

EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH TEACHING

PART I - GETTING MARRIED AND GRADUATING

On March 23, 1946, José returned to Philadelphia after his discharge from U.S. Army. He and Josy decided to get married three months later. They planned that Josy, who would be graduating and receiving her teaching certificate in June, would apply for a teaching job in September, while José would enter the University of Pennsylvania to work towards his Ph.D. in Chemistry. Between her salary and his government stipend (\$55 a month under the G.I. Bill of Rights), they figured that they could manage financially. (His tuition would be paid for under the G.I. Bill.)

In May, José went by train to New York City. Because it was mid-semester, he had to travel there so that he could take his Graduate Record Exam, a requirement for entering Graduate School. Once he got his test results, he applied to the University of Pennsylvania. Here, he was interviewed by Dr. Earnest Carl Wagner, Head of the Chemistry Department.

After questioning José at length about his education, training, and previous experience, Dr. Wagner made his own position clear.

“To qualify for admission to this department,” he told José, “you must go to summer school at Penn and take the course in Organic Chemistry. You have to get an ‘A’ in the course. If you do, you’ll start your graduate work here in September, and I’ll be your adviser. Otherwise, if you come out with anything less than an ‘A’, forget Penn and go elsewhere.”

The summer course was to begin July 1st.

* * * * *

Meanwhile that spring, Josy was doing her Practice Teaching at Upper Darby Junior High School. Practice Teaching was the course title (Ed S5), and Penn’s Education students were expected to take it during the first half of their fifth year, after completing all their other undergraduate requirements. During that same semester, Josy also took two other courses: the second half of Psychology 3E (Educational Psychology and Education S538 (The Teaching of English Grammar).

Psychology 3E was a two-semester course. It was one of the requirements for graduation at the School of Education. Josy should have begun the first half of this course at the start of her senior year. However, reasoning that she was going to be remaining at Penn for an additional semester to complete Practice Teaching, she decided that she could easily complete the second half of Psych 3E at that time.

Ever since her sophomore year, she had been unable, because of scheduling conflicts, to take an elective that sounded extremely interesting to her. It was called The Philosophy of Ibsen, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche, and she had never been able to fit it in. This course, given once every year, was offered only in the spring. Finally realizing that, if she didn't fit it in during her senior year, she would probably never get to take it, she postponed the first half of the Psych 3E until the final semester of her fourth year. This was so there would be no conflict with the philosophy course. Her undergraduate advisor, Dr. MacArthur Leach, distractedly approved this decision. Professor of English and a bit avant-garde himself, Dr. Leach was engrossed in the teaching of folklore and, especially, of the Arthurian Legend. Advising students seemed to interest him little. He generally agreed with all suggestions they made, as long as these didn't appear to break any important rules.

"After all," Josy explained to him during her fourth-year course-selection interview, "since I have to be at Penn anyway for practice teaching during my fifth year, I can simply complete Psych 3E then."

Dr. Leach absent-mindedly agreed.

But a year later, as she was finishing her fourth year and preparing for graduation in February, 1946, this decision caused problems. It turned out that, with Dr. Leach's permission, Josy had accumulated nine credits past her requirements for a B.S. in Education, but she was still missing one basic requirement from the School of Education – the completion of Psych 3E. For this reason, the University denied her permission to graduate.

"But I'm not going to run away!" Josy explained. "I'm already signed up for Psych 3E, and for an additional course in English Grammar this spring. I have to be here during my fifth year anyway, since I'll be doing my Practice Teaching. I can't get my teaching certificate without it. Why can't I just march in the procession this February, and then finish Psych 3E when I do my Practice Teaching?"

"Because it's not done that way," they told her. "Rules are rules. At Penn, Psychology 3E is a requirement for getting a B.S. in Education, and there are no exceptions to the rules!"

She had already distributed graduation tickets to her Aunt Leeba, her Uncle Ben, and her cousins Leah and Mary. Now, the University required her to turn these tickets back in. She had to phone all these relatives and explain that she would not be graduating just yet, and could they please send the tickets back to her so that she could return them to the university. It was highly embarrassing.

* * * * *

José and Josy had set their wedding date for Sunday, June 23rd. This, they decided, would enable them to have a one-week honeymoon before José started his summer course at Penn.

Four days before the wedding (on Thursday, June 20th), Josy went to Penn's Office of Undergraduate Education to get a copy of her transcripts. These, she would have to send away to Harrisburg to receive her teaching certificate. It was then that she made a startling discovery. Nine of her credits went beyond what was required for a Bachelor's Degree. Furthermore, several of her credits had been accumulated in graduate-level courses. At this point, she was now only four courses away from a Master's Degree. Moreover, three of these courses she would have to take in the next couple of years, just to make her teaching certificate permanent!

Suddenly she realized that Education S538 (The Teaching of English Grammar), which she had just completed that spring, had been given for both graduate and undergraduate credit in the same class. Josy had taken the course on the undergraduate level. But had she been advised differently, she could just as easily have signed up to take it for graduate credit.

Hurriedly, she rushed over to see the professor who had taught the course, Dr. Matthew Black. He was just leaving his office

"Could you please authorize a change in my records from Undergraduate to Graduate credit," she asked him, explaining the situation.

To this he objected strongly.

"When you signed up for this course, you requested undergraduate credit," he reminded her.

"But there were both graduate and undergraduate students in the same class, listening to the same lectures," she countered.

"Yes," he replied, "but they came in with different attitudes. The graduate students obviously planned to go into teaching. The undergraduates didn't necessarily feel this way."

"But I was already doing my Practice Teaching while I took the course," Josy pointed out. "And besides," she added, "who would ever take this course except someone who was planning to teach?"

Dr. Black winced. But it was probably this last argument that swayed him.

"The graduate students each turned in a term paper at the end of the course. That's something you haven't done," he pointed out.

"I can still do that," Josy snapped back.

"My grades have to be in by tomorrow. Two o'clock. If you can get a decent term paper in to me by then, I'll put you down for graduate credit."

"But I'm getting married on Sunday," Josy explained.

"That's your problem," Dr. Black answered. "If you turn in a term paper by

two o'clock tomorrow, you'll get graduate credit. Otherwise no!"

Josy rushed home and spent all of the rest of Thursday, and most of Friday morning, writing a paper. At a quarter of two on Friday afternoon, a little out of breath, she arrived in Dr. Black's office and handed him the paper.

"Congratulations!" he called out, barely looking up from the papers he was still marking. "And congratulations on your wedding, too," he finally looked up, smiling. "I hope you'll be very happy!"

Josy was never entirely sure whether he was referring to her wedding, or to the change in her records, when he wished her happiness! This was the first inkling, however, that she ever had that she might continue her education and go on for a Master's Degree.

* * * * *

Graduation date was June 26th. The wedding took place at one o'clock Sunday, June 23rd. They left directly from the Commodore Hotel, at 313 South Broad Street in Philadelphia (where the ceremony and a wedding reception had taken place) and went by train to New York City for a one-week honeymoon.

Josy had previously spoken to one of her classmates who was also graduating, and who had agreed to pick up Josy's diploma for her on June 26th. When the Dean of the School of Education heard about this, however, he called her in. She explained that she was getting married and that, in a class of six thousand students, all of whom would be marching together in Convention Hall, she would hardly be missed.

"Graduation from college is an important milestone," the Dean told her, disapprovingly. "If you want your diploma, then you had better be there in your cap and gown in person to receive it!"

Therefore, José and Josy changed their plans. They decided to leave for New York immediately after the wedding ceremony and reception on Sunday, June 23rd. Their honeymoon at the St. Mauritz Hotel, however, would have to be interrupted mid-way through for Josy's graduation. They would return to Philadelphia late Tuesday night for the graduation ceremony on Wednesday morning. Right after this, they would go back to New York to complete their honeymoon. Then, the following Sunday night, they would again return to Philadelphia so that José could start his course at Penn the following morning (Monday, July 1st).

During graduation, Josy marched along with the other thousands of other students. It was only with difficulty that she finally was able to spot José, her father, and a couple of guests standing in the crowd among the onlookers. As she glanced through the printed program during the proceedings, she suddenly found

her name with an asterisk in front of it. Checking at the bottom of the page, she read that she had made the Dean's List, something that she never had been aware of before.

