



## Not Exactly Flying Colors

### Stories of how you almost flunked

Not everyone has a story about how they almost flunked. Only people like those whose stories are published here—people like me.

I'm the kind of guy who in 5th grade would wait until my buddy Luke Good, who sat next to me, would leave his desk so I could grab the book he was reading, remove the bookmark and place it to some earlier page, so it would look to our teacher, Mrs. Weidman, that I was further along in my book than Luke was in his. By the time I reached 11th grade, seven or so years later, I signed up for Mr. Rankin's Advanced Placement class in modern European history, thinking it would help me get into college. What would have helped me get into college was doing the assigned reading in that class, which I did once in a while, so that when taking the AP exam at the end of the term I actually could have written about European history instead of the three-page, handwritten sob story I wrote detailing why I'd forgotten everything. It was a good thing that college allowed me to take one pass-fail course per semester, because cramming for four hours the night before the final exam was enough to "pass" Astronomy 101, an 8 a.m. M-W-F class I never attended all semester. (I was reading European history at breakfast and just lost track of time.)

As you'll see in the stories here, we all learned to mend our ways.

Thanks to everyone who submitted stories. I wish we had space to publish more of them.

—Michael E.C. Gery, editor

#### How to describe a biology project

I took college-prep biology in the 10th grade, and it went OK until baseball season. We would travel for games, and I would often miss my afternoon biology class. We were required to do a science project, and I won't say what mine was except to say it was lame. An oral presentation was required to receive a passing grade. Each student was called out at random to present their project. When my name was called I walked to the front of the class totally unprepared with no idea what I was going to say. Seriously, my project was lame.

I turned, faced my classmates and introduced my project. At that moment, another teacher came in to our class and went to the back of the room to talk to my teacher. I noticed that my teacher was not paying attention to me, so I just began to mumble a bunch of nonsense syllables and ever so often I would interject a "and that was a result of" or "therefore" and continue mumbling. The class began to laugh. Everyone kept looking back at the teacher because they could not believe that I was getting away with babbling. When the visitor left our room and my teacher turned her attention back to me, I simply said, "And that was my project. Any questions?" The teacher said thank you, and I sat down. I received a 90 on my science project!

Michael Allen | Indian Trail | Union Power Cooperative

#### How low can you go?

At 15 years old, I made what I thought was a good decision. I was going to "make" my parents appreciate the good grades I was making, even though they were not as good as my sister's. I was tired of hearing their so-called encouragement that I could do better. They would say, "Your sister got an A in that subject and you only got an A-minus."

So, upon entering the 10th grade, I began my project to see just how bad a grade I could make and still not fail. I ended up that year with barely a 70 average in a required subject. That grade was only because I realized what was happening and turned in an excellent term paper.

Since summer school was non-existent back then, my plan to prove something to my parents almost backfired on me. Instead, it proved something to me: My parents may not have used the correct approach to encourage me, but I DEFINITELY did not use the correct approach with my project.

Vera Sheppard | Fayetteville | South River EMC



You can see more stories on this topic and others on our Web site at [www.carolinacountry.com](http://www.carolinacountry.com). Next month we'll publish stories and pictures of your finest sports moment. (Deadline was July 15.) For this year's remaining themes and rules, see page 20. We'll publish the 2007 themes in September.

### 8th grade spring fever

At the end of my 8th grade year, I had had enough of school for one year. When testing time came I marked absolutely anything down on the answer sheet rather than even try to read the questions. I had no clue that that was my placement test for 9th grade classes!

About two weeks into the next school year, my teacher accidentally let it slip that my class was the “low” group. I was shocked! There must have been some mistake! I stayed after class and asked the teacher what I could do to get out of that group. She said that actually my teachers had debated over whether to even let me go on to 9th grade with my low test scores.

I decided that day that I would make the highest grades in my section and that I would consider schoolwork more seriously in the future. I learned that always doing my best was important.

*Penny Graham | Lake James | Rutherford EMC*

### How to become an editor

It was around this time five years ago—I was in the 5th grade. Two other students and I were called to the office. I was curious, but I didn’t really care. In the office there was a teacher and a principal. I found out that I wasn’t going to pass 5th grade without passing the writing test. From then on, the two other students and I were taught outside of class how to write. It was embarrassing, but I wanted to pass. I didn’t want to be in the 5th grade for two years.

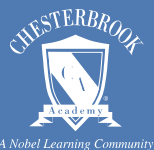
Then, it was time for me to take the writing test. A few days later, my teacher called me to the front of the class and announced that I had passed the writing test. The whole class clapped for me. Now, in 10th grade, I am the editor of the school’s literary magazine.

