

# **Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 4**

## **Introduction**

The first rule of Flanagan's Running Club is no one talks about Flanagan's Running Club! If you are on the mailing list it is because you are trusted not to talk about Flanagan's Running Club. Now that fun at work has been banned in these dystopian times, this is a trial on sending it from my own e-mail address, so they can't grind us down too much. If you get this from my website's e-mail address, then feel free to forward it to whoever you want and get them to sign up to the mailing list on the website.

## **On This Day**

1820 – Maine becomes the 23rd U.S. state.

1877 – First ever official cricket test match is played: Australia vs England at the MCG Stadium, in Melbourne, Australia.

1906 – Rolls-Royce Limited is incorporated.

1985 – The first Internet domain name is registered (symbolics.com).

It's World Consumer Rights Day

## **Mapping The London Year**

1909 – Harry Gordon Selfridge opens his flagship department store on Oxford Street.

Selfridges is the second largest store in the country, after Harrods. Harry Selfridge, originally from America, was successful because of his relentless innovative marketing and he attempted to dismantle the idea that consumerism was strictly an American phenomenon. He tried to make shopping a fun adventure and a form of leisure rather than a chore. He placed merchandise on display, so customers could examine it, moved the highly profitable perfume counter front and centre on the ground floor and established policies for safe and easy shopping that have been adopted by modern department stores around the world. He coined the phrase 'the customer is always right' and used it regularly in his advertising.

## **Chuck D Presents This Day In Rap And Hip-Hop History**

### **2001 – Eve releases the single “Let Me Blow Ya Mind” on Ruff Ryders**

Co-produced by Dr. Dre and Scott Storch, the second single off Eve's debut album, “Scorpion” would become one of the biggest hits of 2001, peaking at #2 on the Billboard Hot 100 and charting in more than a dozen countries.

With Gwen Stefani on vocals, the song won the first ever Grammy in the best rap/sung performance category and the MTV Video Music for best female video.

## **365 – Great Stories From History For Every Day Of The Year**

44BC 'Beware the Ides of March', the augur Spurinna had warned some days earlier, but Julius Caesar had brushed him aside. Was he not, at 55, the most powerful man in the civilised world? For five years he had been dictator, after having decisively defeated the coalition of nobles, including the great Pompey, who had tried to destroy him. Caesar knew there were senators that hated him, who in fact were plotting to kill him, but so sure was he of his position, of the awe (and perhaps, he hoped, the love) in which he was held, that he had even dismissed the troop of Spanish bodyguards that normally escorted him.

So, at mid-morning Caesar set off for Pompey's theatre, where the senate was meeting. En route a friend handed him a note with the details of the assassination plot, but Caesar simply put it with the other letters he was carrying, having no time to read it.

Entering the theatre, he saw Spurinna among the crowd. “The Ides of March have come”, he mocked. “Yes”, replied the augur, “But they have not yet gone”.

Caesar took his seat, quickly to be surrounded by conspirators who pretended to be paying their respects. One seized him by the shoulder, and Caesar shook him off, but as he turned away one of the Casca brothers central to the conspiracy stabbed him just below the throat. Grabbing Casca's

arm, Caesar stabbed it with his stylus and tried to escape the ring of murderers now surrounding him. But suddenly the great man realised it was hopeless. Since Casca's first thrust he had not uttered a word, but when he saw his protégé Marcus Brutus among his assassins, he murmured in Greek, 'You, too, my child?' He then drew the top of his toga over his face while letting the lower part fall so that he would die with both legs covered. The murderers struck out in a frenzied attack, sometimes wounding each other in their eagerness for the slaughter. Twenty-three knife blows struck home as Caesar stood there, defenceless, before he fell dead to the floor.

So, died the greatest of all Romans, perhaps, according to Macaulay, the greatest of all men. But he had changed the world. He replaced the corrupt and incompetent rule of the Roman nobility with an autocracy that lasted for half a millennium in the west and 1,500 years in the east, and he gave France the Latin civilisation that replaced tribal barbarism and that has lasted to this day.