After their honeymoon, José started his course at the University of Pennsylvania. It was a great deal of work and he found it hard, especially after having been away from the academic world for over four years. But six weeks later, José completed the course with an "A". Relieved and happy, he reported to Dr. Wagner, who congratulated him and agreed to become his advisor. That September, José enrolled for his first year as a graduate student at Penn. He decided to major in Organic Chemistry.

PART II - MARCUS HOOK

Meanwhile that 1946 summer, Josy spent the time hunting for a teaching job. She had already gotten her teaching certificate, but one job interview after another came to nothing. By the time September and the beginning of the new school year rolled around, she still had found no work. Almost daily she visited the Student Placement Office at Penn. Each time she reminded them that she would take any teaching position in junior or senior high, be it private or public school, as long as the job was in Philadelphia or within commuting distance. She had no car, and she would have to use public transportation.

Finally, the third week in September, a call came through.

"They need a teacher in Marcus Hook," the lady at the Placement Service informed her. "School already started there two weeks ago, and they're desperate for someone to begin in the junior high immediately. It involves teaching seventh and eighth grade English. How soon can you go for an interview?"

"Tomorrow," Josy replied, "but where is Marcus Hook?"

"It's a half hour away by bus," the lady explained. "Can I set up an interview for you?"

"Please," Josy responded.

Early the next afternoon, Josy, accompanied by José, took a Greyhound bus from center city Philadelphia and headed for Marcus Hook. Once on the road, however, they were astounded to learn that Marcus Hook was, not half an hour, but one and a half hours from Philadelphia.

"This will never work," José told Josy. "You'll have to leave the house every day around five in the morning to go downtown for the bus. You'll be traveling four or five hours each day."

Josy agreed. But, since they were already on the bus now, there was nothing to do now but continue on to Marcus Hook.

When the bus pulled up in front of the school, the entire student body, as well as several teachers and the principal, stood waiting for them outside on the front lawn. A cheer went up as they got off the bus.

“The new teacher is here!” several children shouted. The principal ushered Josy into his office for an interview. Immediately, she explained the situation to him. The principal, however, refused to take no for an answer.

“We must have somebody at once,” he insisted. “For one thing, we have no one to coach the gym team. You could do that for us after school. Also, there’s the possibility that you could help out with the Glee Club. Your resume says that you have some training in music, don’t you? And it would involve only occasional Saturdays.”

Again, Josy explained the problem with the traveling.

“But why can’t you move to Marcus Hook?” the principal suggested.

“My husband is enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania,” Josy explained. “He has to be in Philadelphia every day.”

“Well then, you move here, and he can do the traveling,” came the reply. “After all,” the principal continued, “the salary is \$1400 a year and, if you turn out to be really good, the State Senate might vote you a bonus of an extra \$100 at the end of the school year!”

When it came time to leave, José and Josy shook hands with the principal. They said good-bye to the rest of the group waiting outside on the lawn and boarded the bus. As it pulled away, they overheard one teacher say to another, “I wonder why we can’t get an English teacher. Nobody seems to want the job.” Needless to say, Josy didn’t want the job either.

PART III - COLUMBIA INSTITUTE

The following week (September 1946) a teaching position for Josy finally came through. She answered an ad in the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin. The job was for a teacher of French and English at a small private school called Columbia Institute. This was located on the second floor of a building on the southwest corner of Ninth and Chestnut Streets. The tall, elegantly dressed Director, Mr. Stern, a man with a smooth voice and an oily manner, interviewed her. The student body, he explained, would consist mostly of veterans, recently returned from World War II. These were men in their twenties and thirties who had never before graduated from high school. Now, more mature and in search of a diploma, they would be getting their tuition paid by the G.I. Bill of Rights. Josy’s class load would consist of three French classes (first and second year) and two classes in high-school English (junior and senior year).

What clinched the job for her was when she told Mr. Stern that she had been President of the French Club at Penn. He balked, however, when she replied to his question of what salary she expected.

“Forty dollars a week!” he gasped. “But that’s more than any of my other teachers make!” Finally, because school was to begin in three days and he had nobody else available, he reluctantly agreed.

“Don’t ever expect any raises here, though!” he warned. “And keep the amount of your salary to yourself. I don’t want trouble from my other teachers!”

Thus Josy began the first teaching job of her life. Actually, it turned out to be the happiest. Her students were all older than she but, because most of them had come to realize the need for a high school education (having matured, both in years and through their military experience) they turned out to be highly motivated. Each class was a joy for her to teach, and every school day usually ended with an enormous sense of pleasure and accomplishment.

One woman in her English class, a lady in her late forties, marveled at how interesting poetry could be. “But I don’t understand,” she exclaimed, “how you can get that meaning out of those few words.” Josy, fresh out of college, and herself full of awe and enthusiasm for the classics, lacked the perspective and know-how to explain in detail, beyond a series of generalizations. This frustrated her at the time. How one could reach such conclusions, she decided years later, would take more time and probably require more literary background than many of these students had. The incident also left Josy with the nagging feeling that her training at Penn, although extremely thorough as far as the material was concerned, had given her very little in pedagogical methodology. (This suspicion would soon be confirmed when she moved to her second teaching job.)

At Columbia Institute, however, she found tremendous satisfaction in what she was able to accomplish with most of her students, both in English and in French class. Often, she silently blessed her mother for having, through the years, steered her towards the teaching profession.

Most of her students seemed to enjoy their work. In her class she had no discipline problems at all. The only episode that even approached a discipline problem occurred when one student, a strapping fellow in his late twenties, approached her after class and, swaggering, suggested that he take her out for a drink. When she reminded him that she was married, he retorted, “What difference does that make?” and, when he suggested, in innuendoes, that she give him a good grade for the course, she suggested that he go speak to the Director. After this she had no further problems with him. She suspected, however, that it must have been this fellow who was to blame for a particular incident. Immediately after mid-term exams, Mr. Stern decided to give a small party for the students and faculty. During the festivities, somebody noticed, hanging from the ceiling, a series of “balloons”

on a string. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that these were blown-up condoms! The secretary from the office blushing removed these as soon as the prank was reported, and the party continued without further incident.

The classes themselves were, for the most part, extremely enjoyable for both Josy and the students. They often laughed and joked together while she presented the material, but they learned, and she succeeded in cramming a great deal of material into the course, which they seemed to absorb well. Her ten o'clock French class, in particular, was a delight. These were the students who made the most progress and who, in her estimation, would probably go on to college.

The room where she taught, however, was less than comfortable. An extremely long and narrow space, it allowed just three rows of seats, twenty in each row. This meant that students at the end of each row got a distorted view of the blackboard, which hung on the long wall facing the seats. Because of the dimensions of the room, there was no way of rearranging the chairs to make the set-up more comfortable. As she would stand at the blackboard teaching, she faced the class and, also, the only window in the room. This window gave out onto Ninth Street. Directly across Ninth stood the Benjamin Franklin Hotel. Occasionally Josy would see the window shades in the rooms across the street being pulled up. Once, around ten thirty in the morning, an elderly gentleman in his pajamas stood at his window in the hotel and waved to her for fifteen minutes or more. Josy had all she could to keep from laughing and go on with the lesson.

* * * * *

The other teachers in the school (one for each subject) were a pleasant group. The secretary in the office was cheerful and went out of her way to accommodate everyone. Everybody got along well. But the teachers were not happy. Before long, they began to grumble about their extremely low salaries. Nobody actually knew what anybody else was making, but they all agreed that, judging by their own earnings, it must be too little.

To irritate them still further, the elevator usually failed to work, making it necessary to climb a dark, steep, extremely dirty staircase to reach the second floor where the school was located. In the office, there were no hooks on which to hang up coats and, as the weather began to get colder, the number of complaints over this increased.

