

Voices from the past

Well, once again I find myself sitting at the keyboard unable to sleep because of the many thoughts racing through my head. This time, I lay thinking about what my life was like when our country was faced with war with Iraq over 10 years ago. I can remember being in the seventh grade working on a story for the school newspaper about the rising costs of gasoline and the conflict then with Iraq. Amazingly, I still have the recorded tape that I used to ask questions of the teachers for their opinions on my story. It's funny to look back at how I knew what I wanted to do even as a child, though I wasn't consciously aware of how I was going to do it. But even at that low of a level of understanding of what I wanted to do, I chose to voice my opinion and observations, through my writing to an audience of 100 at best. I wish I still had the article that I wrote to be able to see how much my writing skills have improved since junior high school. I never really connected to my English teacher in Junior High School, mostly because I think he was a closet homosexual and assimilating myself with him was acknowledging a part of myself that I was afraid of at the time.

It wasn't until college, when I met Dr. Mary Relihan, that my interest or discovery of a talent in writing surfaced. Even then I wasn't quite sure that writing, per se, was going to be what I wanted to do. At that time, I

thought I wanted to be a Certified Public Accountant. Now I can't imagine what my life would be like had I chosen to finish that path. I was certainly confused about who I was and who I wanted to be. But looking at it from a different perspective, had I not thought I wanted to be an accountant, I would have never met my best friend Pat in one of my accounting classes. That alone shows me that I was exactly where I needed to be doing exactly what I was supposed to be. There are so many other things that I could think about that I would not change about my college experience if I had the chance. My eyes were certainly opened to a whole world of things I had previously shut out, namely Hypnosis and other metaphysical things that I considered demonic. I often think about the lady that opened my eyes to Hypnosis and palm reading, etc. Her name was Brenda. She was a strange soul. Somehow I think she probably wouldn't seem so strange to me now.

I don't recall exactly how it all came up. I remember she was always talking about things I didn't know anything about (much of which I'm sure I spout out on a regular basis now). One day, I remember that she was doing a palm reading for this girl and told her that she saw that she was going to have a baby boy soon. What Brenda didn't know was the girl was pregnant and had just found out it was a boy. This certainly opened my eyes to

at least a big coincidence. I can't remember what all she told me when she read my palm. Then Brenda told me that she had a book about hypnosis and told me a little bit about it. She brought me the book to read and immediately I was hooked. One evening I was sitting near the library entrance and was talking to one of my friends about hypnosis and was trying to hypnotize her. "By chance," Dr. Kirk, the social psychiatrist professor came by and overheard what we were talking about. He asked if I would like him to hypnotize us both in the library. Of course I said yes! It was a very relaxing experience, and ever since then, I've been able to achieve the same level of conscious relaxation myself... that is when I do it. But by Dr. Kirk hypnotizing me, it sent me on a crusade to hypnotize any and everyone who would let me. I had to see more. I had to try new things. Once I had tried some of the basic things like the "seashore trip," I began trying out regression and progression routines, taking the people back to their childhoods.

At the time, I was working as a manager at Burger King, in Lewisburg, WV so most of my subjects were other managers and hourly employees that worked with me. I learned quickly that the power to hypnotize should not be taken lightly. One of the managers became very attached to me after I hypnotized her several times, doing regression routines. She said she just felt like she

"needed to talk to me" about different things that would happen throughout her day. Needless to say, I stopped hypnotizing her because I didn't want her to form any more emotional dependence than she already had.

That didn't stop me from practicing hypnosis, though. I even hypnotized my speech class for my demonstrative speech. Ms. Sawyer didn't allow herself to be hypnotized, but then if she had, who would've graded me? I still got an A. If nothing else, I demonstrated I could get my classmates to let their heads hang for 30 minutes while drool dribbled on their desks. That's pretty demonstrative!

I stopped practicing hypnosis when I moved to Virginia Beach, mostly because the topic just never came up, and the few times it did, the people I was talking to weren't really receptive to being hypnotized, or they said they were, but didn't ever follow through. I have hypnotized a few people since I've lived in Virginia Beach. I still have a signed 'release form' that my cousin Carolyn signed when I hypnotized her back in 1997. I doubt I'll ever get rid of it. It's the only thing I have that has her handwriting on it, and I don't ever want to forget her signature.

