

CONFESSIONS OF A BOY ENTRANT

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NOW THAT OVER FIFTY YEARS HAVE PASSED, I GUESS I'M NO LONGER BEING HELD TO ACCOUNT UNDER THE "OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT" SO IT'S TIME TO PASS ON A NUMBER OF HILARIOUS EXPLOITS; THERE ARE MANY TO REPORT, BUT I'VE SELECTED JUST A FEW ANECDOTES THAT ARE, TO THE BEST OF MY FAILING MEMORY BOTH HONEST AND FUNNY, AND I'VE RECOUNTED THEM MANY A TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY..

I THINK ALL BOY ENTRANTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BE NAUGHTY, EVEN UNDER THE WATCHFUL, AND SOMETIMES CRUELLY INTENTIONED D.I.'S AND SNOWDROPS, I THINK WE ALL EXPERIENCED SOME OF THE BULLYING CRUELTY THAT SOME OF THEM WERE CAPABLE OF; LUCKILY THEY WERE IN A MINORITY, BUT BOY, DID THEY HAVE THE POWER WHEN THEY HAD US ALONE! SO, IT WAS ALWAYS GOOD TO KNOW THAT WE WERE SMARTER THAN THEM; WE MAY HAVE BEEN THE LOWEST ON THE TOTEM POLE, BUT WE KNEW THE ROPES, THE DODGES AND HOW TO GET OUR OWN BACK WHEN WE NEEDED TO.

WE ALSO PLAYED WONDERFUL TRICKS ON EACH OTHER, I REMEMBER WE HAD ONE GUY IN OUR BILLET WHO WENT TO BED EVERY NIGHT EXTREMELY EARLY AND WAS SNORING BY 7PM AND SLEPT RIGHT THROUGH TO REVEILLE; HE ALWAYS GOT UP FIRST TO GET TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE FOR BREAKFAST. ONE NIGHT AT ABOUT 8PM THE WHOLE BILLET, ALL 20 OR SO OF US SWITCHED OFF THE LIGHTS AND WENT TO BED, AND THEN ALL GOT UP, PUT THE LIGHTS ON, AND RUSHED TO THE ABLUTIONS, OSTENSIBLY TO GET READY AND RUSH TO BREAKFAST AND OF COURSE HE TOOK THE BAIT, AND RUSHED OUT THE DOOR FIRST, CARRYING HIS IRONS AND MUG ALL DRESSED FOR THE DAY AHEAD! WE OF COURSE SLOWED DOWN AT THAT POINT AND SAT AND WAITED ON OUR "PITS" FOR ABOUT 10 MINUTES UNTIL HE CAME STORMING IN, JUST FURIOUS THAT WE HAD BEEN SO INSENSITIVE, HE HAD ACTUALLY WALKED A LONG WAY TO THE MESS AND HAD NOT EVEN QUESTIONED THE FACT THAT LOTS OF PEOPLE WERE WALKING THE OTHER WAY, AS HE WAS STILL VERY SLEEPY! IN THE END HE DID SEE THE FUNNY SIDE.

NOW THEN, WE ALSO HAD ANOTHER EARLY-GO-TO-BED-GUY, THIS TIME I REMEMBER THE NAME, IT WAS BOB HUGHES, BOB WAS A DEDICATED STUDENT MORE THAN ANYTHING, TOP IN ALL THE EDUCATION AND TRADE TESTS AND EXAMS, HE WAS SMART! THAT'S WHY OF COURSE HE WENT TO BED EARLY, NOT LIKE THE REST OF US MOB WHO, AFTER LIGHTS-OUT AT 10PM LISTENED CLANDESTINELY TO RADIO LUXEMBURG. SO ONE NIGHT AROUND 9PM WHEN BOB WAS FAST ASLEEP WE (ABOUT 8 OR 9 OF US) PHYSICALLY LIFTED HIS BED, WITH HIM IN IT STILL SOUND ASLEEP, OUT THE DOOR AND CARRIED HIM TO THE MIDDLE OF THE PARADE GROUND, IT WAS A WARM DRY CALM SUMMER EVENING AND HE CONTINUED TO SLEEP LIKE A BABY UNTIL HE WAS GENTLY AWOKEN AT 4AM BY TWO FRIENDLY SNOWDROPS, I SAY FRIENDLY BECAUSE THEY ACTUALLY THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY AND DIDN'T PUT HIM ON A CHARGE, AND EVEN MORE INTERESTING THEY DIDN'T HOLD AN INQUISITION IN OUR BILLET TO FIND OUT WHO THE CULPRITS WERE! THEY JUST DELIVERED HIM BACK AND CARRIED HIS BED AND BEDDING TO BOOT!