Mr. Stern generally made himself unavailable for personal talks with his faculty. On the few occasions when somebody managed to get into his office to complain, they ended up coming out dissatisfied and irritated. Finally, the teachers got together and decided that, unless everyone got a salary increase, they would all go out on strike. When Mr. Stern heard about this, he expressed shock, and then

immediately called a faculty meeting. In silken tones, he set about soothing their hurt feelings. First, he promised that a coat tree for the office would be purchased at once. This, he assured the teachers, they would get the following day as a sign of his good will. He would also call for the elevator to be fixed sometime soon – no (seeing their scowls), that very week. And they would all get raises. He would discuss this individually with each teacher in private. After all, it was nobody's business what anyone else was making, was it? People had a right to privacy, didn't they? When asked when these conferences would begin, he hedged a bit, then conceded "immediately" although, to be reasonable, they should all understand that he could only handle one, or at the most, two interviews per day. After all, teaching had to go on, and they could hardly cut into class time for these discussions, could they? However (again sensing a change of attitude), all salary discussions would be completed within the next two weeks. By the end of the meeting, the teachers were congratulating each other and virtually dancing around the room in delight. "Imagine! We're getting a coat tree, too!" one exclaimed.

The following day, one interview with Mr. Stern did take place. The second was held two days after that and, by the middle of the next week, everyone except Josy had been called in. When she finally asked for an interview, the secretary told Josy that Mr. Stern could not see her for several more days. Finally, after still another week had gone by, Josy got her appointment. "As for you," Mr. Stern responded to her query about a salary increase, "you get nothing more. You've been getting more than any of my other teachers, and I'm not giving you another cent!"

PART IV - THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Around that time, the School District of Philadelphia announced openings for junior high school English teachers. The written test for applicants would be given early in January. Starting pay for teachers would be \$2000 a year, with annual increments, as well as pension and insurance benefits. Also, there was the promise of permanent status at the end of three years. Both José and Jacques encouraged Josy to apply.

"The job offers permanency," José pointed out. "You have no job security at all at Columbia Institute."

To which Jacques added, "You'd be getting a better salary, plus look at the benefits that go with it. You don't have any of those now."

Reluctantly agreeing, Josy went to take the written exam. Soon after she passed it, she was called in for an interview. The committee interviewing her consisted of three junior high school principals. They questioned her about her

training and previous experience. Then one of them remarked, Tell us what book are you reading at the present time?"

"The Fountainhead," Josy answered promptly. This was a current best seller that José, Josy, and Jacques were all three reading at the same time. They all found it so compelling that each vied with the other to get their hands on it first every night.

The three principals looked at her uncertainly.

"You know, The Fountainhead," repeated Josy and, growing more anxious by the minute, she added, "you know, by Howard Roark."

Now, Howard Roark happened to be the name of the main character in the book. But in her nervousness, Josy came up with his name instead of that of the true author, Ayn Rand. She also, at the moment, failed to realize her mistake. So, apparently, did the three principals.

"Oh, yes!" the woman on the committee responded. "Howard Roark. A wonderful author!"

"Read several works by him myself!" interjected one of the men, while the other nodded sagely.

It wasn't until Josy had left the building and walked for three blocks in the direction of the trolley car to take her home, that she realized her mistake.

* * * * *

They called her in mid-January, informing her that she had a job with the Philadelphia Public School System as of February 1st. Out of the list of schools that they offered her, she chose Fitzsimons Jr. High based on the fact that it was located at Twenty-sixth and Cumberland Streets, the nearest of all the schools to her home.

When she gave notice to Mr. Stern at Columbia Institute, he exploded. "How dare you!" he stormed. "I've been so good to you! I've paid you more than any other teacher in the school, and now you do this to me! How about if I offer you five dollars a week more?" When it became clear that nothing would change her mind, he demanded, "You'll write the final exams for your courses here and turn in the final grades before you leave, I hope!"

"Of course," Josy replied. "I never intended to do otherwise." And she kept her promise.

Several of her students expressed dismay when they heard that she was leaving. Many begged her to reconsider, and a couple even suggested that they form a committee to picket the school unless she came back, but this amounted to nothing. She bid them all a fond farewell, and she never forgot them. Teachers probably never do forget the first class they ever taught. Josy always remembered

with gratitude how this particular bunch launched her on her teaching career, and helped instill it with a joy of teaching that, in the years to follow, she would only occasionally ever feel again.

PART V – FITZSIMONS

Josy was to need that joy when she took her job at Fitzsimons Jr. High School. This turned out to be the low point in her career. Without her previous experience at Columbia Institute, she would probably have concluded that she entirely lacked pedagogical skills, and would undoubtedly have abandoned teaching forever.

The principal at Fitzsimons was a Dr. Samuel Berman. He interviewed her on her first day, along with nine other new teachers (four others who had graduated from Penn, five from Temple). Josy found it a bit surprising that so many new faculty people were coming into the school at the same time, especially when teaching jobs were so hard to find.

She would later discover that the Temple people, who had had training in classroom management, adjusted sooner and better than the others. Classroom management had never been discussed in Josy's classes at Penn. She remembered having questioned several of her professors about how a teacher could achieve discipline in the classroom.

"It's all in the motivation!" they had assured her. "Don't worry about it. It will all come to you once you start to teach."

At one point, when she had persisted, Dr. Laurie, a professor who specialized in the literature of George Bernard Shaw, gave the following example. In his deep, beautiful, theatrical voice he explained.

"When our famous colleague Cornelius Weygandt (affectionately called 'Corny' for short) first started to teach at this University," Dr. Laurie recalled wistfully, "he was a young man with no experience. His freshman class decided to have a field day with him.

"They planned a signal – it was a certain time on the clock. Staring wide-eyed and innocently at the professor, presumably hanging on to his every word, they waited for the minute hand to hit the quarter-hour mark. Then, without blinking and with one combined movement, every student in the class crossed his right leg over his left. It was all done at the same time, in one motion, and the lecturer, startled, paused in mid-sentence. But seeing no reaction on the part of the students, he continued. Then, five minutes later, the same thing occurred again – this time all left legs crossed in unison over the right.

"Now what did Corny Weygandt do?" continued Dr. Laurie, warming to his

story. “Why, whatever any good teacher would have done. He simply made his lecture so fascinating that the students forget their mischievous plan. And that, Miss Feldmark,” he added, singling Josy out of the class, since she had asked the question, “is the secret of good teaching! Make your presentation so fascinating that the students forget to give you trouble!”

This was the sole advice on classroom management ever touched on in Josy’s classes at Penn. Little did Dr. Laurie know of Philadelphia’s inner-city schools!

The new teachers from Temple, by contrast, came to Fitzsimons armed with specifics. They had been taught that teachers, by standing at the corner of the classroom rather than up front in center, would be able to look out over the entire class so that their angle of vision would not be cut off at the two front corners. They came armed with teaching games, with the strategy of producing a written lesson plan beforehand, with several additional activities to fall back on in case the main plan failed to work. They also came with an awareness that the average student’s attention span, at that age, rarely exceeds fifteen or twenty minutes, and that classroom activities need to be varied accordingly. These basic concepts Josy had never encountered before. They had never been alluded to in any of her classes at Penn nor, for that matter, at Upper Darby Junior High School where she had been assigned to do her practice teaching.

Her master teacher there had been a middle-aged English teacher named Miss Wiker. This lady, cool and experienced, seemed to have no difficulties controlling her classes. Nor did she seem to inspire them. either, with much enthusiasm for her subject.

“Junior High School is a terrible age,” she cautioned Josy. “All you can do is put them out to pasture until they grow up!”

Once, during dismissal at the end of the day, Josy caught sight of a boy lightly tapping a board eraser against the back of Miss Wiker’s head. Miss Wiker, however, went on talking to another student as if she were unaware of the whole thing. Afterwards, Josy related what she had seen. Miss Wiker nodded.

“Yes, I knew what was happening,” she responded, “but there are certain things that you just don’t see. It’s easier that way.”

This had been the extent of Josy’s preparation for handling discipline problems. Upper Darby had been a fairly serene neighborhood, the students relatively docile, and during Josy’s sixteen weeks there, Miss Wiker had handled the few problem situations that had come up. Only once had Josy personally run into anything out of the ordinary. This occurred in the middle of a lesson she was teaching under the supervision of Miss Wiker, who was observing from a seat in the back of the room. Suddenly, the door burst open. In stomped Mr. Elroy, School Disciplinarian. With his thumb and forefinger, he was dragging Thomas, the

school bully, by the ear. Josy stopped open-mouthed in mid-sentence.

