

Confessions of a sixth-grade bully
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My bullying victim was Robert, the son of a single dad raising a pair of kids as best he could in a rough northern town.

I was hardly alone in my persecution of Robert. The neighbourhood kids in 553, the subdivision of mobile home trailers literally on the wrong side of the tracks in Hay River, made a habit of harassing both Robert and, to a lesser degree, his younger sister Rhonda.

Robert's crimes were numerous.

He wasn't very smart.

His dad dressed him in farm-boy hick clothes.

He was hopeless when asked to throw a baseball, catch a football, kick a soccer ball or shoot a hockey puck. This made him the last kid chosen every time when picking teams.

He was gullible.

Based on these transgressions, we made his life hell.

The school bus stop was directly in front of his house. He would rarely venture out before the bus came because, with his dad long gone to work, it really wasn't safe. In the winter he was pelted with snowballs and, since we couldn't get him directly, we'd just throw snowballs at the house and shout taunts at him until the bus came.

One morning, my friend Troy and I came up with an ingenious plan.

Noticing that the door opened outwards from the porch, we took a snow shovel, rammed the blade in a slat between the two-by-fours on the wooden step and tucked the handle underneath the door knob.

Guess who missed the bus to school that day?

We howled with laughter and won the admiration of all our friends. We looked forward to the next day when Robert would be forced to come out early and we could give him face washes in the snow at our discretion.

Robert's dad showed up on my porch at supper time.

A big imposing man who worked for the railroad, he was looking for an apology and somebody to pay for a new door knob.

Robert broke it in his desperate, fruitless attempt to get out before the bus left.

Even if the bus had waited, he would have left an empty trailer with the front door unable to close in the middle of winter.

I'm not sure how I escaped dad's belt.

Troy was not so lucky at his house.

Although Troy and I removed ourselves as active participants in Robert's childhood misery, we remained constant witnesses, hanging back while other kids, including girls, did the dirty work. We never raised a finger in protest.

It all came to an end one morning when Robert was fooled into opening the door by a group of kids. A few bold boys and girls stormed inside and refused to leave as they tracked wet snow all over the house.

Troy and I were standing in the driveway when we heard the yelling. Suddenly, everyone ran out of the house and the door slammed shut.

Robert didn't get on the bus that day, either.

In his anger, he had pulled one of his dad's hunting rifles off the wall and pointed it at the kids in his house, screaming at them with tears in his eyes to get out.

I have no memories of Robert after this incident, which probably means we continued to bully him in the only way we could - we left him alone and completely ignored him.

Bullying is not about good kids and bad kids, cool kids and nerds, big kids and small. It's about being different and Robert was. It's about power and we used it to cruel ends for no better reason than because we could and he was there.

Comment:

Sixth grade bully

written by [April](#) , November 23, 2007 (09:58:46 AM)

A very thought provoking letter, Mr. Godbout!

Thank you for your candidness.

I was bullied in High School (just a wee bit) and at my first job, but I passed it down to my shame. Now, in my 63rd year, I'm STILL trying not to gossip (the adult? form of bullying)

"When will we ever learn, when will we ever learn?" My apologies to Pete Seeger.