

My Stab at Politics: By Andrew Moore

As the end of my sixth grade year came to a close, I was very pleased to find out that I would be receiving an award. I'd never received an award before and this one was for the coveted spot of the 'Most Improved Student of The Year'. There was really no clue as to where the justification for this award came from. Needless to say, the award itself meant, to some degree, 'I fit' and had been recognized for some sort of effort (though I am not able to ever remember 'trying' ever, in school). After attending different elementary schools- from Alaska, to New Mexico, to Riyadh the award felt did feel welcoming to me, in my new home, Hawaii and for that feeling I was grateful.

That wasn't the only thing about this award that was curious to me. The year before, in my fifth grade class my music teacher Mrs. Towne kept trying to put me on tranquilizers for my "hyperactivity" (yes even back then- around 1984 they were doping kids). Thankfully, my mom was a teacher as well and didn't agree with Towne's diagnosis. Instead, she told Mrs. Towne to "challenge" me.

It seems funny to me; music, hyperactivity, and I have always got along just fine. I remember being thrilled that I was to have a class in it (music). Maybe she thought I was too much to handle because sometimes, I did become exuberant and it is too much for some people- that aspect of my personality. I can understand that, that I could come off as a little 'over the top' or even 'intense', even at that age.

Maybe that's it, that's why I won most improved student of the year, I was no longer in Mrs. Towne's class. No matter, for what ever the reason, I was glad to accept the award.

Since that was the sixth grade it would be my last year at Aikahi Elementary School, in Kailua Hawaii. Next would be junior high school and I had no idea where I'd be going for that. However, it didn't take my mom long to figure it out. I would be going to St. John Vianny, a small, private Catholic school further away, in deeper Kailua where she, herself taught.

The thing that was going to be odd about this for me was the fact that I wasn't Catholic and this was a one-room per grade school- that wore uniforms and had priests and confessions- things of that sort. Not only that, but most of the kids had been going there for their entire lives and I'd be coming into their seventh grade class when the whole school topped-out at eighth. Once again, coming late into the game, as I seemingly had my entire life.

See, even at my age, I could see the social angles. This was going to be tough. I'd have to wear a uniform, my mom taught there- I even had to have her for a Hawaiiiana culture class. And it was a long way to school, though we (my sister Kerry and I) usually rode in with mom in the mornings and then Kerry and I'd make it home- stopping at record stores and skate/surf shops along the way home through the center of Kailua, the town itself to where we lived.

So the first day of my seventh grade class came and went. I decided that the uniforms weren't so bad because I really didn't have to think about what to wear in the morning. Hawaii was very stratified by what you wore.. Everyone had Vans shoes and my mom wouldn't even spring for the Vans knock off. We didn't have a lot of money.

I got comfortable quickly at St. John's and even made a few friends- things were fine, things were functioning, but I could tell right away that much more was going to be academically, demanded of me.

Then one day, shortly into the new year, there came an announcement over the P.A. Soon the school was to have its student council elections, and if any student wanted to run, they should deposit their name in a box, in the office.

This offer was tempting to me, I kind of liked the idea and I liked it more and more the longer I thought about it. Could I run? Even better, could I win? A real competition never entered my mind. The question was whether or not I wanted the job. Yes, I thought, I'd make a few friends, develop some business associates- because even though it's the only seventh grade, there are always opportunities.

Let me explain: I had found out that the rich kids that went to this school had money to spend. These kids were particularly lazy. What I mean is: we all ate candy as kids do, and they could just as easily have walked around the block to the strip-mall and bought the kind of candy that they wanted to eat- most didn't, or at least they were willing to buy it off of me if I had something to sell. Since my mom was a workaholic, we often got to the school before it was really even open. That's when I'd steal away and make it around the backside of the shopping center to get into the store just as it opened and make the buy. Then, all during the day, I had candy, usually something for every fancy. I was making dough and that little enterprise had started only a couple of weeks into my first and only year at St. John's.

After taking everything into account and figuring that I could co-opt some of that sweet business momentum of mine into a political office; I threw my name into the box in the office.

Now, I needed a campaign, at the very least I needed some exposure as no-one knew me outside of the seventh grade. On top of that, even though V.P. Was the highest office possible in the single-roomed seventh grade, the whole school voted. I need to get my name out, with some sort of message, a platform. What was wrong with the school? A few things that I could see- besides that, I wanted a little more freedom, a little more voice pertaining to different aspects of a student's life, there at St. Johns.