As for the assassins, virtually all were killed within three years of Caesar's murder or, like Marcus Brutus, committed suicide.

History has a special place for Brutus, Caesar had been his mother's lover and had helped him all his life, but nonetheless five years before the assassination Brutus joined Pompey's army against Caesar. Even so, Caesar pardoned him and appointed him governor of Cisalpine Gaul. For his treachery, in his Inferno, Dante places him in the lowest circle of Hell alongside Judas, hanging from Satan's mouth.

### **Births**

1943 – Sly Stone  
1952 – Philip Green  
1975 – Will.i.am  
1975 – Eva Longoria

### **Deaths**

1937 – H.P. Lovecraft  
2003 – Thora Hird

### **Number 1's**

Number 1 single in 1973 – Slade – Cum On Feel The Noize  
Number 1 album in 1996 – Oasis – (What's The Story) Morning Glory?  
Number 1 compilation album in 2003 – The Very Best Of MTV Unplugged 2

### **Random Results**

2015 - Manchester United 3 - Tottenham Hotspur 0  
2015 - Leicester Tigers 22 - Exeter Chiefs 30  
2017 - New York Knicks 87 - Indiana Pacers 81

## **Drabble**

A drabble is a complete story that is exactly one hundred words long.

### **The Ides Of March**

They were off to visit relatives in deepest darkest Cambridgeshire; they hadn't managed to escape making the trip this time; it'd been a lot of years since they had made the long trip down the A1 from Northumberland.

It spooked them when the sat-nav burst into life to tell them to take an exit. They found the street their relatives lived on, only to find a group of people in the road bashing a car with baseball bats.

They rang their relatives. "Ah, yes, the Ides, our lovely neighbours, they certainly are the Ides of March that everyone warns of."

## **Joke**

A man buys a parrot for his kids, but the bird is simply obnoxious. It uses bad language, and no-one can handle it without getting pinched, until finally one day when the bird insults the man's wife. He grabs the parrot and tosses it cursing and flapping into the freezer, slamming the door behind it. After a few seconds, all goes quiet. The man opens the door and the parrot meekly walks out, 'I realise I've offended you and I'm sorry and humbly beg your forgiveness,' says the potty-mouthed pet. The man is touched. 'That's okay,' he says. 'You're forgiven.' 'Good' says the parrot. 'Now, if I might ask; what did the chicken do?'

## Random Items

### Fact

The way roads are built and laid today is based on the principle set down by John Loudon Macadam in 1816. The camber of the road was added to allow draining, and the stones used for the 3 layers had to be broken into a certain size. This was originally done by testing whether the stone could fit in the labourer's mouth, if it couldn't it was too big, this was until one day whilst inspecting the surface John noticed a number of extremely large rocks on the surface, when he asked why they were there, he was pointed to an extremely large labourer who in turn opened a large toothless mouth and proceeded to fit some large rocks in it. From this point on, a 2 inch ring was provided to test the size of rocks. This way of making roads is still used though somewhat refined and is known as the macadamised system.

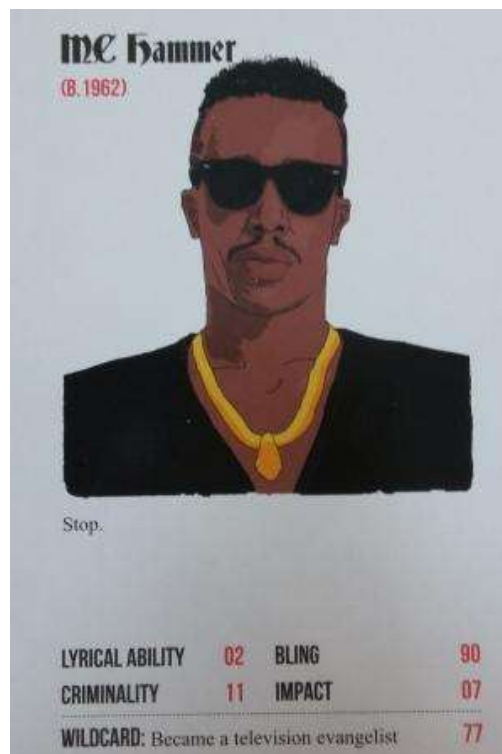
### Firsts

1797 – First Top Hat produced.  
1848 – First Bowler Hat produced.

