A Mostly Magnificent Memoir

TRUE STORIES
DRAMATIZED AND
SOMEWHAT FICTIONALIZED



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Big Apple Film Festival Screenplay Competition
2021 Spring Edition



BO BENNETT

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Many of the names were changed to protect the identity and reputations of those whose actions or behaviors were fictionalized or dramatized.

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A Note to the Reader From the Author

This book is an unconventional, genre-bending story of fictionalized truth based on my childhood. The prologue, conclusion, and epilogue is written in the third-person, whereas the rest of the book was written in the first person.

This book was adapted from a full-length motion picture screenplay. You can download the screenplay for free at

www.ebookit.com/A_Mostly_Magnificent_Memoir.pdf

If you happen to be in the film industry and want the rights to this script, or if you know someone in the film industry and want to see this as a movie, send an e-mail to production@archieboy.com.

As you probably know, a book's success is largely dependent on its ratings and reviews. If you enjoy this book, I would be grateful if you left an honest review on Amazon, Goodreads, Audible, or the book retailer of your choice.

Enjoy the book!

Prologue

It was late afternoon on October 22, 2019, in the town of Easton, Connecticut. Easton is a quaint New England town, home to just over 7,000 citizens and only a few businesses—the kind that make liberal use of the "back in 10 minutes" sign. In this mostly middle-class town, Sturbridge Road is made up of Brady Bunch-esque houses constructed in the 60s and 70s, some of which are well-kept, and others that look like the inhabitants died in their homes years ago, and the bodies still have yet to be discovered.

A high-end, metallic white Lexus SUV pulls up next to a long, straight, steep driveway, weeds sprouting from the cracks as a result of decades of neglect. James Murphy, a man in his late forties, puts the car in park and shuts off the engine while nostalgically gazing at the house at the end of the driveway. James' wife, Sabrina, puts her hand on his. She looks at James, then at their two late-teenage children in the backseat.

James exits the car, his gaze unbroken, and stands at the top of the driveway to get a better look. Giving James a moment, Sabrina follows him out, stands next to him, and rests her head on his shoulder. Trying her best to keep it together, she says somberly, "I don't think I can do this."

"If I can do it, you can do it," James responds confidently and somewhat facetiously. James and Sabrina embrace—the kind of meaningful embrace made possible by a decades-long passionate and loving partnership.

James spent the first eighteen years of his life in his home on Sturbridge Road. This was his first visit in over twenty

years since his dad sold the house after his mom died. James needed this visit to strengthen the emotional connection to the stories he was about to share in the most difficult speech of his life.

Toxic Scripts

It was a typical evening in the Murphy household. The year was 1978. My father, Fred, a heavy-set man with dyed, jet-black, greased-back hair, was sitting at the kitchen table wearing one of his three outfits—this one was khaki-colored pants and a matching button-down shirt, purchased at Sears for $19.95. With his Seagram's Seven and club soda in one hand and a burning cigarette in the other, Fred pretended to be paying attention to the evening news while my mother, Delores, proceeded with one of her alcohol-induced rants. "Look at you. God damn, good-for-nothing, lousy drunk. Sitting there getting drunk, cigarette ashes all over the place, food stuck in your mustache… is that even from tonight's dinner?"

Delores had one light grey cotton robe that she wore nightly and accessorized with curlers and a bottle of wine. She sat next to Fred, holding a large, filled-to-the-brim wine glass in her left hand. In her right hand was a lit cigarette with ashes that always seem to be on the verge of falling. I walked into the kitchen sporting a fire engine red onesie—the kind with the booties that generate enough electricity to knock a five-year-old on his ass each time he touches a light switch. I pleaded in desperation, "Will you please stop fighting!?"

The day of my birth, February 16, 1972, is one of infamy rather than celebration. When my parents were engaged in their nightly ritual of drinking and mutual, verbal sparring, and I stepped in with my feeble attempt to make the peace,

Delores would inevitably bring up the events that may or may not have transpired on this historic day.

"Why don't you ask your father where he was when I was in the hospital giving birth to you!?" rhetorically asked Delores with a noticeable drunken slur.

Already having heard this story many, many times, I rolled my eyes.

With an equally drunken slur, Fred responded to the question I didn't bother to ask, "I was out celebratin' because my son was born on my birthday." Fred looked at me and gave me a wink. Fred had a knack for getting his kids to side with him. Not through logic or reason, but through winks, dad jokes, and sometimes ten-dollar bills. My dad and I share the same birthday, along with Ice T, Sonny Bono, John McEnroe, and Kim Jong-il. Perhaps, at an unconscious level, this cosmic connection is another reason I tended to side with my father over my mother.

