

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



WRIGHTSVILLE BEACHED

It all started out innocently enough one June day ...

by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) May 2013

It was back in the summer of 1985, I believe. Yeah, that was the year. (My long-term memory is a lot better than my short-term these days.) We, my brother Joe and several friends from Charlotte, were renting a two-story house on Pine Street in east Wilmington's Winter Park neighborhood. The address was 5002. (Don't ask me why I remember such trivial things.) Yeah, I'm fairly sure that was the number. <ding> I am now certain that was it.

It was – and still is, I believe – a two-story house on a sandy corner. It quickly became something of a flophouse for five white dudes, aged 17 to 23. Youthful partying and such. The last goof-off summer before everyone got serious about their *great* careers. <cough>

Well, anyway, once our other friends back in Charlotte got word that we had secured a party house near the beach, weekend arrivals were nonstop. I still remember an early morning when there were about twenty visitors passed-out throughout the house. Bodies were slumped over in recliners, on sofas, in sleeping bags on the floor, and even unconscious on the lower back roof. It looked like a deadly gas had been released. I think that was the 4th of July weekend. The big blowout.

However, before that mega-bash, back in late June (Friday, June 21st to be exact), a couple of close friends came down, namely Frank (future Agent 107) and Slim (who never would take an agent number; was always leery of randomly assigned numbers). Upon arrival, they almost immediately wanted to go to Wrightsville Beach to paddle around in the sound in their newly purchased inflatable boats. And, trust me, these were no Zodiacs.

I consented and we were soon on our way, going east on Oleander Drive as the gray-green smoke inside the cab went west. We crossed the two bridges with no delays to speak of (or type up). Traffic was still light.

We parked on North Lumina Avenue, near the intersection with Mallard Street. Our put-in was only thirty feet away. I made sure not to infringe on a driveway by even an inch, as aggressive towing was/is the norm at this upscale beach.

We quickly inflated the two cheap plastic boats on the sidewalk with foot pumps. Slim's boat was smaller, so I joined Frank in the inflation of the larger one. Eight minutes later, we were all set for sail (or paddle).

Slim got in the smaller one by himself. Frank and I shared the larger one. We started to paddle towards a marsh island in Little Lollipop Bay (real name). We could see cars going over the West Salisbury Street Bridge (US 74).

As we drew closer to the bridge, it seemed that some motorists were screaming at us. *Perhaps they got an early start on their vacation?* Such I thought.

And, oh, the wind on that morning. It was like a gale out of the southwest, which put it right in our faces. Frank then grabbed the binoculars. He corrected our course heading.

We paddled in earnest towards what looked to be a small beach on the south side of the marsh island. We would take a break there and chill out for a while. Slim had packed a thermos bottle full of *Elixium*, as he called it. He wouldn't tell us what it was. He assured us it was an all-natural

concoction of high quality. Well, we were young and ready for some high adventure.

We arrived safely and beached the air-filled vessels. The wind had grown so fierce that we had to sit on the boats to prevent them from flying away. I remember Slim joking about us never making it back. His dark brown hair was being ruffled by the wind, and his striped white-and-blue t-shirt looked like a flag (his skinny torso being the mast).

We passed the metallic jug around, taking a few gulps with each turn. It tasted like a mix of almonds, blackberry and mint with under-currants (punnery in motion), replete with a leathery finish. No, just jesting; it was more like steel wool. It did have a slightly emetic aftertaste. I wondered: *What in the world is this?*

I looked at Slim. “Hey, you didn’t just grind up 1,000 morning glory seeds and make tea with them, did you? I vomit on that stuff! Is this going to be another puke-a-thon?”

Slim replied in an assuring manner. “Relax, we’re all going to be ok. It’s not that or anything else you’ve had before, or even heard about.”

Then Frank had a question for Slim. “Hey, how long before the effects start?” The bangs on both sides of his middle-parted hair were flapping like wings in the brisk breeze.

“Usually between 45 and 50 minutes,” Slim scientifically replied.

“And then what happens?” I asked with some trepidation.

“Everything,” Slim nonchalantly said. *Oh, great. Focking great. What have I signed up for this time? How will this end? How many drownings?*

There was a Pizza Hut just on the other side of the bridge that caught Frank’s attention. “Hey guys, we’ve got time to paddle over to that Pizza Hut before we start zooming. Let’s get some food through our gullets before the cosmic onrush commences.”

“You’re kidding me!” I exclaimed. Frank was a known high-risk-taker.

Slim seemed unfazed by Frank’s idea. However, he had no intention of going in his boat. “Bring me back a Hawaiian pizza.” Slim then reached in his pocket. “Here’s the money, man. Keep the change as a delivery charge.”

And with that Frank was ready to disembark on the 375-yard transit. The wind had died down a little.

Frank looked at Slim. “Are you sure that you will be ok here alone?” *Oh, so Frank plans on me going with him. Already feeling disoriented. Their English words sound like a foreign language. Better try to keep my wits about me.*

“Go!” Slim shouted. “I’ll be perfectly fine. You guys will get there much faster with both of you paddling a single craft.” *Did he say ‘craft’?*

And with that, we, Frank and I, were off. The wind, fortunately, continued to lessen in intensity. The trek wasn’t too bad, actually. In fact, we were dockside in a mere fourteen minutes.

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