

## Introduction

At the beginning of all my previous books and in just about any book you read, there is a common warning to people not to plagiarize or pilfer material without the permission of the publisher or author. I'm sure you're quite familiar with the words that start out with, "No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, *etc.*" Note that the last abbreviation just before the closing quote mark is not part of it, but it is an acronym that describes just exactly what those words are. If you've read a book or two of mine, you know my interpretation of ETC. If not, I'll explain it in chapter 3.

It's obvious what those words of warning intend, but you won't see them at the beginning of this book because it's nothing but a waste of space and words. I really don't want people to take a page or two of this book and publish it or call it their own, but how can I stop them from doing it? Much of what you read here is common sense or knowledge familiar to us, so I have no copyright on that, and anyone is free to pass that information on. If you see something that makes an impact and want to use it, feel free to do so and if you want to mention my name and this book, I won't object to that. If you glossed over what I put in place of those words at the beginning of most books, you may want to return to see the few words I wrote, which are closer to the truth.

Sometime during 2008 – in the midst of my publishing adventures – I thought about what books I would write next. I thought about republishing my cookbook, as well as publishing the first book I wrote, a computer math effort. Another possibility was a book of essays that remained unpublished, which needs updating. I am seriously considering a book on cancer, and in early 2009, I began another book off to the side in the *for seeing eye dogs only* series. The project I couldn't wait to begin was a book on truth – what is it and how do we find it? Because of the effort of bringing six books into print last year, I

acknowledged the fact that I couldn't think of the book on truth until the beginning of 2009, which I began in earnest on January 1.

My decision for doing this book has to do with writing, but it also applies to each of us in many ways, whether we look for the truth, or want to make it a part of our behavior. Someone said that if you told the truth, you'd have less to remember. I can't argue with that but many people take care of that problem with the words, "I can't recall." When they utter that phrase, they may be sincere, but others are just not willing to relate what happened. One of the words you can find on my web site is *excellence*, which can't be achieved with laziness and the use of falsehood. Of course, we all have good intentions, but sometimes fail for various reasons.

In April 2009, I stopped in to the local library to return some books and checked out a single book and one DVD, *Be Kind Rewind*, which is a clever title. I'm probably reading more into it than what's there, but I really loved the movie and highly recommend it for a few reasons, other than the title. It starts with Thomas "Fats" Waller, the legendary musician, and it mentions that he spent time in Passaic, New Jersey, a city in which I rented a studio apartment in late 1968. I wasn't there very long, as I moved to the town of Clifton nearby, before I eventually moved back to Buffalo. The movie covers a few subjects besides music. It deals with movies, neighborhoods and trying to save them, as well as offering some outrageous humor.

One point that surfaces in the movie is truth. Miss Falewicz, played by Mia Farrow, points out that you can make a movie even though some of the bits aren't true. They

become reality if one believes in them. That's obviously not true – I'll spend more time on that thought later – but this approach can accomplish something in defining a person, even if some of the specifics are a bit off. What takes place in *Be Kind Rewind* shows that Hollywood takes liberties but inspires us to knowledge in a few ways. Viewing the life of Weller, even if only seeing a small part of it, can move viewers to read a book about him, thereby uncovering some truth.

Sometime shortly after I began college in September 1960, I happened to enter a cinema. That may have been what triggered my interest in movies. I will reference a few throughout this book, since they relate to the subject matter, offering numerous lessons for us, as do books and television. Along with the information comes deception in all these venues, so it's up to us to separate the truth from the lies. People understand that some people can't handle the truth – many of us, in fact – but there are individuals who don't let that get in the way of their lives. Others find it almost impossible to lie. You won't find many people who don't ever not lie, and others who always speak honestly, but we also need to consider scenarios where something may be true one day and not so the next. As I said, it's complicated.

Now that Barack Obama is president, there may be more truth in the nation's capital. Well, maybe not, since we still have the comatose Congress and their compatriots, the lobbying lecherous leeches hanging around. I would prefer many of these people to simply be hanged. Sadly, politicians don't have a monopoly on deception, greed and power, which are some of the reasons for statements that just aren't true and promises that will never be carried out. We also

have lawyers – some people have referred to them with the similarly sounding appellation of liars – marketers, agents, businessmen, CEOs, preachers, accountants and salesmen. In addition, I'm sure you know a few people who take liberties with the truth. B.S. is not unknown to them and these are people who never graduated from college or did so with a B.A.

My journey to explore the truth will cover many of these people as well as relationships, which none of us can avoid, unless we live in a cave. Let's just pray that it has cable or a satellite dish. Television is loaded with deception, especially commercials, whether they are of the thirty-second variety or nauseating infomercials. You may have discovered that much of this blather is filled with lies. Even the regular programming has descended into depths never reached by television with *reality TV*, which is another annoying oxymoron.

I'll delve into comments from critics, whether professionals or family, friends or otherwise. Before my first book was published, I was well aware of critics who panned a movie or book without seeing or reading it, respectively. They're still around today, and as I have discovered, it gets worse than that. I'll also bring up the fact that many people just don't want to hear the truth. If you are a writer or if you merely open your mouth to say something, there's a good chance you could offend someone, even if you tossed out a compliment. Sadly, people are offended quite easily, even by words that weren't meant to do so. We all have heard of great people who are attacked for the good that they do. I'll also mention the need for keeping one's mouth closed on occasion, which interferes with individual growth but is

necessary. Another concern is that you can lie without uttering a word as well as the fact that what someone says may not be precise.

