

A few days after I'd arrived, we decided to load up Jake's truck with beer and drive out to Provincetown. We left for Cape Cod quite late on Saturday night, and by the time we were halfway to P-town it was 1 AM and we were very drunk and sleepy. Jake pulled off the main highway at Brewster, a classic Cape Cod village with an idyllic harbor. We drove the truck almost into the water at the town beach and everyone crawled onto the sand and fell asleep except for Rick and me. It was a warm, full-moon night, and we sat at the water's edge enjoying the gentle sound of the ocean lapping at the beach while moonlight shimmered on the small waves of the harbor. As our eyes adjusted to the darkness, we noticed a small dinghy pulled up on the shore. We couldn't resist taking it out for a row in the harbor. Once out there we came upon a flotilla of small boats and decided to take a few of them out for test rides. We tied the dinghy to the mooring of a small skiff, started the skiff's motor and took off buzzing around the bay. Next we moved up to a bigger boat with a more powerful motor. After having tried out a few more boats, we noticed lights coming on in the houses along the shore. The noise of the outboard motors was waking everyone up, and we could see flashlights coming down to the water. Suddenly we were blinded by a huge spotlight as we sped along. Then came an ominous voice over a loudspeaker: "Come in and give yourselves up; we have arrested your friends."

Instinctively we took evasive action by putting the boat on a zig-zag course and heading for the far end of the harbor. As we approached the shore, we noticed what appeared to be a mooring ball close in. We tied the boat up there, jumped in the water and swam for shore. By now it was starting to get light, and we could see police and boat owners combing the shore in search of the criminals. It was slow going without shoes, but we hiked up away from the water and behind the houses along the shore. Every once in a while we would see someone looking for us and crouch in the bushes till the danger had passed. By the time we got back to the beach where Jake and the rest of the guys were, it was full daylight. From our vantage point in the bushes it appeared that the

cops had arrested them and were waiting for us to be brought in. They probably had our IDs, and without clothes (and especially shoes) we realized it was time to give up. So we walked up behind the officer guarding our buddies and we said, “Hi!” His body jerked up off the ground as though he had received an electric shock. He appeared stunned for a moment, then went to the radio in his patrol car. After a brief discussion he returned to us and said, “The chief wants to have a little chat with you gentlemen; follow me down to the station.”

The chief was an older, heavyset man who appeared to have seen it all and knew exactly what he was going to do. He was probably retired from some big-city police force, and running a small town law enforcement office was just enough activity to keep him from being bored. It was obvious that he had been at home in his comfortable bed when the calls had come in about the boats. He looked at us like a stern father and said, “Boys, I have a lot of angry citizens out there. So here’s what I am going to do: First of all, you two who took the boats for a joy ride are going to put them all back on their proper moorings; then you’re all going to leave town and never come back. Second: you’re all underage and you have a truckload of beer. I am going to confiscate it, if you know what I mean!” This all sounded reasonable to us, so we drove back to the beach and returned each boat to its rightful mooring under the scornful gaze of the sleepless summer residents whose quiet Sunday morning had been so rudely disrupted. When we got to the last boat, we weren’t sure where it belonged, so we tied it up to a mooring ball close to shore, hoping that the owner would see it and return it to its proper mooring. Despite the loss of our beer, we continued to Provincetown and had a splendid day on the beach.

A few days later, there was a note from Jim’s mother on my bed: the Brewster police chief wanted me to call him right away. As I made the call, I had the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach that I was in big trouble. It turned out that the mooring ball we’d used to secure the last boat was actually a buoy marking an underwater rock. When the tide had gone out, the boat had smashed against the rock and sus-

tained considerable damage. The owner was charging us with malicious destruction of property, and there was nothing the chief could do about it. He suggested I call the boat owner and offer to pay for the damages. I did so and apologized profusely. He was very upset, however, and neither expressions of remorse nor offers of remuneration would placate him. I called the police chief and told him that I was in the service and had to return to my base. He called back later that day to tell me he had made arrangements with the judge to hear my case the next morning at 10 AM; he also promised he'd be there to "represent" me.

I got up early the next morning, put on my uniform to gain some sympathy from the judge, and hitchhiked to the courthouse on Cape Cod, some hundred miles away. When I arrived, I didn't see the chief anywhere, so I walked into the courtroom and sat through a trial in progress. The chief still hadn't appeared by the time an official called out, "The County of Barnstable versus Lawrence Wardwell." The judge looked at me and asked me whether I was pleading guilty or innocent. I said, "Guilty, I guess." Just then the chief came in, and the judge asked him to give a report on the incident. After hearing the chief's account, the judge gave me a suspended sentence and ordered me to pay restitution for the damaged boat. He also said that, because I didn't have any money, my military pay would be garnished; once the damages were paid, he would dismiss the charges so they would not be on my permanent record. The chief gave me a ride out to the main highway, wished me luck and reminded me that I was banished from his village forever.

When I returned to South Dakota, it was hard to get back into the routine of walking around on the tarmac for eight hours a day and living in the barracks. Summer was drawing to a close, and I was not looking forward to another brutal winter standing outside. One morning shortly after I'd returned, I was watching the sun begin to shed its light on the surrounding brown and treeless hills. I looked to the Black Hills about twenty miles west of the base, and for a fleeting moment the sun illumined Mount Rushmore, and I could see the four presidential faces carved into the mountain. Something about that sight set off a

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