

A sunset over a city skyline reflected in water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow. The city skyline is visible in the background, with several tall buildings. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the sun and the city. A bridge railing is visible in the bottom right corner.

THE
NEW
MATH

Thee Ace Man

The New Math

by
Thee Ace Man



Strategic Book Group

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CHAPTER ONE

Prelogue

Subchapter I—Introduction—“Hello”

But before I begin, middle, and end this life story of mine, I need to state this: It is not what we have or do not have, but how we behave towards one another that decides our fates. The meek shall inherit the Earth, but who are these people anyway? How will I recognize a meek if I see one? Please read on...

But first, there is always a catch. Please be advised, this is not a do all tell all type of book, but a frank and honest discussion of life itself from myself who is still “in the middle” for a limited time like so many others.

This is a mystery, not history book. I am not talking about “his” story from someone else’s viewpoint, but about “my” story from myself as I remember it. Adult as well as childish themes and language abound so reader beware. You will most likely learn a lot from this book. Probably more than you wish to know about yourself as well as others. Please feel free to reread because as you can tell from the size of this book, there is a lot of information to ponder. Ponder away.

Subchapter II—Background—“In the Beginning”

Life started for me in December 1964 in a city of over twelve thousand in lower central New York State, United States of America, Planet Earth. It was a small manufacturing city with a good chance that a person living within this city could find a

steady, middle income job without much difficulty or training. Burly factory workers were everywhere and it was a very rough and rowdy place to grow up in. A couple gas stations, a couple grocery stores, but bars, inns, and taverns were everywhere. Black soot from the factories was everywhere also, and even during clear days there was a grayish haze in the air.

But the city had two halves, the one half was the rough and ready factory workers, while the other half was the quiet executives, that lived on the hill and away from the factories and the workers. So it was a valley of rough and rowdy misfits surrounded by calm and gentle hills. The area was not ready to accept a calm and quiet yet rough and rowdy misfit, but life happens and I was born into the middle of these two halves. I was born a full-blooded misfit, but an outcast because I had executive tendencies.

My given name was Adrian, but I was originally known as Bubby, and I was the eldest grandchild of both my parents' families. As such, and being a misfit, I was taught to fight by my uncles, who were all much older and larger than I was. I had a wicked temper, but I was not mean and vicious by nature. By age four, my uncles could hit my hand all day and it would not hurt me, but if I hit their hand, three punches would be about all that they could take before pulling away.

But the games of seeing who could punch the hardest were coming to an end. At age five, I would be starting school in kindergarten and being used to my older uncles, it would be quite different with others my same age and size. I did have some uncles and cousins my age but I was used to rough-housin' with my older uncles because the younger uncles would either get hurt easily, and run away, or not fight back. A three-second fight is not fun and I was looking forward to starting school because maybe I could find someone my age that would last more than three seconds.

But I was also not just a fighter, but I could read and think things through as quick as the older people, actually, in most instances, quicker.

Can a rough and rowdy fighter think as well as use their reflexes?

On my father's side of the family, I had my great grandfather, Tiny, my grandfather, Zeke, my father, Bud, and my uncle, Butch, that were fighters. On my mother's side of the family, I had my grandfather, Popeye / Lee, my step grandfather, Ron / Reggie, and my uncles, Pat and Mike. I also had a step uncle, Jimmy, but he was more of a troublemaker than a fighter. The only person close to being an "egghead" was my great grandfather on my mother's side of the family, who had passed away before I was born.

Both of my grandmothers had worked together cutting glass at a local glass shop and my parents had talked since they were young. In fact, my parents were married in July and I was born in December of 1964. My mother was 16 and my father 19 at the time. My father was loud, boisterous, and always right, just like his father. My mother would always voice her opinion "come hell or high water" as well. So there were always clashes and arguments in the house while my younger sister and I were growing up. Both of my parents were stubborn, so clashes were inevitable and fairly often.

I was also born with an infected ventral hernia and had to have my belly button removed. Instead of the usual belly band, the doctor had read about a new procedure called skin grafting, where skin was taken from another part of the body and sewn in. I grew up with a large scar around my belly button, but at least I had a belly button even if it was bionic. Maybe a bionic belly button is better, but how should I know? Also, by age three, I had to have my tonsils removed. I was never a sickly child though and was very active.