### Thought

How do you throw away a trashcan?

## Rappers of the Nineties Trumps



## Quote

General Announcement - The M23 is closed North bound.  
Lone female voice - Which way is North bound?

## Going Underground

### **Queen's Park**

Was the name adopted for a housing estate by the park that was built from the late 1870s onwards. It was so named in honour of Queen Victoria.

The original London & North Western Railway station was opened as QUEEN'S PARK (WEST KILBURN) on 2 June 1879. The present station was opened as QUEEN'S PARK for Underground trains on 11 February 1915.

## Top Ten

Ten NFL teams closest to the Canadian Border

No	Team	Miles from Canada
1	Detroit Lions	1
2	Buffalo Bills	8
3	Cleveland Browns	30
4	Seattle Seahawks	64
5	Pittsburgh Steelers	132
6	Cincinnati Bengals	203
7	New England Patriots	204
8	Green Bay Packers	217
9	Indianapolis Colts	218
10	Minnesota Vikings	227

## Cathedral Fact Files

Cathedral	Carlisle Cathedral		
Dedicated To	Holy Trinity		
Type	Medieval	Architecture	Norman
Religion	COE	Tower / Spire	1 Tower
Site Founded	1092	Height (External)	110ft
Church Founded	1123	Height (Internal)	72ft
Bishopric Founded	1133	Length	239ft
Current Bishopric Founded	1133	Width	141ft

## Thirty-Three And One Third Revolutions Per Minute

### The Beatles - Revolver

"*Revolver*" was the seventh studio album The Beatles. Released on 5 August 1966 on Parlophone records, it was the Beatles' final recording project before their retirement as live performers and marked the group's most overt use of studio technology up to that time.

They recorded the album following a three-month break from professional commitments at the start of 1966, and the songs reflect the influence of psychedelic drugs such as LSD and the increasing sophistication of the Beatles' lyrics to address themes including death and transcendence from material concerns.

The record topped the UK Albums Chart for seven weeks and America's Billboard Top LPs list for six weeks. Together with the children's novelty song "*Yellow Submarine*", "*Eleanor Rigby*" became an international hit when issued as a double A-side single.

The album cover was designed by Klaus Voormann, whose work combined Aubrey Beardsley-inspired line drawing with photo collage using photographs mostly taken over 1964–65 by Robert Freeman, and went on to win the 1967 Grammy Award for Best Album Cover, Graphic Arts. Colour outtake from Robert Whitaker's photo session that produced the back-cover image used on the LP.

Many music critics recognise it as the Beatles' best album. The album was ranked first in Colin Larkin's book *All-Time Top 1000 Albums* and third in *Rolling Stone* magazine's list of the "500 Greatest Albums of All Time". *Revolver* was certified platinum in the UK and 5\* platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America.

Although tracks were officially stated as being written by Lennon & McCartney, this was an agreement amongst themselves, and on the whole they wrote tracks separately to each other, with the lead vocalist for the track being the likely writer of the song.

