

School Bullies

Probably everyone has been threatened, intimidated, knocked down, punched, harassed, and victimized by a school bully. I had more than my share of bullying during my younger years while attending the four-room Marriott school in Weber County, Utah from the 3rd through the 8th grades (1927-1933). Marriott was a little farming town located about 5 miles northwest of Ogden.

The 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades met together in the downstairs north room. These grades were taught by Miss Buelah Stallings, a teacher I dearly loved. The 1st and second grades met together in the downstairs south room. These grades, which my younger brothers attended, were taught by Miss Robbins. A cement pavement leading from a north-south dirt road on the east side of the school led to a cement stairway and double-door. Inside the doors, there was a small hallway where a stairway to the north led to Mr. Shupe's room, located over Miss Stallings' room. Mr. Shupe taught the 6th and 7th grades. A second stairway went south and ended at Mr. Barnett's room. He taught 8th and 9th grades in the same room and was the school principal. The two story school, which was made of yellowish brick, was demolished many years ago.

School was rather formal with regards to entering and leaving. One did not enter the school before the first classes in the morning until the teachers appeared on the front steps, even in winter! Then Mr. Barnett would blow his whistle which gave the signal for us to line up in military fashion in order of our classes, the youngest class being first. Mr. Shupe would then place the needle on the Victrola (non-electronic, of course) phonograph record. Then to the tune of "O the Monkey Wrapped His Tail Around the Flag-pole" we would march, in step, into the school and to our rooms. The name that I gave to that marching tune was, of course, not the right one. To this day, however, I can hear the tune to that irreverent line but do not know the actual name of the march. I have looked through the marching band music books, trying to find it, but have not been successful.

Leaving the school house was the reverse of entering but less formal. We would march out of the building in class order but not to Mr. Shupe's Victrola. After marching down the front steps onto the walk, we were called to a halt by Mr. Barnett's whistle. A second blowing of the whistle dismissed us for the morning and afternoon recesses. We lined up again to march to our classes, without the Victrola when the recesses were over.

I loved school and thoroughly enjoyed listening to what Miss Stallings was teaching in the 4th and fifth grades when I was in the 3rd and likewise for the other grades. I'm very glad that my early schooling followed this "several grades in the same room" pattern.

Some students, particularly boys, disliked school and would often say, "why do I have to learn math or some other subject, I'm only going to be a farmer and don't need it". When the school term ended each year, the teachers would return all of our papers to us. Many students would run down the dirt roads to their homes tearing and strewing their papers along the way while chanting, "No more papers, no more books, no more teachers with cross-eyed looks". Not me! I was teary-eyed over school ending and treasured my papers.

One day, in the 5th grade, two big bullies got hold of me at the back black board while Miss Stallings was occupied with teaching the 3rd grade. They were twisting my arm behind my back trying to make me tell them who "my girl" was. They were hurting me so badly that I said, "Stella Carter", the girl that sat in front of me in her seat. My seat was the last in one of the two rows that constituted the 5th grade class. The bullies released me after I "confessed", and the word of who my girl was quickly spread to my fellow fifth graders, including Stella. Before I knew it, Stella got behind my seat, leaned over, and gave me an upside-down kiss on the forehead!

I liked it, even though she was not really my girl. My girl was Wanda, but I never let Wanda know it.

Other bullying was more insidious. My nature has always been peace-loving, but the bullies were always trying to force me in to a fist-fight, something that I abhorred.