

A SHORT PAPER COMPRISING THREE CHAPTERS AND AN EPILOGUE

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Chapter One: SEPTEMBER 2005

Doctor [Carothers](#) asked me to write a humorous paper about horses, similar to several I had written some years ago about flat racing and steeple chasing. Since then my only equine adventures have been in Ireland while fox hunting. Ireland, as you may know, is to the fox hunter what Saint Andrews is to the golfer.

In Ireland a fox hunt often begins with a stirrup cup or two- usually Irish whiskey laced with a little sherry. The jumps are high, the country is rugged, the hounds are eager, and the hunters are fearless. So it is not surprising that Ireland has 7117 orthopedic surgeons and 902 funeral directors practicing in the fox hunting region. (Don't bother checking my statistics- I made them up).

Consequently, a story about people falling off horses (or as the Irish say, "stepping off") would bring only a limited number of laughs, because serious injuries are not funny. The horses normally emerge unscathed, but some horrible things do happen to the foxes. I think they get what they deserve for chewing up chickens and bunnies. Anyway I have decided not to write about horses, even in the form of a poem. Instead my paper is about a couple of horse's asses. Perhaps later I will redefine them as "jackasses," a kindlier species.

I begin by apologizing for my paucity of knowledge about my subject. In fact there are only two Literary Club members less qualified than I to write on the subject I have chosen: [NFL Football](#).

I hate football.

When I was 5 or 6 years old I was forced to play it with a gang of much older and bigger boys who didn't like football either, but who seemed to enjoy mayhem. It was usually cold and windy, the ground was like cement, and we were always losing our gloves and helmets. We would rather have been indoors [shooting crap](#) or [beating](#) each other up. But our fathers had hired some sort of apprentice Physical Ed nut from [U.C.](#) to keep us out of the way on Sunday afternoons while they were playing a new game, invented by a Mr. [Vanderbilt](#) of New York, called Contract Bridge.

It was not because I was a delicate child that I disliked the Sunday football. I was not. With my sister's help I could pin the fat boy next door to the ground, I could clobber most girls in the neighborhood, and I still have a deviated septum from an ill-fated fight with the Captain of the Boxing Team. He had insulted my dog. He kept telling everybody

that Brownie slobbered. Brownie did slobber; indeed he drooled goeey streams of drivel, with ugly dark spots in it, on everything and everybody all the time, but I loved him fiercely just the same. It was in this slobbery but formative stage that I had learned not to like football. I couldn't wait to grow up and **learn** Bridge.

In college I studied Bridge, and in college my dislike of football turned into hate on a single fateful day. One of my room mates was a huge jolly youth from Philadelphia named Hooker Herring. Hooker had been drafted into football by the Headmaster of his secondary school to bolster a sagging defensive line. With his massive physique he was able to do **offense** or defense beyond expectations, so that when he got to our college he was expected to go out for Freshman Football. The team kept winning. So with the support of sports minded faculty members. Hooker became a sophomore, and immediately made the Varsity team. In spite of my lack of interest in this sport we became good friends, partly because he played Bridge so badly that I felt sorry for him.

He played almost full time in every football game that year until the last one. Just after half-time he was hit in such a way that both knees were broken. They were bent forward, as if they were 360 degree hinges. The injuries were so severe that both legs had to be amputated just above the knees. He was 19 years old.

Chapter Two: NOVEMBER 2005

So why am I suddenly cheering for the **Bengals**? For only one reason: they are winners. It is the middle of November and they are 7-2. If they don't make the play-offs you will no longer hear me shouting "Who dey?" as I arrive at the Club on Monday evenings. In fact I have already stopped shouting "Who dey?" because our most fastidious, or should I say **pickiest**, member reminded me that it is a flagrant **ungrammaticalization**. "Should a Literary Club member be heard asking 'Who dey **tink gonna** beat **dem** Bengals?' or any abbreviation thereof?" asked he.

"Let's keep it between you and I," said I, just to aggravate him further.

It has been 15 years since men like me have paid any attention to the Bengals. Paul Brown, the wizard from **Massillon** and Miami- and, oh yes, Cleveland- had been leading the Bengals since the beginning.

