

Intelligent Resign

Science and religion take a day off.

I graduated from high school in York, Pa., an industrial city surrounded by farmland in south central Pennsylvania. It's also the county seat, 10 miles south of Dover, where the recent courtroom argument on evolution and intelligent design took place.

York County values are not terribly different from most of middle America. There are strong traditions of family, work and religion. Succeeding generations often go to the same schools and churches, live in the same neighborhoods, even work at the same factories. It is also a place that prides itself on independence. After all, York claims to be "the first capital" of the U.S.: This is where the Articles of Confederation (the precursor to the Constitution) were signed in 1777.

As teenagers in the 1970s, we didn't think much about either science or religion unless we had to. We learned about protozoa and photosynthesis in biology class, we studied integral equations in algebra, we read Homer and Hemingway in English class, and the boys made bird feeders in shop while the girls made placemats in home economics.

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We listened to sermons and sang hymns in church – and there were lots of churches in York County. There were Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Unitarian churches. There were the Jews, Quakers, Mennonites and, just across the Susquehanna River in Lancaster County, the Amish. It seemed there was almost a separate religion for every separate need.

There was one thing, though, that brought us all together: football. From September to Christmas, on a Saturday afternoon in central Pennsylvania, you knew where everyone was. If your school team was playing, you were at the game. It was like going to church.

My school, Central High, was never a powerhouse. We were city kids, considered "soft." The perennial favorites were the county teams. Red Lion, Hanover, Dover, East Prospect. Farm boys raised on pork, beef and corn. They worked hard at home, and they hit hard on the field.

Then, my sophomore year, a new coach came to our school. He looked at the raw material in our class, the big linemen and the fast halfbacks, and said he couldn't make any guarantees that first year. "Second year, winning season. Your senior year, undefeated," he said.

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His formula was simple: We would be the best-conditioned team in the league. At summer football camp, he drove us until we collapsed. Then he gave us water and drove us until we collapsed again. "If anybody beats this team, it won't be because you're tired," he said.

First year, our record was 2-8. Second year, 5-4-1. The summer before our senior year, Coach doubled the time we spent in football camp. He said he had to beat the crap out of us in the summer so we could beat the crap out of everybody else in the fall.

We went 10-0, mowing down everyone in the league. Red Lion, Hanover, Dover – farm boys or not, they couldn't keep up. We were simply more fit.

People called it a miracle year. They said we were heroes, and had us all sign a football to put in the showcase in the school lobby. They said our God-given talents and hard work had set a new standard. They spoke of record attendance and community pride. There was talk of building a new stadium, or at least a new gym.

When Coach resigned anyway, nobody seemed to know why. Some said he was a miracle worker; since his work here was done, he would go work miracles somewhere else.

I didn't witness exactly what Coach said to that, but I heard it went something like this: He said he didn't know what forces brought this group together, but he did know what forces made it work. Not every success has to be a miracle, he said. If you've got the raw material, sometimes all it takes is practice.

Steve McQuiddy teaches writing at Lane Community College. He lived in York, Pa. from 1972-1980.





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Public Meeting Scheduled

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When: Wednesday, January 18, 2006

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Library Meeting Room

For more information: Call 726-3780



Notice to Parents!

Learn about Eugene 4J schools. Start by visiting your neighborhood school. With the district's open enrollment policy, parents may opt to send their children to any school within the district, provided that there is space available. All schools in the district focus on nurturing the success of each child.

You can enroll in your neighborhood school at any time. To enroll in another district school, the open enrollment period is from NOW until March 3 for the 2006-07 school year. The 4J Schools Guide – available at any school, at the 4J Education Center or at www.4j.lane.edu – offers an overview of each school. Schools throughout the district will be open for visits:

Mon. Jan. 23 - Thurs. Jan. 27 and Mon. Feb. 13 - Fri. Feb. 17

Please phone ahead or visit www.4j.lane.edu, as each school offers different activities and times when parents can visit.

School's open - and you're welcome to visit.

Districtwide Information Meetings

Meetings at the 4J Education Center, 200 N. Monroe, will provide general information about the school application and enrollment process. Spanish translation will be provided at each meeting.

Thurs. Jan. 19: 7 - 8 pm
Sat. Jan. 21: 9 - 10 am
Sat. Feb. 11: 9 - 10 am

The Application Process

To enroll your child in a school other than your neighborhood school, follow this process:

- Pick up an application at any school, at the 4J Education Center, 200 N. Monroe, or at www.4j.lane.edu.
- Return the application no later than March 3 to the 4J Education Center.



More information is available at
 Eugene School District 4J
 200 N. Monroe Street Eugene, Oregon 97402
 687.3481 TDD: 687.3447 www.4j.lane.edu