

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



A Winter Hike by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | AUG 2016

It was back in January of 2000 when I lived alone on High Peak Mountain (near Etowah, NC, USA) that some Caucasian American friends from Charlotte (Frank von Peck, Agent 107, and Burke Braun, Agent 2) came up for a cool-air waterfall hike. I'm not sure of the exact Saturday, but there was still some snow on the ground in the shady spots. The high temperature was forecast to be 43° (Fahrenheit; 6° Celsius) in the Brevard area under mostly cloudy skies. I thought: *Ah, perfect hiking weather. Should be fun. No bugs. No sweat.*

We had a breakfast bowl (not Cheerios) and some coffee in the living room. A few minutes later, perhaps around 9:30 AM, we were joined by my zany, white, long-dirty-blonde-haired, former Floridian, up-street neighbor Kelvin (refused to take an agent number; is suspicious of all numerical identification).

"We should do DuPont [State Forest] today, dudes," Kelvin suggested emphatically. *Do-do pont.*

"From the bridge?" I asked. *Huh?*

"From the bridge?" Kelvin repeated, looking puzzled.

"That's what DuPont means in French," I said. *Oh, no, he's on with the French translations already.*

"Get out of here, old man," Kelvin retorted.

"Hey, you're older than me," I barked back. (I was 35 at the time; Kelvin was 43, I believe; Burke was just shy of 36; Frank was 34.)

We got our bodies and minds satiated and then piled into my white Plymouth Voyager minivan. Burke, sitting shotgun, put in an early '70s art-rock cassette tape as we began to ease down the steep, gravel, switchbacking road.

When we arrived at the valley plateau (.62 miles – 1 km – from my driveway), the two Charlotteans were noticeably shocked by the ratty old trailers and assorted makeshift housing.

“Man, I don’t know how you ever bought that house up there, Tryke,” [my nickname and art-name] a reddish-brown-bearded Burke said. “I would have turned around as soon as I saw this.”

“I hear ya, Burke. I was sitting in Beanstreets [now out of business, but the focus of a short story with the same name] in downtown Asheville in late October of '97, when I saw the house advertised in *IWANNA* (a free buy-and-sell weekly). It was just your basic three-line text ad. I wasn’t really considering the Etowah area, but a two-bedroom house on a mountain for only \$39,900 ensnared my curiosity. I thought, ‘oh, let’s at least check it out’ – which I certainly did that evening.”

“The first time you came up here it was dark?” Frank asked from the backseat, sounding shocked.

“It wasn’t pitch-dark, Frank,” I replied. “Though, it was advanced twilight. I had called the homeowner before I left Asheville. He said that the house was just a smidgen under 1.1 miles [1.77 km] from the paved road.” *Smidgen?*

“Did he really say the word *smidgen*, Tryke?” Burke asked.

“He did, Burke. You know me; I remember such trivial, non-revenue-generating things.” *What?*

At the bent, shotgun-blasted STOP sign, I turned left and we bounded onto the asphalt road (Pleasant Grove Church Road). Everyone was happy to finally be done with the bumpy, severely rutted, cratered High Peak Road. *Jesus Christ! That is the road from hell!*

Just 500 feet (152 meters) later, we were at another STOP sign that only had one bullet hole in it. I turned left again. We were now on Pleasant Grove Road, which paralleled the sinuous French Broad River. At some point the road changed names and became Talley Road.

Everyone seemed to be lost in Burke’s musical selections. A cut from Gentle Giant was playing as we rolled up to the STOP sign at Crab Creek Road. *School days together, why do they change?*

“Are we there yet?” Frank mocked from the backseat.

I looked in the rear-view mirror and saw his dark brown hair flanking his black shades. “Only six miles [9.66 km] to go, Peckmeister.” [one of Frank’s nicknames]

With that answer, Frank fired up another bowl. *Oh, jeez.*

“We’ve made three consecutive left turns, Tryke,” Burke then said. “Are we going in a circle around the mountain?”

“A semicircle,” I said. “Then we’ll break away to the west.”

Burke just shook his head. *He’s already cooked.*

Kelvin, who had been mute – possibly from being hungover – finally spoke up. “We’re now on Crab Creek Road, boys. You know why they call it Crab Creek Road?”

“No idea,” I replied.

Neither Burke nor Frank offered up an answer.

“Time’s up!” Kelvin blasted. “They call it Crab Creek Road because it runs next to Crab Creek.”

“Booooooo,” I muttered.

“So, the lame comedy hour has already started,” Burke commented.

“Let me out now,” Frank demanded.

Kelvin then tacked on his hardy-har-har laugh.

Soon I was turning right onto DuPont Road (which becomes Staton Road). “It’s the homestretch now, guys.” No reply.

Three miles (4.83 km) further, I turned right into the Hooker Falls Access Area parking lot. There were only two other vehicles. I parked near the river, away from the pair of SUVs.

“Well, we’re here, guys,” I announced. “Get ready for eight grueling hours of hiking.”

“Fuck that!” Frank retorted.

“Calm down,” I replied. “I’m just kidding. We can take in several waterfalls and be back here in under three hours.”

“Ok, what’s the first waterfall?” Frank asked.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