About the time school was going to start, my mother was going to the grocery store with my sister and myself in the back seat of the family station wagon. I sat behind my mother in the car. Just before getting to the store, the brakes failed in the car and our car then rear-ended another car also attempting to turn left into the grocery store parking lot. My knee pushed into the back of the driver's seat and when a police officer arrived I kept saying, "My knee hurts". But somehow people thought they heard me say, "My mom's knee hurts". Needless to say, my mom

had a couple cuts and scrapes on her knee. I was looked at by the officer as being psychic since I was too small to see over the seat. Truth is, others were hard of hearing.

Around the time of starting school another event in the family happened. My aunt Kim got married to my uncle Gary who was a volunteer fireman. I was the ring bearer and my cousin, Rebecca, was the flower girl. During the ceremony I dropped the rings when I slipped in my shoes. After the ceremony, about noon, we all went outside to send the bride and groom off. Of course the noontime whistle went off and a little boy named Bubby could be heard saying, "Uncle Gary, you missed the fire." But really, what's more important, getting married or fighting fires even though it was the noon whistle and not a fire call.

And of course before school started me and my uncle Butch were rough-housin' a bit when I gave my uncle a quick karate chop to the throat. Down my 220 plus pound uncle went from a shot by his 55 to 60 pound nephew. The ambulance came just as my uncle was regaining his breath. Stuff happens.

And what about my first "fishing" story. Yes, three foot tall four year old snags fish. It was at a local lake and I was with my father and I believe my uncle Butch. I was using a beginner's pole with a five pound test line. Next thing we know the pole starts bending every which way and the line is definitely being pulled hard. Advice from the elders, "Give 'em some slack then real 'em in after he gets tired." The pole is almost bending in half every which way, but I follow the advice. After a while, the fish starts coming to the surface. A four foot long Northern Pike also known as (aka) Pickerel for us hicks. Anyway, yes the fish gets reeled in and snatched in the net. Well, it was my first "fish" story even if not that spectacular. Three foot kid snags four foot fish. Oh well. Stuff happens.

Subchapter III—Kindergarten—"First Fight, Almost"

The cut-off date for school was December first and I was born after that date, which gave me time to try and adjust. I was

hyperactive and liked to rough-house, but I was being taught to try and be calm and quiet.

Kindergarten is about learning and adjusting to interacting with others in the school environment. Singing, playing with toys, drawing, story making, learning to share, and the like. Rough-housin' was not allowed.

I was out of place, so most of the time I drifted off to the background and at least tried what was asked, but my heart was not into drawing or making up stories and such.

As far as rough-housin', the school was three stories high and arranged with the younger kids on the bottom, first floor. The elder kids, fifth and sixth grade, were on the top floor.

My kindergarten teacher was a woman and was more into the arts and singing than into dodge ball and other activities that I enjoyed, but there was not a clash between us. My teacher had her world and I had mine.

Also, when beginning kindergarten, it was discovered that I had problems seeing at a distance. At the beginning of the school year, I was found to have astigmatism, and I could pronounce and spell it as well. So throughout most of the year, except the very beginning, I wore black, horn-rimmed eyeglasses.

I had baby blue eyes and near platinum blond colored hair. When born, it was wondered if I would be an albino, but my eyes were blue, not red. I had distinguishing features, but it was the dorky glasses that stood out. With these glasses, everyone recognized me and I tried to talk at least a little bit with everyone in my class.

Because my older uncles liked to fight, and my younger uncles were easy targets, I had learned to keep my older uncles occupied, which would give my younger uncles a chance to be able to do something besides play "walk the plank" and such. This was on my mother's side.

On my father's side, my aunts and uncles were all grown, so there was a generation gap inbetween. I had learned to be a buffer between the "bullies" and the "bullied" through my mother's side of the family.

In my kindergarten class was a kid named Eddie that would take stuff away from the other kids. The teacher would try to intervene but Eddie just would not listen. So, I took the stuff back away from Eddie and gave it back to the kids Eddie took it from. Of course Eddie tried to blame me for himself getting into trouble instead of how he was behaving.

