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Author: H. Paul Jeffers
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Make Them *Like* You

IN THE MIND OF Daniel Brady in the summer of 1856, the most important things in life were the customers who bought beer at three cents a stein in his waterfront saloon on the corner of Cedar and West streets on New York's Lower West Side, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Democratic Party. Consequently, when Dan's second son was born on the twelfth of August, the beer flowed freely. Presently the parish priest was informed that the boy he would be called on to baptize had been named after the Democratic nominee for president of the United States.

If the father of the newborn had his way, James Buchanan Brady and his older brother (their father's namesake) would follow him in the saloon business. The first years of Jim's life, therefore, were filled with the voices of hardworking, hard-drinking, mostly Irish longshoremen and teamsters who lived nearby. They earned their wages from the ships whose masts resembled a leaf-bare forest on the edge of the Hudson River that reached from the tip of Manhattan north to the human wasteland of spirit-crushing tenements called Hell's Kitchen.

A dozen years before Jim was born, England's most famous author, Charles Dickens, had toured the New York waterfront and found the bowsprits of hundreds of ships stretching across the waterside streets and almost thrusting themselves into the windows of adjacent buildings. These "noble American vessels," he wrote, "have brought hither the foreigners who abound in all the streets." So many immigrants had come to New York in the two decades before Jim Brady's birth that the city's population had nearly quadrupled. Most of the newcomers were Irish. Almost all settled in lower Manhattan.

The section in which Jim Brady was born was described by the pre–Civil War Irish writer Fitz-James O'Brien as a "melancholy, mysterious and dreary place." The men who patronized Dan Brady's saloon talked wistfully of their green homeland, the famine that had driven most of them out, and their work. The politics of city and country was discussed primarily in terms of the unjust distribution of wealth between haves and have-nots. In the opinion of Dan Brady and his customers, only the Democratic Party and its New York branch, Tammany Hall, could remedy this imbalance.

How much of this was understood at the time by young Jim Brady isn't known, but at some point in his growing-up as he helped himself to free food that his father made available to his drinking patrons, he made two decisions. He chose not to emulate what many Americans saw as the inborn trait and flaw of the Irish; he would not take up drinking. He also decided that if the world was arranged according to haves and have-nots, he would do all he could to be counted among the former. How far up the economic ladder an Irish lad with a healthy appetite for food but no taste for drink might ascend remained to be seen.

As much as he loved his father, Jim saw that being a saloon keeper was not the route to riches. Perhaps it was because he was a saloon keeper's son and had witnessed the effects of strong drink that he chose to eschew it for his entire life.

That he would not go into the saloon business was reinforced after his father died in 1863 and his widow took up with and then married a man named John Lucas.

Lacking Dan Brady's flair and exhibiting no interest in continuing Dan's policy of mixing beer with politics, Lucas changed the tenor of the saloon from what had been a neighborhood "watering hole" to a place for roistering sailors. They soon flocked to the bar in such numbers that it became in the lingo of seamen a "flag house," meaning a "sailors-only saloon."

To make matters worse, John Lucas demonstrated no aversion to accepting money from shipowners to lace steins of beer with knockout drops. When the unwitting sailors woke up, they found that they'd been shanghaied.

This sin was compounded in the minds of eleven-year-old Jim and his thirteen-year-old brother, Dan, by Lucas's demand that the boys quit school and work in the saloon.

Dan's answer was to run away from home and take a job as a bellboy at the St. James Hotel. Opened in 1863 at Broadway and Twenty-sixth Street, it overlooked Madison Square and was by 1867 one of the most popular hostelries in a post–Civil War city that was increasingly prosperous and rapidly spreading northward.

Admiring brother Dan in his smart uniform and hearing his tales of the "swells" who patronized the St. James, Jim noted that his brother's pockets jangled with gratuities for his services. He envied Dan's rubbing elbows, if only as a servant, with the upper classes of the city and with the nattily dressed men from elsewhere who earned their livelihoods as salesmen. But to a writer named Mary Eliza Tucker, these free-spending men who treated prospective clients to lavish dinners in the grandest restaurants on Broadway and along Fourteenth Street embodied her title character of *Lewis Bridge, a Broadway Idyll.* Published in the year Dan got the job at the St. James, it disdained such men in verse:

Each eager face in passing seems to say—
"Chasing a dollar, comrades, clear the way!"

