

# Graduation part 2

Well, I was up a little early to find a job for the day, and I find myself with a little time so I will try to write this before I leave. So why a part two? Simply put, I subbed for 8th grade yesterday. Actually, the teacher does both 7th and 8th, but she was part of the 8th grade graduation. Why, oh why could she not be part of the 7th grade field day instead? □ 7th grade was either doing field day or a field trip. But 8th grade had graduation practice. All day. Oh the things I get paid for- did I really need to be there, especially since another teacher seemed to be filling in anyway? Well, it's their money. □

The morning was simple. Announcements followed by the students being called to their respective places. Once in the gym, the principal announced how the day would go, then we went into the rehearsal. They started with something simple- standing on cue. "Row one stand up. Row one sit down. Row two stand up..." Then random rows called after all fifteen rows practiced. Next they added the turn to face the outside to the standing. "Stand..1..2..Turn." Again, practice for all the rows. Next up was filing in and out. Or rather, out and in since they were already in their seats. They had to master the art of the square turn. Okay, so they were *told* how to do the square turn, and practiced it leaving, but there wouldn't be enough time to actually master it. Once we were out, the need for the teachers became significantly more apparent. Ever deal with 350 restless eighth graders? Fortunately there were enough of us to handle things. Finally, once we entered again they were ready to actually line up and practice taking their diplomas. One by one, name by name just like Sunday's real performance. Only they had to stop for name corrections. At this time, they also had to practice sitting down on cue as well as listening for their cue to stand up, which was when a particular student's name

was read.

Well, I am out of time for now so I will just post this first part of the day for now. Part 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  this afternoon when I return.

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## Graduation part 1

Okay, thanks to today this will be a two-part post. See my next post for the reason. ☐ Yesterday I had the privilege of attending my nephew's high school graduation. He actually attended two of the same schools as I did growing up. One of those schools I have subbed at several times. The other one was the high school.

We arrived at my brother's house shortly before 11AM. We then waited for the other invited guests to arrive, Alex's grandparents (mother's side) and half-brother. It's a sad thing to mention that Alex's mother died when he was just six. His mother's other son was rejected by his father (not my brother) and so was raised by his grandfather instead. There were other issues at the time, but it would be inappropriate for me to mention them here as they are private family issues that have since been resolved. So, there were seven of us in total not including Alex. These days, at most graduations it is unusual to get more than four tickets. I suppose since they used an auditorium in addition to the gym there was more room for guests.

So, at about 11:20 or so we were off, with a short stop at my home to put some ribs in the oven because my brother's oven took just this time to stop working. Ours is electric and so was pretty safe to use unoccupied for a couple of hours. When we arrived the entire front parking lot was filled of course,

as by now it was 11:45, just 15 minutes until commencement began. There were people parking across the street and down one of the connecting streets. Fortunately for us not everyone knew about the lot *behind* the school, where the faculty parks (the front lot is student parking and, if they still use it, a practice "field" for the marching band in the fall). We found a few spots still open and we were set. We got out of the car and headed in. Nine minutes to go. We headed right into the gym, the three women (my mother, Alex's grandmother, and his Aunt) heading for the auditorium instead. Actually, my mother had been dropped off and headed immediately in. The other two unfortunately had to wait since the graduates were now lined up in the hall. We just made it. They were about to close the gym doors. We went in, then waited by the entrance for the procession. At noon they started coming in- some teachers in black gowns first, followed by a few students in yellow gowns I later found out were not part of the graduating class, just there to take charge of getting the rows of students standing up and lining up in turn. They were probably juniors. Behind them were the graduates in purple gowns. They headed up the aisle, passing between the teachers who had positioned themselves every few rows on either side. They took their places starting in the front and working their way back, 24 chairs at a time, 21 rows. Well over 400 students (many seats were taken by the teachers or yellow-gowns). Behind all of them were several rows of chairs for older guests. To the sides- bleachers. Once my nephew passed, we started to work our way to the bleachers, where we found some seats about 10 rows up. It was pretty tight. Unfortunately, throughout the time I kneed the one in front of me a few times...

