

EDUCATION - MINE

While a student at Saint Joseph's high School, in West New York, N.J., I was asked by the principal Sister Mary Augusta, to cover a class at the elementary school for a few hours. One of the Franciscan nuns had fallen and had to be taken to the E.R.

I was led by a wrinkled face, tortoise moving, slip of a nun, into the building, up a staircase to a classroom on the second floor.

The uniformed eighth graders sat up all in rows reminding one of crows lined up on telephone wires. Row after row of dark uniforms framed only by starched, wide, bib-like collars. I was there for more than a few hours. I have no recall of the lesson, if any, that took place. The students were quiet and respectful. Surprising, as I was but a few years older and not wearing the attention getting habit of a Franciscan nun.

The sisters knew very well of my father's plans to send me to Montclair State Teachers College, following graduation.

One had to declare, upon registering at this private Catholic High School, a course of Academic or Commercial study. This decision could never be revoked. The difference was four years of Latin, as opposed to learning how to type. Include gross geometry, an affront of algebra, creepy chemistry and a *parlais vous francais*, OMG. Was this the course to hell?

Sixty years later, the Latin went to Pluto and I do not know how to type!

I loved college. As a dorm student, this was the first time living with people my own age. No aging family members, no little kids, toddlers or babies.

I was very popular in college as I owned the only car on campus. I made so much money, it hurt me financially to graduate. I made more money than my first year of teaching. In the girls' dorm, my closet was the only one with a security lock.

I was not a good student. I pulled mostly C's but one semester I made the Fean's list with straight B's. I am clueless how this occurred.

One weekend, several weeks before graduation, I drove to one of my high school hang outs to meet up with some friends and head for the shore. I was dressed for the beach – shorts, tube top, sandals. One of my friends suggested I go into the Social Club bar and talk with Herman Klein about a teaching position. He was the principal of an elementary school in the neighboring town.

I hesitated.

What was I wearing?

A few more voices convinced me to enter the bar and meet Herman Klein. The introduction was as quick as the conversation – he with his mug of suds and me barely clothed. He set up an appointment for an interview and turned back to the task in hand.

What was he thinking?

Graduation was now a week away. We were giggling in living our last campus days in dungarees and tee shirts, rehearsing, hugging parting hugs... happy, happy, happy. Still without a teaching contract, in the frenzy of pre-graduation antics, I'd forgotten about Mr. Klein.

Year book signing ruled.

The dorm mother (yes!) sent a rep to find me and bring me to her office/suite. "Where you not to have an interview this morning at Prospect School in Ridgefield?"

Hmmm my chest vibrated in a strange hum-like sound.

My dorm sisters went ballistic!

Within the hour, I had, not in sequential order, a Playtex girdle with garters, a pair of stockings, brown high heel pumps, a yellow and brown checkered suit, a yellow sweater, a brown handbag and countless good luck wishes.

I drove the hour to Ridgefield and promptly found myself seated across the desk from the man to be my first boss – sans mug of suds – Dr. Herman Klein.