

BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

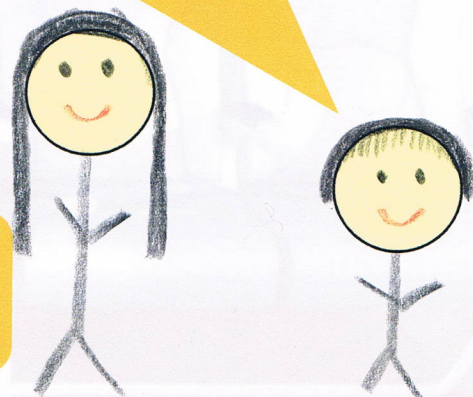
**TRANSFORMATION:**  
**NOODLE RACISM,**  
**TRANSFORMER SEXISM,**  
**AND OTHER DEFINING**  
**MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF**  
**A CHINESE-AMERICAN**  
**IMMIGRANT**

ADAPTED BY  
ROMAN CHIARELLO

WHEN I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD,  
MY PARENTS TRICKED ME.

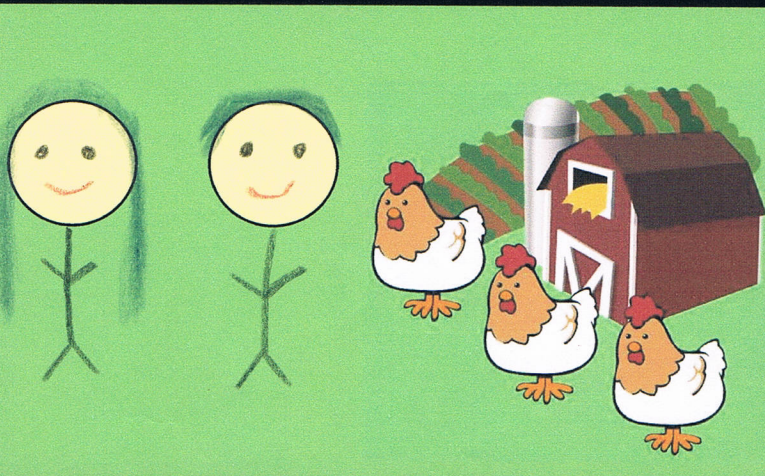
MOM, WHERE ARE GRANDMA  
AND GRANDPA? SHOULDN'T  
THEY BE HERE SOON?

THEY'RE RIGHT  
BEHIND US,  
SWEETIE.



LONG STORY SHORT, THEY WEREN'T RIGHT BEHIND US. MY PARENTS ONLY SAID THAT SO I WOULD GET ON THE PLANE WITH THEM. THEY LIED TO ME. I REMEMBER CRYING DURING THE PLANE RIDE. I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE CHINA AND MY GRANDPARENTS!

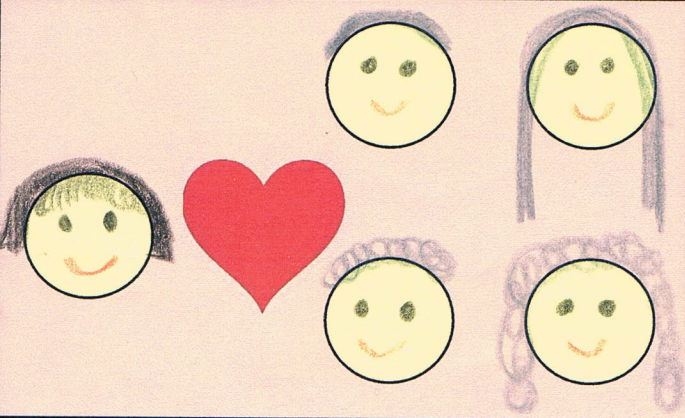
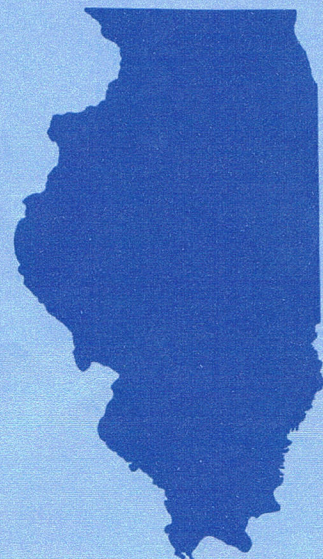
TWO OF THEM HAD A CORN FARM, WITH  
LOTS OF LITTLE CHICKENS.



THE OTHER TWO LIVED WAY UP IN THE  
MOUNTAINS.

I SPLIT MY TIME BETWEEN THEM.  
EVEN THOUGH MY PARENTS ONLY  
VISITED ME EVERY ONCE IN A  
WHILE, I DIDN'T MIND. MY  
GRANDPARENTS WERE AWESOME!

NOW IT WAS TIME  
FOR ME TO START  
A NEW LIFE IN  
AMERICA. I WAS  
MOVING TO  
ILLINOIS, WHERE  
MY PARENTS LIVED  
AND WERE GOING  
TO GRAD SCHOOL.  
THEY FINALLY HAD  
ENOUGH MONEY  
FOR ME TO JOIN  
THEM.

