

What I Learned After I Knew it ALL!: The Return of Bunky and "De' Boys"

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What I Learned

After I Knew It All!

The Return of Bunky and "De' Boys"

Previous Book

The Book I wrote on Humility!

Bunky and De'Boys 2004 Borders

What I Learned

After I Knew It All!

Big Julie, Bunky, Boychick & Curly

The Return of Bunky and “De’ Boys”

Another classic by Bart Banks

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About the Author

Bart Banks is a Philadelphia lawyer, one of the last of the general practitioners. He has tried murder cases, took companies public, been a civil litigator, and a corporate lawyer. He is married with four children, and nine grandchildren. His wife Donna is a retired assistant school principal.

Bart has taught at local universities, lectured at seminars and has made guest appearances on

radio and television shows.

He has been a lifeguard, a Fuller brush salesman, dance teacher, factory worker, teacher, bank president, real estate and mortgage broker, monster magazine publisher, newspaper editor, rock and shock show producer, personnel agency owner and franchiser, a stand-up comic and has performed about twenty-seven other related and unrelated tasks.

He is also active in several charitable and business organizations. His vastly diverse background and legal training, combined with a dry sense of humor, help him to cut to the heart of things while keeping his readers smiling at the same time. He has been called a truly talented storyteller.

His early writing was confined to magazines, newspaper articles and editorials. He has been published by: the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Evening Bulletin, The Jewish Exponent, Israel Magazine. He was a former editor of The American Jewish Congress Newsletter. Bart's first book, "The Book I Wrote On Humility!-Bunky and De' Boys" was a smashing success, selling practically hundreds of copies! It is hoped that this one does at least as well.

An editor of a large publishing company said, "Bart's work is a classic"... a fun read". "The author has a natural storytelling narrative style and loves to set the reader up for the punch line. The dialogue is well done; he makes sure the reader can hear the characters' accents and understands the attitude behind the words. When you read it... you become part of the gang, an insider by virtue of osmosis. You start to imagine what your nickname would have been, how you would have reacted on either side of a prank. Some of the stories are very short and others are longer, but all of them are fully developed for each particular adventure. With comedy, timing is everything. This text reads quickly and the timing and pace are perfect."

About The Book

Philly born and raised, Bart Banks writes openly about his adventures with his old buddies, "De' Boys".

Spanning seventy years, sometimes childlike, yet sometimes sophisticated, his knack for storytelling takes the reader wonderfully back to when he (or she) was one of "De' Boys" and illustrates that you "can take the kid out of the neighborhood but you can never take the neighborhood out of the kid."

One publisher frankly states; "Bart's work is a lighthearted look at what life was like growing up as a "spunky" boy in Philadelphia. Bart has a great narrative style and wonderful timing to his writing. When he delivers the final blow in his stories, the punch line really hits you. His stories are very funny, sometimes outlandish, and always amusing. Men who read these stories will be reminded of their own youth and will see some of themselves in Bunky or one of his buddies. He brings colorful characters to life through his excellent narrative style and natural ability with dialogue."

Another editor reports, "Bunky's Wynnefield is a tightly-knit Philadelphia community comprised mostly of well built row houses—one of those neighborhoods where doors are never locked, all

the adults look after the children and the kids run in packs, forming stalwart friendships and creating memories that last a lifetime. In this well-written and consistently entertaining series of comic stories, author Bart Banks introduces us to a lively crowd of boys growing up in postwar WWII America.

The following pages contain tales of foiled kidnappings, phony confessions, forged report cards, crashing parties, outlandish money making schemes, failed romances, courtroom folly, smart ass remarks, practical jokes and then it gets crazy! Bunky and his buddies come of age. They marry and choose their individual paths... but nothing changes!

Unfolding in vividly cinematic quick riffs, "What I Learned After I Knew It All", like Neil Simon's Brighton Beach Memoirs and Barry Levinson's Diner, gives a nostalgic but decidedly unsentimental view of an American urban boyhood of a past era that brims with energy, honesty and wistful longing."

Some of the characters have charm, some are mischievous, and all are real. They are all your friends and family. They are "De' Boys". As Bunky becomes older he is more often called by his real name, Bruce Blair. Despite the name change he is still the same "Bunky". The book is a classic collection of chuckles.