“Permit me to interrupt your class, Miss Feldmark,” Mr. Elroy announced loftily.

“By all means,” Josy replied, not knowing what else to do.

“What do you think of this, Class?” shouted Mr. Elroy, shaking Thomas violently. “I found him with a firecracker – and in the lunchroom, too!” Then, turning to Miss Wiker, he announced, “He’ll be taken care of, don’t you worry!”

With that, he gave Thomas’s ear another tug, turned to Josy, and said, “Forgive me, Miss Feldmark, for interrupting your class. Please continue!”

He strode out of the room, dragging the unfortunate Thomas behind him, Not knowing what else to do, Josy continued her discussion of **Treasure Island**.

Later that afternoon, Miss Wiker took Josy with her into Mr. Elroy’s office. Both of them lauded her for her “poise and calm” during the incident.

“You’re going to make a really fine teacher,” they both assured her.

This was the extent of what had constituted Josy’s training in handling discipline problems. Now, at Fitzsimons, she was completely on her own. The situation couldn’t have proved more different.

* * * * *

Fitzsimons itself was a disaster area, especially the way in it was run. Every morning, promptly at 9:30, the Dailygram arrived by messenger to each classroom. It contained announcements and, every day, two columns appeared at the bottom of the sheet: those students suspended yesterday, and those reinstated from the day before. Each column invariably contained about forty names.

On the first day of classes, Dr. Berman opened the door to Josy’s classroom and walked in. She was working with her homeroom group, standing at the front blackboard and conducting an election for class officers.

“Why is there paper on your floor?” Dr. Berman demanded loudly. “And why aren’t your window shades pulled down at an even level? Neatness counts, doesn’t it, Boys and Girls?” he asked, turning to the class.

“Yes, Dr. Berman,” the students sang back.

Next Dr. Berman wanted to know what Josy had written on the board.

“We’re having a class election,” she informed him. “These are the names of some students nominated so far.”

“What a stupid way to conduct an election!” he raised his voice. “A student should be writing this, not you!”

Whereupon he turned to the first boy in the front row and commanded, “Here, you, come to the board!”

Handing a piece of chalk to the boy, he continued, “Go ahead, now. Take

down the names.”

Turning to the class, Dr. Berman now addressed them as a group.

“Boys and Girls,” he explained, “Mrs. Rabinowitz is a brand-new teacher, She’s fresh out of college, she’s young and inexperienced – only a few years older than you, you know.” And he smiled. “She never taught in a junior high school before,” he continued. “So be nice to her, please, and help her. Won’t you?”

“Yes, Dr. Berman,” they chorused back.

“Remember, I’m depending on you.” And with that, he walked out.

No sooner had the door closed behind him than pandemonium broke loose. The boy with the chalk threw it on the floor and let out a hoot. Little Richy Friedman, another twelve-year-old with the face of a weasel, sprang from his seat and, after jumping up and down several times, he began leaping over chairs and tables. Others followed suit. Desks got overturned, the walls (movable sashes between the classrooms) shook, and the noise was deafening. Josy ran to the intercom telephone and called the office for help.

Two minutes later, Dr. Berman, accompanied by the vice principal, arrived. They peered in through the glass window in the upper part of the classroom door, sized up the situation, and promptly disappeared. Five minutes later they reappeared at the window. By this time Josy had managed to get some of the students back into their seats, and the others, who were by now beginning to tire of their outburst, were mainly walking around talking in groups.

This time, Dr. Berman and vice principal opened the door and walked in. “Now, now, now,” Dr. Berman snapped his fingers. “What’s going on here? You,” pointing to a burly fellow at the front of the room, “take your seat! Immediately! And you,” (to a girl by the window) “let go of that window shade and sit down where you belong.”

The vice principal stood back by the door, shaking her head sadly as she muttered “Tut, tut, tut” to herself.

At the end of the day, Josy got called into Dr. Berman’s office.

“What a disgraceful situation!” he shook his head at her. “How do you account for it? Weren’t you trained at college on how to conduct a lesson?”

Each week after that she was called into Dr. Berman’s office for a consultation.

“Why can’t you handle things?” he wanted to know. “Didn’t you have Practice Teaching?”

“I was on the Dean’s List at Penn,” she replied, “and I got an A in Practice Teaching.”

“Well, this isn’t your first teaching job, is it?” he demanded to know.

“I taught at Columbia Institute before I came here,” she answered, almost on the verge of tears. “And it went wonderfully there.”

“Then you must be having problems at home,” Dr. Berman concluded.

* * * * *

By the time that the semester was halfway through, Josy would learn that Fitzsimons had the highest incidence of teacher turnover of any school in the city. She also would notice other teachers weeping in the halls after Dr. Berman had addressed a few whispered words to them before strutting off on his daily inspections.

“Why aren’t you standing outside your classroom on hall duty?” she heard him shout to one teacher after another. “Somebody’s got to patrol the halls. even if it’s you!”

After a while Josy would hear students refer to Dr. Berman by his initials.

“I’m getting suspended,” one would announce to another gleefully. “I just got called down to see S. B.”

One day Josy called a girl up to her desk to talk to her after class.

“You’ve got to behave better,” she told the student. “Stop your talking during class. Turn in your homework on time. And furthermore --” Here, Josy raised her finger to make a point.

At this point, the girl punched her.

Josy reported the incident to the office. To his credit, Dr. Berman suspended her and then had her transferred to another school for striking a teacher.

“But you keep your hands at your side in the future,” he instructed Josy. “No more pointing. She probably thought you were going to hit her, so she got in the first punch.”

Once, Josy got so overwrought during a class that she developed severe cramps and had to be rushed to the infirmary. There, the school nurse, who was more accustomed to handling stab wounds and bloody noses, insisted that Josy must have a medical condition that she (the nurse) didn’t want to take responsibility for. Despite Josy’s protests, the nurse phoned José, who had just gotten home from the University.

“You must come and take her home!” the nurse insisted. “Immediately! I can’t be responsible for anything!”

José rushed over to the school and took Josy home. Then they went to see Dr. Kleinbart, their family physician, who lived just around the corner.

“Tension, nothing more,” Dr. Kleinbart pronounced. “Stay home for a couple of days, get some rest, and, if you can, get out of that place where you’re teaching!”

After that, every day when school was over, Josy returned home and told José, “I can’t take any more of this! I’m quitting my job.”

“How can you quit?” he asked her. “You have a contract. You have to give sixty days’ notice to the Board of Education, or you’ll be blacklisted.”

“I don’t care,” she wailed. “I know I’m not trained for anything else, but I’d rather go to work in the Five and Ten rather than stay in that hell-hole! I’m giving my notice tomorrow!”

“Try to stay a few more days,” José suggested. “You’ll harm your reputation if you get black-listed. Try and see if it gets any better.”

“It can’t get any worse,” Josy retorted

“Stay until the weekend at least,” he advised.

“Just till the weekend,” she promised grudgingly.

Then, by the time Sunday rolled around, she got a little calmer and decided to go back for another few days. But each week things seemed to get worse and worse.

Finally, on the Thursday before the Easter Vacation, she found herself again in Dr. Berman’s office.

“Motivate them,” he ordered. “You can’t teach anything without motivating your students.”

“Teach? All I want to do is keep them quiet and in their seats,” Josy responded.

She decided, that very last Friday before the holiday, that she would come in to school for one last day, and then give her notice that afternoon. After all, she convinced herself, at least it will give them an extra week to find a replacement for me instead of just one day.

That Friday, the lesson she had planned was reading “Descent into the Maelstrom”, the short story by Edgar Allan Poe. It appeared in the eighth-grade reader, and the fact that it was entirely too difficult and far above the level of the classes she was teaching had never been considered when the Department Head selected the books for the school.

“Remember, motivate them!” had been the last words that Dr. Berman had said to her during that Thursday interview.

Remembering Dr. Berman’s advice from the day before (“Motivate them!”), Josy decided to start the lesson with a reference to Poe’s more familiar story “The Black Cat”. Above the din of students milling around the room as they entered, she shouted, “A man decided to murder his wife!”

Bewildered, they stopped and stared at her.

