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Sky View High School Spirit Fountain Ritual

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Informant: Darren Perkes is my father and an English teacher at Green Canyon High School, a high school in North Logan Utah. The year before he had worked at Sky View High School in Smithfield, Utah and where this ritual originated. Darren has a close connection with many of the teachers at Green Canyon and Sky View, particularly Marty Reeder and Doyle Geddes, who both play major parts in the Spirit Fountain Ritual. Darren enjoys golfing, skiing, watching comedy and action movies, and spending time with his wife.

Context: I talked to my dad as we travelled with my mom, brother, and sister to Idaho to cut down our Christmas tree. He had caught a cold a few days earlier, so our conversation was interrupted by his coughs, as well as a few minor interjections from the rest of the family.

The Spirit Fountain originated over a decade ago with faculty basketball. As the group of teachers returned to their classrooms, they would stop by a particular drinking fountain and get a drink. According to Darren, it started with him and Marty going to the drinking fountain and joking with each other, saying things like, “Hey, let me buy you a drink.” and then hold the button on the fountain for them. During this same period of time, they would watch sitcoms during their lunch hour to help get them through the day, one of their favorites being “Arrested Development”. One running gag in the show is that every character has their own, uniquely strange chicken dance that they would use to taunt their family members. My dad and the other teachers thought this was hilarious. One day the three teachers created the basic outline of the Spirit Fountain Ritual, which only included getting a drink and dancing like a chicken. As time progressed, the ritual evolved to the more complicated ritual described below. It was done every Wednesday and Friday after basketball for several years. Later, it was performed less and less because to Doyle not being able to play basketball because of bodily pains due to age. Eventually, last year in 2016 it was ended because a new school was built and Darren and Doyle moved to the Green Canyon and Marty stayed at Sky View.

Text: [At first] We would hold the drinking fountain for each other and get a drink and then at the end we would, like, make these chicken noises. And then that progressed in to Marty [another English teacher at the school] being, like, the leader cuz he would, like, mock us when we would bow because sometimes we’d to each other like, [mocking situation] “Oh, thank you!” and we’d do a little bow or a curtsy or something like that after someone held the drinking fountain. So then it became a ritual where after we played [basketball] we’d go to the drinking fountain, we would get in a circle around the drinking fountain, Marty would be the closest to the drinking fountain, Doyle [another teacher] would always start, I would always be the last person, and then we’d let anybody else who wanted to, we even had students who started coming. And we got it down to a science where you came up, you had your
own unique bow, so you could do whatever you wanted, some people did just a traditional bow, some people, like I said, did a curtsy thing, some people did like some weird hop thing. I did this thing where I move my knees back and forth, some people do like the prayer thing where they put their hands together an’ squat. Just all kinds, whatever unique little bow you wanted. So you’d walk up, you’d bow to Marty, and he would do the exact same bow back to you, like he’d do it at the same time you were doing it, so he was just copy-catting you. Then you had to take five gulps from the drinking fountain. So, for some reason we believed that you need to stay hydrated, so we made everybody take five gulps, and if you could tell they only took one, then we’d say, “Nonono, you gotta take five.” I have no idea why. But we took five gulps. Then as you stepped away, you had to do the exact same bow again, and again Marty mimicked the bow that you did, and then you stepped back in to the end, so right next to Doyle, on the circle. So as you stepped in, wherever you were on the circle, when you stepped out you took the end of the line behind Doyle. And then I finished it off because once I did mine, then I would turn to the drinking fountain and Mary would step out and he would get to do his part, so he’d have his own bow, take his five gulps, bow at the end. Then we would all get in a circle and we would all do our unique bow to each other at the same time and then we all had to do a chicken dance, so everybody did their own chicken dance just screaming at the top of their lungs and then we went around the circle and gave high-fives to everybody. And pretty much whoever did it, they were blessed for that day. So they had a better day.

Texture: My dad told this story as a happy memory. I had the opportunity to participate in the ritual during the years when I was at Sky View and we both looked back at it with a bit of nostalgia. He recalls that many students observing the ritual “thought [the teachers] were psycho” but others thought is was exciting to participate. Many students laughed and took videos on their phones. [YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yP7fKMVPu30&t=3s] My dad said he felt “pretty accomplished after completing the little ritual” but wasn’t sure why. He just felt that his day went a little better when he did it. One claim of this that he talked about was how the Sky View basketball team was going to the state championships, so the three teachers gathered them up during fifth hour to do the Spirit Fountain Ritual, and they ended up winning that year, so Darren, Marty, and Doyle all claim to have helped with that through the ritual.
He also said that in order to participate in the ritual, there had to be some respect for it. There were some secretaries who did the ritual half-way and then left during the middle, so they banned them. Also, if anyone talked bad about the ritual or made fun of it, they weren’t welcome to participate. My dad also said that if anyone tried to walk through or “break” the circle, they were asked to go around as to keep the respect for the ritual.

There several times where Darren wasn’t quite sure why the did specific parts of the ritual, but they did them and it was fun.