

## What I Missed in Kindergarten

*By Dennis Knight*

*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* was published in 1988 and has been updated and released this year as the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. It's a compilation of essays by Robert Fulghum telling us about the world in five hundred word bursts. We would welcome him into our writers group, because that's what we do, and while we might not have access to his millions of readers, he would give us hope.

Today the task is a composition on the subject of "grade school", and I have been thinking about Fulghum's book and wishing I had the inspiration first. It's based on a simple idea that we learned in kindergarten everything we need to know about how to live, what to do and how to be. Things like, share everything, play fair, don't hit people, clean up your own mess, flush, and take a nap every afternoon. A few other tenets round out his list, and then the book subsumes about seventy delightful essays on life and people who were apparently paying attention when they were five.

I could write my piece as a review of the book, and I'm tempted, but instead I'll tell you about some things I needed to know but *didn't* learn in kindergarten. For instance, where was my vaunted kindergarten education in 1978 when I changed the alternator on my Mercury Zephyr on a very cold winter morning? I tightened the last bolt, set the wrench down someplace and fired her up. As the car idled, suddenly said tool hit the fan (I paraphrase) and put a gash in the radiator. That the damage was only in the upper half encouraged me enough to teach me that jugs of stop-leak compound poured into a radiator with a hole the size and shape of a wrench won't get you very far. With extra gallons of anti-freeze, I just made it to a radiator shop, leaving a fluorescent green trail all the way.

I have reviewed Fulghum's credo and maybe I shouldn't blame the radiator fiasco on kindergarten, because we actually did learn about putting things back where you found them. In addition, the radiator man apparently remembered his own kindergarten lesson to not take things that aren't yours, because I got the wrench back.

I can't blame a teacher's lapse for my next tale of woe because dishwashers weren't part of life in 1948, and it wasn't until I got my first apartment in 1964 that I learned the hard way not to put liquid dish soap in a dishwasher. Now how illogical is that? The result was a spectacular, floating bubble bath in my kitchen. I slid around the linoleum and finally got the flow stanchied before it took the living room. I learned suds aren't Lawrence Welk bubbles; they are mostly water and they don't just pop and evaporate. I heard the voice of my kindergarten teacher scolding me, "Clean up your own mess!" I did, and then I remembered one other thing she taught us, and I took a nap.