

The double blackboard is a sea of black at the front of the classroom at Kirksey Elementary School. I take my seat in the third aisle in the last row. My feet easily reach the floor, unlike my girlfriend. She isn't as tall as me and her legs swing back and forth.

Along the wall above the blackboard there are strips of paper that show what the alphabet looks like in print. Momma says that I must learn how to write, and she has been helping me learn the shapes of each letter. I don't know if I'll ever be able to put the letters together to spell real words.

A cute boy sits in front of me and he is always talking. He is restless and goes to the pencil sharpener or sometimes to look out of the window. His family goes to church with me, so I am used to his constant commotion.

Mrs. Farris comes into the room and calls us to order. She is tall and thin with a white curly mop of hair. She's taught first grade at our school for a very long time. Everyone knows her because she organizes a Rhythm Band each year, teaching her students how to keep the beat.

She pulls a large box of instruments from her closet every week. Each student gets to pick from a variety of noise makers. There are tambourines, triangles, drums, sticks, blocks of wood with sandpaper, castanets, hand bells, and maracas. She uses one of the instruments to set a beat for us to follow, and marches us around her classroom, down the halls and into the auditorium and back again. We all march in step and play along.

I like the rhythm band, but my favorite part of music is the first Tuesday of each month. We have a pretty teacher that visits our school to teach us how to sing songs. It is the best day of the month. Well, except for the days we have fried chicken at lunch.

Our music teacher arrives at 10:30. She gives each of us a sheet of music and sounds out the notes as we follow along. We learn songs like "Row, Row, Row your Boat," "She'll be Coming 'Round the Mountain," "Good Morning," "If You're Happy and You Know It," and "Home, Home on the Range." We learn to sing in rounds and we girls always out-sing the boys.

We also play games and our class favorite is to play Button, Button, Who's Got the Button. It's usually the last activity before the music teacher leaves.

## Hometown Ramblings

By **Bobbie Smith Bryant**  
Contributing Columnist



# Remembering first grade

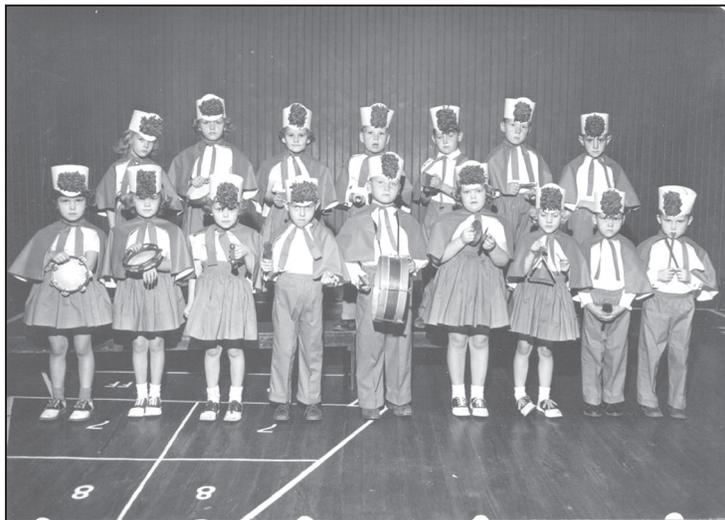


Photo provided

Seen here is the 1955-56 first grade class at Kirksey. In the front row, from left, are Jill Tucker, Phyllis Darnell, Nona Bazzell, David Belcher, Mark Cunningham, Robbie Marine, Evelyn Marine, Mickey Pierce and Mike Pierce. In the back row, from left, are Linda Cunningham, La Jeanna Paschall, Georgia Lee Potts, Rocky Smith, William Ross, Steve Alexander and Jerry Riley.

After music we have lunch. Before we go to the cafeteria, Mrs. Farris sits in a chair and we all sit around her on the floor. She asks us to put our hands together and say a prayer.

I notice that one of the boys doesn't close his eyes during the prayer, so I jump up to tell on him, whispering into the teacher's ear. Mrs. Farris looks very surprised. She pulls me close to her and whispers in my ear, "Why Bobbie, how would you know his eyes were open if yours were closed?"

I hadn't thought about that.

I'm ashamed and embarrassed and really glad no one else heard her.

After lunch Mrs. Farris reads to us from the Little House on the Prairie books. I am scared for Laura sometimes, but her Pa takes good care of her. After we listen to

a chapter, we each have our pallets to lie on and take a nap.

The afternoon goes by quickly. We are learning about coins and paper money. I am a little bored because my Daddy made me learn about them before I started to school.

At the end of the day we line up to ride the bus back home. I do love first grade and Mrs. Farris. Now, if I can just remember how many humps an M has, I've got it made.

*Bobbie Smith Bryant is a native of Calloway County. She is passionate about western Kentucky and is currently working on a commemorative history to celebrate the 2022 Calloway County Bicentennial. For more information about the author, visit [bobbie-smithbryant.com](http://bobbie-smithbryant.com). ■*