Jim Brady preferred the contrary viewpoint of another writer of a best-seller of the day. In *Ragged Dick,* Horatio Alger's main character exemplified the American ideal of pursuing success and the benefits of the riches that came with it, not the least of which was plenty of food.

Three months after young Dan Brady found employment at the St. James, he informed Jim that the hotel had need of another bellboy. The next morning Jim appeared in the manager's office. Whether he was asked his age isn't known. He was eleven, but because of his size, he looked fifteen. Perhaps because the manager knew of his experience as a helper in the family's saloon from brother Dan, he was put to work in the hotel's bar. If business was brisk, he helped served drinks. In slacker periods he filled the duties of bellboy and messenger. He found the latter more satisfying because the men who sent him on errands provided generous gratuities. Most weeks afforded the genial, roly-poly, blue-eyed Irish youth more in tips than he found in his pay packet. This largesse allowed him to spend his day off–Sunday–in pursuit of his favorite repasts in East River fish markets of Catherine Slip between Cherry and South streets. High on his list of favorite places was the eel market, where eels were sold by the foot or the pound by vendors with street carts or in hole-in-the-wall eateries known as eel shops. When Jim had his fill of eel, he ventured to South Street in search of oysters at a penny each. Zestfully downing them by the two bits' worth, he watched the hustle and bustle of wharves crowded with stately vessels under sail and less graceful but speedier ones powered by steam.

IN 1863, as Dan Brady Sr. was being mourned by the "dock wollopers" who had been his customers, a man whose steamboats provided them employment decided to go into the railroading business. For sixty-nine-year-old Cornelius Vanderbilt this was a dramatic change of heart. Only six years earlier, when asked to invest in the New York & Harlem line, the man whose shipping empire earned him millions and the nickname "Commodore" had replied, "Bring me a steamboat and I can do something, but I won't have anything to do with your damn railroads."

Vanderbilt's abrupt switch in outlook had resulted from his realization that the future of the United States after the Civil War would lie in settling a western frontier that stretched far out of reach of ships. Determined to profit by the "westward-ho" fervor that swept the nation, and to play a leading role in connecting the East with the West by steel rails, he bought three railways in four years. He started with the once-scorned New York & Harlem. He acquired control of its rival Hudson River Railroad the next year and the New York Central in 1866. These enterprises were consolidated by legislative action in 1869 into the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. In subsequent years this emerging empire would include lines to connect Vanderbilt's New York system with those serving Buffalo and Chicago and points between. While assembling a national railroad network controlled from New York City, the Commodore turned his attention to building a suitable headquarters in the form of a "grand central depot." He chose an uptown area that many saw as too far away. Vanderbilt envisioned the area becoming the locus of a northward-moving city squeezed between rivers. The site for the jewel of Vanderbilt's railway domain was smack in the center of Manhattan at Forty-second Street and Fourth Avenue.

The Commodore also bought surrounding land between Madison and Lexington avenues and from Forty-second to Forty-eighth streets. Ground was broken for the depot in May of 1869, with construction completed in 1871.

The result was the largest train shed in the world, standing 600 feet long, 200 feet wide, and 100 feet high. Beneath an arching roof supported by thirty semicircular trusses ran twelve tracks. At night its platforms were illuminated by twelve enormous chandeliers whose gas lamps were ignited automatically by an electric spark.

The Forty-second and Lexington facades were red pressed brick with window frames of cast iron that were painted white to simulate the look of marble. Five towers rising above Forty-second Street were topped by mansard roofs. Hailing the terminal as "the largest railway and passenger caravansary in the world," the *New York Herald* extolled it as a "ferruginous palace." The depot provided operating space for Vanderbilt's railroads and another line, the New Haven. Each had its own waiting and baggage rooms.