Once you've read it you'll tell your friends "I loved What I Learned After I Knew It All" You'll tell the stories to others and re-read them often.

Introduction

I originally was going to call this treatise "Humility and Beyond". If true humility is analogous to perfect reality, then of course, there could not be a "beyond" Fearing that the sarcasm would not be recognized by the few totally unsophisticated who took my first manuscript "The Book I Wrote On Humility" to be a serious treatise on the subject, I decided not to.

I often share that it's what I learned after I knew it all that helped me the most in life. Not only that, but I learned it from an unwieldy diverse group of ex crazies taking the same course I took. We met in church basements, smoky club houses, lounges on ship board, meetings in the park, on top of police stations, on beaches and in private homes, in different countries and on different continents. I'm grateful to all the teachers whom I met along the way, for their patience, friendship and love. This book is dedicated to my primary mentors, Bill W. and Dr. Bob. Bill is quoted as saying:

"In God's economy nothing is wasted. Through failure we learn a lesson in humility, which is probably needed, painful though it is."

I've learned these little lessons by being fortunate enough to have made it eight decades. Each of these varied anecdotes constitutes another lesson in humility.

Think about it. Someone whose idols are George Costanza, Cosmo Kramer, Elaine Benes and Jerry

Seinfeld can be expected to be enrolled in a type of continuous education course that should be called "Life 101".

Bunky and De' Boys were just an average group of kids who grew into a cross section of adults. Through these pages I have tried to share with you refreshingly humorous stories of triumph and being trumped, success and stupidity, but mostly funny "forced feedings of humble pie"... for Bunky or one of the other lovable characters known as "De' Boys".

Net proceeds of this book are being donated to "The Crossroads Club" in Delray Beach Florida, a meeting place for recovering people who participate in 12 step programs.

I've miraculously made it as far as I have. The infinitesimal amount of knowledge I had when I thought I knew it all embarrasses me. I will share with you the secret daily request that has become the bedrock of my good fortune since I became aware of some of my many deficiencies.

Dear God:

Thank you for this day and thank you for my life

Thank you for my family and thank you for my strife.

Thank you for my health and thank you for my wealth.

Thanks for my adversity and thank you for my stealth.

Thanks for all you've given me and that which you've taken from me to.

Thanks for what you've left me with, Oh Lord, I do love you.

Take my soul and mold it, as you would have it be.

Please don't leave the job entirely up to me.

God be with us today.

Bunky

Dedication

My thanks to my mother and father, my wife Donna, who my friend Don Greenberg likens to Mother Theresa, (she must be a saint!) He says she should write her own book called "I Married the Taliban". I also cite "Cuddles" Cohen, "Pablo" Smigel, "Chick" Barr, and the rest of "De' Boys" who share my passion for the past.

I also dedicate this to my children and grandchildren in the remote possibility that they harbor the absurd notion that any experience they ever have is something that their parents and grandparents did not go through before them.... L'Dor Vodur (generation after generation).

My thanks to well meaning, even if insincere friends, who inspired me to commit this labor of love when they jokingly said "When is your next book coming out?", I thank my dear assistant Denise

Bailey, who typed it over and over.

This book is not intended to always portray actual people and events. There is, however, much similarity to things that actually happened. Many of the names or facts have been changed to protect the sensitive as well as the author! I've told these stories so many times that I sometimes believe they are true. My children have tried to retire many of them to the Hall Of Fame.

Bunky

Early Shtick

"The Big Squeeze"

"Bingle" and "Chick" lived at 5206 Lebanon & Bunk lived at 5208. Bingle was 8. Chick was 5. Bunk was almost 5. The news came over the radio. A child had been kidnapped.

"What's that?" Chick asked.

Bingle explained "That's when grown ups take a child from its parents and hold it. The parents will usually pay money to get the child back."

"Can the grown up then spend the money on anything they want... like movies and popcorn?"

"Sure."

"We're almost grown ups aren't we?"

"I'd say so."

"Well, why don't we kidnap Bunk?"

"Hey, cool, we could ask a lotta' money for him."