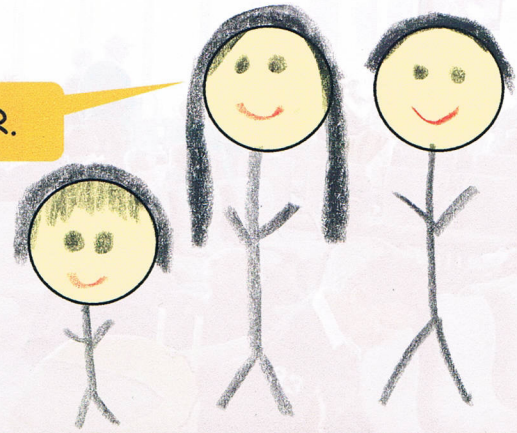


WHEN WE GOT OFF THE PLANE, THE AIRPORT WORKERS WERE REALLY CONFUSED.

IS THIS A BOY?

NO, SHE IS OUR DAUGHTER.

ARE YOU SURE? YOU CAN'T CHANGE IT ON THE DOCUMENTS AFTER THIS...



WE MOVED INTO A SMALL APARTMENT IN SPRINGFIELD. I STARTED GOING TO KINDERGARTEN, AND IT DIDN'T TAKE ME LONG TO GET MY FIRST DETENTION.

SIT DOWN, LITTLE GIRL. YOU CAN'T STAND ON A SCHOOL BUS...SIT DOWN!!!!



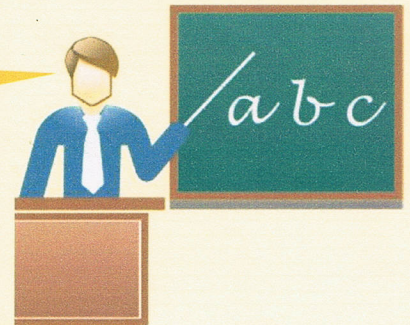
I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE BUS DRIVER WAS SAYING, BUT I REALLY LIKED LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW. AFTER THAT, MY PARENTS REALIZED I HAD TO LEARN ENGLISH. FAST.

THEY HIRED AN ENGLISH TUTOR...WHO ONLY SPOKE ENGLISH...

HEY, I DON'T SPEAK CHINESE, BUT I THINK YOU WILL LEARN A LOT FROM ME!



???



SOMEHOW, IT WORKED. I REACHED MY GRADE LEVEL IN ENGLISH IN JUST ONE YEAR.



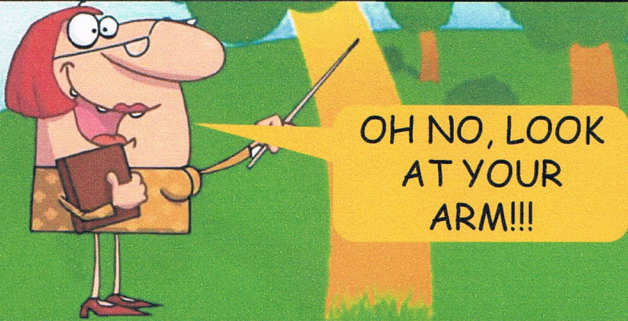
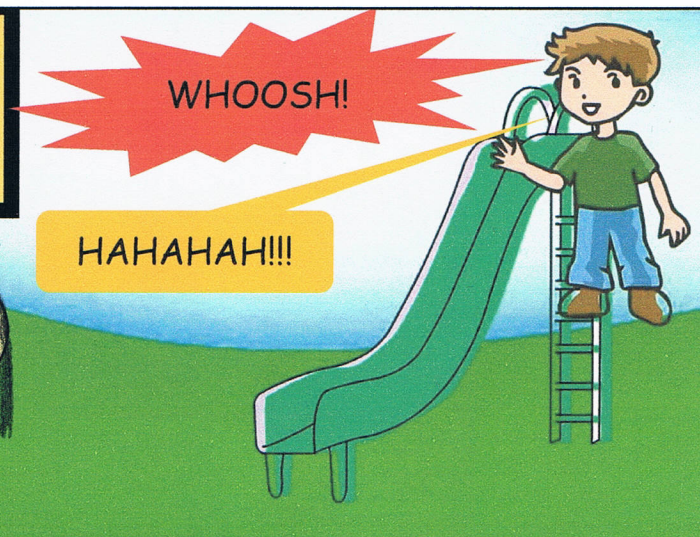
GREAT JOB SUNNY!

THANK YOU!

