

Wes Steven Greenberg

Wesley Jacob Bendor is the middle child of our daughter Sarah. Our grandson, who was seven years old last November, and is a good looking kid (no bias here), tall for his age, as his father is 6 foot 8. Wes is misnamed....his middle name should have been “precocious”. I remember our daughter telling us of when he was in nursery school, on the playground, and he suddenly stopped the class in the middle of a game, and asked, “who here loves me?”. And a few of his harem raised their hands, and the teacher said she almost split her pants from laughter.

This is the same Wes a couple of years later who is now in kindergarten. Dismissal time... the walkers, including Wes, the kids who live close enough from the school to walk to and from home, are now leaving out a separate door from the students who take the bus. 3:15, the dismissal bell sounds, and kindergarteners are only released to an authorized guardian, usually the parents. One by one they dawdle out...until the last one out the door is safely hand in hand with mom.... except Wes and one little girl, Clair. The teacher and our daughter are perplexed, mixed in with a dose of concern, but given Wes’ tendencies, assume he and Clair are back in the classroom, or in the hallway, losing track of time and space as some 5 year olds do. So they search....but the kids are not in the classroom, hallway, or the usual spots. Perhaps the bathrooms...not there. The concerns escalate, and several parents and teachers are now involved in tracking the two wayward kindergarteners down.

In the times before coronavirus, when schools were actually open, following Parkland, Newtown, and the like, schools have become very tight with security measures. Procedures have been established to protect the children; so locked exterior doors are the norm, video cameras are everywhere, visitors and their belongings are searched, and “lock down” drills occur on a regular basis. And when kids are missing, things kick into high gear.

Lock down. Where the hell are they? The entire building is frantically searched by an army of people. No luck. The school is surrounded by fields and some woods. After an exhaustive search, they are not there. Ok, time for panic. Double the efforts, redo the search, nothing. In a haze of fear only a parent can know, Sarah goes home, waiting for a phone call, or some sign of where this child could be... or worse.

The minutes go by excruciatingly slow. And then, a muffled sound of....a giggle. Walking through the house, Sarah realizes the giggle is coming from the basement. Tearing down the stairs, she finds the pair of wayward kindergarteners having a fine time behind the washer/dryer, with glasses of milk, and eating popcorn and pirate booty. The emotions that went through our daughter’s entire being....relief, love, exhaustion, mixed with tears... is juxtaposed by Wes’ grounding until his 21st birthday, or at least it was what we were told at the time.

In truth, I think he spent the next four days in his room.. but Wes being Wes, the adventures, or misadventures, are only beginning.