Additional musicians and production

Anil Bhagwat – tabla on "*Love You To*"

Alan Civil – French horn on "*For No One*"

George Martin – producer; mixing engineer; piano on "*Good Day Sunshine*" and "*Tomorrow Never Knows*"; Hammond organ on "*Got to Get You into My Life*"; tape loops of the marching band on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Geoff Emerick – recording and mixing engineer; tape loops of the marching band on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Mal Evans – bass drum and background vocals on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Neil Aspinall – background vocals on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Brian Jones – background vocals on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Pattie Boyd – background vocals on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Marianne Faithfull – background vocals on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Alf Bicknell – background vocals on "*Yellow Submarine*"

Tony Gilbert, Sidney Sax, John Sharpe, Jurgen Hess – violins; Stephen Shingles, John Underwood – violas; Derek Simpson, Norman Jones – cellos: string octet on "*Eleanor Rigby*", orchestrated and conducted by George Martin (with Paul McCartney)

Eddie Thornton, Ian Hamer, Les Condon – trumpet; Peter Coe, Alan Branscombe – tenor saxophone: horn section on "*Got to Get You into My Life*" arranged and conducted by George Martin (with Paul McCartney)

Side one

1. "*Taxman*" 2:36 Written by George Harrison, "*Taxman*" was a protest against the high marginal tax rates paid by top earners like the Beatles, which, under Harold Wilson's Labour government, which amounted to 95 per cent of their income. The riff was later lifted wholesale by Paul Weller for The Jam's 1980 number one hit "*Start*", and was the subject of a Weird Al Yankovic parody called "*Pac-man*" in 1981.

2. "*Eleanor Rigby*" 2:11 One side of a double A side single release which got to number one in the UK single charts alongside "*Yellow Submarine*", staying at number one for four weeks. Lead vocals were by Paul McCartney. Was a hit for Aretha Franklin in 1970 as well.

3. "*I'm Only Sleeping*" 2:58 Featuring a backwards, Indian-style guitar solo that Harrison played in reverse order during the recording. It was one of the three tracks cut from the US version of *Revolver*. Lead vocals were by John Lennon. A UK hit for Suggs in 1995.

4. "*Love You To*" 3:00 The second song on the album written by George Harrison, it was his first foray into Hindustani classical music as a composer.

5. "*Here, There and Everywhere*" 2:29 A ballad that Paul McCartney wrote towards the end of the *Revolver* sessions. His inspiration for the song was the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* track "*God Only Knows*", which, in turn, Brian Wilson had been inspired to write after listening to *Rubber Soul*.

6. "*Yellow Submarine*" 2:40 Written by Paul McCartney with lead vocals from Ringo Starr, the other side of a double A side single release which got to number one in the UK single charts alongside "*Eleanor Rigby*", staying at number one for four weeks.

7. "*She Said She Said*" 2:39 Written by John Lennon, Paul McCartney did not contribute to the recording, having walked out of the session, leaving Harrison to perform the bass part in addition to lead guitar and harmony vocals.

Side two

1. "*Good Day Sunshine*" 2:08 Written by Paul McCartney, whose piano playing dominates the recording. Release as a single by The Tremeloes, later in 1966 after their split with Brian Poole, but

failed to dent the charts. Paul McCartney re-recorded it to include it on his 1984 album "*Give My Regards to Broad Street*".

2. "*And Your Bird Can Sing*" 2:02 The second of the three tracks cut from the US version of *Revolver*. It was written primarily by Lennon, with McCartney claiming to have helped on the lyric and estimating the song as 80–20 to Lennon. Was one of the tracks considered by The Jam to be their final single in 1982, but wasn't made available until their "*Extras*" album in 1991.

3. "*For No One*" 2:03 Written and inspired by Paul McCartney's relationship with English actress Jane Asher. Along with "Good Day Sunshine", which similarly dispensed with guitar parts for Harrison and Lennon, an example of McCartney eschewing the group dynamic when recording his songs, a trend that would prove unpopular with his band mates in later years. Again Paul McCartney would re-record it to include it on his 1984 album "*Give My Regards to Broad Street*".

4. "*Doctor Robert*" 2:14 The third track omitted from the US *Revolver* LP, it was written by John Lennon. The lead singer of The Blow Monkeys took the title of this song as his moniker instead of his given name of Bruce Robert Howard.

