

MRS. PERKINS' KINDERGARTEN

Kathryn J. Morano

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My life-long adventures in learning began at the tender age of three when my mother enrolled me in Mrs. Perkins' Kindergarten on Oak Street in a lovely large Victorian. That first day, because I cried when my mother tried to leave, she promised to stay in the entry hall while I was led off to join the other children. Next thing I knew, when I looked over, my mother had disappeared. After I had been attending for months, I remember thinking how babyish other tots were when they cried for their mothers. Although my memory is hazy about most of the happy time I spent there, some things do come to mind.

Each day started off with the pledge of allegiance. Hours of activities followed. There was a large room off to the right where long low tables were set up over the linoleum covered floor. Part of the day, all the children gathered around and did things like coloring or puzzles. I can still remember the fat crayons for little hands. Red became my favorite color. Afterwards, Mrs. Perkins would guide us to a back room where she taught us many a song to piano accompaniment. I distinctly recall learning the tune to "Over the River and Through the Woods." I also had my first experience with musical chairs. After some physical activity we headed back to the room with the tables for lunch, where I opened my red plaid lunchbox with a thermos. Lunchtime was when I discovered the existence of sweet snacks such as Twinkies, which I was not allowed to have. My lunchbox always contained grapes.

During part of the day, the older children were led upstairs to spend time with Mrs. Perkins' sister. It happened that I took a liking to one of the older boys. However, I was not allowed to follow him upstairs, which sometimes resulted in my sulking. In good weather we went out for recess before the arrival of the parents to pick us up. That was where one little boy told me he was going to marry me when we grew up. When I encountered him again in high school, he vehemently denied ever saying that. We took turns on the swing set, or chased each other in a game of tag. By the time I was ready to enter first grade, I had learned to read and write, tie my own shoes, and behave in school. I will always cherish those innocent days where learning was so much fun.