

Daily View

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

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[Belinda & Natalie's championship rowing team] Teamwork is so important in life. Individualism seldom leads to success in anything. We need each other. Punky didn't get that.

Punky Taylor, I

“Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

Wesley “Punky” Taylor was my best friend for a couple of years when I lived in Vallejo. He stands out as the most interesting friend in my life. He was also the type of friend that parents most fear and would easily be #1 on the list of “evil companions” (I Corinthians 15:33).

Punky was bull-headed, mean, reckless, obnoxious.... He was not a team player, didn't really care about others; you wouldn't add him to a rowing team. *But...* he could throw a wicked curve ball and toss a football 40-plus yards at age 11. For me, obsessed with baseball and football, his skill washed away all of his sins.

The first time I met him, I was a new kid in sixth grade, having moved there in March. One day, right after I arrived, our teacher, Mrs. Wilson, was talking about some topic. She abruptly stopped in the middle of her speech, glared at Wesley for a moment, pursed her lips in frustration and then shouted at him, “*Wesley Taylor go comb your hair!!*” I was shocked but the other kids, were just sitting there, unfazed, with guarded grins.

Wesley got up, was gone for about five minutes and came back with his hair “combed.” He had this ridiculous looking little clump of hair that he had somehow “coiffed” into a little shape right in front. This made Mrs. Wilson even more upset and she ordered Wesley to go back and comb it “right.”

Clearly, Wesley knew how to get to Mrs. Wilson and she was powerless to do much about it. Can you send a kid to principal's office for an annoying hairdo? Probably not. The rest of us in the class could only admire Punky Taylor's ability to get under stern Mrs. Wilson's skin. Punky was Chief Inspector Clouseau and Mrs. Wilson was Charles Dreyfuss, twitching eye and all (for Brett Z).

When you're a new kid in school, you look for the outlier, not the popular kids. You glob on to the first kid who gives you the time-of-day, and Wesley did that. We shared a love of baseball and football and, as luck would have it (or, in my parent's estimation: *bad* luck), we lived just down the block from each other.

Vallejo was a sport-loving city so Wesley's athletic prowess, in baseball and football, gave him an obnoxious swag. His dad had played professional baseball with the St. Louis Browns and spent a lot of time grooming Wesley's baseball skills. When he was 8 years old, he signed up for Little League and he was so talented, they immediately put him in the majors (most of us had to play the first two years in the minors). He got the name “Punky” because he was, by far, the youngest, smallest kid in the majors.

During football season, Punky and I formed a two-man football team and challenged various kids to games. We went something like 24-0 during those years. I could run pretty fast and Wesley could throw the ball a mile; all I had to do was run under it and catch it and score.

But, this was literally Wesley Taylor's only redeeming value as a 11-12 year human being. Punky Taylor was the original, pre-YouTube influencer — for all the wrong reasons. I was emboldened to do things — or at least support them — that was completely out of character.

This was the period of time in my life when I memorized I Corinthians 15:33 (see above), backwards and forwards, not only because my parent's made me memorize it, but because my mother quoted it almost every day. *Why? More to come...*