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### **HOW I MET DENNIS THE MENACE - MR. JAY NORTH - JANUARY 31, 2013**

Once upon a time, when living in Turners Falls, MA, I learned about a soft ice cream stand called Yelena's Flavorland Soft Serve (as is the style of the locals we just call it Yelena's), out near Turnpike Road (on Turners Falls Road, actually), a bit awkward to get to, especially if you aren't all that familiar with the street patterns, which in that section of town has no grid pattern.

Now, you should know that Turners (the local slang for Turners Falls) is one of FIVE villages that make up the town of Montague. Soooo, technically, I live in Montague or rather, the Village of Turners Falls in the Town of Montague, which dates its inception to January 25, 1754. Not that any reminders, or anyone for that matter, from 1754 still survive, and certainly not Yelena's, but still, it's an old, quaint, kinda place.

Long ago, when first in the computer biz (back in the early 1980s) I met this gal Kate who sold office supplies and printing services. Turns out she was married at the time to this guy named KC (I had no idea what that meant at the time). So, it comes to pass that I went off around 1984 and started a business that sold, installed, trained and supported automated solutions (i.e. computer) for video rental stores, you know, the places where everybody used to go to rent and then return movies on video tape. Now in those days you could rent either BETA or VHS tapes but that's really a story for another time.

As it happens, I hook up with (not in the Biblical sense) Microfast, a company out of Seattle, Washington. They had developed a complete, proprietary turn-key system (both hardware and software) to manage those video stores. Right after New Year's Day in 1984, I called them and became one of their dealers. So, I went off to sell these complete systems to clients in New England. The first computer Micro Movie Club (MMC - the name of the software package) ran on was a Kaypro 10, a CPM operating system based, heavy, gray portable "micro-computer" that came with a whopping 10 MB hard drive (that's megabyte as opposed to today's terabyte drive. I apologize, but that, too, is a story for another day. That 'lil sucker ran at 4 Hz (hertz as in the rental car company but no correlation whatsoever). Ok, a 'lil bit about that. The "hertz" thing refers to how fast the computer can process input/output, it's called processing speed or clock speed. In 1984, 4 Hz was decent for a 'lil desktop unit. It "clocked" at 4,000 cycles per second. Today's computers clock at over 2,000,000,000 cycles per second! WOW, ok a big phew on that one. Let's get back to Yelena's ok?

So, as I start to sell these MMC systems, I quickly realize that I can make a few extra bucks by selling add-ons like printer paper for reports, printer ribbons and lo and behold the big one, custom receipt forms for customer/rental transactions. You see, MMC used a certain receipt



layout/format. Such forms are not available over-the-counter, so to speak. You can't just go to Staples and buy 'em. Heck, Staples wasn't even around until 1986, anyway.

Seeing an opportunity, I decided I'd hook-up (again nothing Biblical here) with someone I could acquire those receipt forms from on a wholesale basis. So, I contact Kate (you remember Kate, right?) whose then-husband it turns out is in the kind of business that could supply me with those receipt forms. That's where KC comes in.

I go see KC and he tells me he can get the forms for me for so much a thousand, boxed 5,000 to a box. Thing is I have to get a minimum of 5 boxes! Well, at the time, I only have ONE client who only needs ONE box of forms. But, I say, WTF (more slang for which I profusely apologize), hold my breath and order 5 boxes. Well, as it turns out, eventually I'm selling (supplying customers) about 1,000 boxes of those suckers every year, which KC arranged for me to get. Eventually, I ditched KC and bought them directly from the manufacturer. That turned out ok, because I never really ditched KC completely. As it turns out, KC and Kate actually ditched each other, but only so far as being married. Last I knew they still know each other.

Over the next couple decades (basically from 1984 to the present) KC, whose real name, I find out, is Kenneth Charles Scott, aka KC to everyone, and I become great buddies. Eventually, he meets Laurie, who becomes his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife (yeah, Kate was actually number 2) and they live in Greenfield which is just across the Connecticut River from Turners. I see them all the time, more so in the summer when we crave ice cream. Seems that KC and Laurie are real soft-serve connoisseurs, going all over the region to seek out the ultimate soft-serve.

One summer night a few years ago, KC and Laurie come over to see me with intent of getting some soft-serve in Turners at a place called Yelena's, that they say is THE BEST. I'm thinking, again, WTF, I'm game, so off we go to Yelena's. Only problem is KC, who always let's Laurie drive, can't remember where it is, well more specifically on how to get there which, when you think about it, is really the same thing. Remember that bit about street patterns? Gosh, it's always something isn't it??