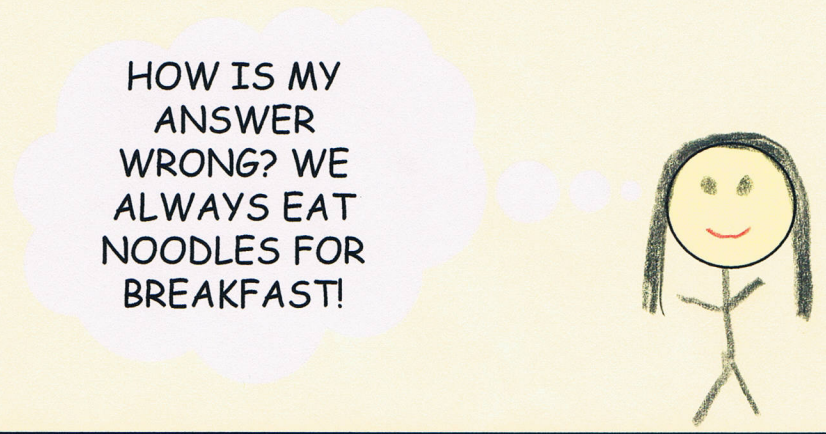
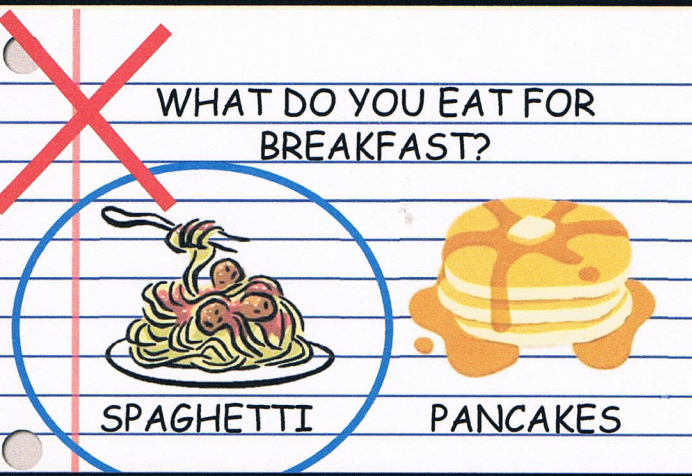


STILL, I DIDN'T SPEAK PERFECTLY. AND THE OTHER KIDS NOTICED...

AT SCHOOL, ONE BOY SAW HOW SHY I WAS AND ALWAYS PUSHED ME AROUND BECAUSE OF IT. THE WORST WAS WHEN HE PUSHED ME DOWN THE SLIDE.



I ALSO HAD A HARD TIME PICKING UP ON AMERICAN NORMS.

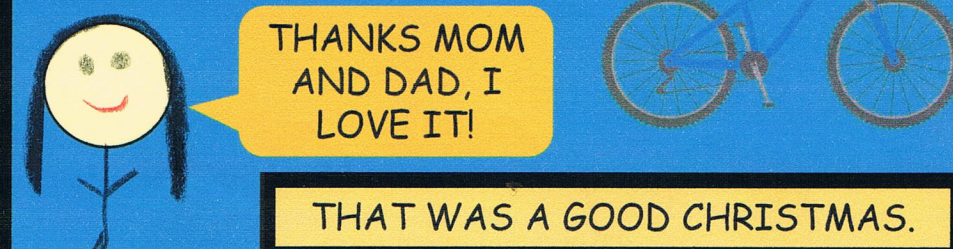


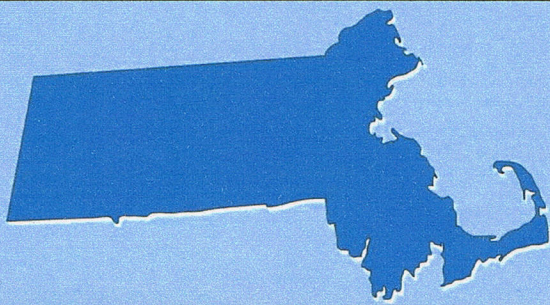
IN ILLINOIS, WE ALWAYS WENT TO CHURCH. THAT'S WHERE WE MET ELAINE. SHE WOULD INVITE US TO HER CHRISTMAS PARTIES. WE BAKED COOKIES AND DECORATED HER HUGE TREE WITH THE OTHER FAMILIES. THAT WAS REALLY FUN.



AFTER THE PARTIES, WE WOULD GO BACK TO OUR APARTMENT. WE HAD A BIG TREE TOO!

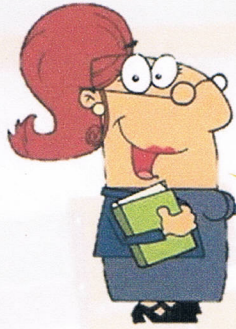
ONE YEAR, I PRAYED FOR A BIKE. MY PARENTS FOUND ONE FOR \$5 AT A GARAGE SALE.





WHEN I WAS IN 2ND GRADE, WE MOVED TO SOUTH HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS BECAUSE MY PARENTS GOT NEW JOBS AS PROFESSORS. THE COMMUNITY WAS NOT VERY WELCOMING TOWARD US.

ONE DAY, MY SCHOOLTEACHER ASKED ME A WEIRD QUESTION.



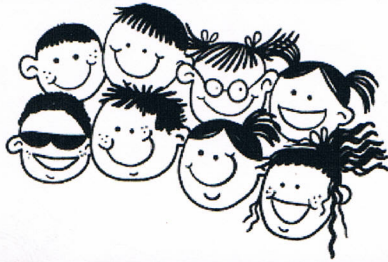
WHAT HOST FAMILY ARE YOU HERE WITH?

