

Chapter 25 – New Job – Back with Class- At Last

Fall, 1970. Highlands High School, on the southeast side of San Antonio near Pecan Valley, is close to IH 10 East. Easy freeway access. My 1968 VW bus looks perfect at home.

The drive from the north side of Austin is about 85 miles each way. The worst part is downtown Austin. They are building the new upper deck on IH 35. Sometimes, in the afternoon, I drive around Hwy 183 to avoid the jams downtown. It is much further. I leave Austin around 5:30 AM (sleepy time) and arrive at Highlands about 6:45 AM. The VW does not have a radio. Sunflower seeds keep me awake and the floorboard fills with salty shells. I want to install a radio but that would cost about \$60. J.A. (wife) says no. I find a portable battery AM radio that sits on the skinny dashboard. Every day I drive listening to the growing number of conservative radio jocks. Back and forth. Not missing a day and never late.

I met and befriended a 21-year-old first-year teacher named Ron Hagelman. He teaches 9th-grade history and is the most liberal person I have ever met. We have lunch in the cafeteria or brown bag in our classrooms and talk. He explained more to me about capitalism, socialism, communism, and different religions than I learned during all the years I sat on my can through classes. He was devoutly against the Viet Nam war, and all wars in general. He smoked weed off campus, never wore a tie or sport coat and the kids loved him. He loved them too, convincing them that history was thrilling to learn.

Ron thought that the library should be a learning center. He tried sending a couple of students per class to the school library with passes and assignments to research. The librarian did not like Ron. She complained to the principal who subsequently told him not to send individual students. Ron blew his stack. He went to the community and rounded up books for his library in the back of his classroom.

In May of 1971, thousands of Vietnam protestors were rounded up and put in fenced cages. Ron came to school with a black armband. He offered me one and I wore it too. The other teachers and the administration were appalled. We were black-listed. During that summer, a new principal arrived. He was a much tougher one and he transferred Ron to a very undesirable middle school campus. He brought me in for a conference and told me that if he did not need a math teacher so badly, I would have been moved as well.

Part 1 - Times and Places

All '70-'71, my class assignments were low-level "Related and Consumer Math". I floated between classrooms. I did not send a single student to the office for punishment for the rest of my career.

In the fall and spring semesters of 1971-72, I was assigned the same low-level math courses, but I really enjoyed the consumer math. I wore a coat and tie every day. I broke up a couple of fights in the hallways. Tough, but I behaved. But, the teachers still resented me. I was not like them. Unruly students kicked out of the classes of other teachers would come to mine for sanctuary to get out of the halls. I was a "S" (*Student*) lover. I was scolded for letting them in. I answered the scolds, "Send me their assignments and they will do them in here...pretty good deal, Huh?" I was not appreciated by the grownups.

One teacher I will name "C" taught Algebra II. He was one of the worse. The kids would come by and tell me how he ridiculed them. One day in the hall, on costume day, one of the black kids dressed as an Indian. This teacher asked him if he was a "Blackfoot". The teacher confronted me one day in the lounge and verbally attacked me for listening to complaints against him. He said, "I am going to take you in front of the "ethics" committee!" I walked up to his face and said, "Bring your lawyer. You have a lot to answer for in disparaging these students." The other teachers standing nearby knew I was right. He was eventually promoted to an elementary school principal position. I ran into this man several times during the next 10 years. More is to come about the continuing saga of "C" during my teacher rights days.

The new principal never visited my classroom(s). He was never in the halls or eavesdropping outside my doors. My kids behaved. They were learning and happy. No parent complained. Teachers were starting to get friendlier toward the end of the year.

Yet, the principal gave me the worst appraisal I had ever received. I questioned "why?? He said that he could not trust my commute from Austin every day. I knew that was just an excuse to set me up for a transfer. In May of 1972, when the Guadalupe River was flooding almost over IH35 in New Braunfels, I made it on time. Even the principal said he was surprised to see me that morning. Yet, he could not trust me to be there? Never missed a day; never late. So much for being a 'good' boy.

In the middle of May 1972, I told J.A. that we needed to move to San Antonio. She says, "No." She will not quit her job at DPS and she is not going to commute. Big stand-off

Part 1 - Times and Places

I found her a comparable job at San Antonio College in the library computer department running the shop. Same pay. Plus, I put the dream bait on the hook under the bobber. “We can buy a house in San Antonio and be even closer to your parents in Comfort, TX.”

After she lands the SAC job, we buy a new small house in the Glen along the northeast edge of San Antonio for \$23,002. We moved from Austin and settled in the San Antonio area. We lived there for 13 years and started raising two boys, born in 1981 and 1983.

No more driving. 1972-73 begins my eventual success story in San Antonio ISD.

