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My earliest pre-school memories of growing up in Orinda are vague. Sporadic recollections of spreading bedsheets over the living room furniture to create cave structures to hide within and crawl through. I recall lying on my back, staring at the ceiling, wondering what it would be like if the world turned upside-down so that I could walk along the ceiling. My mother was president of the Orinda Garden Club. She would take me with her to nurseries where I would play in the dirt with my handful of toys – tiny cars and little men – and create imaginary worlds. A precursor to my current preoccupation of writing novels – creating alternative worlds.

I was a shy kid, anxious about attending kindergarten, to find myself herded into a room with strangers my own age. I can't recall if I was any good at making friends.

Before there were video games there was Kick the Can, Tether Ball, Jungle Gyms, Four Square, Hopscotch, Slingshots and Skateboards...

My second-grade teacher was Mrs. Thom who helped improve my reading skills. Was I dyslexic? Not sure. When asked to stand and read from a book, the words and letters seemed to float across the page, often refusing to make sense. She also taught me to roll my "R's to lose my "Boston" accent, which I was told I had, though I'd only lived in Orinda, California.

In third grade, I recall sitting on a tack that Kenny Thomas placed on my seat for a laugh. I didn't find it funny, but we became friends. We were both arrested later in our pre-teens for riding doodlebug mini bikes around the streets and hills of Orinda. The policemen

confiscated our motor bikes. We had to attend a court hearing. Our punishment was to write an essay on why it was wrong to ride a doodlebug underage without a license. *Blah, blah, blah.*

In fourth grade, we had a substitute teacher one day. Bill Milton was standing in front of the class sharing some story. Someone (Warren Webster?) removed a crayon from his flip-top desk and, as a joke, tossed it at Bill. This resulted in creating a impromptu crayon war, with students sliding their desks to make two sides, desk tops used as shields against the flying missiles. The substitute ran screaming from the room. This incident was an anomaly. We were generally well behaved.

Fifth grade is a blur. No memories come to mind.

I missed the first day of sixth grade, attending my father's funeral. The day was overcast. All I recall is staring at an American flag draped over his coffin. I still have the flag. For a few years, during elementary school, I had become a fat kid, resulting from nervously overeating. Subconsciously, I must have known my dad was dying (though his cancer diagnosis was kept from me and my brother) as we witnessed his decline, over years, battling this disease.

The Park Pool was like an oasis. A beautiful place. I learned to swim there. And later, coming of age, the dances at night were great!

While at Pine Grove middle school, I periodically became withdrawn and depressed. One day, I went for a walk on the street behind our house and asked my dead father for help, to tell me what I needed to do to make my life better. What came to me at that moment was this subliminal message – start playing sports and become more socially active. I signed up to play baseball at school the next day.

Our math teacher, Whitt, had a paddle, which he drilled with holes to produce greater pain and punish kids for running in the hallway. Jackson, seventh grade teacher, made learning Egyptian & Roman history fun and fascinating. Jesse, eighth grade teacher, introduced us to Shakespeare. We performed scenes in class. For Macbeth, we made a caldron for the three witches played by classmates.

At Miramonte high school, my freshman year, I signed up to play football. Hell Week (grueling workouts and scrimmages two-times a day before school started) *was* pure hell. But it got me in shape and I liked being a part of this team sport. Durant was a great coach. My sophomore year, playing Junior Varsity, our team was undefeated. I quit football Junior year after Hell Week to work at Downs Interiors, delivering furniture, so that I could save money to buy a 55 T-bird, my first car.

My time at high school was a mixture of love and hate. Many who were there I had known since kindergarten and elementary school. New friends came from other schools. I became more interested in being socially accepted by my peers than excelling academically. If I liked a teacher I would usually get an A. If the teacher was a jerk, I wouldn't apply myself and would get a B, maybe a C. Therefore, my grade point average was not stellar.

Gompf's art and crafts class was my favorite. One year I cast a silver shot glass that won some award in a state competition. Geometry was the only math class I liked. I sat next to Ray Winquist and we had fun acing the class. McCain was another inspiring teacher. He taught physiology. I once knew the name of every bone and muscle in the human body. Mike Lathan was my lab partner as we dissected a cat. We used the scalpel to shave its face to have a goatee. McCain's

wife was the typing teacher, whose class I took as a lark to meet girls. I had no idea this class would have a lasting effect, providing a skill I regularly use – knowing how to type fast on a keyboard.

Jerry Texdahl was someone I didn't know that well in elementary school. He had a reputation for being a bully. But in high school, we became fast friends, sharing a sense of humor and getting into all sorts of fun mischief. We've remained close friends and get together to reminisce and laugh about those years, lucky to have survived. Overall, I was a good kid, but did get into trouble now and then. The weekend parties were hard to resist. For example, Todd "kamikaze" Butler's social gatherings were pretty wild.

My last memory of high school was the all-night cruise on the San Francisco Bay after graduation. I recall spending time with Margo Doran, who I barely knew, but was getting to know while having fun with her that night. Early the next morning, tired and hungover, I drove up north in my 55 T-bird to Eugene to start summer school at the University of Oregon.

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