For the day-to-day running of the new depot and the trains that flowed out from it, Vanderbilt assembled a cadre of superintendents and foremen. Among them was a native of Connecticut by the name of John M. Toucey. A precursor of many thousands of men who in the decades ahead would work in the city but live in its suburbs, Toucey frequently found himself having to stay in town overnight. On those occasions, especially during the building of the Grand Central Depot, he checked into the St. James Hotel.

An amiable man, Toucey prided himself on being "self-made" and wholly in tune with the gospel of success preached in the popular Horatio Alger books that followed *Ragged Dick*. He also had a keen eye for spotting young men with potential for making successes of themselves if someone was willing to give them a start.

In the year Grand Central opened, Toucey thought he'd found such a youth in one of the hotel bellboys. Ample in size, apple-cheeked, and an energetic worker, fifteen-year-old Jim Brady seemed to Toucey to be just the kind of young man who could start at the bottom of the ladder and work his way up, perhaps to the top.

In the railroading business, the bottom-rung job for such a fellow was derisively known as baggage smasher. If Jim was interested in giving up bellhopping, Toucey proposed, why not come to work for the New York Central Railroad by starting in the baggage room at the new Grand Central terminal? If he did, and if he went to night school to catch up on his education, and if he applied himself to the work at hand, there was no saying what the job might lead to.

There were two reasons not to take up Toucey's offer. Being a baggage smasher would mean no tips and so would pay him much less. And the Grand Central baggage room didn't have a bar loaded with plates and bowls of free food. Yet what future was there in the hotel business for someone who'd dropped out of school and was both Catholic and Irish?

Weighing on the side of accepting Toucey's job offer with its promise of advancement in status and salary was a change in the situation of Jim's mother. Because of the saloon's decline, John Lucas had abandoned both the business and his wife. As a result, she had sold the saloon and opened a small hotel and a kind of employment agency for Irish girls who left Erin in hope of becoming household servants in New York. Because this enterprise brought the still-married Mrs. Lucas less income than had the saloon, she expected her two sons to assist her and to help meet the needs of their ten-year-old sister. (When she was born in 1861, Jim was five. At the time he left home for the job at the St. James, the girl was six.)

In Horatio Alger stories a young man's life took a dramatic turn for the better because of a twist of fate in the form of a benefactor. Alger fashioned such events into moral lessons. Playwrights spun them into dramas. Comedians twisted them to get laughs. Biographers marked them by exclaiming "Here! After this moment everything would change."

For Jim Brady it happened in 1871 in the offer from John Toucey.

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WHEN JIM reported for work, Commodore Vanderbilt's colossal terminal was handling an average of 130 train movements a day. Their arrivals and departures were controlled by a dispatcher in a cabin high on the north wall of the train shed. At the heart of this complex venture was an elaborate system of electric bell signals to guide the actions of train crews, gatemen, and the baggage handlers waiting on the platforms. The passengers who stepped from these trains had come from distant places known to the burly young baggage smasher only by names–Albany, Troy, Buffalo, Erie, Chicago. Almost all who waited for their luggage to be taken off the trains were well-dressed men sporting gold rings and cuff links and ties with diamond studs. Jim could tell from snatches of overheard conversation that they were important. Many were salesmen. All headed from Grand Central Depot to the finest hotels in the city. He recognized some–and they remembered him–from his four years at the St. James. More than a few teased him by noticing that he appeared to have added a few pounds around his midsection. All wished him well.

In keeping with his vow to improve his education, Jim enrolled in Paine's Business College for night courses in bookkeeping and chirography (penmanship). Soon the crude, schoolboyish signature "Jim Brady" became a flourished "James Buchanan Brady."

After Jim had spent eighteen months at Paine's, Toucey rewarded his diligence with a new position and a boost in salary, to $3 a week. The new job was ticket agent and baggage master at the New York Central's new station many miles north of Forty-second Street at Spuyten Duyvil. The name, given to a creek in the area by the Dutch, meant "in spite of the devil." The creek divided the island of Manhattan from the Bronx. That gap had been closed in 1693 by the building of the King's Bridge. To connect the New York Central and Hudson River rail line on the shore of the river to Grand Central in the middle of Manhattan, Commodore Vanderbilt spent $1 million to lay seven miles of tracks along the creek and the Harlem River. To reach his new post, Jim had to get up at five in the morning and take a special train from Grand Central that carried the railroad's employees to the outlying points of Fordham, Highbridge, Morris Dock, Kingsbridge, Marble Hill, Fort George, and Spuyten Duyvil.

