

GUEST COLUMN

Our lives

By MEG GORGONE PINTER

It's a beautiful fall day, sun shining, leaves on the ground and a call for flurries - the smell of hot cider fills the air. It's a Saturday morning and we all know the ritual, we're looking forward to it. And then...the screaming begins "You're going to miss the bus" and the ranting and raving starts. "Where are my keys...my jacket, I can't find my pompoms."

My dad sits in the middle of all this, with a quiet calmness, eating lunch, seeming as though there is not a care in the world except for his ham sandwich. Out breaks the decorations - my mom never forgets. We all race to the cars and start with the black and gold, then the blue and white. Just as we stand back to admire our creation, my dad steps onto the front porch, the precious play cards in hand and bellows "I am NOT driving to the school with blue and white balloons on my car."

We are not surprised, we've heard it all before - most of our lives in fact. My mom gives her usual response, "Oh Rich, it's just fun and games," and my dad turns and looks at all of us. His face is not full of the playfulness and antics we usually see and we know what is going through his head, we know what he is thinking - "It's not a game!" And we all know that it isn't just a game, it's his life - matter of fact, it's all of our lives. It's part of being who we are.

At the game, I make my way into the stands with my mom and her entourage, a group of friends and piles of blankets. We consciously place ourselves in front of the cheerleaders. I sit on the end, careful not to break up the order in which everyone sits, for once, the game gets rolling I dare not sit too closely to any of them. Anyone who knows this group and has had the pleasure of sitting next to my mother at a game understands that this small reserved lady has a passion for football. She carries a lot of steam and is proud that she never misses a game. Football is her life too. She pulls out the roster to make sure that she knows who has done what - she cheers loudly for the boys she loved teaching in 8th grade, the ones who give an extra effort, and for the kids whose parents she knows. She gets excited for them and you know that she cares for them all - she shares the same love and respect that they have for my dad.

As my mom scopes the Dallas team for my sister's boyfriend, I too look across the field from end to end, seeing all the players in my family's life, not just football but friends from both sides - Roberts, Oliver, Galicki, Jackson... Tears well up as I blame the stinging wind. I hope that things never change. I pan down to the field and see my brother, Sam next to my husband who is decked out in a Lake Lehman jacket - funny how

natural he seems in black and gold. I observe their hand motions and know that they are telling old high school football stories - ironically my husband's team was also the Knights.

My sister Sara is also down there wearing her lucky sweater - back from college she misses the sidelines too. She quickly falls into familiar footsteps and helps the trainer where needed. Sara, after all, had been my dad's student trainer for many years. She also had learned the passion for football. I watch my dad with his hands in his pockets pace the field relating to how he feels - that the time of preparation has ended and performance begins. You see I may not know what the referee has just signaled or why they gave a 15-yard penalty, but I understand the spirit of the game and the life that comes from competition. It has been embedded into all of us.

I begin the flashback of my life on Saturdays. I had danced on the Black Knights sideline to "They call him Mr. Touchdown" as a mascot, and sang the DHS alma mater at the end of games. I attended bonfires where Dallas dummies were thrown into the fire and attended ones where Lehman dummies were the torch. As kids we learned to answer phone calls from reporters, ignore unwarranted comments from disgruntled fans and to know that dad was scouting because pancakes were for dinner. We had been taught that the play book was sacred ground, the proper techniques of a water boy/girl and how to crawl under the projector to cross the dining room before VCRs were invented. But we were also taught the most important part of football, good sportsmanship and to love the spirit of the game - win or lose.

It's now the third quarter and as I venture to the Dallas side, I have this good familiar feeling. I look for the balloons we tied to the fence in front of my sister Toni's spot on the track. I spot my old coach who now is Toni's and sit next to her to watch my sister cheer her heart out for the blue and white. "Give me a D" she yells, and for the first time I don't know what to do. As the quarter winds down I go down to kiss her goodbye, for it's time to head back. I see my brother standing there admiring her cheerleading feats. He looks at me and says, "Ok, that's enough, I can't stay over here any longer." I wonder when was the last time he stood on his rival's side. Was it before junior high when he was a Dallas student, or did he cross over during his own Lake-Lehman football career to say hello to his friends?

