

The Day I Took the Spotlight

Wouldn't it be superb to have one moment when you took the spotlight, to have everybody clapping for you and cheering loudly? I have had that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—the day I took the spotlight!

Sometime in February, my teacher told us all about the Woodmen of America speech contest. The topic was “people who have overcome obstacles in their lives.” I thought my great-grandma Lorraine Parsley, who has had recurring cancer 13 times and is still living, would be perfect. She has overcome a lot of obstacles in her life.

A couple weeks later, the class gave their presentations. My teacher had to pick three to five students to go on to the next level. I was one of them! Then the top five from each of the three fifth-grade classes competed. The top seven would be the finalists; again, I was one of them! The top seven worked really hard. We had until March 15, 2001, to practice.

March 15 rolled around. Before I knew it, I was in our school gym with people all around, including the judges, listening to every word I said. I was the sixth to present. I was soon done; what a relief! I knew the top seven got ribbons, certificates, and pins; but I still wanted that trophy.

After the seventh person finished, the judges made their final decisions. They announced the winners. The third-place winner was Aunum, the second-place winner was Sarah, and the first-place winner was Kelli! I had just won first place! I was ecstatic.

That was my once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The students in the audience were going wild clapping and cheering! That was a moment I will always remember, when I took the spotlight!

Cheating in America

Did you know that 7 out of 10 students have cheated at least once in the past year? Did you know that 50 percent of those students have cheated more than twice? These shocking statistics are from a survey of 9,000 U.S. high school students.

Incredibly, teachers may even be encouraging their students to cheat! Last year at a school in Detroit, teachers allegedly provided their students with answers to statewide standard tests. Students at the school told investigators that they were promised pizza and money if they cheated on the test as told. Similar allegations at several schools in San Diego county have prompted investigation. A student at a local high school says she sees students cheating on almost every test, and the teachers don't do anything about it.

The kids claim that they're tempted to cheat because of peer pressure and intense competition to get top grades. Many kids also say that their parents are setting a bad example by "fudging" on income taxes, lying about age to pay lower admission prices, or cheating their way out of a speeding ticket. They are sending a message to their kids that it is okay to cheat and lie.

Finding solutions to this problem is difficult. In our school's math classes, each student has different problems on their test papers, so it is useless to look at someone else's answers. Teachers could also randomly mix the problems throughout the page. Another solution is for adults to lower their expectations. Chances are that students believe cheating is the only way to meet unreasonably high expectations. Perhaps it is time for parents and teachers to seriously examine whether higher test results are important enough to encourage cheating.