

Classmates and Teammates

.I can't help but be grateful for all of the teams, coaches, and teammates I have had in my athletic pursuits. Those people and experiences have prepared me well for this position. For war is a team sport every bit as much as lacrosse is.

From a letter by

LCOL John I. Turnbull to his mother,

October 18, 1944

Over the following days Robbie insisted to his parents that his dream was different—it was a visit. As the boy persisted, his parents' concern grew. Did Mr. Lewis know this would happen? Was this stick really that special? What could happen to Robbie?

They continued to caution Robbie that his dream was simply that—a dream—mostly because they were not able to understand, explain, or control such supernatural phenomena. The parents wanted to call Lewis, but they agreed to wait.

Robbie continued his assertions of a visit and, when his parents would not accept his reasoning, he accused them of not understanding him and belittling his thoughts. They finally relented and called Lewis in

California, who was not surprised to hear from them.

“Mr. Lewis, this is John Jones, Robbie’s father. You gave him the stick.”

“Yes, Mr. Jones, good to hear from you.”

“Would you mind if I put you on speaker phone with my wife?”

“Not at all. Please do.”

“Well, the reason we are calling is that Robbie has told us some interesting things that are somehow related to the stick, and we were hoping that you might be able to shed some light on his behavior.”

“I’ll be glad to try. What types of interesting things?” Lewis asked, knowing all too well what he was about to hear.

“Well, Robbie seems to think that he was *visited* by a young Indian named Red Hawk while he was sleeping. Robbie has told us that he has never experienced any dream like this. He said he was wide awake during it, that he knew exactly what was going on, and that he has total recall of every detail.

“It happened about three weeks ago—I believe it was the night that you gave him the

stick. He has also mentioned a sort of tingling in his hands every time he touches the stick." The parents could not see Lewis smiling through the phone.

"Anything else?"

"That's really about it—do you know anything about this? You said that it was a special stick. Is this what you meant?"

"Well, you will probably find what I am about to say completely incredible, but please bear with me. While I was the custodian of that stick, I beheld similar visions, and many others have as well."

The parents felt a chill and looked at each other in disbelief. Was this some sort of spell? He should have told us about this. Was this possible? They maintained their composure and allowed Lewis to continue.

"Before you become too alarmed, I can assure you that no harm will come to your boy because of this stick."

"But you can understand our apprehension?"

"Of course I can. I know what Robbie is going through. I think we'll need to continue

this discussion in person. I'll be in town this weekend. Would you mind waiting till then?"

"No, we can wait until then, but not longer, please."

"That would be great," Lewis responded.

"Can we say Saturday night at seven for dinner?" Mary offered.

"Yes. I'll be there, but could you please do me a favor before then? If you are concerned about my credibility, please call the Superintendent at the United States Naval Academy, Admiral Ed Charles. He'll provide you an independent source on my background."

After they hung up Robbie's parents were even more uneasy.

First thing the next morning the Joneses called the Superintendent.

"Admiral Charles's office, may I help you?" said the friendly voice of a middle-aged woman.

"Y-Yes, my name is John Jones. May I speak to Admiral Charles, please?"

“Yes, Mr. Jones, the admiral was expecting your call.”

“Good morning, Mr. Jones, this is Ed Charles. Captain Lewis asked me to expect your call. What can I do for you?”

“Admiral, would you mind if I put my wife on the speaker-phone?”

“Please.”

“Well, admiral, we just met Mr. Lewis for the first time about a month ago, but he’s suddenly become a big part of our lives. You see, he chose to make our son the recipient of a very old Native American lacrosse stick he had received many years ago. He said that it was really quite a remarkable gift and—well—it has been so overwhelming. Mr. Lewis asked me to call to ease some of our apprehension.”

“I understand. So you need some confirmation of Captain Lewis’s background, integrity, and so on?”

“Yes, sir, I suppose.”

“Then you apparently know very little about Jim Lewis, is that right?”

“That’s right.”

“Well, let me start by saying that I've known Jim since we were plebes—that is, freshmen—here at the Naval Academy in 1962. We were Plebe Summer roommates, classmates, and teammates. That's almost forty years and counting. I can assure you, Mr. and Mrs. Jones that Jim is one of the finest people I've ever known. He's a truly great naval officer, leader, navy pilot, and person. Everything else I'll say is simply icing. You said Jim gave your son a lacrosse stick?”

