

# The Ocean Beach Incident

This happened while I was an altar boy at St. Paul's\*, our local Catholic parish. Small town, so there was one priest – Fr. Stan – assisted by a deacon who also served as our Director of Religious Education (and de facto wrangler of altar boys), Simon. Both Fr. Stan and Simon were older gentlemen (20+ years older than my parents) – Simon happily married for many years, and the worst anyone could say about the good Father is he had an eye (and occasional errant hand) for the ladies, so there was no hanky-panky with us. Not all Catholic clergy are pedos.

Anyway, a year or three older and outranking me (in more ways than one) was Danny: a big, fat, mean, ugly, stinky ginger bully. Picture a fat red-headed Butch from the Little Rascals – no Woim needed. And STINK! Not normal musky stinky-guy smell – not even the [randy-billygoat-and-old-coonhound-in-a-hockey-bag stink of my mountain bike gear](#) – but brimstone or sulfur gas or something diabolical, anyway.

From time to time, Simon liked to reward the altar boys with something fun, much as a principal likes to see the students have an occasional class trip. One time, it was to see the circus. On this occasion, though, it was a trip to Ocean Beach, which back then, anyway, had not only a beach but a boardwalk and amusement park: rides, games, ...

This was very early 1980s when seat belts really weren't a Thing yet, and St. Paul's had no parish bus... but Simon had a pickup with a cap, into which we all piled. He'd be arrested for it today, of course, but this is now and that was then. To make us more comfortable on the ride out to New London, he had these foam rubber cushions on which we could sit for the trip.

And off we went. The ride out was uneventful. Even the event was uneventful (and honestly not especially memorable). It was

what happened on the return trip: Danny must've been bored, so he promptly picked a fight with another one of the older altar boys. And then he started picking something else: pieces of those foam rubber cushions, which he began tauntingly throwing at the other kid. It wasn't long before the other kid began returning in kind. There were, I think, six of us in the back, and this cushion-chunk fight escalated to involve all but one of the younger lads and me.

When we got back to St. Paul's, Simon opened the cap to be greeted by a sea of chunks of utterly destroyed cushions... and a cloud of Dannystink. Not happy was he. I believe that was the end of Danny's time as an altar boy.

Rumor has it that, a few years later, he knocked up Jody Mae, our class tomboy... so somewhere in the world is his (and her) undoubtedly stinky diabolical progeny.

*\* The names have been changed to protect the guilty.*