Awesome, finally a chance to have my first fight after school. So, after school, Eddie showed up outside and had his two older brothers with him; Chucky, who was thin and about five feet tall, and Butch, who was about two hundred plus pounds. Totally awesome!

Anyway, I ignored Eddie and asked his older brothers if they wanted to fight me. At the same time, I was lecturing Eddie about how he needs to leave the other kids in the class alone. Eddie was scared because he was afraid of his older brothers and I definitely was not. And Eddie became even more scared after I was ignoring him but also wanting to fight his two older brothers at the same time. Eddie could even join in if he wanted.

But Butch and Chucky told me that they weren't there to fight but only there to say to their step father that they tried to stop the fight. That way they would not get into trouble with their step father, who was Eddie's father. So I said, "Eddie leave the other kids alone". Then I pushed a terrified Eddie back into the corner of the bushes with ease. Then I said to his two brothers standing there, "You sure you don't wanna fight?" And they both shook their heads, no. So I said something like, "This sucks, I'm outta here." Then I stormed away mumbling stuff like, "God damned panty waists, too damned chicken to fight me. What is this world coming to anyway..." And on and on as I walked down the sidewalk pulling the leaves off the bushes and such on the way. Needless to say, Eddie did leave the other kids alone in school, but hey, only wimps pick on others that do not fight back and I definitely was not a wimp.

In dodge ball, I would throw the ball softly to those that weren't really into the game, and really hard at the kids that thought they were better than others. So, on the other team, the

“better” kids would throw as hard as they could then try to duck behind the other kids so that I didn’t nail them. Lots of fun.

And after meeting Butch and Chucky, I would say “hi” to them after school and they would be around the older kids so I would introduce myself. “Hi, I’m Bubby, wanna fight?” and they would say “no” every time. One time, however, one kid said to me, “I don’t wanna fight you, if I win then I beat on a little kid and if I lose the others will make fun of me because I got beat up by a little kid.” And I replied, “That’s all right if you’re chicken, bruck, bruck, bruck. I’m bigger than you anyway.” And I put my hand on top of my head then slid it up in the air over his head to show him that I was taller. Problem was, I had to stand tiptoe to do it. Oh well, I was stuck in a class full of a bunch of runts that didn’t like to fight and wishing I was older and taller so that I could be with the older kids that liked to rough-house. So when the teacher asked, “What would you like to be when you grow up?” I would say, “I wanna be older.”

So kindergarten draws to a close and for the final, the teacher brings in a bright lamp to draw “silhouettes” on construction paper. The teacher asks me to take off my glasses so she can draw the silhouette better and a huge pause in the classroom followed by a girl saying, “Oh my god, he’s a hunk.” So yes, I lost my virginity shortly after that during the summer break but before first grade and a new year at school.

Subchapter IV—First Grade—“What Is So Doggone Funny?”

But to digress a little, I lived about 6 or 7 blocks away from school and I walked most of the time. I rarely got sick and only missed a couple days in 6 years at grammar school. The school sat upon a steep incline of about 35 degrees. During the spring time, the walkway to school would be covered with white salt pellets. I wore slick-soled shoes.

So, near the end of kindergarten, I slipped and cut my bottom lip almost completely off. It took two adults, that had to grab me by each arm and lift me completely off the ground in order to carry me up the hill with blood gushing from my bottom lip and

drenching my clothes all the way to the school nurse's office. I kept kicking and screaming, "Leave me alone, I gotta go home" because I didn't know about a nurse's station at the school and such. It was a good thing that they grabbed me, because I passed out about the time they got me to the nurse and I would have never made it to the house. I must have been quite a sight for the nurse. From the school to the hospital and I had to have stitches to rejoin my bottom lip. I started out first grade with a puffy bottom lip.

I didn't learn my lesson because I slipped again in first grade and this time it was my top lip. I still have got a cyst in my upper lip from having it re-attached. Bionic belly button, bionic lips, oh well. In first grade, I knew about the nurse so I didn't need to be carried this time. Maybe it was top lip in kindergarten and bottom lip in first grade but anyway, my first grade picture was a sight to behold.

In first grade I was in a class that decided to use a phonetic form of writing. Bike was spelled bĭk and the like. Each letter had a distinct sound. It was in first grade where you learn to read and I was the quiet kid in class while still being the "Hi, I'm Bubby, wanna fight?" kid after school.