Now, I'm not new to Franklin County at that point in time but I'm a total newbie to Turners. My major thing with Turners, up to then, had been with Terry, my hairdresser/barber, who had his shop in Turners. When I had hair, I'd go see him to get my hair cut but never really ventured to go sight-seeing around Turners. Few people did as Turners wasn't highly thought of. Not like it is now. Now we have the Discovery Center, the fish ladder, PumpkinFest, Annual Block Party, Spring Parade and Ristorante DiPaolo, aka DePaolo's, 'cause Turners folks aren't big on whole names. And, we have (well had, but kinda have in a new version), Yelena's.

So, KC and Laurie and I are driving around in KC's old Toyota Camry (KC and Laurie each have one, but KC's is older, well, and a different color too) all over the Hill section of Turners trying to find this soft ice cream place. We get there, eventually, and KC says, "Ok, that wasn't too bad" and he intimates to me that once you find it you realize how easy and convenient it really is and that he'll remember from now on, which turns out to be true. For me, now that I've been in Turners for several years, going on 8 actually, I can get there myself, except that now it's not Yelena's anymore, it's called Sprinkles. But, I prefer to go with KC and Laurie 'cause doing so is always an adventure. Heck, KC and I even go without Laurie sometimes. I think sometimes she's tired from work and just wants to stay home with Chuckie, their cat, who has Pancreatitis. So even if Chuckie went too, which by the way he never has (he's really a house cat), with his condition, soft serve wouldn't agree with him.

Once we got there that first time I get introduced to Frank, the then-current owner, by KC 'cause by now KC and Laurie are regulars, just that KC always does the introductions. Not that Laurie couldn't perform that function, just that KC's a 'lil hyper (lots less than me though), kinda like Chuckie in his youth (gosh that cat was such a hellion as a kitten). I remember 'cause it was when KC was single, pre-Laurie). Regardless, Frank's a nice guy.

In the summer of 2010 (or thereabouts – well I’m pretty sure it was 2010 – just not sure of the month), KC and I are on another jaunt to Yelena’s. We show up this one night, wait in line and say “Hi” to Frank when it’s our turn at the “Order Here” window. We’re having a nice ‘lil chat when Frank says, “I’ve got Dennis The Menace in here making ice cream cones.” KC and I say, “Sure,” thinking he’s probably just referring to some local Turners yokel (of which Turners has way more than its fair share) who’s just being a royal pain. We comment in that regard to Frank who insists it’s REALLY HIM!!! Well, lo and behold, the next thing we know is this rather tall rotund dude comes out the side door and says “Hi, I’m Jay North.” Honestly, not that we didn’t believe him, just that, well, it’s been 40 plus years since we watched him harass old crotchety Mr. Wilson on TV, and he just doesn’t look like that little kid anymore, which in reality, he isn’t. He’s still playful as all heck though.

I tell him I wish we could get some pics but I don’ t have my camera with me. Nowadays I have a digital camera, not like some old Kodak Brownie I would have had in Dennis’ heyday. At that, KC steps up to the plate, whips out his iPhone and says, “No, problem, my phone can take pics.” Whoda thunk that in 1960, right!

Well, as it turns out, KC shows me how to take a pic of him and Jay, which I’m sure I did, and then KC takes one of me with Jay. I’m the smaller one, the one with the chocolate soft ice cream cone. The pic with me and Jay came out fine as anyone can see. The pic of KC and Jay vanished. I swore I took it. I even kinda remember looking at it in preview mode. Sadly, though, it’s never reappeared. KC, being the kind soul he is though, is not mad at me.

Last year, Yelena’s changed hands. Frank’s gone and we have yet to see Jay North again. Seems that he lives in Florida where his friends/neighbors there have connections to people in Turners. So that summer of 2010 those Florida friends went to see their Turners friends and brought Jay along for the ride, so to speak. And, once in Turners, they too wound and found their way to Yelena’s whereupon Dennis The Menace served up soft ice cream cones and had his picture taken with your classmate, Garry. Well, with KC too but Oops on that.

Every so often KC and I recall that incident and remark about how gracious Jay was to both of us. KC has said, “He didn’t have to come out and chat with us. That was really nice of him to do that.” And take pictures too. From 1959-1963 (see [Wikipedia](#)) The TV show was a major hit and Jay became famous as a child star. If you ever run into him, tell him KC and I say hi.