Once the graduates were seated, the speeches started. One teacher tried to entertain us with his speech, starting with, "This entire speech is plagiarized...". The principal had a speech about how he started with the current class four years ago, and then some standard words of inspiration for the young

adults. The valedictorian's speech was a pretty normal well-prepared speech, and then another student, a cancer survivor (one of two in the graduating class □ ) performed a song he wrote on the piano/singing. He received a standing ovation. Finally, it was time for the long, drawn out process of the students coming forward to receive their diplomas. As their names were called off one by one, they showed a picture (of most) on the overhead screen. There were a couple of slipups, and I think there was a slide accidentally left in of a student who was not there for whatever reason. At first, people applauded after hearing their young one's (or sibling's) name, but that turned into just a single clap. I think the graduates got us started on that, I'm not sure. Several shouted out or whistled. One (only one thankfully) had an air horn. My nephew had his turn, as did a former neighbor I remember- I had forgotten their youngest was Alex's age. As they got to "P" I noticed there were seven Patels, a very common last name for Indian families. They were probably all unrelated too. I'm sure it means something, but I'm too lazy to look it up.

A final congratulation when they were all finished, and then we were done. We were supposed to wait until all the now-former students recessed before getting up, but that didn't quite work out. Once half had left, the bleachers started emptying. We met up with Alex and the three women outside, a few (more) pictures were taken, and then we left. Alex's brother hopped into the car with him, and the rest of us got in our vehicles in back. When we got to the front of the building, we were just in time to see Alex peeling out in front of the school by a police officer. Nice. The car had no plates either... Should have meant problems for him, but the police were too busy with the traffic. Lucky him.

Well, we finally got back, my brother fed us ribs (which we had picked up, now done cooking), pheasant, venison, corn, and some sides. We talked a little, the relatives left, then I

left. Day over. I should have gotten to this blog yesterday but somehow never got around to it. Now, you will have to wait until tomorrow for part two which should have come today..

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## What? Again?

If one awards ceremony wasn't enough, the school I was at today had its own awards show. Knowing that elementary students are far more impatient than older ones, this ceremony was much shorter fortunately. **And** I got to sit down... Actually, the entire thing was one hour, but the presentations were only about 20 minutes. The rest of the time was raffling off various prizes. The entire event was based on reading. The class I subbed for, a fifth grade class, actually came out on top with more than 1600 books read. At least I *think* it was the number of books. But they also mentioned last month, and that is a huge number for just one month, even among 25 students. If it was for the entire year, then yes, 1600+ books. Anyway, the kids also received raffle tickets based on the number of "miles" they went. Come to think of it, it would have to be books, and therefore over the entire year. Or, if in a month, then I would guess a book carries a certain number of points like in the accelerated reader program found at many schools. Yes, that could be it. Anyway, each student in my class had anywhere from 50 to over a hundred of these miles, earning them two to four tickets. There were a lot of prizes, so that means a lot of chances to win. Some kids won more than once. I was holding a ticket for an absent student. Unfortunately, she didn't win at all.

After the assembly, the weather which had been rainy with a tornado watch all day had cleared up and the sun came out and

dried the blacktop, so there was a 5th grade versus teachers kickball game. Yes, I got to play... ☐ After missing an easy catch, I did manage to score a few runs on our turns up to bat. So, it was a fun end of the day.

What? You want to know about the rest of the day, before the awards? Well, it was supposed to be a field day, meaning play time outside with special events. Remember the weather I mentioned above? Yeah, no field day. ☐ So, they did PE and music at the start of the day (yes! breaktime...) followed by some writing, and finally math games in the computer lab. I got a chance to try a game they loved called Lemonade Stand. I used to play a game by this name back when I was in school, only that game was for the Apple ][ instead of Java in the web browser. Oops, did I just date myself? ☐ So, after that came lunch and free pizza. Not the best, but I doubt the kids cared. ☐ Yes, I had some too. This was supposed to be a part of the field day, but unlike field day they couldn't postpone the pizzas, so when they have their field day next Monday they will have to do their lunches the ordinary way.

Crazy days at the end of the year, I'll tell ya. If I manage to find work next week I'm sure I'll have some more interesting tales.

EDIT: Why don't all the smileys/emoticons render? Oh, well. Editing once got **one** of the four to work in any event.