Unfortunately, no matter how much I demanded of my sister, she wouldn't paint my posters for me, so my visual campaign was shot, as I just didn't have time to do it. The election was coming up quickly and the candy business took some of my hours. On top of that, there were some other things I'd put into the cooker and a daily commute to contend with, lawns to mow- I just didn't have time to 'campaign', so I decided to use the candy. There was always stock at the ready, every morning, so I'd just sweetened everyone's tongue as we got nearer to the day of the election. Therein, my confidence started to solidify.

It wasn't just the campaigning and then an election, there was a speech as well. This would have to be delivered to the whole school (thankfully not in the church) and to anyone else that'd like to attend, but in the very least- all students, teachers, and school administration would fill the hall and hear what I'd have to say.

I remember I wrote the speech the night before, first in pencil with one re-write in red pen (I remember I chose the color red to fire me up). Another correction or two and it was ready for its one and only delivery.

"Children, quiet please, our next speaker will be Andy Moore for the office of Vice President. Andy you may begin.", said the M.C. And then I did- I gave it all of the force, unwavering eye-contact, and passion I could muster. Bordering on hyper-boiled begging, I listed the fouls of the institution and what I would do to rattle the cage of the ruling elite and in-turn, set the school straight and free on its true course. Computers were one issue of mine. Why didn't we use them? I remember that, we had them, brand new as they were and they sat in dust (Dos?)! What is wrong with you people?

Whence I was finished, I dropped my head in mock exhaustion, and the crowd went up. It was a standing ovation.

The next day I was the non-Catholic student body V.P. Of a Catholic school. Things were good. The campaign had cost me little in candy profits, but the losses were negligible. I went back to work in that regard.

Around the same time I sealed a deal with a classmate of mine, a Mr. Eric Loke of Japanese ancestry. Eric had an incredible talent for geometry, while a majority of the class had a problem with it, or simply didn't want to do the work. The thing is, at a Catholic school, or at least this one, you had to have the work. No work, no grade, no fun and then, no school. And to these people, my mother included, public school is Hawaii is a really tough option to have to consider.

It's quite possible that young Eric came to campus in the early hours like I did. Some how we managed to put together a tight little operation. He'd come in early, give me the homework, I'd make a working copy and then sell it to the necessary students before the first bell would ring in the morning.

Between this and the candy, cash was rolling in and I didn't have to worry about my geometry, nor was I paying for the answers. Of course I always took great care of Eric and gave him more than the agreed upon cut. (A business trait I employ to this day.)

My mom's best friend at this school was Toni Lockyear. She also happened to be the school's seventh grade math teacher. I never really liked Toni, nor did she ever like me. I didn't trust her and found her high-strung and maybe there was a little man-hate in her as well. All I know is we had had family outings which gave her personality time to prove itself to me.

That was the deal, the way things worked for a while- a bit tense, as I tried to keep all of the balls juggling in time. It's a fact though, as history's proved it over and again, all empires come to an end someday, and my little operation would be no different.

Quite unexpectedly, one day in math class, as all of our heads were bowed in the pursuit of knowing the kind of truth that math can produce, Mrs. Lockyear called the gentle and bespectacled Eric up to her desk in the corner of the room to ask him an innocent question. I noticed his bothered demeanor going there, towards her desk, but thought nothing of it.

And then I heard a gasp, followed by sobbing and saw from my seat, from the opposite corner of the room, young Eric's shoulder's slowly heaving up and then dropping down as Toni half rose in her seat screeching her chair legs in the reversed motion. I still couldn't hear anything outside of the sobbing, but as the whole class sat there in awe, as Toni finished what she was asking Eric, at that same split-second, he turned his head, looked at me and his arm rose- extending his pointer finger to me, as if there was no-one else in the room?

It turned out later that Toni had not even asked Eric about our operation at all. She had asked him something totally unrelated, but his good-old Catholic guy-guilt stepped in and snapped his savvy.

When I think about it now, Eric looked totally different, in the face, when it was all said and done. Maybe he needed it off of his back. Of course, we both got punished, but my mom got it worst of all, because we were asked not to come back the following year and since it was really difficult for her to get a job in Hawaii, we were going to have to move to California- which was fine with me.

After about two weeks of school detention, and after thinking all was over, that things had cooled, I was impeached by the school's administration. My empire was in shambles. The only thing that was still in operation was the candy- that flame just burned too brightly. That one, the candy, was purely mine, no help was needed and the demand was always strong.

Later that summer I was at the beach a few blocks away from my house. Usually, the beach was empty, but today there was a kid, my age and we got to talking. It turned out he was from San Francisco. He was there in Kailua, on vacation, with his family visiting some friends in the neighborhood. I asked him if he knew where Redding California was, 'cause that's where we were headed, to live- with my mom's college friend and her family- just until we could get settled in California.

He didn't.