

Like many of my fellow generation members who were teenagers in the 1980s, a large chunk of my memories from that time is recording songs off the radio. I'm certain that I'm not the only youth who burned up many cassette tapes from this practice.

Fast forward to 2008 when I was going through some of my things from my youth that were packed away at my Dad's house. One of the things that I uncovered from the past was a large box of cassette tapes that had been forgotten about for years. I took some of these home with me just to see if they still played. I was in luck, because even though the years of being stored in the summer heat and winter cold, the vast majority of them made it through their time in storage with little ill effects.

It is uncanny how that after just listening to a few songs I can tell how old that particular tape is. That releases the flood of memories to flow unchecked. For just a few minutes I am sent back to sometime in the autumn of 1988, or when ever that tape was recorded. The time line stretches from early 1984 and continues up to June of 1989. This covers 99% of my teenage years, from 8th grade on up to graduating high school in June of 1989.

Quite a few of the songs contain in-between song banter from the DJ. After hearing the DJ announce what songs are coming up for a minute, I honestly think that the new INXS song is going to play after the next commercial.

The down side to finding this cache of magnetic memories is that sometimes it sets off a yearning in my soul to turn back time. There are times when I'd consider giving up very cherished things just to go back for a bit...and that can never happen, maybe at least here and now.

For the most part when I listen to these tapes today they bring back memories of bright clothing, Swatch Watches, hanging out at Magilla's (local Teen Dance Club that was popular), and the music that is on these tapes. The vast majority of emotions that flow over me are of good things from those days. God knows there are some bad memories from those times, but I'm fairly good at blocking them out. Most of the songs are the standard bubble gum Top 40 songs from the 1980s.

There is one tape that does stand out from all the others. When I hear this tape, my thoughts are not of hanging out at the light house in Huron, Ohio, drinking Sundance Fruit Juice Sparklers (I loved the Kiwi-Lime flavour, I'm still trying to figure out why they were discontinued) at Magilla's while working up the courage to talk to some girl from Vermillion.

Those are not the thoughts going through my mind when I first heard this tape after almost 20 years. The content on this tape was different, and when I hear it I can feel every emotion that went through my mind at that moment in time.

The cassette it's self is no different that the other Memorex cassettes that were being sold in the late 1980s. This tape is transparent with various shapes in blue, hot pink, and yellow, I'm not certain if this could scream "I'M A PRODUCT OF THE 1980S!!!" any louder if it wanted to. This tape is very much an accident that happened out of the blue at the right time and place. This particular tape is a time machine of sorts.

When I first brought this cassette home after finding it in storage and played it, I knew that it was recorded in the Spring of 1989, just by the songs on side A. This in it's self is not significant alone, but what was on the other side is the freak of nature.

When I rewound the tape and pressed play on side B, the first song to play was Bobby Brown's "My Prerogative", which made sense as this song had been a hit some time before. Hearing a Bobby Brown song is not a big deal, he had some hit songs back then and I liked most of them. But what else is on this tape is what makes it an artefact is not the music, but rather the lack of music on this tape.

The first 10 or so minutes of the Side B of this 90 minute bright plastic piece of Spring 1989 contain a few songs that I normally would record then shut the tape off. I did record some of the Disc Jockey jokes and announcements of songs coming up, but the vast majority of my taping were just songs. Looking back, I wish I would have kept the "RECORD" switch depressed just so I could hear the then everyday monotonous adverts 20 years later...but in 1989 I was not concerned about recording a Domino's Pizza advert for the future. I had other things to freak out about that had much more importance than me saving the past to be found at a later date.

Things I had on my mind at that time included small trivial details such as is _____ - _____ going out with anyone? "I saw her at Magilla's last Sat. and she was with her friends, but I did not see any dudes lurking about...why don't I have the guts to talk to her". Little things like that were my everyday concerns at that point in my life. Meeting girls, getting their phone numbers and going out on dates with them, going to the Sandusky Mall, then going to Magilla's after the Mall closed on Sat. night.

My life did not just revolve around to meeting girls, music, hanging out at Teen Dance Clubs, MTV, Cedar Point, Soak City, dreaming about living in So. Cal.. I had actual other major things that were hanging over my head like an albatross following my wake as my life was sailing across the ocean of being a teen fast closing on becoming a young adult in the late 1980s.

