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Goin' Fishing during school hours *by Bob Kloos*

Beacon Street had traveled to Roxboro Elementary School before. It's not even two miles from my home in Cleveland Heights. This time we were invited to work with a small band of nine and ten year old boys to help them create a dramatic component for the school's annual celebration of writing called "Children's Ink."

These chosen few had distinguished themselves over the past school year. Their behavior was being monitored carefully. As something of a last resort, they were awarded membership in "The Gentlemen's Club" and expectations from the administration were made clear. It was the hope of my contact, teacher Lynne Maragliano, that this opportunity would invite some or all of them to rise to the occasion and present something they could be proud of. Lynne suggested that something along the line of Mummenshanz would be well received! I had seen the German mime troupe on stage before. I remembered bodies enveloped in stretch material and rolls of toilet tissue to create illusions.

(www.mummenshanz.com)

In two one-hour sessions, I was to meet the students, establish a rapport, design a program, and rehearse.

Our first encounter was memorable. None of them knew me, heard of Beacon Street, or had a clue where to begin. But they were all actors! The energy and desire to express themselves was abundant. All we needed was a channel, a creative direction in which to flow.

Good friend and life mentor Mary Lou Beers had told me about the Fish Philosophy and how she includes it in some of her secular speaking engagements. (www.pikeplacefish.com) The philosophy took on flesh (or scales) at the world famous Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle WA. According to the web site, the people working at the

market "stand for the possibility of World Peace and Prosperity for all people. We believe that it's possible for a person to impact the way other people experience life. Through our work, we can improve the quality of life for others. We are committed to this belief. It's what we do." It was a philosophy that might well be adopted by the gentlemen.

Quickly, the gentlemen and I contrived four short skits based on the four principles of the fish philosophy:

1. **Choose Your Attitude:** Choosing the right attitude will provide you the energy and faith you need to guide you through the day.
2. **Make Work Like Play:** You can be professional and make a profit while having fun at work.
3. **Make their Day:** Your positive attitude and sense of play should bring a smile to your face and to the faces of others.
4. **Be Present:** Be attentive. Listen to others with all your senses.

With the help of a few props (brightly colored cubes of material, egg cartons, foam pipe insulation, a bag of chips and, rolls of toilet tissue) we managed to include everyone with energy and imagination. The toughest audience of all awaited: their peers.

The "Childrens' Ink" assembly was punctuated by the Gentlemen's Club artistry which was accompanied by CD tracks of the original "Little Rascals" music of LeRoy Shield. (ISBN 09992387022) It went very well. The gentlemen were quite pleased with themselves. On the evaluation form, Lynne said: "The boys are still basking in their accomplishment."

The Gentlemen's Club and the smell of fish combined to make for another memorable day at Roxboro Elementary. We had been there before. We will probably be heading back there soon.

