



Gone With the Wind

I wonder if sometimes these little stories are running in 'themes' a bit too much. Recently I seem to have fallen into the habit of stringing together a number of episodes with related content. Over the past month or so for example, each story seemed to 'lead' into the next one; we started with a visit to Hakone last month, and ended up on a hotel bandstand nearly forty years earlier!

I think this is partly because the format for these stories is so short; with only around 600 words to play with, there is sometimes too much 'content' to fit into a single episode. But I don't intend to let them grow longer; I tend to be far too 'wordy' as it is!

I mention this because - yet again - we have a 'continuation' episode today. In last week's story, when talking about a change in my behaviour, I said "I don't remember at all what set it off," but since I wrote that, I have remembered! (And that in itself is interesting - a long-forgotten episode has come back into memory, simply because I wrote about missing my bus!)

Edmonton in Canada; I was in the final year of elementary school, and it was the last day of school before leaving for the summer vacation. We were cleaning out our desks and gathering everything together to take home. I must have been I suppose thirteen years old.

It had been a mixed year of school for me. I had not been doing particularly well in recent years, and had even been forced to repeat grade five. The phrase that keeps coming back to me from those days was the 'David is not working to his full potential' that seemed to appear on every annual report card. But this story is not about that sort of thing.

In the hustle and bustle of getting the classroom all cleared out and put in order, some of us were asked to do certain chores. I was told to take some chalkboard erasers and dust them off (outdoors, of course) to remove the loose chalk, and also to take a stack of papers out to the garbage area.

No problem. I gathered it all together, and made my way to one of the school entrances. Standing just outside the doors, I put the papers down, and started to bang the brushes together to remove the dust. It was a windy day, and that part of the job went well.

But I was careless with the loose papers, and a sudden gust of wind caught the stack and sent a dozen or so sheets flying up into the air and out into the schoolground. Little David hadn't yet learned how to control himself very well, and yelling loudly, gave vent to some of the new words that he had learned from some of the other little boys, words that were not in our school dictionaries, you may be sure.

He then yelled something like, "That s*&# was garbage anyway, so who cares. Let it go," and turned to return to the classroom.

Mistake.

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Standing there, directly behind him, was the classroom teacher. We don't need too much imagination to think about what she must have said, but I suppose it involved words like 'I'm disappointed in you ...', 'I thought you were a better boy than that ...', and almost certainly, 'Aren't you going to pick them up?'

I don't remember any more of the episode than this. As I mentioned, it was the final day of elementary school, and I guess I never saw that teacher - who I had liked - ever again. I would also be fibbing to you if I claimed that 'From that day on, I was a changed man.' But I would bet that the episode did leave its mark, and the biggest sting would have been ...

'I'm disappointed in you ...'

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