

Memories of Xmas, 1972 and other related topics is published by Richard Small, 117 S. Meridian St. #3, Tallahassee, Fla. 432301. Some very personal material resides herein and it took me a long, long time to decide whether or not to publish it. Even now when things have changed, it tells me things I'd rather forget about...still those are things I must remember. Things are much better on the 23rd day of June 1974, RHP #34.

I spent a rather interesting Christmas Day, or actually, the day before the day before Christmas, and the events therein seem worth chronicling...if not for my own memory (which is selective-I tend to forget things I find painful), then because it might be the end of an era.

I have been told at times that I am very strange. I have also been told that my mother is very strange. However, now that I am used to all sorts of strange things, they do not bother me as much as they would, say, the 'Average Fan in the Streets', who might be surprised/shocked/astounded by all the interesting things which occur. So if by chance my narrative seems cold/odd/uncaring, this is not necessarily because I am cold/odd/uncaring, but rather because I am quite used to things like this occurring and am not surprised/shocked/astounded quite so easily anymore.

Well, back to the day before the day before Christmas Day. A bit of an introduction is in order though. My mother (who is strange), about 2 years back, married a Redneck (who was also strange). (The fact that she has married and divorced the Redneck 3 times within a sixth month period is also strange. She and the Redneck moved out about 6 months ago, so there may be even more marriages and divorces that I don't know about.) Some really strange things used to happen back in those days, when she, Pete (the Redneck) and I all lived in the same 2 bedroom apartment. Like everyonce in a while she would get mad at Pete (every 2 weeks or so) and would throw him out of the apartment. Usually, this occurred when they were both drunk (in case you have never encountered one, there is nothing that is worse than a drunk redneck...except, perhaps my mother when she is drunk). Well, anyway, whenever she threw Pete out (and sometimes he didn't go willingly, but that's a whole nother story), she would have this fear that he would come back and do something horrible. So she would call up the handy 24-hour-a-day lock service and have the lock changed in the middle of the night. This was not too bad except that she would forgive him in two or three days, let him back in the house, and give him the new key. After about 10 key changes in a 3 month period, I finally convinced of the pointlessness of changing the lock every time she kicked Pete out (what a horribly pointless waste of money, though I did get to know the lock-changer guy real well). Sometimes Pete would get violent and this would mean anything from a pair of broken glasses to broken false teeth (while in use I might add).

I guess that's enough of an introduction, now back to the day before the day before Christmas. Not a mouse stirring...however Madre (which is what I call my mother) was stirring and so was Pete. Then I get this phone call. "Oh...sob,sob,sob...Pete and I had a fight and I'm running away address unknown, but before I go I want to bring over your Christmas presents." I might mention that whenever

Madre and Pete have a fight and if Pete is unwilling to leave, she always leaves for 'address unknown'. However, her address never remains unknown for long and she always comes back.

So, anyway, she comes over and drops off all the Christmas presents and in going through them, discovers that she has left two back at the trailer where she and Pete live. As Pete is not expected back we decide to go back to the trailer (rather she decides) and inasmuch as she is somewhat intoxicated, I drive her back in her car. So we hunt around and hunt around and hunt around and eventually come to the conclusion that the presents must really be back at my apartment. So as we get ready to leave, who should come driving up but Pete. Who is also slightly intoxicated. Make that VERY intoxicated.

"Whu you doin' heah?", he mumbled in garbled Redneck dialect. "Why, I'm here chauffeuring my mother, who does not seem able to drive". This stumps him for a while and after recovering, demands to see what's in the car's trunk, claiming that it is something of his which we are trying to steal. So, the trunk is opened (all it contained were clothes that my mother was taking to the hospital) and Pete angrily announces that they are his and wildly throws them on the ground. "Well", I slyly observe, "if you wear them and people see you, they will take you away and put you in a funny place". However this does not seem to amuse Pete and he tells me that I had better shut up or else. Not desiring to find out what 'else' is, I shut up and when he goes inside the trailer, I tell Madre that it would be wise for us to get away, so we hop in the car (forgetting that the keys are still in the trunk. Pete sees this, yells that he his going to go get his gun, comes back outside and threatens to do soemthing. However, he merely runs up to the car, smashes the rider's side window with the gun butt and grabs my mother's hair. I decide it is best to stop, so we get out for a while and by some strange quirk, Pete decides that we may go. After sweeping all the glass out of the car (boy did that window shatter), we take off.

