



Charles Calvin Best, BED & MA

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I was born and raised in Abilene, Texas, but from 1976-1980 I attended Hyde School, a leadership boarding academy (grades 9-12) in Bath, Maine, graduating with honors in May 1980. While my friends remained in New England or on the East Coast, I returned to Texas. I do need to say that Hyde transformed my life – my character – in powerful ways for which I am deeply grateful. Hyde School caused us all to grow up and to take full responsibility for our decisions and actions. Hyde taught us how to be accountable, productive, and optimistic adults with zero sense of entitlement. I remain indebted to this remarkable, demanding institution!

I graduated from Hardin-Simmons University in 1989 with a degree in English & History and with a minor in Psychology, working as a finish carpenter for their mill shop. My first teaching assignment was at Coldspring-Oakhurst Consolidated ISD on beautiful Lake Livingston in East Texas. That area is about 90 minutes by car north of Houston. I taught 9th & 11th grade English, Humanities, GT/Honors English, and I set up a darkroom there and engaged in photography with students, especially concerning sports. I assisted Coach Peveto with college-readiness packages for graduating athletes. I also worked for the school district twice a week at night and during breaks as a finish carpenter. I designed and built, for instance, all of their band storage cabinets. I really enjoy carpentry work, especially scratch-building cabinets and tables.

After two years I moved to San Antonio, Texas. I taught 7th grade Texas History and 6th grade English my first year there. That was a huge (and at first precarious) change from working with high school students. I soon became the leader of the Dream Team, teaching GT English to 8th graders, honors English, and regular 8th grade English. I began a Young Astronaut Club that became extremely successful in that we were running summer camps, camps during spring break, and numerous after-school classes on several campuses. That program eventually became an aerospace magnet school (420 students and twenty staff/teachers) called the Krueger School of Applied Technologies that I founded with a great deal of help from Bob Morris, retired USAF aerospace engineer and close friend. I directed the magnet school for eight years and began an additional one before leaving San Antonio in the summer of 2005.

During that time, I was a graduate student at Texas State University in San Marcos. I completed about 70-75% of a master's degree in School Psychology, including an internship at a private mental hospital in San Antonio. I eventually realized, however, that my heart was not into giving IQ tests and other types of cognitive assessments, so I dropped it. Moreover, I could not embrace the medical model of mental illness. It was my sense that patients at the aforementioned hospital needed more than drug therapy and short-term hospitalization with equally brief, superficial counseling. I worked with patients there (young and old) who, in my opinion, were facing personal crises – who were actually more existentially and relationally troubled than “sick” and in need of prescription drugs. That was also an exciting and busy time, for I worked for several

years as an educational consultant at NASA-Johnson Space Center in Houston, and I co-taught rocket science at Michigan Technological University (with Bob Morris) on the Upper Peninsula in summers, doing that for eleven years for their Summer Youth Program and for the State of Michigan's Detroit Area Pre-College Engineering Program. Bob and I both loved MTU and its surrounding forests that blanket the land right up to the edge of magnificent Lake Superior, and the people with whom we worked were kind and supportive – many happy memories from MTU and NASA-JSC!

Post-San Antonio, I returned to Abilene and earned a masters degree in history from Hardin-Simmons University. I had become mentally and physically exhausted of 60 to 70-hour work weeks in San Antonio for eight intense, consecutive years in big city, school district management with all of its power-politics and incessant personnel issues. It got to be a Hot-Mess for my psyche because it was so Machiavellian. I had lost my way because I was increasingly dealing with slimy, career educrates-politicians and not working with students nearly enough, and the latter is what I do best and what brings me the most joy. Going back to graduate school fulltime was a huge break in the action but an extraordinarily enjoyable one. I learned how to ride horses during this time and became a serious team roper. I roped cattle (I'm a header) at least once a week for years, making some very good, life-long friends in the process. It was a colossal change in my life for the better because there was lots of fun and laughter, and there was no political agenda whatsoever. By that time I had also completely stopped watching television and had focused my life on here and now reality. I maintained two roping horses until May of 2023 at The Dusty Hat, where my wife, Kimberly Ann Best, and I live north of Abilene in ranch country.

I met Kimberly while teaching at Breckenridge Junior High School post-graduate school. With regard to our friendship, we actually had the horse way out in front of the cart because our relationship was about school life and shared interests rather than romance, and that was the case for a considerable period of time. We eventually married in 2013, and the whole thing has been a blessing to us both because living in a condition of reciprocal love is a radically better way of life from anything I had known. I began teaching at the junior high in 2009, switching to the high school for the 2012-2013 school year. Kim also moved to the high school a few years later. We now enjoy a personal and professional partnership.

I had raised my daughter, Callie, as a single dad in urban San Antonio (20 minutes from the Alamo) where we lived for many years. We loved our way of life there. Callie really grew up in downtown San Antonio where, for instance, we would purposefully ride trolley trains in the rain at night, and Callie often played at Travis Park next to Market Square. When Callie was older, she spent her 11th grade year in Belgium for eleven months and (after living in Dublin, Ireland for two years) relocated to Berlin, Germany. Kim has two adult children, Natalie and Forrest, and we have four grand kids: Trinity, Mack, Camille, and Greyson. We are pictured with two of them at the top of this bio.

My life is best when I'm working with students on a variety of challenging fronts; that is where I find my purpose and happiness. Kim's wired-up similarly with three college degrees and a passion for learning, teaching, and rural life; we both enjoy city museums, music and concerts, movies and streaming series, reading and writing, lots of dancing, and we take frequent trips to Matagorda Bay, Surfside Beach, and Point Bolivar near Galveston, Texas; we also often visit San Antonio, staying on the Riverwalk near the lock and dam system.

I love working with students and enjoy life now more than ever. I am married to my BFF, and that does make the difference. Kim and I are grateful! We are pictured below at Matagorda Beach during Thanksgiving 2024.

