

Liz MacKean, Anna Raccoon, Death and Karma

Saturday, 19 August 2017

On the same day, at the same time, two top journalists died. Anna Raccoon, technically a barrister, but lately a blogger, had been diagnosed with cancer six years ago; given months to live but, in her hospital bed, bald due to chemo (I have a great photo of her in her Sinead O'Connor phase) reads a newspaper report about Jimmy Savile at Duncroft, abusing girls. Knows she was at Duncroft then, in the 60s, and a big, odd, blonde DJ never visited then, pricks up her ears and starts investigating.

Over at the BBC two Newsnight reporters, one of whose Aunts had been the Duncroft headmistress at the time and who had got into a row with his mother over a will, decide there is now a big story to break, that Jimmy Savile had been a paedophile abusing young girls at Duncroft. Since he was now dead - nothing to lose; no law suits for the BBC - a great story - go for it!

Aided and abetted by another part time journalist, Mark Williams Thomas, who had old connections with Surrey Police (in whose area Duncroft School had been) and who also knew a great story when it appeared (true or false) they decided to con the BBC into doing a huge Newsnight exposee on Savile. Hardened old experienced Editor Peter Rippon looked at it, spotted it was full of flaws, dropped it (read his BBC blog).

ITV, less particular about specifics, took on the story. It exploded. Media loves a tale involving sex and celebrities, particularly dead ones as they cannot sue. Savile was painted in death as a prolific paedophile. Everyone knew he probably wasn't, but it was a great story. Dozens of punters, intrigued by the publicity, leaped on board, ranging from elderly women who once got his autograph in a hospital car park (read the NHS reports) to genuine victims of pinched bums and stolen pecks on the cheek. Casual kisses of congratulation became tongues down throats. After all, with compensation, let alone massive media interview fees, what was there to lose? Evidence of arms around boy scout shoulders on TV abounded. Charity marathons became races towards beds.

As most great stories do, it faded away.

Cut to 18th August 2017. After a six year battle with cancer, Anna Raccoon died aged 70, having established that the entire Savile fiasco was an inflated media balloon, full of exaggeration and invention. Liz MacKean had a stroke and died, aged 52, having followed her Savile career with similar exposees on Cyril Smith and others.

Karma is a bitch.