

FANCY SEEING YOU HERE SIR

By John Redfern

It was a miserable day, pouring with rain and had been for the past three days. I was on Station Duty in my Sub Divisional Headquarters of the County Police when the telephone rang. Picking it up I recognised the voice of an old mate Sgt Ron Summers from the nearby Section Station.

“Hello Ron” I answered, trying to sound cheerful despite the inclement weather. Ron was in an agitated mood as he told me that the new Divisional Chief Inspector intended to ‘Put Him on a Charge’ for ‘Neglect of Duty’. This was a very serious situation and practically unheard of in my time in the Force. Ron was a great guy and we had been ‘oppos’ on adjoining ‘Country Beats’ until a short time ago when he was promoted and we had gone our separate ways.

As the duly elected Constable’s Representative on the Police Federation part of my duties included the welfare and problem solving of my colleagues. In this case it was unusual to be contacted by another person of different rank and status. Nevertheless there was nothing in Regulations which prevented anyone whatever rank to represent another member of the Force in pending disciplinary matters.

From the ensuing conversation it appeared that poor old Ron had fallen foul of our newly appointed Chief Inspector ‘Inky’ Penn who had recently joined us from the ranks of the Metropolitan Police. Inky was a nasty piece of work by any stretch of imagination and I had already ‘crossed swords’ with him. He could be quite ruthless and seemed hell bent on ‘getting to the top’ at all costs. Being an Ex Navy man I could not resist giving Inky his sobriquet which was quickly adopted by all the lads.

The charge of ‘Neglect of Duty’ can be broken down into varying degrees depending on the severity of the offence but the broad outline of the charge remained the same. It appeared that poor old Ron had been late in submitting Occurrence Reports and Returns to Division. As a rule this would call for a polite rebuke or reminder in the form of a memorandum from the Chief Superintendent and as my subsequent enquiries revealed that everyone else had also been late in submitting their paperwork to Inky, I concluded that the charge was probably vindictive and perhaps frivolous.

In accordance with the laid down procedure I telephoned Inky to inform him that I intended to represent Ron at any subsequent hearing and to request a copy of the charge forms which had to be sent to the officer concerned and his appointed representative. Inky almost went berserk and seemed to completely lose his reason and even more so when I told him that I intended to make a written record of our conversation and present it at the hearing before the Deputy Chief Constable, should there of course be one and respectfully reminding him that he could withdraw his allegation at any time. There was a momentary silence before Inky almost burst a blood vessel in slamming down the phone.

My immediate reaction was one of complete amazement. I have never heard of a Senior Officer making such an outburst. Having discussed the situation with my Branch Board Chairman and Secretary and acting on their usually sound advice I decided to prepare my case for presentation.

The following day was my Rest Day and what better opportunity than to have a quiet lunch and a good pint at a country pub a few miles away. The Landlord was an old chum and former colleague Nobby Hall. Nobby and I had served together in the same Division some years ago and when he retired after 30 years service he bought his pub 'The Lamb and Lark' together with his wife 'Dot'

Nobby was an absolute diamond and highly respected by everyone who had ever known him as was his dear wife. Together they had transformed the pub into a little 'gold mine' which produced not only good beer but excellent food too. It also gave me the chance to talk to Nobby and ask his advice.

A warm handshake from Nobby and a big hug from Dot followed by a pint of best bitter put me well and truly at ease. The pub was fairly full and several people were already enjoying their lunch as Nobby and I began our conversation mainly concerning Ron who was also a former colleague and good friend of Nobby.

My tale of woe caused Nobby to shake his head sadly and at times he looked angry. Dot produced some soup and sandwiches so that Nobby and I could continue our conversation. People began to come in for lunch and Nobby was kept fairly busy serving them pausing now and again to continue our talk.

"What is this new Chief Inspector's name"? enquired Nobby casually "Would you believe Clarence 'Inky' Penn" I answered. Nobby chuckled, " I bet I know who gave him that name" he replied smiling. He placed a finger to his lips and pointed to a table near the window where a couple were eating lunch.

