

1974, What I Wanted

by Ann Bogle

I wanted to earn A's. And an A cup to protect my tall nipples from fondling at school. It was our first year to be graded. Until then, we had been scored on behavior—what if we were to be scored on behavior or graded today? Then we were transitioning from behavior to performance along academic lines, and once, my head still hurting from the kick it received on May 2, the day before my twelfth birthday, from a boy on the playground, probably Hans, but maybe someone else, maybe Jeff, not likely David, and not the twins, Joel and Tim, and not Charles, never could it have been Charles. Charles was the sort of young man in sixth grade who might grow up to defend a woman against the might of other men, so it was not he who kicked my temple, after the teachers had warned the boys not to kick us there. Surely, someone must have wondered what “temple” meant. There was another David, but for the sake of fiction, he goes by Donald in my books. Donald and I had a relationship history that could be traced to the McGovern-Nixon election in which McGovern won only one state, ours, and Nixon won the rest. In the show of hands, Laurie and I had voted for McGovern. The other 28 kids had voted for Nixon. I planned a childhood memoir called *Voting for McGovern* or *Waiting to Be Hippies*. I thought of us dressed for those three years in our elephant pants and mini-dresses, beads and chokers at our necks, long blond hair parted down the middle, recorders, easier to play than flute and clarinet, though we played those, too, and as we got to be better at those instruments, recorder became harder to play, easier to overblow, and the girls with soprano voices, one with long brown hair and pretty bangs, joined the Chamber Choir for which they had had to audition, and due to my extreme height—I was 5'2” by seventh grade—I could not or did not think I could sing the high notes the other girls could sing and no boy, no boy could hit those high notes ever again. Charles appeared in the hall in eighth grade sporting the first beard, and I acted maturely toward it, as if it did

not faze me that he had grown a beard over the summer and his mother, Gretchen, and his father, Father, had allowed him to do it. If there had been arranged marriage in eighth grade, the grade it used to be and still sometimes is when children left school to work in the fields, I would have hoped that my parents would have arranged for me to marry Mike, who was tall and spread his protective arms around me on the sofa in our living room, despite his age, which must have been only thirteen, already a man like Charles, a man like my father, who must have been 49 at the time, and who got mad at Mike, thinking worse things than arms folded around his daughter, because of bad Donald, Mike who could be described even at thirteen as blue collar because to earn a living is what he wanted to do, and Donald, a poor student who had voted for Nixon in the open election yet picked the only two girls who had voted for McGovern to take him to the equation that led to the baby carriage, could take her dream away from her, to get A's—a bad girl, perhaps, one who wanted to score and score well, an anomaly, a trick in their otherwise orderly progression of nips of vodka to nymphomaniac, not a nympho, maybe a sea nymph or wood nymph, and not an oily-haired girl, a tall girl, at 5'2", fast at algebra and sure at science and made for weddings after all.