“Yes.”

“So I'll bet that Jim conveniently failed to share his lacrosse background with you?”

“That's right. Well, he did say that he had played many years ago and that it had been a big part of his life. I think that is all he said.”

“Well, Jim has never been one to toot his own horn, so let me do it for him a little. Again, keep in mind at this point that none of this really matters because the lacrosse aspect of Jim's life only helped create the foundation for his future successes. He's been a leader all of the years that I've known him. But it might be good for you and your son to know that Jim is widely considered the greatest lacrosse

player ever. When he was at the Naval Academy he revolutionized the way the game was played.

“If you talk to many lacrosse people about the players who dominated the game over the years, most would single out Jim. Paul and Gary Gait of Syracuse University, Mark Millon of the University of Massachusetts, and one or two others have certainly achieved greatness in the modern era. But the game is different now. Back when Jim played, no one had seen anyone like him. Prior to Jim, I guess you’d have to mention Jim Brown—also of Syracuse—Class of ’57. If you’re wondering, yes, he is the Jim Brown of football fame. He was a tremendous lacrosse player also. It is difficult to compare any of these players directly since they were all so fantastic. But it is fair to consider Jim in a class of his own. He was inducted into the National Lacrosse Hall-of-Fame in 1982.”

The Joneses stared at each other in disbelief.

“Jim and I played together for all four years here. Our first year was on the plebe team. Then we won three straight national championships, and our record was something

like 35-1. Not many people know or believe this, but in 1963 our plebe team defeated our varsity in a pretty formal scrimmage. Under most circumstances that would be impressive but, in this case, that varsity team won the *national championship!* We love to ride those guys about that, and we continue to do so after all these years. We had several excellent players and coaches, but Jim was central to our success. He was a phenomenal player. Jim was first-team All-America and received the Turnbull Award three consecutive years."

"The Turnbull Award?" the father asked, recognizing the name that Lewis had mentioned when they first met.

"Oh, forgive me. That's the award given annually to the top attackman in lacrosse. Division I players back then, and nowadays in Division II and Division III, I believe."

The parents remained speechless.

"Hello...?" the admiral inquired as he heard the silence.

"Y-Yes, we're still here," the father offered.

"Should I continue?"

"Please do."

“Well, in 1991 Jim was honored by the NCAA with their Silver Anniversary Award. Jim’s high school background is probably worth noting as well. On Long Island, Jim was a member of a team that came out of nowhere and won many lacrosse championships. When he graduated, he was considered a unique lacrosse player. He played at a level that no one was familiar with. He was playing the game in a different way and with remarkable results. He once scored ten goals and had eleven assists in less than *half* of one game. He also collected a number of very prestigious awards. By the time he left Long Island his reputation as a player was spreading to the major centers of lacrosse. Recently, he was the first name mentioned for a mythical All-Century team. Should I go on?”

“Please, if you don’t mind.”

“Well, from there Jim went on to become a top-notch naval aviator and test pilot. He was a superb pilot and naval officer.”

The Joneses didn’t want to ask the next question, but the mother could not hold back. “Did Mr. Lewis ever mention anything about the old Native American stick that he had?”

“I know he kept an old stick in a leather bag. But he never talked about it or used it when anyone was around. He was pretty protective of it. I’d be a little surprised that he gave that stick away. I wonder if that is the one he passed to your son.”

“I think it probably is,” said the father.

“Well, that is very interesting. I never knew much about his stick, but I did know at the time when we were roommates that the stick contributed to his fascination with the game and its ancient history. I’m sure that his knowledge of the game’s history accentuated his magnificent skills. He studied every aspect of the game. He loved—and thrived on—the game’s ancient roots and often referred to its warrior nature.

“What else can I help you with?”

“Nothing, you’ve been very helpful. Oh, how should we address him?”

“Jim retired as a captain, but he would probably wish to be called just Jim. If you insist on being formal, he is technically Captain Lewis.”

“Thank you very much, admiral. We can't tell you how much we appreciate this.”

“You’re quite welcome. Please let me know if I may be of further assistance. Good luck.”

“Thank you again, admiral. Good bye.”

The parents stared at each other again. They intentionally did not share the contents of this discussion with Robbie and began to make preparations for Lewis’s visit.