

TELLING TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

Chris Lowe and friends

Number 12

An Educated Guess

It is natural for parents to want to show that they are interested in their children's schooling – and none more so than teacher parents. This little gem was told by a colleague at school, who arrived one morning chuckling to himself.... so much so that all his senior management team colleagues refused to start the early morning meeting until he had shared his good cheer with us. As always personal anecdotes like this are inevitably better in the mouths of the author.... especially one that can hardly get the story out because of the tears in his eyes.... but it is a lovely story nonetheless, even as it stands written thus:-

You will appreciate that.... like most teacher parents, I suspect.... I can't let any opportunity go by without using it to 'educate' my seven-year old daughter. One day I remember foolishly asking her to estimate how many peas there were in a packet of frozen ones my wife had brought home from the co-op. I thought it might be 'educational' to verify the accuracy of her estimate by getting her to take out ten peas, weighing them and then calculating how many would fit into the 500gm pack. Tirzah had her own idea. 'No, dad. That's not good enough. I have done the estimate....you must now count the whole lot to get the exact amount. It's only fair!' She then flounced out to go and play with her pals.

I did start counting the peas, partly as a matter of honour and partly because I wanted to know the answer....but I never completed the task. For one, the peas kept rolling off the table, and for two, my wife came into the kitchen, saw what I was doing and screamed, 'What on earth are you doing with the peas for tonight's dinner party!'

This setback did not pause me in my quest for opportunities to practise 'education' on our daughter. Tea-time last night was as usual the moment for the inevitable parent question....

'So, what did you do at school today, then?'

As usual, too, Tirzah's eyes went up, and she sighed. She placed her elbows firmly on the table, leaving knife and fork pointing skyward. She considered the question carefully.... as though she had never heard it before.

Wife and I paused in our munching and looked at her. We need not have worried. It was the normal moment's thought, and we duly got the answer we fully expected.

'Nothing, dad. Just school.'

She then resumed her attack on her fish fingers, leaving us the usual opening for follow-up questions. We were surprised, therefore, when Kate put her knife and fork down halfway through a chip and said,

'Do you know what, dad, we had a new girl arrive in the class today and she speaks really good English. She's ever so nice.'

My wife joined in. 'Oh? So where does she come from then?'

'She's from India,' replied Tirzah, showing some awe in her voice.

My teacher-parenthood took hold of me at this point.

'That's good, really nice.... And where is India then?' I could at last spy a use for the spinning globe in the corner...the one I had purchased at the PTA sale.

Tirza paused with her fork halfway to her mouth. She laid it down and thought hard. Finally she put her head in cupped hands in front of her, leaning on the table.

'Well, dad, I don't know exactly where it is, but it can't be far..... because she goes home for lunch.'
