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Ressurrection From the Depths of Ignorance

ANDREW CURRIER

The icy Pacific waves lip, curl, and crash thunderously like fallen giants creating a soupy green whitewater that washes two drenched surfers ashore. It is 8:30 a.m. on a foggy Monday morning and the two surfers are still out having the time of their lives on the epic waves of the misty Oregon coast. "Is it time to go to class yet, dude?" asks one. The other replies, "These waves are gangbusters. We've yet to finish work here. Don't bail on me now dude!" As the two middle school

"students" paddle back out into the powerful riptide that carries them about a quarter of a mile out into the shark infested waters off of Indian Beach, yet another school day has lost the battle over conscience within the minds of the two young men. Why go to school when there are no books to learn from, absence has no consequences, and the teachers have too many problems of their own or are too busy disciplining others to have any time to teach anything? Little did the truant boy know, that he was about to embark on an arduous journey that would leave him in a situation in which he would have to reform and change his detached ways.

People who have never been to the Pacific Northwest or who are not from there don't realize that there is a completely different mindset and lifestyle that is deeply rooted into the hippy culture of the sixties. During my middle school years, from sixth to eighth grade, I learned many things, like how to roll a joint and make beautifully ornamented bongos in shop class. One day, in Mrs. Hitchman's pre-algebra class, I learned the easiest way to grow adult

marijuana plants from seedlings. Oregon, as far as I know, has the largest movement to legalize marijuana and four out of five people drive some variation of an early model Volkswagen automobile. Whether it be the picturesque water-color like sunset of the coast, the luscious bucolic forests that blanket the rolling farm spotted hills, or the majestic snow covered peaks of the Northern Rockies, the people of the Northwest are really in tune with nature. It is to a point where Mother Nature consumes society, manipulating every aspect from recreation to education. Although nature preservation is crucial, to neglect preservation of humanity through education is tragic.

The Oregon state public school system is in serious trouble. There is no money to fund the schools and the school board is so liberal that they are more concerned with saving the trees than how to write a complete sentence. Homework was never assigned because the teachers didn't have the authority to assign it and there were no text books to be distributed because the school system supposedly could not afford them. My parents realized that my education was in serious jeopardy but there was no alternative besides home school, which I was adamantly opposed to. At the time I was too busy getting high and riding waves to realize that I wasn't learning how to read and write at a middle school level.

When it came time to move to Alabama the summer before my freshman year of high school, my parents decided that it would be best to send their son to a private Catholic school. Making the transition from worn out Levi's and a Quicksilver t-shirt to a strict dress code of khaki pants, collared dress shirt, and dress shoes was like leaving a tropical vacation to a Fijian island, only having to return home to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; it's just not easy. The biggest shocker was having to do homework every night. Although my folks were bewildered and frustrated at how lost their son was, much credit is due to them; they helped me every day with my homework and struggled with me through that excruciating first semester in private school. There was a particular instance where my father was trying to help me solve algebra problems; algebra was

something that came naturally to my father and he was dumbfounded at how such elementary arithmetic could be challenging to anyone. My father's frustration showed in his eyes which were like that of Clint Eastwood's strained blue bloodshot eyes in "Dirty Harry" when Detective Callahan expounds his famous line, "Go ahead, make my day." The cold blue stare emitted from my father told me just how much of a lost cause I was.

Montgomery Catholic provided an outstanding academic foundation which has served me loyally ever since. The teachers, although difficult, worked closely with me knowing that there was much catching up to be done. The most helpful teacher was Ms. Ortega, the freshman composition teacher who guided my ascension from the depths of a fourth grade writing level in a single semester. Her constant drilling of grammar and sentence structure on a daily basis was precisely what was needed to set me on the path out of that Inferno-like "dark forest" of idiocy in which I was lost. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of a Catholic education is the spirituality blended with the rich tradition of the Church, which is incorporated in every school day. From the morning prayer to the required four years of religion class, a spiritual and moral education graced an already excellent curriculum.

Because I was coming from a place where the mere mention of God in class could result in the automatic removal of a teacher, the teaching of religion in class was somewhat of a culture shock. Bible study, like anything else, is what you make of it. I embraced it, extracting as much meaning and understanding as possible. It didn't take long until my slipshod morals were reformed, replaced by a concrete moral concept that is a backbone to my lifestyle. The inner walls of my brain that were previously encrusted with bong resin, malted hops, and salt water were now magnificently illustrated with biblical paintings that would give my life meaning. Finding purpose in a life that formerly had none was like finding an arabesque oasis in the middle of an and desert.

Catholic school lifted the hopelessness that shrouded my soul. The hopelessness that engulfed me was a silent dark antagonist which would have consumed my conscience permanently had the Holy Spirit not intervened and shed light on the darkness. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to be saved and the inspiration to evade the inevitable ignorance of hope and spirit. It took a Catholic education to deliver me from the emptiness of the schooling I was receiving from the liberal and hypocritical Oregon public school system.

The tall, slender, stone-faced boy holds the Cross high above his head as he leads the silent procession of priests and altar servers down the aisle of students who are gathered in the gym that is temporarily transformed into a chapel. The students look on at the boy who is about to leave the tight-knit confines of Notre Dame High School to delve into the great unknown that is to be the rest of his life. As they took at his familiar face, they ponder the time when the boy first came to their school as a total stranger, they think of all the good times they had with him in class, at parties, or on the baseball diamond, and they think with satisfaction how each one of them individually had something to do with the experiences that transcended his lost soul into a complete person. The boy does an about face and turns into the hundreds of stares with a smile.

He will miss all of the good times that he had there with all of his friends, but he is overtaken with joy because he knows he will look back with nothing but fond memories and he will be carried through the unknown future by the rejuvenated soul he has gained from Notre Dame.