

Skipper Hall Remembers a Teacher from 1910

I can't remember much about the Santa Anna school, but the San Angelo school I would say was a pretty good school. I had a teacher named Morton and she was one of the best teachers I ever had. She was the only one I remember by name. She begged me not to leave school; in fact, she cried about it. Later in life I tried to find her, I wrote back to San Angelo but they couldn't locate her. She had married, and that leads me to think there ought to be some way to save women from being lost. I tried to find her to tell her I went back to school, but I couldn't find her.

DID SHE A BIG INFLUENCE ON YOU?

I don't remember how much effect she had on my life, but it's bound to have been quite influential. I know when she would get discouraged, or when the kids got so — modern teachers think they have a terrible time. But when the teachers would go nuts before the day was over, she would have me come up and recite Shakespeare's — how does it go? I ought to be able to think of that. Once I get started I can say it.

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, un-fledg'd comrade.
Beware of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear't that th' opposed may be aware of thee.

About once a week she'd call me up to recite that. So looking back on it, I must have had a little bit of an ability to speak or something. There must have been something about me that challenged her. And in terms of [my son] Jack's experience, I would say I had a great potential there and she recognized it, and that's why she begged me not to leave school. She used the wrong psychology, and all that. But my concept was labor. It was the old Protestant ethic of hard labor.

WAS SHE RIGHT? SHOULD YOU HAVE STAYED IN SCHOOL?

I don't know. If I would have stayed in school, of course, you never know what would have developed. But she used the wrong psychology and even as a minister I was always trying to put on old work clothes and go out and dig in the dirt or do something to get my hands dirty. I was never able to completely destroy the work ethic. In fact, the concept of schoolteachers and preachers were — in my youth — my concept was they were parasites on society, because they didn't work with their hands.

— Bryan "Skipper" Hall, March 30, 1980 (As told to James L. Smith)