5. "*I Want to Tell You*" 2:30 The third and final track from the album written by George Harrison. It was a US hit for Ted Nugent in 1979, and was a staple of live shows by The Lambrettas in the early 1980's

6. "*Got to Get You into My Life*" 2:31 Written by Paul McCartney after he had seen Stevie Wonder perform at the Scotch of St James nightclub and described as an ode to pot. It was a top ten hit for Cliff Bennett and the Rebel Rousers in 1966, and issued as a single in the US in 1976, reaching number 7 on the Billboard Hot 100. It was covered by Earth, Wind and Fire in 1978 winning a Grammy that year.

7. "*Tomorrow Never Knows*" 3:00 Written by John Lennon's it was described as the greatest leap into the future of the Beatles' recording career up to this point. The recording includes reverse guitar, processed vocals, and looped tape effects, accompanying a strongly syncopated, repetitive drum-beat. It is referenced in the lyrics of Oasis' "*Morning Glory*", and provides the "manifesto" for The Chemical Brothers "*Setting Sun*", and the basis for their hit "*Let Forever Be*".

## Story Time

### Self Portrait

#### 1

It's not important for you to know my name, my name does not matter, you may make assumptions based on the painting, or even on reading this story I am writing to go alongside it. You can guess all you like, but you won't get it right, you can drag up all the normal name clichés, Billy, Bob, Chuck, Buddy, Cletus, Mr the third, or Mr the fourth, they will all be wrong. They say not to judge a book by its cover, I would say not to judge a man by one picture, a single snapshot in time, an image as they pass through a particular place on their journey through life, or by one action of theirs at a point, more than half their life ago.

I took up painting in my twenties, never having given it a thought up to that point. I needed something to do, something that I could use to express myself, something I could do to help fill in some time in the dull monotonous existence I was living at the time. I had felt lost; I was stuck in a rut of my own making, the kind of rut that came about from making poor decisions and from picking the wrong people to have around you in your life, but more about that later.

I had struggled with the fundamentals of painting at first, my efforts were heavy handed, I would often overlap when I didn't want to, then miss filling in gaps on the paper, and later the canvas as two colours came up against each other.

I later found that I was trying to be too precise, my childhood colouring books had ingrained me without me knowing, that every colour had to be within the lines, something that had shaped and hindered my creative vision. I was trying to be too literal with what I painted, trying to recreate what was in front of me as if it was taken by a camera, all the while without realising I was shackling myself, shackling the creative being that was inside of me, a being I had never realised was there.

It took many years for me to shake those self-imposed shackles off, realising that they were symbolic as much as anything else. Eventually I found my own style, one that I was happy with, one that I could recreate, one that could draw the viewer in to the light and shade of what was on show,

allowing them to see the overview of the scene without spelling out every single detail for them, allowing them to finish the story for themselves. Even with my own style, if anyone had asked me, I would have told them I would never do a self-portrait, at the time it would have been impossible.

## 2

From the age of nineteen I could never bring myself to look in a mirror, or any other surface that may have given me a reflection. I didn't want to know what I looked like, what I was becoming; there were plenty of other people judging me on that every single day, I didn't want to add to it. Over the years I might have caught a brief glimpse, out of the corner of my eye against a surface shiny enough to throw an image back to me, but I never lingered, never wanted to stop and inspect myself, afraid that I wouldn't recognise the person staring back at me.

When I finally did see myself many years later, it wasn't in a mirror, and it certainly wasn't intentionally. A relative of mine had had my photo taken, walking through the wild, overgrown area out the back of my childhood home.

## 3

I hadn't been back to that house in over twenty-five years, I wasn't aware it still belonged to the family until a few months ago. When my letters had started to be returned to me as "addressee gone away", I had assumed that my parents had moved, moved to somewhere smaller and more manageable for them as they reached their retirement years, which they hadn't even thought about telling me where that new home was. I hadn't considered for a moment that they had both died, killed in a car crash in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of the night, no indication of where they had been, or where they had been heading.

