

Chapter 26 – Teaching, Leading, and Fishing

Fall, 1972-76. Back to work at Highlands High, beginning the 3rd year, I was pleasantly surprised that I had been assigned two sections of Algebra I. The other three were related math. Algebra is my favorite math genre. Mr “C” who taught most of the Algebra II sections has been promoted to a counselor position at an elementary school. (poor kids).

Also, I was elected as the ‘chief delegate’ among six other delegates to represent the 106 faculty members who joined the NEA/TSTA local San Antonio Teachers Council (SATC). I think I was elected because no one else wanted the job. American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was still trying to get a foothold. I represented faithfully at all meetings. My prestige rose in that I served the members and non-members. More joined the next year. I moved up in the SATC and was appointed head of the Teacher’s Professional Rights and Responsibilities committee. Through my encouragement, we changed the name to the Teacher’s Rights Committee. I also convinced the organization to start a Teacher Rights Legal Fund to help teachers get legal help. The fund was started from scratch with 5% of local dues each year until it reached \$5,000. I used it several times securing visits with lawyers for teachers in trouble with the administration. Many changes came about in battles for due process and fairness under the old unfair practices.

I also started helping with class sponsorship. One of my favorites, Mr. Roesler asked me to cosponsor the Class of 1973. It was fun. In 1974-75, the Class of 1976 was mostly mine with Mr. Roesler helping. The Class of 1980 was all mine. Graduations are big assignments for class sponsors. My abilities to organize and boss kids around impressed even my doubting Principal. Organizing proms is also a big deal. Raising funds, decorating school halls for homecoming and competing against the (now) four classes were all part of the assignments most teachers are too lazy to do. Becoming a rising favorite and a source of power, the principal denied me certain school-based committee assignments.

But I must digress. Back in the spring of 1969, living on the edges of lakes around Austin, we bought a 16 ft ski boat. \$66.71 payments for 36 months. J.A. cut up my new credit card but enjoyed the boat. We went skiing often on Lake Travis and Town Lake. The first launch is worth a word here.

Part 1 - Times and Places

Backing the boat down the ramp for the first time at the upper reaches of Town Lake, the task seemed trivial. The boat trailer was in the water, the bow pulley latch was released, and the boat would not float off. I brought the boat/trailer back up the ramp and noticed there were aft latches holding the boat to the trailer. Took them off and tried again. I noticed the rear of the boat was showing incoming water. I brought the boat out again and drained the boat. Then I saw that there was a plug opening in the bottom aft. Ok, inserted the plug. The boat was finally brought to the loading dock. It floats. The car and trailer were parked successfully.

We get in the boat, lower the outboard, and push off before starting the motor. Big mistake. Knowing the gas tank was full, I turned the key and cranked the electronic starter. Nothing. We begin drifting into a thicket of underbrush. A guy from the dock yells, "Put it in neutral. Hold in the center button on the gear shift and put the lever in the up position." Then he yells, "Push in the key, hold it in, and turn the key". Ok, I push in the key, hold it in, turn the key and the motor turns over and sputters. "Oh, now I know where the choke is." I realize. I have never driven an electronic choke before, only a manual. We had a short boat ride after that.

During summers and long weekends, we took fishing trips to Port O'Connor, spending nights in the roach motel and fishing all hours of the day and night. Except on rough days, we beached on Matagordo Peninsula after traveling a couple of miles across Matagordo Bay to the jetties. Walking the mile down the dirt airplane runway to the surf, we gathered five-gallon buckets of big seashells and lugged them back.

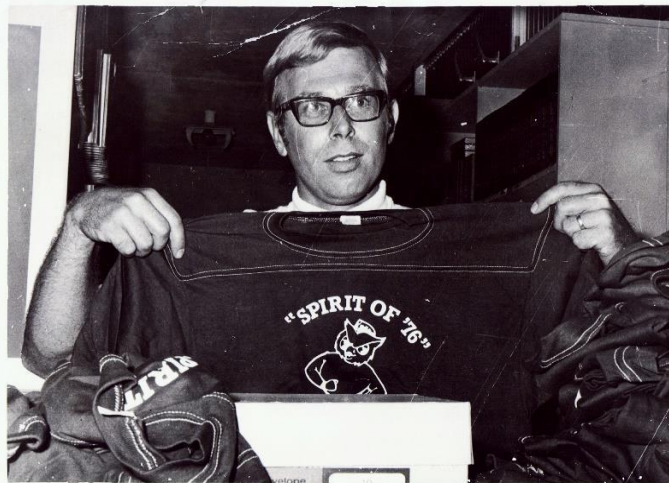
We ventured out through the jetties into the Gulf many times on calmer days and fished the oil rigs and around the huge granite stones, trying to catch mackerel, ling cod, tarpon, and big reds. Many big ones got away from our light bay tackle. Mostly we followed the birds in the bay and caught sea trout (weakfish), redfish, pompano, gaff top, sting rays, hardheads, sharks, croakers, Ladyfish, Jack crevalle, sunburns, and engine troubles. We fished the back shallow bays. It was an adventure to find the deeper channels and not go aground. We fished the old Coast Guard station along Caballo Pass which was destroyed by Hurricane Carla.

At the dock was a restaurant. The owner, Melba, served great meals of seafood and other goodies like chicken fried steak. We cleaned the catch at the cleaning tables. We would bring a few filets. Melba would cook them for us. Breakfast was to die for.

Part 1 - Times and Places

That boat gave us many joys and tribulations. The trailer was not galvanized and had to be reconditioned once. Finally bought a good trailer for it.

During this period and loving my summers off from teaching, I would drive to Roswell from San Antonio. Father would hook up the travel trailer. We would drive to Santa Fe to pick up his best friend. Then, we would head to the Weminuche Valley near Pagosa Springs in southern Colorado for a few days of trout fishing. Those were fun times spent with Father, away from Mother, enjoying his friendship with his best bud. He accepted me. He was a different man then.



Part 1 - Times and Places