MY PARENTS...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

DID YOU COME OVER WITH ANOTHER FAMILY?

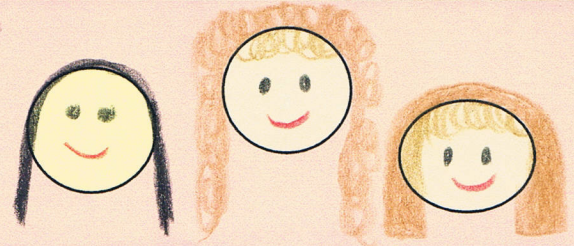


APPARENTLY, A LOT OF CHINESE ORPHANS COME TO AMERICA AND ARE USED AS MAIDS IN ANOTHER FAMILY'S HOME. I COULDN'T BELIEVE SHE SAID THAT. I STARTED CRYING.



THE STUDENTS WERE NO BETTER. MOST OF THEM DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME BECAUSE I WASN'T WHITE.

I HAD TWO FRIENDS: KIMBERLY AND AMANDA. KIMBERLY WAS BULLIED BECAUSE OF HER LISPE, AND AMANDA WAS BULLIED BECAUSE SHE WAS LARGER THAN THE OTHER GIRLS. AT LEAST WE HAD EACH OTHER.



MY MOM WORKED AS A PROFESSOR AT MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE. AFTER SCHOOL, I WOULD GO WAIT FOR HER TO FINISH.

SUNNY, DO YOU WANT SOME CURLY FRIES?



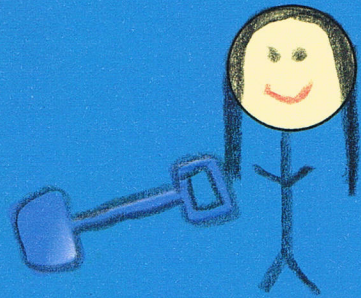
YES MOM!



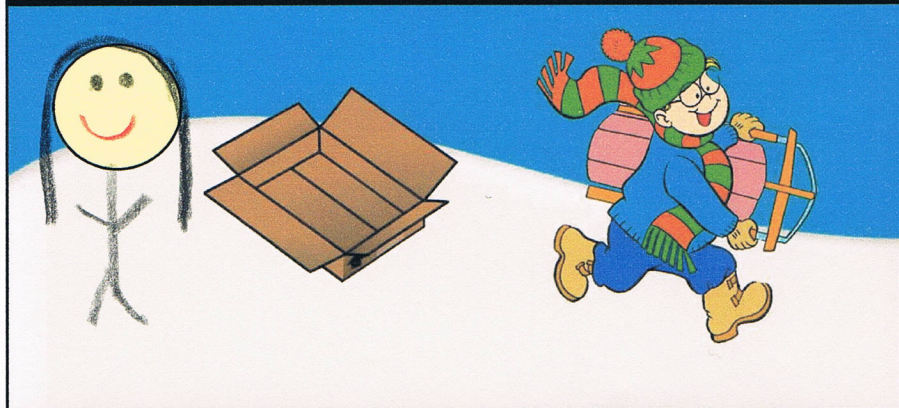
EVEN THOUGH I HAD MY CURLY FRIES, I WAS ALONE AND BORED. EVENTUALLY, I GOT USED TO IT.

DURING THE WINTERS, THE NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS WOULD SLIDE DOWN THE HILL IN THEIR SLEDS. I DIDN'T HAVE A SLED, BUT MY PARENTS FOUND ME A CARDBOARD BOX THAT WORKED JUST AS WELL.

I ALSO HAD A LITTLE SHOVEL. IT WAS MEANT FOR SAND, NOT SNOW, SO I HAD TO BE CAREFUL WITH IT. ONE DAY, THE OTHER KIDS ASKED TO BORROW IT.



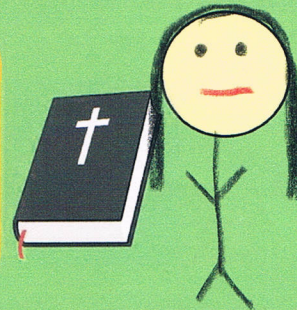
HEY, CAN WE SEE THAT?



LATER THAT DAY, THEY GAVE IT BACK. IT WAS BROKEN.

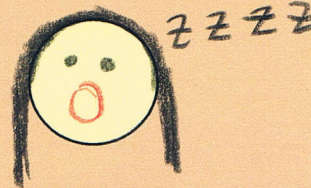
OUR CHURCH IN MASSACHUSETTS WAS AWFUL TOO. IN THE KIDS' CHURCH, I HAD TO MEMORIZE BIBLE PASSAGES.

WRONG! COME BACK AND TRY AGAIN IN FIVE MINUTES.



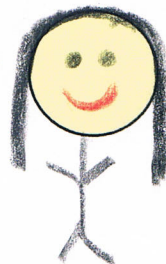
UGH, THIS IS SO POINTLESS!

ONE TIME, I WENT TO THE ADULT CHURCH INSTEAD OF BIBLE STUDY. IT WAS REALLY BORING...



...BUT THE LAST STRAW CAME DURING PLAYTIME.

