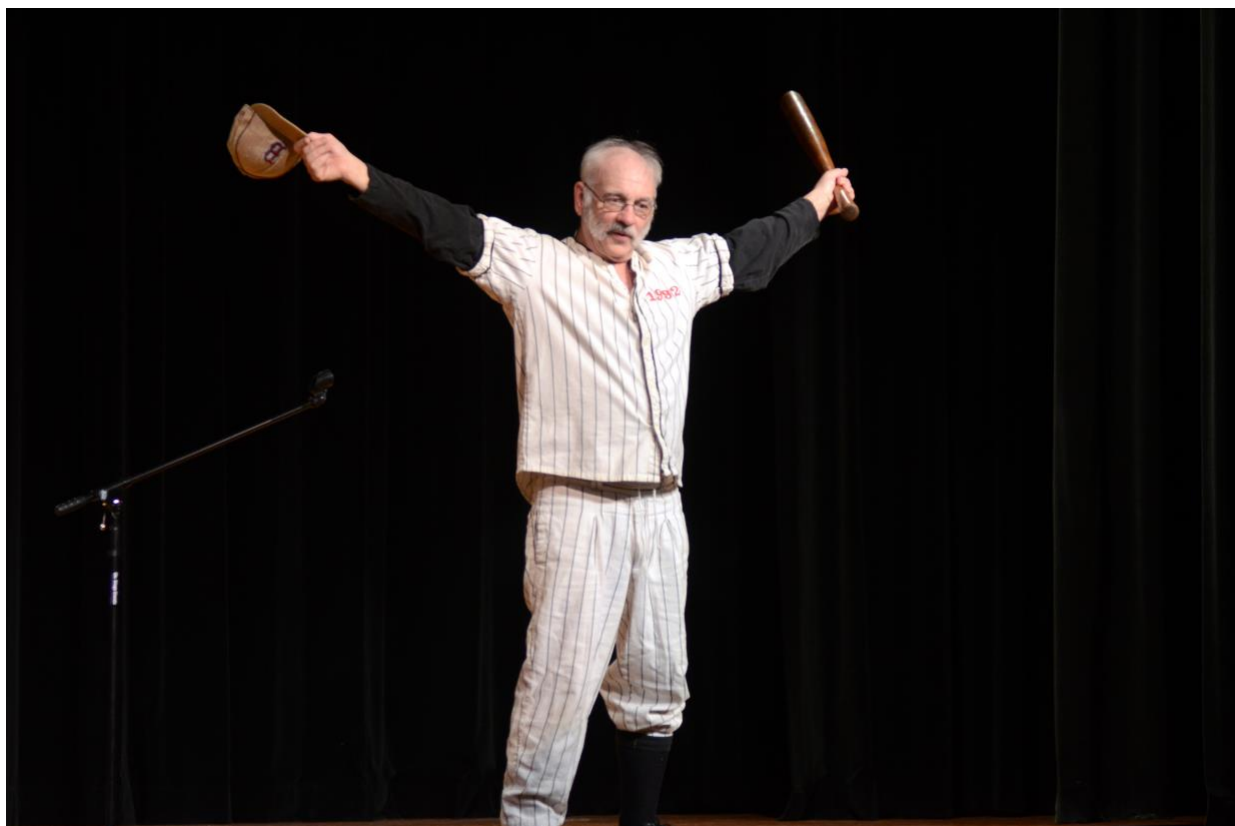


"Casey at the Bat ... Reimagined" (with apologies to Ernest Thayer)
by Rick Ohler

PREFACE. As the 2015 Kiwanis Club EA's Got Talent Show approached, the organizers were nervous that they didn't have enough acts. So they asked, cajoled, pleaded, demanded that I provide one. Maybe a simple reading of "Casey at the Bat" would do, they suggested. Okay, I said. Well, I've always felt bad for Casey, striking out year in and year out since 1888, so I said I'd do it, but I might have a surprise ending. I thought it was time that Casey had some better luck. Call it a metaphor for redemption; call it a silly poem performed by an old man who is accustomed to making a fool of himself on stage. Either way, with sincere apologies to Ernest Thayer, here is "Casey at the Bat ... Reimagined"



The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play.

And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;

They thought if only Casey could but get a whack at that—
We'd put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a cake;

So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;

And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;

It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face.

And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt.

Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.

Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore.

"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted some one on the stand;
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his
hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;

He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered fraud;
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.

They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles
strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clinched in
hate;
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.

And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out

But I always thought Casey got a raw deal
That to him Thayer was uber cruel.

I mean, his teammates didn't exactly come through in the clutch,
And we've all struck out a time or two.

So I imagined a bit different conclusion to the poem
End this tale on a happier note,

One where Casey doesn't wallop a game-winning homer,
But even so, he isn't the goat.

So let's go back to that famous third strike,
Just after he swung and he missed

Wishing he could shrink to the size of an ant
To escape the booing and inevitable hisses.

When all of the sudden came a roar from the crowd,

That set Casey's poor head to spinning,

'Cause even though he'd swung and had missed,
That wasn't the end of the inning.

The catcher you see, he booted the ball,
And that third strike took off like a rocket,

And spun like a dervish away from the catcher;
There wasn't any way you could stop it.

The catcher took off and searched for the ball
Then took off in a panicked pursuit,

For he knew that he had only to throw out our Casey
For whom speed was not a strong suit.

Casey stood there quite in total mesmerization,
Like a deer caught in a car's lights.

Until the Mudville crowd cried out in one voice,
"Casey! Run for your life!"

He dropped the bat and bolted down the first base line,
His legs churning to beat the band,

And the catcher, when he finally recovered the ball,

Threw wildly into no man's land.

Flynn, he got up on his horse,
and came around easily to score,

And Blake, well he quickly followed suit,
Now it was tied, four runs to four.

Casey, he should have stopped at first base,
And should certainly have stopped at second,

But with the opponents in such a fine frazzle,
He saw that third base seductively beckoned.

He arrived just as the throw came in from the outfield,
And caromed off Casey's thick noggin,

And for a moment, he lay there in a daze,
As if his senses had experienced a foggin'.

Then, up he sprang, his feet began spinnin',
Like a sprinter with a big race to win.

And off down the line he began to locomotor,
Onto home plate he was closing in.

A collision loomed Between Casey and the catcher,

As the catcher blocked Casey's way.

But Casey only bore down the harder,
Determined to save Mudville's day.

The ball and Casey both reached home plate,
And during the ensuing tumult,

A hopeful town held its collective breath,
As they waited for the umpire's result.

The ump peered in to the tangled mass,
Of bodies sprawled on home plate,

And after an agonizing second or two,
Waved both hands and hollered, "SAFE!"

The crowd erupted in thunderous applause,
And cheering and jubilation.

While Casey smiled a wide, toothy grin
Soaking in the crowd's adulation.

They carried him off on 5000 shoulders,
Toward the Commons they made their way,

In a procession of ladies and gentlemen and kids,
Forming a joyous, impromptu parade.

Well, right here in this favored land
the sun is shining bright;

The band is playing on right here,
and here our hearts are light,

And right here men are laughing,
and right here children shout;

Because there is great joy in Mudville,
Even though Casey has struck out.

