

**Disclaimer: The following account is fiction. Any similarity to situations or persons of the past or present is purely coincidental.**

## **Why the Speaker Was Late**

**By Robert Francis**

**© July 2006**

LOCATION: a large convention center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to announce that our featured speaker has just arrived. Please give a warm welcome to the world renowned Ulysses Smith Adams.

CROWD: excited applause

SPEAKER: I am terribly sorry for my late arrival. To begin with, my private jet came in somewhat late. Then on the way from the airport, a totally unexpected situation arose to further impede my progress. Understanding the importance of my prompt arrival, I instructed my driver to run all stop lights on the way to the convention center. He was doing an admirable job of following orders when a pedestrian, for no apparent reason aside from reaching the other side of the road, stepped into a crosswalk and proceeded to walk in front of the limousine. Of course we hit the careless man, running cleanly over him with one front tire. Then, as the man somehow became tangled or caught under the body of the car, we were forced to a stop.

My driver and I both removed ourselves from the limousine, my driver to extract the man from under our car, and I to upbraid him for his careless and unthinking behavior. I was quite shocked when the man began to shout at us in a very critical way and with no shortage of profanity. I began to realize that he was actually blaming *me* for what had happened. He went so far as to say that he fully intended to sue me for damages.

“My good man,” I said. “Your careless behavior may well have caused me to be late for a very important speaking engagement. Thousands, and I do mean thousands, of people have paid dearly to hear me speak tonight. They will be very disappointed if I am late. As for your sundry injuries, what’s past is past. We can do nothing about that. It is to the future that we must look. I freely admit that with your numerous broken bones and hemorrhaging organs, the future, to you, may look bleak. I regret very much this situation in which you have found yourself, but keep your chin up. Tomorrow is a new day. And let us not cast blame. Let us not be critical of one another. We are all brothers after all.”

With that, my driver and I got back into the limousine. “Back up,” I said. “Run over the man a second time. We must leave no job only half accomplished.” Indeed, it was a very regrettable situation in which we found ourselves, but we are here now. It is an honor to be in your fair city, for the august purpose of speaking to you good people concerning the beauty of brotherly love.