

## JOHN BRYANT'S ONE-ARMED BANDIT

Once upon a time, in the latter 1920s, John Bryant, proprietor of the Douglas Lake Hotel, acquired a nickel slot machine for his establishment. It was a welcome addition to another activity that occupied visitors on summer afternoons.....the playing of cards, quite often poker. At the time, such slot machines were quite popular, both as a diversion for the guests and as an added source of income for the host. Indeed, there were three such machines on Douglas Lake at one point: two were located in the Ingleside Inn on the northern shore of the Lake and the third was maintained in a back room at the Bryant Hotel.

Also at the lake were two very bored teenage boys with too much time on their hands and a wee bit of larceny in their hearts. Friends from childhood, these high school buddies found themselves looking for high adventure while on vacation at Douglas Lake. Pranksters, both, they took great pleasure from shocking and surprising friends and family. On one such occasion, they had mailed a box filled with spiders to an unsuspecting pal.

Now, however, they were ready for the Big Time. Having eyed the one-armed bandit on earlier trips to the Douglas Lake Hotel, they formulated a plan. They would row over to the Hotel in the dead of night and would "liberate" the slot machine. And so they did, rowing silently to the shore, beaching their boat on the sand, and sneaking up the beach to the front of the Hotel, where they entered through a window. The object of their attention was found in short order. And despite its rather ponderous weight, they managed to spirit it out through the same window and down to the boat. As they were gleefully rowing for home, however, a thought suddenly occurred to the boys. How, exactly, were they going to explain the sudden appearance of a SLOT MACHINE in the family cottage?

How, indeed? No explanation that they could come up with would satisfy THE PARENTS, a suspicious bunch, given the boys' prior history of pranks and other minor indiscretions. So what should they do? To take it back where it came from would be to risk being caught red-handed. To take it home might be even worse. As they looked about them on that dark, dark night, a thought emerged. Where could they put it where no one would ever find it? The solution proved to be a simple one. So overboard it went, in about 20 feet of weed-filled water, where, one assumes, it resides to this day.

Having revealed the fate of the slot machine, the big question becomes "so what happened to these two fine young men?" Actually, they went on to lead productive lives

and remained life-long friends. The one founded a company in the western part of the country. And the other headed for the bright lights of Broadway, where he “discovered” and served as an agent for two well-known stage songstresses. After acting in a Humphrey Bogart film, he went on to produce multiple Broadway musicals. And in what must have been a crowning achievement, he served as an associate producer for both the Broadway and the Academy-award winning movie version of the musical “Chicago”, starring Katherine Zeta-Jones, Richard Gere and Renee Zellweger.

And the identities of these two young men? Their names are being withheld to protect the guilty.....and the children of the guilty.....and the grandchildren of the guilty, who still make their way to Douglas Lake from time to time.

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