

*Drebbin The Boy Who Talked To
Voices*



By Scott Stackpole

Drebbin

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Dedicated to my father Kenneth Dwayne Stackpole

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Drebbin

Part I

Chapter I

The Voices Begin

Drebbin and I grew up together in a small town,Plastow New Hampshire was it's name,doing things that most young boys do-riding our bikes,playing hide and go seek,and best of all,we thought,pretending we were truck drivers using toy trucks we had been given for Christmas and giving ourselves make believe names like Joe or Bill,whatever we wanted to be called.Yes being in the sandbox getting hands and clothes dirty was all kinds of fun except when it was time to go home.Then it was the wrath of mom we were confronted with usually beginning with “DO you clean the clothes around here or do I?”The answer was obvious so we just timidly said “You do mom,sorry”and that usually took care of things until the next time.Dad never said anything,if he was around,since he didn't do the clothes either.We really didn't care because we knew it would happen again,all that fun and such.

Next on the agenda was supper,now that was something to look forward to and we did.There wasn't anything elaborate or expensive that was served but it all tasted good especially after a long day of playing and getting dirty.Potatoes,that's the ticket.Drebbin loved potatoes and would be very upset if there wasn't some type served at each meal,mashed,baked,it didn't matter as long as they were there.If they were baked he would scrape out the insides from the skins,put butter on the skins and eat them first with salt and pepper of course.Drebbin enjoyed that.He told me that He talked to voices.

The next best thing to supper was watching TV,only shows our parents would let us watch of course.All the TV's we ever saw were black and white-rich people had color television and our parents were not rich at least that's what they told us.We had no reason to suspect otherwise.Come to think of it,there was one night when we were both outside after supper when we got really daring and looked into the window of one of our neighbors houses-guess what we saw?YES color television!We could not believe our eyes,it was awesome!If I remember correctly,it was a Disney show with colors exploding all over.We never forgot that and couldn't wait for our turn to watch that kind of show every night and boy we did wait.

Drebbins parents knew my parents and we both had sisters,clunky sisters we used to call them,and that was how we came to know each other.Drebbin didn't talk much,he felt alone most of the time.But when he decided it was time to talk he was really funny and made people laugh

especially myself. He didn't understand what got him started so he tried to keep going but it never lasted very long which made him sad. He told me that and made me promise not to say anything about it. He trusted me more than anyone else. He talked to voices.

The First Grade

After six years of enduring our parents and sisters we were in for a real treat, the first grade. We had no idea what to expect but it certainly did not take long to solve that mystery. Schedules and bells and places to be at given times certainly was something we were not accustomed to except what are parents expected of us. Now we were faced with new grownups and teachers who very politely ushered us into a new world of books and chalkboards, other new students we had never met since they lived in another part of town far from us. That first day required acceptance on our part of all sorts of various rituals which were designed to educate us, make us smart. Looking back now they weren't really rituals but it seemed that way to us.

I remember that many of the parents came with their "new students" to help them get started on their educations—mine did not come but Drebbin's did. It ended up being a wise decision on their part since good old Drebbin might still be among the missing today if his father had not grabbed him by the arm when he bolted for the door! He did not want any part of the first grade or any other grade as it turned out. So mom and dad finally got him settled down, calmed down and convinced him that all of this was in his best interest. The rest of us, having seen this, didn't think so but what did we know—we were first graders. After Drebbin did calm down he told me how pissed off he was, pissed off and afraid at the same time. He talked to me. He talked to voices.

Our teacher, we only had one, was Mrs. Pellitear who was nice to all of us so we became accustomed to her and our classroom. It looked kind of funky with chalkboards and big letters on the walls and above the chalkboard and these goofy little desks we barely could fit into. At first she had us doing simple little things like drawing and coloring to keep us occupied. It was alright, for me anyway but Drebbin found it difficult to get through each and every day while his mind wandered to any place other than in our classroom. What that room did was remind him how much he disliked groups and authority, an authority that would soon stare him right in the eye.