“Hey, shut up, youse guys!” Richy Friedman shouted. “I want to hear this. Sit down, youse mutts!”

For the first time since the opening day of school, when Josy had tried to conduct an election, only to be interrupted by Dr. Berman, she suddenly found an entire class rushing to their seats and, then, staring up at her expectantly.

As she continued to speak, she found that the more gruesome she made the details, the quieter the students became. Whenever she tried, though, to steer the topic to vocabulary study (referring to the terms “descent” or “maelstrom”), immediately signs of restlessness began, and she quickly switched back to “The Black Cat”, ending up by telling the whole story, stressing the ghastliness of the murder, the spookiness of the cellar where the man buried his wife, and the grimmest details she could elaborate on. The students hung onto every word. She never did get to the assigned story. But, for the first time, she had an entire class quiet, attentive, and well-behaved for an entire period. She went home singing that day, determined to remain at her job and, after the holidays, to reach her students through motivation.

Things didn’t work out as quite as happily as she had anticipated, though. She spent the rest of the term telling stories, one after another, but hardly any work ever got done. Also, there was just so much talking that the students would listen to. After a while, the relating of stories began to bore them, though a few remained mesmerized, sitting in a daze from one day to the next and, at least in that way, creating no discipline problems.

Classes were large – forty-five to fifty to a room. Josy noticed that every time even one person was absent, it made a difference and the class was easier to handle. She also noticed that giving written assignments helped somewhat to keep many students quiet, but she never got to go over the work with them, for that involved listening on their part. Also, she found out that in many classrooms of that school, other teachers were experiencing problems quite similar to hers.

Near the close of the term, Dr. Berman called her into his office. He announced that he was rating her “Unsatisfactory”. As per regulations, she was sent downtown to the Board of Education Building for “judgment”. Here, when they heard that Josy came from Fitzsimons, they looked at each other and nodded knowingly. One lady even took Josy aside and told her, “Don’t worry about it, Dear! We get a lot from that school.”

They reassigned her to another school for the coming term. Of the three on the list that they gave her, she chose Holmes Junior High, at Fifty-fifth and Chestnut Streets in West Philadelphia. It was quite a distance from where she and José lived but, at least, it was closer to the University of Pennsylvania. The neighborhood, a community known for strong parental support of the schools, held greater promise as to the type of situation that she could expect to encounter.

PART VI - HOLMES

Josy arrived at Holmes Jr. High School on September 5th, 1947. This

school, she soon learned, had been the first junior high in the nation. Back in 1913, when the building had first been erected, the junior high school movement was just starting. The construction at Fifty-fifth and Chestnut had already begun when someone decided that, instead of an elementary school, it should become the first junior high. Accordingly, they installed an auditorium, a gym, and a lunchroom. But it was too late to do anything about the sliding sashes (typical of elementary schools in those days) that had already been erected to separate one classroom from another. These, then, were allowed to remain, so the building retained characteristics of both an elementary and a junior high.

Dr. Robert Wayne Clark was the principal. Josy met with him in his office a few minutes after she arrived. He was a tall, red-faced man, dignified in bearing, with a shock of white hair and a booming voice.

“Oh, you were unsatisfactory,” was how he started the interview as he glanced over her records. “But you’re coming from Fitzsimons, aren’t you? That explains a lot!”

Then Dr. Clark proceeded to explain the plans for the opening of school.

“The students will be arriving on Friday, the 7th,” he announced. “You’ll meet your homeroom class for an hour and a half. They come in to get their rosters, and they go home – early dismissal, you know. But on Monday all classes will be going on a trip.”

Disregarding Josy’s astonished expression, he continued. “We’ll be taking advantage of a wonderful opportunity. Downtown at Gimbels Department Store – you know, at Eighth and Market, they’re holding the “Know-Your-City” Exhibit. All teachers will be taking their homeroom classes to see it. Your turn comes on Monday. The ninth graders will go first!”

“But how will we get there?” Josy asked.

“Easy! On the “El”, of course. You know, we’re just two blocks from an “El” station. You’ll walk your class to the Fifty-sixth Street stop in the morning right after you take roll. The train will take you directly to Gimbels. You get off at the Eighth Street Stop and go right into the building. Then, you spend the day seeing the exhibit, and you bring them all back here by dismissal time.

“Two thirty,” he added, seeing her puzzled stare.

“But I’ll be meeting my class for the first time on Friday. And only for a couple of hours. How will I know which students are mine?” Josy asked.

Dr. Clark stood up to end the interview. “A good teacher,” he raised a finger to stress his position “makes it a point to learn every student’s name on the very first day. Why, when I was a young teacher, I kept a seating chart. And, on the blackboard in the back of the room (so they wouldn’t know I was looking at it) – on that blackboard, before class, I had written a code for myself. That code reminded me who was who, should I forget a name here or there. So you should

have no trouble.” With that he ended the interview.

Friday the students arrived for the first half-day of the term. They came to the auditorium where Dr. Clark greeted them from the platform and then, one by one, he called their names assigning them to an advisor. Forty-two were assigned to Josy’s home-room. When the whole list had been read, she walked them upstairs to her classroom on the third floor (Room 305), where she distributed roster cards and had them copy their schedules. While they wrote, she stared at one after the other, trying to fix in her memory who was who, and which face went with which name (the code that Dr. Clark had suggested she already had written on the back blackboard – just initials, he had warned her, not full names, for that would give the whole scheme away). The whole thing looked more like a maze, and was very confusing, even though Josy had made an effort to study it earlier.

After they had finished copying their schedules, she read to them from numerous pages containing announcements, rules and regulations. From time to time, the door would open and a messenger would arrive, breathlessly interrupting with a communication from the principal, the vice principal, the guidance counselor, or another teacher. There were announcements about auditions and proposed schedules for the gym team, the glee club, the orchestra, the Girl Guides, and numerous other activities. Now and then a new student would appear, dazed and confused from having been assigned earlier to the wrong homeroom.

Suddenly, at 10:30, a bell rang.

“Time to go home,” somebody called out.

Josy walked her class downstairs, still trying to associate names with faces.

On Monday morning, students arrived for their first full day of school. Just as Josy finished taking roll, Dr. Clark arrived.

”Time to leave for Gimbels!” he beamed. “Have a nice time, Boys and Girls!”

Josy took her class downstairs, out the building, and towards the “El” station. Two other teachers (Miss Augé and Mrs. DiSalvo) were also walking in the same direction with their classes. Josy estimated that there must be about one hundred and fifty students in all. By the time they reached Fifty-sixth and Market, she was unsure which student belonged to which teacher. Of her own class, she could recognize only a handful, and she wasn’t entirely sure of their names, either.

Everyone climbed up the three flights of stairs to the train platform. When the first train came rattling down the tracks and pulled to a stop in front of them, a mass shoving ensued. Josy was pushed on, along with a mass of students, but she wasn’t quite clear whether they were her own or not.

The train lurched forward, and there was a din of squealing, giggling, and shouting. Every time they reached a station, the doors opened and several student got out to make room for other passengers to disembark. Josy wasn’t quite certain

that they all got back on. One station before Eighth Street, at the Eleventh Street Stop (the site of the Earle Theater and where one of the Big Bands was featured), the car emptied out and only a handful of students remained. The other two teachers must have been in an adjoining car, Josy assumed, but she didn't actually see them. When they arrived at Gimbels a few minutes later, she had about ten students in tow.

Not knowing what else to do, they all entered the building and spent the rest of the morning at the exhibit. From time to time Josy would see the faces of new students, and she only knew that they were from Holmes when they greeted her by name.

Lunchtime came, and everybody who was left went to the cafeteria. At a distance, Josy saw Mrs. DiSalvo and Miss Augé. They waved to her, but the place was too crowded with shoppers for her to reach them.

At one o'clock, as previously agreed upon, she took her group downstairs to the basement where they all waited to board a train taking them back to school. At the Eleventh Street stop, a huge influx of teen-agers got on. Many of them were singing hit songs, and somebody remarked to her, "Wasn't that a great concert?"

"Shut up, she's a teacher!" someone else called out, and the offending student promptly moved and lost himself in the crowd.