Delores had a different theory regarding Fred's whereabouts the day I was born. "You goddamn liar! You were at the bar getting drunk like you always do and screwing around with your whores!"

Fred and Delores had the kind of relationship where infidelity on both their parts wouldn't be much of a surprise to anyone who knew them. But the reference to Fred's "whores" was more figurative than literal. According to the implied criteria set forth by Delores, to qualify as a "whore," one had to be female, between the ages of 17 and 60, and come within a 10-foot radius of Fred. Delores made exceptions for immediate family members, close friends of her children, and herself.

This conversation, or script, rarely modified, played out over and over again like poorly written computer code stuck in an endless loop. The repetitiveness was most likely

due to the fact that both Fred and Delores would get so drunk that they simply didn't remember what they had and had not argued about the night before.

This script was just one of their many that I heard night after night. The others all revolved around the themes of jealousy, infidelity, intoxication, and hatred. To say that I grew up in a toxic environment would be an understatement.

I gave my mom my full support when she would sit me down and tell me that she and my father were getting a divorce (this script played out at least three times per year). I needed my father and mother; I just didn't need or want them under the same roof.

Fred and Delores never did get a divorce. There were probably many reasons that despite their contempt for one another, they stayed together, including their children, finances, and the stigma attached to divorce given their Catholic upbringing. Perhaps the biggest reason was that they needed each other in a highly codependent and psychologically unhealthy way.

The next morning, Fred and Delores sat in the same chairs at the kitchen table as the night before, dressed in their day clothes, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. Fred watched the news on television while Delores read about how gay vampires are taking over the Whitehouse in her favorite paper, the *Weekly World News*.

"Did you hear what that son-of-a-bitch mayor said?" Delores asked while half-listening to the television.

"Yeah. He's a Goddamn idiot."

Both Delores and Fred would often find pleasure and camaraderie in their mutual hate for their common enemies, be it a relative, a family friend, or a politician.

Even the "good times" were based on anger and hate.

The Pimp Affair

Delores was so vulgar that, had she been a character in a Tarantino film, she would have been censored. Her creative and vulgar insults often included commands involving a mixture of sexual acts and dead mothers (directed at Fred). What's ironic about all this is that if any of her children uttered even the most benign of profanities, she would slap us silly. When Annie, my older sister by seven years, was a sassy tween, she was building a tower out of playing cards branded with the Seagrams' Seven emblem. Thanks to reward points earned for excessive drinking and smoking by my parents, just about every room in our house had some object with either a booze or Marlboro logo on it. Delores was napping on the couch next to Annie when Annie's tower collapsed, and she reflexively uttered the word "damn!" It was like Delores was poked with an invisible cattle prod. She jumped up and started smacking Annie while cursing incoherently. Which brings us to what has become known in the Murphy family as "The Pimp Affair."



The year was 1978. John, my older brother by almost a decade, was putting the finishing touches on a Monet-like painting while singing a pitch-perfect rendition of Barry Manilow's *Copacabana*. John was the proud recipient of whatever musical and artistic genes ran throughout our family, whereas Annie and I got none of the musical genes and just some of the artistic ones that were stuck to the

bottom of the gene pool. This was made evident by my being asked by my elementary school music teacher to lip-sync when my class sang the national anthem at the school concert. As for my art, well, it even sucked for a five-year-old. Unfortunately for John, it appeared that the musical and artistic genes also came with the genes that made it necessary to get glasses, braces, and a hell of a lot of acne cream. Given the age difference, John and I did not "hang out" together often, but when we did, we generally got along well. Generally.

Perhaps the most dreaded of phrases used by us Murphy kids was "I'm telling Mommy," because we knew that if we were in the wrong, then at best, we had a verbal lashing coming to us. At worst, we would be chased around the house by Delores with a cigarette hanging from her mouth, trying our best to avoid her free-flyin' hand that was indistinguishable from a loose firehose. For this reason, there was an unwritten and unspoken code that existed between us Murphy kids: we allowed each other to get away with minor offenses before we called in the big guns (i.e., Delores). For example, I could get away with calling Annie a "jerk," but never a "bitch." I could call my brother a "poo-poo face," but never a "shit head." Exact wording mattered, and so did context.