Recess, which is now called coffee break, came twice a day I think so we would go outside and play on swings or the jungle jim to get a little exercise. It was funny how the girls went to one side of the playground and the boys to the other side which I guess was perfectly normal—what self-respecting little boy wants to hang around with little girls. None of us did with the exception of Drebbin who made the great mistake of being a little too close to the girls when he used some foul language that these girls spoke to Mrs. Pellitear about. So Mrs. Pellitear warned him about the use of profanities on the playground and explained that if this continued he would be punished. Drebbin agreed and that seemed to be the end of it until one fine day guess what? He did it again, the girls told on him again and punishment was eminent, and what a punishment it was! None of us expected Mrs. Pellitear to make Drebbin put powdered soap in his mouth and swallow it with water. But she did. Quite frankly the rest of us were in shock watching all of this in horror wondering if he was going to puke or not. He didn't puke but did refuse another dose of soap and water when offered to him. That was the end of foul language but not

the end of Drebbins distaste of soap and of authority. He was trembling after school that day having been embarrassed in front of his classmates and decided there would be no more foul language and no more liking Mrs. Pellitear. He told me that. He talked to voices.

More Than We Thought

Being in a school where all eight grades shared one building and its classrooms intimidated us a great deal. I remember in high school as a senior the freshman seemed like a bunch of inferior little brats that we looked down upon. In the first grade it was the same—the eighth graders looked down on us since they were so much older and smarter than we were and used every opportunity to bully us around. We just avoided them and kept our mouths shut to keep the peace and it usually worked. We actually became friends with a few of them which carried over as we grew up. It seemed that many of the guys we hung out with were older than we were which in the long run helped us out.

So time passed and we advanced up through the fifth and sixth grades getting an education in schoolwork and in life. Along with that came another form of education—the principal. After Drebbins soap eating episode he and I managed to stay out of trouble pretty much but did hear about the guy with the stick who used to smack students, and the bench outside of his office which was where “bad boys” were sent awaiting punishment. That was our principal Mr. Leathe a big man dressed up in a shirt and tie which we both were afraid of but fortunately never actually needed to see for punishment. As it turned out HE was the guy that got punished having been caught stealing milk money out of the lunch boxes of first graders. What a jerk!

There were a couple of teachers that Drebbin and I really liked, they made their classes kind of fun. There was Mr. Betournie, our science teacher and who also supervised our class when we went out side for physical education. We thought that was a joke since it wasn't really necessary to teach us how to run around, play ball and such. But it got us out of the classroom for an hour so we didn't complain. Then there was Mr. Digenero, a big stocky guy who taught us math. He also played some type of minor league baseball and was pretty good playing the catching position—we actually went and saw him play one evening and then coolest thing about it was the pitcher for his team was a Preacher! We didn't know they could do that! I just remembered something very important, wait until you hear this...

...one day in english class we all took turns giving book reports so when it came to my turn I got up in front of the class and did alright, I guess. A few more reports were given and then it was Drebbins turn to get up in front of the class and speak. He had been waiting for quite some time for his turn which he used to get nervous and confused—nervous to the point that when he did get up, he held his book real low down by his crotch so nobody would be able to see him piss his pants! Yes, he did, right in front of everyone! Luckily for him, only one person figured out what was happening, a guy named Gardner I think it was, and he showed Drebbin mercy by confronting him after the bell rang to end the class and go home since that was the last class of the day I remember Drebbin telling me that Gardner looked at him and asked “Did you really pee your pants in there?”. What can you say now, if that had been you what do you say? So Drebbin kind of begged “Please don't say anything” which he didn't and that was the end of it except Drebbin hated school and groups even more than ever. He told me that. He talked to voices.

Chapter 2

Graduation and California

Well well,after every one of these last eight years having been completed we were going to graduate!This is without any doubt the biggest accomplishment of our young lives.What was really neat about it-for the past year a new addition to our school was being built and now it was completed so we were going to have our graduation ceremonies inside this new addition where everything was brand new.It struck Drebbin and I kind of funny that upon our leaving Pollad school something new had been created for the first graders coming in to enjoy.We wished it had been there for us but whatever.

