

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory

December Delirium

*a psecret psociety
pshort pstory by
mike bozart (33)*

9:00

$6 + 6 + 6 = 18$

December Delirium by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | DEC 2015

It was a leisurely, albeit quite smoky, teenage drive with future Agent 107 (the late, great Frank N. Peck). We were in his 1975 burnt orange Ford Maverick, driving northwest into Charlotte from Matthews (NC) on US 74 in December of 1981. But, as he slowed down for a red traffic light, we advanced thirty-four years in just 3.4 seconds. Yes, it was suddenly December 2015, and our driver Frank is now just a serene, ashen-faced ghost.

“That department store was over there, Frank. Yes, on that very corner. Buick Drive at Independence Boulevard. Or, was it Electra Lane? Oh well, you know; it’s not important now, I guess.”

Frank just nodded. Then, the saddest smile overtook his ethereal countenance.

I continued with my east Charlotte geography update and recollections. “Notice the overpass they recently built. Conference Drive. Yeah, the retail outfit over there was called Service Merchandise. Such an odd combination of nouns. Yep, I remember it.”

“Are you sure?” a holographic Frank asked in a whisper from my left, sensing my flickering (and faltering?) memory. *His neural circuits are going, but old Mike doesn’t realize it yet.*

“Oh, yeah; that was where it was. Maybe it closed before you guys got down here in ’79, or shortly thereafter. I remember the LED watches in their one-inch-thick catalog. Remember those store catalogs? They mailed them out to the surrounding neighborhoods.” I chuckled for a second.

Frank just murmured, “L-E-D.”

“Yeah, Frank, LED watches were a relatively new thing then. And, they weren’t cheap. Some models were well over \$100. One hundred 1981 dollars, that is, Frank. Oh, Pulsar was the daddy brand. We all wanted one. And, get this, all the LED watches were set to 11:49 in the catalog. Don’t ask me why I remembered this.” *Were they set to 11:49 in the store, too?*

“AM or PM?” the Frank apparition quickly asked much more clearly. *Why in the weird world did he ask that?*

“Not sure on that, Frank. However, I often wondered if the 11:49 display time was to show off as many LED segments as possible. But, as I thought it out in my mind, that hunch would prove to be wrong, as the numbers 6 and 9 have six segments each. The number 5 has five, and the number 4 has four. I realized this after waking up at 6:54 one Saturday morning in June.” *Yeah, I’m sure, dude.*

“So, you think that 6:59 or 9:56 would display the most LED segments, is that right?” Frank asked with a lost-in-thought, Earth-is-now-so-trite look.

“Well, let’s see, Frank. There are seventeen LED segments in 6:59 and 9:56. There are only fourteen in 11:49. Thus, be careful. Your bane isn’t totally braked yet, Frank.” *The bane of cold rain in Spain.*

“Bane braked? Now, listen to you, Mike. You have got to be the word murderer of the century. Pure linguistic poison, you spout. Yeah, my old friend, your brain is just toxic letter-

shaped linguine.” *Letter-shaped linguine? Where do you buy that pasta?*

“Maybe so, maybe sew. Hey, what about 12:59?”

“What about it?” the phantom Frank quipped.

“I count eighteen segments in that time. Looks like I win.”

“Eighteen segments in that time. Sounds like the title to a novel, Mike van Tryke. [my nickname and later visual art name] Yeah, your addition is correct: Eighteen LED segmentations it is. Perhaps you got me this time.”

“You can post 12:56 and we’ll call it a draw, Frank.”

“Will you let me post 12:99 in overtime?”

“Only if I can post 12:66,” I retorted. *Still a draw.*

“Well, if we’re going that far off the conventional clock, I’ll post 99:99. That’s a total of twenty-four segments for that 24-karat gold medal.” *Fool’s gold.*

“You haven’t taken the gold medal yet, Frank. 12:99 equates to 1:39.”

“Equates to 1:39? What temporal nonsense you speak!”

“Yeah. Sure. 12:00 plus 99 minutes equals 1:39. AM or PM: It’s your choice. Therefore, my eternally stoned comrade, your LED segment total is only thirteen.”

“Thirteen?”

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