Later, back at the apartment, we find the two presents that caused all these problems and after finding them, my mother takes off for 'address unknown'.

Three hours later I get this phone call. It is Pete. In an indignant sort of tone, he demands why I did not tell him my mother was going into the hospital. Now, Madre had told us (me and my sister) that she had cancer of the uterus and would be going into the hospital on Jan. 1 (which is also her birthday) to have an operation. I figured that obviously must have told Pete of this and that Pete was acting kind of stupid, had a poor memory, or was trying to hassle me for some absurd reason.

After calling me all sorts of assorted names, Pete finally gets around to telling me that she had entered the hospital today and why hadn't I told him of this. Well, this was news to me, but was not that impossible (if you know my mother, that is) and after resisting the temptation to verbally massacre him, I talk a little more and hang up.

Two hours later I get still another phone call from you-know-who who blurts out that Madre had run away from the hospital and demanded to know if she were there. After resisting the urge to tell him 'if I was in the hospital and knew you were coming after me, I'd run away too', I tell him, that 'No, she is not here'.



Pete then proceeds to tell me how I AM RESPONSIBLE for everything that has happened and how I AM TRYING TO BREAK UP THEIR MARRIAGE. I then point out to him, that I rarely come over to see them at the trailer (like once every two months) and that whenever I do, it is only when they call me up to ask me. I also point out that I rarely ever call Mother up and that whenever we converse on the phone, it is she who calls me up. How then, I ask, could I possibly be trying to break the marriage up?

Pete, who has trouble reasoning when drunk (as well as when sober) announces that I am still trying to break the marriage up. Then, as an interesting piece of Pete-baiting, I tell him that I will gladly give my mother up, if he will give his mother up. This does not impress him too much and after calling me a sonofabitch and various other things, hangs up.

The interesting thing about all of this is that I am not trying to break the marriage up in any way. Long ago I came to the realization that my mother led (and had chosen to lead) a very dangerous life. However, that is her affair. All I ask is the right to live my life the way I wish to. I also firmly believe that she has the right to live her life as she wishes to. It's her life and I don't see that I have any right to interfere.

If she wished to marry a redneck who will beat her up and get drunk, that is fine with me. If she wishes to marry and divorce him three times, that is fine with me. In no instance would I ever offer any objections to their marriage (if she were to divorce him again and ask me if I had any objections to their getting married for a fourth time, I would have no objections.). I would however point out that divorces cost money and wouldn't it be easier and cheaper to stay married once and for all. Otherwise, I would point out, it is a senseless waste of money and other people (at work etc...) might not take this as openmindedly as I am. And if Pete happens to hit her in the mouth and break her false teeth, well that is unfortunate, but perhaps you should have taken your teeth out first.

Of course this sounds uncaring and cruel. But what could I do? Even if it were possible, I wouldn't press charges against him or call the police and have him arrested. Frankly, I don't believe in doing either of those two things and even if charges were filed, Mother would refuse to testify against him and if I had him put in jail, she would only go down the next day and bail him out. I must confess that there were a couple of times when I did call the police and have him arrested, however there were unusual circumstances each time. I did this at times when Mother was drunk and mad and would try to throw Pete out of the house. Only Pete did not wish to go (a good deal-over 50% of these fights are not his fault), and instead went back to bed where he tried to go to sleep. And Madre would follow and do nifty things like cuss him out non-stop for hours (calling him every dirty thing imaginable), throw ice water on him, throw his clothes out in the street etcetera, etcetera. } why?

Well, anybody could see that it would only take so long before Pete reached the breaking point and all hell would break loose. In such cases, it would be very wise indeed to call the police. However, I never did call them except when she asked me to and usually I had to be convinced that there was no other way (and she had to ask me

several times before I'd do it). In all fairness to Pete, it must be said that many of these early fights were not his fault; some were, but whenever my mother gets drunk and mad, a sort of unreasonable state of mind comes over her and she just gets madder and madder. However, after the police took him away and locked him up, who do you think it was who came down and bailed him out the next day. Yep, my mother.