I'll also talk about the differences between science and technology, a difference that at one time seemed non-existent. A related field that on many occasions uses facts in the wrong way has to do with statistics, studies and surveys. Illusion plays a great role in one's beliefs, but perhaps we are simply overcome by what we want to believe rather than by what has actually occurred. The health care profession forces us to look closely at drugs and vitamins and one wonders whether any of those pills are necessary or effective. I couldn't leave out a consideration of conspiracies and need to wonder if those who deny their very existence aren't part of the conspiracy itself.

You may have seen the PBS program, *History Detectives*, which in the summer of 2009 returned to the air. I made it a point to record the show when it was on and I will talk about the process used by this great team of researchers to uncover the truth and simultaneously shed some light on the history of an artifact. The research endeavor is something of great importance, so I will look at the role of historians, who sometimes fail to uncover what really happened. Going right along with that is the thought that maybe truth isn't obtainable. However, with fingerprints, DNA evidence, as well as the advanced technology available today – questionable at times, though it is – it might appear that the truth really can't be hidden, even if it takes some time to uncover it.

I mentioned excellence earlier. As a writer, I can't produce a book that is completely free of errors – those

miscues don't necessary equate to lies. However, one of my goals is to minimize the mistakes, which means diligence, editors and proofreaders, who themselves are also capable of missing something which is not fact. It goes with the territory and can't be avoided. They really aren't to blame – it is my problem and that's why I myself edit and proofread each of my books, more than once. The extra effort means that the truth is not likely to be distorted, which goes along with the idea of doing the best you can.

This quest has been the inspiration for the book. We need not be writers to strive for what's right – something that people actually debate. Each of us looks for and expects honesty from others. When it is not achieved, we are very disappointed, but realize that our friends and family are human. Mistakes are part of life. As we shall discover, the idea is quite complicated. Just as it was my intention to have a book cover that is black and white, the gray is missing. Truth may be black or white, but gray more aptly describes what people think is the truth. It also is the color of how we apply it to our everyday lives.

The first title I thought about using was ***Objects in Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear***. People love titles that I choose for my books, even if they don't buy any of them. Potential customers chuckle at the front page of the book, with its title and cover. Some naively ask me if these are children's books, but they are probably confused by the illustrations, which tie in to the subject matter and bring out the fact that each of my productions has my sense of humor. This characteristic may sell books, but it has great ramifications as far as the truth is concerned. Just as potential customers misjudge the nature of my books, people misread

others and their books as well. In this case there is a misreading of the book even before opening it.

I didn't settle on that title, but rather a variation on it, which might result if one fails to heed the implications of the original title. The mirror image idea reflects the fact that truth is hard to achieve. Notice that the mirror on the passenger side of the car has the words that were my first choice for the title – indicating an inaccurate outlook – whereas the left or driver's mirror seems to be quite truthful. I wonder if this has anything to do with the fact that we're talking about the distortions and lies brought about by people in government on the right, whereas their counterparts – on the left – seem to have a better picture of the situation. I'm not the one who engineered these mirrors, so don't blame me. I wonder if the misrepresentation is still present to the person sitting in the passenger seat up front. If so, there's no reason for this problem, and another title would have been necessary. My second choice was *Objects In Mirror Are About To Smash Into Your Car: A Treatise On Truth*, but I figured it might be too long, so the final title is what you see on the cover.

In the spring of 2007, I purchased a 2007 Toyota Prius, which turned out to be a complete assault on truth. I should have known better since I was dealing with a car dealership as well as a criminal corporation, which had “toy” in the name. At the time the company was actually number one in the pack. Unfortunately, they weren't leading in the way they should have been and were like all the rest. After two years, I had had enough of the lies and traded in the car for a Honda Civic hybrid. One of the lies was the camera in the back of the Prius that displayed the scene behind the

vehicle whenever I shifted the car into reverse. Along with the distorted view came constant beeping – another annoyance that I can do without – and this picture didn't have the warning about the objects in the mirror. However, relying on it rather than glancing behind would guarantee a call to my insurance company. There were other technological deficiencies in the Prius, such as the gas gauge, inaccurate calculation of the mileage, displays that disappeared when you wanted them to remain, and another that wouldn't leave, even though I was hoping that it would.

I'll be referring to a few movies and books that fit in with our discussion of the subject matter. One book that is appropriate is Daphne du Maurier's *Rule Britannia*. The 2008 flick, *Doubt*, starring Meryl Streep and Philip Seymour Hoffman, is worth mentioning and one that you will not easily forget. Each has much relevance when it comes to revealing the truth, though in slightly different ways. The movie and book are not unlike the journey we are about to embark on, which will not deal with the technicalities of mirrors, but rather with the complexity of uncovering the truth. It will be a long and involved endeavor and a complex one. Finding the right mirror to see the true picture will be of utmost importance to us.