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Sky View High School Spirit Fountain Ritual

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Sky View High School Spirit Fountain Ritual
Occupational Folklore, Ritual, Custom

Informant: Doyle Geddes is a co-worker of my dad and a family friend. He and his wife live in North Logan, Utah and he is a humanities teacher at Green Canyon High School, but worked for nineteen years at Sky View High School in Smithfield, Utah, where this ritual was performed. He loves to laugh and watch sitcoms with my dad and other teachers during lunch.

Context: I interviewed Doyle in his Green Canyon High School classroom during his fifth hour period (he didn’t have a class that hour). The student teacher was also in the classroom listening. It was quiet, but we could hear muffled discussions in the hallway at some points. We just sat in the chairs around one of the desks. Doyle has been a friend of my dad ever since I can remember, so it we talked casually. The conversation began with how the Spirit Fountain Ritual started with Doyle, my dad Darren Perkes, and Marty Reeder, another English teacher.

Text: It started quite organically. There were four of us in the beginning, and we would get done with faculty b-ball [basketball] and we would feel good, you know? We would have an endorphin high and feeling good so we would walk down the hall and we would stop to get a drink of water to hydrate and refresh ourselves. And then it just seemed like, you know what? this is so refreshing, so, you know, good. We’ve just done something fun together that it needs have – it needs to be something more than just drink of water. So, we began with somebody operating the fountain and the others would have to bow to that individual and they could do whatever bow they would like. And then we would each step in in turn. I don’t know how the specific rules evolved, but it became a specific ritual and it began with first the bow, and then you would have to take five gulps and then once you left the fountain and your five gulps you would have to take another bow and then the next person would step in in turn. And then the addition beyond that point was that once we had all finished, we would acknowledge that we had just finished by bowing to each other all together. And then at the time we were watching a sitcom [Arrested Development] during our lunch hour that had an episode that featured a chicken dance, and the chicken dance was fun. So, we began to end our morning ritual, bow to each to each other, take our five gulps, bow to each other again, and then we would do the chicken dance to finish it off and
everyone had their own chicken dance. [He forgot to mention a few other things while I recorded the first time, so here is the rest] You could not touch the fountain, that was a rule, so, ladies had to like, hold their hair. The person that took the bow could not touch the fountain. And the second was that after we finished the chicken dance we would all high-five each other.

[Later in the conversation, Doyle described the specific roles that he, Darren, and Marty had in the ritual]

The Spirit Fountain happened every Wednesday and Friday morning. Yes. Marty Reeder was always the fountain operator, I would always go first- I would always lead off, and then your dad [speaking to me about my dad Darren] would be number two and then whoever beyond that, you know, would hop in.

Texture: Doyle reminisced this story with a happy sense of nostalgia, since the ritual was discontinued after the new school was built and he and my dad moved to Green Canyon while Marty stayed at Sky View. He made hand gestures and we laughed in between at certain points in the story. After our conversation we looked online and found one video on YouTube that a student had posted a few years earlier. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yP7fKMVPu30&t=3s]
He also described the ritual as a somewhat strange way to demonstrate their school spirit, hence the name “The Spirit Fountain Ritual”. Doyle described how they were observed by students, as the drinking fountain they stopped at was near the commons area of the school, and the teachers would invite the onlookers and teach them how to perform the ritual. He later said that it was impossible to not watch the ritual because of how loud and absurd it was. They received varied responses. Some thought they were nuts, some wanted to join but weren’t brave enough, and then there were those who jumped right in. He said that at its height of popularity, between three and twenty kids who would participate. At certain points, one of the three teachers would miss basketball, so the other two would call them over the intercom to go the spirit fountain, because they still wanted to perform it together. There was a sense of respect for the ritual. Those who mocked it weren’t invited to join and if someone broke the circle they would politely ask them to walk around.
After a while, they started making claims that their day would be awesome by starting with the ritual. He also said that ritual had been going on for over fifteen years at Sky View, and that he hopes that something similar will come about at Green Canyon.