

FIRST FIGHT AT SCHOOL

October 8, 2015 By Harry Zirkelbach

IN 1927 AT THE AGE OF FIVE I WAS ENTERED INTO THE FIRST GRADE AT ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL, NEW BRIGHTON, PA.

UNDERSIZED EVEN AS A FIVE YEAR OLD, I WOULD FOREVER BE THE SMALLEST BOY IN MY CLASS THROUGHOUT THE NEXT ELEVEN YEARS. IN THE SUMMER OF 1938, 11TH GRADE, I GREW ANOTHER 12 INCHES, BECAME AN AVERAGE SIZE TEENAGER.

BECAUSE OF SIZE AND DISPOSITION, THROUGHOUT ALL THOSE SCHOOL YEARS, I WAS NEVER INVOLVED IN A FIGHT.

LATER, MARRIED, ALL OUR CHILDREN SEEMED TO HAVE FIGHTS.

IN 1974 A DAUGHTER TRANSFERRED FROM ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL, DENVER, TO THE 8TH GRADE OF HILL JUNIOR HIGH.

THERE, ON THE THIRD DAY OF SCHOOL, WHILE THE CLASS WAS BEING MARCHED FROM ONE CLASSROOM TO ANOTHER, A BLACK BOY, SMALLER THAN OUR DAUGHTER, BEGAN PESTERING HER. HE PULLED HER HAIR, PULLED AT HER CLOTHES, TRIED TO TRIP HER. SHE ASKED HIM TO STOP. HE CONTINUED, BEING URGED ON BY OTHER BLACKS.

THIS DAUGHTER THEN TURNED AROUND, STRUCK THE BOY, KNOCKING HIM DOWN. A TEACHER SAW THAT COMMOTION.

BOTH WERE TAKEN TO THE PRINCIPAL, ASKED OF THE DETAILS. THE BOY REPORTED AN UNPROVOKED ATTACK. BOTH WERE EXPELLED FOR THREE DAYS.

COMING HOME EARLY THAT DAY, HER MOTHER LISTENED TO THE TALE, MADE SOME PHONE CALLS, AND ARRANGED THE ENROLLMENT OF THE DAUGHTER INTO THE 8TH GRADE CLASS OF THE INTEGRATED CATHOLIC CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

SHE WAS GRADUATED FIVE YEARS LATER WITHOUT ANOTHER FIGHT, EXCEPT AT HOME FOR GRADES IN SOME OF THOSE YEARS.