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GOAL POSTS AND PARKING LOTS

No one ever knows how lucky he or she is to have good memories of his or her time in middle school and high school. The process of learning is important but what is more important to us is the learning outside the school environment. Teenagers share a common bond with each other that is understood only by the teenagers themselves. These memories are filled with happiness and usually some kind of mischief. A tradition of "hanging out" is marked by certain individual characteristics and mannerisms. These characteristics and mannerisms are deemed by the personality of those persons who possess them.

I grew up in Hartford, Kentucky, which is a fairly small community compared to Bowling Green or even Owensboro. In fact, Ohio County is stuck right in between these two cities. By and by, the community is usually very quiet and not stirred. You can leave your door unlocked if you dare. I probably would not, since the house I have lived next to for fifteen years has a Lincoln style log fence and a mockery of vehicles and night time activity. Anyway, the community of Ohio County is traditionally safe, that is, until the weekend.

It seems like the only place that I have ever noticed the

hanging out ritual to take place is the Wal-Mart parking lot in Beaver Dam. There, the division of social groups vary quite extensively. This division stems from as early as seventh grade for me at Ohio County Middle School.

Of course there were the usual group known as the "preps" or in my opinion those who think they have more money than God alone. These kids to me always had the gung-ho attitude of an up and coming movies star and insecurity of a mouse. They were always good at anything and everything: sports, community service, youth groups at church you name it, but especially sports. You see, in Ohio County, sports like basketball are treated as if my school was the University of Kentucky, which it is definitely not. If you weren't playing or cheerleading, you were in the stands screaming your lungs out. Although I was interested in sports a lot, it seems I was forced by my father, who was a coach, sportscaster, and a sports writer, to play basketball.

Yes, I was a part of the prep crowd in middle school, I hate to confess. I wore the name brand clothes and shoes, went to all the dances, played basketball; I felt pretty popular and powerful for the first and last time in my life. On the side, though, I had other friends who didn't quite fit in with the upper class. I guess I would have to call them "wallflowers." I actually spent the next five years talking to them more than anybody else. You could also call them misunderstood, because they were to the preps. In fact, anyone who was different from them was considered weird, nerdy, or dorky. The wallflowers made good grades but were silent

in class whereas the preps made good grades, sometimes, and acted like they knew all the answers which they did not. You see, the preps have to be "on" all the time which is totally disgusting.

In high school, my social standing went from prep to instant "band nerd." I took an active interest in music starting in seventh grade. I soon joined the great Ohio County Marching Band and the people I was associated with quickly became my safe haven. The band nerd is one who thinks, acts, eats, sleeps, and lives band. They carry their trumpets, trombones, french horns, and tubas in school and on the school bus which can become very crowded with regular students. I never had the luxury of carrying a case since I was a percussionist. The band nerd's usual Friday night during the fall is the football game. Again the preps are there only now they were standing at the top of the bleachers around the concession stand and talking about getting drunk or who has been screwing who. The football field houses both jocks and jocks with a redneck attitude. They pump each other up for yet another losing game at Ohio County High School. They aggravate each other and butt heads to stimulate their hunger to win which they will not do.

It seems that there has been and still is a ridiculously adolescent rivalry between the band and the football jocks. And I simply have to ask, why? We dragged our butts out there every Friday night to play a halftime show and pep tunes for them and what did we get in return, trash cans spray painted with the words "Band Fags" on them. A jock in my school feels threatened by anyone

who has a shread of intelligence that they don't have. They wear their athletic jackets, football jerseys, and \$200 athletic shoes that no one can afford without Mommy and Daddy's money. That's another thing, the upper class of preps and jocks always ran to their parents for every wrong look they got at school and if the principal, who was a jock himself, would be so inclined, these kids would get off scot-free. That tradition has been around for years, even when my parents were in high school, only it is a lot worse especially where clothing and cars are concerned.

Yet to be discussed are those individuals who are the lowest of the low, the rednecks or scuzzballs, which is a more appropriate term. These kids don't have Mom and Dad's help, it's usually Mom or Dad or nobody at all. They can't win with the principal ever and wouldn't even try if their lives depended on it. They have little or no money, drive cheap, loud cars, though usually trucks and smoke cigarettes or dip snuff like there is no tomorrow. Speaking in sentence fragments they fail their classes and get kicked out of school for defending their attitude and state of pride. Their only conquests are alcohol and sex. The preps may also dabble into these conquests as a part of their insecurity. Competition is fierce and the rednecks listening to Hank Williams, Jr., usually prevail.

Now we come to the hang outs or haunts of Ohio County. Again, the preps, rednecks, and nowadays, grungers drift into these areas together, not acknowledging each other's presence. The "grungers" are a product of the 1990's Seattle music scene. They may also

be called as by the nationwide press, "Generation X." They dress sloppy and usually from another era such as the 1970's. They are also good at their academics, but don't try hard enough to make the grade. They are an accelerated form of the wallflowers. The main hang out is the Wal-Mart parking lot which is connected to only one other major store, a Houchens, and other crude, dirty stores, including a Subway.

The usual weekend starts on Friday at 9:00 pm and ends at about midnight on Saturday during the school year. Every town in America has a strip that everybody has to cruise so that every individual sees them. This strip starts at McDonald's and ends at the high school fence that divides the school from the weekend escapades of students. As you continue on past both the high school and middle school, you come to a first possible turn around point, the Bank of Ohio County. You will usually see about three cars full of scuzzballs sitting there anyway so you might as well continue on. There is yet another dingy shopping center on the left and a KFC/CarQuest on the right take your pick. The main attraction at the shopping center is the Ohio County Lanes bowling alley, which is a weak, smoke filled area with small pool tables and old bowling lanes. I have had the pleasure of both bowling and shooting pool there and I must say it is a disappointment because of the abundance of rednecks. I became entranced by their cigarette smoke and cues they actually bought themselves. I personally prefer to hang out at Wal-Mart, since there are usually too many people there to notice you. Lately, since I have been

at Western, I go back and hang out with the social classes of Ohio County as a means of recapturing my high school experience.

I must confess that I never hung out because I was a band nerd and didn't get my driver's license until my freshman year in college. So I linger through McDonald's parking lot to the front of Subway to talk about my experience and catch up on the latest gossip of the high school scene. Did I lose my teenage years? You bet I did since I was very shy and inhibited about myself and what others would think about me. It seemed that things never change for me but I hope I can pass on the tradition to my kids and they will find themselves gossiping about their crazy mother under orange street lights in the Wal-Mart parking lot.