

## The Lettered Man

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My mother thought the world centered on her two children.

At least that is what we would learn years later.

At my age of five she entered me into the First Grade at St Joseph's Catholic School in New Brighton Pennsylvania. We lived in a rental two blocks from the School and Church, which adjoined on the same block. Both had been built just before the turn of that Century.

The School building was not large, was a rectangle, with one long room occupying each side of the entrance door on the north side. The same configuration existed on the 2nd floor. Each of the four rooms had an array of desks facing south where the teacher resided, and just beyond her blackboard was a small room acting as the depository for outer clothing we might wear in any bad weather; and, any lunch we might bring.

St Joseph's boasted eight grades. This was accomplished by having two grades in every room, the same teacher. First and second, immediate right. This is where I met civilization, for until that year we had lived in another city, and as new residents, our family would know no one in the School.

I enjoyed school. Really.

I thought nothing was expected of me, but to listen.

And listen I did.

The good Sister would alternate teaching our first two grades, giving easy work assignments to the Class not being instructed. In a perfect world this made sense. In my young first grade world, the only thing that made sense was for me to listen and absorb all these wonders being revealed to my retentive mind, for both the first and second grade minds. It would be months before I could break the habit of doing no assigned exercises.

One of the first grade pass-outs to we tykes, was a box containing duplicate letters of the alphabet. Basic; learning the alphabet, then pronunciation of each letter; then their combination letters to spell any word.

I assumed others might share my confusion with some of the letters, like c and k in the spelling of cat. Those instances demanded a great deal of repetition from our forgiving nun.

Thus it was days on end. Moving from letters to words; then finally from those words to Letters to take home to Mother explaining what we had learned, and our love for her and dad. So in those small hours of the school year 1927-28, we graduated from letters to words, then back to letters, requiring that I understand any word might have multiple meanings.

And so today, to my fellow Classmates and Wordsters of Windsor Writers,  
this message,  
basically my diploma  
that I took home at the end of the First Grade.

MY CAT IS MY

FRIEND

MOM

I LOVE