

LIBERTY ROAD: Transcript

My mother loves to teach. She always has. When we were young, we were homeschooled in our basement. My mother managed to find used school tables and books for us. I have two brothers: one older than me and one younger. We were our mother's very first students. She taught us math, reading, and science and other subjects.

We always enjoyed her classes. One day, my mother decided to take us on a field trip to learn something new, outside of our basement classroom. She came up with the idea to take us to the local fire station, where we could learn the responsibilities of a fireman. We were thrilled! We loved the firetrucks and were eager to go. So we all piled into the car and headed off to the station.

Inside the large garage, we spotted the fire chief. He was walking toward us. He was very good looking..

"So," he said, "you've come to learn about being a fireman? To learn about our job here?"

"Yup!" we said, "we want to learn!"

"All right - follow me."

He brought us to the coat rack with all the hats, boots, and coats. They were a beautiful yellow. We tried the coats on but they were very heavy! So were the helmets. And with the boots on, we could barely walk!

"How can you get anywhere with all this stuff on?" we asked.

"Well," said the fire chief, we're all big and strong, you're not full grown yet, so no wonder it's heavy for you."

We took off the firefighting outfits. Next we wanted to see the fire pole. That's the pole that firemen use when there is a fire alarm.

"I'll teach you how to slide down the pole," he said.

So we went up to the second floor, and looked down the hole. The floor was a long way down!

"Now you have to be careful," the fire chief explained, "many people hold on to the pole wrong and could get hurt. If you don't grab the pole right you could get burns on your arm. You should hold the pole like this: [Demonstrates] "

Then he let us practice sliding down the pole. With our arms and legs crossed, we slide right to the bottom. It was a lot of fun. We wanted to do it again.

"That's enough," said the chief, "let's go see the fire truck."

Inside the fire truck we found loads of dials and buttons. We accidentally hit the one that set off the siren. It was really loud. The fire chief rushed to shut it off but we were having a great time. At the end of the tour, we all gathered round the chief.

"Being a fireman is a lot of fun," we said. "I want to be a fireman!"

"Well," he said, "a fireman's job isn't always fun. Sometimes we get to a fire too late and people have died in the building. Sometimes we hurt ourselves trying to put out the fires. There are a lot of very serious things that can happen as a fireman. I wouldn't necessarily call it fun; it's more of a challenge."

"Oh," I said, "people sometimes die?"

We had to think about that one.

"Do you know what the most common cause of fire is?" he asked.

"Is it from birthday candles?" I asked. "You know, after everyone sings Happy Birthday and the candles get blown out? Is that it?"

"No," he said, "not candles. The most common cause of fire is: People playing with fire. Sometimes kids like to play with matches, lighting them and then blowing them out. And sometimes it causes a fire. We see it happen all the time. So I want to warn you all to never play with fire or matches."

"Oh no!" we said, "we would never!"

"I know," he said "Do you know what to do if you ever catch fire yourself?"

"Hmm," I said, "would you try and blow it out? r maybe try and hit it and pat it out? I don't know!"

"Nope," he said, "you should: stop, drop, and roll. If you ever catch fire, fall to the ground and roll over."

"You can also cover yourself with a blanket as tight as you can to suffocate the fire or use water to douse the flame or if there is a fire extinguisher nearby, you can use that. There are quite a few ways to stop a fire."

"Wow," we said.

We had learned a lot, but it wasn't quite as much fun as first thought. We were tired and it was time to go home. We thanked the fire chief and our mom for taking us, and then drove back home thinking about what we'd learned.

"You know," I said, "I thought before I wanted to be a singer, but I've now changed my mind. I want to be a fireman instead. That's a really brave job."

We got home and went to bed. Early the next morning, at seven, my brother woke me up.

"You know our tree?" He said, "we could build a treehouse. Come on!"

I jumped out of bed to follow him. My mom had cooked us a delicious breakfast of scrambled eggs, with bacon and toast. We scarfed it down without even chewing and ran out the door and all the way to our tree. We stood there, imagining the awesome tree house we could make. First we would need a ladder. So we hunted down some wood, found just the right pieces, and attached them to the trunk of the tree. We climbed up the ladder and into the branches. It was neat having our own personal staircase! We thought of what else could be missing. We need a floor so it was easier to stand in the tree. We climbed back down and went scavenging for some more wood. We found the perfect piece, flat and wide. We hauled that piece of wood up the tree and set it down. We were like professional carpenters at this point. We grew bored, however, with sitting up in our tree.

I spotted my baby brother, toddling below the tree. I hollered out to him.
(He is hearing)

"You see that pail," I said,
"Why don't you climb inside."

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh nevermind why, just get in. Come on!"

He climbed into the pail while I came down the tree to look for some rope. When I found some, I tied it to the pail and climbed back up the tree and started to haul him up hand over hand.

My baby brother started to cry, "Mom!" he yelled, "Stop! I'm scared!"

But I didn't stop. Once I had him up in the tree I celebrated our success at the first working elevator in a tree house.

"Oh it's all right," I said.

My brother kept crying. It was then I started to smell some smoke. I looked down from the tree to see the grass was on fire! I told my baby brother not to worry.

"Stay in the pail!"

I ran down the tree and said to my older brother, "what happened?" My brother just stood there, dumbstruck by what he'd done. Meanwhile the flames were growing.

"What should we do?!" My brother just stood there. "Snap out of it!" Then I remember what the fire chief had taught us, we were supposed to stop, drop, and roll.

So I fell to the ground and rolled around. I quickly realized that this wasn't working because I wasn't on fire. I had to think of something else.

Water!

I ran back to the tree house and yelled to my brother,

"Get out of the pail! Give it to me! Quick!"

But my brother just sat there crying for his mother.

"Knock it off," I said, "this is serious, give me the pail and hurry!"

He finally climbed out and pushed down the pail. I grabbed the pail and started running for the house. Inside, I began filling the pail with water. When it was full, I bolted out the door, water splashing everywhere. By the time I got to the flames, only a little water was left. I threw it on anyway to almost no effect whatsoever. I said to my older brother, "Come on! You've got to help!" Finally, he snapped out of it. "All right, let's go."

Back and forth to the house with the pail we went, throwing pail after pail onto the flames. My mother was sitting down, reading a book. After feeling the door slam time and again and again, she got up to investigate. She saw the billowing smoke and immediately called 9-1-1. Sure enough the fire trucks arrived, and out stepped the fire chief. That same man who had given us a tour the day before. He was wearing the yellow jacket, boots and hat, although this time he didn't look nearly as happy. The three of us were still hauling water as fast as we could. The very last of the flames were dying just as they arrived. We were soaking wet and out of breath.

The fire chief stood with his hands on his hips.

"What happened?" was all he said.

"It was him!" I said, "my brother. He's the one! Not me!"

"Shh," he said, "don't tell ...Oh, fine - what happened, you see, it's not that I was playing with matches, no, not I. You see, I had found this lighter, and you didn't say anything about playing with lighters, and I figured since it was different, that its okay. Anyway, I was lighting grass on fire and that's how iit all started. I didn't mean to, sorry."

The fire chief just shook his head. My mother was mortified, vowing to never take us on a field trip again.