

Buster B

By Marilynn Reeves

Rummaging through a box filled with old memorabilia, I found an ancient diary dating back to September, 1954. Intrigued, I sat down and started to read:

Dear Diary – School starts tomorrow and I’m scared to death! I’ve got this horrible pimple on my chin that everybody’s going to notice and there’s no way to cover it up! Mom says it’s just hormones, but Daddy says I’ve been eating too much fat. He says if I keep eating so much gravy on my mashed potatoes I’ll end up looking like H.C. (I have made-up names for everybody, just in case anybody ever reads this!) Oh God, I don’t want to end up looking like her – she’s fat as a pig! Well, I’m not fat ... at least I HOPE I’m not! I was always a skinny kid, but this summer I did start putting on a few extra pounds. And I’m getting a couple of ‘bumps’ on my chest too! I’m only 12-1/2 and all the kids are going to make fun of me – especially ‘Buster B’ (I named him after my shoes because that’s the lowest thing I can think of to call him!).

Jan told me I should ask Mom to buy me a bra. But when I asked her, she said no, I was too young. So Janet let me have one of her old ones. It’s kind of gross – held together with safety pins, but it will have to do till I can convince Mom to get me one of my own.

So anyway, tomorrow I’ve got to walk up to the Junior High and start 7th grade. The building is right next to the Salida High School, and all those kids are so big! Most of the girls wear lipstick and some of the boys look like grown men! And instead of having just one classroom and one teacher, we’re going to have a bunch of different teachers and have to change classrooms every time the bell rings. And I’ve got to keep all my stuff in a locker. Daddy gave me this combination lock, and I wrote the numbers down in my notebook. And this year the 7th grade kids will be coming from all three grade schools – not just McCray, but Longfellow and even St. Josephs’ – so I’m going to have to learn to get along with them too, even though I don’t know them very well. I just hope they like me!

I set down my diary and remembered how some of those Catholic kids eventually counted among my very best friends. And the last time I saw ‘Buster B’ was at our 25th reunion in 1985. I was surprised when he asked me to dance. ‘Buster Brown’ (a.k.a. Mike) had become quite a nice gentleman, with a wife and at least a couple of kids. I reminded him of the days in grade school when he used to tease me, pulling my pigtails and stuffing snowballs down my back. (I didn’t mention how he used to pop my bra strap, when we were in junior high, however.)

He laughed and said, “Well, I always liked you, Marilynn, but I didn’t know how to tell you that back then. So I guess I resorted to a bunch of silly kid stuff, just to get your attention.”

I laughed, too, and for the first time, I decided I kind of liked my old nemesis, ‘Buster B’ after all.