

# Shameful Maneuvers

*by Ann Bogle*

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This is the first day of writing. It is February 1, 2020, and I am 57. When I was 11 or going on 11, two boys chased me at top speed toward a picnic table where our teachers were cutting watermelon. I threw myself on the ground and grabbed onto watermelons, trying to anchor myself, while the teachers laughed. They sarcastically chided the boys for chasing me but did nothing else to stop them. The boys dragged me by my feet down the hill toward the lake shore. Once I was in the weeds, they pawed at me and tore at my clothes.

February 2, 2020. The children surrounded me at the picnic and during the bus ride back to Glen Lake, the elementary school, and once we were at the school the girls surrounded me in the girls' lavatory. They all wanted to know one thing: What happened? The rest of the fifth grade was playing softball with Mr. Noble at the time, and that is where four of us, two girls and two boys, were supposed to be, not talking under the trees. The other girl ran top speed to the softball diamond when the boys gave chase. I ran top speed toward my teacher, Mr. Ostern, and another teacher, Miss Woodquist. I felt panicked, and as I supposed, I would never recover. I was not going to live a normal life.

I could not run that fast again. Running was over, yet there was running still ahead of me in school, a task I would not be able to perform normally. I did not turn against school. It was toward the end of the school year and Mr. Ostern who had enjoyed my terror would not be my teacher in the fall. Probably I rationalized that we were not at school when it happened. We were at a park quite far from home and school. Perhaps I turned against that park even though it was one of my dad's favorite places. It was Baker Park at Lake Independence in Maple Plain, Minnesota. On the other hand, Maple Plain is where my grandmother's best friend, Emma,

had lived and driven her brown Buick. It could not be a bad place, though no resolution came of my protest and self-defense.

(February 23, 2020). The two girls who ran, Laurie and I, had voted in class for George McGovern in an open show of hands. Our hands went up first. The other 28 kids who voted for Richard Nixon raised their hands next. I felt so embarrassed, I could die, or so I told my mother. I went to Mr. Ostern's desk and suggested a private ballot for next time. Years later, my mom told me that the schools had adopted closed ballot voting. The purpose of it was to give us practice.

February 3, 2020. The other time at Baker Park I was going into fourth grade and picnicking with my family. My older brother and I were in the water swimming. My mother and father and younger sister were on the shore. My parents were preparing food at a picnic table. My sister was shoveling sand into a pail. The water was quite shallow. At Lake Independence one goes out very far until the floor of the lake drops off and the deeper water begins. My brother was 14 or 15, and I was already 9. I remember having been in third grade, so he would have been in ninth. Yet it was summer so we weren't in school. So apparently I was 9 and my brother was 14 or 15, and fourth grade had not started yet, and for him it would be tenth. It matters to know our ages. My brother poked his foot toward me and hooked his toe on my bikini elastic and gave it a downward tug. I froze in terror. Then I started running toward shore against the weight of the water, running and running until I got closer to shore. I saw my parents looking peaceful and involved in their activities and decided not to tell them what my brother had done.

At home I told my closest friend, Lori, about the water and the shore and the thing he did. I told her because I wasn't sure if it was third base, and I wanted her to tell me. Instead she ran through the neighborhood calling out, "Peter Bogle went to third with his sister." It was a good thing it was summer, and the calling did not go as far as school. At least I don't think it did. Maybe it rang throughout the summer and landed in the fourth grade. That is, I

wonder if I had a reputation that led to other dastardly events. We said, not knowing it wasn't true, that it *was* third, and I was in third grade, but really third grade was over, and fourth grade was on its way.

At some point my brother punished Lori for spraying a false rumor using our names. He knocked her down in gravel, and she has a scar on her knee to this day, which she showed to him when he visited. He apologized for it then. That was in around 2000, almost 30 years later.

February 4, 2020. In fourth grade I started bleeding from my urethra. It stung very much, and the toilet bowl filled with blood. I told my mother only that there was blood in the toilet, and she kept me home from school. She told me what a period is and gave me menstrual pads. That day I walked up the hill on McKenzie Boulevard and reflected that I was a woman now, even though I had not even heard of a period before that. Later that day, it became apparent to my mother that I didn't have a period. I had a urinary tract infection. I believe we went to the doctor, but I don't remember it. There was no talk of what causes a urinary tract infection, but it likely was poor hygiene, unless a more innocent explanation existed. It wasn't sex, another cause of urinary tract infection, or menopause, another cause, things I would not have known. The next day my mother gave me a note to give to my teacher, Mrs. Brendemuehl. I can't remember what the note said or if it was sealed. On the playground I told a few girls what a period is.

My father gave a microbiology presentation to the fourth grade class. He tested the bacteria on our fingers in petri dishes, incubated the cultures, and returned to give them to each kid. Some of the kids had tremendous growths in their petri dishes and others only sparse growths. Then we all went to the girls' room and the boys' room to wash our hands.

I dreamt that my mother had told authorities that I had sexual problems in childhood. I believe that she didn't actually say that, at least not to me, and I know her well both from childhood and recent years. I lived with her in my adult life for twelve years. What

if she had been called to the school to account for her daughter's behavior? What if the boys were not considered worse?

(February 23, 2020). In fourth grade the students formed a corporation. We elected officers, sold a product that we designed, and sold stocks. I was elected Treasurer. I earned \$64.50. We designed and made and sold decoupage fruit plaques.

