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# Your permanent record

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There are few things that are dreaded more when you're in elementary school, than when a teacher glares at you and says, ?That is going to go on your permanent record!?

Oh no! Not your permanent record! You'll be carrying the mark of Caine like a neon sign bolted to your forehead, or maybe you'll have to wear a scarlet letter on all your clothes so everyone knows you have a blotch on your permanent record.

My Grade 7 homeroom teacher ? a lovely woman, who would have fit in nicely as a guard in a Second World War internment camp ? told us a blotch on our permanent record meant we would never get into university, or get a decent job, and we would be life-long losers. Yes, she really said that.

The blotch on your record meant you were doomed for eternity.

She would threaten you with adding something to your record every chance she got.

I'm pretty sure my permanent record is collecting dust somewhere in a school archives, or more likely was shredded and put in the trash years ago.

Despite the threats, I realized that no school, employer, or police agency, has ever requested a copy of my permanent record. In fact, no one has ever even requested an actual diploma to prove that I even graduated high school.

I would like to think, that girl who sat next to me in Grade 5, and eventually went on to become a teacher herself, realized what a nasty thing it is to threaten a kid with writing something bad about them on their permanent record - and that girl who is now a teacher, has decided not to be that kind of teacher.

But I'm sure it still happens.

There is an online forum that I am active on, and it occasionally has posts about school nightmares.

One parent told her story. Her young daughter had been having a difficult time in school for several years. She complained the teachers picked on her and always gave her a hard time.

The kid started a new year, and was suddenly enjoying school, getting good marks, and was a lot happier.

The parent was determined to find out why things had changed.

During a parent/teacher conference, the parent asked a lot of questions. The teacher finally admitted he did not read reports on kids coming into his class.

He reasoned that the reports were only someone else's opinion, and he did not want to judge one of his new students by what another teacher said about them.

They pulled the kid's record. Sure enough, the original teacher labelled the daughter as trouble. The next year, the new teacher saw this report and treated the daughter as if she were going to be trouble. The trend continued for several years all because one teacher didn't like the student.

The current teacher, the one who did not pre-judge his student by reading the opinion of others, said he found the daughter to be pleasant and polite in the classroom, and a good student.

There seems to be very little forgiveness when it comes to writing down some people's wrongdoings.

When it comes to criminal or anti-social behaviour, you have to keep a record. A guy who has a long rap sheet and continues to be a menace to society needs to be kept on a short leash.

However, some people make mistakes and never make another one.

The TV show Border Patrol, documents border crossings and focuses in on people who did ridiculous things, like bringing in a dozen chickens in a suitcase, but declaring they are not carrying any kind of meat. Those circumstances never end well.

There was one fellow trying to enter the U.S. to attend a sporting event. He was denied entry, because they discovered he had an assault charge ? 40 years earlier ? as the result of a street fight.

The customs people determined he was a threat, because of that incident, which he said he could barely remember.

Think back to a time you have done something, probably in your youth, that now, you are not proud of.

Would you be happy if someone brought it up at a social event in front of other people decades later?

?Hey Bob, remember that time you got drunk, and drove your car over the neighbour's dog, and we buried it in the back forty, and the neighbour asked you the next day if you had seen his beloved pet??

Think back ? for many people, that's not all that far-fetched, is it?

Sometimes letting bygones be bygones is the best course of action.