

Joan M. Smith, Editor



Anniversary Memories



Five years ago today RapAround was launched. In going back to that first issue we found that Nazareth Academy was the featured school, the Equal Time question concerned a new educational concept — school without rules. On the sports scene, Our Lady of Mercy and Cardinal Mooney girls' basketball teams were keeping cool in a rules dispute. Bishop Kearney was holding a sophomore retreat, Notre Dame was celebrating Martin Luther King Day, the St. Agnes magazine drive began, and the feature article was "Catholic High Schools are Alive, Well...and Changed".



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It was noted in that first issue that our aim was to be lively — that we have been — covering school concerts, sport events, psychology classes, history seminars, May days, liturgies, career days, art weeks, ring ceremonies, candy drives, play rehearsals — ad infinitum. There have been over 200 Speaking-out columns, 1,600 students have been interviewed just for Equal Time, and over the years only 5 students haven't shown up for their Winner's Circle \$5. And since RapAround came into existence it has been in the top award spots with the National Catholic Press Association, taking first place in 1977, 1979.

In 1975, students were writing in the speaking-out column about conformity, excessive TV watching and the Patricia Hearst situation. Equal Time questioned them about their opinions on Sunday homilies, legalization of marijuana, gun control, death penalty, violence in sports, Vietnam, and the Attica Prison riots.

What was happening in the schools? The Cardinal Mooney cheerleading squad took the Section V championships. BKs Marching Kings performed for the Pope in Rome. On stage, St. Agnes did Pinocchio — BK, Camelot — and McQuaid did "The Detective Story". Over at Our Lady of Mercy, sophomores Eileen Vergo, Noreen Bishoping and T.J. Schmidt were among the students who participated in the school's annual Arts Week — and Aquinas Institute celebrated its 50th anniversary.

It was also stated in that first issue that through RapAround we would show the tremendous impact our youth have on society as well as provide space for these owners of the future to indicate how they would use it. It was impossible to contact the young adults who were attending high school during that first year to see how they've navigated, what was then their future. But we did talk with the original nine coordinators who began the long chain of student reps who have helped make RapAround a success.

"I can't believe five years have gone by!" exclaimed Bill Blum as he walked into the RapAround office. But five years or not, Bill is the same energetic, smiling person he was when coordinating Bishop Kearney's news for RapAround back in 1975.



Energy is Bill's middle name. While attending the University of Windsor, (class of '79), where he received his BA in Political Science, one of his extracurricular activities was as cheerleader for the school's basketball and football teams. This activity culminated in his accompanying the basketball team to play-offs in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He also served for a year on the school newspaper.

Bill's involvement and philosophy of "Just don't sit back and watch the world go by," dates back to his BK days when he performed in the school plays including Fiddler on the Roof, South Pacific, My Sister Eileen. He ran indoor track, was headline editor for the Coronet in his junior year, and co-editor in his senior year.

Reminiscing about his BK days he recalled receiving his senior ring, "making or missing the RapAround deadlines," and admitted that all his memories of those four years are brought back whenever he sees the Marching Kings perform.

Presently, Bill is employed with the Lincoln First Bank as a trouble shooter, a task that takes him to 11 bank branches where he has the opportunity to indulge in a favorite pastime — meeting new people. He is a member of the bank's bowling team and is its youngest member.

Since being out in the work world he has discovered people tend to complain about the little things but that people are friendlier than he expected.

His philosophy is that "Life is what you make it," and he believes that the everyday business of meeting customers and dealing with their problems can have its moments by reaching out and sincerely helping them.

Every so often RapAround runs into one of its original coordinators like Larry Conley, who is employed with the Wegman enterprises, and is night manager and assistant front-end manager for the store on Mt. Read Blvd. and Maiden Lane. He had attended Monroe Community College for a semester after graduating from McQuaid in 1975, but decided it wasn't for him at that time. He wanted to tackle the outside world.



He considered his four years at McQuaid fantastic and explained, "There's a comrade there that's incomparable." While at McQuaid he coordinated student participation in the Inner High Council's festivals at the Rochester Psychiatric Hospital and spearheaded the school's Red Cross bloodmobile drives. In fact he still recruits for this purpose; whenever he goes down to donate he brings along friends. He was also involved in the Big Brother Program and CHE.

Concerning his RapAround affiliation, he said it gave him the opportunity to meet the kids from other schools, and gave him a look at how each school handled the various aspects of school life.

Larry keeps in shape by playing tennis, calls golf "his game" and still enjoys tackling the wilds. During his McQuaid years you'd find him riding the rapids in the Pennsylvania rivers and during the past few years has been camping in the Adirondacks, and along with fellow classmate, Dennis Adsit, ventured on a 10 day wilderness survival trek through northern Canada.

Larry enjoys the independence of being on his own, but warns against the pitfalls especially what the inflation crisis can do to a well-planned budget. His advice to those considering moving out on their own — "It's a lot more than just deciding," he explained, "it takes preparation."