Pete is a redneck. As a redneck his reasoning capacities extend but little beyond his fists (when younger, he used to pick fights and beat up other rednecks on bets). If someone did all the things to his mother that he has done to my mother, I have no doubt that he would beat the living daylights out of the guy, if not kill him. Pete cannot figure out why I have not tried to do something like this to him, why I have not continuously tried my best to split them up, why I have not tried to interfere. While he could probably beat me in a fight, there is nothing to stop me from purchasing a gun and shooting him (a thing, with the right witnesses and all, I could probably get away with). However, I would never do this under any circumstances. Why should I? He has done nothing to harm me. If he chooses to beat my mother and she chooses to be beaten, though fighting back, that is his and hers business. Not mine. In no way mine. If she truly wished to leave him she would, but the fact that she has divorced and remarried him three times seems to say something to me.

However, try as he might, Pete can not figure out why I do not hate him, why I do not try to harm him, why I do not try to cause trouble or split them up. Were he in my place he would act quite differently, would beat the person who was harming his mother, maybe kill the guy. He just can't figure out why and because he can't he figures I must be doing something and the only thing that seems remotely possible is that I am trying to break up the marriage.

Now I could explain why I could not possibly be trying to interfere with his life and he would probably not suspect me of doing that and would not hate me for that reason. Actually, he doesn't hate me. In his own way, I feel he realizes that what he has done to my mother is not exactly right. So while he may not hate me, he certainly dislikes me intensely. One thing I can not stand is having people hate me for nonexistent reasons. I do not object to people hating me but I do object when they hate me for the wrong reasons or nonexistent ones. If I were to explain to Pete why I could not possibly be trying to break his marriage up, in the process, I would give him other, more justifiable (to Pete anyway) reasons to hate me.

To explain... My mother, is not like most mothers (as you must have gathered by now), in more ways than one. She is extremely talented and when I say extremely, I mean it. Most of her life has been spent as a secretary or in similar jobs. However, she is always changing jobs every 6 months or so. Not because she is fired, but because she is so extremely talented, she leaves for a better, more interesting (and better paying) job. She never does anything wrong. NEVER. And she does her regular job anywhere from two to three times faster and more efficiently than people who are doing similar jobs or the people who held her job before her. Once she tires of one job, she goes looking for another one. Besides excelling in work, she has an amazing record of successfully accomplishing things which most

people would not even think of doing. Though I've forgotten many of these things I do remember several outstanding ones (most of her odd feats were done in the past-last 3-4 years).

Once, she and my sister and another girl (a young friend of my sister's) were taking a trip to Hawaii (drive to LA and fly to Hawaii). On the night before they were to leave, instead of going to sleep like most people would and getting a good night's rest, she starts drinking, stays up all night and get uproariously drunk. She never got a wink of sleep and bright and early the next morning, they all pile in the car and take off (as my sister and her friend are too young, Mother is the only one who can do the driving). Even being intoxicated and having no sleep, she does ok until outside of Shreveport, Louisiana. At this point, she falls asleep on the superhighway and for 5-10-15 minutes she is completely asleep. She doesn't run off the road however & in 5-10-5 minutes she wakes up, just as she is about to run into some guy and swerves over into another lane to avoid hitting him. Anybody else would have had an accident for sure (had they even woken up which is doubtful).

On another occasion, she passed 10 cars at once, in a blinding rain-storm, at night, on a two-lane highway, when visibility was less than 30 feet. That took...well, luck to survive. Or the time we were in the middle of Kansas and couldn't find a motel to sleep in, so Mother drives non-stop for 48 hours until we get to Tallahassee. And she was quite tired when we started. These are just a few of the many superhuman (for lack of a better word) things that she has done. For instance, when she woke up on the superhighway outside of Shreveport, she inquired of my sister to see if she knew that (my mother) she was asleep. "I knew you were asleep", my sister replied, "but I knew you'd come out of it".

An interesting way of looking at it, but then again what else is there to do. When you have a mother who can do these foolhardy things and get away with them EVERY time (things that most people would have trouble getting away with once), You either worry yourself to an early grave (or very early ulcers), or you adopt a safer view.

My mother is a superhero. She has superpowers of some sort and can not be hurt. Thus, she can perform with ease, things which normal people would have difficulty in doing. This would explain why she is never 'wrong' (jobwise). And most importantly, this explains why I will never have to worry about her, or spend anxious hours wondering where she is, if she is ok, if she is alive. You see, there have been other men in her life besides Pete; more violent dangerous men who were capable of doing far more harm to her than Pete ever was - though that remains to be seen.

