

**NEW Feature!**



# Time Out for The Agnes Pflumm *ReadforScience*® Series!



*With Teacher / Author Merrie Koester Southgate, MEd.*  
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## The *REAL* Story of Agnes Pflumm

Have YOU ever done something of which you're ashamed? Did you ever make that same mistake again? If the answers to these questions are "Yes" and "No" in that order, then we have a lot in common!

You see, I made a BIG mistake in the 6th grade. I was a student at St. Andrews Elementary School in Charleston, SC, and our teacher told us we HAD to do a science fair project. "ARGHHH!" I wailed. I was sure I would need help. Being a very good actress, I moped and groaned until my father fell for my "Daughter-in-Distress" routine. Please know that I NEVER meant for my father to do my *entire* project. I mean, that was CHEATING, right? But I so loved spending the time with my Dad that I sort of put that out of mind at the time. Still no excuse, however....



But then, when the enormous, handcrafted electromagnetic crane that DAD built for me won first prize in the school science fair, I was filled with shame. I would have to live with that shame FOREVER! Forever's a long time....At age 24, I became, of all things, a science teacher who was a little out of the ordinary. You never knew when I might start dancing right in the classroom! For the first 13 years of my career, I somehow escaped having to take my students through science fair projects, and that was JUST fine with me! I had not yet learned myself how valuable this experience could be.

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## Agnes Pflumm Comes to Life

When I was 37 years old, I took a new job as a middle school science teacher. Two days before school started, my principal told me that all of my 6th graders would be REQUIRED to do science fair projects. I started sweating. I fretted. I had nightmares about evil electromagnetic cranes chasing me! I didn't want my students to fear doing projects the way I had. I especially wanted them to understand the importance of doing their own work. And then, I got the idea that completely changed my world.

I would write a story for my students about a science teacher named Agnes Pflumm, who hated science fairs; but the only job she could find was one which required her to take a class of 6th graders through their first science fair projects. The rest is history. Stay tuned for next month's issue!