"Do you think his father has a lotta' money?"

"Sure he's a lawyer. He probably has a hundred bucks."

"We shouldn't ask for all that. He might get mad."

"O.K., how about \$5.00."

"Is \$5.00 a lot of money?"

"It sounds just about right."

The phone rang.

"Mrs. Blair, this is Bingle and Chick, can Bunky come over & play?"

"Sure Bingle."

Bunk walked next door.

"Hi, what are we going to play?"

"Kidnappers"

"How do you play kidnappers?"

"You go down the basement with Chickie and get the toys out and I'll tell you when the game is over."

"O.K."

It took Bingle almost a half hour to write the note. It read as follows:

"We have Bunky. We are holding him for ransom. We want \$5.00. Then you can have him back. Please deliver the money to 5206 Lebanon Ave. Please bring it by eight o'clock because that's when we take our baths."

Signed

Bingle & Chickie Borofsky

It didn't work so good.

"How do you play...?"

"Please bring it by eight o'clock..."

Confession

Derek was almost seven years old. Like most kids, his mother took him to church and he attended Sunday school. He learned about the Ten Commandments and the eleventh, to love one another. Even at his age he couldn't help noticing that according to the six o'clock news there was a wide gap between the way adults told him to behave and the way they seemed to misbehave on a daily basis. Most of what he heard about on the news could be classified as larceny, arson, murder, rape and then it got nasty.

He was determined to be a good kid. He would follow the teachings of the church and earn his way into heaven. As he neared seven the magic day was coming... his first communion. His teacher explained that he was to approach his spiritual leader who would award him a wafer and a portion of wine. The wafer would represent the body of Jesus Christ and the wine would represent the blood of the savior. Once Derek would ingest these substances it would unite him forever with his higher power. They would commune. This ritual would constitute a rite of passage.

Before this however, Derek and his contemporaries would be introduced to the sacred act of confession, the special process by which a responsible young adult, starting to mature can make the kind of disclosure of acts and thoughts that will help purge himself of the psychologically crippling emotions of guilt and shame.

The child waited patiently for his turn to come. His religious school class lined up so each could enter that mystical box and make his first confession. Finally Derek's turn came. He was told to begin his repentance. He understood that the available sins to confess, would likely be violations of those Ten Commandments he had studied.

He knew he had not killed anyone. He hadn't taken anything from anyone, that wasn't his. He certainly knew he not only honored his mom and dad but actually loved and admired them.

His mind raced. What could he confess to? He didn't think he had coveted anything or borne false witness, whatever they meant. How could he be saved unless he had something awful to admit?

His turn arrived. Nervously he entered the box.

"Good morning my boy and how are you today."

"Fine Father, thank you."

"And why are you here today my son?"

"Forgive me father for I have sinned" implored the almost seven year old.

"And prey tell child, what was this sin, the judgmental lapse, that brings you here today?"

“Father, I’m pretty sure... that is I think I must have committed adultery!!”

“Forgive me father...”

Being Frank

There are some things you are not. You are not a little bit dead. Nor are you a little bit pregnant. A batted ball is either fair or foul.

It was the championship game for the little leaguers. The eight-year-olds would battle to the finish. Then they would go for pizza and sodas and in two to three days they’d leave for overnight camp where there would be more battles to fight.

It was the last half of the seventh and last inning. There were two outs and Danny had scratched out an infield hit and took second base when Mark, the third baseman, threw the ball completely over the first baseman’s head. Fortunately, the right fielder remembered what the coach had said about backing up the infielders. His alert throw held the runner to one extra base.

The score was tied. Danny represented the winning run. Arnold was the next batter up. Little Frankie, the catcher, knew that Arnold had trouble with low outside pitches. He gave the pitcher a low outside target. The ball bounced in front of the plate but Frankie stopped it with his chest then returned it.

The next pitch was higher than Frankie’s target. Arnold closed his eyes and swung the bat as hard as he could. You could hear the crack of the bat all over the field. The ball sailed over the shortstop’s head into short center field. Allen was the center fielder because he had the best arm on the team. He scooped up the ball and threw it like it was on a clothes line right toward home plate.

