

Second grade; a defining moment

By Sally Harrison

I loved school. Mother never had to call me twice to get up and get ready to walk the mile to catch the bus. It was an adventure I looked forward to with the greatest of anticipation.

The first day of school was a sensory overload. The classroom smelled of floor polish, chalk and the first waftings of lunch being made in the basement cafeteria. The squeals of happy children seeing their school chums for the first time after a very long summer. The rustle of new clothes, scraping of new shoes, the obligatory portraits of Lincoln and Washington hanging on the wall to the right, and the new books stacked to left waiting to be opened. It was all a feast for the eyes, ears and nose.

It is September, 1947.

Miss Kyser was our second grade teacher. So stereotypical, it's laughable. Tall, robust, with gray hair neatly tucked into a proper bun. Round metal rimmed glasses, dark long-sleeved dress over a snug corset, sensible black shoes and what looked to be therapeutic stockings. Her only adornment was a long stick that never left her hands.

The purpose of this story is not to report on my status as a second grader (I did well), but to tell you about Phyllis Meyer. Phyllis was painfully thin, fine white hair encircled her even paler freckled face. I don't remember the color of her eyes. She looked at the floor most of the time. I assume they were blue.

Phyllis stuttered.

It was Miss Kysers' practice to have each of us read out loud in front of the class each day. Poor Phyllis would stutter. Miss Kyser had no patience. She would smack her with her stick and yell, "Start over!," over and over and over again. As if this process would make Phyllis stop stuttering. I felt so sorry for poor little Phyllis. I thought in my child's mind, that if I could do something nice for Miss Kyser, she would in turn be kinder to Phyllis.

In our home there was one room that was off limits to my brother and me. That was our parents' bedroom. We could go in, but only with an invitation. So here was the first rule broken. I took \$2 from Dad's billfold as his pants hung from the bed post. Across the street from Washington Grade School was a small store. Second rule broken. I crossed the street and bought a heart shaped box of chocolates.

I took my ill-gotten gain and gave it to Miss Kyser, confident my plan would work. Instead she gave the box back to me and told me to take it home and tell my folks. I can only guess what prompted this action. Was my guilt written all over my face? Or did she ask me where I'd gotten the chocolate and I stuttered and stammered with no lie waiting at the tip of my tongue?

Well, there was no way I was telling Mother and seeing the disappointment in her eyes and suffering the consequences of my theft. With heart shaped box tucked securely under my coat, I got off the bus that afternoon.

I couldn't rid myself of this now hateful thing soon enough. I tossed the box over the bank into a ravine clogged with blackberry bushes and small shrubs. I waited until night to complete my deception. With flashlight in hand and using the kitchen floor of my doll house as my desk, I wrote in my second grade cursive, "Dear Miss Kyser, Sally was a bad girl. I spanked Sally." (signed) Mrs. Biggs. The next day I gave the forged note to Miss Kyser. There it was, all taken care of. All's well that ends well.

My bubble burst when I got home that afternoon. I was shocked when Mother asked, "Where's the candy?"

I replied, "At the end of the road."

"Go get it," she said.

Oh no! I must now walk the mile again, get the candy over the bank and walk back! This task took me a considerable amount of time. I was in no hurry. As far as I was concerned, life as I'd known it was over. During my journey I concluded that Miss Kyser had called Mother and told her of the box of candy and the forged note. There was no way out. With feet dragging deep furrows in the dirt, blackberry scratches on my arms and legs, and the weight of my considerable sins on my shoulders, I carried that dreadful box of candy into the house and set it on the counter.

Expecting to be flailed to within an inch of my life, I waited and waited. Mother bustled silently around the kitchen, and I waited. Finally she looked at me and the candy and said, "Eat it!" What!? She wanted me to eat that hateful candy? I would have much preferred the beating I was expecting, nay, I deserved. All the rules I'd broken, the forgery, the lies, the theft. I'd done it all. I needed to be punished! Instead, I ate the candy as told. Choking on each distasteful morsel. My shame was never spoken of again. Miss Kyser still mistreated Phyllis until she left school. I don't know what ever happened to her. I can only hope she survived Miss Kyser and her stuttering.

As for me, it defined my life. A life of crime was not in my future. Two wrongs don't make a right. And the road to hell is paved with good intentions.



Jamboree Committee Announces Schedule of Events

The Vernonia Jamboree Committee has announced the schedule of events for this year's 51st Annual Vernonia Friendship Jamboree, Logging Show, and Cruise In, to be held August 3 - 5, 2007.

The theme of this year's Jamboree is "Remember When...," reminding everyone of all the history and great memories associated with the Friendship Jamboree.

Highlights of this year's extravaganza include:

Softball Tournament - Black Powder Rendezvous - Kids Fishing Derby - Parade - Motorcycle Show - Car Cruise In - Teen Dance - Logging Show. And, new this year, a Fly In and Model T Drive In at the Vernonia Airport.

Vernonia's Voice will be printing and distributing a special "Jamboree Guide" the last week in July, to include all Jamboree events:

Alternative Stage celebrates it's 20th Anniversary at the Mill Pond
Kids games, including a rock climbing wall and inflatable slide
Lions Club BBQ (all weekend)
DJ Tommy Disco will spin your favorites for dancing at Shay Park in the evenings
Friends of the Library used book sale
Booster Club BBQ at the Car Show
Vernonia Ridge Riders Horse Gaming Show at Anderson Park
Grange-Sponsored Variety Show
Sunday Worship Service on "A" Street, featuring the drama group "Dramatic Differences"

The Jamboree Committee hopes you have a fun-filled, safe weekend, and reminds you to please don't drink and drive.

Jamboree Contacts:

General Information, Randy Parrow (503) 429-3811

Vendor Information, Sharon Parrow (503) 429-3811

Parade Information, Robb Wilson (503) 429-7731