During these last five years out in the world, what has he found out? — "The most important thing," he answered, "is to be happy doing what your doing," and he seems to be following his own advice. Larry has always liked meeting people, and according to his count, at least 25,000 of them go through the store a week — that's a lot of people to meet and at times can mean a lot of grief. "I'm the first one the customer sees after discovering another rise in food prices!" he laughed. But Larry, keeping his cool and flashing that ready smile, copes with it.

DeSales' first coordinator, Thomas Marino, went on to attend Morrisville, a two year technical school. He graduated with an associate degree in Science and a major in Mechanical Technology.

Presently, he is working at the GTE Sylvania Company in Seneca Falls where he resides. His position with the company is that of a lab technician in the Engineering Products Division.

In that year of 1975, while Tom was at DeSales, the school was going to be closed by the diocese. For RapAround, Tom interviewed the students about the situation and it led to his feature "A Death in the Family". One student interviewed observed, "It's going to be too late when everybody realizes what a mistake it is (the closing). I wish there was a way to keep it open." A few months later this hope became a reality when it was decided DeSales would remain open.

After four years at Albany State University, the first Notre Dame coordinator, Victor Caroseo, class of '75, is back at his alma mater as an English teacher. While Victor was in college he did some writing for the school newspaper, and was the chairman of the undergraduate English students committee, in his senior year. He received his bachelors degree in English and Education, magna cum laude. Following his graduation in June he landed a job teaching summer classes at Elmira Free Academy, then followed the position at Notre Dame.



He said it wasn't difficult deciding to return as a teacher to the high school he had attended. He noted that because of his experience with the school, he felt that it would be a good place to teach. He said he knew that at Notre Dame there is a "greater emphasis" on academics that is important.

According to Victor, Notre Dame is basically the same as it was when he was a student. When asked about his first term on the other side of the desk, he said that it has gone "better than I thought," and that he is "really enjoying" his teaching assignments.

Linda Petote Lanni, (married Aug. 11, 1979) served as St. Agnes' RapAround coordinator and remembered the excitement of meeting the deadlines. Since her graduation, Linda received her BS in nursing, graduating from the University of Rochester, magna cum laude. She is now at Crouse Irving Memorial Hospital, in Syracuse, in the pediatrics department where she works with leukemia cases. Her husband, Alan, is attending UpState Medical School.



While at St. Agnes, Linda was editor of the yearbook, was a member of the glee club and participated in school plays. Her interest in nursing took wing while she was a member of a nursing Explorer's Post and served as a Candy Striper at Highland Hospital. She was glad of the chance offered her by Sister Christina Walsh to be a RapAround coordinator. In fact, she credits sister with being a big influence on her outlook in life. "She was always striving for perfection."

While at St. Agnes, the one incident Linda still chuckles over was the day she and the yearbook staff stopped the train. The tracks run beside the school and it seems that everyday classes had to come to a halt because of the noisy whistle. Linda and her compatriots decided to make a point, called channels 8 and 10 and then, one day just before the train was due, congregated on the tracks. The engineer took it all in good humor and quiet reigned from then on.

In talking about her future, Linda stated she intends to go for her MA, then on for her doctorate. Her goal is to teach nursing.

Through high school and college she developed a philosophy of enjoying wherever she is and what's she doing. "Enjoy today," she advised, "do your best, but be satisfied with what your best is."

Besides being the coordinator for Our Lady of Mercy High School, Mary Jo Porreca, (class of '75), managed to be score keeper for the school sport teams, a member of the ski club, play folk guitar for the masses, be involved with the Christian Action Movement, be editor of the Quill, and participate in all the school plays. This latter activity giving her the experience for her career in the theater.



Mary Jo went on to pursue dramatics at Catholic University and then New York City University where she received her Bachelor in the Fine Arts of Acting. She's one of the "I Love New York" adherents, and especially likes Greenwich Village. She stayed in New York after graduation making the rounds of theaters and has appeared in off-broadway productions including Elijah, Dark of the Moon and Suddenly Last Summer.

Mary Jo, however, is the first to admit that living in the Big Apple is expensive and theatrical competition is overwhelming. According to her, over 200 people can show up for an audition. So, recently she made a move to Minneapolis where a thriving regional theater offers many opportunities. In fact, right after this interview she was headed back to audition for Spoon River Anthology. For the audition, Mary Jo explained she would have to do two monologues — one comedy, one serious. On this performance would rest the decision of whether she would be called back to read from the script.

In between performances and auditions, how does she maintain her acting requirements? "A lot of prescribed exercises," she said, "general relaxation and stretching exercises plus vocal exercises."

Leaving high school behind "is when you really see how sheltered you were," Mary Jo observed and added, "When you're out in the world you provide your own motivation." But she credits her early motivation to Mercy and its emphasis on the arts, and to Sister Jane O'Brien and Constance Casey who encouraged her.

In recalling her Mercy days, Mary Jo's memories are of the Field Days, May Days, and especially Class Day — "That was the most touching," she said.

Mary Jo's goal is to earn her living solely by acting. At present, in between acting jobs, she is employed in a department store, but she is aware that with each audition and performance she is broadening her experience. Also, she has learned a valuable fact — in her field, perseverance is the key word.