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## Moving day

Hey, watch out- will ya? Get that house outa' the middle of the road! Er- house? In the road? It must be Mount Prospect's Central School. Today was the day they moved the 1896

schoolhouse to its new location by the Mount Prospect Historical Society. This building was saved recently when funds were raised to move it from its old location, where it would have been torn down to make way for progress. Unfortunately, the schoolhouse still has to wait for the new foundation to set. Once it does, they will have to lift it again off it's temporary spot and plop it down where it will hopefully stay for awhile. Next, they will need to raise some money to renovate it and finally will hopefully open it for tours (just a guess), at a reasonable cost of course. You can find the story by clicking the picture below. Oh, I hope the driver didn't speed with his 105,000 pound load...



Another story link is: [Mount Prospect Historical Society moves Central School](#)

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## Assembly may be required

What a snooze... No, not me last night which was anything but- I think I may have gotten about five hours of sleep if I'm lucky. I'm referring of course to the assemblies that happen sometimes at schools. Especially those that totally mess up the schedule. For me, it was pretty much irrelevant too. Not to the kids or staff, just to me and any other sub that might have been there. You see, it was an awards ceremony. For the entire school. All, or at least many, sports and academic clubs. As a sub I knew pretty much zero of the names, hence why it was kind of a snooze to me. It was a snooze to probably nearly all the students as well because it lasted for more. Than. Two. Hours... For nearly all of the awards, they handed out certificates to every student involved, name by

name, and then gave awards to high achievers. I would guess well over 300 names were read over those 2 hours 20 minutes. There was one sport I couldn't believe they had, let alone the number of students involved. Bocce-Ball. I kid you not. Nearly a hundred kids involved too by my estimate. Wow. Only track compared to that with four teams, 7th and 8th grades, boys and girls. There were probably 60-80 students involved there. The only other sport I remember was girls volleyball- I'm guessing there was no boys volleyball team because one of the students was a boy. The teacher was careful to not refer to that particular team (7th or 8th, I don't remember) as "the girls."

The academic teams and clubs consisted of a math team, geography team, and science olympiad. Probably more- I don't remember. Interesting to note the math team was entirely Indian (or similar) or East Asian. Hmm. Perhaps our schools really are failing the children in the math field. Band, orchestra, and drama were part of the other extracurricular activities. And finally, there were also service clubs. One club helped the mentally-challenged kids, and another- well club doesn't really apply here (you'll see why in a sec)- recognized students who did some sort of community work. Thankfully they did not recognize these students individually as a good 90% of the students raised their hands when the principal asked who has done some community work or project! Was this part of a class assignment or were they really this outward-thinking?

Well, after some 25 teams, clubs, and organizations they wrapped up, had a drawing for some Pepsi T-shirts, and then were dismissed. The scheduled ending time was 9:45. The actual ending time was 10:35. Oops. Reminds me of television networks and sports for some reason...

So, we skipped two of the periods and I went on break. Finally I could get off my feet. Oh, did I mention that I had to stand for the entire assembly because there were no chairs



provided for the teachers? Some plopped down with the students, other stood right along beside me. Now, I have an injured foot so I did a lot of leaning, walking, and a little bit of sitting on the floor in addition to the standing. So, all good and well now. Unfortunately I had about twenty minutes and I had to start eating my lunch as the teacher I was in for had no scheduled lunch. Instead, she had a study hall period. So, I had a panini during 4th period, an orange and a Mountain Dew 6th during study hall, and the rest of my lunch last period. Well, an interesting day for sure.

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## **Tomorrow, tomorrow, I love you, tomorrow...**

No, I am not posting about [Annie](#), but rather when FedEx gets over here tomorrow with my new computer. My old one died last year, hard drive failed again making think there is something wrong with the controller as it ended its life in the same way as the one it replaced. Second hard drive worked all the way through. Fortunately I was able to get a final backup of critical data before it stopped working altogether. I have been using someone else's computer ever since, but it will be good to have my own again. Which reminds me, I will need a wireless router now so I can use the computer anywhere, after all what good is a laptop if I can't surf the net from the bathroom? ☐ Time to join the new millennium, eh? I'll probably pick one up on ebay.

