

INTUITION

By James Collins

A hot August day on the sidewalks of the Bronx is memorable. The bricks have absorbed the heat and concrete for days and that heat continues right through the night, as if you are living inside a brick oven. To survive you search for shade.

Fifty teenagers had gone down to the Yankee Stadium for a shape up to act as hustlers selling soda, ice cream, hot dogs, etc. to the patrons of a Yankee game. Since it was the middle of the week, and the Yankees were not doing well, the vendor did not need these 50 workers that day. As they all drifted back up the hills to the local neighborhood, they searched for shade and found it on West 165th St. between several five-story buildings. Inevitably, a pack of cards materialized and a card game started. The sidewalks were 12 feet wide and the game spread out. A few more decks of cards and a couple of pairs of dice appeared out of nowhere. Suddenly, there were five games of chance in action at the same time. Each of the hustlers was required to have a minimum of two dollars in quarters in their pockets if they were going to work at the ballgame. You had to bring your own change, as you were an independent operator. Many had 10 or 20 dollars on their person. Therefore, there was a lot of money available in this crowd. A few immediately lost their coin, and backed out to stand in the crowd cheering on the players. More teenagers, hearing the noise, drifted in and the total crowd began to grow. So did the noise. Everybody knew everyone else and there was a friendly attitude to the overall group of games. A few hours passed. My best friend Owen and I were involved in a blackjack game, but our money continued to seesaw so we were about even.

Suddenly, the hairs on the back, of my neck rose – a sure sign of danger. It happened before and shortly thereafter, problems arose. I had learned that my intuition was very good, reliable, and quite sensitive. If I paid attention to it, I had evidence that it saved me from harm and possibly death. I immediately turned to my buddy Owen and said, “We have to get out of here now!”

"What's wrong, Jim?"

“The back of my neck is tingling. Something is going to happen, and we do not want to be here. Let's get out of here now.”

"Is this your intuition kicking in again?"

"Yeah, and something is going to happen shortly. Let's go. "

We both picked up our money, notified the dealer that we were going to leave, and we did.

"Jim, where are we headed? Everybody is here. Where are we going?"

"We are just going to take a walk around the block. Whenever this happens, it happens quickly. We are going to walk slowly and then we'll come back."

A standard New York City block is 600 feet long and 400 feet wide. Therefore, to go around a city block is roughly 2000 feet, or just less than half a mile. It typically takes 10 minutes, but if you walk slowly, it can take 20.

As we came around the final corner of our trek, we could still hear the noise of the crowd but it had a different pitch and intensity. The police had arrived. There were three Black Marias on the block, and about 20 police officers had the 50 teenagers lined up against the wall. They had separated out the ones they had been playing cards with money on the sidewalk and were loading them into the Black Marias. They searched the spectators for weapons. None was found on their person but a few knives had been abandoned in the street.

"That intuition still works, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, and it saved us many times. This is just another one to add to the list."

John Conroy, who was 18 worked as a clerk supporting the buying and selling of stocks, was getting off the bus on the corner when he spotted the police loading his friends into a Black Maria. Wall Street had let out the minions who worked in the back office early and they were on their way home. John wore a three-piece suit and carried a briefcase. It all made a wonderful image, but the briefcase only carried his lunch. John, who stood about 5 foot seven, had the heart of a lion and when he spotted his friends arrested, he decided he was going to help.

"Officers, officers, cease and desist. I am a lawyer and I represent the men you are loading into the van. They cannot be arrested without due process." The crowd cheered and clapped.

The very large Police Sgt., with very little hesitation grabbed John by the shoulder told him "You're too young to be a lawyer. But it's a good time to get some training in court," and promptly loaded him into the Black Maria.

Everyone who was arrested went to night court, and poor John had to explain to his mother how he had gone to work in Wall Street in the morning, wearing a suit and ended up arrested for playing cards in the street. I would have liked to hear that story told to his angry Irish mother.

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