The teacher kept asking me to stop using my finger to follow while reading, and when I did, I was not able to read. The letters would jump around and by using my finger I could have a focus point so that b did not look like p or d. I could read above a fifth grade level using my finger, but not read at all without using my finger. I was dyslexic. The teacher decided to let me keep using my finger to read with.

Another oddity, while writing, I was ambidextrous as well and I would switch the pencil seamlessly between my hands while writing.

And of course honesty is the best policy, which leads to another story. I always did my homework at this time and carried my books to and from school without a book bag, carrying case, or such. One day, however, I did not have my homework and the teacher asked, "Where's your homework?" I had only one answer, "My dog ate it". We had a beagle named Lady that loved to eat paper and lick butter straight from the dish. The

entire class busted out laughing after I said what had happened. The teacher did not believe that a dog could have eaten a whole piece of paper, so I received a zero for homework.

About a week later... Lady struck again but this time I was able to pull it out of her mouth before she could gobble it up again. So the next day I turned in some pretty slobbered up, half-eaten homework. Quite a sight to behold to say the least. But yes, honesty is the best policy and can be good for a laugh as well. Who would have thought that a homework eating dog ever existed, but I had proof.

At home, I was in charge of cleaning up the dog poop left in the yard. I never did find my homework that was eaten, but if I had, I sure was not going to carry it to school to hand in. Legends are not made or born, they just happen. But why did a homework eating dog happen to me? Who cares if it makes a good story I guess.

At the end of first grade, the area had a huge flood that closed school three weeks early. At first the family stayed with my uncle Butch, but myself and my eldest cousin, Rebecca (Becky), were not getting along well. So after the water subsided, we moved to my step grandfather's and grandmother's home for a while until the area was cleaned up.

During the flood, an engineer had a brilliant idea. Put a train on a bridge to help steady the bridge and keep the bridge from washing away. Was cool to see the bridge and train get washed into the river like a mini train set.

We lost everything in the flood, but the house was still standing and we had the clothes on our back and a place to stay. I also had lots of time to see my younger uncles "walk the plank" and such.

I had a difficult time with subtraction in school until I figured out an odd system that worked. This was fairly odd but it worked for me. Take 16 minus 7 for example. 7 minus 6 equals 1 and 10 minus 1 equals 9, so the answer is 9. And now, 13 minus 7 or 7 minus 3 equals 4 and 10 minus 4 equals 6, so 13 minus 7 equals 6. It works but at that time don't ask me how I figured it out. I just did. No one showed me and I never showed anyone else.

Subchapter V—Second Grade—“Me, Myself and I”

School was on a hill, and after the flood waters subsided, the school was changed from “disaster relief” back to a school again. If I remember right, we were playing basketball with the partitions up in the gym so that the beds people were sleeping on could be left set up. But second grade started and it was definitely a trying time for me.

Or better yet, me, myself, and I. Not because of the flood and all that, but because I had a teacher that was bound and determined that another Napoleon or Hitler existed in the world and Napoleon and Hitler both used both hands to write with. Only spawns of Satan write with both hands and she was also bound and determined that I was going to write with only my right hand.

The war was on and daily the teacher would slap her pointing stick or ruler on my desk if I was caught switching hands while writing. Very annoying for everyone. She always snuck up behind me to slap the desk but it didn’t startle me, just annoyed everyone else in the class who got startled. This continued for most of the school year.

About the middle of the school year, my mind awakened. I realized that at the top of the paper it just read, “Name _____” and I happened to think, “Isn’t my name, Me?” So I put “Me” in the name blank on the paper. The teacher, a woman, was not amused and proceeded, amongst a huge laugh from the class, to lecture me that I was not me. Oh yeah. She said, “You’re name is not me, change it.” To which I replied, “If I’m not me, who am I then?” Huge laugh from the class. And the discussion ensued for at least five minutes before the teacher asked me to grab the dictionary and start copying. I learned a lot of new words in second grade besides learning that Hitler and Napoleon were both-handed like me.

So the next day, Name Myself, because “I wasn’t feeling myself today.” And of course, the day after that, Name I, so I learned even more new words and truthfully I is not me, but I have a hard time understanding how I am not I. You figure it out.

