

You wouldn't believe what happened at school today

Miro Martin

One evening at a conference

We were sitting around the bar having a few when, laughter being the comedian's drug of choice, I began sharing anecdotes from my teaching career. My audience loved it, so I told a few more and when someone suggested: "Miro, you should write a book" I thought to myself 'someday maybe I will.'

Having time on my hands these days, I've made a start. Here, as a taster, are a few 'you wouldn't believe it but I swear it happened' yarns. Every one is true, I promise; only the names and locations have been changed to avoid my being sued.

Full moon

The first P&F meeting I attended at one of my schools in New Zealand was not so much a baptism of fire – more of a nuclear meltdown, really.

As parents began arriving they began to bicker and trade insults. The welcome for the new principal was a series of short grunts and any dreams I had of working with a supportive and productive body turned to nightmares.

Clearly, I had to get used to a new language register – where every second word was 'f@#k this or a@#\$\$ole, so I turned to a coping strategy a colleague of mine taught me. He used to write 118k on the corner of his white board and whenever he was stressed he looked at this number. It was his annual salary; it didn't help me on this occasion.

The president of the P&F was an extremely large lady who didn't pull any punches and in fact was known for landing real punches.

She showed remarkable restraint under attack and simply said, "well, if you aren't f@#\$in happy I'll f@#\$n leave." At that point she stood up and walked out, as she approached the door she dropped her pants, bared her enormous bottom and shouted, "you're all a pack of a@#\$\$les."

How do you spell that?

I have occasionally come across women breastfeeding their babies on school grounds. It's a delicate issue that needs to be approached with care and diplomacy. In some cultures no-one would raise an eyelid. It's a natural occurrence but in Australia the Anglo component of our culture, in particular, is quite prudish and tends to frown on feeding the babe in public.



One day my secretary led a lady into my office for an enrolment interview. She had twin boys to be enrolled in prep and a newborn in a pram. Her English was poor. As she sat down she undid her blouse and pulled out a breast. It seemed to take an eternity for her to start and she was talking all the time while she prepared for the feed. I really didn't know where to look. Finally the baby attached and I relaxed.

She wanted to enroll her two boys and, as her hands were occupied, I filled in the form for her. The names were Elijah and Isaac. I asked her how to spell these names but couldn't understand her. Without thinking my eyes dropped to her breasts. Elijah was tattooed on one and Isaac on the other. I copied the spelling from the tattoos; at that moment my secretary walked in and I looked up to see both staring at me open-mouthed.

Party trick

While principal of a small rural primary Catholic school, the local police sergeant asked me to take on a young offender who had been released to do some hours of community service. I was reluctant to allow this since some of the parents might object. However, at a parent meeting the matter was discussed and the parents agreed to

allow the young man to work on the grounds under police supervision.

The arrangement worked out really well. He was a good worker and didn't bother the children. One day the police supervisor was called away and I said I'd watch the man until his hours were up.

Towards the end of lunch break I noticed that most of the students had gathered in a cheering, laughing group. When I went to investigate I found that the man had his shirt off. He had two naked women tattooed, one on his back and one on his chest and, as he gyrated, the ladies were 'belly dancing' in front of an appreciative audience.

Tongue twister

I had a first-year student teacher with me in a grade three class on a three-week practicum. Today she wouldn't raise an eyelid but 25 years ago her tattoos and body piercing really made her stand out, especially in a conservative Catholic country primary school.

One day one of my curious eight-year-old girls asked her why she had a stud through her tongue. "It's for the sexual purpotheth." You had to be there.

Pentecost with a difference

The story of Pentecost is about Jesus' apostles after his death. The apostles were scared that they would also be crucified so they hid in a small room. I used to tell the children that Jesus would not have been happy about this. After all his hard work his death would be in vain if no one heard about him, so he sent the Holy Spirit to give the apostles courage and give them a boot up the backside to get out and spread the news.

One year a delegation of agitated parents arrived at my office with a 'serious' complaint. The children had told their parents that I said Jesus had kicked the apostles up the ar@#e.

I wonder how many twisted messages went home during my career. I could write a book just on that one topic. **ET**



Miro Martin retired at the end of 2011. His plans for 2012 include continuing to write for *Education Today*.