

ON THE ABILITIES OF CHEERLEADERS

Over the years my wife (Linda Lukat Denny--Class of 1970) and I have become increasingly appreciative of the educational experience we received during our years at Seneca High School. For in addition to the classroom instruction we received, we also gained an appreciation for the uniqueness of individuals and their abilities. We in turn sent our two children, Rebecca Willen (Class of 1999) and Roy Christopher Denny (Class of 2002) to Seneca in part to help them to appreciate a broad range of individual backgrounds and talents. So when one day during his sophomore year at Seneca my son Chris imparted to me that all cheerleaders knew how to do was twirl their hair and chew gum, I found the need to offer a bit of "home schooling" on the subject. And the best place I knew to start was with a former Seneca cheerleader that we both were acquainted with.

"You know Joyce (Spurlock) McClain," I began. "She is a nurse, has served on the school board, and has run for office as a state legislator. She seems quite competent, don't you think?" My son answered in the affirmative since he knew the family and had helped them on occasion with some volunteer work. I then pulled out a Seneca yearbook from 1970 and showed him a picture of Joyce in her cheerleader uniform. As my son began to ponder the possibility that cheerleaders might be more proficient than he had originally thought, I found my yearbook from 1969 to offer him some more examples of competent cheerleaders. We discussed the Barnstable twins, who for years have raised money for diabetes research with their annual Kentucky Derby party. We also talked about Kathy (Kilness) Tharp, a former Miss Louisville who has enjoyed a successful career as a systems engineer. At that point I could sense a change as to my son's opinion of cheerleaders, but felt I should offer a couple of more examples to him in order to be sure.

I went back to the 1970 yearbook and turned to the J.V. cheerleader page. He was first shown a picture of Clarice (Novicki) Francis, who followed in the footsteps of her older sister Jayne as a cheerleader. He was then shown a picture of Susan (Stairs) Goodling, who like Joyce McClain has worked in the nursing field. At that point the "home study program" as to the capabilities of cheerleaders had fully served its purpose. For my son was now aware that it was indeed possible to have a productive life after having participated in cheerleading.

Sometime afterward I had opportunity to have contact with Joyce McClain. I related to her my son's initial observations as to cheerleaders and the resulting discussion we had had. Joyce laughed appreciatively and then said the following (and all you former cheerleaders take note), "Make sure to tell Chris that I still twirl my hair and chew gum sometimes." And it is also worth mentioning that as she spoke, she was fully engaged in both of the afore mentioned activities.

Sam Denny (Seneca Class of 1969)

