

# Priceless dog therapy

Okay, those are two things mashed together in the title describing events of Wednesday, my only day of subbing this week (though I am still trying for some Friday work). What happened to Tuesday? Well, I had to push my Monday photo work to Tuesday due to that annoyance to the daily routine known as jury duty, or in my case non-duty. Fortunately no driving was required for this civic duty as the location was Chicago. In fact, I would just not show up rather than drive there due to the ridiculous traffic. Fortunately, the train stations are within walking distance both from my home and the courthouse in the city. I also was glad this was the civil court instead of the criminal one- I don't know how people are able to serve on juries for criminal trials that can often take weeks to complete. I realize jobs can't fire you for jury duty but they don't have to pay you, and that lack of pay would be a huge problem, at least for me. You noticed, I'm sure, that I wrote "non-duty" earlier. What actually happened was my group got called down (while I was in the bathroom no less) and we went down to a courtroom, only to wait and be told that the two parties came to a settlement so no jury would need to be picked. So we went back up to the jury waiting room in case we might be needed again. About an hour later we were called up again, jury trial take two, or so I thought. However, this time we were given our checks and sent home- I guess being called up once can count as our civic duty even if we didn't make it to jury selection, let alone trial. We did have to wait until they were sure we would no longer be needed though. With half the day still left, I stopped for lunch since the next train wouldn't depart for another 45 minutes. Unfortunately, with the light leaving us earlier these days I was not able to go to even one of the dealers since I couldn't be sure how long it would take and didn't want to make a wasted hour round-trip anywhere. Yes, I could have blogged Monday, but I just wasn't up to it.

Which leads us to the topic of the title, my sub-job Wednesday. I had to get up at 5:30 to start looking since it is near impossible this year to get a sub job in advance for some reason. I somehow managed to secure one at a nearby school in their mentally-impaired program. I must remember never to show up any later than 10-minutes early at this school. I was right on time, but ended up about ten minutes late because they closed the lot by the front doors due to buses meaning I had to ask where the other lot was, wait in traffic to get to it, suffer leagues of parents dropping off their kids in the very same lot, find a spot, then walk a quarter mile back to the front doors of the school. I did note there were still spots left in the front lot as I headed to the doors.

So I eventually made it to the classroom, somehow still before the kids arrived to the class (though I still had to work my way around several at their lockers). Being a MI class there were of course teaching assistants so I was able to cool down from the hassle of my arrival. They showed me the schedule for the day, but being Vet's day that schedule was just made to be broken. Instead of an hour of guided reading, for example, they had maybe 20 minutes before heading to their 2nd-grade buddy class. That teacher talked a little bit about Veteran's Day, and then a couple of soldiers came in to visit-one from the Army, the other a Marine. Both had served time in you-know-what part of the world (the marine couldn't tell us where- essentially saying it was classified, but the army soldier had been to Afghanistan). They talked a little about what they did, what life was like with their respective units, and their families. The 2nd-graders had written several questions to ask them during their visit. It was quite interesting. Once the principal came in and whisked them to their next class to visit, we headed back to our own room for snack time. The next schedule change came during this time. Just as they finished eating and sat down to read silently, in walks a vet. Okay, she wasn't a vet but I just had to use

that play on words. Notice how I didn't capitalize the word this time? That's because this person was a pet therapist, if not a veterinarian. Both work with pets, though for different reasons- oh never mind. So my pun didn't work- sue me. ☐

Anyway, the therapist reminded the kids how to handle the dog (apparently she had been here before), making sure they let this lap dog sniff their hands before they could pet him. She also taught them how to give the dog treats (in an open hand, because the dog could bite your fingers if you hold the treat by the thumb and forefinger). She also had the dog do some tricks. The kids one at a time rolled a die and the dog would jump through a hoop for the number of times it showed, then later they did dog bowling where the kids would hide a treat among foam pins, and the dog would knock a number of them down to get to the treat. Cute.

The kids got their silent reading in, and then we skipped math to do calendar in the short time left before lunch. This is where the next part of the title comes into play- the look of surprise on a 5th-grader's face when you sneak up behind him while he's eating lunch and ask him a question in a place he does not expect to hear or see his church and summer camp leader as he turns and recognizes me. Priceless. As I talked to him, two more kids from my church got up to talk to me- one of whom I was going to talk to next, the other a surprise to me. What was funny about this encounter was the girl who I had worked with in church drama last year didn't know what to call me since she only remembered my first name, which is what I use at church- Mr. Derek. She had clearly been taught to not use an adult's first name at school. Maybe I told her last year, I don't know. I didn't know the third one came to this school, but this school being the closest to my church means several kids do happen to attend school here. I know of three others in the junior high area who I know I have mentioned before (two are the girl's brothers, twins whom I have also worked with at church).

The rest of the day was pretty mild. I had an extra half-hour off due to the kids going to music, and when they came back we scrapped writing for some reason to watch part of a movie. You know, I don't think I have ever watched *101 Dalmatians* before even though I kind of know the story. We only watched a little bit of it before getting ready to go home, where I rested up until choir rehearsal, where I just want to mention that another pair of twins I taught a few years ago are regularly a part of- they finally came down to the tenor section after singing alto for the last couple of years (hey, they were 12-13 at the time!). I can even name a couple more sets of twins and a set of triplets too. I don't know why, but they are not all that uncommon at my church. Well, if I can think of some story to write about them sometime I may say some more.