I was upset and angry that no one had tried to tell me then. Seven years on I found out as the search for their probated recipient of their will was stepped up before the property was passed back to the state. It wasn't as if I had been difficult to find for most of that time, I had only had two addresses in that period, neither of them secret. Finally a young private detective had tracked me down where others, older and apathetic hadn't bothered beyond a cursory search. My parents had left me the house and various others bequests to me. My remaining distant relatives had been hovering, circling, ready to fight the state for the proceeds of my parent's estate if I hadn't been found. They seemed somewhat less than impressed when I had strolled into the courtroom to claim my inheritance.

Some of my more grasping cousins had insisted on a DNA test, which the judge had agreed to all too readily, despite deep down knowing who I was. My first visit to my parent's graves was to watch my father being exhumed so a test could take place. I was so livid at this that I nearly broke my long running vow of non-violence, to take up a handy two-by-four to beat the living bejesus out of the cousins.

I made my feelings crystal clear to them when the results came back, with a curt refusal to accept their crocodile tear laden apology, instead promising them that they would be prosecuted for trespass if they ever set foot on, what was now my property.

## 4

Whilst we had all been awaiting the outcome from the laboratory on the DNA tests I had visited the house. I was surprised to find that most of the furniture was still in place, covered by dust sheets, left in the same spots in the rooms as they had been before my parents had left on their ill-fated final journey.

I wandered around the house being bombarded with memories I had buried long ago, never intending to find again. Opening the door to my old room was a real shock to the system, it appeared to be unchanged from the day I had last seen it aged nineteen. Faded posters still hung on the wall, what on earth had possessed me to get a Glenn Medeiros one? I opened the wardrobe and found clothes I hadn't worn in a quarter of a century, hanging and sat where they had been left all those years ago. I pulled some out, looking at their sizes, then groaning inwardly as I realised how much I had filled out over the years despite my circumstances. I took down an old hat from the top shelf,

trying it on for size, thinking that at least my head shouldn't have grown over the years. It felt comfortable on my head, reminding me how often I had worn a hat back in the day, keeping it on as I shrugged a denim shirt off a hanger in the wardrobe and put it on over the vest top I was wearing. The buttons didn't quite do up properly any more, but it was perfect to wear as an impromptu jacket.

I went back downstairs, and then out of the back door, crossed the porch, going down the steps out into the garden. Here the property differed from inside, out here nature had started to reclaim the space as its own. Everything was overgrown, as I wandered through the waist high grass, yellowed from the sun and the lack of water, I tripped a couple of times over hidden steps, or garden equipment left out, probably for my father to come back to, intending to finish a job my mom will have given him.

What I didn't know on that day was that my grasping cousins had hired a private detective of their own, they had tasked him with watching my every move, to see who I was talking to, where I was going and what I was doing, they had told him I was an imposter, and that they wanted to know who had put me up to it. The private eye must have been bored to death, recording virtually nothing as I kept to myself. He had taken several photos of me during that time, including one of me in the garden. I appeared to be staring directly at the camera, but can't remember seeing a thing; the private detective must have had one of those telephoto lenses. He had handed me the pictures in a folder after the DNA results had been confirmed. He looked sheepish and apologized, saying he was only doing his job, and you know what, he was, one that my grasping cousins had set him to do.

## 5

I didn't look at the file he handed to me until quite a few days later on; I was too busy sorting out all the paperwork from the estate of my parents. I had briefly thought about moving back home, but decided against it as there were too many downsides, I didn't belong here anymore, I had a life in a different town, a different state, where the people accepted me for what I was and for what I had done.

Despite not moving home, I didn't even sell the house, the death duties along with the taxes on the proceeds from the sale would have left me worse off. I donated the house to the local fostering association as a charitable gift, no one had to pay anything out that way, and it would help the community out. Ironically, a community that if they had known I was there would have only been willing to help me out, out of town that is.