There was a party after the ceremony and Drebbins father played the piano and also danced with his daughter,Drebbins sister,Cheryl so that was kind of cool.I remember talking to Drebbin about the eight years we had spent in school especially after one of our fellow classmates commented about the diplomas we had received.He said”I am holding eight years in my hand!”and he was correct,it made us feel proud!However that feeling left Drebbin real quick after he learned what his parents had decided to do.

This is what he discovered-he would be moving into a new house his parents were having built in a town not to far from Plastow called Kingstown.You see,that meant Drebbin and I would be going to seperate high schools,meet new friends and such which didn't impress Drebbin at all.Hold on!! guess what now?His family had decided to sell their new home and move to California.This was due to the death of one of his two remaining grandparents so now the decision had been made to go west and re-unite with his mothers brother,Uncle Kenny and Aunt Lorraine.This did not impress Drebbin one least little bit-graduation,a new home,new friends,new high school,new state to live in,and he had nothing to say about any of this.Now,Drebbin and I were going to be seperated for the first time in our lives since I was certainly not going to move anywhere.We talked about how we might be able to stay in touch when all of this happened but neither of us had letter writing skills so we just left it to chance.At least we would have a little more time together since it would take a few weeks to make all of the moving arrangements.So he entered Sanbon Regional High School in Kingstown,september I think it was,and got used to his new schedule there which would'nt last long for Drebbin.He did join the freshman football team and the high school band he told me.You see in the last year of our Pollad School experience,a new high school had been built called Timberland which was where I would be going along with the other classmates we had come to know in Plastow.There was way to much going on for Drebbin.He told me that.He talked to voices.

So off goes Drebbin and family DRIVING to California in his dad's Ford.I don't remember a lot of what happened after that since we talked by phone every once in a while but the calls were expensive and short.After he and his family got settled in,the next adventure

started,getting settled in to a new high school,get this:the third biggest high school in the country!It was called Chafee High School and boy he hated that place.What would you expect since he came from a small town and a small school and now was in a school in which his physed class had more people in it than the entire student body back at Sanbon.He didn't like groups or authority and he found himself sitting right in the middle of both!He knew it would never work for him but there was nothing he could do about it so he kept to himself never daring to talk to his parents about that or anythingSome of the voices were gone now.He told me that.

1316 North Sultana,that was the address where his family purchased a house near Euclid Ave.That was where Chafee school was so it was a short walk to get there.Didn't matter to Drebbin because he did get there every day and got accustomed to a new shedule and new classes but never bargained for meeting up with afro americans and mexicans-there wern't any where he came from.Not only that but they were very aggressive like they had a big chip on their shoulders,which they did,and confronted Drebbin every day largely due to the way in which he talked.In California,you said parrrk your carrr,not pahhkh you cahhhr.He never did pick up on talking like that,he thought it was stupid just like they thought he was stupid.Things like that kept Drebbin away from doing things that he liked,playing football as an example.You see,at Chafee the football program consisted of three lower class teams, a junior varsity team,and the big varsity team-there were enough students to support all of that and still some of the tryouts didn't make any team at all.So much for football.And the marching band that Chafee had was large enough to play at halftime for the Rams football team,a professional team!High school in California did not work for Drebbin

His family life wasn't all the appealing either,it was obvious.So many things had changed from what all of them were accustomed to like the trees in the yard-they were stupid looking things with tall straight trunks and a few palm leaves at the top and warm weather all year long.It was especially depressing at Christmas time since there wasn't any snow or cold weather-you get used to this and then all of a sudden it's all gone!That plus Drebbins parents didn't have much money so the presents everybody exchanged were a lot fewer than they were accustomed to.Life in California was hard for all of them,especially Drebbin and he thought it would never end.We talked on the phone right after Christmas which enabled me to find out about all of these things and I felt bad for him.I was doing alright back in Sanbon and Drebbin's experience out west taught me a valuable lesson which I reflect on to this very day-be thankful for what you have,many others do not have as much as you do.

