

CHAS'S ROCK'N' ROLL ALLOTMENT

STARTED Eldon Road Junior School in Edmonton when I was seven. I remember being shown around on the first day and being excited that the school had a garden for the class to grow stuff in. It was pointed out to us and I remember it like a photograph.

Good things that happen in your life are summoned up as images that are frozen in time ain't they?

The patch wasn't very big but it looked good to me. About 6ft by 3ft, it was freshly dug and ready to go. I'd only ever grown two Cos lettuces in my back garden before, guided by Mum, which I couldn't wait to eat so picked 'em when they were 4ins high and ate 'em between two slices of bread and salad cream. Delicious. Another vivid memory. Now my class had a proper school garden but I never got to

'I wore old Mrs Barlow's long drawers'

grow anything in it. It wasn't put to use or ever referred to again. I suppose our teacher Mr Selford wasn't interested in gardening, like the teacher before was. He was interested in the arts though. He loved John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and under his direction the class put on a production of it. I was John Bunyan and I wore old Mrs Barlow next doors' long drawers. I remember my mum trying them on me. How she hid her face from me I don't know. She did, though. I never sussed, I thought I looked cool. She must have been fit to bust.

The play went on and all the mums were there to see it. In the scene where Christian meets the Monster, the Monster was a little boy, shuffling, menacingly, with a big cardboard box over his head and body. There was a fierce face painted on it and a curtain tacked around the bottom to hide his legs. Bit by bit, as the Monster shuffled across, the curtain



Picture: LUKE SANTILLI

started to come adrift and pretty soon fell altogether to reveal two little legs in black school plimsolls. The painted cardboard box twisted round imploringly trying to spot, through two little eye holes, Mr Selford for

direction. The mums roared. Mr Selford was none too pleased about it though and copped the right hump.

I used to sit next to Peter Huff in class. One afternoon I let one go. He didn't think it was funny at

all. He started punching me and I couldn't stop giggling. "Come out here you two," said Mr Selford. We went out there.

"What's going on?" asked Mr Selford. Still annoyed at me Peter Huff pointed at me accusingly. "Charlie Hodges let a fart sir," he said. I couldn't believe it. He said this to a teacher. All in among terror and suppressing the urge to laugh, I denied it.

"Go outside and think it over," said Mr Selford. To this day I don't know what he meant by that. Think what over?

But outside was where the school garden was, which I'd forgotten about. Now the nicely dug over patch was a mass of weeds and stinging nettles.

I obviously had the gardening instinct in me then because I remember looking at it with a tinge of sadness. I would have loved to have grown something on that small plot. I know now

'Growing your own teaches you to slow down'

I would have got some valuable early gardening experience had this plot got used but it didn't.

I think today, at least, all primary schools should have their own allotment. Growing your own has got so much going for it. It not only produces wonderful stuff to eat but it also teaches you to slow down; not to rush through life, not to be continually overtaking but to sit back and enjoy the journey.

● *Chas & Dave's autobiography All About Us by Chas Hodges is published by John Blake (£7.99). Future Chas & Dave gigs: Cambridge Corn Exchange, Wednesday; Anvil Theatre, Basingstoke, Friday; G Live, Guildford, September 28; Winter Gardens, Margate, October 3; Pavilion, Bournemouth, October 5. An Audience With Chas Hodges (hosted by Goodmaze and Shed), The Corringham Hall, Corringham, Essex, October 26 (0844 561 7107)*



Did you know?

by Mitchell Symons

WITH MORE AND MORE PEOPLE TAKING TO THE TWITTERSPHERE, HERE ARE SOME WONDERFUL ONLINE SPELLING MISTAKES...
Derriere

"Your dairy air looks rather ravishing from this vantage point."

Menopause

"So hot in the office today one of the secretaries thought she was metal pausing."

Cologne

"I love it when you can still smell your boyfriend's colon on you."

Overreact

"I always ovary act to small stuff."

Wounds

"Time heals all wombs."

Self-esteem

"Ladies that fall in luv with other peoples boyfriends have low selves of steam."

Pedestal

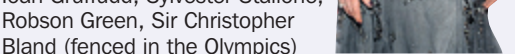
"Women, stop puttin' these men on such a high pedal stool. Not all of them are worth it."

C-section

"Ladies do you prefer natural birth or sea sexion?"

Lactose intolerant

"I can't eat dairy any more. I think I'm lack toast and tolerant."



CATHERINE ZETA JONES, WHO TURNS 45 ON THURSDAY, BECAME A GOOD FENCER WHEN SHE SHOT THE MASK OF ZORRO. HERE ARE OTHER CELEBRITY FENCERS...

Marcel Marceau, Neil Diamond, Anita Harris, Bruce Dickinson, Gene Wilder, Sir Rocco Forte, Mick Fleetwood, Bryan Mosley, Ioan Gruffudd, Sylvester Stallone, Robson Green, Sir Christopher Bland (fenced in the Olympics)

THIS WEEK'S PONDERABLES...

- The ancient Greeks believed that the only way to grow a good crop of basil was to scatter the seeds while cursing and stomping your feet.
- The online book retailer Amazon was originally going to be called Relentless.
- During the Second World War, future PM Sir Edward Heath commanded a firing squad which executed a Polish soldier convicted of rape and murder.
- There is only one reference to sneezing in the Bible.
- The actor James Doohan, who played Scotty in the original Star Trek TV series, helped to create the Klingon language that is now spoken by geeks all around the world.
- After John Law Hume, a violinist on the Titanic, died in the disaster, his family were sent an invoice for his uniform.
- The Bald Eagle swims by using its wings to perform a sort of butterfly stroke.

THIS WEEK'S IMPONDERABLE...

With the Ryder Cup starting this week, do you have an uplifting story from previous contests?

In 1969, the Ryder Cup was between the US and Great Britain and Ireland (nowadays the US's opponents are Europe which makes for a closer encounter). The Americans had won the previous five. In the final singles match on the final day, with the teams all square, Jack Nicklaus and Tony Jacklin were on the final green. Nicklaus sank his final putt leaving Jacklin with a short putt to tie the contest. To everyone's amazement Nicklaus conceded the putt, saying: "Tony, I don't think for a second you're going to miss that putt but I'm not going to give you the chance." It was an extraordinary gesture: if Jacklin had missed it, the US would have won the Cup.

mitchellsymons@columlist.com

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[1] Thom, E. A randomised placebo controlled double-blind study of silicol® in the treatment of non-ulcer dyspepsia (NUDI) (irritable bowel syndrome).

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