At every succeeding station, several students got off and others, whom Josy swore she had never seen before, got on. Each time, from inside the car, she noticed familiar faces outside on the platform as the train pulled away. Some of these students even waved to her. She arrived back at Holmes with thirty-four of her original forty-two students. Others began drifting into her classroom before dismissal time, but four never showed up at all.

Tuesday morning, Dr. Clark called Josy into his office. He was livid with anger. Shouting, he labeled her as irresponsible and incompetent, slinging a host of other epithets at her. "I've never before seen anything like this in my life," he stormed. "Imagine, losing students like that!"

Later, she found out that a few other teachers had had similar experiences. Most were newly assigned, but one insisted that, even though she had known many in her group from the year before, it was impossible to exert any kind of control in such a situation.

* * * * *

Despite this unfortunate beginning, Josy found Holmes a much better school than Fitzsimons. Students generally went directly to their seats when they entered her room. They remained seated for the whole period and, generally, she was able to get some teaching accomplished. Dr. Clark asked to see her lesson plans every

week, and he commented that she had, in his own words, “some beautiful units”.

“You have so much to offer these kids,” Dr. Clark once commented. But then he would usually find something to scold her about.

She became better acquainted with several experienced teachers on the faculty, and she learned a great deal from them. Pearl Norris, the older of the two guidance counselors, was a tremendous help. Josy soon learned to refer more difficult students to Mrs. Norris, who would later interpret some of the problems for Josy, giving her better insight into some of the difficult situations.

“Remember,” Mrs. Norris told her, “every school needs guidance counselors. Even those in the most affluent of neighborhoods. You’ll find problems all over – they’ll just be problems of a different kind. But the number will be the same.”

Once Josy referred a seventh grader named Billy Bard to the counselor. Dr. Clark happened to walk in, and Mrs. Norris introduced the child to him.

“Bard – I know that name,” responded Dr. Clark. “You must be Maggie Bard’s brother.”

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than Billy sprang up and began furiously pummeling the principal with both his fists. Dr. Clark, tall and heavy as he was, had all he could do to restrain the child, roaring out, “What did I say, Son? What did I say?”

“Dr. Clark should have known better than that,” Pearl Norris later pointed out to Josy. “Mentioning Billy’s sister brought out all that rage and jealousy. Well, at least it gives us a clue as to what’s bothering Billy.”

Others on the faculty were also very helpful. Twice every week, the sashes between Josy’s room and the two rooms adjoining it were pulled open, and the three classrooms became an extended auditorium that they used for an assembly at the end of the day. Eleanor Augé ran the programs, and Lucy DiSalvo assisted. Josy was asked simply to monitor but, in so doing, she was able to observe, week after week, the techniques of these two experienced teachers, and she profited enormously from this. Miss Augé, a blond middle-aged woman, always came across as calm, unruffled, and ready to tackle the most unexpected of situations with a firm hand. But it was Mrs. DiSalvo who was the real surprise. Josy had noticed her immediately in the office on her very first day at Holmes. Only a year or two older than Josy, she looked like an eighteen-year-old. Short, extremely pretty, with straight dark hair that hung loose to her waist and snapping black eyes, she was energy personified. Vivacious in her manner, she brooked no nonsense, standing up to the biggest students with a strict, decisive, uncompromising manner. What amazed Josy was how even the most unruly caved in to her demands.

“Shape up and respect yourself!” Josy would hear her shout at some miscreant. “I expect better from you than that! Sit up! Wipe that grin off your face

when I talk to you! And no more nonsense. You can do better than that!” Sharp tones, strong words, but always a positive approach. Lucy was, in Josy’s mind, a truly workable example of what “motivating the students” really meant.

She was full of practical advice, too. She took the time to explain and interpret several incidents from an experienced teacher’s point of view.

“Usually,” she once advised, “bad boys, even the roughest, you can deal with. It’s all out in the open. They’re loud and they’re noisy but, usually, it’s something you can handle. But bad girls, now, that’s a different story. You don’t get as many bad girls but, when you do, you’ve got a problem. The trouble’s usually on the inside, so watch out!”

During her second year at Holmes, the school purchased a wire recorder (something newly available at that time, and a predecessor to the tape recorder). Josy availed herself of the wire recorder quite often. She used it in her English classes to record the students reciting poetry that they had memorized and, also, to record plays which the students wrote and acted out. The machine proved extremely useful in helping her classes improve their enunciation and, especially, in motivating their interest.

Once, while several boys and girls were rehearsing with Josy at the wire recorder, Dr. Clark passed by. Glancing into the room, he got upset to see what he thought were students milling around the room instead of remaining in their seats. This he interpreted as disorder. Angrily he flung open the door and entered the room shouting. Josy had to turn off the wire recorder and explain in detail what was going on. Abashed, he strode out of the room without another word but, in the meantime, the recording had been ruined and they had to start all over again.

During her third year at Holmes, an incident occurred that Josy would never forget. In one of her classes was a thirteen-year old boy named William. Josy gradually learned from the counselors that William’s mother had recently remarried and that she had taken William along on the honeymoon, having him sleep in the same bed with her and her new husband. This was all she ever learned of William’s background, but it gave a clue that she could expect strange behavior from this boy. He began to evince this immediately.

There was something extremely odd about William. Under his slick blond hair were eyebrows that always remained fixed in an expression between a frown and a stare. His face was usually screwed up in perplexed wonder. William’s movements were extremely jerky. He constantly managed to get himself into situations that inspired uncontrollable laughter from everyone around. One day as he walked into the room, his pants suddenly fell down. The next day, upon entering, he tripped, his books sprawling all over the floor, hitting the legs of students close by. The third day he slid into the room and, slipping, landed sprawled out over the teacher’s desk. Another time, he knocked two girls over as

he came backing into the classroom. One never knew what to expect from William, except that it would invariably be something distracting and out of the ordinary. Also, that it would evoke laughter at the most unexpected times. William was extremely restless. He constantly made faces at no one in particular and, even during the occasional moments when he forgot himself and just sat still, he presented a picture of such pathetic wonder that anyone looking at him burst into irrepressible laughter at his bewildered expression.

Josy soon found it impossible to teach if William sat anywhere within the range of vision of any other student. She herself had trouble keeping a straight face when she glanced at him. To make the best of the situation, she decided to move William to the last seat in his row. Even this helped very little, for he immediately began to distract those around him by making odd noises. Then, meeting their startled glances, he would respond with such a foolish grin that they collapsed in irrepressible laughter. There was something unsettling about William; he was both comic and incorrigible at the same time.

Finally, Josy ended up placing William in a corner seat at the very back of the room. It was as far away from the other students as she could get him, yet within range of her voice. She tried not to make eye contact with him while she was teaching, for she knew that she would never be able to go on with the lesson if she did.

William, however, continued to get into more and more mischief. Finally one day, when Josy was up at the front board writing a definition for the class, William fell out of his seat and, landing on the floor, began to guffaw and bray loudly. The class screamed with laughter.

“Stop that, William,” Josy called out from the front of the room. “Stop that, or I’ll have to send you to the principal!”

In one motion, William sprang up from the floor, flung open the back window and, extending the upper half of his body outside, continued to bray like a donkey.

“Send me to the principal,” he shouted, “and I’ll jump!”

His hips and legs were the only parts of William that still remained inside the room. Josy froze. At the front of the class, she stood at least thirty feet away from William, swaying in the wind. The classroom was on the third floor. Quickly, she realized that the only thing to do was to diffuse the situation by feigning indifference.

While the class watched in shock, she quietly turned her back on the scene and, shrugging her shoulders casually, pretended to be unconcerned.

“Go ahead and jump,” she replied nonchalantly, turning back to the blackboard and continuing to write.

William promptly pulled himself in off the ledge, closed the window, and

returned to his seat, grimacing as he sat down and twiddling his thumbs rapidly. At this point, Josy sent a messenger downstairs to the office, then strode rapidly to the back of the room, from where she escorted William out the door. She stood there in the hall, watching the class while she waited with him until the messenger returned, accompanied by Mrs. Norris. Josy related the incident to her, and the counselor took William downstairs to see the principal.

Later, Dr. Clark called Josy to his office. He was livid with anger.

“How could you tell that student to jump?” he stormed.