Frankie was planted in front of the plate just as he was taught. There was no way he would let Danny score without bowling him over. The third base coach waived Danny in. He rounded third, put his head down and barreled for home. The throw was a little wide to the left. Frankie stepped aside and trapped it after one short bounce. Danny started his head long slide. Frankie dove back into the base path.

A cloud of smoke arose. The umpire threw his right arm up and simultaneously yelled,

“OUT!”

Danny’s coach charged out of the dugout screaming,

“No Way! No Way! He missed the tag.”

Frankie's coach tore out of his dugout,

"What do you mean? He had him cold."

Parents and siblings yelled.

"He's out" and

"He's safe"

What to do? There was no instant replay.

Mr. Moonheim the umpire said,

"I'll settle this. I've known Frankie since kindergarten. I'd take his word in a minute. Frankie, did you tag him or not?"

Frankie looked into the stands catching his parents' eyes. He turned to his dugout and viewed his teammate's anxious faces. His throat was dry. His voice cracked. He looked up at the umpire and finally uttered.

"Almost."

The Tangled Web

It was the last Friday in February in the tenth grade. Pootsie was just starting his growth spurt. Now he could play basketball with the big guys in the neighborhood. He was not destined to become an all public hoopster from Olney High School but he was certainly good enough to get into most schoolyard games and play on the neighborhood team. Obsessed with developing a left hand push shot he had practiced it day and night.

The effect this dedication had on his marks was no little and quite some. At the end of the first report period he had barely passed two courses and was failing two. Though there was time to recover by the end of the semester, taking the report card home to his folks unquestionably would spell the end of his basketball career until mid June when the final grades came out. What a disaster.

Pootsie pondered the dilemma all afternoon and evening. Saturday came. Able to bare the pain alone no longer; he headed up to the corner. There he encountered Freddie the Fink. Freddie was quite patient as Pootsie related the details of his quandry.

“Look”, Freddie said. “I don’t know if he still has any left, but last year Big Boots had some blank report cards and was selling them for only half a buck. Maybe he still has a few.”

“You make sense Fink, walk me over to Bootsie’s house.”

The buy was completed. Carefully Pootsie crafted a new report card. “No sense overdoing it” he thought. He gave himself two B’s and two C’s. He figured he could certainly make up the lost ground and after the semester if one of the C’s slipped to a D his mom would have the entire summer to get over it.

As he finished the last stroke of his homeroom teacher, Mrs. Yitzlaf’s, signature he marveled at what a perfect job he did. It truly looked alike. Even the ink was the same. There was no doubt it would pass.

Mr. Smiley, Pootsie’s dad, hurriedly signed the bogus report card. Pootsie was so pleased he contemplated approaching the Fink to go in partners. They could supply the complete product, the card, the marks and a teacher’s signature all for \$1.49. Fortunately, the thought of trusting Freddie the Fink on a continuing basis had a chilling effect on the idea and he let it go.

Sunday night Pootsie placed both cards in his biology book and pulled his bookstrap tightly around it and his notebook. He might need to use the fake one to show his folks for his final marks. It was important not to lose it.

On Monday Pootsie signed his Dad’s name to the real report card and handed it back with the rest of the class.

That afternoon de’ boys were playing three on three half court hoops in the schoolyard. Pootsie put his books on the steps and started to take some warm up shots. A gust of wind blew the fake report card onto the court. He bent down and retrieved it. He gazed at it, it had two E’s on it.

“Holy shit, I handed up the phony one... when Mrs. Yitzlaf reads it I’m dead meat.”

For ten days Pootsie set his alarm a half hour earlier than usual to get to school before it started. He told his curious mom he was working on a special project for the school newspaper. Every morning he waited outside of Mrs. Yitzlaf’s room praying she’d go to the bathroom. “My lord,” he thought “she must be a camel.” Finally he had a flash. He bought her a tall carton of coffee at the luncheonette across from the school and waited for her. *

More outlandish stories about "De Boys" from childhood to adultery. Foiled kidnappings, fantasy confessions, stupid pranks, losing legal cases, embarrassed heroes, busted blind dates, salesman's shtick, audacious schemes and much more, all recorded with shameless candor and boyish charm.

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