The teacher thought she had it figured out so the next time the paper had “Your Name _____”. The teacher had it figured out all right. So of course, “Your Name _____ You _____”. Then I said to the teacher, “I know; I know. You’re not you either” and then I continued, “I’ll grab the dictionary.” And so I grabbed the dictionary and off I went. It was definitely worth it just to aggravate her back and thus was the life of “Me, Myself, and I” in the second grade.

I also learned that I was antidisestablishmentarianistically motivated since I was more “work with what you got and build from there” type of an attitude. Let’s leave antidisfranchise-mentarianism, which is just another big word meaning all-inclusive, out of this discussion shall we?

I was also attending Sunday School at the local Episcopal church and it was around this time that I asked the Sunday School teacher a couple of questions that amounted to “don’t ever bring that heathen son of yours back here or he will be excommunicated from the church!”

This was fine with me because I had just asked, “In the Bible, it says Noah led the animals two by two but in another part says that there were seven of the good animals for a sacrifice unto the Lord.” “Do you know which it is?” She was upset but my answer was “Any way to ask Noah?” To which the teacher replied something like, “I’m not that old.” And after that came some jokes about the teacher being as old as Moses or Methuselah. But this was Church and if part of Heaven or wherever, why couldn’t they talk to those in Heaven or wherever? Darned if I knew.

But in my next breath was the question, “We know Jesus was born on December 25th but do you know what year it was? Surely if you know the month and the day, someone must know the year, right?” To which the teacher replied, “The year zero.” To which another in the class replied, “There is no year zero in the Julian calendar.” Later, information came out about the Mithrites and dancing around pine trees and such. By that time, I was banished from Sunday School.

I also did not like the way some people behaved in this church especially towards the nicest person I knew at the

church, the janitor. It was sneakily said that dark skinned people, like myself, who is part native american, would not be able to get into Heaven. I felt brainwashed and rightfully said so. That was that and I got banished. I would rather go to Hell with the nice janitor than live in Heaven with a bunch of snobs anyway.

Later, after reading through the Bible more, I realized that he (Jesus / Jeshua) was apparently born on the morning of the first day of planting season in either the year 4, 5, or 6 B.C. (BCE). A tidbit to think about, do you know where it said Jeshua ascended into Heaven wearing just a loin cloth? Me neither, but who knows? Back in the day, the crucified were stripped down to a loin cloth then nailed to a cross. After death they were taken down and dumped somewhere. Maybe someone ripped Jeshua's "death shroud" off him before he ascended. Stranger things have happened I guess, but it seems like someone would have mentioned something like that if it had happened. The same as it seems someone would have mentioned if Jeshua had ascended into Heaven wearing just a loin cloth. Something to think about.

And another tidbit, during the times before and of Noah, they used a lunar calendar. After Noah, a solar calendar, thus explaining why the ages differed before and after. A solar calendar is based on the Earth revolving around the Sun, whereas a lunar calendar is based on the Moon revolving around the Earth. Roughly thirteen lunar years for every solar year. Do the math. Methuselah wasn't THAT old. So yeah, King David really made out when he had Adam's 70 lunar years converted to 70 solar years but stuff happens.

And now I got to sleep in on Sunday mornings. Cool. Plus no more of that tree-hugging, love-thy-neighbor, hippy type mumbo jumbo that I did not listen to anyway. I was a fighter, not a pacifier, and besides that, pacifiers are for babies anyway.

But wait, let's backtrack a little here to regular school again. Wasn't it written that the teacher only slapped the desk for most of the year, but not all of it? Yes, true. Towards the end of the year, the desk beatings stopped. I lost my virginity after kindergarten and in second grade a girl was doing the "gotta pee dance" while sitting a couple chairs to the left and wearing a

skirt. My imagination let loose and of course the teacher asked me to stand before the class and answer a question. So I stood up with a huge, long lump straining to get passed the top of my pants belt. The teacher went out of the class door screaming, “Ahh, I didn’t do it...” The next door teacher looked inside our classroom after seeing and hearing all the commotion and just shook his head. The second grade teacher avoided me for the rest of the year and didn’t mention Hitler or Napoleon again in class. However, Brian, a kid next to me on the right side in class, went from talking about Hitler and Napoleon to comparing me with the Marquis de Sade.

