

Sweet Lessons of Life

For a brief stint in Junior High they put me in charge of the school's concession stand. Looking back, it begs one question: "WHAT WHERE THEY THINKING?"

Folding money was mighty scarce in my single parent home in those days. We didn't generally splurge on a lot of luxuries, like food and clothing. So while I was disappointed the concession gig didn't pay in cash, I wasn't completely disgruntled. Just working around so much popcorn and candy had it rewards, *if you know what I mean.*

In fact, it was like a dream come true; for both me and my dentist. I was like a fox in the henhouse! My belly had never stayed so full. My social life was really picking up too. I was the most popular guy in school while behind that counter.

Looking back, you would've thought the faculty would have supplied me with a little supervision, it being my first experience in retail sales and all. But they didn't. I was left to learn the ropes on my own. I caught on fast. I pretty much mastered certain concepts like 'Inventory Reduction' right off. Then, of course, they eventually *took* inventory and had to let me go.

Obviously, I hadn't developed the character to hold such a lofty position. I was just a dumb kid. I'm not sure what my P.E. coach's excuse was. That big galoot used to rap on the back door before I was officially open for business everyday.

"Sheffield let me have some M&M's!" or "Sheffield let me have some popcorn."

I'd hand him a bag and stick out my hand for payment. He'd slap it and walk off laughing, "Thanks Sheffield."

One day my un-righteous indignation finally got the best of me. I decided to stand up to the big bully. (Of course that's easier said than done when he's 6' 5" 250lbs, and you look like a broomstick in a pair of parachute pants.)

When the coach poked his big buffalo head in the back door that day hunting a freebie, I made my stand. Well kind of. I turned my back and mumble feebly, "Look coach. You gotta pay for this stuff. You gon' get me in trouble."

Coach got a queer far away look in his eyes. I gulped as he stepped in to the room and quietly closed the door behind him.

"Sheffield," he growled picking me up by the collar, "I'll take what I want. You ain't gonna say nuttin, you here?"

He was right. I couldn't say 'nuttin', especially with his bad breath all over me, practically melting my bugging eyeballs. I just gulped.

"Besides," he continued, letting me down and politely straightening my collar, "I'm sure you don't want me to tell how I seen you slipping free goodies to all your buddies?"

I gulped again. My whole life flashed before my eyes. I knew my principal would love to mark this down on that so called 'Permanent Record' he spent most of his time compiling on me.

Coach stuffed his gym shorts full of blow-pops and walked out. As I watched him walking off I realized why he got paid to be a teacher- because he sure taught me a lesson! I learned if you get involved in shady dealings you'll inevitably run into some shady characters, and they'll always be some bigger, smarter, and smellier than you.

Listen, sharing breathing space with smelly demons in shadowy places is no way to live. If that's what you've been doing, I want to encourage you to come out into the light; the Light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Jesus wants to give you a new heart, new coaches, and rest for your sin wearied soul. Of course, there's your permanent record to think about too. (*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23* KJV)

But anyway- Stealing doesn't get you anything for free. There'll always be hell to pay. The only thing truly free in life is love, and Jesus' is much sweeter than a belly full of stolen blow pops.

-Guy Sheffield 8-14-07