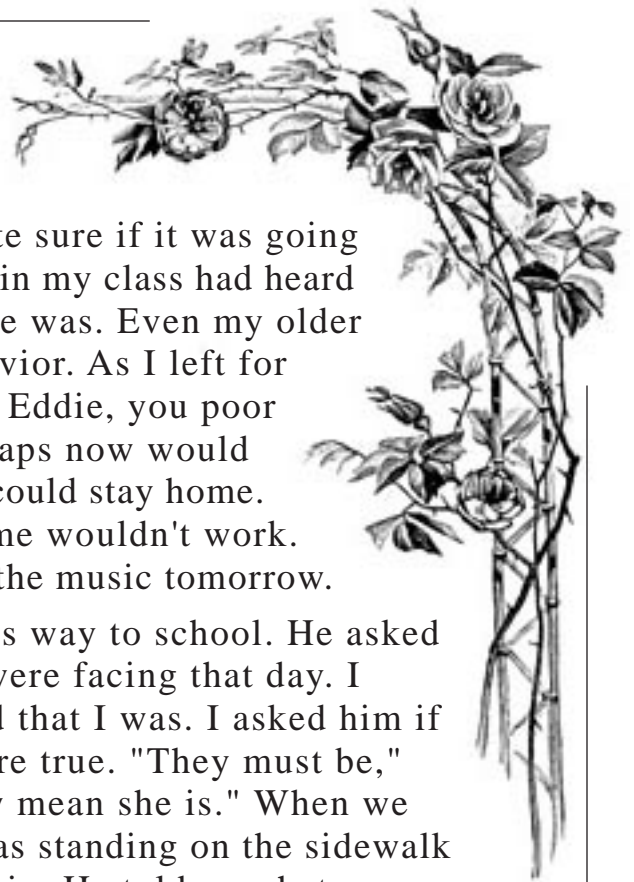


Mae E. Lanpher

North Street Tales

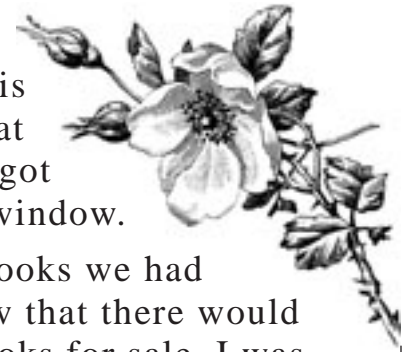


It was my first day in 8th grade. I wasn't quite sure if it was going to be a good day or a bad day. Most everyone in my class had heard stories about Miss Lanpher and how strict she was. Even my older sisters had warned me to be on my best behavior. As I left for school that morning, Hope said, "Good luck, Eddie, you poor thing." That remark made me think that perhaps now would be a good time to pretend I was sick so that I could stay home. I realized though that that excuse to stay home wouldn't work. Also, in didn't go today I would have to face the music tomorrow.

I left the house and soon ran into Mark on his way to school. He asked me if I was as scared as he was of what we were facing that day. I pretended that I wasn't at first, then admitted that I was. I asked him if he thought all those stories we had heard were true. "They must be," he said, "because everyone knows about how mean she is." When we arrived at school, Mr. Fetzer, the principal was standing on the sidewalk. He knew our names and what grade we were in. He told us what room we were to go to. Miss Lanpher's room was on the second floor on the west side of the building. That was good news for Mark and me and for Gene who came in with us. If we got seats near the window, then we could see what was going on at the sports field behind the school. Miss Lanpher was standing at the door to her room. She was tall and very thin. Her curly hair was gray. Her glasses dangled on a chain that was around her neck. She put on her glasses, looked at each one of us as we stood shrinking under her stare. Then she said, "Let me see, you must be the Barkley boy. Didn't I have your sisters in my class?" I replied, "Yes, Miss Lanpher you did." "Well, then, you must be Edward. Is that correct?" she asked me. I felt doomed. She already knew my name. Meekly I replied, "Yes, Miss Lanpher." She had the same questions for Mark and Gene. She also knew their first names. Now we were all branded. Gene muttered under his breath, "And, we've got a whole year in her class." "What did you say, Eugene?" asked Miss Lanpher. "Nothing, Miss Lanpher." Gene replied.

