

He Could Write a Book

By Judy Fritschen

Bill Fritschen applied for a 60-hour teaching certificate in 1957. This was the last year Kansas granted them. Bill received his certificate and began his first teaching position in the fall of 1957 at the ripe old age of 20. He was principal of a small grade school in western Kansas, taught 7th and 8th grades, and coached whatever sports they had. He recalls studying the text books to stay one step ahead of the kids in the various subjects. He continued to take classes on Saturdays and in the summers as he worked on his Bachelor's Degree in music education.

Bill graduated from Fort Hays State College (now Fort Hays State University) at Hays, Kansas, in 1962. He then took a job in a somewhat larger school in Seneca, Kansas, teaching high school vocal music. He continued to further his education and eventually got a Master's Degree in school administration. He served as elementary, junior high, and high school principal in various school systems in Kansas.

Bill could write a book about these experiences. He always had a unique way of taking care of discipline issues. Let me give you an example. Bill was principal of a high school in western Kansas. One of the senior boys was having a hard time finishing out his last year. I don't recall his name but I'll refer to him as Tom. He hated school and the only reason he stayed in school was for wrestling. He had just won the heavy-weight championship and wrestling season was over. Since he was a senior, wrestling was over for him for good. He was a disciplinary handful to say the least. Tom's mother could not handle him. His father could, and he was actually afraid of his father, but his father was a truck driver and was out of town a lot of the time. One day Tom "moon"ed the pep bus loaded with Pep Club girls as they were preparing to leave for an athletic event out of town. Of course, this incident was reported to the principal, Bill. I'm sure Tom thought and hoped he would get kicked out of school. Bill knew expelling him would be a disaster. He would probably get in trouble with the law for stealing a car or something and end up in jail. Bill typed up a report describing the incident as it was reported to him. He called Tom into his office the next day. He slid the report across the table toward Tom and asked him to read it. He did. Bill asked if that was an accurate accounting, and he said yes it was. Bill asked him to sign it and he did. Bill told him if he crossed that line again he would send that report to his dad by special delivery mail.

Tom graduated from high school, joined the Navy, and actually became a pretty decent citizen. He would not have been accepted in the Navy without a high school

diploma. One day when Tom was home on leave, he rode his motorcycle by our house. He saw Bill in our front yard so he rode up our drive-way. He and Bill sat on the front steps and had a conversation. He asked Bill if he remembered when he mooned the pep bus. Bill said, "Oh yes, I remember quite well." Tom said, "You had me by the b_____!"

Let me tell you about another somewhat humorous episode. It was Bill's first year in a high school in western Kansas. As was the custom on the last day of school (unknown to Bill) when the final bell rang kids threw marbles on the floor, set off fire alarms, and lit firecrackers as they ran out of the building. The next year Bill and his staff were better prepared. On the last day of school the kids and lockers were searched for firecrackers and marbles. Teachers were instructed to step out of the classrooms just as the final bell rang and position themselves at strategic places in the halls.

Students and staff were not aware that there was a bank robbery that happened on that day in a small town about 15 miles down the highway. The robber was chased by police toward our town. They found the get-away car abandoned just outside the city limits and they were searching the whole town. Police from neighboring towns came to help. They brought guns and police dogs. The county courthouse was just across the street from the school, and it was a gathering center for the police officers.

When the final school bell rang for the school year, the students walked quietly to their lockers and down the halls to the outside door as teachers watched. When the students exited the building and saw all the police with dogs and carrying weapons one of them was heard commenting, "Boy, Mr. Fritschen is really serious about this, isn't he!"