

**Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, September 2008**

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There is a lonely little tug at the corner of my heart this morning as I watch kids walking by my window on their way to school. They are beautiful in their new and not so new clothes, backpacks and haircuts. "Look! That little boy in the new jeans and blue shirt, he reminds me of my Dan, the year I let grandpa trim his long hair and he started school with a very crooked buzzcut (buzzcuts can be very crooked believe me)."

And that little girl, she must be seven. She has the same serious look Tanice always had from worrying about the state of the world. No wonder she is such a great nurse now. I remember getting a call from her teacher one day expressing concern that Tanice had been putting her lunch in the big garbage container every day for the past several weeks.

When I asked Tanie why she was tossing her lunch away she looked at me with big tears in her eyes and said, "It's for all the hungry kids Mom."

"Hungry kids!" I asked. "Where on earth did you get the idea that food from the garbage went to hungry kids?"

"On television all the hungry kids dig in the garbage for food."

That was when I realized just how much influence television had on our children.

"And over there across the street, see that little girl? She reminds me of Roxanne, the way she has her arm around a little sister who is crying. I remember the evening our doorbell rang like someone was leaning on it and I opened the door to this angry mother. "Look what your daughter did to my son," she yelled, pushing a hulking 12 year old son in front of her.

"My daughter, are you sure?" I asked in complete surprise sure she had the wrong house.

“Yes and this is the second time this has happened and I won’t stand for it. This kind of bullying has to stop!”

I turned around and there was my “bully,” with her little sisters arm around her, looking very frightened as the woman ranted and raved about big kids taking advantage of younger ones. The woman was stunned when Roxanne, eight years old, three feet tall and, at the most, forty five pounds stepped forward and said, “I’m sorry but I beat him up ‘cause he kept pulling my sister’s hair and pushing her down.”

“Yes,” Tanice piped up, and “he does it every day, and we asked him nicely to please stop but he wouldn’t.”

The woman never said another word. She shoved her son out the door, threatening to beat the crap of him when they got home. With all her yelling and threats it’s no wonder her son terrorized little girls.

Another a Christmas when we were so poor my late husband and I decided to cancel Christmas but we needed a way to break it to our kids and make it sound like a fun idea. As a free lance writer, which is what I was at the time and he was a singer, song writer and artist, our pay cheques were often far between. I had suggested going to my brothers and just saying that we decided to not have gifts this year and instead we were going on a holiday in the summer. Shannon wouldn’t hear of it, insisting my brother would know that we were lying, instead he would do several small paintings and sell them to someone who hadn’t done their Christmas shopping yet. In the middle of this discussion our kids came home for lunch and Cindy, our youngest headed for the pantry and pulled out a can of Chicken Noodle Soup and started wrapping it. “What are you doing?” Shannon asked her.

“It’s a Christmas present for the poor people,” she said. I thought Shannon was going to choke, he had been about to open that soup and heat it up for their lunch. Dan, our always very wise son said, “We are the poor people, right mom?” To which Cindy promptly replied “No we’re not. We’re otters and singers and we’re famous, Mrs. Kelly [teacher] said so!” She couldn’t pronounce author.

To make a long story short the mail man delivered our cheques that day and we had a great Christmas.

Children are special and we are so blessed to have them. And I love September and the smell of new books, scribblers and pencils. I miss the rushing around in the morning preparing breakfast and lunches no one remembered to make the night before and I love the memory of threatening to let them all starve if they forgot to do them or slept in again.

My Dad always said "It was important to make memories so children could have good stories." I'm sure these same stories have a whole other take when heard from my children but as much as I love them, I miss my wee kids and I miss school.