At this point Drebbin didn't realize what was in store for him and his family but soon he found out.

Back Home Again

It took one whole year for Drebbins parents to realize that this move to the west coast required life time adjustments that they were not capable of making which lead to the decision to go back home to New Hampshire,a decision that brought hope and joy back into Drebbin's heart.That was a feeling seldom felt by him.He did call me right after he got the good news about coming home and he couldn't wait!It was nice to hear him excited about all of this and I felt that he deserved this excitement.The new plan that his mom and dad had come up with involved two

main issues:call the contractor they had used to build a home for them in Kinstown and build another one (pretty simple huh) and prepare to pack up and drive,yes drive again,all the way across country back to N.H.That was a boring prospect for Drebbin but he knew it must be done to bring him back to a place where he and I had grown up together,a place he was accustomed to and felt comfortable with.At least he had something to look forward to.His aunt and uncle didn't make it any to easy for his parents to follow through with all of this since uncle Kenny had "Painted a sad picture"of this decision.That was what Drebbins dad said anyway.There were arguments about money and empolyment they would need when they got home but that didn't effect Drebbin's enthusiasm about the entire deal-he was going home!

So finally the car was packed,all gassed up,and off they went wondering if they had made the right decision.It was the right decision for Drebbin so he tolerated the return drive back to N.H.I think he said it took five days for they would stop each night and rent a room to sleep in and then head out again in the morning.The closer they got to home the better Drebbin liked it.He was starting to see things that were familiar to him like the pine trees,road signs that reminded him of where he was,and houses and streets that he never really noticed before.Now they gained a very important part of his journey.He told me that.The voices were back as was he.

It wasn't easy though.The house that was being built wasn't ready when they arrived in Kingstown so they ended up staying with friends until it was completed which took a couple of months.During that waiting period,Drebbin was enrolled at Sanbon and started all over again but at least he remembered faces that he had known and fellow students that talked like he did.It was another adjustment for him,an adjustment he felt would be for the better and it was.Now Drebbin and I even though we were attending different high schools could talk again much easier than it had been when he was at the west coast.Life was much more comfortable now for Drebbin and he actually looked forward to his classes and fellow students.He liked them, they were good people and good friends he just didn't know how to talk to them so he made jokes and laughed most of the time.It wasn't until later in his life that he found a way to speak to them and when he did it made him glad.He had found a way to Face the Book.He told me that.He could tell me anything again!

High School And His Future

So now Drebbin starts out as a sophmore,the second year of school since the first year as a freshman in California didn't teach him much of anything other than how to get frustrated.At least now he could and did participate in the areas that he enjoyed.He went out for football but realized he wasn't cut out for that since you were required to accept the authority of your coach and have the confidence to achieve your goals.He did not like authority and did not have any goals.Every day was a start and finish and whatever happened never did stay with him,never effected any thinking of the future.He didn't know what the word future meant. It seemed like something that would just be there and he would ride along with it trusting it.He would soon discover that's not the way life works.

The classes Drebbin took were part of a curriculum that would prepare him for furthering his education in college.He didn't care about that,his parents did so he did what he was told to make them happy.Didn't make him happy but he was accustomed to that,accustomed to having

his parents make decisions for him since he was obviously too dumb to make decisions for himself. Later in life Drebbin realized that he had made decisions for and about himself, they just didn't agree with his parents' ideas and decisions. So the classes continued on throughout his sophomore year and he did as much as he felt was needed to avoid flunking any courses which would have been a tremendous embarrassment for his folks. He didn't really want to flunk any course but it wasn't a big deal for him so he just plodded along and did whatever he felt was necessary to achieve a C grade for most of his classes which he did do. The classes that he liked the most were math, science, and drafting. His drafting class became significant in his life later on although he didn't realize it at the time.

