

Trending this week: Cigars and the question of tradition

Students' annual last day cigar smoking isn't for everyone, and that's okay

by Michael Pruchnicki

In the Trevian Spirit, many seniors will make their way over to Elder Beach today and perform the New Trier tradition of smoking cigars to celebrate graduation.

It is a tradition that, according to students past and present, has spanned generations.

Like all traditions, we seniors hear about it, get excited to do it, and then experience it. But, also like all traditions, is it a true tradition, or an act of conformity?

Like everyone in the world, I am a slight conformist. I come to school dressed for the most part like all guys at New Trier.

I ditched on Senior Ditch day and went down to Wrigley to sit in the bleachers and watch the Cubs play. I wore the t-shirt of my college on May 1, I'm following the dress up themes for everyday this last week of school, and I will go smoke a cigar this Friday.

I think many seniors at this school can say that they have done these five things as well. And while I think that we would all like to think that we do these things because it's our decision and we think they are fun and entertaining, is it true, or is it because it's what everyone else is doing? Is it about fitting in and following the crowd?

Essentially, an argument can be made that all of high school is about conforming, and doing what everyone else is doing.

When you squeeze 3,000 plus teenagers into a building, most everyone is going to want to fit in. I don't think our football team sells out the student section at pretty much every home game with out a few people sitting around on a Friday afternoon saying, "hey everyone is going to the game tonight, we should too!"

It is a certain set of kids that set the standards for what being 'cool' is, and it is up to the rest of



Charlotte McGuire and Bridget Zimmerman enjoy a cigar in 2014 | Facebook

the population to live up to those standards. Not to say that New Trier High School is Mean Girls sequel, but it is what it is.

A majority of us see kids dressing in a certain way, or acting in a particular manner and as human beings we want to be like them for

different reasons. Possibly because they're perceived as more popular than us, or they're part of a group that we associate with.

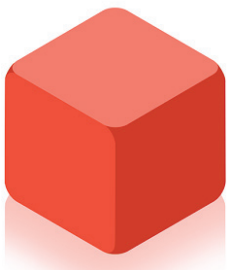
That said, there are tons of people in this school who aren't dressing up this week, or who were not sitting in the sun on Clark and

Addison last Friday afternoon. I would consider myself to be friends with some of these people, and many people like me would think of themselves as that as well. I don't have a problem with these kids at all, and I don't think Trevian Nation has and grudges against them either.

I actually think that it's admirable to see. It is what makes New Trier what it is. We've got kids that want to be like everyone else, and we've got kids who want to be themselves. But what makes New Trier (and particularly our class) special is the kids who want to be themselves, aren't viewed as outcasts, and are still accepted in our little society.

So whether this Friday you're smoking a cigar at Elder, or doing some other activity to ring in the new era of all our lives, just keep in mind that you are doing you, and what ever that you is, is fine by everyone else, and I can't think of many other places where you could say that.

App of the week



1010!

Album of the week



True Colors- Zedd

Movie of the week



The Age of Adaline

Restaurant of the week



DMK Burgers & Fish

Quote of the week

"Now that you've graduated, just remember: Bosses don't usually accept notes from your mother."
-Melanie White (Editor of ClickZ online publication)

10 questions with Denise Dubravec

The 2nd-year principal shares her thoughts on graduation, the renovations, and the never-ending cycle of education

by Joey Schuman

Principal Denise Dubravec will be graduating her second class of seniors May 31 at Welsh-Ryan Arena in Evanston. We gathered her thoughts as the 2014-2015 school year comes to a close.

JS: This will be your second graduation ceremony as principal. Will you get "butterflies" being on that stage in Welsh-Ryan Arena?

DD: I think definitely the attendance numbers bring an excitement to the stage, but I keep a perspective that [families] are really there to hear their student's name, and I think the most important part for me, too, is the student voice, that student speech, and so that's what I keep in my mind. I'm so proud to stand before all of those families because of the wonderful students we have at New Trier.

JS: How does this graduation feel different from last year?

DD: I think every year, each class represents something different to the institution, so I think although for myself, it's going to be similar in terms of format, it's always exciting to hear all of the different accomplishments that each class has completed throughout their four years, so that's always new and fresh. The graduation speaker has his or her thoughts, so I think that chages up the experience for me.

JS: New Trier graduation seems to get a lot of attention especially due to the pomp, and grandeur of the ceremony. What, in your opinion, makes the graduation ceremony here so special?

DD: We definitely have traditions that have been part of this institution. I think one of the special parts of graduation is our recognition of "generation" graduates, and that is something very unique to our institution, to be able to not only recognize second, but third and fourth generation families. You don't see that very often. I think that piece in itself says a lot about parents' faith in moving back to the same school that they graduated from.

JS: "Senior Week" festivities are annually thrust into the limelight around this time. Have you had to deal with any type of senior prank or over-the-top celebrations over the past two years?

DD: No, I haven't. I've been very fortunate. I think part of being a senior is the idea that you celebrate. And so I believe it's important for seniors to feel good about themselves as they walk out the door. Just insuring they have a last couple weeks of safety is our main concern, surely not to take away from their personal celebrations.

JS: What makes graduating New

Trier such an accomplishment?

DD: One of the things about graduation is wanting seniors to take a stop. To take a moment and just stop. And to think back and think about their journey in the last four years: the challenges, the successess, the perserverance, dedication to the academics as well as the extracurriculars. I think if they really took a moment to think about it, it probably could be overwhelming too, because our students here really put forth 110% into this institution, so they're really part of a legacy.



Dubravec took over for principal Dr. Dohrer in 2013 | New Trier

JS: What advice would you give to the graduating seniors?

DD: I hope that they think back to the experiences they have had here and that they were positive experiences they can use as they move forward,

whether they're going to college, or a gap year, or a job, whatever path they choose, that we gave them something that was a value that will forever stay with them.

JS: How about the sophomores about to step foot on the East campus this fall?

DD: Walking into a school of 3000 from 1000, I think there's just numerous opportunities. For a 10th grader coming in, it's important to take time to get acclimated to the institution and reach out and to look for different support systems. To get involved as quickly and as soon as possible. Something maybe that they can hold onto for the next three years, in other words. Something that you're passionate about. And you don't have to stick with it, you can experience lots of different things.

JS: How much of your summer is work and how much do you get to take off? Are there a lot of preparations that have to be done for the school year?

DD: [Administration] works 12 months. Part of that 12 months we do have some vacation days, and so sometimes we use them during the winter break and during the spring break, because we don't have the same vacation days as the students and faculty. Generally in the summer, we take some days off to rejuvenate, but also there's a lot of planning.

JS: Where do you expect to be, renovation-wise, by the start of the 2015-2016 school year?

DD: When students come back, the "T" building should be down completely, and that area itself will be the primary area where you'll see some construction. They're working now on putting an access road in the back, and there will be some work done on Essex so I think students will see more construction trucks and trailers and fencing along that area. And hopefully some actual walls going up.

JS: What were your biggest surprises over the 2014-2015 school year? Were there any pleasant surprises? Disappointments?

DD: The passing of the referendum was pleasant. I don't know if it was a surprise, but it was pleasant that that went through and I'm very thankful that our parent community recognized that it will benefit current and future students. So I think that was something much needed and much appreciated. Part of the disappointment was the weather. It's a surprise. You know that we're going to have cold weather, that's a given. But the number of days that we had excessive cold can really be difficult on our students and our faculty just trying to get to and from school. But people perservered through it.