

## CHAPTER 1

**I am a Teacher:** That is to say I was a teacher until I was summarily dismissed, fired, forced to retire on April 25, 2017. I am not sure which term fits my demise best.

On April 24, 2017, talented singers filled positions in all of my eight choirs. Several ensembles had competed successfully on the international, national, and state levels. Our choirs consistently gained yearly recognition by the state activities organization at their annual gala. February of 2017, we held auditions for the coming year and every choir filled with students who loved to perform. In March, I took a group of singers to tour New York City, see three Broadway shows, and participate in two clinics with Broadway actors. On April 24, 2017, it would be fair to say I was comfortable in my position and worked relentlessly to sustain that feeling.

On April 26, 2017, cowering at home, I felt light headed with heart palpitations. A pit formed in my stomach like none other experienced before. I felt hurt, confused and betrayed. My Christian belief system went to work. I prayed, but not the prayers of praise and thanksgiving. No prayer passed my lips thanking God for the privilege of being a teacher. All I could mutter was, “Why me, God? Really?” Twenty-four hours earlier, my life as a teacher, came to an end.

April 25, 2017, I walked with confidence toward the administrative offices for my End of the Year (EOY) evaluation. I had undergone this process a number of times, so I felt no need to be nervous. For almost a decade, this teaching position held the usual challenges. My integrity and style of teaching underwent the usual questioning by my department and the administration. Not

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only had I survived, I thrived over the years and built a substantial program. While this year contained its usual ups and downs, why would this EOY be any different?

I am unable to bury the words I heard that day. “You will not be the choral director here next year. If you do chose to return, you will be placed where you cannot be a part of any negative student interaction and where you will have nothing to do with collecting money.” My breath stopped. Swallowing hard, I tried to make sense of those words and started to ask questions. The voice raised in decibels, as if scolding a naughty child. “Did you not hear me? You are not going to be teaching choir here next year!”

My gravestone should read **She Never Saw It Coming**. In my personal life, many things shocked and blindsided me. As a defense mechanism, I crowned myself with a new title: Queen of the Worst Case Scenarios. I tried to foresee any negative event which could lead to my downfall and then attempted to navigate through it with composure. It seldom worked. April 25, 2017, was no different. I had not seen this coming.

As you take this journey alongside me, your points of view as a student, teacher, parent or administrator will shift as I encourage you to walk in another’s shoes. My story is laced with anecdotes of success, failure, passion and what it meant to be a teacher. April 25, 2017, was my day which will live in infamy. As dramatic as it may sound, this best describes the deepest hurt I ever experienced as a 46 year veteran teacher. But through God’s grace, I am recovering.