

AN UNFORESEEN INCIDENT

The Continuing Saga of Roy

By MIKE HARRIS

When Roy heard of the program "No Child Left Behind" he was already retired. He got excited and did something uncharacteristic. He sent a check and a note offering to help in administering the program as a volunteer in his home town. They took his check and hired him as a volunteer clerk to help administer the program in the local high school. In three weeks he was politely fired. He just did not fit in the workings of the bureaucracy.

He then decided, perhaps he could get a small job, make some extra money and reduce the boredom at the same time. He answered an ad in the local paper for "SCHOOL BUS DRIVER" – two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. He got the job because he had a clean driver's license and the unusual hours did not encourage many applicants.

He was given a route to collect elementary students, grades one through six. The training consisted of several trial runs to familiarize him with the route. His habit for promptness, on a given Monday had him at his first stop early enough to start right on time. That was the first thing the parents noticed, his smile of welcome to the children ~~was also~~ it seemed unusual. Everything was working – parents, children, and Roy were all on the same page.

Roy made a special effort to learn each child's first name and greeted each child as they got on the bus. In the process he met one fourth grader who made an impression on him. Upon introducing himself in the morning it went like this: "Good morning! My name is Roy. What is yours?" The prompt answer was, "Karl with a K and I am in fourth grade." "Welcome on board Karl with a K."

In time he found out that the former driver was apparently not a morning person, he always started late and was grumpy on the morning run. By the end of the first week the bus was a much happier experience. Roy was always on time and cheerful to boot.

The second anomaly was that when he came early he brought a newspaper while he waited to start. The natural curiosity of the children asserted itself and Karl with a K volunteered that he could read the paper, except some of the big words. Roy got an idea. The next day before he opened the door to let them disembark he made an announcement. "I picked out a word from the newspaper and whoever gets the word from the dictionary, copies it down, and uses it correctly in a sentence will get a nickel. The word today is 'discern'. The word is written on a piece of paper. You can pick it up on your way out."

Not all took a piece of paper with the word, but Karl took the piece of paper and asked, "Are you really going to give a nickel?" Roy said, "Yes, give me that piece of paper." On picking up in the afternoon, Karl handed Roy a piece of paper with a copy from a dictionary and the word in a sentence and took his seat. Four or five others gave him pieces of paper with their names but

none followed the instructions except Karl. When all were aboard he read the pieces of paper out loud and made a show of explaining that only Karl had done it correctly and gave Karl a nickel. From that day forward, when the bus stopped the children from third to sixth lined up for their piece of paper and made a beeline for the school library. By the end of the second week some teachers came looking for Roy. They found him and wanted to know if he was the one who was giving out nickels and why? He said it was his way of implementing "No Child Left Behind."

The next thing he knew he was called in to see the principal. During a short conversation the principal asked, "Why?" Roy answered, "Capitalism really works, it worked in the army and it works even with kids on a school bus."

(To be continued ...)