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Sky View High School Spirit Fountain Ritual

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Sky View High School Spirit Fountain Ritual
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Informant: Martin, or Marty, Reeder is an English and Spanish teacher at Sky View High School in Smithfield, Utah. He lives a block away with his wife and five kids and usually walks to school to save money. Marty and his family have been friends of my family for a long while (we were in the same church congregation for a while, and my dad was a fellow English teacher at Sky View before he moved to Green Canyon, a new school as of last year) He is usually seen wearing cargo pants with a book in each pocket. He is a jokester, loves to have fun and laugh with people and do and say ridiculous things. He’s published two fiction novels and is an avid reader and writer.

Context: I talked with Marty in his classroom at Sky View after school. Most of the students had left, but we could hear a few conversations out in the hallway. Because Marty has been a family friend for a long time, we were able to talk casually.

The three teachers who were involved in the Spirit Fountain Ritual were Marty, my dad Darren Perkes, and the humanities teacher Doyle Geddes.

After doing the ritual for several years, Doyle stopped going to basketball due to health reasons, so their final year of doing the Spirit Fountain they were only able to do it about two times. Then a new school was built and Darren and Doyle moved to that school and Marty stayed at Sky View, but they did the ritual one final time the year before the new school was built.

Text: It was gradual, it built upon itself. So we, after playing faculty ball (basketball) in the morning, we’d walk back to our classrooms, we’d walk past the “spirit fountain”, which was named by one of the exec councils [student leadership] that year, spirit fountain. And we’d be thirsty, because we just played faculty ball, so we need to hydrate. So I- so we would get a drink there and I started just holding it – it was more efficient if I just held the button for everyone and then they took a drink. And then Darren, your dad [speaking to me], he felt it would be nice to reciprocate and hold it for me while I drank, and then we were acknowledging the good behavior and actions of each other so we would kind of like, give a nod, a little bow to each other. And then our bows started to get more fancy and more formal and more ritualistic until we had a set bow that we would do before, but then we would also bow afterwards. And then students would start to join us and we would form a circle and they would just circle in and they’d have to do a bow and I’d reciprocate by doing the same bow and I would hold it for them, they would drink five gulps, we’d figured that was enough to hydrate. Then they’d go back into
the line and into to the circle until everyone had done but it. But it would always start with Doyle Geddes [humanities teacher] and it always finished with Darren Perkes who would then do it for me. And then it kind of felt anticlimactic to end like that, so once we were all in the circle, and I was the last one, then we added a chicken dance, because we’d been watching Arrested Development during lunch and everyone has their own, unique chicken dance in that show so we thought we would represent that. So then we would all give our chicken dance and then we’d give high-fives and be done. It was quite the ordeal, it would take up a good five minutes. [later in the conversation Marty added] We would be really strict about it. Like, if somebody would do out of turn, or something like that, or somebody would walk through our circle in the middle, that was, like, very disrespectful. So we were pretty strict about that. [I reminded him of one rule] They weren’t supposed to touch the fountain [when they took a drink during the ritual] because the whole point was that somebody was doing it for you… They could use their hands to hold their hair back, or they just had their hands to their sides.

Texture: As I talked with Marty, he talked with a happy nostalgia. We laughed together at some of the more silly parts of the story. Marty says that the spirit fountain was silly but fun and would brighten his, and every participant’s, day by starting it off with the Spirit Fountain. One claim of his 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. Marty also said that some people were hesitant to participate, mostly because of the chicken dance they would have to do at the end, but they still invited as many people as they could because they knew they’d be happy after participating. He explained how they did ban a few people because they didn’t respect the ritual as they should have by only doing it half-way or treating it with disrespect. Bystander students who observed unwarned would be surprised at the sudden chicken noises, but many ended up joining later.