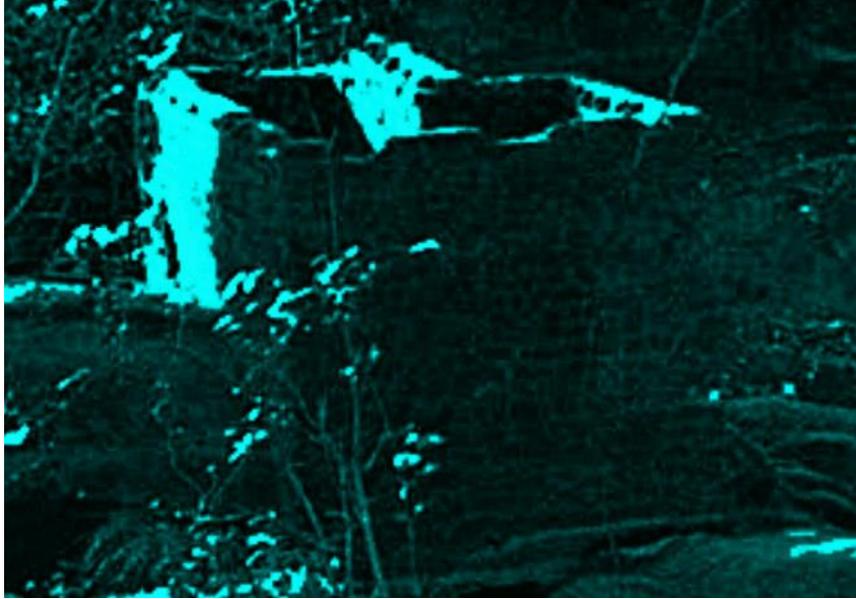


another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Fallon Park by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | Dec. 2019

Fallon Park

by Mike Bozart

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Saturday, December 27, 1969. It is an overcast-quiet, wind-chilled, decidedly cold (29° Fahrenheit; -1.67° Celsius) morning in the Anderson Heights neighborhood of Raleigh, North Carolina. A 6'-3" (1.91 meters tall), 32-year-old Caucasian American father is walking with his two sons, ages 5½ and 4, across curb-less Kittrell Drive, a slender, unlined, sidewalk-less, unmistakably residential, dark-asphalt-surfaced lane. Once on the right side of the traffic-less street, the toboggan-donning trio walk northeastward on a shoulder path for about 200 feet (61 meters), and then pause at a trailhead. The low-slung, front-window-walled Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School and attached brick church on Overbrook Drive come into view off to their left. The father stares at it.

"Are you liking kindergarten, Michael?" the father asks his older, red-haired son. *Why did dad ask me that?*

"It's ok, dad. I have two friends: Mark and Kirk. We always eat lunch together." *Glad he's made some friends. He seems so shy. Worry about him. He's kind of like me in the early years. Hope he can shed the shyness earlier than I did.*

"When can I go to that school, dad?" the younger, blonde-haired son asks excitedly. *Joey sure is raring to go. Someday he will realize that the age of 4 was best, and should have been savored. Bet that Michael wishes that he was still 4 and not in school, as he already appears to be a bit of an introverted daydreamer. Though, it seems that all kids want to grow up as fast as possible. I sure did.*

"In twenty months, son." *20?!*

"Is that a long time, dad?" a very curious-to-know Joseph asks. *Twen-tee sounds like a big number.*

"No, not really, son. It's less than two years." *Two years!*

"How much less?" Joseph demands to know.

"One sixth less, Joey. Imagine a super-large apple pie cut into six slices. It takes two years to eat it all. Now, imagine one of those big pieces taken away. You'll start in August the summer after the one that is coming up." *Gosh, that still seems like a long time.*

They then turn and take the oaks-and-pines-bisecting trail that descends to a small stream in Fallon Park, which is

essentially a very wide, mostly wooded greenway. The wool-winter-coats-clad threesome begin walking upstream on a bankside footpath. *Wonder if there is a pipe crossing. / This feels like a great adventure.*

“I bet that water is cold, dad,” NCSU (North Carolina State University) Wolfpack-scarfed Michael posits as he looks at some gray stones in the creek bed.

“You would be right, son. We certainly can’t search for crayfish today. The water is quite frigid now. Hypothermia could set in.”

“High-poh-what, dad?” the younger son asks.

“High-poh-thurm-ee-uh, son. It can be a life-threatening situation. We must not get wet today. The creek in winter is not the same as in summer.” *Life-threatening? Yikes!*

“Could we die in that creek, dad?” the older son then asks.

“You could, Michael, but I would never let that happen to you guys. I’d pluck you right out of there in an East Flatbush second. But, your mother might not let you come down here anymore. So, let’s not get too close to the edge. This creek bank is undercut in numerous places, and sometimes has a styrofoam-plate ledge. Your weight could cause it to break and collapse. So, let’s stay at least five feet [1.52 meters] from the edge. Ok, guys?” *Undercut? Styrofoam-plate ledge? Collapse?!*

“Ok, dad; we will,” the two sons say in unison.

The trio keep walking. All are now silent. The only sounds are the snapping of small, brittle twigs under their boot steps. All three are completely immersed in their thoughts. *Never knew that a person could die from being in cold water. That’s scary – really scary. Must not fall in that creek. Must watch where I step. Falling in that creek would be bad, really BAD – we couldn’t come down here anymore. / So glad that mom and dad bought me that [maroon] tricycle for Christmas – the exact one that I wanted. I will ride it again later today. Hope mom will let me go to the school parking lot. If my friends go with me, she will probably let me. Need to call Kirk and Mark later. Hope they can go. / Kinda miss the [United States] Navy and the [USS] Sam Rayburn. [an early nuclear-powered submarine] But, 70 days at sea is not fair to my*

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