In Commodore Vanderbilt's grand railroad network, Spuyten Duyvil was a "flag stop," which meant that a train halted there only when Jim signaled that he'd sold a ticket. This also meant that there were few bags to be handled. In the long intervals between passengers, Jim kept busy by learning telegraphy. This bit of enterprise did not go unnoticed by his patron.

It was during Jim's two years at Spuyten Duyvil that he engaged in what he later called "the only dishonest thing in my life." One Sunday morning as he tallied the previous day's sales, he found to his horror that he was ninety-five cents short. It was money he would have to make up out of his own pocket–almost a third of his weekly salary. While he pondered this calamity, he looked up and found at the ticket window five men carrying brass horns. They were part of a German band that had been hired to entertain at a picnic. None of the musicians spoke English, but their leader managed to communicate that they wanted round-trip tickets to their destination. Jim sold them one-ways and pocketed the difference.

"When the leader of the band came back the next day, he was hopping mad, but I made believe I couldn't understand him," Jim recalled. "After a while he got tired of shouting and went away. That night I took the money that was left over from the tickets, had a fine dinner at Smith and McNell's, and went to the theater afterwards."

Fortunately, this act of fraud against passengers and embezzlement of New York Central funds did not reach the ears of a man who had also worked his way up in the ranks of the firm.

John Toucey was now ensconced in an office of the railroad's headquarters in Grand Central Depot as general manager. No employee did more to further the fortunes of the New York Central system than he. Under his leadership, the system would be one of the first to adopt the air brake, the automatic coupler, an interlocking switching system, and the vestibule car. His sensitivity in dealing with the labor force kept a large majority of New York Central employees on the job during a strike in 1877.

In his rise to the top Toucey brought his protégé with him. In 1874, after nearly two years at Spuyten Duyvil, Jim was given a clerkship in Toucey's office at Grand Central. Expected to continue improving his education, Jim again enrolled at Paine's. The reward from his benefactor was promotion to chief clerk at $50 a month.

Toucey also listened to Jim's pleas on behalf of his unemployed brother. Dan was given a job in the same office.

Earning a handsome salary, Jim was a twenty-one-year-old bachelor in a city overflowing with ways to spend money. A portion of Jim's went for a new wardrobe of Prince Albert coats, fine shirts and trousers, elegant cravats, a shiny black stovepipe hat, and shoes from Manhattan's finest makers on Canal Street. But most of his wages were spent on sumptuous daily dinners, meals on Saturday night before and after the theater, and lavish leisurely lunches on Sundays. These were almost always in the company of a boyhood friend, Jules Weiss, who would take up the trade of tailoring and find his best customer in Diamond Jim Brady.

As chief clerk, Jim found himself immersed in all aspects of railroad management, from the cost of repairing a locomotive and the operation of air brakes, to the intricacies of corporate maneuvering in the increasingly fierce competition among railroads in a westward-moving nation that had validated Commodore Vanderbilt's foresight by falling in love with trains and becoming dependent on them.

After having created one of the great networks of steel rails in less than a decade, Cornelius Vanderbilt died on January 4, 1877. At the age of eighty-three, he was America's richest man.

The Commodore had not approved of most forms of charity and, with the exception of Vanderbilt University, he made few contributions. One newspaper took the opportunity provided by his passing to decry "that a free government professedly founded on the equal rights of man can make it possible for one man to accumulate so much of what other people earned."

A few years earlier, when Vanderbilt was forging his railway empire by scooping up roads such as the Erie, Mark Twain had bitterly called his methods "lawless violations of commercial honor." In an "Open Letter to Com. Vanderbilt," the country's most popular author wrote, "The immoral practices, in so prominent a place as you occupy, are a damning example of the rising commercial generation–more a damning thing to the whole nation. Go now, and do something that isn't shameful, do go and do something worthy of a man possessed of seventy millions–a man whose most trifling act is remembered and imitated all over the country. You must certainly feel a vague desire to do some splendid deed in the interest of commercial probity or human charity, or of manly honor and dignity."

