

IN THE SHADOW OF HOGAN'S MOUNTAIN

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Beginning of a School Year - The Old and the New

It seems that most of my late summer life has centered on getting ready for school. From my earliest memories of entering first grade to my work as a university professor, a similar pattern evolved.

My first memory of getting ready for school was the beginners' day at Ellendale Elementary School. All the soon to be six year olds (there was no kindergarten) were cleaned, shined, and clothed in one of their best outfits and brought to school by their mothers for their first school experience. My first day was going very well. I had met some potential new friends and had met teachers Mrs. Wyke, Mrs. Stamey, and Mrs. Jenkins. Near the end of the beginners' day, we were all taken to a room where a health nurse was checking shot records and giving injections for those still needing immunization for such things as small pox. Needless to say, I was not very happy about the shots. After this experience we were allowed to wait in a row of chairs while our mothers completed the paperwork. I was still whimpering when a blond-headed boy named Bobby Sipe sat down beside me. I remember vividly that he had a two-stick banana popsicle. Much to my gratitude, he shared half his banana popsicle with me. With this kind act, I gained a friend for more than sixty years.

During my elementary years, the approach of the school year coincided with the sale of our tobacco at the warehouses in Winston Salem. The money from these sales allowed us to be taken to Stamey's in Taylorsville, Moore's in Granite Falls, or Woolworths and G.C. Murphy's in downtown Hickory to get a new pair of shoes, a couple of pairs of jeans, and other sparingly-purchased items. We also

were allowed to purchase a notebook, Blue Horse paper, pencils, a big eraser, and other small items. As the year began, other supplies were purchased at the school store. The most high demand items included spiral-bound notebooks, cherry cough drops, five cent square boxes of pretzels, and on occasion a Mallow Cup that contained coupons that could be mailed off for prizes. The ultimate purchase was an eight cent orange soda from the vending machine near the newly constructed 1957 gymnasium.

High school preparations included purchase of red ball sneakers and basic school supplies using money earned in the tobacco fields or summer job at a local furniture factory. Since I was not very fashion conscious, my beginning school clothing purchases were limited to the basics. Following a family tradition, I was able to snag a bus driving job when not playing sports. The bus route ended at Hogan's Mountain and buses were parked at the end of the route to save fuel. We would go to the bus barn (It was still called a barn instead of garage in those days) the day before school opened. We were given a map and allowed to drive the route in reverse on the way home. The pay was a whopping thirty dollars per month. The beginning of the school year also brought thoughts of the lunch time socializing on the steps of the old Collegiate Institute while eating W.D. Sears' pressed ham (bologna) sandwiches with chili and slaw and a pint of milk purchased for thirty-five cents.

After college and returning from teaching in Rutherford County, my early days of teaching in Alexander County were punctuated with a mad rush to prepare for student arrival with very limited

preparation days. My first days of teaching at Wittenburg were a whirlwind of preparation of a Spartan room, acclimating to a new principal style with Marie Rudisill, and preparing to coach my first football team. I never will forget that the room had a free-standing chalkboard with storage space behind the board for student belongings. We were expected to have all bulletin boards filled with artful displays.

Thankfully, several veteran teachers came to my aid to show me the ropes for getting limited supplies and doing bulletin board displays. In those early days we did not have copiers, but early versions of a duplicating machine. Purple masters had to be prepared, inked, and placed on the machine. The two oldest machines were assigned for my use. Both were hand operated. Preparations also included placing orders to borrow 16 millimeter films from the State Film Library to add diversity to our instruction. Records for the record player could be checked out from the school library. Computers and internet did not exist, so material preparation was done with a typewriter or by hand. The Holy Grail, the attendance register had to be completed monthly and submitted to the principal. Veteran teachers prided themselves on having perfect attendance reports. I was extremely proud to receive my first error less returned register in February of my first year.

Throughout my 41 years as an educator, late summer always brought great expectations for a new year. The first day of school was always one of the best days of the year. As the teacher stood before his or her students, he or she saw a well-polished group of young scholars anticipating the wonders of a new year and a new teacher. Whether it was the kindergarten student on the first day or the university student completing requirements for a doctoral degree, optimism for things to come was one of the greatest assets for the entire school term. Teachers set the tone for the school year. Teachers still have the wonderful power and responsibility to shape future lives regardless of the challenges of an ever-changing world. They can inspire dreams, ignite creativity, and impart a passion of learning for our world's most precious possessions.

I challenge all members of education community to partner cooperatively with our schools to create the most nurturing environment possible.

Important 2019-2020 BACK-TO-SCHOOL INFORMATION



Administrators are in the process of finalizing bus routes based on the students assigned to buses at this time. If you have children or know of children who need bus transportation for the 2019-2020 school year, and have not signed them up to ride a bus, please contact your child's school this week to ensure he/she is assigned to a route. If your child is not assigned to a school bus by August 9, this may delay your child being able to ride a bus during the first week of school. The schools cannot guarantee a route assignment before September 3 for students who are not assigned to a route prior to your school's open house. Thank you for working with our schools to ensure students have bus transportation at the start of this school year so the routes will be as consistent as possible.

UPCOMING DATES & INFORMATION

**First day of school for students is
Monday August 26!**

Jump Start - West Alexander Middle School

For rising 6th grade students
Wednesday, August 21 • 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Parent meeting in the gym at 4:00 PM
Open house for 7th & 8th grade students
Thursday, August 22 • 6 PM - 8 PM

Elementary Schools Open House

All Elementary Schools, Head Start, and Preschool
Thursday, August 22 • 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Alexander Central High School Open House

Wednesday, August 21 • 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM
Freshmen 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

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Senior Night!

Class of 2020 Students and Parents

Please join the ACHS Counseling Center:
Thursday, September 5 - 6:00 pm
ACHS Cafeteria



Senior Year Information Session:

- College (2 and 4 year) • Financial Aid • ACT/SAT • Scholarships
- What to do now? What's next?

College Admissions Representative Q & A Session

*College Fair - September 13th (for students during the school day)

*Senior Conferences - September 10th-end of October

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