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.

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 sexual purposes,” 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
boost up the backside to get out and spread the
news.
One year a delegation of agitation 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.

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

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.

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