

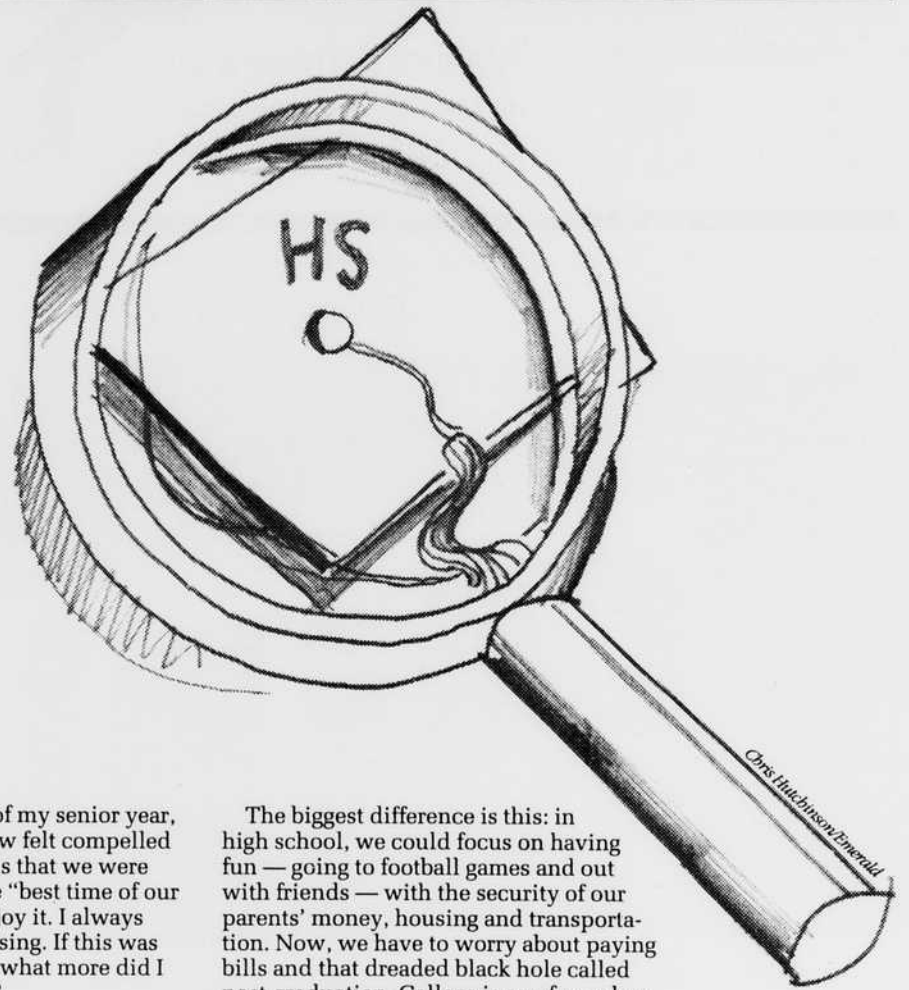
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PERSPECTIVES

High school is more than just teenage wasteland

The four years preceding college are relegated to the shadows but cannot be overlooked



We share a deep, dark secret as college students. It's often alluded to in conversation but never fully explored. It pops into our heads more often than we'd like, and we wish we could dismiss it. For most of us, it's all-too-recent history, but we pretend it never happened. No matter how hard we try, it takes on an almost mythic status in our lives.

Opinion



Ashley Bach

We all went to high school.

We all endured four years of assemblies, pep rallies, tedious assignments and a cutthroat social ladder. We all had lockers, morning announcements, a principal, dances, a student council and hot and cold lunches. So why do we want to forget it ever happened?

Well, at first glance, the answer seems simple. High school wasn't exactly a cakewalk for some of us. Besides the Darwinian race for status and the ever-mentioned "popularity contest," ninth through 12th grade was frustratingly immature and shortsighted.

But, to varying degrees, it was also fun — in many ways more fun than college. And more, it was an extremely important time for our emotional development. I may laugh at a lot of things from my high school days, but I don't discount them.

When I was making the graduation par-

ty circuit the last week of my senior year, adults I didn't even know felt compelled to tell me and my friends that we were coming to the end of the "best time of our lives," and we better enjoy it. I always thought this was depressing. If this was the best time of my life, what more did I have to look forward to?

The fact is, high school isn't the climax of our lives, but it ought to be recognized for what it did provide. As we go about our lives as fast-track college students and pretend we're intellectual and grown-up, we tend to forget where we came from. The funny thing is, high school and college are more similar than we'd like to admit.

Much is made of high school students' preoccupation with good looks and accomplishments. We'd like to think we're above all that, that we now judge people by their character and are tolerant of all views. Yeah, right.

Talk to anybody who's out there in the real world, even, and they'll tell you that cliques and social division are just as prevalent as they are in high school. Adolescence is a training ground for making your way in the world; teenagers are just more obvious with their cruelty.

High school and college also have a strange love for good, old-fashioned young-person fun — namely drinking and other wacky hijinks. We party more now than we did in high school, but the biggest difference is Mom and Dad aren't around to avoid. Socially, we're really just high schoolers with legal ID.

The biggest difference is this: in high school, we could focus on having fun — going to football games and out with friends — with the security of our parents' money, housing and transportation. Now, we have to worry about paying bills and that dreaded black hole called post-graduation. College is carefree when compared to the real world, but it has nothing on high school.

In the meantime, the closet obsession will continue. Former football heroes will dream about Friday nights and wish they could return to the crowds. Old captains of the cheerleading team will yearn to be the most popular girl in school again. And former dorks will wallow in bitterness. We may be in a slightly bigger world now, but it doesn't stop us from looking back.

We probably couldn't ignore it, even if we wanted to. Films such as "There's Something About Mary" and "Romy & Michelle's High School Reunion" present high school as a breeding ground for personalities, strengths and insecurities. We wish we could deny it, but the movies ring true.

So what is there to do? Move on, break out of past stereotypes, but without a sense of denial. Feel free to remember. And, along the way, await that five- or 10-year reunion with a combination of sheer horror and unyielding pride.

Ashley Bach is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.



CORRECTION
The story "Senate approves new committee member" (ODE, Nov. 19) should have read, "The purpose of the ASUO education campaign is to educate students about the student incidental fee."
The Emerald regrets the error.