WOAH, A TRANSFORMER! SO COOL!"



PUT THAT DOWN, YOU CAN'T PLAY WITH THAT!

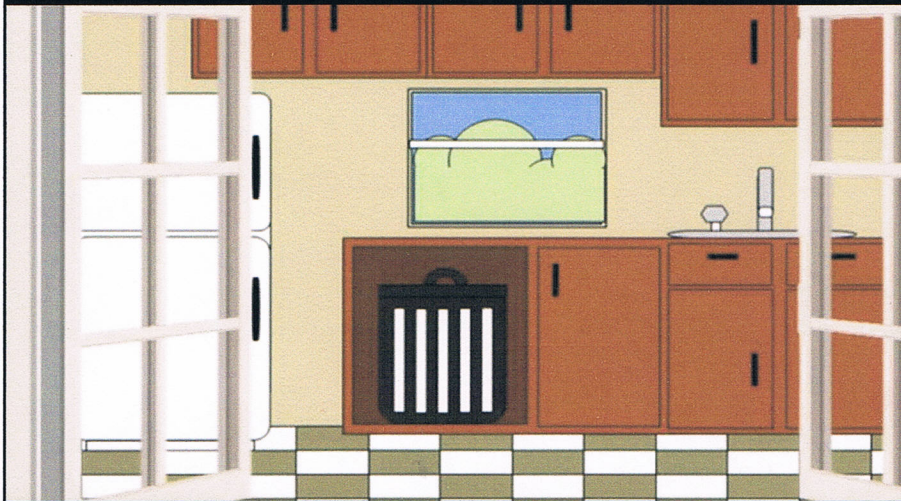
OH THAT'S THE WRONG TOY!

EWWW, THAT'S FOR BOYS!

THE OTHER KIDS WERE SO MEAN THAT DAY. AFTER THAT, I NEVER WANTED TO GO BACK THERE.

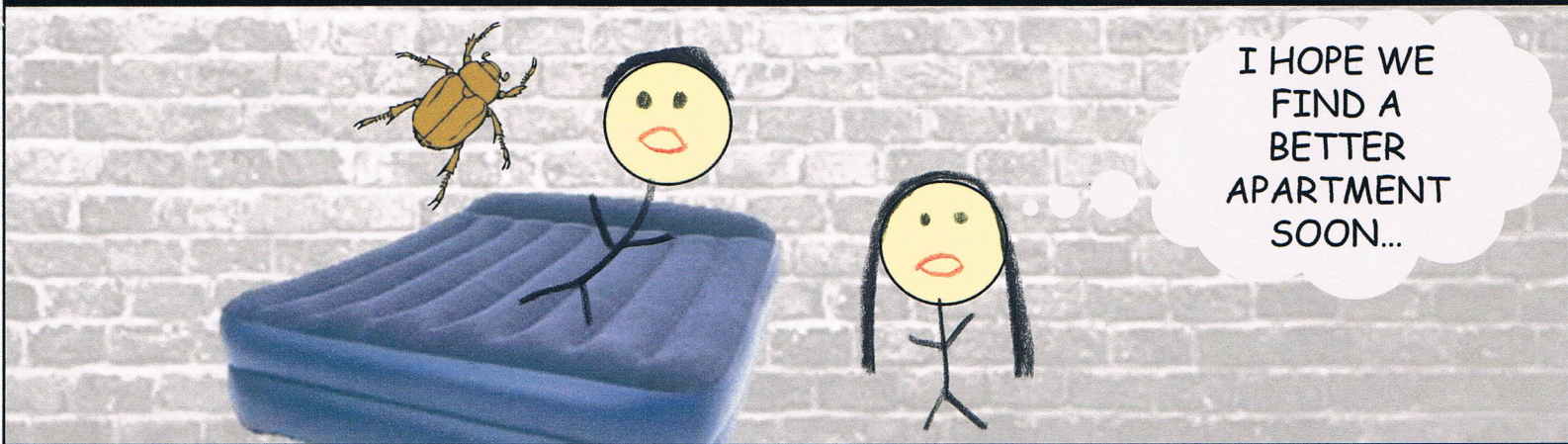
WHEN I WAS IN FOURTH GRADE, MY PARENTS SAID WE WERE GOING TO NEW JERSEY. DAD WENT FIRST. HE LIVED IN A SMALL STUDIO APARTMENT UNTIL HE COULD FIND A BIGGER ONE WE COULD ALL LIVE IN.

ONE TIME, I STAYED THERE WITH HIM OVERNIGHT. THERE WAS A SMALL KITCHEN BEHIND AN ACCORDION DOOR...

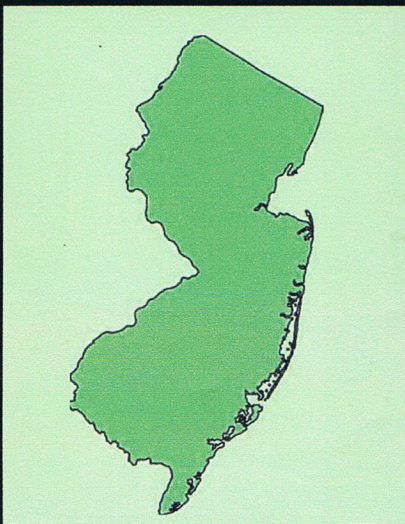


...AND A MATTRESS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM.

