

One of My Best Cups of Coffee - Ever

From the title, one would think this story would transport readers across the globe – maybe a tale of sipping an unparalleled espresso at a quaint café in Rome, or possibly bellied up with a bold cup of Arabica bean joe in a South American coffee bar. These iconic examples, however, couldn't be further from my life's finest encounter with the warm beverage. In fact, the best cup of coffee I have ever experienced had little to do with the exquisite taste from its bold, flavored bean. Rather, it had everything to do with the company I recently found myself surrounded by on a beautiful summer morning.

Rather than traversing the “big pond” to experience the pleasing note of the lovely, steeped brew, I was instead crossing Highway 12, heading up Middle Waitsburg Road, adorned by rolling wheat fields marked occasionally with lush green vineyard plots.

There I sat, sipping my cup of coffee, surrounded by a handful of former 1950's Wa-Hi graduates, all of whom I have come to know and enjoy spending time with since relocating to Walla Walla. While I suspect that the glorious view from the kitchen table would match any Tuscan coffeehouse landscape, I can all but guarantee you, the company, conversation, and stories would be unparalleled anywhere across the globe.

On this lovely morning, I had the pleasure of spending time with Dean Derby and his wife Shari (both Wa-Hi class of 53), John Knowles (also class of 53), and Dean Lodmell (class of 52). For over an hour I sat and sipped, soaking up the tales, experiences, and unrivaled Big Blue nostalgia - pausing only long enough for Shari to graciously refill our cups. Stories abound primarily of football, family and friendships. Former classmates sharing high school accomplishments and life experiences. Tales of coaches and teachers who impacted lives, helping to shape and direct their formative years.

Undoubtedly, during our morning coffee interlude, I benefited a whole lot more from the experience than they surely gleaned from me. Surprisingly, while I longed for more lore and legend from days gone by, all four continued to amaze me with their profound interest in the current state of our schools - excited to learn about construction progress, student accomplishments and how teams were shaping up for the upcoming school year.

This unique experience served to reinforce the remarkable school system we maintain, and the generations of incredible young men and women it has and continued to produce over its 164-year history. We are truly blessed with an incredible community, faculty and students. I am reminded that the glorious history of this extraordinary district lives on, whether class of 1952 or 2022 - once a Blue Devil, always a Blue Devil!

I have experienced fine cups of coffee in picturesque Italian hill towns. They didn't come close to rivaling my recent cup of joe with these 1950's WaiHi legends.