberts and gave her a high five.

“Uh, okay, moving right along,” said Elmo. “Calamity, does Outreach have any requests?”

“Yee ... hah, you betcha, Mr. President,” answered Calamity, reigning female trick rider and lassoing champion, as well as chairwoman of the Outreach Committee. “Outreach would like some space for a holding pen, I mean an orientation room, to introduce our captives, I mean our prospective new members, to the principles of our denomination. And we could also use a tack room, I mean a supply room where we could store extra rope, I mean extra evangelistic materials.”

“Is there anything else, Calamity?” asked the President.

“Well, we just ordered a cool branding iron with our denomination’s official insignia on it. We could use a room where we could brand new prospects so they would have a more difficult time joining other denominations or something, ah ... no, never mind. That would be asking too much. No, Outreach has no more requests.”

“Uh, thank you, Calamity. Uh, Fellowship, do you have any request for space in the new building?”

“Hey, genius, wake up,” yelled Rocky. “You’re up for any requests for space.”

“Make mine on the rocks,” said Randolph P. Farnsworth, chairman of the Fellowship Committee. “Oh ... I digress. The Fellowship Committee would like additional space for a stage where the band we hire can play on the night of our annual Fellowship dance.”

“Let me try to understand,” said Elmo. “You want a stage so the larger band you hire has someplace to set up their equipment?”

“Absolutely.”

“Uh, the only way I can see that happening is if we reduce the size of the area where people can dance,” said Elmo.

“Not a problem,” said Randolph. “We aren’t worried about that. Nobody ever comes to the Fellowship dance, anyway. We just want to hire a larger band to increase our attendance.”

“Uh, I see. Okay, uh ... Stewardship. How is the Capital Drive coming along, Lenny? What is the fund balance?”

“Right now, we’re on a bit of a losing streak,” answered Lenny, bookie extraordinaire. “But I got a sure-fire tip on a horse in the seventh at Belmont. If we put down ten thousand on Luther’s Revenge at a hundred to one odds, we could clear a cool million.”

“Sounds reasonable,” said Elmo, the President.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the President led the group in the Lord’s Prayer. Some said they heard a faint quacking along about “Forgive us our debtors”, but that cannot be confirmed.

Pastor Anderson sat up with a jolt. His sweat-soaked pajamas stuck to his clammy skin. He thought about calling Father Riley over at St. Ann’s to see if they would lend out their bingo set for a fundraiser, but he decided that would only show a sense of panic. Reaching for his notepad on the nightstand, he scratched off the entry for a new office in the new building. He would encourage the Building Committee to stay within budget, including an ample contingent reserve. That’s all that he could do ... that’s all that he could do. Except

perhaps, to think of a tactful way to pass on the duck next time they eat out.