My sister started kindergarten this same year with the same teacher that I had had for kindergarten. After one year, my sister was tired of the kindergarten teacher saying, “You’re nothing like your brother.” But my sister had to study hard and was a “chatterbox”. I breezed through things easily and was quiet.

To each their own and really for the better as well. One of me, myself, and I is bad enough to deal with. I wouldn’t want a clone. Would you?

Subchapter VI—Third Grade—“A New Beginning”

Third grade is the time of my life. My kindergarten teacher is my third grade teacher as well. I was starting to write with my right hand most of the time. I had jammed my left middle finger with a basketball and gave my left hand a rest from writing.

Third grade ended up being a year of change for me. I started out as Bubby but ended up as Ace. This is the year that I met Julie and the way I thought about things changed. But it was the beginning of the year when I met Julie, and the end of the year when my name changed.

I was walking home from school one day and I saw two younger boys that I recognized, walking together, going home, after school. I spoke out and said, “If you two are gonna hold hands, you’re gonna need to learn to fight, wanna learn?” And the two boys stopped and at first it was one on one, but even two on one I was easily tossing them around. Next thing that hap-

pened was a girl's voice calling out, "You two leave him alone." And I said back, "I started it." Then Julie said, "I know those two and they better leave you alone." The two kids were stunned and I let go and they took off running after about a minute when they realized I wasn't going to fight anymore with them.

Julie and I then started talking and the first words out of my mouth were something like, "Seriously, I started it." And Julie said, "Doesn't matter. I know you're a nice boy." Next I said, "Want me to carry your books for you?" And she said, "Yes." So off we went towards home. Next I said, "Does your dad ever hit you with his belt?" And she shook her head yes. Next, "Hair brush?" And she nodded yes again. Then I said, "My parents tried using the bristle end once but it bounced too much so they turned it back around." And Julie said, "Mine haven't done that yet." Next question from me, "Switch?" And Julie asked, "What's a switch?" I said, "It's when you take a branch off a tree. I try to get a big branch because it is hard for them to lift unlike the smaller ones." And Julie said, "Nope, they've never done that."

We talked an awful lot for two blocks and both our parents smoked and we didn't like that. And both our parents fought and argued which we didn't like either. Julie's favorite color was red and she loved monarch butterflies. My favorite color was silver and black and then came the end of the walkway and time to cross the street. So I said, "Which way?" And she said, "I gotta go this way." And I was like, "I gotta go the other way." I then said something like, "Nice talkin' to ya but I gotta go before I get in trouble for bein' late." She said, "Me too." I then said something like, "Oops, you'll need your books." I had never done anything awkward that I could remember. But yes, I dropped the books, hers and mine. I said, "Sorry, I'm such a klutz." And she said, "That's OK. I'll see you again sometime." We then picked up our books and went our separate ways.

The next day I showed up for class and the teacher noticed that I was not wearing my belt around my pants. The teacher asked, "Why aren't you wearing your belt?" And I responded, "My dad hits me with his belt and I don't want to do that to my kids, so I'm never gonna wear a belt again." The next day nearly

all the boys in the class were not wearing belts. The night before I just couldn't understand why Julie's dad would ever want to hurt her with a belt. Julie was a nice, quiet girl in school, and for the first time in my life I had met someone that I just could not think about hurting. I was a fighter and not a hippy, tree-hugging pacifist and such.

The next day Julie was also telling people how she met a nice boy named Bubba and more than one kid asked if Julie was stoned or high on something. Julie only knew about the quiet kid, Bubby, in school, not the "Hi, I'm Bubby, wanna fight?" kid that most others knew. Also, things got twisted around at school the next day as well. Julie was known now as the girl that had beat up two boys at the same time!

Oh well, Julie had met a nice boy that was what mattered and if Bubby was a "nice boy" then no one wanted to argue about it with a girl that had just beat up two boys at the same time! Plus, Bubby was always looking for a fight anyway. Julie went from the "nice and quiet" girl to being known as a fighter and I went from being the fighter to being "a nice guy".

