I sure didn’t think it was funny when it happened; but as my mom predicted, I would laugh about it some day.

Detention was a term unknown to me before that day in 2nd grade. However, I did know that ‘Molly’ was a word synonymous with annoyance.

I was not a shy kid and I most certainly was not a child that a prissy little pigtailed squirt in a homemade poodle skirt could boss around. Seriously, her mom made her poodle skirts. This was in the 70’s. What a fashion faux paus? I wish I knew what that meant back then because I certainly would have given her grief about it.

It was still a daily argument at home that I had to walk to and from school with her every day just because we lived across the street from each other. I don’t know if our mothers watched with admiration or confusion with me always two steps ahead of her in my muddy grass stained Levis and her in her perfectly pressed frilly dress-of-the-day.

I tried for the most part to ignore her at school. It wasn’t hard. My recess games involved tackling or diving or running or throwing. Her favorite game was to spin and show how high her dress would twirl. Her perfect golden ringlets followed around her and swooped ahead when she stopped. Her shiny patent shoes accented her white lace socks; or the other way around—I wasn’t sure how that worked.

Some girls stared longingly; jealous. Some boys gawked; her ruffly bloomers exposed. I just swallowed back disgust; annoyed with her interruption of our ‘real’ game. The only time I really had to even pay attention to her was when she would come around our game and try to boss us and change the rules to suit her liking. And so it was…

We were just starting our 3rd game of tunnel tag—where of course, I had dominated the first two games—when Molly decided that her dress twirling self-appreciation was no longer amusing her.

She graced us with her presence and decided to join our game. However, she had “ideas” for our game. The most genius one: “I think if you get tagged, you don’t have to have someone crawl through your legs to set you free. They just have to tag you.”

*Huh? Isn’t that the object of TUNNEL tag?* I thought.

She proceeded to explain that she was wearing a dress and it wasn’t lady-like to crawl on your hands and knees. Lady-like? What the hell does that mean?

My retort was something less than friendly. She stood with her hands on her hips, patent shoes perfectly in line with one another. I stood with my hands on my hips, muddy shoes shoulder width apart in athletic ready position. We were at an impasse.

I just saw it out of the corner of my eye; a big fresh pile of dog crap. Not the kind with the distinct logs, but just a pile of mushy crap muddled into an undefined plop. I’m not exactly sure what took over my 2nd grade mind at that point—it certainly wasn’t logic—but I bent over and grabbed that perfect little patent shoe and pulled it—along with Molly’s ankle—and smooshed it in that pile until it was covered in the brown oozing muck.

I stood back and admired my work. Silence and awe filled the faces around us. Thinking back now at that precise moment, I’m sure what I felt was pride.

Molly’s voice shattered my reign of glory, “You are in so much trouble.”

But I wasn’t done yet. I took my eyes from her shit-covered shoe and looked her in the eye. Then my damn hand reflexed across her cheek. Man, that felt good. But only for a second…

Then shock. *Holy crap, I just slapped her. Did I just slap her?*

Molly turned and ran crying across the field to the recess monitor. *Yup, I just slapped her.*

I saw the horrored expression cross the monitor’s face as Molly read to her my guilty verdict. The slow scan across the field brought the recess monitor eye to eye with me and she pointed with one long finger, turned her palm up, and curled her finger inward motioning me to proceed her way.

I was the first 2nd grader to ever receive a month long detention. I think there’s a plaque at the school with my name and two other notorious wrong-doers commemorating our placement in history at Schroeder Elementary. Well, at least it’s cool to think there is.