

Missed Opportunities

To quote from an old movie, "The Thrill of Romance", one of the characters reflects, "I'm sorry for things I did, but **very** sorry for the things I did not."

I have always been intrigued with the performing arts. When two of my kindergarten classmates were picked to be angels in the school production of "Hansel and Gretel", I was heartbroken not to be among the chosen. The next year, my sister, Nancy, played Becky Thatcher in the Junior High production of "Tom Sawyer". I helped Daddy make the hoops for her costume and was mesmerized listening to her recite her lines. Sometime in grade school our Brownie Troop went to City High's auditorium for a performance of "Snow White". It was magical and the dye was cast.

My first movie was "Pride of the Yankees". Mother and I rode the bus downtown for a matinee at the Englert Theater. In grade school, Sandra Fisher, invited a few of us home to see her new television. We watched Howdy Dowdy and Clara Belle on a very snowy five-inch screen. Aunt Ruth bought tickets from the Boy Scouts for the Ice 'Capades. They were held at the Field House on the flooded basketball court. In 1952, Dr. Eicher was instrumental in getting tickets for Gloria and I to "Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus". It was under the Big Top at the Lucas Street Fairgrounds off Kirkwood Avenue by the railroad tracks. "You Can't Take It With You" was my first play. I accompanied Aunt Ruth to the University Theater for the performance.

My fondest memories of Horace Mann School were the annual Christmas and Spring concerts performed by each of the classes and held in the gym with a stage at one end. They also held a Talent Show once a year and it was then that I had my first solo performance, when I was in sixth grade. Costumed as a boy, with a newsboy hat covering my hair, I recited Eugene Field's "Seein' Things".

From 4th through 8th grades on Saturday mornings, I would religiously ride my bike to church for choir practice. For our Sunday performances, we wore peacock blue robes with white collars that had to be washed, starched and ironed.

At Central Junior High, which is now the parking garage for Mercy Hospital, all performances were held in the study hall which was filled with desks and had a stage along one wall. It was there that four of us girlfriends displayed our talents in a short skit. The name slips my mind, but it was about old ladies sharing a cabin and not being able to sleep because of snoring. We thought it was hysterical at the time, but not so funny now as we realize "life is stranger than fiction". That year I was also on stage as Second Girl and understudy for Jo Marsh in the eighth grade production of "Little Women". This "star" was never born as I only played "Jo" in rehearsals. I returned to the stage in eighth grade when our section presented a musical skit, "Memories". The theme was Silas and Miranda on their 50th wedding anniversary remembering days gone by through song. I was Miranda. That was my final performance until September of 1963 when I started teaching. Of course, then I had a captive audience. Opportunities in the performing arts were abundant at City High. Paint and Patches

offered a variety of programs throughout the year as well as class plays and a talent show. The chorus performed multiple concerts and assemblies and there was always a production number either from Gilbert and Sullivan or a Broadway show. Although these opportunities were offered each of my four years of high school, I always had some excuse; rehearsals were usually at night, we lived on the north side of town with no family car, I would have to depend on public transportation or friends who would have to go out of their way to give me a ride. The truth was I was reluctant to put myself on the line and possibly embarrass myself. What if I wasn't good enough? As each year passed it became easier to take my seat in the audience. By not taking the risk, I denied myself small successes that would give me courage and confidence and could have eventually lead to triumphs! I defeated myself.

My sister, Nancy, had the right attitude. When we were growing up, she always said, "I can do that!" Whatever the circumstances; circus acts, daredevil antics, or magical disappearances, she was confident that given the opportunity, she could do it. Lacking the bravado of Nancy, I was content in those intervening years to be the observer or only perform for my captive audience. My enthusiasm and admiration for all performers in the entertainment field continued to flourish from my seat in the audience. I have experienced a wide variety of performances from sports, such as indoor polo, to opera in a Roman coliseum. No matter where we were living or traveling we always got involved in the cultural activities of that city or country. When money was at a premium, we packed a picnic lunch for free outdoor concerts or performances such as Shakespeare in the Park. Those experiences kept this unborn star's dreams alive and I began thinking "I can do that!"

Now that I've retired, I'm taking advantage of twenty years of confidence building in the classroom. Opportunities are no longer bypassing me. "I can do that!" is my new motto. It has been very rewarding. With each new accomplishment another opportunity appears. You can catch my performance as a late 1800's schoolteacher at the Coralville School House Museum or at the "special event" Saturdays at the Herbert Hoover site in West Branch.

The writing of this Legacy Letter represents an opportunity for me to hone my writing skills for my Write Your Life Story project which I have undertaken with the support and encouragement of the group by the same name.

What I've learned can be summed up by a quote from Eric Butterworth, which I found on my plumber's calendar, "Don't go through life: Grow through life."

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