“What else could I have done?” Josy asked. “He was too far away from me to grab and pull inside and, if I had started to walk towards him, I just know he would have gone further out on the ledge.”

“You don’t know that,” Dr. Clark roared. “You never tell a student to jump out a window!”

“But what should I have done?” she insisted.

“You should have begged, ‘Please, William, come on in and sit down.’”

“Then I **know** he would just have gone out further – and he might have fallen.”

“Yes, but at least **you** would have been in the clear!” Dr. Clark retorted. “This way you had forty witnesses hearing you tell him to jump.”

“But I really saved his life,” Josy protested.

“That’s not important!” Dr. Clark shot back. “You protect yourself and the school, that’s what you do! Never mind anything else. Keep yourself in the clear!”

William, despite all these problems, seems to have ended up well. Years later, Josy heard that he had realized his true calling. He had joined the circus as a clown, and was, reportedly, extremely happy and successful in this career.

* * * * *

The school was planning to relocate, in the fall of 1950, to a new location, a newly-completed building at Fifty-ninth and Walnut Street a few blocks away. In April before the move, a parent-teacher evening was planned, with the underlying purpose of highlighting the coming move and encouraging parental involvement, as well as additional support. All teachers, Dr. Clark announced, were to extend themselves as never before. This event could determine how willingly the neighborhood backed future projects. Josy decided, for her part, to put on a short play that her students had recorded in English class. They had been rehearsing for several days, and this seemed an ideal opportunity to present their writing and performance skills to the parents.

When the evening arrived, visitors were directed to go, first to their children’s classrooms, then later to the auditorium for announcements and an

address by the Principal. During the first session, Josy's class acted out the play. There were about thirty parents present, with about twenty students acting. The parents were ecstatic at the performances, many delighted to see their own youngsters in the starring roles. Parent after parent came up to Josy afterwards to congratulate her on what she had accomplished with their children. One couple even hugged her in gratitude. The grown-ups beamed. The children smiled with pride. Everyone seemed really happy. As they left to go downstairs to the auditorium, Josy felt a warm glow of satisfaction at what she had accomplished for the school, as well as for herself.

The next morning when she arrived at work, the secretary in the office told her that Dr. Clark wanted to see her.

"It must be to congratulate me about last night," she thought to herself, and she walked into his office with a spring in her step.

"Everything would have been perfect last night except for you!" he roared as she entered.

Astounded, she stopped in mid-step, unable to believe her ears. Then, in blustering tones, his face growing purple with rage under his mop of white hair, he elaborated. It seemed that an Armenian couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ajakian, whose boy was in Josy's seventh grade class, had come to Dr. Clark during the evening to complain. They charged that Josy had vilified the Bible. Unable to believe her ears, she asked Dr. Clark for details. It turned out that, several weeks before there had been a class discussion about the creation of the world. This was part of the Core curriculum that Josy was required to teach. She had explained to the class, after questions, that the earth had originally been formed as a spin-off from the sun, taking billions of years to cool and harden as it whirled through space before human beings appeared.

The Armenian child had contradicted her. "But the Bible says that God created the world in seven days," he had countered. "And you say that it took billions of years?"

Josy had gone on to explain that the Bible, a great work of art, had to be interpreted freely, as did much other great literature. What had been depicted in the Bible as a single day, she went on, actually stood, in scientific terms, for eons. The child had said nothing, but he must have gone home and reported the incident to his parents. Now, weeks later, they had taken the occasion of the Parent-Teacher meeting to voice their objections.

"How could you have ruined last evening like that!" Dr. Clark thundered.

"But how should I have handled that situation?" Josy wanted to know.

"What I would have done," Dr. Clark continued angrily, "would have been to explain that the words of the Bible were not meant to be taken literally, but that 'seven days' should be interpreted as meaning 'a long, long time'."

“But that’s exactly what I did!” Josy protested. And she repeated the exact words that she had used to the class.

“Oh,” responded Dr. Clark, suddenly regaining his composure. “Very well, then. That’s all.”

Josy realized that the interview was over. She left the office struggling to regain a measure of tranquility, and went upstairs to her classroom to start the day’s teaching. All day long she conducted her classes as if nothing had happened but, when she arrived home that afternoon, she wept in frustration over the incident.

* * * * *

Another new teacher arrived at the school one year after Josy. His name was Irv Fleishon. They moved him into the room next door to hers. Through the movable sashes which separated their classrooms, Josy overheard many strange things. One involved a clothing drive that the school was conducting for charity. Students were asked to bring in used clothing, shoes, and small household goods. Everything had to be brought in neatly packaged and tied with rope. In the assembly, Dr. Clark announced an award for the winning class, the one that would turn in the greatest number of packages. Every day the Dailygram announced the current status of the collection. Soon it appeared that Josy’s homeroom class was in the lead.

One morning, during her free period while Josy was writing at her desk, she heard Mr. Fleishon in the next room pleading loudly with his class.

“I want you to beat that class next door,” she heard him say. “You’ve got to win, no matter what! And if you do,” he continued, “I’ll do anything you want – anything – just as long as you come in in first place!” She could hardly believe her ears.

On the last morning of the drive, one of her students, who was acting as a messenger for the office, came rushing back into her classroom.

“Mrs. Rabinowitz,” he gasped breathlessly, “I just delivered the Dailygram next door to Mr. Fleishon’s room, and they’re re-wrapping packages. They’re opening the bundles, and making two or three smaller ones out of each package!”

Mr. Fleishon’s class ended up coming in first, turning in the greatest number of bundles in the school and winning.

The next day, through the sashes came sounds of an uproar.

“You promised you’d do anything we wanted, and we won!” a girl shouted. “You’re not fair! We won!”

”Yeah!” screamed a chorus of voices in her support. “You’re not fair!”

“Well, what do you want me to do?” came Mr. Fleishon’s nervous reply.

A long argument followed, after which Josy heard a voice pipe up. “We want you to run around the room three times!”

Next came the sound of footsteps pounding in rapid succession as the teacher presumably ran around the room with the class cheering, “Yay, Fleishon!”

“He really got off cheaply with that one,” Josy mused to herself. “If the class had had a more vivid imagination, he would have been in real trouble!”

Years later, Josy heard that Irv Fleishon had become principal of a prestigious elementary school in the suburbs.

PART VII – SAYRE

In June of 1950, Dr. Clark announced that, finally, the new building at Fifty-eighth and Walnut Streets was ready, and that the entire staff and student body of Holmes would be moving there in September. The new school would be called Sayre Jr. High, while the present Holmes Jr. High would become an elementary school after they left.

Dr. Clark was extremely proud of the new building. At a faculty meeting, he announced that the place would have an intercommunication system that would transmit between the office and every classroom. Let it be understood, he hinted broadly, that teachers had better perform at their best, since he could tune in and listen at any given moment to what was going on in their classrooms. Several at the meeting looked at each other in disbelief, and a few shuddered.

Dr. Clark also announced that, to avoid what could become interminable bickering, he was, then and there, decreeing that the new school colors would be red and black. Nobody objected, although a few elderly teachers shook their heads at each other and sighed unhappily. The only complaint about the new building, he confided to everybody, was that the walls were constructed of cinder block, which meant that every time a student pressed a hand against a wall, dirt could leave a lasting imprint. Again, several teachers, mainly the women, sighed and shook their heads in exasperation.

“Now, in order to simplify this huge moving project,” Dr. Clark continued, “during the first semester we will group all advisory classes alphabetically by last name. Students will still be grouped by IQ and ability in the major subjects (English, History, Math, Science), but in homeroom, you’ll have only alphabetical listings.”

With this arrangement, Josy expected her homeroom students would present a wide range of ability. To her amazement, however, it turned to consist only of those with IQs of 130 and up, although all the last names ranged from the letters L through R.

“An astonishing example,” exclaimed Dr. Clark, when Josy pointed this out to him, “of how the law of averages can fail to work!”

And he was right. Never before, and only on rare occasions afterwards, did Josy have all the pupils in one class as brilliant as that homeroom at Sayre, which had been based on alphabetical selection alone.

