

WISH THEY ALL COULD BE CALIFORNIA GIRLS...
IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

By Robert "Bob" Rogers Chaffin
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Her name was Judy and she just showed up at the beginning of the school year in 1960. Waltzed right into the sophomore class with her golden blond hair all done up in this tight little bun on top of her head, looking so full of smiles and personality that immediately every boy in school lost attention to algebra, history, biology, and in some cases their current girlfriends.

She was different; tall, long slender neck, clothes that were different from the other girls who all tended toward skirt and sweater sets. She wore dresses; shirt waists with full skirts tailored to fit her slender waist perfectly. She was also without presupposition of who was cool, who was in the "in crowd," and who deserved a place at the "A" table in the cafeteria. To make matters worse, she had a personality that would have melted the iceberg that took down the Titanic. Straight white teeth flashed as she smiled at everything and everyone, regardless of their social status.

The girls, particularly the "in crowd" girls, were at their wits end. They were trying not to like her but finding it very difficult in light of her dazzling smiles and sunny cheer she spread everywhere she went.

Immediately they began a quest to find some glaring fault but seemingly to no avail. It was clear the game had changed, and the social order of high school had been rocked to its core. By the time elections for class officers were held, she had been named secretary/treasurer of the sophomore class, to the great distress of those who thought themselves in contention for that position. It's funny how your mind works during that vulnerable time that composes our high school years. Not one of us stopped to consider what she might have been feeling. None of us considered that because of a family crisis back in California, she might have been required to pick up her suitcase and sojourn in Middle Tennessee, which must have seemed as foreign to her as another planet. None of us even considered that she had given up her place in the social order of some California high school only to have to earn her way back in a new school. None of us stopped to think that she might have been taken aback by the fact that her clothes were different from ours and that she might have gotten up every morning wishing she had a skirt and sweater set to wear like the rest of the girls.

It is difficult to place one's self in the shoes of another and feel the difficulties they might be facing, since we are all so often obsessed with ourselves and how we are being viewed, or responded to, or catered to by others.

For example, when it was becoming obvious to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, they began to become concerned, not about possible working against God's plan, or "kicking against the pricks," rather they thought about themselves.

"Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin; "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." John 11:47-49.

Like us today, they those many years ago, were focused on themselves, their place, their power, and not how they might serve others and please their maker.

Oh well, Just California Dreaming, so "stop on by the church and bend down to pray – California Dreaming on a summer's day."

Who knows what empathy for others or for yourself you might find there.

Bob Chaffin was born in the Roaring River Community of Jackson County, Tennessee during World War II, but soon moved with his family to the nearby town of Carthage; where he spent the balance of his growing up years. He was graduated from David Lipscomb University and Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan where he earned an MBA. Upon graduation from David Lipscomb he took a job with General Motors' Financial Staff and worked his way through varying levels of responsibilities in a number of GM locations.



In January of 2001 he retired while holding the position of Finance Director for the Information Systems Division of GM and returned with his wife Janice Lafever Chaffin to his beloved Tennessee. Today, he lives in Lebanon, raises Black Angus Cattle, and serves as an Elder for the Maple Hill Church of Christ.

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*Read more about Robert Rogers Chaffin in the Chaffin files and read more Writer's corner stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>