

Bedard

John Bedard introduced me to fun in the adult world. At the end of my third day of work at my first “real job” I sensed a presence hovering at the entrance to my office cubicle. I turned to face a heavysset man of medium height, of black hair and beard, wearing square wire-rimmed glasses, standing half-hidden like a child at the entrance to the circus for the first time. For an eternal moment we stared at each other across the distance, both inquisitive and anxious. Finally he spoke, and the query changed the course of lives forever: “Do you Quake?”

“Excuse me?” I sputtered in mass confusion.

“Do you *Quake*?” he reiterated, to which I replied, “Only when I’m nervous, I guess.”

Quake, for the uninitiated, was the title of one of the original and highly successful video games of the “first person shooter” genre, wherein what you see on the screen is supposed to represent your view inside the electronic world of armed combat. I had only heard of these games previously, so in reality what this man was asking me was whether or not I played this one. Suddenly he was at my computer hacking away installing a version of this game so that I could partake in a not-so-company-sanctioned playing of “Quake” by members of the office staff over the office network. In short, every person you saw running around in the game was an actual person sitting nearby at their desk. Since it was after normal working hours and most folks had already departed the office, time spent on non-work activities such as this could be justified (in our minds). Everyone else in the game had been playing “Quake” for many moons and had experience and nicknames like “Cannonfodder”, while I was completely green – a lamb to the slaughter. With that thought, I chuckled and typed in the nickname, “Lambchop”... and slaughter me they did. Over and over and over, for 90 minutes before I realized I should go eat dinner. In those ninety minutes, however, I met more people from the office than I had in the previous two days – each stopping by my cube between killing sprees wondering who this “Lambchop” was. It was my introduction to the Underground: the counter-culture hiding in plain sight amongst our office culture. It was an eye-opening, watershed event in my life, and this man was my catalyst.

In our office of one hundred or so, there were perhaps a dozen people who were core to this group, and John Bedard - or simply “Bedard” as he was affectionately known by his friends - was central to it. John was the graphic artist working in a software company; the man who made sure the aesthetics and public image represented our ethos and products. Being an artist (the one and only, mind you) also gave him license to “Zag” when everybody else “Zigged” – something everybody in the office allowed and embraced with only the occasional rolling of eyes. John was the glue while we were the beams: his different role and perspective was the crucial necessity to all of our success, and his extremely well known black humor added the gravitas to our lives reminding us not to get too impressed with ourselves. You could simply sum it up as “Bedard being Bedard”.

If the group was close-knit in the office, it was even more so in our personal lives. Simply put, we were all friends – the best of friends. We worked with each other, supported each other, cared for each other. We knew each other’s strengths and weaknesses, joys and miseries, triumphs and failures. To this day we all stay in contact and can count each other as members of our closest circle of friends. And my invitation to the group can solely be put down to Bedard. And just like at work, Bedard was the glue. You could always count on Bedard. You could always count on him being there for you - both physically and emotionally. You could always count on his contributing to the festivities as only he could: it wasn’t a party until Bedard was there to make fun of us or be that cloud of sarcasm. It wasn’t real until you got his perspective; you cannot truly appreciate how blue the sky is until you have a cloud to compare it with. Clear blue skies are boring, but if that’s what you loved you would find no stronger supporter – unequivocally - than Bedard.

John Bedard was my friend. He was my catalyst, the man who showed me that you can be an adult and still have fun like a kid. It was my first real job and I thought it was time to “grow up” and be serious. Thanks to Bedard, that pathetic thought lasted just under three days.

John Bedard died yesterday in Anaheim California, aged 45. He died doing what he loved best: riding his motorcycle. He died being an adult having fun like a kid. He died and now... now all I see are clouds. I weep and I see clouds, because those were the things that Bedard would see. And I see that I weep not solely for John, but for me. We all do. We weep because we will never again have our lives enriched in the totally unique way that Bedard - and only Bedard – was able to enrich it. We weep for the ending of life – of his, and that cherished part of ours. We weep and we question: Why? What if? What if he had taken a different road that day? What if John had stopped just a little longer at breakfast? What if Bedard had driven at just a little different speed all morning long?

What if, what if, what if...

We could drive ourselves mad pining for the answers to such questions. But in an effort to “Zag” like John would have, I ask myself this: What if Bedard had never stopped at my cube at 4:55pm that day? That is one question I will never seek the answer to, for it’s a life without gravitas, without sincerity, without fun.

I just looked out the window at the clouds – and a motorcycle drove past. Keep Quake-ing, Bedard.