

## **Chapter 27 – Teaching, Teacher Rights, and the Stork**

1976-1981 A very productive and fun period. The number of Algebra II sections assigned to me grew each year. The process of sowing the seeds was to occasionally, for one period, exchange an Algebra II class with an Algebra I teacher and encourage the Algebra I students to follow me to Algebra II. That also allowed growth in the Algebra I teachers to prepare them for teaching Algebra II. By the end of 1977, I was assigned all Algebra II and even an advanced Algebra II section. I requested the advanced class be assigned to a different, stronger math content teacher to prepare those students for the higher math courses. Besides, I liked having only one preparation.

Beginning in the fall of 1978, the reticent Principal had been re-assigned to Director of Plant Services and a Godsend principal floated in the front door. A few days before the first day of school, I walked into the main office to pick up mail and greet the staff. I saw the new Principal and walked to him. Someone introduced us. He looked me straight in the eye and said, “I have been waiting to meet you. We have a lot to talk about. I want to get some of your ideas on what needs to happen.” I answered, “WOW! Thank you, that ends a long drought!” I instantly liked this guy and was highly energized. His name was D. Frank Clark. The “D.” was for “Doctor” because the parents either wanted to name him after his deliverer or could not come up with anything else.

The next few years were a blast at Highlands High. There is nothing more refreshing than for your boss to stop and speak those four most important words, “What do you think?”

The Class of 1980, which I sponsored, was (IMHO) one of the best classes to every graduate from the school. We were organized, had many events, honors, and quite a few high achievers who were admitted to prestigious schools on scholarships. Many of us are still connected in social media.

Still the Chief SATC Delegate for Highlands, I started mentoring my replacement, offering full backup. During this time, on the teacher union side of my life, fame was growing with Teacher Rights accomplishments. At the District level, the success of my role defending teachers in conflicts with the administration was picking up organization membership. It also focused attention on me from the Superintendent. Future episodes will describe some of the changes that were made in policy and procedure even in cases that were lost.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

NEA assigned a heavy hitter from Illinois to the San Antonio Teacher Council in 1976. This person named Roberta was assigned as an adjunct advisor full-time to assist in the growth of our large NEA/TSTA organization. Remember, the AFT was making a big effort to get a foothold in the State and our District. There was a membership battle between AFT and NEA.

Roberta was very patient when needed; and aggressive when it was learning time. Under her tutelage, I became knowledgeable about school board policy and administrative procedures, particularly the grievance process. She practiced with me on what to say in the first few cases, and how to write grievances. She was always there when I needed advice or re-direction. The goals were to stay within the guidelines, insist on the due process rights of being heard, represent, show the inadequacies of the procedure when it failed, and get changes made. *Extra information here* - Roberta and her husband were also ballroom dance instructors. J.A. and I joined and became members of their exhibition round dance team for several years.

A brief description of the grievance procedure is this. Level I – the grievant meets with the Principal (no representative present), presents a written grievance and awaits a response within 10 days. Level II – If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved, the grievant submits a written grievance to the Area Superintendent and asks for an interview (representative allowed). If the grievant is not satisfied, then the process goes to Level III – the same procedure. Level IV is the school board, but any Superintendent with a lick of sense does not want this laundry going to the school board. Usually, agreements are made at the lower levels.

I had several grievances go to the Superintendent. Some straight to him because he initiated the action against the teacher. Some were obviously going to be losses, but it was important to provide due process through representation/legal assistance for the teacher to make the loss decision. Along the way, it was an opportunity to change unfair parts of the procedures. I approached the Super occasionally, stated the problem, and was summarily asked to get out. Many of these conflict resolutions and the districtwide notoriety of such, influenced my future career.

Back to real life. In 1980, I stopped smoking. Early morning running. One mile, two miles, sprinting. I do not know why. Perhaps weight maintenance. I did this for about 6 months. Something changed my system. Not using any birth control since 1965, suddenly, 16 years later, J.A. started eating pretzels, not dill pickles, but craving pretzels. She was 37 and I, 38. Kinda' late for having a first baby. Life is changing and exciting.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

We were concerned about aged eggs, so we decided to have an amniocentesis. Scary procedure. Would not do it again. The results came back normal. I looked at the chromosomes. The count seemed to be the same as an alligator. We said yes to the question about knowing gender. A Boy! Name selection took a while. I won. "Aaron" for Hank Aaron/Aaron Spelling and "Lee", is my middle name. Aaron was born in July 1981. Difficult birth. High pressure from edema. Too many pretzels? The vacuum was used which temporarily misshaped his head. I greeted him and called him Yoda. So happy and proud.



Mahan



Clark

