

My Name Is Ewald

By Michael Groetsch

“But Big E, I don’t understand why you want to attend this seminar. You know they try to get you here so they can put the hustle on you later. And besides, you have more money than God! Why don’t we turn around and go back home,” Vincent insists.

“Shut up Vincent,” Big E replies. “The paper said that the first seminar is free. They’re also giving away a door prize.”

“A prize? What kind of prize?” Vincent asks.

“I have no idea. But it’s a prize and it’s free. Now let’s go in and register!” Big E demands.

As they enter the hotel’s conference room, a young man with perfect hair immediately greets them to the seminar. He sports a silk suit and looks like he’s auditioning for an infomercial.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” he says. Welcome to your financial future. If you men would be so kind to fill out a registration form for the door prize, we’ll have someone seat you.”

“Big E,” Vincent whispers, “if we put our names and addresses on these registration forms, we’ll be on every financial advisor’s mailing list in the country within 24 hours. This is just a gimmick to get information on you. There is no way that I am going to give them my address and phone number just for a chance to win a door prize.”

“Shut up, Vincent!” Big E yells as he picks up a blank raffle ticket. “I know what I am doing. Now go sit down if you want. I’ll be there in a minute.”

As Big E fills out his form, Vincent looks over his shoulder and notices that he prints the name George Howard and gives a phony address and phone number.

“Big E, who the hell is George Howard?” Vincent asks.

“Be quiet, Vincent,” Big E whispers, “I’m using an alias. If I am lucky enough to win, I can get my prize without being bothered later.”

“But what happens if they ask you for identification?”

“Vincent, who in the world has ever heard of anyone winning a door prize and then being asked for ID? Now shut your mouth and please go sit down!”

After being seated, Big E introduces himself and hands his business card to an elderly couple already sitting at their table.

“Hi, my name is Ewald Groetsch. If you ever want to buy real estate, please contact me and I will see if I can help you.”

“Ewald, how do you spell that?” the elderly man asks.

“E-W-A-L-D. It’s German,” he replies.

“What an unusual name,” the elderly lady responds. “I don’t think that I have ever heard that name before.”

“Nice meeting you Ewald,” the elderly man says.

“Yea. Nice meeting you Ewald,” the man’s wife repeats.

“Big E, quiet down! They’re beginning the seminar,” Vincent mumbles.

Within 45 minutes, Vincent is ready to leave. “Come on, Big E, this is all bullshit. They just want to sell you a book and a bunch of tapes and get you to come to future seminars that cost big bucks. Let’s get out of here.”

“Shut up Vincent. I’m not going anywhere until they pull for the door prize. The guy with the hair says that you have to be present to win. Even if you didn’t, they couldn’t send the prize

to George Howard because George Howard doesn't exist. If you want to go, catch a cab. But I'm staying!"

For the remaining hour and a half, the guy with the hair and silk suit delivers a financial message designed to lure participants back to future seminars. In closing comments, he offers his book and tapes at a discounted price only available to those in attendance.

"Come on Big E, lets go!" Vincent insists.

"Vincent, I told you that I'm not leaving until they draw for the door prize."

"Okay folks, we're ready for the drawing of the door prize," the infomercial guy announces. "Would the lady in the first row please come up and assist me with the drawing?"

A middle-aged woman with a buffoon hairdo pulls the raffle as Big E sits on the edge of his chair.

"The winner of a free dinner and Saints Football tickets is a George Howard. Is there a George Howard in the audience?" the hair guy asks.

Without hesitation Big E (aka George Howard) responds, "Yea, here I am!"

"But I thought that your name was Ewald Groetsch," the elderly man at the table replies.

"I'll explain later," Big E insists. "Let me get my prize first," he says as he winks at Vincent and walks toward the podium.

As Big E accepts his prize, the infomercial guy insists that he will be in touch later to discuss other financial endeavors.

"Sure you will," Big E responds, as he receives his prize and summons Vincent to quickly head for the parking lot.

"What do you think his real name is?" the elderly woman asks.

"I don't know," her husband replies.

“Do you think that he could have been a prop for the company putting on the seminar?” she asks.

“Maybe so,” he responds.

“How about if we leave before we’re approached by the guy with the hair,” she suggests.

“Good idea, dear.”

“Hey, why are we leaving through the side door?” she asks.

“Because Ewald Groetsch, George Howard and that weird friend of his might be waiting for us in the parking lot.”