First Walk to School was a Real Learning Experience

I was raised by my grandmother, a prim, proper Southern lady, and my loving old-maid aunt.

My first recollection of the time is from when I was 5, sitting on my front porch in our small South Carolina town of Bennettsville with my dolls, playing school. I decided I needed a book and a lunch, so I went into the house and told my grandmother that I wanted to go to school and that I needed lunch.

She thought I meant playing school on the front porch.

She had fried some fatback that morning and put a piece in a cold biscuit and wrapped it up in a piece of funny paper.

As I started back to the porch, I stopped by our library table in the hall and picked up a book.

I was sitting on our steps when a boy, about 5 years older, came by. I asked him if he would take me to school, which was on the other side of our small town.

The boy, not having much more sense than I did, said he would. He took my hand, and we started off.

When we reached school, he took me to the hall and then left.

A lady came up to me and said, “Honey, what are you doing here?”

I told her I wanted to go to school. She then took me to the office of the principal, Miss Sally.

She asked my name and when I told her my grandmother’s name

and that I lived with her, Miss Sally called someone in my family to come and get me, which they did.

I vividly remember a spanking and being put to bed in Grandmother's huge bed and being in isolation for a whole day.

I did not know that half the town had been looking for me.

I still have my grandmother's bedroom suite. It doesn't look as big these days, but when I look at it, I remember crying all day.

I still have the book that I took to school that day, Where Shall We Spend Eternity?

And I remember my prim, proper grandmother asking if I had shown Miss Sally my lunch. Grandmother was mortified that Miss Sally would have seen that fatback and biscuit, all wrapped up in the funny paper.

I think the only one happy that day was the dog—he ate the fatback.

—Frances K., Portsmouth, Virginia