That was the main reason I couldn't stay there, it would drag up too many bad memories for too many people. Even though it hadn't been me that was ultimately responsible, I had been there when it had all gone down, I was the only one that had been caught, and I was the one that ended up spending twenty years in prison for it.

I lost the love of my life that night, and my freedom to boot, but others lost their children, their hope, their livelihoods, their futures. They needed someone to blame for it all, and there I was, there to be used as that punching bag for all those angry people who had lost something, there to be vilified by a community that thought they knew everything, a community that drew ranks and cast me out as a piece of rubbish that was spoiling their lawns.

Good riddance to bad rubbish.

## 6

I wasn't even supposed to be in the bar in the first place, at nineteen I was too young to be drinking. The bartender knew it as well, but as always the little weasel was more interested in taking my money than obeying the law. It was a busy night in the bar; I was out alone, my girlfriend Trudie was working at her family's convenience store, pulling the night shift with the son of the local sheriff and chief pain in the posterior Marty.

I was playing pool when the other guys made their way into the bar, I hadn't seen them before, turns out they were making their way through town heading for the west coast, or at least that's what they told me. We played pool for a few hours, sinking beers as we did so, moving on to



shots of tequila as the evening went on. Thinking back, we never exchanged names, just drinking and playing pool together as if it was an everyday occurrence. It was getting on towards closing time when they mentioned a party they had heard about, asking if I was interested, they just needed to find somewhere to get some beers to take to the party.

Without thinking I pointed them in the direction of Trudie's store as I hopped onto the bed of their pickup truck, hopping back out when they got there, grabbing the opportunity to see my girl.

My new found nameless friends made their ways over to the fridges to stock up as I made my way over to the till. Trudie was glad to see me, however her assistant for the evening wasn't, I was sure that Marty liked Trudie in a more than friends kind of way, he enjoyed the chance to spend time with her on the night shift. He had intimated on several occasions that I wasn't good enough for her, that she'd be better off with someone of higher standing in the community. He meant himself of course, thinking that he was hot stuff being the sheriff's son.

Marty sneered at me as I walked up to the counter, saying I wasn't old enough to have been drinking, that he wouldn't be so disrespectful to his girlfriend. Trudie glared at Marty, telling me to ignore him, but his jibe had caught the attentions of the other guys I was with, they came swaggering up to the counter, beers in hand, eyes all over Trudie.

"How about you come partying with us sweet cheeks?" One of them leered in her direction.

Trudie laughed it off, saying she was happy working, the guys snorted derision at that, asking her why on earth she would enjoy working in this dump? Trudie got riled up at this insult to her family's business, shouting at them to get out of her family's shop, if it was such a dump, they could go and get their beer from somewhere else.

At that point the brown smelly stuff really hit the fan, one of the guys drew a gun and shot Trudie, she went down in a heap behind the counter, and he then took a pot shot at Marty who was already running for cover. Marty went down as well, as he did the guys were jumping over the counter, emptying the till out before running off out the door back to their pickup truck and roaring off into the night.

Dumbstruck, I made my way around the counter to Trudie on the floor behind it, passing Marty who was whimpering in a corner on the floor. Trudie was bleeding profusely from a hole in her upper chest, already unconscious; I tried to stem the bleeding, whilst shouting at Marty to call for an ambulance.

Between whining about being shot himself, and blaming me for it all, it took him a couple of minutes to actually get round to making the call. It seemed like an eternity before the paramedics turned up, bringing the police with them. By the time they arrived, Trudie was already dead, having breathed her last in my arms. I was covered in blood, distraught and numb, those feelings getting worse when the cops put the handcuffs on me and hauled me down to the station.

I was questioned for hours by the sheriff, his son had already obviously gotten to him and given a much skewed version of events, I was up against it big time from the outset. Apparently, I had shot Trudie in a drunken fit of jealousy over Marty, before turning and shooting at him. The fact that no gun or bullets had been found at the scene didn't seem to matter. No one even bothered looking for the other three guys, saying I made them up, that there hadn't been anybody else there.

