

The Surprise

Sometime in 2006 I got a message from a name I remembered, barely. It was Walter who sat behind me through all my school years. His last name fell right behind mine alphabetically. We spoke during school but never hung out after school.

Right after that first email in 2006 we spoke via telephone. He had found me on some high school website. When Katrina hit in 2007, I went home to New Orleans to help out. Walter offered to drive me around. My brother didn't want to there were roofing tacks all over. Walter He looked older, but then so did I.

At the end of that ride he spoke words that surprised me:

"Robin when we were young kids my father beat me all the time. He often used the attic fan belt. Some days I hid under the house until I was sure he would be asleep. It was very bad. He cursed me and said I was good for nothing, I wasn't wanted. But I managed to keep going day after day. I had a secret in my mind that helped me.

I would think, "Robin likes me, even if you don't." You smiled at me every day, you turned around and talked to me in class you treated me like I was somebody. I would think of you while he was beating me. That's how I survived, thank you, you saved me.

I nearly fell over. I didn't know what to say.

I surely couldn't say: Oh, Walter think nothing of it, being friendly is my nature."

While thoughts of "God how that could be", "I had no idea" ran through me for several seconds I managed a big smile and a long tight hug. As I fought my tears I said, "Gosh Walter It was great to see you again, I am glad you made it, sorry all that happened to you, if I helped I am glad. Let's be sure keep in touch. I will call you when I get home, we have each other's email so we can continue to write. Next time I come to town I want to meet your wife and grandkids."

Walter died later that same year. All I have to say is, "You just never know."