With not much of an understanding of the impressionist movement as a five-year-old, I wandered into John's room and criticized John's painting as being "unrealistic." Words were exchanged, and things escalated quickly. In a moment of childhood fury, I didn't hold back. "You're a pimp!"

John, horrified, had a look that someone might have when walking in on their spouse having sex with a goat. It was a look one might see on a priest's face after calling the Pope a "douchebag." It was the same look I had seen many

times before on the faces of my teachers when my mom was talking to them.

John immediately uttered the dreaded phrase, "I'm telling Mommy you said that!"

Starting to question the innocence of my smack talk, I dealt with this confrontation the best way I knew how. I hid in the hallway cabinet. I was crying tears of fear and regret, hoping I would never be found.

"James? Jamie? Where are you, sweetheart?" calmly asked Delores.

I calmed down as I realized it wasn't the Mrs. Hyde mother I was expecting, but the more level-headed one– the creator of my moniker "little baby Jesus." Sensing the calmness in her voice, I cautiously came out of hiding to meet my fate.

"James, where did you learn that word?" my mom asked.

"I made it up. It's short for 'pimple'!"

At that moment, Delores was overcome with a sense of relief, realizing that my childhood innocence was still intact and that I was most likely still unaware of the roles played in the sex trade industry. Delores felt sympathy for me for my unnecessary trauma due to a simple misunderstanding. She gave me one of her big hugs filled with unconditional motherly love, showing me the true nature of the big-hearted woman I called "Mommy"... then she slapped the shit out of John.

Who says justice is blind?

I Wasn't Monkeying Around

As a child, I had quite an imagination. I had a passion for making up stories, but because I often attempted to pass these stories off as truth (i.e., I lied), I had the credibility of… well, my father. Nature might have equipped me with a creative personality, but it was the nurturing of my loving father, or more specifically, Fred's inability to speak the truth that he inadvertently passed on to me by his example. Given that I was my father's son, I had little credibility in the Murphy household. This made my reporting of an unbelievable truth… unbelievable.



It was a steamy summer afternoon in 1978. I was chillin' in my back yard, riding my electric truck at its max speed of one and a half miles per hour. We lived on a three-acre wooded lot surrounded by trees and deer. In fact, Lyme disease was so common that before I could say "Connecticut," I could say "doxycycline" and "amoxicillin." I heard a noise up in the trees. What I saw simultaneously frightened and excited me.

I ran into the kitchen from the back yard. "Mommy! Mommy! I saw a monkey in the tree!"

Delores, feigning surprise, responded, "Really! What color was it?"

"Black!"

"How big was it?"

"Bigger than me!"

"Did it talk to you?"

Sensing that my mother was humoring me, I continued to answer her but started backing out of the kitchen as Delores' questions became more patronizing… even to a six-year-old. Given that Delores had no problem believing in fairies, chakras, the Loch Ness monster, Bigfoot, and other similar ideas and creatures she read about in the *Weekly World News*, I didn't think a monkey in a tree would be such a stretch, but apparently, I was wrong.

Several days had passed. I was standing up at the head of the kitchen table, passionately making my case to my family as they enjoyed their typical breakfasts: coffee and Marlboros for the parents, and cereal with monsters on the box for the kids, with a side of second-hand smoke. It was clear that over the past several days, my story went from "cute" to a troubling potential indicator of schizophrenia. Fred took out a map of the world and showed me where we lived, and then he pointed to where monkeys live. Although Fred pointed to Western Canada, I understood the point he was trying to make: monkeys didn't live anywhere near us. Just when I was starting to doubt my own story, the anchorman from the local channel five news team caught our attention.

> *Now for an update on Mitch, the monkey who escaped from Beardsley Park Zoo in Bridgeport this Monday. Mitch has been found in Easton, a neighboring town, by a resident who was outside mowing his lawn. We are happy to report that Mitch is now safe and back home. It seems like Mitch had enough monkeying around.*

While the anchorman forced a corny laugh, my family was silent and stunned. They looked at me with pity and remorse. I sat down with a big grin, clasping my hands

behind my head, and crossed my feet on the table. This was the first time I experienced vindication, and it felt good.

Delores smacked me across the head. “Get your fucking feet off the kitchen table!”

End of the free sample

You have just read the prologue and the first three stories of *A Mostly Magnificent Memoir* by Bo Bennett, PhD.

The complete ebook (EPUB and PDF) is available direct from the author at

bobennett.com/bookstore