The weasel of a bartender had denied all knowledge of me being in the bar, let alone being there with anyone else, the sap was too busy protecting his own behind to own up to serving an under-age kid.

Even the store burning down the very same night did nothing to arouse the suspicion of the sheriff. When his son died from an infection picked up during treatment to his gunshot wound, my goose really was cooked.

The lack of physical evidence, no verbal witness statements, or even my loud heartfelt, tearful protestations wasn't going to stop the jury finding me guilty. Not one single person from the bar that night came forward to volunteer that they had seen me there, or if they did the sheriff just made them go away. The jury took less than ten minutes to reach a verdict, and the same judge that ordered a DNA test twenty five years later smiled as he gave out the sentence.

I was given twenty-five years in prison, with a chance of parole after fifteen, the prosecution hadn't even attempted to ask for the death penalty, they knew it was all a crock, and that going after the death penalty would mean more intense scrutiny of the facts, something my own lawyer seemed allergic to trying to do.

The first five years in prison had been spent as a nobody from a small town; the verdict had even me believing that I might have done it. It was only starting out on the arts program the prison offered that enabled me to come out of the deep despair I was feeling, and the regular thoughts of taking my own life that had been dogging me relentlessly.

It had taken five years of parole applications before they deemed I was safe enough to walk the streets again, I was paroled out to another small town, in a state far away from my home town. I reported in to the local police station every Monday and Friday morning, and I saw my parole officer every Wednesday afternoon. He found me a job, I'm sure there was a twinkle of amusement in his eye when he told me I would be starting on a nightshift in a local convenience store. He was trying to have some fun at my expense, trying to goad me into a reaction, but that wasn't going to happen, I didn't want to go back to prison under any circumstances.

I was still working in that same convenience store five years down the line when the private detective found me, by this time I wasn't on parole any more, the full term of my sentence had run its course, I was a free man.

## **8**

As I flicked through the pictures in the file I was struck by the one of me in my old back garden. With the sun behind me and the hat on my head, I could have been any age, from the teenage boy I once was that the hat and denim shirt belonged to, right through to a sixty-something year old version of future me. The beard in the picture intrigued me, I had never paid it any attention before, I could make out there were various colours in it, I wanted a proper look at it, so I went out and bought myself a mirror.

For the first time in twenty-five years I stood there looking at my face for hours, inspecting the different coloured wiry hairs of my beard, they went from white to black with all shades in between. The hair on my head was a thinning cover of sandy and grey strands; I traced the route of my wonky nose with a finger, thinking of the fights that had shaped it many years ago. Upon opening my mouth I saw the missing tooth, just off centre on my lower row of teeth, nothing to do with fighting this one, a damn olive stone had done that, having never eaten one before I was unprepared for the pit and over enthusiastically bit down on it, cracking my tooth, losing some of it that I probably swallowed. It was cheaper to get it removed than it was to get it fixed, so out it came. I felt the lines on my forehead, knowing that years of solemn frowning had put them there.

Finally I looked deep into my own eyes. The hazel-green irises looked back at me with an intensity that told me why people didn't often stay around to talk to me for too long. There was nothing I could do about that now; it was too late for me to be able to change any of that.

When I finished my inspection, I hung the mirror up in the hall of my flat. Once I was happy that it was securely in place, I went to get a canvas, my brushes and the paint. I started my self-portrait there and then, using that photo of me as a guide to what I was to paint. I worked through the night to complete it, I knew it was me in the painting, it was the eternal me, me at every age possible, stood in the vague outline of my life, where I stood for all time.

I hung the painting in the hall directly opposite where I had placed the mirror the previous afternoon.

I would look at myself every day from now on.

I know what my name is!

## Dilbert



## Epilogue

If you want to catch up on old issues, Drabbles I've had published, or the random scribbling from a bored mind on my blog then they are all available at <http://www.onetruekev.co.uk/>