

There is just a little left for me to add to Erik's splendid paen. Please tell me you kept a journal, Erik! Erik once confided his goal to "lead an interesting life". I never imagined it otherwise.

The games Erik mentioned were part of Mr. Squibb's expressed plan. He had prepared and posted an extensive list of interesting things to do, rain or shine. No one dared complain of boredom. Intensely interesting activities like climbing the water tower, fermenting cider with yeast and raisins, distilling the applejack, and fishing with fulminate (please don't ask!) somehow never made the list.

We sang unfamiliar songs:

"What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
Erleye in the mornin'!"

We learned unfamiliar expressions. "The ghost is rising." meant the cesspool was emitting disagreeable odors. "Whose ghost?" went unasked. "Life is not a bowl of cherries." handily quelled complaints.

We learned to saddle and sit a horse, to store a razor blade for sharpening pencils conveniently and safely taped in a notebook, to spell 'horehound' correctly, to stoke and bank a fire, to trim a lamp wick, a myriad of uses for #10 cans and that lemon wedges quenched playing field thirst.

Does anyone have the recipe for that tuna and pineapple concoction or remember what we called it?

"Paddle his bottom 'til he hollers,
Paddle his bottom 'til he hollers,
Paddle his bottom 'til he hollers,
Erleye in the mornin'!"

I was told that the Squibbs read a dictionary on their honeymoon and wouldn't be surprised to hear they lugged Samuel Johnson's tome on their camping trip.

Home on my first vacation, I failed embarrassingly while attempting to describe the reasons for my delight with Midland and its headmaster. Any approval of school or teacher was uncharacteristic for me, much less delight, and my explanatory powers and understanding were woefully lacking. Not surprisingly, my clumsy attempts to describe the proper spelling and minty virtues of the horehound plant did not go over well, either. I never again attempted to express my feelings about Midland and Mr.

Squibb. Never, that is, until now.

Grass Mountain often drew me to its peak -- with a bag lunch, naturally. It does not seem so grueling a trek, in dimming retrospect, as it seems to have been to Erik. Perhaps I had longer legs or was better conditioned with more laps.

“Hooray and up she rises,
Hooray and up she rises,
Hooray and up she rises,
Erleye in the mornin’”

I hauled dead falls in a two-wheeled pull cart, cut them to length with a Swedish saw, split and sold the firewood(dry); trapped gophers; and sat faculty children. One November, I shined shoes for a price. Heath Bars ruled.

“What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
Erleye in the mornin’.”

Having “... inwardly digested” Erik's reminiscences, I cannot now escape the conclusion that we had become invisibly bound to Paul Squibb; that, unknowing, we were bonded as firmly as goslings to their mother. No other master, no teacher or professor, no man since could command my attention so easily, or so excite my imagination. In later years, shamefully, some of us ridiculed and pestered two teachers who seemed too aloof in our callow estimation.

What was the source of the ability to connect so quickly and powerfully with our maturing minds? Surely, it took more than candy bars and Honey Grahams. Part of it, seems to me, was that Paul Squibb had decided to treat us as if we were his own children – to silently adopt us, and understand each of us as best he could. Erik mentioned some of the clues: the ranking of students according to time of arrival at his world rather than by date of birth into the “other world” or last initial (personally gratifying to me); introducing students as brother ____; placing the latest arrivals at the front of the chapel; and the name plaques available to serve as his memory aids. It is typically Squibbian for these things to have served other purposes as well. In some ways, you might say, he was our Mr. Chips and we were his “boys”.

I cannot remember the occasion when we learned that Mr. Squibb would not be returning. I can recall the feeling. It was as though I had lost my father once more. Mourning ensued, again unrecognized. Swats retreated into the past as if by spontaneous, unspoken covenant. Lap slips piled up.

“Shave his belly with a rusty razor,
Shave his belly with a rusty razor,
Shave his belly with a rusty razor,
Erleye in the mornin'!”

As part of a six week, cross country, automobile tour a few years ago, another Louise, my bride of thirty-eight years now, and I enjoyed a brief visit to Midland (one brave white horse got to crunch my apple), a fine dinner at Matei's tavern, and later on the Squibb Museum cum Bed and Breakfast in picturesque Cambria, where “Squibbing” had become a tradition.

Imponderables, like Spanish Moss, drape Midland's iconic oak. What would we have been like had we never met Paul Squibb? What would he think of us today? What exactly prompted him to leave? What if he had remained? Would he have convinced Maclean to curb his rapscaillon impulses? Might I have learned to pay less attention to my stomach, and more to my studies? Would the swats have continued? Would we have administered them?

At graduation, Erik and I entertained the school in a traditional stilt fight (another Squibb innovation, no doubt) with much cheering and encouragement from the onlookers. Erik was a better athlete, while I had far more experience on the stilts and had learned to turn them upside down, walking with my feet six feet above the ground. I remember it well. Midland life is more than just a bowl of cherries.

I never learned to say “Good-bye, Mr. Squibb”.

“Hooray and up she rises,
Way-hay and up she rises,
Heave-ho and up she rises,

Er leye

in

the

morn ing.”

Tom Young, '55
Stamford, CT
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