

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

April 7, 2020

Mugsy

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1

You can probably measure the maturity of your faith by how well you relate to Psalm 46:1, and many others like it. Jesus is our friend and is always there for us, even in the toughest of times. But when we are young in age and/or in the faith, we need human examples to help us understand it. That’s why I’ll always have a soft spot in my heart for Mugsy. Mugsy was not a Labrador Retriever. He was good friend in the sixth grade when I lived in Grass Valley.

Our family moved from our hometown of Costa Mesa in the fall of 1958 because my uncle, who had a thriving hearing aid store in Modesto (it’s still there), talked my dad into opening a hearing aid store in the little town of Grass Valley. When we got to Grass Valley, we rented a house way out in the country; the backyard was a swamp, perfect for two young boys. My brother and I were super excited. It even snowed there in December. Even better, we got a dog from the dog pound. His name was Snuffy — a *real* Pointer. Snuffy would point, with one paw raised, at a grasshopper and would stay in that posture until the grasshopper jumped. He would follow it and point again until it jumped. *What a dog!*

Living in the country, with a dog, some snow and a real swamp in the backyard was great. Going to a new school was not so great. In fact, it was horrible. I began at the beginning of the school year, but this was a tiny school, with zero turnover. Everyone knew that I was a new kid. I had switched schools a couple of times in the past, but I had not experienced the horror of being a new kid in a small town where everyone knew everyone else.

The most popular kid in school had a name I would have given my right arm to have. His name was *Cozzi Costa*. I love that name! To one to whom sports was life itself, that was a name you could take right into the big leagues! My name, Dave Posey didn’t compare. You can guess how many “flower” jokes I had to bear. One girl liked to say, “hey Posey! *Wilt! Hardee bar bar...*” (under my breath I would say, *“that’s so funny I forgot to laugh”*). Where was Buster Posey when I needed him? I may have become a Giants fan!

Anyway, Cozzi Costa not only had a cool name, he *was* genuinely cool, groovy, the inness of those who were in “the in crowd.” He was a smallish guy, but he was fast, the star of the flag football team and his walk told you he was *in charge*. He even had an “entourage” of four or five friends and he walked a stride or two ahead of them. I immediately idolized the mighty sixth-grader and wondered how I could become his compadre.

It wasn’t going to happen. For some reason, Cozzi Costa decided he didn’t like me, at all, and he mocked me and made fun of me from the day I arrived, even *yelling* at me across the school grounds. He actually yelled a racial slur, and I wasn’t even a “race” (being while doesn’t count, does it?). These daily slurs and insults, relentlessly hurled at me for everyone to hear, was a crushing blow to my 11 year old ego. I don’t remember ever feeling as lonely as I did those first few days in September at Grass Valley Elementary.

Instead of feeling sorry for myself, after awhile, I decided to do some “research.” I soon found out that the little makeshift king, Cozzi Costa, was not the *baddest dude* at Grass Valley Elementary. The person everyone feared was a tall, rather overweight, kid named “Floyd.” He was Cozzi Costa’s exact opposite: big, uncool name, played no sports and wore thick black plastic horned rimmed glasses. He would probably be considered the nerdiest of nerds if he was in a school today.

But Floyd was tough. I don’t what he had done to establish his dominance before I got there, but when Floyd came around the kids at school parted like the Red Sea to make room for him. And they called him “Mugsy.”

I’ll never know why he did this but Mugsy befriended me, the new kid at school. He invited me to go with him wherever he went around the little campus (and I didn’t have to follow him, we walked side-by-side). He invited me to his house to watch Superman and the Donna Reed Show and to eat peanut butter, pickle and marshmallow sandwiches. He even punched me in the solar plexus once, just to display the punishment one would get if they continued to trouble me. It took me five full minutes to get my breath back. Mugsy was a good friend.

One day my new buddy Floyd took Cozzi Costa aside and “convinced” him that mocking his friends could be very unhealthy for tiny campus kings and little squirts who think they are fountains of wisdom. Costa never called me anything but “Posey” again and he did it with a smile — whether it was real or forced, I didn’t care.

I’ll always appreciate Floyd. To befriend and defend the kid that the most popular kid in school didn’t like was really a very grown-up thing to do, don’t you think? Floyd was “a very present help in time of trouble” and I’ll never forget him.

I tell this story for two reasons. First, I’ve never forgotten the people in my life who were kind to me even though I had nothing to give them in return. I wish I could go back in time and thank each one of them properly. Two, we all need a helper from time-to-time. Ideally, Jesus is that helper day-in, day-out; he helps the helpless. But we need to model Jesus’ behavior, especially to the down-trodden. Be a “Mugsy” to someone. They may not thank you now, but they’ll never forget you.

[The photo above is a shot I took of David “helping” Angie; he’s probably 4 years old; she’s around 1 ½]