The Commodore left the bulk of his $70 million estate to his oldest son, William Henry. With it went control of the New York Central system. He took over at a time when other lines were cutting wages. Central brakemen were earning an average $2.15 for a trip of 150 miles. To remain competitive with his rivals, William ordered the rate cut to $1.90. A conductor's hourly wage of $2.87 was slashed to $2.60. Rail workers went on strike everywhere. Summering at the United States Hotel in Saratoga Springs, William said the strikers belonged to "the Communistic classes" and were "manifesting a disposition to pillage and destroy private property." He told a reporter for the *New York Times* that there was little difference between him and his workers. "Although I may have my millions and they have the rewards of their daily toil," he said, "still we are about equal in the end."

The railroads prevailed in the strike in which a hundred men were killed and five times as many were injured, but its legacy was the ultimate formation of railroad workers' unions and even more violent clashes in the 1880s.

Although the strike had not affected James Buchanan Brady's pay and terms of employment, something his brother did had disastrous consequences. Exactly what sin he committed is not known because Jim never spoke of it. The result was Dan's immediate dismissal. Then, for what John Toucey said was "the sake of discipline and morale," Jim was also fired. However, sacking him was not as easy as dismissing Dan. As chief clerk, Jim knew as much about the New York Central as Toucey. In an atmosphere of public bitterness toward railroads because of the strike, along with a general feeling that railroads were run by crooks, cutting Jim Brady loose carried with it the danger of him retaliating by revealing company secrets to the press or the state legislature, and possibly both. An even more worrying possibility was that Jim would be hired by one of the New York Central's competitors. With these concerns in mind, and feeling sympathetic toward his protégé, whose only crime was having Dan as a brother, Toucey turned to a friend who was a partner in the railway supply firm of Manning, Maxwell and Moore.

At the moment that Jim was being let go, Charles A. Moore was looking for a salesman to handle a new item in the firm's line of equipment. It was a patented handsaw that could cut steel rails to size at the point where track was being laid. The tool saved time, labor, and, most important, money.

Moore asked Toucey what Jim Brady knew about selling railroad equipment.

Toucey replied, "Nothing. The only things he's ever sold were tickets."

But the lad knew a great deal about almost every phase of railroading. He was shrewd, honest, and loyal. He'd worked hard, studied to get ahead, and proven himself worthy in all he was called on to do. And he was not a drinker.

Moore interviewed Jim for more than an hour. He certainly was no beauty, and his girth attested to an appetite that if it had been for drink would certainly have resulted in him being a drunkard. His speech left a lot to be desired, but the men to whom he'd be selling saws were not exactly expert users of the language, either. He dressed well, which was important in a salesman. No one wanted to buy from someone who did not look prosperous. Questions posed to him about the railroad business confirmed that he knew his stuff. And he was definitely not lacking in self-assurance. With that confidence, combined with a smile and a shoeshine and a few lessons in the tricks of the trade, Moore decided, James Buchanan Brady might sell quite a lot of handsaws.

His advice to Jim was taken from the gospel of the traveling salesman but amended to the business of railroad building. "Get to know the important men in every line," he advised. "Find out which ones are doing the buying and if you can, find out which ones will be buying in the years to come. Make them your friends, make them understand that you are the man who will serve them. Make them trust you, make them respect you, and most important of all, make them *like* you."

When Jim began this job in 1879, there were 93,000 miles of railroad in a country that was looking westward. Fervor to lay new miles of roadway swept the nation. "The clamor for the Iron Horse and its glittering land of tracks was presently to assume the proportions of an uproar," wrote historian Parker Morrell of the period. "Nothing could stop it, nothing could lessen its din. In a single decade the people of the United States were to build as many miles of new railroads as the people of the three leading countries of Europe had constructed in the previous fifty years." Ten years after Jim Brady became a railroad equipment salesman, there would be more than 160,000 miles of track.