WHILE DAD WAS SLEEPING, I SAW A COCKROACH WALKING RIGHT NEXT TO HIS EAR. THANKFULLY, HE ONLY HAD TO STAY THERE FOR A FEW SHORT MONTHS.

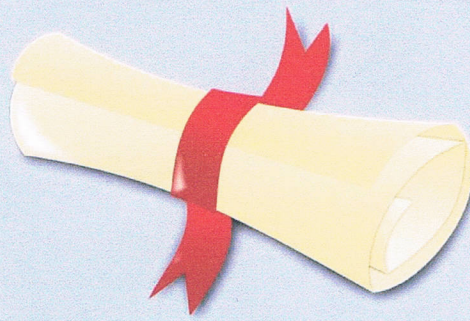


OUR MOVE TO NEW JERSEY WAS FINALIZED OVER THE SUMMER BEFORE I STARTED FIFTH GRADE.

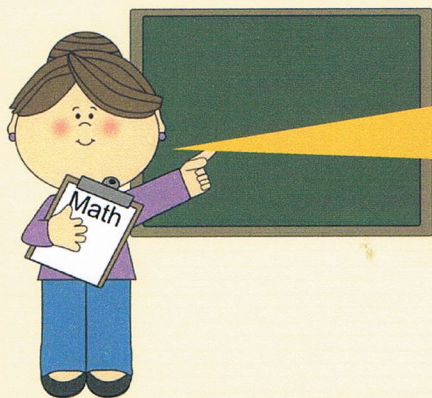


WE MOVED TO A MUCH NICER APARTMENT THAN THE ONE DAD LIVED IN.

SCHOOL IN NEW JERSEY WAS VERY DIFFERENT THAN SCHOOL IN MASSACHUSETTS. RIGHT BEFORE WE LEFT MASSACHUSETTS, I GRADUATED FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.



I THOUGHT I WOULD BE STARTING MIDDLE SCHOOL IN NEW JERSEY, BUT I STILL HAD ONE MORE YEAR OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO GO.

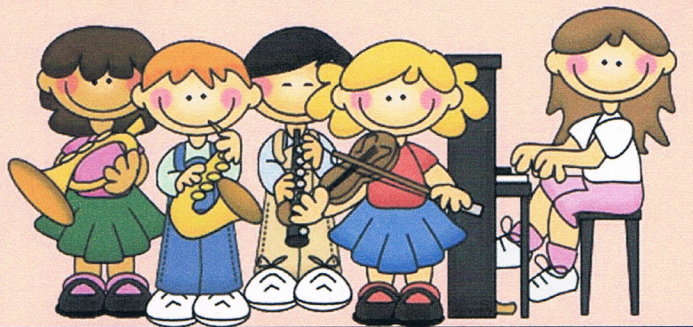


WELCOME TO FIFTH GRADE!



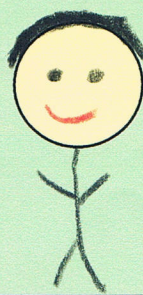
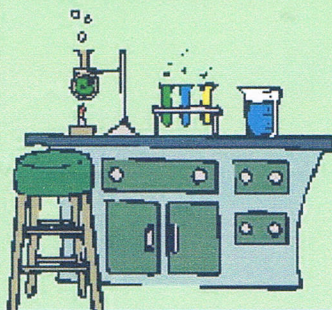
UGH, I THOUGHT I WAS DONE WITH THIS

OVERALL THOUGH, MY NEW SCHOOL IN NEW JERSEY WAS MUCH BETTER THAN MY OLD ONES. NOBODY QUESTIONED WHO MY FAMILY WAS OR WHAT I ATE FOR BREAKFAST.



MY ONE COMPLAINT IS THAT MUSIC EDUCATION WAS MUCH LESS DEVELOPED IN NEW JERSEY THAN MASSACHUSETTS. I REMEMBER LEARNING SO MUCH ABOUT NOTES AND INSTRUMENTS BEFORE WE MOVED, BUT IN MY NEW SCHOOL, WE WERE STILL LEARNING THE BASICS.

IN NEW JERSEY, MOM AND DAD HAD MUCH BETTER JOBS. THEY BOTH WORKED AS CHEMISTS IN THE GAS INDUSTRY.



THEY WERE ABLE TO SAVE UP MONEY UNTIL...



...WE MOVED INTO A HOUSE! THE HOUSE WAS IN THE SAME TOWN, JUST A FEW BLOCKS FROM OUR APARTMENT.



SINCE THEN, MY LITTLE SISTER ANNIE WAS BORN, MY DAD HAS GOTTEN AN EVEN BETTER JOB, AND OUR FAMILY IS MUCH MORE STABLE.

