

A recent front page newspaper story about me: “The Pied Piper to 155,000 Rhode Island Youngsters...” recounted my message of doing good deeds and how responsive children were to me. But amidst all the praise was a mention that some people don’t like that my name is associated with everything I do. Obviously, they don’t know what I’ve done where my name isn’t involved. But, even if they did, it likely wouldn’t matter. Even if you’re giving away your money and time helping children and the needy, there will always be some people jealous or suspicious of you.

But then there was ‘the boy who hated me’ for an entirely different reason...

It seems that several years ago he had been excitedly waiting my visit to his elementary school. I never knew it until I accidentally met him in the Providence Place Mall recently... As I passed him, I heard him clearly say, “I hate you”. I stopped short. He was staring at me intently. I thought he was kidding. He wasn’t...

“I hate you” he repeated. I didn’t know what to say. “Why” I finally asked? And he told me: “Years ago you visited my elementary school and my teacher promised me you would tell everyone at the assembly about a special good deed I had done. But you never did.”

His teacher must have forgotten to tell me. Or perhaps she had told me and I forgot. Two or three different school assemblies almost every school day fall and winter, except testing days, for the past 11 years. Leaving little time to single out youngsters for special recognition. And, God know, so many of them deserve it for all the good they are doing for others. But here was a youngster I had failed.

“I’m sorry, I told him. I really am”... I thought his eyes soften a bit.

Sometimes I make mistakes...

I’ll continue visiting the schools for as long as I can. As best I can. When I no longer

can, I hope your children will continue on for me...