

Bits and Pieces

By Becky Loepky

I have always been different from most other students at my school. My family is German Mennonite. I have always felt like I don't quite fit in with the other people at any of the schools I have attended.

I started school in a small Texas town, and there were no other German kids around. I couldn't speak much English when I started kindergarten, so I really struggled communicating with my teachers and classmates. I also didn't know how to play many of the games the others played. As a result, nobody wanted to play with me. Right from the start, I never wore the same clothes all the other girls wore. My mother made me wear dresses to school. I never even had a pair of jeans until I was in second grade. Then, my parents decided to home school me for second and most of third grade. At the end of third grade, my family moved to Seminole, Texas. On my first day, I found that there were far more German kids. I didn't mind third grade, but fourth grade was even better. The school put all the Mennonite students in two classes. This made me feel much more comfortable.

I don't remember much about the beginning of fifth grade, but about two or three months before summer break, my family moved to Satanta, Kansas, which is where we still live. I am now in eighth grade and have plenty of friends, but I still feel out of place sometimes because I don't do a lot of the things other teenagers do. For example, I have never been to a dance, and I don't go to parties very often. I never even went to a football game until seventh grade, and nobody else in my family has ever been to a football game. All of my school friends have gone to games since they were in kindergarten.

On the other hand, both my mom and my dad's parents were Mennonites, so they probably don't even know what a football game is. They wouldn't go to a game and couldn't watch it on TV. They couldn't because they wouldn't let a TV on their yard, much less in their house. I think this is because their parents taught them that it was wrong (or something like that). This is something I have never understood, and I'm not sure if anyone knows. It's just the way things have always been, and it's not about to change. This is why I feel like I don't fit in with many Mennonites. I can't stand to wear dresses everyday or not watch TV, and I don't know what I would do if I couldn't use the computer. On Sundays, a lot of the German teens meet at someone's house and hang out. I have never really wanted to go because it sounds really boring.

Sometimes I wish I could be all Mennonite, and then other times I wish I couldn't even speak German. But then I think about all the friends I have. If I was just one or the other, I would only have half the friends I have now. I have also realized that I will have more job opportunities as an adult. And sometimes, it really doesn't hurt anyone to stand out. That's why I'm happy to be American above all else.