I had become friends with Paul on the golf course. He had a swing like a wood chopper and his vocabulary of swear words was inspirational, but he always paid up generously if not cheerfully at the 18th green. From time to time he would invite friends to

his hermetically sealed glass box atop Riverfront Stadium on Sunday afternoons. It was warm and cozy, and the view of the Bengals in the snow and sleet down below was perfect. But certain rules had to be observed: First, during the play, everyone had to be silent- no chatting, no comments, no questions. Paul would be speaking tersely to the staff on his telephone in a low voice and occasionally he might blurt out a few words of praise, or a single curse word. No replies were expected. Even between plays conversation was minimal and muted. Secondly, cheering was unacceptable, as was shouting at even the most miraculously completed pass or last moment win. Murmuring "who dey?" would have been unthinkable. Visits to the bar and buffet were limited to time-outs and the half-time break, as were trips to the [restroom](#), a deprivation which made some of us fidgety.

Paul's wife, Mary, is an exuberant [extroverted](#) beautiful blonde, and in those days was even more so. She could not watch football in silence. She could not stop herself from jumping up and down and shouting during every play. Whether Paul had expelled her from the box or not, we never knew. Perhaps she had just chosen to sit in regular stadium seats outside with the noise and hoi [polloi](#). We could see her, though, from inside. Sometimes she ventured into the box at half-time with her friends, and played the role of demure hostess.

Of the 22 Paul Brown years, die hard fans remember especially the star players and the 12 winning seasons, but nothing happened between 1990 and now. Forget the construction of two superfluous new stadia which have ruined the river front and absorbed millions of tax payer dollars needed for education, low income housing, etc.

This Fall a young man named Gregory Gall delighted the fans and helped recapture public attention by providing a welcome diversion at the end of the recent game with the Green Bay Packers. You undoubtedly recall that the [Bengals](#) were ahead 21-14 and that there were 28 seconds left in the last quarter. The Packers had the ball on the Bengals 28 yard line, when their quarterback, [Brett Favre](#), dropped back to throw a pass. Mr. Gall, a spectator at the event, jumped 9 feet down from the stands onto the playing field, ran over and grabbed the ball out of Mr. [Favre's](#) hands. He wanted to help. Memories were evoked of [Morganna](#), the voluptuous [stripteuse](#) who used to run out onto the baseball field to kiss the players. She could only have outshone Mr. Gall had she been a [transvestite](#).

Mr. Gall, incidentally, is being nominated for this year's Greatest Living [Cincinnatian](#) Award, after his probation period is over. (No need to check this "fact" either.) Our super coach, [Marvin](#) Lewis, joined in the fun-he said the front office should pay Mr. Gall \$20 for his help. The County Prosecutor and the Judge, both humorless

Republicans, wanted to send Mr. Gall to jail. Fortunately there was no room at the time; it was being redecorated by **Griewe** to provide a more cheerful ambiance for the inmates.

Chapter Three: JANUARY 2006

I love football. The **Bengals** are in the **playoffs**. If they don't beat the **Steelers** a second time I will eat my **Bengals** beret. (Incidentally, it tasted awful, I should have had it dry cleaned first). I am glued to the **T/V** on Sunday afternoons, hoping to view another starlet having a "wardrobe malfunction" during the Half, as happened last year at the **Superbowl**. Carson Palmer is a perfect gentleman. Chad **Johnson** is the perfect showman, **Shayne** Graham, the steel-nerved kicker, lives in our neighborhood and does community work downtown for the Free Store Food Bank. All such great guys!

And on Monday evenings now, as I saunter from my car to the Club, I shout "Who do they think?" or sometimes "Whoever do they suppose?" **Passers-by** consider me the epitome of **uncoolness**.

I am trying to get enough tickets to organize a Literary Club expedition to the Superbowl in February so that we can all see Chad dance his interpretation of the Sugar Plum Fairies after our win. Profits will go to our Capital Fund.

Epilogue

My friend Hooker plays no more, but Carson Palmer shall return.

The **Bengals** may have lost their chance for the Super Bowl, but the Enquirer reports that self respect has been restored to Cincinnati, and that zillions of dollars have poured into downtown night clubs, restaurants and brothels, all due to the new **Bengals**.. It is implied that somehow these dollars will filter down to help the needy, improve the schools and domesticate the violent, and that therefore we should all be happy..

Do we hear the jackasses rejoicing? Who **dey!** I mean

"Whoever do they suppose....?"