

My years at Whitehaven High School from 1948 to 1952 were fraught with emotional ups and downs. Aside from my nerdmanship, my abilities ranked in the mediocre range. Mrs. Burkholder and Miss Gandy could attest that my sewing and cooking skills were sadly lacking. My chemistry lab partner bravely carried out most of our experiments. I seemed to be prone to klutziness, and we feared acid spills or explosions if I were in charge. However, there was one area in which I did excel and all because of the outstanding commercial art teacher, John Fyfe.

Mr. Fyfe was able to take teenagers with a modicum of artistic ability and instill in them the rudiments necessary to create art. He taught us perspective, balance, color, design, figure drawing, lettering, and much more. And he did this with a zeal that made us all want to go out and become famous graphic artists.

He made art the favorite high school subject of all who studied under him. In some way we all were knit together as a small family of art students helping each other to become more proficient, encouraged by our “family” head, Mr. Fyfe.

Fifty plus years have passed. I studied mathematics in college but never lost my love for art. I married the lab partner and eventually became the director of homebound ministries of a large church. As part of my ministry, I sent out hundreds of hand painted cards to those I served, the homebound, the sick and the bereaved.

In retirement, as I continue my card ministry, I remember Mr. Fyfe and that basement art studio at WHS. The example he set of making learning fun while creating art will always be my inspiration.

*(Faye Smith Hoover lives with husband of 48 years, Alan, near Richmond, Virginia..)*