A few people came up to me and asked me, "Are you really a nice guy now?" And I said, "If Julie says I am then I must be. Do you wanna fight about it?" Then they would say, "No, no, just askin'." Then came "Bubby and Julie sittin' in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G, first comes love, second comes marriage, then comes Bubby in a baby carriage. Suckin' his thumb, wettin' his pants. Doin' the hula hula dance. Bubby's in love. Bubby's in love." And I would say, "Yeah, wanna make somethin' of it?" And then they would back away. I was still Bubby after all.

Julie and I walked together a few more times but it started getting close to the end of the school year and I wouldn't see Julie again until next school year. So near the end of the year I asked Julie, "Julie, you know my real name, Adrian, Andrew, and Bubby, Bubba, but I could use a better name. Can you help me?" And Julie said, "If you wanna go out with a girl, what's the first thing you look at?" And I answered, "Face." And Julie said, "How about Ace?" And I said, "Cool!" Then I said, "I'm gonna tell everyone my name's Ace from now on."

So the next day at school I said, “Hi, my name’s not Bubby anymore. It’s Ace now and I’m a nice guy. If you call me Bubby again I’ll kick yer ass.” What a nice guy, right?

But after Julie came up with the nickname Ace for me, I said to Julie, “How does Jules sound?” Then I explained, “Not like the Crowned Jewels that just sit on a shelf and collect dust, but the Family Jewels that someone would want to start a family with?” Julie said, “OK” and we finished our walk only I had forgotten in all the excitement and actually walked all the way to Julie’s house this time. Oops.

Anyway, on the way, we did the dandelion test where you put a dandelion under your chin and if your chin turns yellow... which of course it did. Was a big time of change for me throughout third grade. The biggest change was that I did not feel like fighting anymore. As well, Julie’s next door neighbor, Brian, who started the Marquis de Sade jokes last year, was doing Family Jewels jokes at the end of this year.

Another oddity. At this time in the history of the USA, there were a bunch of brats that were trying to get away with stuff by holding their breath. A “childish” form of suicide so to speak. Adults’ response at the time was “Oh whatever shall I do, my baby”. My response was, “Let the spoiled brat ‘do themselves in’ then realize that all the brat is going to do is turn red or blue in the face then pass out then start breathing again. Spoiled brat, don’t give into this and definitely don’t give them what they want. The ones holding their breath are just trying to get away with something bad. Don’t let them get away with it no matter what!”

Adults listening to a nine year old? It happened. After getting a headache then NOT getting what they wanted the “I’m gonna hold my breath and you won’t have me around anymore” hoax stopped. Dumb nine year old. Adults should never listen to kids. But then again why not? It worked didn’t it?

Subchapter VII—Fourth Grade—“Who Is This Ace Guy Anyway?”

Fourth grade was a year of transition for me in many ways. The nickname change was only part of this change. Previously,

if someone got 11 points on a 10 point quiz, then they bubbled the test because it was Bubby that was usually the only one that got that extra point that even I, Bubby, did not know existed. I was usually the first one done on tests and quizzes with also the highest grade on tests and quizzes. Well, actually, the tougher the test or quiz, the higher the grade I got. I always messed up the “easy” stuff. But I was Ace now so it went from bubbling a test to aceing the test. Same thing just different name is all.

But also, Julie wanted a nice boy so I was trying my best to be a nice boy whatever that was. But a nice guy apparently does not go around looking for fights and such. So a definite change inside myself. When looking for a fight, I could not find one. Now that it was going around that I was a nice guy, it seemed like others that would not fight before wanted to fight now. I had never been hurt in a fight, but I realized that others got hurt in fights. After meeting and talking with Julie, I just did not feel like hurting anyone anymore. Before Julie, I really did not care about anyone or anything, I just liked to rough-house a lot because I was hyperactive dealing with all the yelling and screaming and such going on inside the house.

Most of my time growing up was either spent outside or just sitting alone in my room. At school, I would talk to anyone but it was usually just short jokes or comments like, “How’s it goin’?” and such. I didn’t really talk much, just idle chit chat.

My new teacher was a guy this year and a very nice guy that did not get upset easily. I was just learning to be a nice guy, my fourth grade teacher was the real thing. Because of Julie, I was becoming more honest and open about things. With my new teacher, I was talking a little more but still keeping to myself most of the time.

