

Journey of the bell

I was part of a group (sounds better than gang) that infiltrated the camp, rang the bell and fled like deer – several times.

However, we were not involved in the heist and disappearance of the camp's icon. The "borrowers of the bell" consisted of five people of which I knew several. They did not reveal to me the "successful operation" until years after. My knowledge is sketchy but this is what I know. The names have been changed to protect the semi-innocent.

The motive was boredom the challenge was real. The thing was on a roof and HEAVY. The night was quiet, the moon light reflecting off the almost century old forged steel bell. I was told it took some doing to get it down without losing any members falling off the roof, being crushed by the bell fighting back to stay home or the clapper clanging the side screaming out for help.

Everyone in the getaway vehicle was quiet, sweating a mix of adrenalin and nerves. The bell was stashed in a shack in the woods that was nearly as old as the bell.

Dissent among the group was immediate. Several felt remorse and wanted to return it. Two of the more zealous members and who provided most of the muscle of the heist wanted to keep it. After a heated discussion it was decided that they would leave it at the shack and return it the camp the following week.

When they reconvened to the shack to return the bell – it was gone!

Another heated discussion followed and in the end they washed their hands from it assuming that someone had come along and stole it from the thieves. Although it was never spoken there was suspicion that two of the members – the two zealots, had taken the bell.

In time the suspicions were confirmed as the two admitted to the rest that they did indeed have the bell.

Through the thirty five years of captivity, the bell rested in Wisconsin, Texas, Idaho, and Oregon. There were rumors that it was atop of a new church plant in the heart of Texas but this could never be confirmed. It finally ended up in a crawl space of a house, a thousand miles from its home in Minnesota.

For many years several of the group persisted in trying to find a way to bring it back. It was a class reunion that provided the perfect opportunity to send it on its journey home.

Only one of the original people who took it was present to help return it. "It was a fun adventure to bring it home. I am so glad it is where it belongs," the sole member said.

There is probably a lot more to the "story of the bell" that I don't know and will remain a mystery. So for now it is back home ringing in the campers to the mess hall. A sweet sound filling the campground. If only it could talk...what a story the bell could tell.