

BUTTURDS I HAVE MET

My father maintained during my childhood that he always wanted to write a book called "Bastards I Have Met". The problem was that the New Zealand author Barry Crump beat him to it by writing his book by the same name in the late 1960s. I had the opportunity to buy and send my dad Crump's book for his birthday, but because I was pretty devout in my church at the time, I decided not to. I always regretted it, because he would have loved it.

These days, now I am in my mid-70s, after having been in the workforce since 1966, including 19 years in the Education service, teaching in High and Elementary schools (Secondary and Primary for those living here in New Zealand). As a result I have some quite entertaining stories about some of the characters I have met and worked with over the years.

When a job is going well and the people we work with are good, honest, hardworking and supportive colleagues, a workplace can be a very pleasant and fulfilling place. I can say that the majority of the time it was like that with me, but there were times when working with some people became quite difficult. If I related every story I would want to tell, this would turn into quite a lengthy book, so I will tell some of the people that I encountered while working in the Education service.

I have no apologies to anyone who may recognise themselves in this article. If their behaviour is revealed to all and sundry, then they have no one to blame but themselves. If these people had treated me fairly, I would not be writing about them – obviously.

The first time that I felt that I was actually personally bullied by a work colleague was when I worked in a suburban post office during the early 1970s. I had worked with the Telegraph Department, but when that department started to run down because of advancing technology in the form of telex, people would send telex messages instead of telegrams. I saw the

writing on the wall, so I transferred to working as a counter clerk in a suburban post office. The office I ended up in had a Postmaster, a senior clerk, a part-time lady, and me. For some reason the female senior clerk took a dislike to me for no apparent reason. She would put pressure on me by waiting in the back office on welfare benefit days when the customer queue would be right out the door, and I was the only person on the counter. The Postmaster was fairly weak and intimidated by her and did not do anything to correct her. The woman was basically lazy and did as little as possible. When I did the balance, there were times I was short in my balance, and the shortfall was usually an even amount, like \$4.00 (two \$2.00 amounts), or \$10.00. The cash trolleys had lids that lifted up and it was not too difficult to circumvent the locks. So I suspected that when I went to my lunch break, she was stealing money from my cash trolley and then making it appear that the shortfall was my error. When we had a shortfall, we had to pay the amount in. It was interesting that when I transferred away from that post office, those shortfalls in my balances ceased. I then went to what is called District Post Office Relief where I did relieving work around different post offices in the region. I found out that she had convinced the Postmaster to prevent me relieving at his post office. So she was basically the first real butturd that I had the misfortune to work with.

It is unfortunate that this was before the internet and emails, otherwise I could have expressed my concerns by email, sending copies to the Postmaster for his response, and CC-ing a copy to the Chief Postmaster and to the local Union delegate. Also, when a workmate berates you, it is always wise to have a pocket recording device to produce when that person denies what they actually said. In cases of bullying and unfair treatment, it is best to document everything to build up a time-line of evidence.

In the early 1980s, I left the Post Office to train as a School Teacher, and the four years I spent at university and teacher's college were very edifying, giving me the confidence that I could do academic work. I gained an undergraduate degree and a diploma of teaching without failing a paper, and with a B plus

average, which for me was a major achievement for a 30s something high school dropout.

Then I got my first teaching position in a high school in a Southern city, teaching typing and economic studies. Although my degree was in English, I decided that spending the first couple of years teaching typing, something I was very good at, would establish me, and then I could apply for English teaching positions. But, as I discovered, things were not going to be plain sailing for me.

I don't know if it is something to do with my personality, but I seemed again to get on the wrong side of a frustrated 30s something woman. It transpired that she did not want to have a male typing teacher in her department and did her best to sabotage my teaching career in the first year. Note that as my supervising teacher she received an extra allowance for training me on the job. In fact, she gave me no training and in every exchange with me, she showed her resentment of me. Matters came to a head when I just happened to give a one-age worksheet to a student to take home for homework, and the woman burst into my classroom and berated me with a loud and angry voice with repeated accusations and threats that she is going to do her best to make sure that I would be fired. My regret that I did not have a recording device to play her angry "entitled Karen" rage to the Principal and Union Fieldworker.