It almost seems that my life has come full circle in many

respects, and I'm sure it has in more ways than I know. Looking at where I am now and with respect to what I'm doing and wanting to do, it's very similar to where I was back in 1996 and what I was doing then, too. Then I was working at Burger King and just in my freshman year of college. My mind had only begun to comprehend the things it grasps so firmly now, one life cycle later. I suppose that's why Nancy Napier, my district manager appeared to me in my dream last night. She's been in a lot of my dreams since I left Burger King back in 1996. We didn't exactly part on the best of terms, mostly because of a disagreement over managerial style and human compassion.

Looking back at 1996, it wasn't exactly the easiest year for me emotionally. I was working 40 hours a week at the restaurant. I was carrying 18 credit hours at college, which equaled 6 full-time classes spread over 4 days. And on top of that, my parents were in the process of a divorce. I was just so emotionally exhausted that I couldn't take it anymore. I don't think I handled the experience too badly, though, unless you consider getting eczema blisters so large they held my toes and fingers apart and were even on the souls of my feet. I remember going to Nancy in December of 1996 to explain to her the situation I was going through, and to ask for two weeks off to refresh my spirits. The answer she gave me will probably stick with me for the rest of

my life, because at the time, I thought “how could someone have such little compassion or understanding for someone else’s situation?” When I told Nancy that my doctor had diagnosed me with depression and had put me on Prozac, she told me that she had gone through a depression before and that “I just have to decide to be happy. It’s that simple.” At the time, her words were abhorrent to me. Now I can look at her advice as well intended, and very good advice, but not necessarily conveyed in the best manner at the time.

It just so happened that during those two weeks that I had off from Burger King, I was talking to my (now) best friend Pat in the parking lot of the college. She told me that she had to get back to work to write up an advertisement for an assistant position she was hiring for. Naturally, the opportunity seemed too good to be true, so I asked if I could apply for the position. Having known her for a few months, she knew my potential, so the application and interview process were basically formalities.

Well, this new opportunity left me in a predicament of how to break the news to Nancy that I would still work for her, but would need more flexibility with hours. Since Pat had a project that she needed worked on, I went in on the Friday before I was scheduled to go back to Burger King. Like a dumbass, I told one of my

coworkers at Burger King that I had been hired at the City of Lewisburg and of course it got back to Nancy that I was working at City Hall. Like a wet hornet, she called City Hall and spoke with me telling me how “disappointed she was in me that I concocted some story about depression to get two weeks off to look for a new job.” I tried to explain to her that it didn’t happen that way and that I wanted to still work for her, but she said, “I don’t need a part-time manager!” Then she told me that she wanted me to return the restaurant keys that day. I told her that I would get them to her as soon as I could. Then she said, “If anything happens in the restaurant, you know you’ll be the first one they go to.” I replied that I didn’t care and would get her the keys when I could. Then she wanted to talk to Pat, and told her “He’s MY employee... blah blah blah” Finally she hung up after severely ticking off Pat, who then took out her frustration on me.

A few hours later, the Chief of Police, who was a long-time friend of Pat’s, came down to talk to me saying that Nancy had called him to get the keys to the restaurant. He merely chuckled at her behavior and said that he doesn’t even have jurisdiction over where the restaurant was located, but that she was just trying to scare me to giving her keys back.

That night Nancy called my house, again wanting her

keys. We began debating her management styles (mostly me attacking the things she did wrong) and her defending them by attacking the things she thought I did wrong as a manager. I remember she told me that she "had more employees quit over me than she had any other manager in the seventeen years she had managed that store." I told her, "I can't help it they don't want to work. The ones that aren't lazy love me!" We went on in the heated debate/argument for quite awhile, and I distinctly remember her saying that "you may think I'm a bad manager now, but when you get out in the world and experience things a little more, you'll look back and think 'you know, that ol' Nancy might have known what she was talking about.'" Those words have echoed in my dreams countless nights since that conversation, and again last night in my dream.

While I would have to agree that some of the things that I didn't agree with Nancy on back then, I would agree with now. And I have a lot more respect for her as a person now than I did then, too. She was very good at motivating people (including me) with her attitude and energy. She also lived by the principle of leaving everything not related to work outside of work when you walk through the door. So I guess now that I have experienced more of the "real world," I would agree with her more now than I did back in 1997. One day I'll call Nancy Napier, if for no other reason than to thank

her, because no matter how small the part, her role helped shape me into the person I am now. Obviously she impacted my life a great deal for her spirit to visit me so many nights in my dreams. She will always be a reminder of who I am and who I want to be.