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June 02, 2006

Random iPod Musings: "Its Like Two Special Needs Kids Hitting Each Other" Edition

Before I get any hate mail, let me say that that comment is in reference to this little scrap between Debbie **Schlussel** and a rather random University of Michigan Dearborn students/Muslim PAC worker who, though mostly insane, is [making some very valid points](#). Perhaps, somewhere in all of the unsubstantiated claims being lobbed from both sides, there is a lesson to learn. Probably about helmets.

Anyhoo, its been a long week, culminating, tomorrow, in an excruciatingly long commencement ceremony for my brother. It can only barely rival the excruciatingly long Senior Awards Night that I sat through, listening to stellar resumes, accolades, community service, lives lived as resume padding, hoping against hope that these kids will understand that these are not their best days, despite all evidence and experience to the contrary. It rang true for much of my high school class.

It seems, the more that I hang around metropolitan Detroit, and the further removed I am from high school, the more high school people I seem to see, as they migrate back to their little nests following so many failed attempts at the real world. I'm frankly amazed. One grad works as the receptionist in my hair salon, another as a stockboy at the mall. I've seen them at registers in shops, at the local fast food joint...everywhere. And all of them see me and want to talk about high school, even if they never talked to me before. Did we really do that badly? Was high school really the peak of some peoples existence? Or is this just a small bump in the road to better things?

Sitting at my commencement, I recall very clearly thinking that I would never, ever return to "that place" and I really never did. High school was a nightmare, and one I'd rather not repeat, even in memories. I wanted nothing more than to walk off that stage, divest myself from those people, and forget those years. Never look back. What did it

give me, after all, but regrets and mistakes that I would spend the next half decade correcting?

I find out, occasionally, that high school, against my better wishes, shaped my character in ways that I can only now appreciate. If not for a lost political debate in ninth grade, I would never have thought about lawyering. If not for an amazing 10th grade Civil War teacher, I would never have liked politics, or understood that much of the history that I studied was from an ignorant and one-sided point of view, and that my conservative leanings--just starting to come to fruition--were the greatest weapon I had against the perils of sheltered higher education. If not for an angry conversation about the Republican primary with my 12th grade AP history teacher, I might not have tried a hand at politics. Were it not for an abysmal journalism teacher, I would not have shrugged off the mainstream journalism classes (which I now see turn out the same nightmarish quality that she espoused), which would have strayed me from law, and from blogging.

If I had never been stupid enough to believe my friends were smarter than my parents, or that the wrong path was the right one, I probably would never have ended up making the journey back. And that journey, back to who I was, back to faith, is worth everything in the world to me.

Chain reactions. All of the crazy metaphysical ideas in the world, all of the science and the psychoanalysis, and it all comes back to one very deep secret: the Universe has a sense of humor.

I have a lot to be grateful for when it comes to the high school experience, most of all that, in the end, it has never defined me. I watched those kids with incredible resumes get their awards (the ones that, despite all of the fawning by teachers and administrators, were miserable to know and worse to cross) and I felt a little sorry for them, the same way I felt sorry for them the first time around. Life is about the moments, and not the missed ones, or the ones spent padding a resume that puts you in the bottom rung of a big school. Its like that Bruce Springsteen song where he goes back and meets his high school acquaintances, only to find out that they've been pining away for the Glory Days of Friday night lights, and popularity. Life should never be spent looking back. At 18, your greatest years are ahead of you, not behind you.

If I could give them any advice, it would be to stow their diploma in the deepest drawer, at the bottom, and fill above it. Remember that life is about living in the present, not the future, and not the past. Remember that your parents are probably right, that you knew what you wanted to do and who you were at the age of 8, and much of the next ten years will be spent rediscovering it, that "following your bliss" sounds fun, but its not, and that its the journey that teaches you. You will not know everything, but the greatest lesson you will ever learn is that that is just fine, because its the learning part thats the most fun.

Have a good weekend, enjoy the sun, the lack of humidity (in my corner of the world) and a little bit of mood music, a little bit of punk, and the best band name I have ever heard. Road trip music.

1. Were Still the Weaker Sex -- I Love You But I've Chosen Darkness
2. Love You Madly -- Cake
3. Crackin' Up -- Ceasars
4. Melissa -- The Allman Brothers
5. Singin' In The Rain -- Jamie Cullum
6. Naked Eye -- Luscious Jackson
7. Lives of Crime -- Fruit Bats
8. Decatur or Round of Applause for Your Stepmother! -- Sufjan Stevens
9. Blue -- The Thorns
10. Cities in Dust -- Souxsie and the Banshees

Bonus Personal Favorite: Sweet Jane -- Velvet Underground

And P.S. The digital camera works fine.

Posted by E. M. **Zanotti** at June 2, 2006 01:04 PM | [TrackBack](#)
Comments

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Who Is E.M.?

She's a 24-year-old overeducated, overopinionated, politically conservative relapsed Catholic, technogeek, [crunchy con](#) and member of the legal profession.

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