

Memories of my Happy Days at St Michael's School, San Francisco.

Sr. Theresa Berry.

It was the year of 1967 that I arrived at St Michael School in San Francisco, feeling very excited about starting a new year in new surroundings and a new community of sisters. I had a few weeks to prepare for classes and I got to meet many of the parents in school settings.

School began in early September, I was assigned to teach second grade. I had taught this age-level before and had very positive experiences with the children, so I was feeling excited and happy. I must say that in my first week at St Michael School I learned that these lovely children were very lively, full of energy and very musically endowed. They would come into the classroom in the morning smiling and happy and their chatter would begin as soon as we had finished Morning Prayer.



To help these lively children and the quieter ones, I decided to employ the use of a record player and play some relaxing classical music as a background to their creative abilities. The results were astounding as these children loved all music, but this softer, classical music helped to keep a calmness about them. They and their parents alike commented many times about the difference in their quiet demeanour and work skills as they smiled and moved their little bodies to the rhythm of the music. It made for a lovely beginning to our school day. We were all at a place of peacefulness and quiet, because when it was time for 'quiet' work, copying their spelling words from the blackboard or practising their handwriting, I would play the music!!

As the years moved on, I assumed responsibilities for the Fourth Grade. I brought my record player along with me! It was like a Plan Book which I brought to every classroom. I recall one Fourth-Grader asking me if the class could have music at Art Class! And so we did. After all, this was Music Appreciation time as well as Art Appreciation!! During the class, these young ladies of 9 years of age would quietly dance/ act out up and down the aisles. The 'call to dance' was in their bones. So yes, they danced and made beautiful movements. Some of the boys were amused at this lovely display of innate talent, so I invited them to show us their same talent. I would watch as they demonstrated their gift of movement! Absolutely wonderful, always showing the talent of their heritage.

Now, as for the parents of these children, I must say that they were so great about their involvement in their children's lives. I felt so lucky always having them volunteering around the school in many different ways. They helped inside and outside the school. The fathers of the children made sure that every team had a coach for the different sports because we didn't have funds enough to pay for a coach. The Dads themselves were the coaches-volunteers. These generous, hard-working men also supplied the teams' uniforms.

They were great years I had at St Michael in SF. I still meet up with some of the families when I visit my family in that city by the Bay. Memories of St Michael stay strongly with me and often play a role in my interaction with children to this day.