*Elise Shim | Matthews | Butler High School*

### The Typing I race

When I was in high school, I was an exceptional student. I breezed through biology, chemistry, algebra and trigonometry classes, making A’s with ease. However, I had trouble with Typing I. Unlike some of my friends who took the six-week typing course, I took the full-blown, year-long version. I enjoyed typing, but I tried to key too fast. Grades were determined by timed writings. I consistently got “A/F.” The A was for speed, the F for accuracy. Sitting there listening to the keys of the manual uprights clack around me was like being in a foot race. Their keys sounded faster than my keys, I thought. So, no amount of self-discipline could get my fingers to slow down. Conversely, my brain could not speed up enough to get the right directions to my fingers. I made a D on the exam, but I passed the course.

*Sheila Cranford | Denton | Randolph EMC*



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## My brush with death

By the time I reached the 3rd grade, I came to a startling conclusion: I stunk at math. Throughout the rest of my school career, I struggled to make good grades when it came to numbers. I finally reached my lowest point during my freshman year in high school. During second quarter, we received progress reports. I had an F! Stunned and upset, I decided there was something I had to do to pass.

I studied and did all of my homework. When the end of the quarter rolled around, I received a C. I was overjoyed! After my brush with death, I worked hard to change my grade, and I did.

Almost flunking is scary, but as long as you work hard to change it and to improve, you can do it.

*Rachel Sult | Matthews | Butler High School*

## Driver's training and cooking

It was June 1956, and I was in my last semester of college, which included taking driver's training and cooking classes. I also was planning my wedding, commuting an hour each way and working part-time at the Buffalo Evening News taking classified ads. To say I was spread pretty thin would be an understatement.

My fiancé was graduating from the Naval Academy in Annapolis in the middle of my exams, so I took some books along to study. After returning to Buffalo, N.Y., I finished taking my exams, practiced (for the first time) driving the car in which I'd be taking my driving test, and put the finishing touches on our wedding which was to occur June 30.

Not surprisingly I didn't do well on my exams. In fact, I was very worried about not graduating. We were moving 3,000 miles away so it was imperative that I graduate. I talked to the one professor whose exam I was pretty sure I flunked. As a result I managed to graduate, passed the driver's test and even baked a loaf of bread! The wedding was lovely and lasting, as we're about to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary.

*Joan Macdonald | Brevard | Haywood EMC*

## "Tactics" and love

While attending Naval Officer Candidate School, the required "Tactics" course nearly led me to flunk out of the program and destroy my self esteem. Each week we were tested, and I would believe I had easily passed. However, the resulting score would be below 20 points out of a possible 100! Concerned, I studied harder, and even passed up liberty, but I still would fail the following week. The harder I tried, the worse the score.

Near the end of the course, with little chance of recovery, I was resigned to assessing alternative options for my future. My father considered my emotional frame of mind and took a simple approach in an effort to help. He drove my Mom and my girlfriend to the school for the weekend, and he forced me to put aside the books to enjoy the time together. This chance to clear my head and absorb their affection was the catalyst I needed. I never scored under 90 on the remaining tests. I graduated school and eventually taught the subject to others.

The love of others is powerful medicine.

*Larry Holland | Taylorsville | EnergyUnited*

## Machine shop & blueprints at night

Having the best mother in the world, I was encouraged right after high school (1981) to continue my education. As it was, I was working third shift in a textile plant six nights a week. I knew my mother was giving good advice, so I decided to sign up for machine shop and blueprint classes four nights a week (a two-year course) at the local community college. The class was from 6 until 10 p.m.

Being loyal to my mother's wishes, I committed myself not to miss any work or any classes. Needless to say, after the first four months I was a very tired person. I got out of school at 10 p.m., and I had to report to work at 11:45 p.m. I lived quite a few miles from work and school, and I soon discovered that by the time I drove home from school it was basically time to get back in the car to drive to work. To help solve this problem, and to get a little more much-needed rest, I decided to sleep in the nearby grocery store parking lot from 10:10 until 11:30 p.m. After two years I passed, but it was very close. 🙏

*Michael Padgett | Union Mills | Rutherford EMC*

## Send us your best **Earn \$50**

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

### October 2006

#### My Favorite Halloween Costume

Send the story and photo.

*Deadline: August 15*

### November 2006

#### My Favorite Photo

North Carolina people or places.

If they are digital: 300 dpi and actual printing size.

*Deadline: September 15*

### December 2006

#### Regifting Mistakes

I should not have given that away.

*Deadline: October 15*

### The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616  
Or by e-mail: [finer@carolinacountry.com](mailto:finer@carolinacountry.com)  
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