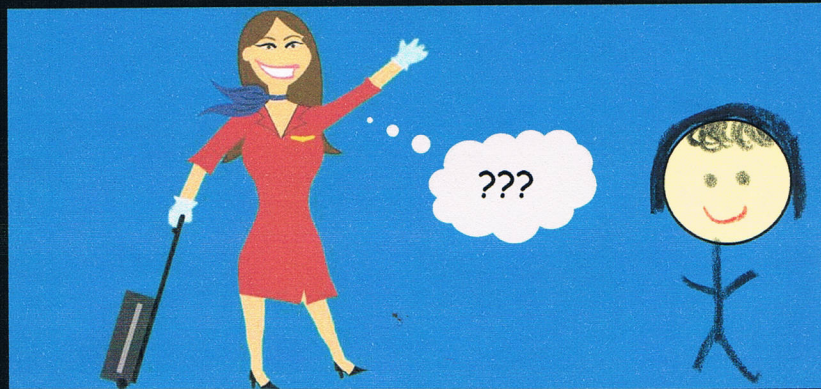
RECENTLY, MY PARENTS BOUGHT MY NINE-YEAR-OLD SISTER ANNIE A PIANO FOR \$1,000.



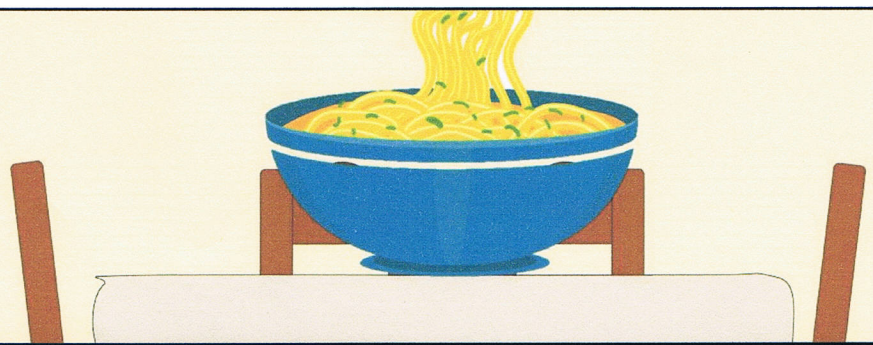
THAT USED TO BE MY PARENTS' COMBINED MONTHLY SALARY.

# REFLECTIONS

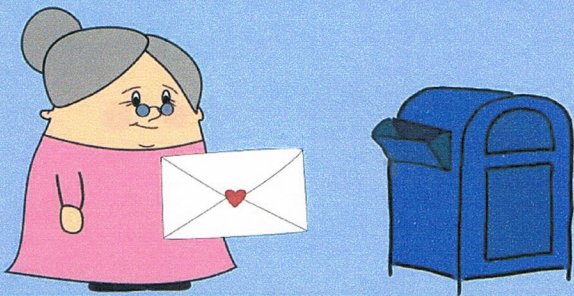
1. WHEN I WAS LITTLE, MY GRANDPARENTS BELIEVED THAT LONG HAIR WAS BAD LUCK. THIS IS WHY MY HAIR WAS SO SHORT AT THE AIRPORT, AND WHY THE AMERICAN AIRPORT WORKERS THOUGHT I WAS A BOY (UNDERSTANDABLY).



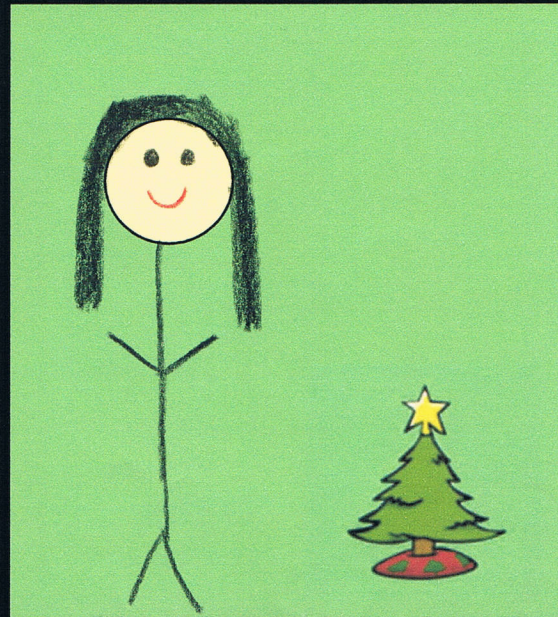
2. I STILL EAT NOODLES FOR BREAKFAST, BUT I HAVE COME TO LEARN THAT THIS IS NOT AS COMMON AMONG AMERICANS.



3. ELAINE, OUR FRIEND FROM THE CHURCH IN ILLINOIS, STILL MAILS US HANDWRITTEN CHRISTMAS CARDS EVERY YEAR.



4. I NOW REALIZE HOW SMALL OUR CHRISTMAS TREE IN ILLINOIS WAS. IT ONLY LOOKED BIG BECAUSE I WAS SO SHORT. HERE'S A MORE ACCURATE COMPARISON BASED ON MY CURRENT HEIGHT:



5. I NEVER SPOKE TO AMANDA AGAIN AFTER LEAVING MASSACHUSETTS, BUT KIMBERLY CAME TO VISIT US IN NEW JERSEY A FEW YEARS AGO. SHE TOLD US HOW HER GRANDMOTHER DIED FROM BREAST CANCER, AND HOW HER MOTHER WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF HER OWN BATTLE WITH THE DISEASE.