She got to teach that class, too. The brightest was a small blond fellow named Roy Linker. No one else, even in that group, came even close to him in the speed and completeness with which he grasped almost every concept even before hearing it through. Rarely did any of his work display an error, yet he was humble and gentle in his behavior. After this year at Sayre, Roy would go with his parents to India, where his step-father, a linguistics professor of Phonetics, would spend a sabbatical year. By age fourteen, Roy would be admitted as a child prodigy to Harvard University, and at eighteen he would graduate from there with a degree in Mathematics. Decades later, Josy would learn, through meeting Roy’s step-father at the University of Pennsylvania, that Roy, although brilliant and highly educated, had become a complete failure at every-day living.

“During the Vietnam War,” Dr. Lisker would tell Josy, “Roy burned his draft card, and then he joined a commune. He never learned to support himself, he never held a job for more than a month or two. Roy wanders around the country, and back and forth to Europe sometimes, living on what others hand out to him. Every once in a while, when we come home, we find him on our doorstep. He carries a knapsack with all his worldly possessions, and after he stays a few days, he leaves again, and we give him a few dollars, but that’s all he’ll ever accept. What a waste of talent and intellect!”

In that homeroom class of 1950, the closest runner-up to Roy in intellectual achievement was a quiet, plump little fellow named Harvey Plotnick. Harvey would hang on to every word that Josy uttered. On the very first day, almost before the class was seated, he raised his hand and begged that she assign him extra projects.

“I love to work in the library,” he announced. “And I’m especially interested in History, but I’ll take Science, too, if you don’t have any History projects to give me.” He was all of twelve years old. Later, Josy heard that he had become a respected orthopedist, with a flourishing practice in Suburban Philadelphia.

The entire class was a delight to teach, and Josy never forgot them. Once, toward the end of the school year, Josy and Lucy DiSalvo escorted their homeroom classes together to the Philadelphia Zoo for a day-trip. They went by public transportation, changing trolley cars on the way, and José, whose classes at Penn had already ended for the year, met them there and took pictures. “Monkeys on Monkey Island” was how they labeled one of the photos. It was a lovely day, nobody got lost, and everyone had a wonderful time. How different from Josy’s

first day at Holmes and the trip to the Know-Your-City Exhibit at Gimbels.

That year at Sayre passed relatively smoothly. To be sure, she was one of only a handful of young married teachers in the school, and the older faculty didn't take too kindly to young married women working outside the home. In the teachers' lunchroom, she made it a point, whenever possible, to sit with three other young married women on the staff. At adjoining tables, the older women teachers made sure that their remarks were loud enough for the young women to hear.

"I would rather be an old man's darling," piped hunchbacked Miss Spear with a chuckle "than a young man's slave!" And she glanced significantly at Josy and the three other young women at the nearby table.

It would be Josy's final year of teaching before taking maternity leave, and it turned out mostly to be a pleasant one. The only thing that marred it was the insistence of Miss Doris Press, Vice Principal (and rumored to be secretly in love with Dr. Clark), who declared that Josy must train a student teacher from St. Joseph's College. Josy opposed this vigorously, explaining that she still felt quite unsure of herself as to classroom management. It would be irresponsible of her, she professed, to train another teacher who was even less experienced than herself. Miss Press would hear none of this.

"You're doing beautifully," she insisted, "and the fact that this young man is a history major, while you yourself teach English, won't matter in the slightest!" Josy's protests were firmly ignored and, one day late in February, a college senior entered her room and presented himself as her new student-trainee.

The young fellow seemed frightened of his own shadow. "How do you ever control the kids?" was the first question he asked.

"With difficulty," Josy quipped, hoping to lighten his mood. Instead, he turned even more pale, and he never afterwards seemed to recover. He begged Josy to let him do anything but take over the class – do paper work, take attendance, write on the board, anything but face the students. For the first month, Josy complied. Meanwhile, she insisted that he observe classroom procedure, explaining as much as possible as she went along, and she encouraged him to ask her questions and discuss anything he didn't follow. His main response, however, was usually just to stare.

When it came time to prepare report cards for the third segment of the year, Josy allowed him to copy onto the cards the marks that she had made out. Unfortunately, she assumed, after checking the first ten cards, that the entire job had been done correctly. On the day that reports were given out, all classes returned to their homerooms ten minutes before dismissal time to receive their cards and go home for the day. Josy allowed the student teacher to distribute the cards and to dismiss the class at three o'clock. Meanwhile, she sat at her desk close by, completing some records and keeping an eye on the proceedings.

At two minutes past three, students began returning. Several had received the report cards of other children. Some had the wrong marks on their cards. Before long, almost three-quarters of the class was back. While a restless group squirmed, complained audibly, and muttered, "I want to go home!" Josy feverishly worked to correct one report card after another. Finally, the janitor arrived announcing that it was time to clean the room. The young man, of course, had left promptly at three o'clock.

* * * * *

Josy eventually insisted that the young fellow teach a few classes on his own, while she observed him. Each time she would suggest certain strategies, but he would follow these only for a day or two, and then revert to other procedures. Josy never knew what to expect of him from one moment to the next. And he was extremely disorganized.

Finally came the day when his professor from St. Joseph's arrived to rate him. A week in advance, Josy had begun working with the student teacher on the lesson that he would present. She took care to explain every contingency that might present itself: where he should stand, the exact words he should use, the activities involved in the lesson, one by one. When the professor arrived, Josy seated him in one corner at the back of the room, while she took a seat in the other. The lesson began, its subject, the Boston Tea Party.

"Now let's list the thirteen original colonies," the young fellow suddenly announced, launching into a new topic and completely disregarding Josy's advice to stick to his original lesson plan. One by one, the children rattled off names of the states, while the student teacher wrote each one on the board. He finished up with fifteen original colonies instead of thirteen.

"That's wrong!" one student called out.

"I know," he responded miserably. But neither he nor the class were able to decide which two names to exclude.

The professor kept shaking his head in disapproval, and Josy, unprepared and untrained in this material, could only suggest that he move on to another topic. By this time he was so rattled that she had to take over the lesson for him, and the professor got up and stomped angrily out of the classroom.

Josy never saw the young man again after that day, and when she asked Doris Press what had happened to him, the Vice Principal promptly changed the subject.

* * * * *

During the last week of school, they put Josy in charge of an assembly presentation. It was the first she had ever had to present. She decided to put on a quiz program, arranging for ten students, one from each homeroom, to be on the stage with her while she quizzed them on various topics of interest. At the end of the hour, Miss Quinn, the girls' gym instructor (and, also, the strictest teacher in the school) approached her. "Quinny" as she was referred to by the faculty members who knew her well (and by several students, in whispers behind her back) was feared by teachers and administrators alike. Known for her sharp tongue and loud voice, Quinny practically ran the school. Precious few things ever satisfied Quinny. Whenever she barked a command, everybody jumped, even Dr. Clark and Miss Press. Now, after the quiz program, she approached Josy, and Josy found herself quivering at the thought of what might be coming. Quinny, however, smiled and slapped her on the back.

"Rabinowitz!" she snapped, "I've never seen your work before, but this was excellent! A fine program! Any time you need anything, don't hesitate to ask! And, oh, by the way, from now on, you can call me 'Quinny'!"

It was at that moment that Josy finally knew that she had "arrived" in her profession.

* * * * *

That May, in 1951, Josy became pregnant. Having already suffered one miscarriage the previous November, she and José decided that she should not return to teaching when the fall term arrived. According to the current rules, she would have been permitted to work until her fifth month, and the few weeks' extra salary would have meant a great deal to them in those days, but they were afraid to chance any further problems. Early in the summer, therefore, Josy wrote to the Board of Education requesting maternity leave. This was granted, and Malva was born the following year (February 13th, 1952).

When Josy became pregnant again in 1953, she applied for a second maternity leave. This too, was granted, and Lois was born October 31, 1953, twenty months after Malva. The Board of Education, in granting this second maternity leave, informed Josy that she would be expected back at work on the day that the younger child turned two years of age. However, early in 1955, Josy became pregnant once more, and Marty was born October 28th of the same year. Again, she applied to the Board of Education for a maternity leave. This time she received a letter, informing her, "Sorry, we only permit two children!" The leave was refused. It was at this time that Josy resigned from her teaching position at the School District of Philadelphia. It would not be until seven years later that she would apply there to teach again.