In preparing to venture forth on behalf of Manning, Maxwell and Moore, Jim reflected on the demeanor and style of dress of the hundreds of successful salesmen he'd observed during his years at the St. James and as a baggage smasher and ticket agent for the New York Central. They had told him, "If you're going to make money, you've got to look like money."

As the salesman shared this maxim of his trade, Jim's attention was diverted by the glint of the man's large diamond ring. He expressed admiration for it.

"In the selling game you've got to have at least one," said the salesman. "Nothing says money more than a display of diamonds. When you check into a hotel, a sparkler can mean all the difference between a very nice room and one the size of a broom closet. For some reason, nothing impresses a hotel room clerk more than a diamond ring. The same is true for the head waiters in the good restaurants."

During the two years Jim had been John Toucey's chief clerk, he'd saved $200. Ninety of it was now spent for a one-carat diamond ring. The rest was apportioned for three suits made by Jules Weiss, other wardrobe items befitting a successful-looking salesman, and a suitcase built to withstand the most savage baggage smasher.

With a bundle of order books in his bag, the portly, well-turned-out, diamond-sporting twenty-three-year-old who had never ventured farther than Spuyten Duyvil boarded a New York Central train and headed for the vast expanse of America that awaited him beyond the Allegheny Mountains. In doing so, he was one of an army of men flooding "Out West" to drum up business and add to the lexicon of American commerce the term "drummer." They went on behalf of the makers of everything required to build and to populate the only nation in the world whose bounding oceans were now linked by trains.

In 1870, one year after a golden spike had been driven into a tie at Promontory Point in Utah to complete a transcontinental railroad and only forty-four years after the Granite Railway Company of Boston built and operated the first railway in the United States, a train had carried passengers from Boston to San Francisco. Nine years later, a railroad was transporting a chubby fellow carrying in his wallet the business cards of the company of Manning, Maxwell and Moore embossed with "James Buchanan Brady, Sales Representative."

Wherever trains took him, Jim presented the cards and himself to superintendents, master mechanics, section foremen, road gang bosses, station masters, train crews, roundhouse workers, conductors, and anyone else connected with railroading.

Charles Moore's mandate to him was to sell saws and to make friends. Because the saws were so obviously time, labor, and money savers, they practically sold themselves. Jim did so much business that at the end of each day's work he suffered from writer's cramp. When orders were completed and mailed back to New York each evening, he left his hotel room to carry out his second task. Having sealed every sale with a handshake and an invitation to the buyer to join him for dinner, he was rarely without companionship for the meal. If during the day he'd dealt with several officials of a railroad, he invited them all to dinner or to a private party in his room, which was invariably the hotel's best. But it was not simply because he picked up the check that his customers joined him at the table. They found Jim Brady to be a charming fellow who knew and understood railroading and spoke their language. Most of them discovered that after dinner he was also a boon companion at the card table.

The costs of these entertainments were charged to Jim's expense account. Toward the end of his first year on the road, Henry S. Manning looked it over and was so alarmed that he called Charles Moore into his office. "If your young favorite is going to spend all our money entertaining men just so he can sell them that damn little handsaw," he said, "we'll be bankrupt in no time at all."

Manning proposed that Brady handle the firm's entire line of equipment.

"Brady's doing very well as it is," said Moore. "We'll let him alone a while longer, and when we do start him selling the whole line, I'll wager that he proves to be our best man."

The expense reports that arrived each week contained more than a tally of the sums Jim had spent in the cause of selling handsaws. Written in the hand that had been trained in chirography at Paine's came detailed reports covering the past, present, and future needs of whichever rail system Jim had visited that week. Decades before American industries and stock market analysts routinely researched, studied, and documented the condition of companies, James Buchanan Brady was doing just that for his employer. He was also building a foundation for a career that fifty years hence would earn Diamond Jim Brady the accolade of *Fortune* magazine as "the greatest capital goods salesman of them all."

When Charles Moore decided in the fall of 1881 that Jim was ready to expand his mandate to include the entire Manning, Maxwell and Moore line of equipment, he offered Jim both a salary and a commission on each sale. Jim replied, "I ain't interested in sellin' goods for you on a salary. The only way I want to work is on a straight commission basis. I got an idea that we'll both make more money that way."