However, that was enough for me, and I put in a written complaint the Principal. He told me that he knew that there would be a conflict when he hired me, and I said, "Thanks very much!" I had also been offered a position in another small town school at the same time as receiving the job offer from the present school, and at that time I regretted not taking it instead. But the Principal was supportive and told me that any paperwork she submitted would be "lost" in the system. When she did present a negatively worded report at the end of the year, I wrote my reply stating that she gave me no training, berated me with raging outbursts, and basically failed to perform her role as a supportive supervising teacher. I had asked the Principal to

remove her from being my supporting teaching, but he said that there was no one else in the school who could perform her role for me. So I was stuck with her for the remainder of the year. At one stage, when the Principal and Deputy Principal tried to reason with her in the Principal's office, over how she was treating me, I was sitting in the staff room and I could hear her screaming and yelling like a mad woman.

Thankfully, she was promoted to be the head of the Commerce Department of another regional high school, she went there to find another target to continue her bullying behaviour on some other unfortunate victim. As a result, my second year was idyllic by comparison.

I noticed that in this particular school, the mature male teachers tended to be treated disdainfully by some of the female staff. I concluded that there were some "man-haters" on that staff.

In my third year at the school, I volunteered to take a Communication English class for the students who were not academically able to cope with senior English studies. One student complained to me that "we are in the dumb class now". This might have been an opportunity to increase the expectation of these students if given a chance, but no...

I had the misfortune of running into another 30s something "entitled Karen" type teacher who thought of herself as the "best thing since sliced bread" in her department. She, like the previous frustrated woman, took a dislike for me being unloaded on her department at the insistence of the Principal. So, history repeated itself. She did nothing to give me any substantive training, but panned my every attempt at planning lessons, and basically destroyed my confidence. I found out from one of her senior English students that she had no time for any students who did not achieve anything less than an A grade, and treated them basically in the same way she treated me. Over 30 years later, that student, whom I got back in contact through Facebook, still had feelings of resentment against that teacher. It is a real pity that instead of building up student to reach their

potential, some teachers who think more of themselves than what they ought to think, fail them through discrimination because the students struggle to come up to their standards. I heard that there was a female Physical Education teacher who used to slap students who were not able to do what she required of them.

It is interesting to note that the school developed a falling roll and I became redundant at the end of my third year there. It is interesting that "Karen" had speaking rights in the meeting they had to determine whose positions were to be disestablished. Because I have a suspicious mind, I suspected that she would have fully supported for my position to go. The Union field officer did tell us that if anyone had any concerns about the process to let her know. Because I got another position fairly quickly for the next year, I didn't advise her that the person who had speaking rights had basically bullied me with repeated criticism throughout the year. But I am not sure whether it would have made any difference. However, the Principal did offer me work for the following year as a long-term reliever, as my workmate in the typing department went on maternity leave. But I decided that I didn't want to run the chance of having to cope with any other entitled "Karens" on that staff and that a new teaching position would be better for me.

My experience in my next high school was more positive, but unfortunately after the third year in that school I became redundant again through falling rolls, and because it was a "last in first out" situation, my position had to go. Seeing that falling rolls was a country-wide situation in high schools, I decided to try my hand at Primary (elementary) school teaching.

I did a long-term relieving stint at a rural school, which was a unique experience in running a two-teacher school. It was a real learning curve for me, in terms of the type of rural culture, working with a non-academic board of trustees, and learning the ropes of running a school instead of just being a teacher in it. I decided that being the principal of a school was not my style

because of the stress, so I opted to remain an ordinary classroom teacher.

In another "blog" I related my story of being bullied by the principal of the next school I went to, and the long-term outcome for her when she was caught embezzling funds from her school in the late 2010s. Also, in another "blog" I related how I was shafted by a principal who made sure that his wife was going to gain a position in his school even though it meant getting rid of a teacher who had a positive performance appraisal and so resorted to taking fictitious incompetence proceedings against me. Fortunately, I got another teaching position on promotion, which angered him because that was not what he wanted to happen.

I had an interesting time at this school as a Senior Teacher, in charge of three teachers in my block. I found that a second-year female teacher was the "apple" of the Principal's eye, and when she complained that I was not communicating with the other teachers (which was false) he believed her and sent in a support teacher to assist me. I didn't mind that because I saw it as training and development for me.