1966 and what a year it was for Drebbin! Sixteen years old and a junior in high school, this was big time for him. It got bigger when he passed his driving test and was given a license! He kind of lucked out here because there was a new rule governing classes that were mandatory to take if you wanted to apply for a driver's license but Drebbin's birth month, May, came just before this rule was put into effect so no classes were needed. His father taught him how to drive so he was on the road and something amazing happened then—Drebbin realized that driving was fun and he felt comfortable doing it! There weren't too many areas that he felt comfortable with so this made life a little more enjoyable for him. Now things got really cool.

Sports was an arena for Drebbin that he enjoyed and participated in. Since his attempt at football failed he ventured into other sports, baseball, basketball, track, and cross country. Baseball was his favorite which confused him. He could play outfield, catcher, and pitcher—positions that he felt quite comfortable with and positions that required him to have the baseball in his hand quite often. That was where the confusion came from for he continued to struggle with authority and being part of a group but when he was on the pitcher's mound ready to start a game nothing bothered him, it was like being free for him. Those were good times for him. He told me that. For the other sports he liked and joined, basketball was difficult since the team he played for had many quite talented players who played at a level that he never achieved. He was considered the “weak link” but through determination and work, he managed to be in the starting lineup when he was a senior.

Drebbin wanted his own car so he wouldn't have to ask for permission to drive his parents' car so he got a job at a barrel company that was located in town. It was a disgusting job as he described it but he earned enough money to buy his own car—a 1956 Chevy with a re-built 265 cubic inch engine and a three speed manual transmission, you know the kind you have to shift yourself and the shifter was on the floor. Cool! He liked that and still drives manual transmission vehicles to this day. It wasn't much to look at back then but it was his and he was proud of that car especially when he realized that it was OK to drive it to school and park across the street from the school campus. That was not the end of the adventures of Drebbin, not at all.

He had his sports, his car, and his grades were good enough for him anyway so now what. A girlfriend that's what. Her name was Janice. She was one year younger than Drebbin but that did not matter, they liked each other and as it ended up they were together for a long time. They actually got married later on but that was in the future so now they were boyfriend and girlfriend, everybody in school knew that. This was quite a thing for Drebbin since he was quite shy and unsure of himself but they managed to get along. He was happy with the relationship and they were together going into Drebbin's senior year, a year where his ideas about his future were about to change drastically.

The biggest change for Drebbin came by means of a guidance counselor, a person that he didn't know existed (nor did I) but was assigned to him by the school. A meeting was arranged for Drebbin to sit down with this counselor and discuss what his future might hold and how to determine a successful path for him to choose. To accomplish this, Drebbin was given a

document, a questionnaire which required him to answer several questions offering multiple choices to determine what things he liked to do the most. Questions like “Would you rather read a book, play baseball, cook a meal, go fishing, or...” things like that. So he gave his answers and awaited an evaluation of them which he received in a later meeting with his councilor, I think he said his name was Bill. The results did not surprise Drebbin but it caused his father a great deal of concern. The concern centered around Drebbin's highest score, the area that he would be most likely to succeed in and that came out to be music! His father, being a part time musician himself, thought it would be too risky to embark on a musical career since there were no guarantees of success. So the second highest category that Drebbin scored in, mechanical engineering, ended up being his choice—actually it was his father's choice not his. He preferred the music option but as had happened in the past, his father's choice was final, to his dismay.

With this information in hand Drebbin and his parents searched for an institution that could offer him an education at an affordable cost. That institution was New Hampshire Technical Institute, Concord New Hampshire. It was a two year school but seemed to be the best choice so Drebbin applied and was accepted. He was a little nervous about going but felt it was the correct thing to do. All that needed to be done was graduate successfully from high school and off he would go to college. It was 1968 and all that was left to do—practice for the graduation (which he thought was a pain in the butt), graduate, and get his diploma which he did.

College on the horizon and things looked pretty promising for Drebbin. He certainly did not expect what was to come.

End of Part I

Part II on the Way

