

# MY LIFE AS A

# SPY KID

BY KATIE BYXBEE

I use an FM system, a frequency modulated wireless device, to help with my hearing loss. My teachers speak into the FM microphone, and his or her voice travels to my hearing aids. But for some reason, for the past eight years that I have been using an FM system, my classmates have suspected that it is a spying device. Ever since first grade, when a boy came up to me and asked if I were a secret agent, I have been using an FM system to eavesdrop on top-secret conversations among the teachers, which confirms his guess that I am the school's Spy Kid.



## Spying Was Fun—at First

My work as a Spy Kid began spontaneously. I would hear a message from my teacher and then decipher it for my classmates. When I was in first grade, I learned that this is the biggest advantage of an FM system. My first classified message was about our class musical. I heard that we would be performing an original musical named Jack. I announced the news to my class, and we started jumping around frantically. Even though we had no idea what the musical was about, my class was excited about knowing something the teachers had kept a secret. After a few minutes, I heard footsteps walking back toward our classroom. I screamed, “She’s coming! Everybody quiet!” My classmates rushed to their seats, sitting down like they had heard nothing. When the teacher strolled into the classroom moments later, the whole class giggled. At first the teacher was confused, but she brushed it off. For the next two years, I would listen with my FM system and keep my classmates informed.

## Sometimes You Don’t Want to Hear Everything

However, as my classmates and I grew older, the dull secrets of the teachers became less interesting to both my classmates and me, so I decided to keep them to myself. Because the secrets no longer interested me, I no longer eavesdropped—with the help of the FM system—to what my teachers were saying or doing outside of the classroom. But there was one moment in sixth grade that scarred me for life. My teacher left the room, and I continued doing my work as always, not paying attention to the sounds coming through the microphone around the teacher’s neck. Suddenly, I heard a sound I had never heard through the microphone before. “Hey, guys! I can’t seem to figure out what our teacher is doing,” I yelled to the class. “What does it sound like?” one of the girls asked. I focused intensely on the sound. It sounded like water poured into a bucket. “Oh, my God,” I said, “He’s using the restroom!” Everyone started laughing and gagging at the same time. Of course, I knew this was normal, but to hear your 50-year-old male history teacher using the restroom was very disturbing. I heard his footsteps coming back to the room. “Everyone quiet!” I screamed. When the teacher entered the room, we sat quietly at our desks, pretending that we had heard nothing. We were trading looks and smiles, trying to muffle our laughter.

## I Outgrew the Spy Kid Shenanigans

Recently, some changes were introduced to the FM system. Now, instead of the voice from the microphone

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going into my ear, it progresses to a speaker in the classroom for all of my classmates to hear. This meant I was no longer my school's Spy Kid. Even though you can still hear the teacher after he or she leaves the room, my teachers make sure they mute the microphone when they leave the classroom. So, nothing much has happened recently. No secrets have been shared, and no mysteries have been solved, until about two weeks ago.

I was sitting in my math class, and my teacher began looking for her computer charger. She asked the class, "Did anyone see who took my computer charger?" Moments earlier a girl had come into the class and taken the computer charger and hurried out. At the same time, we shouted the name of the girl who stole the charger. "What!" My teacher said, "One of my own advisees! Unbelievable! You know what, let's go get the charger back. Who wants to come?" We all looked at each other to confirm she was not joking.

Next thing I knew, we were marching to the classroom where the charger thief was located. As we gathered outside the classroom, we discussed our plan to reclaim the charger. Once our plan was confirmed, we marched into the classroom demanding the return of the charger. Before even half of the class ran into the room, everyone started screaming at us. "We heard everything!" One yelled, "You're here for the charger!" another screamed. Because our plan had failed, we had to move to Plan B, which involved taking the charger and running. Once we were all outside the classroom, we attempted to figure out how the other class had heard us. I looked at the teacher and saw the FM microphone

hanging around her neck. "Guys," I said quietly, "the FM system was on. They could hear us through the microphone." Everyone turned to our teacher and looked at the microphone dangling around her neck. We all started laughing while we walked back to our classroom.

### **I've Learned to Seize Opportunities—and So Can You**

Ever since first grade, when I stumbled upon the secret potential of my FM system, I started choosing differently in my life. I began doing more exciting and daring things. I learned to take advantage of opportunities, so I will not regret a thing. This is important, because time passes so quickly. It seems like yesterday that I obtained my first pair of hearing aids, yet in reality, it was eight years ago.

So try that new sport, go on that roller coaster, jump off the high dive before another minute passes. Find the courage in yourself to help you live your best life possible. Seize opportunities in the present, just like I did with my FM system. **HL**



*Kathryn Byxbee, known by her friends and family as Katie, lives in Riverside, Connecticut, and is in the eighth grade at the Greenwich Country Day School. Katie and her sister Libby both have mild-to-moderate severe sensorineural hearing loss in both ears. Katie believes in the importance of being brave, and if there is a will, there is a way. She loves playing water polo for Greenwich Aquatics as a "Country Day Tiger" and enjoys going to her home away from home, Adirondack Camp, in the summer. She hopes that by writing, she can inspire all children, especially those who have hearing loss, to be daring and find the courage (with an FM system or not) to live their best possible lives—at camp, in sports, at school—wherever their heart is being called.*

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