I started becoming more of a smart ass however. Anything I could verbally bash or cut down to size, I would. I became totally against stereotyping anyone or anything. Stuff like, “Of course he’s a dork, he doesn’t know any better.” And “Nice guys finish last, but would you please stop touching my bottom.” And the like. Of course I was very punny and using double, triple, or quadruple meanings to an extreme. “Life is like a bowl of cher-

ries, so why not pick your nose like you pick your friends.” I was still rowdy, just not so rough.

At the time I also started making up words like Texbutt and Arkansbutt and Nerbuttska and such because after all kids shouldn't be saying ass all the time (especially not us nice guys). Plus “sound it like it spells” with pronunciations (pronunciations) like skizzers (scissors) and bologna (not boloney) and such.

There was a kid in my class named Cort that was a straight A type student. Once Cort learned something, he remembered what he learned. Once I learned something, I would try to prove how messed up it was. In other words, Cort was a genius; I was a gifted genius. Cort memorized and learned a lot of things and I figured out warped ways to apply that knowledge. Cool. Even better words, Cort was an egghead and I was a cracked egghead. Cort was very studious and I was not. I realized that Cort was a focused person and I wasn't. To each their own, not good or bad, just different. I was used to chaos and turmoil, like Julie, but Cort was not. Apples, oranges, and kumquats. Dollars make cents (sense). Three square Tic-Tac-Toe is futile but four, five, and beyond worked well. A page full of dots for games of Connect the Dots to make squares. Find a word puzzles with hidden meanings. Definitely a new direction from “wanna fight?” And a nice guy teacher too. This is not what I had expected in life.

Outside school, I was finding out that the neighborhood had gangs. First Street Gang, Second Street Gang, Third Street Gang, Park Ave Gang, and others. Julie was in Second Street and Park Ave Gang territory and I was in Third Street Gang territory. Second Street and some Park Ave Gang members were not too happy about this. Let the rumbles begin with chains, knives, spikes, and such, galore. In fifth and sixth grade I was asked if I wanted to join the Third Street Gang and I refused. I was a gang unto myself, no hard feelings, but not for me.

Also, outside school I was playing baseball as well as street football. Most people in the neighborhood worked 8 to 4 so there was not much traffic on the streets at other times. But baseball in summer and street football in the winter with 1-2-3 Bob-A-Ree

(team hide and seek) at night. Not much time for fighting anymore. Heck with homework too. If I didn't do my homework at school, I just didn't do it at all. That's how I got so fast on tests and quizzes. I would hurry through stuff in homeroom before school so I figured out how to do things quickly and efficiently.

But I was Ace now and was now well known for having the best grades on tests and quizzes, while having the poorest effort rating. Yup, A+ grade, unsatisfactory effort. A+ 4 or in grammar school (K-6), excellent for the grade, poor for the effort. I guess grades aren't that important. It's not what you know or how well you know it, but what really matters is how well you can copy stuff out of a book. Bah. I was learning about dinosaurs, sharks, and all kinds of cool stuff outside school and I did not care if an exclamation point was necessary or not. A big shark is a big shark whether it was 30 feet or 31 feet long. Sheesh! I understood, but just did not care. That's the way I have always been, I do not care, until Julie. I did and still would care about Julie.

My dad also played drums in a country music band at this time. My room was by the basement door and they would practice in the basement. I listened to pop music and was not much of a country music person. Most of the country songs sounded like a bunch of babies whining about how stupid they were and having post nasal drip to boot. Not my cup of tea. But slapping sticks on a set of drums was cool. Beat 'em up, harder, faster, eww... wipe out...

I guess my parents' ceaseless bickering wasn't so bad after all. I had drum lessons and chorus (with Julie) in school and piano lessons after school with my mom's cousin, Linda, who was dying of cancer. Did I mention I was in chorus with Julie? Yes, I joined the "damned sissy chorus". I was an ace harmonizer but never a soloist. Great voice, no direction or distinction. I had a pure voice that didn't waiver. I never took voice lessons nor guitar lessons. I started out playing guitar left-handed but I got tired of changing the strings around so that my sister could play right-handed. So I switched to learning to play guitar right-handed. Left-handed bass and drums, right-handed guitar. Piano is, of course, both hands.

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