

Chapter 14 – North Junior High Teachers

In 7th grade, I have a wonderful English teacher, Ms. L. She is pretty and teaches me how to diagram sentences. That is fun and easy. I excel in her class. I start reading a lot of books.

I go to the Carnegie library on 3rd St. Books for the younger readers are in the basement. I spend hours there looking for outdoor stories of dogs, wolves, horses. I find my favorite author. [Rutherford G Montgomery](#). I also enjoy all the Black Stallion novels and some of Zane Gray's. I go by barbershops and read the Field and Stream stories. I am quite interested in the outdoors and wildlife.

Another teacher I remember in the 9th grade is Ms. P. the algebra I teacher. She has thin red hair. She and her sister have been teaching in the school district for decades. I do not pay much attention in class. I am interested in girls, and I notice those around me. I understand algebra. It is easy. For some reason they put me in a summer school advanced track between 9th and 10th grade. I resent going to summer school for Algebra II.

One day during 9th grade, a friend with a car invites me to go on a ride during lunch with his girlfriend and another girl. I say ok. I end up in the back seat with a girl "E" who is in my Algebra I class. We make out a bit. You know, 'smacking lips' etc. I have no idea why we did that. A few days later, I am sitting in algebra class and a 'Slam' book is rotated to me. Those books have a page for each person in the class or school. You are supposed to 'slam' with comments about each person. I write something about "E" being easy. I pass the book on to the next person.

In a few minutes, when the book reaches "E", I hear a loud 'slam' noise. E gets out of her desk, walks around the room to my desk, and forcefully slaps me in the face. Then she walks back and sits down. I flush with embarrassment, compose myself, and wonder why I ever wrote in that book. Ms. P. does nothing about the slap, but I think she grins a little when she looks down.

Alas, education has many twists and turns.

Part 1 - Times and Places

The woodshop teacher, Mr. W., teaches 8th and 9th graders. I take the shop course both years because Father wants me to know woodworking. By 9th grade, I know how to run all the power tools in the shop. I master the power jointer, planer, band saw, table saw, miter saw, jig saw, and all the hand tools.

I become the shop “slave” laborer for Mr. W.

In 9th grade, I am not given time to work on my own project which is a big gun cabinet. Father orders the Honduran mahogany raw lumber and blueprints. I plane, joint and prepare my lumber for assembly when I have time. Then it sits until April. I am doing all the labor for Mr. W. on the other students’ projects. I tell Mr. W. that I need help putting my project together. He ignores me. We all know Mr. W is drunk most of the time.

I tell Father. Father is angry. He goes to the woodshop. He asks Mr. W, “What is going on?”. Mr. W says I have been goofing off. Father does not believe him. He tells Mr. W to give me help. Mr. W is angry too but follows through. From that point forward, Mr. W curses at me many times because he is having to work. It is embarrassing in front of the other students, but they know I have helped them many more times than Mr. W.

Mr. W. messes up the lumber cuts on the bottom section of the cabinet by not following the blueprints. I warn him before he cuts, but he does not listen. Then after realizing his errors, he redesigns the bottom part of the cabinet with no drawers, only doors. I tell Father. Father is really angry now.

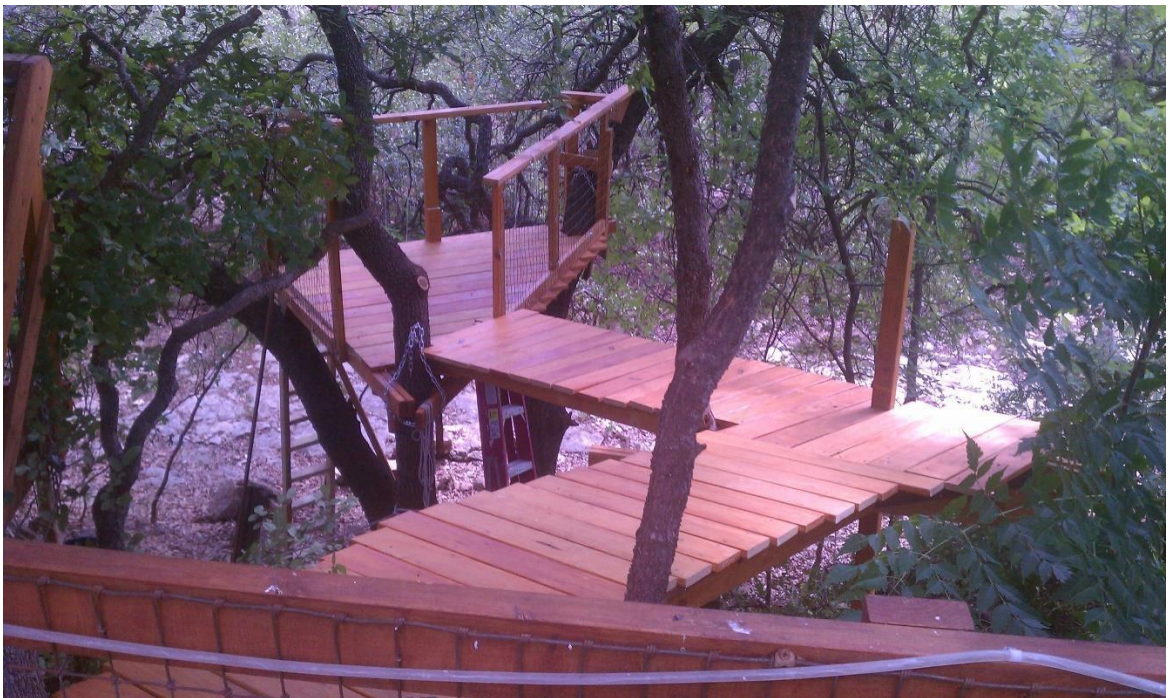
The gun cabinet is not finished at the end of the school year. Father brings it home and finishes it himself. He curses a lot too, but not at me. I help.

Afterwards, I learn that Mr. W. was Father’s teacher as well. The skills I learn there stay with me through life. I love working with wood. I build many things. Many years later, when Mother dies, Brother asks me if I want the gun cabinet. I reply. “Hell No”.

Part 1 - Times and Places



Before



After