

Kissing Day

The worst thing about having a birthday when I was a young pupil at the Academy of Arcadia was knowing that all the older girls would be holding me down and kissing me two days after my birthday. Yes, as nice as that sounds now, it was really painful for a young boy. I imagine that this tradition was started by some older girls to embarrass young boys...and it worked.

On the day of one's birthday the celebrant would get the traditional spanking....nothing hurtful but everyone joining in to render a few small slaps on the birthday boy's butt. Occasionally, some bully would really let you have it with a hard whack, but for the most part it was a very civil spanking...with lots of laughs and teasing...it was fun. We never got to spank girls although many of them were bigger than us...but customs are customs.

The day following your birthday was "Pinching Day" and everyone got to give you one pinch during the day. It was usually a gentle pinch, except for the bully, who gave you a black and blue mark on your arm if he was in a good mood or on your butt if he wasn't! Two days after your birthday was "Kissing Day." The kissing usually happened on the playground during the first recess period. The older girls would corner the reticent young birthday boy, hold him down on the ground and kiss him dozens of times on the cheeks and head...but never on the lips. The other boys would stand around and laugh...sometimes saying, "Glenn loves so in so," or "Kiss him again." When the two or three minute

event was over, everyone would clap and cheer, and other than the humiliation of having lipstick all over your face...the ritual was over. About a month before Kissing Day, I started dreading not my birthday...but "Kissing Day." Because my birthday was on September 10, I was usually the first one to receive the treatment, probably increasing the impact of the event.

Over the years, I have told many friends about this Academy custom and although many thought it was quaint, no one had ever heard of such a tradition. Even several of my friends from The Academy said they did not remember it. Had they repressed this embarrassing event or had it never happened? Was this just a fanciful dream that I had conjured up in my head. All Freudian interpretations aside, my older sister, Alice, fondly remembers "Kissing Days" and smiles when she talks about "those old times," so I sure of my story.

In recent years, I have tried to reinstitute Kissing Days with our friends to no avail. Most of the women were not interested in holding the men down and when I suggested that we reverse the custom and that the men kiss the women on their birthdays, they really started to resist. Some didn't even want anyone to know when they were having a birthday! Even the pinching part was unacceptable to nearly all of them. So, I must live with the memory of "Kissing Days" gone by. I should have enjoyed those days more when they were happening!

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