Of course I no longer live at home, so this problem is not as much now as it used to be. The only time I ever manage to get involved is when she calls me for help. Such as the time she called me on the day before the day before Christmas. However, back in those days (i.e. anytime prior to 6 months ago) it was a regular 24 hour a day problem. Though nothing happened every day, something big would happen every week or two. My sister was smart and moved out two years ago (she has no phone even though one has been offered free by my father. She doesn't want to get into the messes that still occur). I was not so smart and stayed around (I was going to college and it would have been difficult to survive off-campus, both financially and academically).



Did I mention that my real father is alive and living in Fort Myers? I did now. My sister is smart and doesn't have a phone. She never gets called. I have a phone... I don't object to helping my mother (even though I realize there is no point to it), but there is that element of physical danger present. And I'm not stupid enough to believe that I'm a superhero and can't be harmed.

Actually, I can't completely believe the bit about my mother being a superhero, though it isn't quite as hard to doubt as it may seem. I seem to have acquired another approach of looking at things. A cold/cruel/callous one perhaps, but it does save my sanity and to me, that counts.

My mother is doomed. Even with all these lucky escapes, she is doomed. You can't go on doing the things she does and get away with it forever. She is doomed...it is only a matter of time before she makes the fatal mistake that will end her existence on this earth. It may be Pete. Or a fast car. Or a superhero stunt that doesn't work. Or something else. It really doesn't matter. Pete is doomed also, for similar reasons. Also because he is a violent redneck with whom time is catching up. He can no longer beat up the people he used to and one of these days...

I don't know how it will end. I do know that it will end. I will be a scientific observer and watch my mother and Pete destroy themselves. Consider it a lab experiment, with two natural enemies placed in a cage. The trained observer will not interfere because he wishes to see how things will turn out if they two are left alone. I will not interfere, because I wish to see how things will turn out if they are left alone. A trained observer will not interfere because his interference may affect the outcome. I will not interfere because my interference may effect the outcome. Also, I may get hurt.

I know they will destroy each other. That is fact. The only things I do not know are 'where', 'when' and 'how'. I'm in no hurry. Let things take their own course. I will wait and watch patiently. Now you can see why I can never tell Pete this. For him to find out that I consider him as a 'brainless' animal that will seek its own destruction, will not make him love me much. I of course would never interfere because it would upset the experiment. It would not be wise to tell him this (you do not tell lab animals that they are lab animals--ruins the experiment).

I know this sounds cruel, but... Do you think that if I thought it would do any good, that I would hesitate to run up and tell him, "MY God man! You're ruining your life! You've got to do something before it's too late!". If I thought it would do any good at all, I would. But it won't do any good. I've tried before. People to whom you give advice, tend to ignore it unless it is something they wanted to hear. Particularly unasked for advice. I've tried many times. I know.

If I really thought they would listen, I do it, tell them, immediately. From experience, I know I would be wasting my time. To see two people you like...no love...very much (yep even old Pete) headed on a road towards disaster and you are completely powerless to save them... The hopeless frustration of being unable to do anything is too much to bear and remain 'normal'. I have to create these 'pleasant'

diversions to hide in. I have to make up these plausible but cruel methods of looking at things. I have to say 'don't become involved, because if you do, you'll go down just as they do'. I'm young! I live! I don't wish to die! Or have my life permanently warped so that death may have been desirable. It's not that I have anything against dieing in hopeless causes...it's just that if I am going to die in a hopeless cause, it is going to be in a hopeless cause of my own choosing.

Besides, if I went down with them, would their example have been in vain? Make no mistake about it, I'm getting a lesson. Of what NOT to do. A lesson I'll want to remember for years, so that when I am married and have children, I will not make the same mistake. So that, perhaps I can do a better job. I've learned a very valuable lesson. An extreme sort of tolerance. I've learned many things. I try never to get angry. I do not hold grudges. I am not out for revenge. I also do not take things very seriously. People have been killed, wars have occurred because people took some things seriously. Look at the IRA in Ireland. Or the Israeli-Arab conflict. Humor is my way out (I do have one bad fault though...I like to poke holes in people's hokey beliefs...which they take seriously). I try to be good, kind, nice, friendly & assume other characteristics similar to those. AND I NEVER, NEVER offer advice...serious advice...unless I am asked first.

