

Father Mac Frogs Sal

Lancione

I don't remember the year, but I do remember the incident. Yes, another incident that occurred at Father McDonald High School. This one thanks to Mr. Jim Chatterton, then the biology teacher at Father Mac. Jim needed some frogs for his biology classes. At first, I thought he wanted dead frogs preserved in formaldehyde. But no, Jim wanted real live frogs. I didn't understand why and was afraid to ask? To study them, kill them, dissect them? Yuck!! Anyway, good old Mr. Ottavio Scalzo was in charge that year of ordering lab supplies. However, Mr. Scalzo was always rather busy, never quite finding the time to order the frogs. Jim, of course, kept complaining to me that he wanted frogs. Thus, one day I took it upon myself to ensure that Mr. Scalzo would order the frogs without any further delay. In those days, Mr. Scalzo had an office right next to room 121 in the Holy Cross building. A few years later, by the way, room 121 became the detention room. Indeed, you may remember Mr. Pennefather frequently announcing on the intercom just prior to 3 PM, "If you owe, don't go. Report to room 121, not bus stop 121!"

While in his office during a period where we were both free, I remember asking Mr. Scalzo if he had anything to do. As soon as he said "no", I seized the opportunity and informed him that this was an excellent time to order frogs for Mr. Chatterton's biology classes. Jim wanted six frogs. The catalog listed them at \$16 each. Both Mr. Scalzo and I concluded that this would be too much as \$96 would almost deplete our meager science budget. I therefore suggested that we order three frogs instead. Mr. Scalzo agreed and, as I watched, he dutifully wrote the number "3" in the quantity column of the order sheet. He then signed the paper on the dotted line. Actually, he scribbled something taking up perhaps 10 lines of paper. Mr. Scalzo's signature is very unique. It is very difficult, or should I say impossible, to read. It looks like a huge infinity symbol written sideways. Come to think of it, it kind of makes sense as it resembles the number "8" which is what his name means in Italian. I then asked him to please send in the order form immediately. He did and as soon as I saw Mr. Chatterton that afternoon I cheerfully informed him of the good news that "the frogs were on their way." He didn't ask me how many and I didn't tell him that he would be getting only three.

It was on a Friday, about four weeks later that the incident bloomed. By this time, of course, I had completely forgotten that we had ordered frogs as quite frankly frogs are not what are usually on my mind. I did not have a class that period and happened to be alone in the Science Prep Room correcting some tests. Soon the bell rang signaling the start of the lunch period. Mr. Scalzo came into the room asking me if I was going to lunch. Wanting to finish my corrections, I told him to go ahead without me informing him that, "I'll join you shortly". I stayed to finish my work for approximately 15 minutes. Then, in a rush to go to lunch, I got up, quickly walked out of the Prep Room and shut the door behind me. As I turned the corner out of the Prep Room, a man simultaneously turned the corner down the hall carrying what appeared to be three pizzas. I may never forget the picture of this angry looking man walking hurriedly towards me carrying three pizza boxes. I remember it like yesterday thinking to myself, "Good, who ordered the pizzas?" Being somewhat hungry, and without knowing who he was, I jokingly remarked, "Perfect, just in time for lunch!" Unfortunately, this man had no sense of humor.

Indeed, the man appeared to be totally "pissed off" at something or other telling me in a very loud, serious, angry and authoritative voice, "Where is your fridge?" Convinced that they were pizzas, I responded, and I kid you not, "What fridge, here, give them to me, I think I'll eat one right now". He raised the boxes out of my reach and repeated louder, slower, angrier and right in my face, word by word this time, "Where - is - your - fridge?" I immediately concluded that this man is not all there while saying to myself "I don't want to eat them cold!" I opened the Prep Room door, ordered him to follow me and as I opened the fridge door, still convinced they were pizzas, I told him, "Here, are you happy now?" Luckily the fridge was almost empty as the man placed the three "pizza" looking boxes into the fridge. He then turned to me and said, "Mister, these frogs will come out of hibernation any moment now. Keep them in your fridge!" and closed the fridge door. The poor guy thought I was joking with him when in fact I was not. I was genuinely convinced they were pizzas and began laughing out loud right in his face. While doing my best to refrain from laughing, I asked, "How many frogs are there?" Looking at me as if I were some kind of a weirdo he answered, loud and clear, "three dozen" and walked away as hurriedly as he had arrived. He didn't even have any papers for me to sign; he just took off quickly. It soon dawned on me that we ordered three dozen frogs rather than just three frogs. Little did we know that frogs are ordered by the dozen. When Mr. Scalzo wrote "3", it meant "3 dozen" and not three frogs. They were \$16 a dozen and not \$16 each. Fortunately, we had not ordered six. At any rate, there were now three dozen frogs sleeping in the Father Mac Science Prep Room refrigerator.

Although anxious to tell Mr. Scalzo that the frogs had arrived, he was not in the caf when I got there. I quickly had lunch and when the bell rang I rushed to class. Being a few minutes late, I did not see either Mr. Scalzo or Mr. Chatterton as they were both already in class. As luck would have it, I did not get a chance to see them that Friday afternoon at all.

The following Monday, I was again alone sitting in the Science Prep room. Forgive me for not having frogs on my mind as I sat there at my desk. Soon I began hearing "popping" sounds coming from the fridge. I suddenly remembered the frogs saying to myself, "Oh hell, the frogs" as I rushed over to open the door to see what was happening. To my shocking surprise, four or five of them leaped out jumping straight at me. Completely startled and somewhat afraid, I moved back so fast that I almost fell to the floor. Soon, all the frogs in the top box as well as some from the second box jumped out of the fridge. I didn't know what to do. I was reluctant to get close to the fridge to shut the door for fear that a frog would jump at me. Since the Prep room door was wide open, there were now frogs leaping and jumping throughout the Father Mac science area.

I quickly went to call Mr. Chatterton telling him that the frogs have escaped. He rushed to the Science Prep room, closed the fridge door and asked me what happened. I answered, "They woke up and ran off, that's what happened!" I then told him to get his students to round them up and get rid of them. He agreed, telling me that he would keep only five or six and bring the rest to the local fields. God only knows in whose yard in the neighborhood of Father Mac the frogs were released!

Of course, I couldn't resist the temptation of having a little bit of fun. I remember thinking to myself that this "frog incident" would be an excellent opportunity to play a practical joke on someone. Mrs. Geraldine Matthews, the Father Mac secretary immediately came to mind. I wanted to ask a student rounding up the frogs to let one

loose downstairs in the Secretariat area. Now, trust me, as best as I can recall, although I wanted to, I never actually got a chance to ask anyone to bring a frog downstairs to Mrs. Matthews or to anyone else. Apparently, however, by recess time, and without any help on my part, the frogs had somehow made it downstairs. I recall Mrs. Matthews informing me that afternoon that we were crazy in the Science Department. I replied, "No, we are not crazy, we are mad, we are mad scientists." To this day, I have no idea how some of those frogs made it to the office area.

During the last period that day, in an effort to rest from the excitement of the "frogs", I went downstairs to have a cup of coffee. While sitting having my coffee, the late Mr. Charles Kelly soon walked into the room and sat at the table. Within minutes, the late Mr. Bud Johnson walked in and also sat down at the table. At some point during that coffee break I remember making the remark, "Boy, that's all we need, a bunch of frogs jumping around our school." Both immediately turned to me and gave me a stern look. Charles Kelly then decided to lecture me with the remark, "Please, it's not nice to refer to our French students as frogs!" They obviously had not yet heard about the incident (where were they?). Yes, it happened at Father Mac! What can I say?

Sal Lancione