February 5, 2020. In fifth grade there was an assembly for our grade in the gym. We learned about the uterus, the ovaries, the fallopian tubes, and ova, along with testicles, other things, and the vas deferens. Then we watched a film about sanitary pads and swimming.

Because I hadn't really gotten my period when I thought I had, Lori gave me the nickname "false alarm" Bogle. I finally bled in eighth grade after waiting four or five years. From the start my attitude toward being a woman was positive. I liked wearing a bra, and I mostly liked having a period. I didn't get cramps as many girls did and thought it was because I was tall. I thought my long torso left more room for my organs. In seventh grade I was one of the tall girls at 5'2".

(February 23, 2020). In sixth grade I wrote poems and decorated them in colored ink. I had an *Illustrated Treasury of Poetry for Children* from age 9, a rhyming dictionary from my father, and a collection of poetry by *25 Minnesota Poets*. One of the poets in that book, George Roberts, came to our sixth grade class. I soon learned that he didn't like rhyming poems, so at my desk I wrote an abstract unmetred one about a giraffe.

(February 5, 2020). In sixth grade I married six boys, including two who were twins. I had studied Henry VIII and his six wives for a school paper that I still have. The level of the paper is advanced. My mother must have typed it, but the voice is mine even to this day. Most adults cannot write as well as I could then. It makes no sense that a girl who can achieve at that level must spend most of her adult years unemployed, partly on welfare, and laboring under disability. Or that she has to have manic depression. Even if

she does have manic depression (and she does), she should not have to remain exiled from the motions of regular society.

In sixth grade I was considered gifted. There was a Gifted and Talented Pilot Project. My teacher, Miss Epsky, knew that I was looking for female role models when I happened on the wives of Henry VIII. I might have tried to showcase women poets or First Ladies of the United States instead, both things that interested me, but Henry VIII is where it landed. I imitated him by marrying six times, all in the sixth grade. Most of the boys I pretended to marry thought my classroom seductions were funny, but there is a chance that one of the boys turned violent against me.

Six of us kids were assigned to Room 100 where we learned to use the school district's first computer. Selection was based on our math aptitudes, and I was the only girl. Perhaps one boy or another felt jealous to be left out of that room.

It was the year my brother had broken my arm by pulling me to the floor from the bed by my foot. I had refused to go to Jolly Jingles "the little store" for him. I realize that I probably told other kids that my brother had caused the fracture. My arm wasn't in a cast. It was in a Scottish plaid sling.

Toward the end of the year, a boy on the playground got me to the ground and kicked me in the temple. My mother had to get me from school, but I don't remember it. I remember the next day when we went to tour the junior high on my birthday, and my vision started swimming. We went to the doctor again, and he told me I had a migraine. Migraines, he said, were caused by excitement. That day came the worst physical pain I have ever endured in my life. For symptoms I took a caffeine pill called Caffergot. Okay, I forgot! That a boy had caused the initial injury is not something I consciously knew until after my manic depression (bipolar disorder) diagnosis in 1991, when I wrote 17 years later to request doctor records.

(February 23, 2020). The Gifted kids met with Mr. Hollenbeck in his office on the wing where the first, second, and third grade classes were. He was our school counselor, but the

gifted kids had required meetings with him. In ninth grade and beyond I would become his babysitter. He and his wife had four children. The oldest was the same age as my sister, five years younger than I, and the youngest was an infant. In their living room was a hanging wicker chair, and I sat there to read *Our Bodies Ourselves* after the kids were sleeping.

February 6, 2020. I haven't gotten to the parts I am postponing to write but that I know have yet to come. What parts so far seem like childhood growing pains and what parts seem actionable? The teacher at the picnic table laughed at my terror and did not intervene. Schools had eliminated corporal punishment. The boys acted as if they would rape me if they could. My brother tampering with my bikini bottom is perhaps understandable childhood behavior, but there was terror. Being kicked in the temple, losing consciousness, and developing migraines seem actionable, but they remind me of a sports injury that someone gets past. Landing on the floor on my elbow was rough housing, and it ended in my broken arm. My parents did nothing to my brother for doing that to me. My parents, too, used no physical punishment against us. Often there was no sense that my father knew about our troubles, especially if something had to do with sex, and as if my mother might be keeping him in the dark.

His realm was scientific work in manufacturing in St. Paul, forty-five minutes' drive from Minnetonka. Did his microbiology lesson to the fourth grade relate to my urinary tract infection? It felt like symbolic teaching.

(February 22, 2020). When I was young, even before I entered junior high, my dad who was Swedish and Scottish but looked Latin with jet-black shiny hair and tan skin, traveled to South and Central America to set up microbiology labs. He visited every country and set up labs in manufacturing. He learned Spanish. He taught the lab workers Good Manufacturing Practices. He returned on the jet plane where we could meet his gate in Minneapolis with gifts from every country in Latin America and coins and currency.

(February 6, 2020). Did the boys in the story of childhood have names I remember? Indeed they had first and last names. Are they alive today? It's hard to say, but yes, at least most of them are alive today. Is naming people a conflicted act? Naming people is a hardship, but not naming people is too anonymous. The people become dots in a mysterious landscape. I could assign numbers to them without names or change names (give fictitious names) because naming people could be actionable.