Even when someone asks me I am hesitant to answer. How do I know my advice is right? I could be giving wrong advice and were these people to take it...my God...I could be ruining their lives, should they take me seriously. Sometimes I will offer humorously phrased advice on minor points. Sometimes. But never major advice. Never.

These things and many more make up my character and personality. I do not believe in lying cheating or stealing and am strongly against such practices. But alas, I seem to be out of place in this day and age and even I am not incorruptible. I do try to hold it down to a minimum though (insignificant things...but then to a murderer, robbery might seem like an 'insignificant thing'. This is not to say that I'm a murderer (which I'm not), but more to say, how can one truly judge the things that one does? I really don't think it can be done. Do Generals in Viet Nam really want to kill innocent civilians? I don't think so.).

I don't wish for anyone who's reading this to assume that it is correct and that I know all the answers. I don't. I never shall. All I can ever hope to know is some of them...a few perhaps...to know that they are the answers...that will content me. All I know is that I WILL NEVER KNOW THE ANSWERS. All my life and I'll never know. Maybe not even in death. One nice thing about rednecks...they have all the answers. Never for one day in their lives is there one day of doubt. Though forced to them, they know the answers. Of course their answers may include such things as 'hate', lynchings, murder, and other violations of individual's rights. The rednecks have the answers and never have any doubts about their beliefs. How wonderful to never have to worry about what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. Of course, I never said that the rednecks have the RIGHT answers...but they believe they do. That's what counts I guess (even though wrong, it must count for something). And how do I know that rednecks have the wrong beliefs...for all I know, they could be right and I wrong.

It's not easy to admit that you could be wrong and others are right, but when you consider the possibility that what



you believe to be right is wrong and what you believe to be wrong is really right...well...it makes one a very tolerant individual to say the least. That is to say, you at least think you are tolerant.

I do not think that I like Joe College or Mr. Average American, whose interests center on football, sex, food and booze(drugs?) though not necessarily in that order. I do not think I would like such a person, but I would treat them friendly and would make no attempts to make them like my self. For all I know, they could be right, living as they do. I could be the wrong one, and if I'm wrong I certainly don't want to make others emulate me (even if I think that I'm right at the time).

In a way, I wonder why I'm writing this. WHY? Perhaps this is my Charles Foster Kane 'Declaration of Principles', the youthful enthusiasm of what I believe. Perhaps like Kane, I too will have my Jedediah Leland, who in later years will resurrect my youthful, enthusiastic 'Principles' to show me what I could have become and making me look at the dismal reality of what I had become.

I'm not so naive to think that I'll always be as open-minded as I seem to think I am now. Perhaps I'm not very open-minded at all. But at least this will serve as a way of keeping some part of me from the past; the way I feel and thought and believed, intact, so that in the future, I can look back and say, "This was Richard Small in Feb. '1973." "This was positive proof of what I once was". Unlike Kane, I would not destroy this piece of the past; I would treasure it. You can only learn from past mistakes, and what good are past mistakes when you forget them? I want to remember my past mistakes. I want to remember that I cheered when John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy and ML King were shot. I want to remember supporting Wallace vigorously when he announced his running mate was Gen. Curtis LeMay (in 1968). I want to remember so I will not make those mistakes again. I had completely forgotten about the Wallace/LeMay thing and almost about King, but fortunately someone did not let me forget and I'm deeply grateful to that person. And while I do object to giving others advice, I more than heartily welcome advice/criticism/suggestions from anyone who is kind enough to give them, No matter what they are. Anything.

Perhaps I wrote this for people like Craig Miller. I was deeply moved when I read his 'apazine which chronicled his life at home. His parents and the 'threats of violence and brutality' and of the 'little games to antagonize one another'. A lot of it really hit home. The hopelessness of his situation; no friends, loss of a much loved girl, plodding day-today existence and the thoughts of suicide. Nothing else left.

I hope things never become this bad for me. I'll admit I've given more than a passing thought to suicide, but I certainly have no intention of committing now or in the near future (though I do believe an individual has the right to commit suicide if he/she so desires).. I have too much to live for.

Perhaps this is who I'm writing for. People who are depressed, who are contemplating such things. Maybe they'll get something out of it. Maybe...shit...who am I fooling. I'm writing this mostly for myself & if it helps somebody else I'm glad. Those who did not like it...forgive me for rambling this way, but I felt I had to say this..

Rich

good