

A Few Memories of 4th Grade

Looking back on my life, I don't know why exactly, but the 4th Grade was a pretty memorable time for me. I had just "graduated" from Charlie Bagley Elementary school (which housed Grades 1-3) to Robert E. Lee school (which housed grades 4-6). Although it was a "new" school building to me, the building itself was ancient.

I remember I was in Mrs. Hughes homeroom class. She also taught English. I remember that because English includes spelling, and for some reason, that year I was a good speller. Since that time, I don't think I necessarily excelled at spelling -- but in the 4th Grade, man, I could spell! Every 6 weeks period, we would have a classroom Spelling Bee, and Mrs. Hughes would give the winner a "prize" of some sort. I won the first 5 Spelling Bee's! I remember being awarded some metal office clips, and a huge lollipop... I can't remember the other awards (there were too many to keep up with - ha!), but I do remember some of the other kids looking at my prizes and wishing they had them! I remember on the 6th Spelling Bee, I missed the word "plant" -- I think I said: "P-A-L-N-T"... I guess I got a little bored with winning and "took my eye off the ball," so to speak. When I missed that word, the entire class cheered! Oh well, you can't win them all, I guess.

Also in Homeroom class I learned a valuable lesson or two about life. I was basically a shy and quiet kid, and except for Spelling Bee's, I don't remember being "out front" that much. But one day, we had classroom elections -- we were going to pick a Classroom President. I am not really sure what a 4th Grade Classroom President was supposed to do, but still, we were going to elect one -- this was obviously an important office! We all got a slip of paper and wrote down who we thought should be the Classroom President. The teacher collected the names, and there were 2 names that ended up tied for first -- me and another guy. I was shocked that anyone would vote for me for such an honor! Because there was a tie, we had to have a run-off election, so again slips of paper were handed out to the class. The "other guy" in the election was a good friend, and even though I would have loved to have been the Classroom President, I voted for him instead of voting for myself. As it turned out, I had cast the deciding vote in the election, and my friend won! It really wasn't a big deal, but looking back on it later in life, I have often wondered if winning that election would have caused me to do things differently later in life? Who knows! But I did learn, if you really want something, sometimes you have to "vote for yourself" -- and go get it!

I remember changing classes and going to Mrs. Kyle's class. She taught social studies and music, at least. I remember a couple of things about her class. She would sometimes whip out an autoharp and play and sing some songs. I had never seen an autoharp, so I thought that was pretty interesting. I also remember that one day I was stung by a wasp in her class. I went up to her and told her what had happened -- and I showed her my swollen and throbbing finger. I was hoping she would let me go to the office and get some medical attention -- maybe even a Band-Aid! I really wasn't hurting that bad, but I knew that everyone would have been impressed if I could come back with a Band-Aid on my finger! But Mrs. Kyle just looked at me and my finger

and said in a heart-breaking tone: "You'll just have to grin and bear it." I returned to my seat realizing that life can be tough sometimes... and sometimes you really do have to just sit down, shut up, grin, and bear it.

Mrs. Ervin taught 4th Grade Math. Mrs. Ervin had been teaching for a long time -- she even remembered teaching my parents! And she was definitely an "old school" kind of teacher. We all loved her, but we were afraid of her as well! I don't remember a lot of specifics, but she would yell at us sometimes. I had always been pretty good at math, but I didn't do well with her style of teaching. I remember one particular day she was in rare form, and I seriously considered running out of the room to get away -- I distinctly remember seeing the open classroom door and thinking about it... but I didn't. I have often wondered how my life would have turned out differently if I had run out that door. How stupid that would have been! Where would I have gone? But I didn't run out the door -- I stuck it out with Mrs. Ervin, and apparently she finally pounded some math into my head! Actually we all ended up really liking Mrs. Ervin. She really won us over when she brought her baby goat to class and bottle fed it in class! So, yes, Mrs. Ervin -- even with her occasional yelling -- was a good and memorable teacher.

I believe I was in 4th Grade when my Great Uncle -- Mr. Ford Scott -- visited our school. Although I didn't know it at the time, Uncle Ford was a brother to my Grandfather. He was a noted sign painter and artist in Fayetteville. All of us were brought into the school cafeteria, and we sat in a big circle around Uncle Ford as he talked to us and painted a picture -- a nature scene -- before our very eyes... hills, trees, a lake, a boat, clouds -- all "magically" appeared as he talked with us! I realized from this little demonstration that some people are gifted by God with amazing talent -- and it is wonderful when they find and use those gifts in their lives to bless others. I have often thought back on that day when Uncle Ford visited our school, and I have thought about all the lives he touched with his signs and paintings through the years.

I'm sure I could sit here and write more about my 4th Grade year. It seems it was such an innocent time in my life... I guess it really was. But it was also a time of learning a few little life-lessons and growing up a bit. Growing up can be hard -- and even painful at times -- but when I think back to my 4th Grade year, I just have to smile a little.

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