Well, second day of second grade. Different school, different class, different experience. I actually got to do some teaching today, though only in math. They seemed to be a few sections behind the other school interestingly enough. Basic

multiplication facts. That can kill the joy of math for many... They did get to draw at least rather than just writing numbers. They would draw arrays, like a 4 by 6 array for the problem  $4 \times 6 = 24$ . Aside from math I went over answers, did some reading aloud about how a movie is made interjecting my own thoughts as well as getting theirs on the process, and, well, that's about it for the teaching I guess. The rest was more or less babysitting and trying to learn their particular routines. And no specials for this class today by the way. Aside from recess and lunch I was with them constantly, though like the class yesterday they had computer lab time where someone else was at least in charge even if I didn't get to put my feet up in the lounge.

The lounge- what a tiny room to be crammed so full of teachers. There was just enough room for three long tables pretty close together with just enough room to walk around them. It wouldn't ordinarily be so bad as teachers tend to go out for lunch, but today they had a cookout with grilled steaks and chicken, and baked potatoes. I'm not sure who all was invited to the cookout, but I wasn't the only one who didn't know about it. So instead of going out, they all got their food and came into the lounge crowding around the tables. I felt sort of like this:

It didn't help much that half the table space was taken up by three large cakes (someone's birthday- don't know what the other two were for) as well as a couple of miscellaneous snacks of which I *did* partake. ☐

Well, aside from a 5th grade band concert in the afternoon, it was pretty much a normal day I would say. Good group of kids though a bit talkative and some would move about without permission. And now a long three or four (hoping just three) day weekend. Two districts are off on Tuesday so I may be out of work that day as well as Monday...

By the way, 100th post for me!

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## From 8th to 8

Going back to elementary was quite a difference from the last several days, in more than one way. First, going from age 12-14 to age 8. There is a world of difference between teens and second-graders. Second, going from the specials to the academics. The last week has been dominated with Industrial Tech and PE, with a short break in ELS (also quite different from second grade even though some of the material is similar...). Finally, working with a single group of kids all day instead of over a hundred.

I didn't actually do much teaching today. They really have a routine down with language arts centers so all I had to do there was introduce what they would be doing and then help here and there when some didn't understand something or other. Math was just an end-of-year assessment (didn't need to be reminded of this- the lean season known as "summer" is nigh upon me). They had a handwriting worksheet I only needed to introduce, again, and computer lab in the afternoon where

someone else pretty much ran the show while I helped. I did get to start a book for read aloud, a Mexican Cinderella. They are on a unit apparently about Mexico, including learning some Spanish. Across the room were their attempts at making the Mexican flag which I had to duck under every time I crossed the room. The teacher I subbed for must be much shorter.

Well, it was fun and I did at least get to work with a class I have worked with once before so there were less surprises- I'll tell you subbing in an elementary classroom requires a lot more work than in a middle school classroom. Breaking routine can be difficult with younger students, whereas older ones just take in stride and adapt. Therefore, studying the routine from the plans takes up some time. Well, enough of this blathering on. On to bed and then a different second-grade class tomorrow.

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## **The end is near...**

Tonight I write this as I should be partying instead. Tonight is the end-of-year cast party for the children's drama. Or rather, that is what the schedule says. The party was actually canceled due to lack of interest, plus a general grim outlook on people showing up on Wednesday nights for past rehearsals. If it was going to be anything like last year's get-together then I really won't miss it. It was a low turnout then and pretty unexciting. Some ice cream and drinks, and a little bit of small talk. The kids if I recall did some theatre games. Those theatre games used to be part of the rehearsals, but this year they got cut due to time, though the director did do some one of the nights.

In any event, the end may have arrived for rehearsals, but we have one more weekend to perform- this coming weekend. I suggested we have the show "canceled" and have "extras" carry off pieces of the set as we do the drama. Unfortunately this suggestion was too late and Steve (children's ministry pastor) cringed at the thought of having to take down and put back up the set for each performance. I guess it was also kind of a negative note. The show rather ends more positively by finally discovering the formula my character has been searching for for so long. Of course the formula involves Jesus, the only super human. He is the one who makes super heroes out of all of us who are children of God. At the end we will take our final bows and the mock science show will end.

