

Testimonial

Sunny Nash



Left: Sunny Nash, 8 years old, 1958
Right: Sunny Nash, 2021

Journalist-Author
Bigmama Didn't Shop At
Woolworth's

Graduate
Texas A&M University '77

I was in third grade. Passing the office one morning, I heard Prof. Sadberry announcing over the P.A., and the telephone ringing off the hook. I went in, answered the phone as quietly as I could and wrote down the information in my best boxcar print. He finished announcements before I hung up and handed him the paper.

“You have a lovely telephone manner; who taught you to speak so clearly and take telephone messages?” he asked. “Thank you. My mother taught me,” I said. “Since I just got my glasses and have to catch up, she lets me practice by writing messages to deliver to neighbors who don’t have telephones and use our number. They pay me a nickel each if they have money. Mostly they don’t.”

“Mrs. Jackson is out sick,” Prof. Sadberry said. “Would you be willing to answer early phone calls until she returns? I can’t pay you. That would be against school policy, but I can arrange free cafeteria lunch.” Booker T. Washington

Elementary School had no hired office help the entire time I attended the school. Mrs. Jackson was a teacher, who came in early to help get the day started. I said, “Prof. Sadberry, I will answer calls for free! And may I announce over the P.A., too?” He hesitated, “Well, that’s a big job—gathering information, verifying it, typing announcement scripts, operating audio equipment...are you tall enough to reach the microphone?” “I can stand on a box!” He looked down at me curiously. “Let’s give it a try. Go to your classroom. Mrs. Byrd will wonder where you are. I’ll tell her later what you’ve talked me into, in case you are ever late.”

After my free lunch, Prof. Sadberry and I retrieved a box from our janitor, Rev. Nobles, who operated out of the storage/boiler room. During Mrs. Jackson’s absence, I answered the telephone, using a form Prof. Sadberry wrote for me to record data, stressing that I ask callers to spell their names, and repeat their numbers back for confirmation. He taught me to use the Mimeograph copier, manual typewriter, 8mm movie projector, reel-to-reel tape recorder and a twin-lens camera, which was more difficult than my Brownie. He taught me copywriting and editing, and enough electronics to set up and operate the P.A. system, connect the microphone and troubleshoot the system when things didn’t work. He even invited me to write and deliver occasional P.A. messages, although, he continued to do most of the broadcasting himself; it was less work than letting me do.

When I was a senior in high school, Prof. Sadberry loaned me the reel-to-reel recorder and microphone he had taught me to use nearly a decade earlier to record my audition for a recording contract, which I got, and a record release the following year. When I took him a copy of my record, he assured me that the record was not the end, but the beginning of my story. “There will be much more for you to do,” he said. Now, I know what he meant. In 1977, I earned a journalism degree from Texas A&M University and most of my journalism skills—research, writing, reporting, announcing, photography, audio production and electronics—all started in Prof. Sadberry’s office in 1958. I eagerly support naming the new Bryan ISD Intermediate School #3, in to honor of my hero—Prof. O.W. Sadberry, Sr.