~

I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER SINCE. I WONDER IF SHE HAS A FACEBOOK...



**R**

6. MY LOVE FOR TRANSFORMERS EVENTUALLY DEVELOPED INTO A PASSION FOR THE STEM FIELD. I CURRENTLY STUDY COMPUTER ENGINEERING AT RUTGERS AND HOPE TO WORK ON SELF-DRIVING CARS ONE DAY.

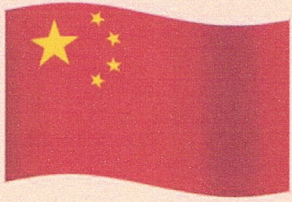


7. SINCE WE LEFT SOUTH HADLEY, THE TOWN HAS DEVELOPED A WIDESREAD REPUTATION FOR BEING AN INTOLERANT COMMUNITY. A FEW YEARS AGO, A GIRL NAMED PHOEBE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER BEING SEVERELY HARASSED BY HER CLASSMATES. THEY CALLED HER AN "IRISH WHORE." LOOKING BACK, I'M NOT SURPRISED THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH HADLEY ACTED IN THIS WAY.

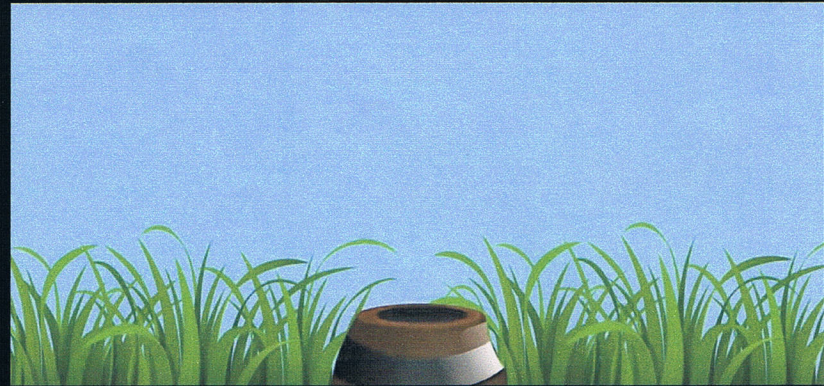
8. I'M AN ATHEIST NOW. WHEN WE MOVED TO NEW JERSEY, I ASKED MY MOM IF I COULD STOP GOING TO CHURCH. THANKFULLY, SHE SAID YES. IN CONTRAST, ANNIE WILLINGLY GOES TO BIBLE CLASSES ON THE WEEKENDS. I CAN ONLY ASSUME HER CLASSES ARE MORE FUN AND LESS STRESSFUL.



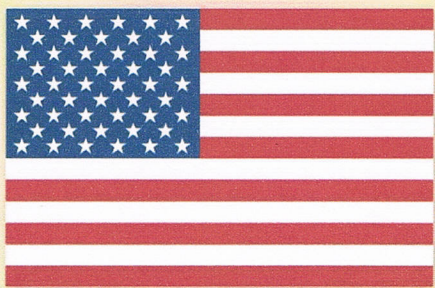
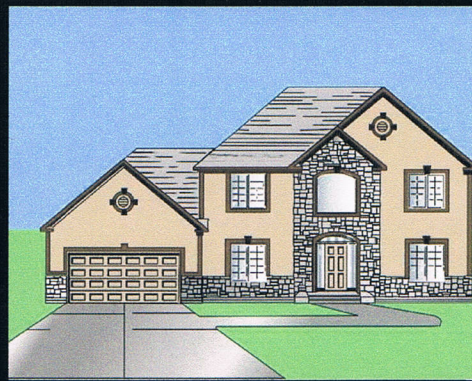
9. I'VE BEEN BACK TO CHINA TWICE SINCE MOVING TO AMERICA. ON THESE VISITS, I DISCOVERED THAT CHINA IS A BIT LESS PERFECT THAN I REMEMBERED IT.



10. MY GRANDPARENTS FROM THE FARM HAVE NO BATHROOM, ONLY A SMALL HOLE IN THE GROUND. I DIDN'T REMEMBER THIS FROM WHEN I LIVED WITH THEM, BUT I NOW HAVE SUCH A GREAT APPRECIATION FOR THE WELL-DEVELOPED AMERICAN PLUMBING SYSTEM.



11. MY OTHER GRANDPARENTS FROM THE MOUNTAINS HAVE SINCE OPENED AN APPLIANCE STORE AND MOVED INTO A BIG HOUSE (WITH PLUMBING).



I BECAME A U.S. CITIZEN ON MARCH 3, 2016. WHEN I GOT THE CHANCE TO BECOME A CITIZEN, I KNEW IT WAS THE RIGHT TIME. BECAUSE THROUGH ALL OF MY STRUGGLES, I AM NOW SURROUNDED BY AMAZING FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AND I FINALLY FEEL LIKE I'M HOME.

