**The Best Prank Ever --- by John Somerset (1960)**

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| The Fire of 18 October 1956 did little to change what was the true essence of Port Credit High School: the immense pride of being part of something truly very special and the engaging spirit that lived in the hearts of those who claimed the school as their own.What did change, regretfully, was the appearance of the building. The board had the once-enchanting, neo-gothic, Credit Valley Stone face of the school torn from its body. In its place they constructed an industrial-like façade of steel, glass and other uninspiring materials - with no provision for a front entrance, or even a mounted bronze statue of Burt Lucas's dog that, after all, raised the early-morning alarm, saving the building from total destruction.Yes, we then had a school with no apparent main entranceway and an uninspiring, featureless face. Instead students, staff and visitors were directed to a side entrance off the parking lot. In the "foyer", located by the custodian's work areas, numerous steel garbage cans stood sentry, rather like a silent welcoming committee.Yet, in spite of these shortcomings, the spirit rose bravely among the charred thorns: we put the fire behind us and carried on with renewed purpose. After all, schools are much more than mere bricks and mortar. We convinced ourselves that glamour mattered little, if at all.We had, for example, a greatly anticipated event each spring: the graduating classes versus the teachers in a game of baseball. Witnessing the human side of the teachers is always a delight for students. The whole school turned out to watch the event and cheer for both sides. The focus was entirely centered on the game of baseball. Classrooms and offices emptied, leaving the school, and in particular, the inner sanctum unattended. There would be no witnesses to what would happen next, as someone saw even the cat at the game. Yes, someone had let the cat out.The next day around lunchtime, there were wisps of hush-hush rumors that the decorum demanded by the office was about to take a major hit, so to speak. Anticipation grew throughout the especially long afternoon.The 3:15 bell sounded - and still nothing had happened. "All stand for the National Anthem", a crackled voice commanded over the loud speakers in each classroom. We stood at attention by our desks, well... after a fashion that is. We heard the needle feeling its way along the grooves of the long-play orchestral recording toward the first cut.While certain people held their breath, anticipating the explosion, the staff and most of the students were innocently and totally oblivious. It happened precisely as planned: the opening vocal bars of Elvis Presley's, *Hound Dog*, blared over the speaker system at full volume - before we heard the needle loudly scraping its way across the lacquered disc. Then... incredulous silence, while the words and music resonated in our heads.The awesome peace was quickly broken by howls of laughter. A roar resonated throughout the school. The teacher in my classroom, at first looking aghast, began stomping his feet and clapping his hands with utter disbelief then astonished wonder reflected in his reddening face. As we spilled into the halls, laughing and joyfully slapping backs, the question was on everyone's lips: Who did this incredible thing?To answer the question, nothing ever happened. Some clever acts of daring are best left alone to dwell in the mists of time among our fondest of memories. As far as I know, there was no investigation. As it should be, sleeping dogs where left undisturbed.It seems that someone stole into the school office while everyone else was engrossed in the baseball game. This unnamed person found the turntable and carefully replaced the recording of *God Save the Queen* with another showing a rather unobtrusive label. Who knows, but the mysterious person probably joined the crowd at the baseball game, doing his best to stifle a bursting grin that threatened to call attention to his excited self. I cannot imagine how he was able to control his rising mirth behind nothing more than a smile.In every high school there is always a small group of what were known as the tough guys. Predominantly dressed in black, believing that "black is a man's color", they took positions, mostly on the fringes of formal school activities, doing only what was deemed to be cool in a manner after Johnny Cash.One of the more-prominent members of this group was a student named Morris Lash. Now I am not pointing fingers necessarily. After all, time has brought forth a growing and dubious group of pretenders with varying claims - all of them spurious, in my considered opinion.I have not seen or heard of Morris Lash in over forty years, but if I were to come across him, I would treat him to a beer of his choice and shake his hand, a belated, but sincere gesture of appreciation for planting the seeds of a remarkable memory of the best prank ever. |