

## Escape from Kindergarten

*by Nancy Martz*

The youngest of three daughters, I toddled after my sisters, romping daily with them on rope and tire swings Dad hung from the black walnut trees. We lugged tea sets and dolls up to the grove to play make believe on the rock pile, rode in a cart with our older cousin behind our black pony Rosy, and played hide and seek among the dense evergreens in the yard. My sisters were a fixture and I at a loss when one morning they ran out to catch a yellow bus. For two years, I watched them come and go on the yellow bus. Once home, they tweaked my imagination with glorious images of slides and merry-go-rounds; graham crackers and milk; coloring and finger painting; games, skits and singing; somersaults and dancing; and listening to great stories.

Finally, the day came when I climbed into the yellow bus with them. It didn't take me long, however, to realize what a bait and switch operation school was. Buzzed with excitement, I interacted happily with all the other children who would be my friends. But then I found out why each of us had to bring a rug to school. In the midst of all the stimuli the teacher suddenly told us to lie still on our rugs. Wide awake and thrilled that twenty six playmates surrounded me, I found napping out of the question. After lying there for several minutes, I raised my head and saw Susan Zender fidgeting near me. I grabbed her stockinged foot and we both giggled happily.

That's when Mrs. Orsland intervened. She stood down from her tall stool, picked her way through the rugs, snatched me up and reiterated the rug rules while all the other children raised their heads to watch. I was mortified and shamed. When Mrs. Orsland turned her back, I slipped out of the classroom and raced down a long hallway with an opening in the distance. Reaching it, I took the stairs to my left and climbed all the way down to the enormous front doors which I couldn't budge. Just then, my sister Sandy dashed by at recess with her friends from second grade. I was filled with elation and banged on the window yelling her name.

Crushed when she was gone in seconds, I pushed, sobbing, at the door. Then I felt a tingling on the back of my neck and glanced back to see Mrs. Orsland coming. My heart fell into my stomach. She took my hand and walked me back to the classroom, telling me that she, Susan and all my classmates missed me and that school would be a wonderful adventure that would last all my life.

Finally home, I told my mother the rug tale and that school was not something in which I cared to engage, even though I had wept and whined for two years to start. I wept that night, but I got on the yellow bus in the morning determined to get through it somehow. I didn't know then that I had 54 straight years to go before walking out the heavy doors for good.