Soon all our classmates arrived and took seats as near our best friends as possible. That all changed when Miss Lanpher came into the room. She picked up a piece of paper from her desk and began to call the roll. Then she had us all stand up and stand around the sides of the room. She said she would assign us a seat that would be ours for the whole year. I groaned because I knew that I would probably get a front seat because my last name began with a B. Sure enough, that's what happened. She put Harold in the

first seat in the first row next to the windows because his last name began with an A. Then Earl got the second seat got the second seat because his name began with a B. I got the third. Well, I thought, at least I got a desk near the window.



Miss Lanpher didn't waste any time. She told us what books we had to buy and when we were expected to have them. I knew that there would be a rush after school to come a 9th grader who had books for sale. I was all set because my neighbor, Alice, was in the 8th grade the year before and told me she would sell her books to me. \$1.50 would buy all my books.

After all the announcements, Miss Lanpher turned to the blackboard and wrote,

"HITCH YOUR WAGON TO A STAR! Then she said that that would be our motto for the year. If we followed that motto we would have a very successful year. Of course, there were questioning looks on most of her students' faces, but no one dared to ask what it meant. Miss Lanpher smiled, then turned to the chalkboard and began to write math problems which we were to solve.

Everyone in that room knew what Miss Lanpher's first name was and that her middle initial was E. We weren't supposed to know that and we knew that if we dared call a teacher by his or her first name there would be trouble.

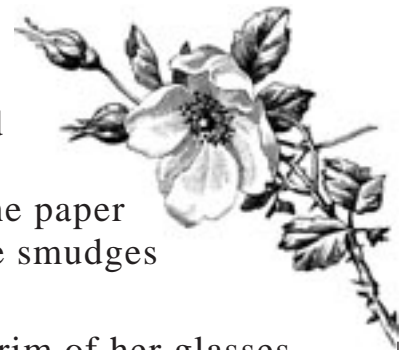
Miss Lanpher lived in a big Victorian house on Center Street with her sister, Grace. I knew that because my sister Mary Jane sometimes went over there to clean and do some cooking for the sisters. Grace was an invalid, or so she liked people to think. Mary Jane said that there were times when she heard footsteps in Grace's room when there was no one else in the house. Also food would disappear from the icebox and Miss Lanpher would ask Mary Jane if she had eaten it. Mary Jane always replied that she hadn't, then Miss Lanpher would smile and drop the subject.

As the days progressed through September and into October my classmates and I began to realize that nothing horrible had happened. Miss Lanpher always had a smile for us, didn't get angry when we made a mistake, and was there to help us after school. In fact, we realized that we were beginning to like her! She even took some of us home in her car when it was raining. She had a big, green, Packard car that she never drove above 20 MPH.

One day Miss Lanpher asked me to stay after school. "Now what did I do?" I wondered.

When the bell rang at 4:00 p.m. for dismissal, I remained in my seat. Miss Lanpher always went out into the corridor and remained there until everyone had left the building. When she came into the room, she called me to come

up and sit in the chair beside her desk. She picked up a piece of paper which I saw was my homework that I had handed in the day before. I had been in a hurry doing it because I wanted to listen to a program on the radio so the paper wasn't the best work I could do. In fact there were erasure smudges and the paper had been folded to fit in my pocket.



Miss Lanpher, shook her head and looked at me over the rim of her glasses. She looked so sad. I just looked at the floor, ashamed that I was the cause of her feeling sad. Then she said, "Edward, do you remember what I wrote on the blackboard the first day of school?" I replied, "Yes, Miss Lanpher, you said we were to Hitch Our Wagon To A Star." She asked, "Do you know what that means, Edward?" "I'm not sure that I do." "Well," she said, "that motto means that in everything you do you should do your very best. I like to think that my boys and girls will not only do their very best but will go beyond that and reach for their very, very best. Do you understand that, Edward?"

I thought for a moment, then I said, "I think I do, Miss Lanpher. It means that I should reach for the stars and that the stars are very hard to reach. But if I try hard, and do my work I can touch those stars." She smiled at me and with that smile I knew everything was OK. It also told me that she liked me and wanted me to do the very best I could. She handed me that messy paper. I took and told her that I would hand it in the next morning. "No, you won't Edward," she said, "tomorrow is Saturday, Monday will do though. "

That year passed too quickly for me. There was one thing that I always remembered about my 8th grade experience and that was Miss Lanpher's smile.



Edward Barkley