

Keeping busy

The public school in town served a number of purposes. Education, of course, was one. It offered a curriculum in general education, manual education, and preparatory education for college. Its music and sports programs provided entertainment to the school and its patrons. And the school served as an agency of social cohesion, bringing the community together in a common effort in which everyone took pride.

The sports program was the center of gravity of extra-curricular activities. The school fielded junior and senior varsity teams in football, basketball and track. Any young man with enough coordination to walk and chew gum at the same time could find a place on one of those teams. In addition, sports generated a need for pep rallies, cheerleaders, a band, homecoming activities, parades and floats, a homecoming queen and maids of honor, and a sports banquet. It also mobilized parents to support the activities with time and money.

There were any number of clubs a student might join. Some were related to academics, like the Latin Club, the Spanish Club, and the Science Club. Others brought together students interested in a profession, like the Future Farmers of America, the Future Homemakers of America, the Future Teachers of America, and the Pre-Med Club. Still others were focused on service. The Intra-Mural Council, made up of girls (who had been neglected in the regular sports program), organized tournaments in a variety of sports for girls. The Library Club worked to improve library holdings and equipment. The Pep Club organized homecoming activities, parades and athletic banquets.

The Student Council, including representatives from each class, was elected by the student body after a heated political campaign with banners and speeches. It represented student interests to the administration and the school board. It approved student clubs that were formed, helped resolve discipline problems, and played a role in setting codes of conduct and dress. For the most part, it was a docile body that approved the policies of the administration.

The Journalism Club published a monthly newspaper of school news and opinion. It was financed by selling ads to business men in the community.

Another group planned and published the school Yearbook, which was a pictorial record of the student body, the year's activities, sports, and achievements. The Yearbook staff sponsored a beauty contest, pictured outstanding students selected by the faculty, and a Who's Who of popular and talented students selected by the student body.

Churches in town, of which there were many, sponsored their own activities for youth; and the community sponsored a recreation center, called Teen Town, for chaperoned Saturday night dances each week. Community and school leaders seemed determined to keep the youth of the town busy and out of trouble. In a small Southern town in the Bible Belt where very few students had access to a car, which had been voted dry and in which no alcohol was sold, they succeeded marvelously well.

The first paragraph implies that the public school...

1. ...was more than just an educational institution.
2. ...offered the best educational curriculum.
3. ...had developed close ties with a college.
4. ...preferred students talented in sports and music.