

## Beaujolais Novae

It's 1971, Red Watch Southmead, Bob Denton, Bill Lewis, Josh White, John Gamlin, Sandy Powell and me, the Newbie. It was the days of Bristol City and County 600 Exhibition on the downs.

One evening we were having supper when Bob Esson produced a bottle of red wine. There was much debate over the French Pronunciation, Bristol Aeroplanes built the Beau Fighter ---- not the Bee fighters. ----- Josh said to Sandy, still not quite appreciating the probationary Fireman's status, I chipped in with "I live in Beauchamp Road, Bishopston", Sandy roared "It's on our patch so from now on I'm going to call you BEAUJ" and so it was for nearly 50 years.

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We called him Sedge, Sedge lived in Spencer House, Redcliffe, with his nan. She was a character and knew how to twist Sandy around her little finger. His dad lived in Fraser Street, Bedminster, Sandy was his double. When sedge married Jenny the reception was at St. Mary Redcliffe School, very convenient for a stroll along the railway line, through the tunnel to the Ostrich Pub for a pint, he only drank Courage Velvet Stout. Clink, clink was his signature tune.

Realising his nomadic potential, the following year we went touring the Continent with our wives Jenny and Josie for 3 weeks. It was hilarious, Sedge navigating, Beauj driving and the two girls in the back on look out guarding the food. We had reached Lichtenstein and diligently driving round a large roundabout on the right-hand side of the road we were nearly scythed in half by a speed tramcar. The tramcar was on a railway line that went straight through the centre of the roundabout. Sedge coolly said "pass some supplies forward in case we get split up girls" Such potential today is labelled, Emergency Planning, I believe.

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Soon our holidays included our two sons and Matthew Sandy and Jenny's eldest son. A number of holidays at Pontins, Selsey Bill, with donkey derby's and Miss Pontin!

Sedge was 'man of the week' (ask Paul Brown) and captain of the football team.

Very late one night Sedge and I found ourselves on the shingle beach, convincing a local lobster fisherman to take us onboard, the next minute we were at sea in an open boat, hardly any land in sight. We came back with a lobster each which we stored in the bath tubs of our chalets. The Girls refused to cook them and then frog marched us back to the beach to return them to the sea.

I think that was where Sandy took the bait of sea fishing.

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As the boys grew older Sedge and I embraced adventure, Youth Hostelling in Cornwall, Falmouth was our favourite. The Hostel was in the Keep of Pendennis Castle. One-night Sedge went out to get some more of his acrid cigarettes and ended up being locked out. The police took an interest in his appearance, (no mobile phones in those days), so one phone call to the brigade and principal officer Len Silman, was left to explain how dear Sandy is to us all. Happy days.

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The adventures increased with our next holidays, camping in the Brecon Beacons with fishing and canoeing in Llangorse lake, the boys loved it. Sedge was famous Chinese toast around the campfire. One night, camping in a remote farmers field the boys were horrified to wake up to find a herd of heifer's in the tent. No problem, Sedge had a word in heifer speak and I do believe they understood. The cattle decided to go or risk chatting all night. Then he lit another fag and made tea all round.

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Keeping his pigs (30 of them) was his pride and joy. The Piggery was at Failand on the land of Bannister the butcher of Worrall Road, Clifton. Sedge and I worked for Bannister we did rabbit and game. Sandys pigs were traded through the old Winford market on the hill where we enjoyed many an hour. The pigs finest hour occurred the night of the first Barn Dance at Temple, held in the gym. Red Watch cabaret was provided by Dick Barrow, Pete Dewey, Bernie Edmonds and me. Jim Cecil was on the door, no arguments there. Everyone was dressed as cowboys, with bales of hay and live animals. 0200 hrs saw Sandy and me driving along Coronation Road back to Failand in a grey station utility van with sliding cab doors open. Flagged down by a police panda car, Sedge was asked "has the squealing in the back of a Bristol Fire Brigade van got anything to do with the two cowboys driving it? Let's look in the back----- just imagine!

In time the pork enterprises moved to Watercress Farm, Ashley Down. The way forward now was cooking pig swill, collected daily by Sandy's brother Albert, from Institutions such as, Horfield Prison, in a van that never stopped moving!

We were living in Wathen Road, St. Andrews then, and Sedge would often call in to see us on his way back to Wainbridge Manor, Pilning. I have a picture permanently etched in my memory of..... pouring rain with Sedge in his overalls' sat under the sun parasol with a cup of coffee and one of his acrid fags, with us sat in the shelter of the kitchen doorway. "You know what I mean Beauj" God he stank!

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In 1990 my family moved to a small holding in Temple Cloud, Somerset. We kept three horses and had a tractor, bailer and hay bob. Hay making would see Sedge appear with bottle of wine in hand to stay and assist.

I can picture it now, small bales dropping out of the rear of the Massey Bailer, helper following behind to stack, often in a cloud of dust and there was Sedge – still smoking-still talking-not doing a lot, moreover, stopping everyone else from doing so.

"All right Beauj"

When the hay making was complete, we would all fire up the Ring o' Bells, Hinton Blewett. Sedge really enjoyed the country, he could talk farming and was a great spoof player, the locals would ask "When is he coming again?" Happy Days.

To sum up ----- we were sat at home one evening, the phone rang, Josie answered it and could not get a word in for five minutes --- then she passed it over and said it's Sandy for you! I put the phone to my ear, and no one was there, yet I could hear noises. Ten minutes later I was just about to hang up when a gruff voice said "Alright Beauj" ----- I asked, "Christ where have you been?" An offended voice replied, "I just went to the kitchen to make a cup of tea Beauj", ready for a chat.

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There you have it, the temperament of a true Sub Mariner, run silent, run deep. He was a deep thinker and very quick with dry humour.

We served on the same watch three times. He had been promoted, demoted and then promoted but never had his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal presented to him ceremonially. He idolised Bill Plenty on Green Watch, Avonmouth and as a long serving Sub Officer, Sandy was the backbone of many a watch.

He was quite a legend to us all, even if football was not your game.

Our best wishes go to Jenny, Matthew and Danny.

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And so, finally -----Beauj to Sedge-----Over and out mate.