

I MADE A 41!

Perhaps the only test score that I remember is the 41.

I was in high school. The class was taught by one of the two teachers that impacted me most, Mr. Bales. The other teacher was Mrs. Drew from the seventh grade. It's amazing how I can remember from over 30 years ago my two most impacting teachers.

The eighth grade. It was a time when I, like most, didn't know what I was to be in life. The drama of that time of youth was simply get through school and make the long walk home.

There are some things that will still be like the eighth grade when you get to be eighty.

The test was the final for the class. I remember anxiously waiting as Mr. Bales passed out test after test. It was a rather difficult test. I didn't know how well I had done, but I knew there were things on it that I didn't know.

I heard groan after groan that accompanied the plops. I could tell by the groans that the grades weren't looking good.

Mr. Bales dropped the stapled pages on my desk. There in big red numbers, circled to draw attention, was my grade. 41! Groan!!! I moved my paper where it wasn't in plain view. A 41 is not something that you wanted your classmates to see.

After the final plop, Mr. Bales stood behind the worn desk that had stood guard over countless students before me. He addressed the none too jubilant class.

"The grades were not very good, none of you passed, so I will have to consider grading on a scale," Mr. Bales announced.

"The highest grade in the class was a 41, so all of you flunked," were the final words that I remember.

A 41. That's me. Suddenly my dismal looking final didn't look quite so bad. There were at least 30 students in the class. I had the highest grade. I felt a whole lot better.

I walked home that day with the low but high grade safely tucked away in my book satchel. My mother knew that I had a big test that day and asked me as soon as I got home, "how did you do on your test?"

"I made a 41," I said.

My mother's expression changed. A frown now stood where a smile was a few seconds earlier. I knew that I had to explain and explain fast. "But mother, I had the highest grade in the class," I proudly stated.

I knew that statement would change things. I had the highest grade in the class, that made a difference.

My mother said, "You flunked."

"But I had the highest grade in the class!" I replied.

"I don't care what everyone else had, you flunked. It doesn't matter if everyone else flunked too, what matters is what you do," my mother firmly answered.

For years, I thought that was a harsh judgment. My mother was always that way. It didn't matter what the other kids did, it only mattered what I did and that I did it excellently.

We often don't understand the wisdom of good parents until we ourselves stand in the parenting shoes. My mother's philosophy has carried me throughout life. Don't worry about what the crowd does. The crowd often goes the wrong way. If you follow the crowd, you will go to the same destination as the crowd. The path of the crowd is wide and it is crowded. The path to pass the tests of life is narrow and there are very few people on it.

The path up the mountain is narrow; it is not crowded.

The path to health is narrow; it is not crowded.

The path to harmony, peace and happiness with your spouse is narrow; it is not crowded.

The path to peace with yourself and the world is narrow; it is not crowded.

I made a 41 and was proud of it, but it would not have gotten me through the real tests.

The majority of spouses are not faithful. It's the crowd. And even though you may be the smoothest deceiver of the group, you are on the road to failure; it's not a passing grade.

The crowd eats fattening unhealthy fast food. That food sends you to an early appointment with the doctor and the funeral director. It's the food of the crowd.

The crowd spends no special time in prayer and meditation each day. That leads to an unhealthy spirit. It's the way of the crowd.

Thirty years after my mother said that she didn't care if I was the best failure in the class, I understand why.

"Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." That's a quote that my mother lives by.

We often take comfort in the crowd; the only problem is that the crowd is not comfortable.

PASS the class!

A MountainWings Original