

Reflections

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Through the loving union of our parents, we came to this good Earth during 1941.

Most of us were born in Houston (or came here with our parents shortly after our births). Some of us "trickled in" through elementary and junior high school and even a very few of us came to Houston during high school; but, I'll bet not many.

Our social-intellectual recombinant DNA clearly describes in our background two dominant animals: Purple Pups and Pandas; my what a pairing to make Redskins – an evolutionary leap that would make Darwin blush in disbelief. But, Redskins we became.

And, as we made that transition (full of wonder, awe and perhaps a little fear) we knew that something had happened to us. For better or for worse, we had finally left childhood and were headed toward something called maturity. The State of Texas had decided that we were already somewhat mature by giving us driving licenses when we were in the ninth grade.

In the late Summer – Early Fall of 1956 we gathered. All the strange things we had heard about Pandas and Purple Pups were soon dispelled and we found an almost immediate kinship with one another. We also found out that not one of us was as hot stuff as we had been a short year before. My digression was miserable and quite public. I went from being the fastest kid at River Oaks Elementary to moderately fast at Lanier to abysmally slow at Lamar; so slow in fact that Dick Cooksey named me "Flash". I'm sure the same happened in the worlds of drama, basketball, dance, volleyball, football, music, softball, badminton, baseball, future farming, homemaking, tennis, swimming, debate, and certainly, most certainly in the world of academics.

Knowingly or not, we had encountered keen competition – a competition which would spread across all of life – which yielded trophies and medals only if you "won", "placed" or "showed". Our world is not to be confused with today's wherein children get trophies if they "showed up"...or... "tried to show up"... or... "thought about showing up."

We became refined and well honed in that competition. Led by our great teachers and coaches – and supported, but not smothered by our parents – we were well represented in All State Band, Choir and Orchestra and won more than our share of One Act play contests, District and Quarter Final Championships in Football and Basketball, State Relay laurels, Baseball, Softball, Tennis and Swimming medals and of course Debate championships. Heck, we probably have someone in the class that won a medal in "whistling."

But where we really excelled was in the classroom. A staggering 98% of us went on to more education beyond high school. 98% of us began some type of postsecondary credentialing upon our graduation from Lamar and, most of that number started college. Lamar was the *sine qua non* of high schools in Houston, the state and nation. We were the best and we knew it and in our teenage emergence, oh, how we could strut. "River Oaks Boulevard is the only street in the world with a Country Club at both ends."

In our day, Kincaid and St. John's were places to be avoided (save for lifelong and endearing friendships). All my parents had to do was utter "Kincaid" and I knew that the next word would be "military school."

Our school motto, "Reach for the Stars", was particularly applicable to this class of ours. In fact, one of us led the Division of Manned Interplanetary Exploration at NASA during the 1990's. Many of us entered the learned professions of law, medicine, dentistry, engineering, nursing, architecture, theology and teaching. Numbers of us literally became owners and captains of business and leaders in banking, finance and industry. There are several of us who became serious writers and journalists not to mention accomplished performers and practitioners in the arts: Singing, dancing, drama, photography, painting and sculpture. God almighty we were good and we didn't even know how good.

To my now astonished knowledge, not one of us was killed in the Viet Nam War although many of us served as distinguished "officers and men" in various branches of our nation's armed forces.

At the foundation of our memory has to be our parents and their clones; our teachers. As we think of them we need to judge them very kindly and with loud praise for they were doing the best they knew how – just as we have done as parents and teachers in our own right. My father, who knew a bit about theology and its two attendants, good and evil, found me one time in the darkest night of my life. He literally took me in his arms and said simply – "When we are judged by God the only criterion He will apply to that judgment is motive...and even then, that judgment will be merciful."

As we – corporately and individually – survey the over fifty years just past – we have much of which to be proud; in fact, an abundance bordering on embarrassment.

In our life and time we have served life, society and their purposes to the best of our several abilities and on overwhelming balance, have done so beautifully. We learned our lessons well in Lamar and our predecessor and successor schools. From the Panda-Purple Pup union resulting in Redskins, we went on to become a whole menagerie of animals and characters: Owls, Cougars, Tigers, Aggies, Horned Frogs, Pirates, Longhorns, Bears, Mustangs, Red Raiders, Falcons, Goats, Mules, Razorbacks, Kangaroos, Trojans, Bobcats and who knows what else.

Our intellectual, physiological and spiritual DNA is firmly planted in our follow on generations through our precious children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews who, after all, are our greatest and most enduring legacy.

Simply put – We've done more than our part and we've done it with overwhelming ability, extraordinary grace, abundant good cheer and enormous generosity.
