

Come Back in a Few Years

Don Jackson

Ag. Jl. Sr.

HIGH school teachers thought they were pretty gosh-darn smart, it seemed to Arch. This morning young Mr. Sorensen, the new geometry teacher, had looked at him in an amused way and said, "You thirteen-year-olds get some big ideas, don't you, kid?"

So Arch hated Mr. Sorensen today, and his anger spread to all three hundred students in Hillsdale High School. Who was old college-man Sorensen to talk so big? Old smart-aleck Sorensen with his pleated trousers and tan shoes. All Arch had done was to suggest after class in the morning that geometry would be easier for him if Mr. Sorensen would spend more time explaining theorems and less time hashing over the world series.

It probably wasn't a wise thing to say. Mr. Sorensen had turned to erase the blackboard, chuckling as he cut dark swaths through arcs and angles of the preceding hour. Then he had swung around facing Arch, pulled up a nicely-creased trouser leg to expose a red and yellow sock, and planted his foot in the center of the swivel chair by the desk. He fingered a piece of chalk and stared at Arch. "Look here, Bud," he began. "You're young yet. Better hold off the advice until you pile up a little more experience."

So there it was; you had to have experience. You had to wait until you were older to be somebody. Arch shuffled into the study hall, to desk four, row five, and slid heavily into the seat.

THIS was Mr. Sorensen's period to take the study hall. Arch rested his chin in one hand, his elbow on the desk. He ruffled an eyebrow with his forefinger. In the seat ahead was Betty Wheeler, and on brighter days he often sat looking at her yellow hair which she tied loosely in back with a blue ribbon. But not today, because this question bothered him: When did a person start getting credit for being alive? How old before people shook

your hand instead of patting your head? Was everyone jealous of fellows growing up? How old did you have to be? Probably as old as Mr. Sorensen, anyway.

Sorensen was standing at the edge of the platform at the front of the hall, hands in pockets, looking blankly out the window, when Mr. Clapper came in. Mr. Clapper, the principal, was a short, ruddy-faced man with a gold tooth shining, and he patted his sparse black hair down flat against his head with oil and water. A contrast to Mr. Sorensen, tall and broad like a clothing model.

Mr. Clapper seemed to be scolding Mr. Sorensen for something. He held a report sheet in his right hand and thumped it contemptuously with two fingers of his left, making a sharp sound like the bang of an air rifle. Quickly Arch decided on a trip across the room to the pencil sharpener. He strolled casually and slowly past the main desk, and heard Mr. Clapper say:

“. . . and we had hoped you would catch on to the work here a bit faster, Sorensen. We had considered a more experienced man, you know.”

TIPTOEING back to his seat, Arch was maliciously delighted. He admired Mr. Clapper because it was so easy to learn things like history and government from him. He always had a story to make things real, like yesterday when he had told the class about the storming of the Bastille, and Mary Dunn had fainted.

And now he had told Mr. Sorensen he needed more experience. **He** had a right to, Arch decided. A person must learn a lot in forty-five years.

And certainly even more in sixty years. That was about how old Mr. Barnett was. Mr. Barnett had been the burly, roaring superintendent of Hillsdale High School ever since Arch could remember. The students always grinned proudly when he shook his shaggy white head and twirled his black-rimmed glasses in his hand as he lectured in general assembly. He taught no classes, but often talked to the whole school on safety or public health.

Tonight Arch stayed after school for play practice. The rest of the cast had drifted out, but he had rehearsed extra for Miss Green in her office. Now he came down the corridor, slipping on his leather jacket as he swung along. Mr. Clapper and Mr. Bar-

nett came out of the study hall in front of Arch; Mr. Clapper looked worried, and was explaining something:

“. . . perhaps I was wrong to send in the order without your sanction, but I didn't think I was exceeding my authority.”

Exceeding his authority. So even Mr. Clapper was inferior to someone else. The two men entered the superintendent's office and the door slammed. A sheet of paper had sifted out of Mr. Clapper's arms, and it glided to the floor by Arch's feet. He picked up the paper and—sidestepping a guilty feeling—read this letter:

My Dear Mr. Barnett:

We have studied with considerable interest your manuscript entitled “Some Concepts of the New Education.” It is a brilliant piece of work, my dear Barnett, but we feel it still is not what we are looking for in a book of this kind. Perhaps after a few more years in that fine school of yours you will give us what we want.

Very truly yours,
Franklin Ross, president
Ross Publishing Co.

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Flippancy

Richard N. Mason

Sci. Sr.

Spin a bright new penny!
Let it twirl and gleam in the sun.
Make it heads, you'll write her
And tails, you'll be damned.
When it plinks to the ground,
Be stoical, be strong!

Plink!

Oh, it's tails, eh? Too bad.
But wait! You're in love?
Then spin it again
Make it two out of three . . .