

Ellen Janowitz
167 Gordon Rd.
Walnut Creek, CA 94598
Home phone: (925) 256-1134 email: embulf@yahoo.com

I, ELLEN BULF, do declare as follows:

I went through the public school system in Palo Alto, California from kindergarten through high school. In 1963, in my tenth grade math class, I stopped saying the Pledge of Allegiance after the word "America." My reason was increasing mental anguish, which had reached a crisis point, over publicly professing belief in things I privately thought were false. This included "liberty and justice for all" (it was the civil rights era, and clearly we did not have liberty or justice for all) and "under God" (because I didn't believe in God). I stood up with the class, put my hand over my heart, and sincerely hoped that no one would notice that I left some words out.

My teacher confronted me. He demanded that I explain to the class why I was not saying the entire pledge. Self-conscious and unprepared, I muttered something about not wanting to say things which I did not believe in.

The teacher became openly hostile to me for the rest of the semester. I was frequently ridiculed in front of the class. He accused me of being a traitor and rejecting the values on which my country was founded. He demanded I explain to the class why I thought I was smarter than the greatest minds who ever lived, as well as those who built our country and fought for it. Was I a Communist? If not, why was I acting like one? People like me were a disgrace and an affront to good God-fearing Americans. And if I thought I was so smart, why wasn't I in AP math? (This was particularly hurtful because I had dropped down from AP math.) I was accused of rejecting goodness, truth, and morality and setting a bad example for others. I was barely 15, shy and self-conscious even under normal circumstances. Any attempt of self-defense was met with more enthusiastic attacks, so I tried to respond as little as possible. The stares and silence of my fellow students during these tirades were excruciating. They are still painful to recall.

For months, I dreaded going to that class. When I had a question, the answer might begin with, "Well, it seems Miss Bulf *doesn't* know everything!" I stopped asking questions and dropped farther behind. I was often too upset at being ridiculed to concentrate. When my grades suffered, the teacher offered nothing but criticism and contempt. I never told my parents about the abuse to which I was being subjected. Although they were secular in their beliefs, they remembered the recent McCarthy era and thought it best to say whatever the school required so as not to make oneself conspicuous. I suffered through the sadistic ordeal with no support until June finally released me.

Blaming myself for my lack of math ability, I never took math again in high school, which prevented me from my goal of majoring in Biology in college. I only realized

years later that I could have done well, with help and encouragement. (Later, in my twenties, I enrolled in junior college and took the last two years of high school math, with good grades; I then went to a state college, graduating with a degree in Biology at the age of 28.)

The climate of fear intimidated others in the class. At my twentieth high school reunion, a fellow classmate approached me and recalled vividly my humiliation in tenth grade math. He told me that he, a fellow atheist, had been pained by the experience, and had wanted to stand up for me, but didn't for fear of being victimized himself. He wanted to apologize. Watching me suffer alone was one of his strongest memories of high school, one which had caused him to live with twenty years of guilt.

Executed on Dec. 11, 2003 at Walnut Creek, California.

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