My thoughts are broken by Jack Jones, former Mountaineer coach and long time neighbor. He asks me if I miss being on the track and then more so wants to know why I am heading towards the Lehman

side. I reply, "Yes it's hard to believe, but I cheer for them now." As my old homeroom teacher looks at me in shock, I quickly add that the words, Go Lehman, will never be heard coming out of my mouth. The flashbacks continue...to my senior year when I felt bad for my father when Dallas took back the shoe. He had lost the bet made with some of my Dallas football player friends and we had to have a blue light on our front porch for the remainder of that year. I recall Sam's senior year when as quarterback he helped carry Lehman to victory and dressed in uniform in a coffin for the Dallas pep rally. I remember back a year from now to Sara's senior year when she hugged her friends on the field after a win and made the annual walk to the 50 yard line to collect her victory soda from a Dallas coach. I silently make a wish that Dallas wins next year to make the cycle complete for Toni. For the people who live in this area know what I mean. The Dallas/Lehman rivalry is part of all our lives. We intermix and intermingle with both sides. This game represents life in the Back Mountain, and if you try to explain it to people who have never lived here, they don't understand. They ask, "An old shoe, that's what you play for?" For we are addicted to the passion and the excitement of the game and to the competition - and although at times it doesn't seem like it, it really is fun and games.

We wait for my dad coming off the field. My mom runs up to him and gives him a kiss. A smile runs across his face. The gauntlet forms for the players and parents clap and cheer for their children. Reporters run after the stars and coaches of the winning team. The losing team cries as they walk by - they lost the old shoe. It's a wonder if the first people who bronzed that shoe almost 50 years ago could have ever imagined how important it could still be. We line up for our annual photo shoot. This year it's Toni's turn to hold the shoe. She hesitates before standing on the Lehman steps in her Dallas uniform. My dad pulls her close and says "This is what it's all about." We hug and shake hands with fellow coaches and good-hearted parents and fans yell "Good game Coach."

It's over, the game is over. The buses pull out and the crowd disperses. We leave my dad to finish business and solemnly all walk to our car, not because "we" lost this year, but because the season is over. Across the parking lot, we hear shouts and turn to see what the commotion is about. A group of my mom's junior high students are cheering. "Mrs. Gorgone, give us an A!" As we break into laughter, I know that our lives will never really change.

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BAZAAR FUN

Amy Puffenberger's face became a work of art under the careful hand of Anna Bruns at last week's Gate of Heaven School bazaar. At right, Elizabeth Barry, Merissa Konnick and Amanda Humanansky took turns picking ducks for prizes.

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LETTERS

Wycallis could serve district by resigning

Editor: Gerald Wycallis you are remarkable. I am amazed it took you three maybe four days to decide on closing the Dallas High School. What were you waiting for, the students to become violently ill. There are no reasons or excuses.

It's obvious you showed no regard for the health and safety of our children or your faculty and their families for that matter. I as a parent of children in the Dallas School District, am appalled at your lack of concern and disregard you have shown the children

that you Gerald Wycallis are responsible for. The only good that can come of this, is the parents of the Dallas School District to demand your resignation and receive it.

Donna Sutton Shavertown

One-man Pinocchio at Wyoming Seminary

Who's that singing Italian opera? It's the Lewisburg actor Joel Gori in his One-Man Theatre version of the classic tale of Pinocchio, to be presented Nov. 15 at 6:30 p.m. in Wyoming Seminary's Buckingham Performing Arts Center, Sprague Avenue, Kingston.

Pinocchio and his devoted father, Gepetto, will make theatergoers of all ages laugh, weep and remember again that no one gets something for nothing.

Gori, the artistic director of the Metamorphosis Performing Arts Company, is a movement theatre artist who travels to theatres, colleges, and universities, museums, and festivals with his One-Man Theatre. He has taught theatre at Bucknell University, the Pennsylvania State University and Encore Music Camp at Wilkes University, and is an artist with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. He was featured on the national public television series *The Secret City*. A native of Scranton, Gori also creates programs for symphony orchestras, corporations and non-profit organizations.

His appearance at Wyoming



JOEL GORI

Seminary is sponsored by the Lower School Parents Association. Tickets are \$15 and can be pur-

chased at the door the evening of the performance, or by calling Wyoming Seminary at 283-6090.

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