



"It occurred to me as I was sitting here this morning that my family could cover four of the eight decades involved in the school's history. My father was here in the 20s, I came in the 50s and my sons have the 70s and 80s covered. This morning, however, you are stuck with only me - probably because I have been around longer than all but two of the buildings. I have been given two minutes to analyse education in the 1950s and have been ordered to make it entertaining - an impossible, or at least Herculean, task. I feel failure coming on.

When kids ask me about the 50s, the thing they seem most fascinated with is "the cane". The other is the separation of boys and girls within the school. I'll deal with segregation first.

No fraternisation! In class, in the playground, after school, on the way home - or even on the stairways. Tuckshop end of the school for girls - other end for boys. Even when I came on staff, I was a bit leery about using the girls' stairway. Old habits die hard and punishment seemed likely to descend at any moment.

Which brings me to the cane. The most frequently asked question by today's kids, is, "Did it hurt?". Now, that's a pretty stupid question. I can only refer you to the Bible and, if I recall, the Acts of the Apostles in which is written, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." On the subject of giving it, I later discovered that a Patrick Rafter serving action, but with a relaxed wrist and elbow, brought the best results.

The second and third questions can be combined. "Did you ever get it and what for?" The answer to this is, regrettably, "Yes" and the answer to the second part is not, as you might think, for wearing a yellow baseball cap, but for breaking the segregation rule - and being foolish enough to get caught. You see, the 50s decade saw the beginnings of the 'teenage revolution' but we hadn't had enough time to get good at it yet. The fourth question, "Was the experience worth six of the best?" will remain unanswered, as befits a State High gentleman.

The girls, of course, did not get caned. A worse fate befell them in the form of Dotty McCorkell. She was one of those Edwardian ladies who looked like a Spanish galleon in full sail. They needed Dotty in New York when Godzilla got loose. One look from her would have had him apologising and promising never to do it again. Unfortunately, she and my mother had been school friends together and so news of most of my indiscretions made it home before I did.

Other than that, school is still school and kids is still kids. In the same way that human nature doesn't change very much, I don't think the values and all the good things about BSHS have changed much either."

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