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Thanks for the Memories

Memoirs of a high school principal

by Tony LEWIS

During my 25 years as a school administrator and 16 years as a teacher, I kept a diary recording interesting and amusing incidents. Here are just a few of the stories from the halls of 17 high schools.

LOST

While principal of a school with 2,200 students, many additions and alterations were made over the years. During the summer, we hired a company to renumber the existing lockers. (Students kept their lockers for their four year stay). On the first day of school a Grade 10 student came to see me to report that his locker was missing. He insisted that his locker had disappeared. We went for a walk. "There, look at the number. My locker is gone!" he said. I told him to try the lock with his combination. It opened. He was mystified how this new locker had his lock! I smiled and left.

LUNCH

A teacher came to my office door with a student and a large garbage bag. He explained that as he walked by a locker, he had noticed an overpowering rotten smell. The caretakers opened the locker and

found it packed with old decaying lunches! I listened to the discussion on locker hygiene as the student squirmed. "Check this out!" the teacher said, and proceeded to untie the garbage bag before I could stop him. The rotten smell was horrendous. Out of the bag came hundreds of tiny "well fed" flies. Together we fled the scene, swatting as they swarmed! It was a week and a few fumigations later before the last of my tiny visitors left my office.

THE FAILURE

I had received a request to assist a teacher with an upset parent. The teacher and the father proceeded to tell me about his son's essay. The student had failed his assignment with a mark of 40 per cent. "Unfair, unjust, unkind" the dad exclaimed. "It is a great essay." The student sat quietly. The teacher explained why the essay received 40 per cent. His criticism was well-founded and supported with examples. The father grew angrier and the student was uncomfortable. "You don't know what you're doing," said his dad. "I wrote that essay and it's terrific!" The teacher looked at me and I looked at the student and his father. "In



that case," said the teacher, "the mark is now 0." I said good evening and left the scene.

THE TALKING LOCKER

I always walked the halls of my schools. In passing a corner one day, I heard a voice yell "Help me!" I looked around and nobody was in the hall. The call persisted and I realized that it was coming from one of the lockers. I located the locker, had the lock cut and opened the door. Nobody was there. The call continued and I saw light coming from the joints at the back of the locker. I reached in and pushed on the back and it fell in. To my surprise, there was a room behind the locker with electricity and furniture and a young student was

secured to a chair with tape. I climbed in and released the unharmed student who explained to me that he had been there since 9 a.m. It was now about 11 a.m., and some senior students had told him that this was part of his initiation into high school and they would be back by lunch time. I dealt very strongly with the guilty seniors and after my lecture on "initiations" and determining their punishment, they indicated to me that the "hidden" room had been there for many years and had been passed on to 'select seniors' year to year. What else is behind the closed locker doors in our schools?

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