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A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Work...

Give My Regards to Broadway

By Michael A. Crawford, CPA

I enjoy attending Broadway plays but I never dreamed I would become part of one.

Before one of my many business trips to New York City, my wife, Debbie, and I agreed to see two plays on Broadway. I told her I wanted to see "The Producers" and that she could pick the other show.

When the time came to see her play, Debbie asked if I wanted to know which one she selected.

No," I said, "Just surprise me."

Although curious, I

patiently walked with her from our hotel in Times Square to 42nd Street's row of theaters. As we approached the theatres, I saw several marquees. However, I immediately knew which play we were going to when I saw a marquee with a picture of Hugh Jackman in "The Boy from Oz." My wife was infatuated with Hugh Jackman.

The hostess took our tickets and led us to our seats. As we continued walking toward the front of the stage, I realized my wife acquired very good seats. I didn't realize how good until the hostess seated us in the front row, two feet from the stage. My wife had a grin on her lovely face the size of Texas — we were about to see Hugh up close.

The first half of the play went as

expected — dance number after dance number with my wife never blinking and her head seldom breaking concentration from Hugh. At intermission, we stood to stretch our legs and she asked "So how do you like the play so far?" I felt compelled to say "It would be an okay play, if he wasn't so darn homely!" She simply said, "Yea, you wish."

The second act began with another provocative dance number by Hugh. In the middle of the number, he stopped the band and came to the edge of the stage in front of us and

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asked the audience "Would any of you like to dance?" Immediately, all the women (and some of the men) erupted into yells and screams. Even with all the commotion, it was hard to miss my wife making hand and arm motions as if she were directing a plane to an arrival gate:

It was enough to get Hugh's attention. He came closer to her and asked her to stand up. A spotlight immediately shone upon her, and with her knees buckling and face turning red, she stood and looked up at her fantasy. He asked, "What's your name sweetheart?"

Taking a deep breath, she timidly sputtered, "Dddddddebbie."

Hugh said, "Hi Dddddddebbie," and asked her to turn around so the audience could say hi to "Dddddddebbie."

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Hugh asked where she was from and when she said Oklahoma, he seemed pleased and said he had been in the Broadway play. After more conversation that included Hugh seductively moving his hips in front of my wife's smiling face, Hugh then asked her if she was married. Surprisingly, she said yes. He then pointed to me and asked if I was her husband and, again, I was happily stunned to hear her say, "Yes, he is."

I was having a great time, laughing during the entire encounter between my wife and this actor — at first.

Hugh suddenly asked me to stand up and tell him my name and how long we had been married. With a second spotlight shining on me, I stood and proudly answered. He then introduced Mike and Debbie to the audience and applauded us for being married 27 years. After a short conversation with me, Hugh asked the band to start up their number again and asked me to dance for my wife just the way he had danced for her.

I looked at him in utter dismay and said, "You want me to do what? My hips don't move like that." However, I wanted to be a good sport so I gave it my best. My best caused the entire audience to erupt in laughter. Then Hugh asked me to dance with Debbie. I pulled my wife close to me and attempted a seductive dance, which was a little out of control.

The audience, the band and even Hugh laughed hysterically. Finally, he put me out of my misery and said we could sit down, but not before he gave us a kiss. My wife was clawing her way onto the stage for her kiss. After hugging and kissing her, Hugh turned to me and said, "Your turn." I said, "No, that's okay," but he insisted, so I got a hug and kiss on the cheek.

During the entire second act of the play, he continued to have impromptu dialogue with us during the various scenes. I couldn't resist the opportunity to be a Broadway star and did my best to play along with the script and add as much humor as I could. When the play was over, my wife and I, though worn out, relished our theatrical high.

While we were waiting to leave the theater, one of the actors poked his head around the stage curtain and said, "Come

backstage with me. Hugh wants to meet you."

I didn't know my wife could move that fast.

Before we knew it, we were standing in a hallway backstage waiting for Hugh to leave his dressing room. As he came out, he saw us down the hallway and said, "You guys were great." Not quite sure how to respond, I said, "You were pretty good yourself."

We got a picture and he autographed the towel around his neck and gave it to my wife (who later framed it and hung it prominently in our house, unwashed). We said goodbye and started walking toward the front of the building when Hugh said, "Don't go that way, just follow me out the stage door, it's quicker." As we exited the stage door with Hugh, the cameras began flashing and anxious fans began screaming. Amazingly, all the people standing behind the barricades on the sidewalk on each side of the stage door were not just yelling Hugh's name, but were also yelling, "Mike and Debbie!"

We were stars!

After Hugh left in his limo, we were still standing there answering questions — What's it like to work with Hugh Jackman? How does he kiss? How long have you been doing this?

It seemed like we were there about 30 minutes before we could leave for our hotel. As my wife and I walked back to Times Square for a little late night cheesecake, we were still stopped occasionally by fans that congratulated us on a great performance. From the time we walked out the stage door to the time we arrived at the cheesecake deli, my wife and I walked in stunned silence. We didn't speak a word to each other. However, when we sat down and ordered our treat, we looked at each other and laughed uncontrollably at our moment as Broadway stars. €



Debbie Crawford, Hugh Jackman and Michael Crawford

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