

I had a message today, a friend wondering if I was okay, since I was behind my usual schedule of essays for this website. I assured her I had just been too busy in the garden and, in fact, I was really only ONE little blurb behind. But, I am taking this morning to catch up. It is cold—39 F. here this morning, and working in the garden this afternoon will be preferable anyway. So, here's what her message brought to mind:

This friend—I won't tell you her name, but she will know that I am referring to her. And, in fact, she may have different versions of some of these stories, but that is a matter for debate.

We met in the second semester of first year German at Central Michigan University. Two professors taught German 101, and I was lucky to have the better teacher, but she had the earlier introduction to a learned and quirky prof who was eccentric, very intelligent, and unusual. We came to think highly of him as a friend.

My first German teacher, Dr. Patricia Annable, taught the second semester of first year German. The two classes had diminished in number so that there was only one section of German 102.

I am not sure what this soon-to-be-friend thought of me at first. I do know she did not approve of my socks. I have never cared what other folks' opinions are, and probably there were plenty of girls who disapproved of my favorite socks. They were argyles, short cuffed, meant for girls, not for boys who were the usual argyle wearers. I am sure these socks were not "cool," but I didn't care. In fact, I wish I still had them.

But, I soon became better acquainted with this girl, and I guess she forgave me for my socks. We began doing our German studying together. Her parents had come from Germany, so I, as well as she, had an accent—in addition to the Michigan brogue—reminiscent of Schwabia.

Our second year at CMU we shared a dorm room. I was living in a nice dorm, four girls in two bedrooms with a study room and a bathroom, but it was hard for a freshman to have a chance for a choice room the next year unless she knew an upperclassman who would "draw her in." The girl across the hall had lost roommates to graduation, so my new friend and I got our room on her coattails.

My friend undoubtedly has memories that I have totally forgotten. And what I have remembered, she probably has lost in the mists of so many years. I believe she met her future husband in astronomy class. Perhaps, the first date is what I recall, but she—I will have to give her a name, so I will call her Marie—was all prepared to go, wearing a gray wool jumper, when her nose began to bleed, partly on her jumper. She had a propensity for nosebleeds. Apparently, the jumper was important to the date, and she did not want to wear anything other than that. We sponged the blood from her jumper and dried it with a hair dryer. I guess we got the blood out, or he was not observant, because they are still together.

As the next couple of years passed, we had many German classes together, and we sometimes did our lessons at the student union while enjoying a cherry coke. I remember that we had a course in idiomatic phrases, and we were not sure what one of them meant. The light suddenly came on to Marie, and she said—very loudly—a word that is common now but quite rude in those days. Other students turned and looked at us, not realizing that the word, while somewhat offensive in English, meant something entirely different in German and was the answer to our problem.

We also had English Literature class together. And we loved our teacher, Mr.

Zorn. When we had an exam, he would hand the blue book stacks back by giving them to the first person in each row, and we passed them on back to the students in our row. There was one boy who was very good in class discussions, and we were certain that he would have the best essay exams in the class. But, he did not. He actually was quite average, while we each had an A. It took us awhile to figure this out, but we finally realized that we not only had the correct interpretation that Mr. Zorn was looking for, but we had begun writing *like* Mr. Zorn. "Indeed," that is what we had done without ever thinking about it.

I haven't seen Marie for years, but we keep in touch. We are basically hermits here on Coe Creek, and Marie goes to Florida during the winter and is busy with her life here in Michigan during the summer. But, we will always be friends. I have read that there are "friends for a day, friends for a year, friends for a certain segment of a person's time on this Earth and friends for life." Marie is in the last category.