AT HEREFORD, AS I'M SURE IT WAS THE SAME FOR ALL BOY ENTRANTS, BEING THE LOWEST ON THE TOTEM POLE, WE WERE ALWAYS PICKED ON BY ANYONE IN AUTHORITY, ON REFLECTION WE LIKELY BECAME BETTER FOR IT KNOWING WE COULD ONLY GO UP, BUT TRULY, NOBODY WAS MORE CRUEL TO THE BOYS THAN THE SNOWDROPS, THEY ALWAYS ABUSED THEIR AUTHORITY AND RELISHED GIVING OUT PUNISHMENT AND FREQUENT "BOLLOCKINGS" IN PUBLIC; THERE WAS ONE FEMALE POLICEWOMAN WHO WAS DETESTED BY EVERY BOY IN THE CAMP AS SHE WAS SUCH A BITCH TO ALL OF US WHENEVER

SHE GOT THE CHANCE; WE WERE ALL SHIT SCARED OF HER AND HER BAD TEMPER, ALWAYS DIRECTED AT US. AT THE SAME TIME, SHE WAS ABSOLUTELY STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL AND WORE THE TIGHTEST UNIFORM WE HAD EVER SEEN ON ANY FEMALE MEMBER OF THE R.A.F., SHE HAD THE BIGGEST SET OF HEADLIGHTS WE HAD EVER SEEN, AND SHE ATTRACTED HER FELLOW MALE SNOWDROPS LIKE DOGS AROUND A BITCH, AND SHE USED HER POWERS ON THEM WONDERFULLY. I THINK EVERY BOY ENTRANT IN HEREFORD HAD FANTASIES ABOUT THIS WOMAN! ANYWAY, ON WITH THE STORY. WE ALL DID JANKERS OF COURSE, I WAS NO EXCEPTION, AND NORMALLY COOKHOUSE WAS THE WORST OF THOSE PUNISHMENT DUTIES, PEELING SPUDS, OR CLEANING DIRTY STOVES AND VATS; BUT, THERE WAS ONLY ONE ASSIGNMENT WE FEARED EVEN MORE, AND IT WAS TO BE SENT AS PART OF THE DETAIL IN CLEANING THE RAF POLICE OFFICE, BECAUSE THEY GAVE NO QUARTER, AFTER ALL WE WERE CRIMINALS BEING PUNISHED, WE HAD COMMITTED TERRIBLE SINS, AND ON THIS PARTICULAR SPELL OF JANKERS I WAS SERVING FOUR DAYS FOR HAVING A DIRTY CAP BADGE, A TRUE CRIMINAL ACT. TWO OF US WERE ASSIGNED TO CLEAN THE POLICE OFFICE, WHEN WE GOT THERE," SHE" WAS ON DUTY, IT WAS BITTER SWEET AS WE GOT TO OGLE AT HER CLOSE UP AND SMELL HER PERFUME AS SHE MADE US CLEAN THE TOILETS 5 TIMES AND SCRUB AND POLISH THE FLOOR THRICE. WHEN SHE GAVE US A 5 MINUTE BREAK WE HAD TO MAKE COFFEE FOR THE TWO POLICE ON DUTY, THE NORMAL LIQUID CAMP COFFEE MIXED WITH CONDENSED MILK AND HOT WATER.....AND THAT BECAME THE CHANCE FOR OUR REVENGE; MY FELLOW CRIMINAL, A WONDERFUL GUY CALLED KEITH HOSTLER JUST HAPPENED TO HAVE A CONDOM IN HIS WALLET AND, WE OPENED IT AND Poured IN THE REQUISITE 2 OUNCES OF CONDENSED MILK AND THEN TIED A KNOT IN THE DEVICE, THEN WE QUIETLY LAID IT ON THE DESK OF THE SERGEANT WHO WAS NOT THERE AT THE TIME AND CLOSED THE DOOR. WE NEVER DID KNOW THE RESULT OF WHAT HAPPENED, BUT I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO HAVE BEEN A FLY ON THE WALL WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED, I DO KNOW THAT SHE WAS POSTED ABOUT 2 WEEKS LATER, AND WE OFTEN WONDERED IF WE HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE.

AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, US BOYS KNEW THE ROPES, AND HOW TO GET AROUND THE SYSTEM, BUT THERE WAS ONE NIGHT WHERE WE ALMOST EARNED A TRIP TO DETENTION! WE KNEW EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY OF OUR HOME BASE, WE KNEW THE CRACKS IN THE PERIMETER, THE HOLES IN THE HEDGES, THE DITCHES WHERE WE COULD BE INVISIBLE. IT WAS VERY COMMON ON WEEKDAYS, AS SENIOR ENTRY, TO CHANGE INTO CIVVIES AND HEAD A FEW MILES AWAY FROM CAMP TO ENJOY AN EVENING OF DARTS, SNOOKER AND A FEW PINTS OF CIDER OR BEER, OR BOTH, MIXED TOGETHER, WE WOULD OF COURSE NORMALLY BE BACK BEFORE CURFEW, BUT WHEN WE RAN LATE, WE KNEW WHERE TO CREEP IN THE REQUISITE HOLE IN THE FENCE AND SLINK IN THE DARK BETWEEN BILLETS AND MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO OUR BUILDING WHERE WE HAD LEFT A WINDOW UNLATCHED TO CLAMBER IN. WELL, THREE OF US, BOB HOSKINS, JOCK MITCHELL AND MYSELF JUST ABOUT USED UP EVERY PIECE OF LUCK AND SKILL IN OUR POSSESSION ONE LATE SUMMER'S EVENING AROUND 11PM; WE GOT IN AS USUAL EASILY AND WERE MAKING OUR WAY TO OUR BUILDING, UNFORTUNATELY STUMBLING A ON ON THE WAY, AS WE HAD CONSUMED A LITTLE TOO MUCH OF THE SCRUMPY, AND AS A RESULT WERE NOT AS COVERT AS WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN. IT ACTUALLY DIDN'T TAKE TOO LONG BEFORE WE HAD TEAMS OF SNOWDROPS AND FIRE PICQUETS SCOURING THE AREA, THERE WERE TORCHES FLASHING, AND DOGS BARKING AND WE WERE RUNNING FOR DEAR LIFE.....AND THE ENEMY WERE GAINING ON US AND, A COUPLE OF TIMES WE WERE ACTUALLY SPOTTED, AND LOTS OF EXTRA SHOUTING AND EXCITEMENT CAME FROM THE ENEMY RANKS!

THE CHALLENGE THAT ALMOST DID US IN, WAS THE AIR RAID SHELTER (COVERED IN GRASS) WHICH WAS POSITIONED DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE REAR WINDOW OF THE BUILDING WE WERE TRING TO SNEAK BACK INTO. EVERY TIME WE ALMOST GOT TO THE TOP, AND ON TO FREEDOM, WE FELL DOWN THE

BLOODY SLOPE AGAIN.....AND THE ENEMY WERE GETTING EVEN CLOSER, HOW THE HELL THEY DIDN'T SEE US CLIMBING AND FALLING REPEATEDLY I'LL NEVER KNOW, THEY WERE JUST LOOKING IN THE DIRECTION THEY THOUGHT WE WERE HEADING TOWARD THE FRONT DOORS OF THE THREE BUILDING BLOCKS! ANYWAY, AFTER COUNTLESS ATTEMPTS WE FINALLY (ALL 3 AT THE SAME TIME) MOUNTED THE PEAK AND SPED IN SECONDS TO THE OPEN WINDOW WHERE WE DIVED THROUGH MAKING A HELLISH COMMOTION, SECURELY LOCKING THE WINDOW BEHIND US.

THIS IS WHERE TEAMWORK AND BOY ENTRANTS COURAGE AND SOLIDARITY PREVAILED, BECAUSE IMMEDIATELY ABOUT 20 BOYS SURROUNDED US, STRIPPED US, PUT US INTO PYJAMAS AND UNDER THE COVERS IN OUR BEDS WITHIN, IT SEEMED, 10 SECONDS, AS ABOUT 10 SECONDS AFTER THAT, THE DOORS BURST OPEN AND THE LIGHTS WENT ON AND HALF A DOZEN SNOWDROPS AND A COUPLE OF OTHERS WOKE EVERYBODY UP ASKING IF ANYONE HAD COME THROUGH OR IF ANYONE HAD SEEN ANYONE JUST ARRIVE! OF COURSE, EVERYONE PROTESTED ABOUT BEING WOKEN UP, INCLUDING US THREE, AND THEY MOVED ON AND WE COULD HEAR THE COMMOTION AS THEY WENT FROM ROOM TO ROOM TRYING TO TRACK DOWN THE INFILTRATORS!! THERE WERE QUESTIONS FROM ALL LEVELS LOOKING FOR CLUES FOR DAYS AFTERWARDS, BUT NOBODY KNEW ANYTHING, AND NO-ONE EVER CAME FORWARD. THERE WAS A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY FOR A FEW WEEKS AFTERWARD FROM LOCAL CONSTRUCTION PEOPLE, REPAIRING PERIMETER FENCES AND BRICKING UP HOLES IN WALLS AND HEDGES.

FOOTNOTE.

JOCK MITCHEL, BOB HOSKINS AND I STAYED IN TOUCH FOR MANY YEARS AND ALMOST ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT THIS EVENING; IT WAS ALWAYS GOOD FOR LAUGH. BOB PASSED AWAY ABOUT 15 YEARS AGO FROM CANCER IN HIS NATIVE PLYMOUTH IN DEVON; JOCK MITCHELL (NOW KNOWN AS DON MITCHELL), IS NOW LIVING A WELL DESERVED RETIREMENT WITH HIS WIFE CHRIS, CLOSE TO HIS KIDS AND GRANDKIDS IN ST, CATHARINES ONTARIO, NOT TOO FAR FROM NIAGARA FALLS, I'VE BEEN IN CANADA SINCE 1974, I LIVED IN VANCOUVER FOR FIVE YEARS BUT NOW LIVE IN OAKVILLE, ONTARIO, DON AND I SEE EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME BUT WE DON'T CLIMB THROUGH HEDGES TOO OFTEN NOWADAYS.

DECEMBER 2018