"He's over there having lunch with a young lady" whispered Nobby. "Who is?" I enquired a little irritably. "The new Chief Inspector and I bet she isn't his wife either" Nobby winked slyly. I turned around in the direction he had indicated and I could hardly believe my own eyes.

"Well, Well, Well, fancy that Nobby"? I exclaimed " You are correct mate, it isn't his wife, it's our Angie from the 'Super's' Office, I've seen Mrs Penn". "What about that then"? said Nobby grinning "Go on then, now is your chance, get in there". "Right come on Nobby, I'll introduce you" grabbing his arm we went over to the window where the oblivious pair were eating.

"Well fancy seeing you here Sir" I exclaimed as an extremely red faced Chief Inspector Penn looked up from his meal. "Hello Angie, how are you"? I enquired politely as she smiled back looking extremely embarrassed. Turning to face the Chief Inspector I said "I'd like you to meet ex Pc Nobby Hall, we are old pals and this is his pub". Chief Inspector Penn nodded as Angie glared at him. "I didn't realise you used this pub", said Angie lamely. "I bet you didn't" I almost chortled as Nobby and I went back to the bar.

A few minutes later a very red faced Chief Inspector Penn sheepishly came over to us. "It's JR isn't it"? he enquired nervously. "That is correct Sir" "Look JR It's not really what you think, We just". He stammered. I held up my hand to interrupt him. " Of course not Sir, we never thought it for a moment did we Nobby?" I smiled. "Not for a moment" echoed Nobby " It's OK Sir, your secret is safe with us, isn't it Nobby"? "Absolutely JR, safe as houses, mind you there are people who". I interrupted him "We are all men of the world when all said and

done eh! Sir"? I answered. "Look JR I, I mean we" I again interrupted him placing my fingers to my lips "Say no more about it Sir shall we" I enquired "By the way Sir, I've been meaning to ask, what is the current situation with Sgt Summers"? I asked looking him squarely in the eye.

The Chief Inspector swallowed hard. "I've been thinking about it and perhaps I may have been a little hasty in my actions". He stammered weakly. "That's good news Sir, after all the Deputy Chief Constable might not have understood your position as we do, is'nt that so Nobby"? "Absolutely". agreed Nobby nodding his head several times "It doesn't really bear thinking about does it"? he enthused.

Chief Inspector Penn fumbled inside his coat and took out his wallet. Fishing out a £5 note he spluttered. "Perhaps you would both like a drink"? " That's very civil of you indeed Sir, two large brandies JR" inquired Nobby amiably as he pressed the glasses to the optic. "May I take it that there will be no further action against Sgt Summers then Sir" I enquired politely to a now quite distraught Chief Inspector Penn, who paused for a moment, now completely deflated. "I will send him a withdrawal slip" he paused again "Tomorrow Sir"? I enquired. "Very Well, tomorrow it is" Inky almost snapped. "We will forget our little conversation also then Sir" I smiled. Inky stormed out followed by Angie and the two began furiously arguing outside. Nobby and I turned to each other, clinked our glasses and drained them in one gulp. A handshake and a wink followed by another big hug from Dot and it was time to go.

I was on 'Station Duty Early Turn' the following day when I opened a memo in the Internal Mail addressed to the Police Federation Representative. It was from Inky, who was as good as his word and 'After careful consideration in this case, I have decided to deal with this matter 'Internally' and have therefore recorded it as 'No Further Action Necessary'. I smiled and reached for the telephone to inform a very relieved Ron Summers of the outcome. "How the Hell did you get the old bugger to drop it". enquired Ron. "Let's just say that you owe me two large brandies and leave it at that" I replied replacing the phone.

The strangest thing happened about one week later when Force Orders were published as usual but included an item that Chief Inspector Penn had been posted to Force Headquarters Traffic Unit. "Funny that", I thought until the penny finally dropped. "It's that old sod Nobby, of course, he and the Deputy Chief served together on HMS Ramillies during the war and they were still 'big oppos'

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