

Teaching in the Sixties

In Sept. 1967 I joined the staff at Lorne Park Secondary School as a teacher of history and economics. I had been signed to a contract by the Toronto Township Board of Ed. I was supposed to go to Gordon Graydon S.S. (did eventually) but that recruitment chap went to lunch and a couple of 'head-hunters' by the name of Alan Pleasance (V.P.) and Hal McKay (Head of Moderns) at Lorne Park wandered over, we chatted and soon I was a Spartan. Such was the life of hiring at the Royal York Hotel.

My most vivid recollection of that era is not an event but rather a societal progression, threatening in its time but then again, change is always a threat. This story is not a Lorne Park story, it is a recollection of the broad view the Secondary Schools had of what was appropriate and what was not. There were norms and norms were important.

When I arrived at L.P. male teachers wore shirts and ties, period. One day, a brave young lad wore a navy jacket, perfect grey slacks and a yellow turtleneck. His class was covered until he could go home and dress in professional attire.

It was however, the students for whom the double standard applied most unjustly.

Accepted attire for girls was a dress or skirt (no specific guidelines were issued for the length of the skirt but a review of Yearbook photos for the era indicates that a yard of fabric went a long way thanks to the introduction of the micro-mini.)

Boys, on the other hand, could wear jeans that were ripped (strategically I might add), less than clean and generally disheveled was de rigeur.

In the late 60's (cannot remember which year) there was a rebellion by the girls, polite of course, dialogue with the administration and veiled threats of who knows what. Common logic saved the day! Girls were allowed to wear slacks (not jeans) but the point had been made.

We turn the page into the 70's, the Vietnam War, drugs, widespread urban burnings and a prevalent tone of hostility to authority of any kind really put the kibosh on rebellion by communication.

We all adjusted, of course, but the way we were was never the same again.

Good memories of happy times.

Yours Truly,

Peter Swalwell