His only other condition was that his expense account be unlimited.

On the road again with authority to sell everything in the firm's catalog from the saws to freight and passenger cars, he set his sights on being the most successful–and richest–man in the game of selling railway equipment. He would do so by combining his knowledge of the business with princely courting and entertainment of customers and the plain old Irish charm known in his father's homeland as blarney.

Not all his customers were quite so easily won over, however.

Soon after being given the entire Manning, Maxwell and Moore line, he called at the Philadelphia office of the president of the Reading Railroad. Jim's research had shown that the company was badly in need of new freight cars. Notorious for being ill-tempered, George Baer despised salesmen and refused to see him. Irked by this lack of common courtesy, Jim returned the next day and was again ignored. He was there for a third day and a fourth.

When Baer arrived on the fifth day, he glared at Jim for a moment and demanded, "Why are you still here?"

"I've been waiting to tell you, sir," said Jim quietly, "that you can go straight to hell."

Baer blinked with astonishment, then barked a laugh. "All right, young man," he said as he took Jim's arm. "I'll see you."

An hour later, Jim left the office with a contract tucked in the pocket of his Prince Albert coat for freight cars to the tune of $5 million.

Jim celebrated the coup by purchasing a ring, a pair of cuff links, and a stick pin, each set with a sparkling emblem of the incarnation of the commercialization that went hand in hand with industrialization.

Half a century after Jim Brady became a traveling salesman, Iowa-born writer/composer Meredith Willson caught the essence of such men in his Broadway musical *The Music Man*. Its main character was a purveyor of band instruments and uniforms, "Professor" Harold Hill. In the opening number a group of drummers on a Rock Island line train chugging its way crossing Iowa sang, "You gotta know the territory."

In an era before mass communication and selling products by advertising that reached millions, products of manufacturers had to be sold person to person. Salesman to shop owner. Door-to-door drummer to "the lady of the house." One on one with whoever did the buying of equipment for a railroad. For a traveling salesman aboard the trains in the hinterlands, diamonds were a signboard. They testified to the pedigree not only of whatever he was peddling but of his own. Whether you were selling a handsaw for trimming rails or $5 million in freight cars, you first had to sell yourself. To do that you had to be more than a name on a business card. In order to get past a receptionist in an outer office you had to look important, and nothing was so potent in making that point, Jim had been advised, than the flash of a diamond ring.

If one diamond had the desired effect, Jim reasoned, what result might several achieve? If he were to become the most successful salesman possible, he first had to look the part. He would have to be perceived as more than just another drummer with another order book to fill. If flash counted, he'd outflash everyone.

If picking up the dinner check would land him a deal, the repast would be one that the guest would never forget. And neither would the man who had bought it be forgotten. If being a great salesman required being *liked,* as Charles Moore had counseled, James Buchanan Brady would be the best-liked railroad equipment salesman ever to get off a train. If sporting diamonds assured that once he'd been met, he would be remembered, then he would appear to be encrusted with them.

While on the road, Jim found other salesmen to be a source for gems. He garnered many by winning them at cards and dice. Some stones had been hocked by long-gone drummers. If Jim spotted a ring in a pawn shop with a gem that he wanted, he asked the pawnbroker to remove it from its mounting. The pawnbroker kept the gold. If a ring contained other gems, they also were left to the broker. Jim desired only diamonds. Sometimes the stones were only half a carat. Large or small, he carried them away in a pocket of his wallet. In later years as his wealth increased, he toted them around in a miner's belt and delightedly spread them out by the handful before the astonished eyes of customers and other salesmen. Should someone doubt that they were genuine, he scratched "James Buchanan Brady" on a pane of glass.

He became so identified with the stones that in 1884 "Markie" Mayer, a top salesman of cotton for the firm of H. B. Claflin & Company, walked into the barroom of Cincinnati's Burnet House hotel and coined the most colorful and indelible nickname in American history. Looking around the room, he asked, "Has anyone here seen Diamond Jim?"