Not only was I coming up on graduating High School, which was not yet guaranteed, At that point in time I was not the best student. But even that was not the biggest event to dominate my life, there was something even more sinister on the horizon of my life in the Spring of 1989...I will get to that later, now back to this tape.

After hearing the first few songs, I noticed something very different about this tape. Something caught my ear, after the last song ended, the DJ started to give the

weather report and I listened to it, I had to remind myself this was a 20 year old tape and not real. Then I started to wonder when I'd hear the DJ get cut off and the next song begin. And the weather report segued into a commercial for the film "Ghostbusters II".

Then the DJ came back on and played "I Drove All Night" by Cindy Lauper, so back to the music, everything is normal. But after that song was over, the DJ played the News. Then it became apparent to me that I had somehow left the Record Switch depressed and had recorded the entire side of this tape.

From a dumb mistake I had preserved almost 45 minutes of W-92 FM, Bellevue, Ohio, US. from a morning from the Spring of 1989, which I thought was sort of a neat find. I knew that it had to be the Spring of 1989 because the news spoke of the student protest in China. I also knew it was a morning show. I was just was not certain of what exact date...yet.

Then I heard the date and time mentioned and my whole being was overcome with a sense of fear and uncertainty. This tape was recorded on the 12th of June 1989 at around 8:00AM. Suddenly I was back then, my gut twisting and my mind raced. Maybe because I knew what had happened the first time I lived through 12 June 1989. This date will forever be stamped on mind, I highly doubt I will ever be able to think of this day and not have a sense of impending doom come over me.

This was the day that I started my Active Duty in the US Navy. Actually, on paper, my Active Duty began on 13 June 1989, but I had to go to the recruiters office and report in, then spend the night at a hotel near the MEPS Station and be there in the early morning of 13 June. So, for all practical purposes, the 12th of June was my last day as a civilian.

I'm not saying that the Boot Camp I went through was the toughest or the easiest. What I'm basing this story off of is the feeling of the unknown, the uncertainty I felt at that moment in time. The emotional build up to that day in my life coupled with the finding of this tape years later almost compelled me to write this story. What are the odds of me accidentally leaving the record switch on, on this monumental day of my life?...Weird.

The exact morning this was recorded was the dividing line in my life between my youth (I think I'll always see myself as a youth) and being a young adult. In many ways this date is the dividing line between then and now. After I went into the Service, I would see many things in life from a very different point of view.

I started the 12th of June 1989 wearing a pair of 501 Levi's, a "Hobie Surf Co." T-Shirt and a Red Sweat shirt from my High School. The following day I traded that outfit for a shaved head and a pair of dull blue dungarees that smelt of mothballs. No

longer did I wear my beloved 1987 Swatch "Skyracer" watch, that was traded for a set of dog tags.

I would get to wear the Swatch again, but I had to wait two months.

It still makes me wonder to think that at one point in time I'm attempting to talk to some girl at a dance club and the words come out something like "dar doo dupp dar" or something like that as I feel my face turn hot, then a little over a year later and I'm responsible for an F-14A Tomcat and the lives of the aircrew. What a rapid transition...I sometimes think that my experiences in the Service are part of the reason I try to hold onto

my youth with my claws the way I do. Being in an environment where I had to grow up very quickly whilst many of my classmates had the luxury of a slow progression into adulthood really did have an effect on my mind set today. I try to think of myself as youthful as I can...and there is not a thing wrong with that.

I have just stopped playing the tape. I let it play until the end, then it clicked off, it did not get chewed up by the tape player rollers like I was scared it might, it played perfectly. I also had another blank cassette that I recorded it onto and it recorded just fine. I now have two copies of this moment of my life. I'm not even certain if I will ever gather the courage or will to listen to this again, but if I want to, I can.

I know that right here and now is present time and nothing can change that. But just for a second I can recall that feeling of fear, uncertainly, leaving home for the first time, getting screamed at, having my head shaved, the list can go on and on, and I know that on that same day there were at least 79 other teenaged boys that felt the same thing. Well maybe some of them were a bit more brave and confident than I was, but I'm certain I was not the only one who had doubts of what awaited when we all got together and were formed into Boot Camp Company 236, 1989 Great Lakes, IL.

By Mark Lodge