When I was going into my interview for the position, I recognised a teacher who had been a teacher at one of the other schools I taught at in the city. When I got the position, I found out that she was a teacher in the school. I think, by her subsequent attitude toward me, that she resented that I got the position she wanted instead of her. Low and behold, another 30 something entitled "Karen!" She was a teacher in another block, so she had no direct contact with me. But she was mates with the second-year female teacher in my block, and I think that she and another second-year teacher in her block teamed up with the teacher in my block to undermine my position by bring the fictitious complaint against me.

Now the Principal's way of communicating with staff was to issue a memo, neatly stapled in half and placed in my staffroom cubby hole. I grew to hate those memos, and felt it was a threatening way of dealing with me, and would have appreciated

face-to-face communication if he had concerns. Now, this 30s woman, decided to give me an instruction about something she wanted me to do, and so she issued the same type of memo to me. I knew she had no authority over me so I just threw them in the rubbish bin. It really p'd me off to think that she would order me around if she was in charge of me! In hindsight I should have sent my own memo to the Principal asking him who the blazes she thought she was and that she can put her memos where the sun don't shine. But I did not want to cause further conflict, so I left it alone.

I came to the point in that school that I started to feel unsafe as a European male teacher in that school. This was the only school in which I was subjected to a nasty racial slur from a Pacific Island student. I let it go in one ear and out the other, because I am a forgiving person after all, and she was just an ignorant under-achieving twelve year old hardly out of her nappies.

Things came to a head when a female student in one of my classes accused me of looking up her dress. As part of the teaching process, students would sit on the floor around me as I taught some aspect of the topic, and I guess some students might feel uncomfortable sitting where their dresses might ride up. However, she complained to the female second-year teacher (who else?) and I had to defend myself to the Principal and Deputy Principal. I got the impression that the female Deputy Principal didn't quite believe me, and that made me feel very unsafe. I told the Principal that I had no interest in that students and for me she would be like outer Siberia – that everyone knows where it is, but no one wants to go there. He didn't really know how to respond to that. I told him that I will refuse to have that student back in any of my classes without another adult present. I also, changed the process by having students bring their chairs to the front when engaging in a close teaching session with them.

So I decided that to keep myself safe, I began looking for other teaching positions, and so I left that school at the end of the

year. I found out that the principal retired at the end of that year and the Deputy Principal was appointed in the position. I felt relieved that I had left that school, because if she was not going to believe me concerning the complaint by that student, if a similar false complaint was made, that principal might not support me at all. I heard from a good friend of mine that he considered her a hopeless principal who caused more problems than she was able to solve.

In my opinion, there are school where it is extremely unsafe for a male teacher, especially if there are senior teachers and administrators are man-hating feminists. A really effective way of getting back at a male teacher by students who don't like him as a authority figure, the most effective way is to make a false complaint of sexual misconduct against him. This is the reason why a male teacher should never be in a room alone with a male or female student, and if there is a need for correction or counselling, insist on having another adult in attendance, and having the session recorded.

In one school that I taught at there was a male teacher who loved his students, often having them on his knee, and giving prizes to them. While these students were in his class, they were happy to accept the gifts, and his affection. But one year, after they went to an Intermediate (middle) school, several of them ganged up and decided to make a complaint against him that he touched them inappropriately. I suspect that they were influenced and coached by a feminist teacher who took her opportunity to "get" a male teacher whom she considered to be a sexual predator (which he wasn't). The outcome was that he was charged, lost his job and registration as a teacher, had two heart attacks through the stress, and had his life basically destroyed. The judge at his trial said it was just his word against theirs, and the jury favoured the students. It just showed me how a group of resentful little witches can persecute and falsely accuse a good teacher who genuinely loved his students and gave them his best as a teacher. It showed me that it is always best to be totally "hands-off" when dealing with school students at any level.

However, when I decided to give up teaching at the end of 2004, I felt relieved that I was away from all that nonsense, and that I then discovered that working for the Family Court and then the District Court as a Victim Advisor, I found myself working for a much better employer who respected their employees and gave them a much better deal than I saw in any school I worked in over my 19 years of teaching.

These days, if anyone asked me about going teaching, I would tell them if they can find an occupation that they can do better with their university degree, go and do it rather than be a school teacher. Until teachers get the respect and support they deserve, I wouldn't recommend teaching to anyone if they don't want to be disrespected, bullied, falsely accused and mainly treated as a labour unit instead of the professional they ought to be. That may be a jaundiced view of teaching, but there it is. I'm happily retired now so I just don't care.