

Italian-American Nicknames Are No Joke

Darrell Fusaro (April 16, 2010)



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learned this while looking for jobs in L.A., making calls trying to land interviews. I knew it wasn't going to be easy. The problem is my name, "Darrell Fusaro." Why? Here's an example,

The executive's receptionist answers: "So and so's office, how may I help you?"

With every ounce of courage I respond: "May I please speak to "So and so?"

Then she asks the dreaded question: "Who may I say is calling?"

"Darrell Fusaro."

"Dale?"

"Darrell."

"Harold?"

"No, it's Darrell-

"I'm sorry, what is your last name?"

'Fusaro."



“Gerald Bizarro?”

Eventually we’d get past my name and the receptionist would promise to pass along my information. But my confidence would always be depleted.

Although feeling weak and ineffective, I plodded along with my footwork. Little did I know that the next call I made was going to be my last. After the dreaded “Who may I say is calling?”, I blurted out my childhood nickname: “Fuzzy Fusaro.” The receptionist put me on hold and within seconds there was a man’s voice on the line asking, “Fuzzy Fusaro, what can I do for you?” For the first time in my life, I was being treated like a “somebody.” It was remarkable! Who did he think I was? Could my Italian-American nickname really make that much of a difference in how I am perceived? Who cares? I liked it.

Next thing you know, I am signed with an agent named “Dick Woody.” (Yeah, and I thought my name was bad enough). Before the ink was dry on the contract I was starring in TV commercials. At every shoot it seemed like they rolled out the red carpet for me. Dick Woody was calling every week to inform me of another director who wanted him to “get Fuzzy.” I even got a call from Nicholas Pileggi, best known for writing the book and screenplay for the movie “Goodfellas.” What was the cause of all this new-found respect? Could it be that my silly childhood nickname, “Fuzzy Fusaro,” was being perceived by Hollywood as that of a Mafioso? Regardless of what the cause might have been, this true Hollywood story was soon coming to an end.





The Screen Actors Guild was organizing a strike for higher wages, but Dick Woody was still getting calls for me to work. I voiced my concern to Dick Woody, but he reassured me I had nothing to worry about. And just like in every Greek tragedy when the main character chooses to ignore their conscience in the pursuit of fame and fortune, their downfall is for certain.

Mine was swift. Someone dropped a dime about me working on a commercial during the strike and the Screen Actors Guild called me in for questioning. Just like you'd expect in a Mob trial, I was sitting at a desk with a microphone answering questions from a panel of inquisitors. The jig was up. I got five years, no professional acting for five full years. Dick Woody folded up shop and it was over as fast as it started.

Humbled, I retreated back to my ordinary life as "Darrell Fusaro." At first I felt robbed of my chance to make it big, but now I am grateful for the experience. Once I settled down, I realized that in all the excitement I was more anxious than happy. Looks like the simpler life's for me. Unfortunately, I have to be reminded of this fact, because every once in a while I get the urge to reemerge as "Fuzzy Fusaro."

Lucky for me, he and Dick Woody are currently on hiatus...

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