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Lesson in jurisprudence at the Elementary level

By F. C. Blake
 Of the Independent

On May 1, fifth grader Tabatha Hanson donned a champagne-colored wig, to approach Eagle Rock School's gymnasium-turned-"courtroom." She acknowledged that for the character she portrayed, Gold E. Locks, this could have become a mayday by its alternate definition—a distress call.

Three plaintiffs in the mock trial had pressed charges difficult to refute. A beloved, well-respected, huggable family, the Bears, aired their outrage concerning Ms. Locks's callous disregard for manners. Reputedly the world's most outstanding porridge cook, Mom A. Bear (McKenzie Brownlee) testified that on the morning in question she'd prepared her family's favorite breakfast. Along with spouse, Pop A. Bear, (Brad Hessel,) and cub Babe E. Bear (Stephanie Ewen), she suffered deprivation of said breakfast because of the defendant's actions. The prosecution introduced into evidence its exhibit A: Pop A. Bear's empty porridge bowl. This bore the imprint of his name, clearly denying license or permission to anyone else wishing to partake from it. The defense claimed the Plaintiffs had left their cottage doors open.



The defense claimed the Plaintiffs had left their cottage door open, thereby implying an invitation, which the defendant graciously accepted. The tastiness of the porridge in question prompted Ms. Locks to follow up with a nap. The Bear family should have found the guest's behavior flattering.

In her judicial garb, Cheyenne Gabica presided over the jury trial paying careful attention to proper decorum.

Teachers Mason Marshall, Lori Evans, and Linda Saling underwent training at Educational Services District two days in January and February for the Classroom Law Project. "This is a federally-funded program," Marshall said.

"It's designed to help teachers bring civics learning back to the classroom," added Evans. The faculty members received a catalog of scripts for mock trials. Marshall's wife who teaches in Grants Pass lent the bears' costumes to his students.

During one class trip to Jackson County's court, Evans said, the fifth graders sat in on an actual arraignment. Then an attorney instructed them on how to be good jurors. To cast their program, the teachers drew students' names from a box, and let them select whatever available role they wanted. Among them, Jacob Anusten chose a bailiff's part, and Jacob Johnson, an attorney's. Others, including Jordan Cardenas portrayed photographers in a courtroom that even included sketch artists.

Two other mock trials took place at Eagle Rock's four-hour-long event.

The first bore the title, Village of Sheepfold vs. Joey Wolfcryer (Jared Thebo.). It detailed the citizens' anguish when Wolfcryer allegedly turned in three false-alarms regarding wolf-sightings. Witnesses testified that Joey had studied "wolf-cry-ology" in school, and had learned it well. Joey's defense team argued for freedom of speech. They also pointed out that the fourth alarm, which the townsfolk ignored, could, if heeded, have saved their now-devastated flocks.

The final case involved a lawsuit against the shrewdest of three little pigs. His indignant victim, the big bad wolf, filed an action demanding to know how dare that swine attempt to cook him?"

According to proud parents in the audience, learning seems to be much more fun now than when they attended school.

Photo by F.C. Blake

L to R: McKenzie Brownlee, Tabatha Hanson as Gold E. Locks, Stephanie Ewen, Brad Hessel, and Cheyenne Gabica.