



The Stolen Bazooka

The afternoon started out as a normal afternoon of Bullock family errands -- a crazy middle-aged mom, a bunch of kids, places to go, and a big yellow van. It ended up as an afternoon forever remembered. An afternoon remembered for a few drops of youthful mischievousness, but mostly for its downpour of bravery and courage. Not to mention a lifelong lesson in old fashion Abe Lincoln honesty.

In typical fashion, Mom was hauling half of the family clan around Lake Grove in our big yellow van. The Bullock bus was one of a kind. The car was bustling inside as the family was hitting each of their favorite downtown spots. First it was Seven Eleven, then Village Drug, next Carters Market, and finally the typewriter repair shop.

It was the summer of 1978. Jimmy Carter was running the country. Matt was only three years old. According to two year old Diana he was decked out in his favorite overalls. Teenage Kelly, on the other hand, has him sporting his favorite pair of carpenter shorts. Shorts loaded with pockets and a key ring hanging off one of the loops. Either way little Matt was generously adorned with empty pockets.

During the stop at Village Drug, little Diana notices Matt slyly slip a piece of Bazooka in the front pocket of his overalls. Diana was young at the time but still has guilty recollections of helping him mastermind the grand heist. Matt was her man and she had visions of eventually getting her share of the stolen bazooka. Either way they left Village Drug that day with the shared secret of the famous gum wrapped in red, white, and blue.

Once at the typewriter repair shop, the siblings waited outside while mom dealt with the repairman inside. Kelly was the oldest and in charge of the sidewalk supervision. Away from Village Drug, Matt thought he was now acting unnoticed. He strategically pulled the single piece of bazooka from his overalls. You can imagine his surprise as he looked up and caught Kelly's eyes. Mark quickly barked out, "Hey, where did you get that?" No doubt little Diana quickly chimed in and helped finalize the conviction.

Moments later, everyone knew what had to be done. Mom guided the family trek and headed back to Village Drug. Little Matt with both fear and courage approached the dreaded counter. Holding up the single piece of gum, he stared at the cashier and confessed to the misdeed. In his young raspy voice he said, "I took this piece of gum. I'm sorry." He then handed the lady a penny -- the price of the gum. Kelly will never forget the bravery Matt showed that day. She can still see the fear in his eyes. At the same time he did not shy away. He stood up and did what he needed to do even as a three year old.

And so it is, with a single piece of Bazooka, our Brother Matt gives us another great memory -- a memory of mischievousness but more importantly one of bravery and courage.