

Five Stories About Inexperienced Youth

by Gerry Schramm

1. Pharmacy

Randy approached the counter. It appeared that the only person in the pharmacy was the pharmacist himself, Mr. Crubby, and from the sound of the stiff white bag crumpling he was busy saving someone's life, or at least ameliorating someone's discomfort.

Randy thought about leaving. He couldn't ask Mr. Crubby. It would be too awkward. Mr. Crubby knew him and Sandy, and he knew their parents. He would surely tell them. Besides, Randy had heard that it can't happen the first time, especially at 14, and Sandy said she had never done it before. They were safe.

When Mr. Crubby stepped down from the raised platform, Randy turned to leave. "Need something, Randy?" he said to Randy's back. "Nah," Randy said. "I'm good."

2. F=MA

"What'd you say?" August stood on the snow-covered roof with his toboggan.

"I said," said August's best friend, Cody, "force equals mass times acceleration."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"Well, you're not that big and the roof really isn't really that high, so you won't be going very fast, which means you won't hit the ground very hard. I don't see how you can get hurt."

"You're the smart one." August moved to the roof's peak and placed the toboggan between his legs. Maybe his teachers were right. Maybe math does have real-world applications.

3. The Correct Dosage

Surely, Rico thought, two pills every eight hours equaled six pills once a day. Right?

4. The State of Our Schools

"Who can tell me the purpose of government?"

Not one of Mr. Abernathy's students volunteered to answer, so he was forced, as always, to choose the least interested among them.

"Mr. Lockerbie? Perhaps you know the answer?"

Mr. Lockerbie, studying the dark outline of Rebecca Straight's bra strap beneath her thin tee, inhaled sharply. "Uh," he said. "Uh, maybe you could rephrase the question, Mr. Abernathy?"

"Sure, Mr. Lockerbie. What is the purpose of government?"

"Oh. Government. Well, I suppose the purpose of government, being the body that rules, is to do the will of its citizens."

Ostensibly declarative, his answer was in actuality posed as an interrogative.

"Right," Mr. Abernathy said, "And I love my job."

5. Preventive Measures

"Dude, I'm certain the safety is on."

