

MR. DUPP AND MR. DOVER

By Fred Hobbs

They were childhood buddies in Dismal Seepage, South Carolina in the 1930s. Stan Dupp and Ben Dover spent lazy summer days catching baby alligators in the swamps near the shores of Gobblersknob Lake. Two more unlikely companions never existed.

Stan was a born con man. He'd buy penny candy at Frampton's Drug, Sundries, Hardware, Millinery and Feed Store and sell the pieces for a nickel a throw on the school yard at Jesse James Elementary. As a teenager, he learned to cheat at almost any game including Solitaire. He shoplifted, frequently choosing to swipe ping pong balls, though he was not very skilled at the game and tired to con his opponent into agreeing his return shots always landed on the table. Meantime Ben Dover excelled in school and was the most popular boy in class.

Stan was a daredevil and a scoundrel. Once, in the middle of the night, he climbed the Dismal Seepage Water Tower and painted this message on the tank: "Ben Dover is a fink." Caught by Police Chief Levi J. Tightpants as he was climbing down the tank, Dupp wound up in the Garlic Corners County Jail. Offered the choice of facing time on vandalism charges added to his shoplifting capers... or joining the Army, Stan told the judge he preferred the latter.

Stan had never encountered or even thought of a drill sergeant. But Sgt. Ira Bully soon introduced him to the joys of basic training. Up at 4 a.m., a half hour of PT (physical training), morning chow of powdered eggs and spam, then drill, drill, drill. Stan got lost crawling the infiltration course, panicked at the gas mask drill, fell in the mud swinging on a rope exercise, and missed the target on all of his rifle practice. In short, he flunked basic training 101. But, mercifully for him the Army found him an ideal post, as a ski instructor at an American military-operated resort in Germany. He had conned his commanding officer, Col. Roscoe Crutchley into the plush assignment. The colonel's aide was a lieutenant named... Ben Dover.

Back home, now dressed in "civvies", Stan Dupp drifted from job to job..soda jerk, gas station attendant, fry cook at "Pop" Nurlman's Eastside Dismal Seepage Eatery. Ben Dover was away at Harvard Law School and then returned home to join retired Judge Ivor Anderson's law firm: Anderson, Sanderson, Henderson and McGonagle.

Today, Stan is back in stir at Punkinville State Prison serving 10-15 on burglary charges. Dover is a distinguished Washington, D.C. attorney in the firm: Reddy, Willin, and Abel.

A final note: In accepting this assignment, writers were asked to: "make it utter nonsense, but make us believe it." Well, the "us" is you. The writer can claim that more than often "nonsense" comes from roots of truth. In this essay, it can be truthfully stated that about 80 percent of the content is based on "composite reality." Only the names were changed to protect the innocent!

And, of course, we all know that for every "Ben Dover" there is almost always a "Stan Dupp."