

EARLY DAYS



As a chorister of Winchester Cathedral I started my own theatre company at the age of eight. This was a success until one of the members rang the Mayor of Southampton and tried to put on GLAMOROUS NIGHT by Ivor Novello as a musical at Southampton Town Hall. The Mayor rang our headmaster and to cut a long story short, the club was disbanded.

As a scholar of Winchester College I played the Queen in Richard the Second and also Macbeth. As an officer in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders in Aden my Batman was called Macbeth and a very good Batman he was. National Service did me proud. And I may say there's more to it than at first meets the eye.

At Oxford I did so much theatre that they made me President of the University Theatre Club with Ester Rantzen on my committee. Many happy productions ensued. I remember playing Macmillan and Peter Snow playing DeGaulle and somebody else playing Eisenhower as the Gods coming on at the end of then Birds by Aristophanes in St John's garden. Ken Loach played Flamineo and I played Brachiano in The White Devil. I played the lead in Italian Straw Hat a musical by which we staged at The Oxford Playhouse Company. Then I was invited up to Edinburgh to the festival. I was to play Caesar: a mad scholar tramp in a play called Vasco. I tackled the part with vigorous method acting and according to the doctors, went mad. It was some years before I fully recovered or at least was crossed off their list, but I did manage to do five months of weekly rep. with great success. It wasn't long after that I broadcast with the BBC on Radio Kent for two years as a comedy entertainer and have since entertained with magic. What I have outlined here broadly is full of the most delightful detail. I suppose you could almost say that I had a show business career and the Early Days were full of promise. HOPE and PROMISE.

Now I am in my seventies waiting for the end. I am still gunned by pedestrian jobs but Winchester Cathedral, Winchester College, military service in Aden and Oxford University were a grand start, I can't really recall them without boasting but I think that's something to boast about.

Since then I have managed to write and get staged a play about my mental illness called IS IT A CRIME TO BE HAPPY. This was selected by the King's Head Islington, possibly the Leading Fringe Theatre in London.

Schizophrenia is supposed to be a killer but I managed to survive it and eight years ago I started my own writer's group; WRITERS TEMPORARILY ANONYMOUS and to this day my friends from way back in Pilgrim's preparatory school still come to visit me including Ester Rantzen. Pilgrim's was of course the choir school for Winchester Cathedral.

The story of my life was televised in an hour long programme on BBC. 2 which took us a whole year to make while many of my contemporaries have become rich and famous I'm quite happy being chair bound. I can hardly move more than twenty yards without gasping for breath but otherwise I am perfectly happy. There are more adventures to be had across the mind than there are across the world.

Richard Jameson