I *really* hope the performance goes without a hitch. Last week I was the only regular cast member there for my performance time. Another was prepared as a fill-in, but the rest just didn't show up. Steve said he knew a couple wouldn't be there, but my guess is he didn't have much advance notice as we had to scramble to get others to fill in, and needless to say they had to perform with scripts. Something that was actually quite regular last year, but praise God was not so much of a problem this year. The last episode is supposed to be the most memorable, so I pray that it is memorable in the right way...

Well, this wasn't my regular sub-post, but you already knew I had PE at the one school again. Basically, same thing different students. Softball all day with similar pluses and minuses as the previous days' kickball. Until tomorrow then, when it looks like I will break the middle-school rut with second grade. I will also get to sleep in an extra hour... ☐

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# ELS, not ELL- dang acronyms...

Not sure what to write tonight. I was at one of the few schools one district ever calls me for- I am not sure what's going on with that district. I guess it helps that this school is the largest in the district at over 900 students 6th-8th grades. At first when I saw the acronym ELS when I looked up the teacher online, a practice I often do when I'm not told what subject or grade I'm teaching, I confused it with ELL, or English language learners. Middle school ELL as I've posted before can be, well just add an **h** in front of it and you'll know what I'm talking about. Oh, joy. But I should have remembered from another district that ELS stands for *(something) life skills*. I am not sure what the E stands for, but in short this refers to mentally impaired students, whether it be autism, down syndrome, or what-have-you.

So I arrived and found out about the class, confirmed by the lessons on the plans, and the students arrived one by one. Announcements, attendance, then off some went while others came in- a bit unusual for a middle school where the students start in their first class except for a few schools that have homeroom scheduled at the beginning of the day. So the first class was all the lowest students who could barely read even at a first grade level. Mostly, they repeated what I or the assistant read but some could read a little bit without the help. Second period was quite the opposite. I had the higher level ELS students, and we discussed ancient China and their inventions. Yes, gunpowder was one of them along with paper money, ship rudders, and porcelain. Then there was math. Most students worked out of packets while I worked with some of the lower-level students again, practicing counting to twenty (well, I did say low-level). Actually, before math I had to relieve another teacher who had a meeting with a parent. That class just colored. Anyway, following math the kids did "vocational education," which today was putting together

Hawaiian leis (those flowery things that go around the neck) using construction paper flowers, cut up colored straws, and yarn. The teacher who prepared these actually cut the yarn too short so they wound up more like strange headbands. Oh, well.

Following lunch I got the higher level class again and we worked on list poems. An example similar to one we did together is:

*What I like about summer  
Swimming at the local pool,  
Playing baseball at the park,  
Hanging out with friends all day,  
Chasing down the ice cream truck,  
Sleeping in until late morning.*

The last period (not counting my off-period) was kind of a laid back period. Some students played a game, others used the computers, and one did some reading. Anyway, that was it. Not exciting, but different.

And I just picked up my job for tomorrow. It looks like I will be back at middle school I was at Monday for... PE again! If that isn't strange enough, it is for a third PE teacher out of the five there. Two to go... ☐

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## **Just a short one**

I am very tired so I will make this one quick. Besides, it was PE again, at the same school as Friday, so there isn't much to say about it. Kickball again. The only real difference was I had 8th grade health instead of 6th, so I had the 6th graders for PE instead of the 8th graders. I had to show a video in health class about abstinence. They did some

good object lessons on the video involving cups of water contaminated with spit and food and then sharing the cups. Also, using clear packing tape as a lesson by sticking it first to one person's arm, then another, and another, then finally sticking two of these together and comparing it to two pieces of tape never used stuck together. I actually had to show this for only one class as there was an assembly during the other one. Outside. But that was okay even if the temperature was in the mid 50s. It wasn't all that bad. It was about a new solar panel that was installed at the school that they said could provide energy to light one of the rooms 24/7 I think they said. Not much, but apparently worth it. Our village president was there along with the superintendent and even our local US House representative. Each of them, along with a student and the principal, gave a little speech about it. My role? Not much since the entire school was out there which of course included all the regular teachers to keep the kids in line.

Well I'm going to leave the post with that. Hopefully I will be less tired tomorrow when it comes time to blog.