



IT FEELS LIKE SPRING

By ROB FOURNIER

I was recently speaking with a former student-athlete about the start of the 2010 athletic season. In his case, there might have been a little more emphasis on “former” as it had been some forty (40) years since he had last visited campus. Amazingly (at least to me), he lived in Oakland County and so it seemed at least that an occasional visit to campus seemed “accessible” in the last four decades. But it never happened.

He told me metaphorically that he felt like he was going into his own personal fall season and those career activities and family obligations of his “summer life” had transitioned into a less frantic period in which he had more time to enjoy things. If that was truly his belief, then his personal postponement seemed misplaced...if not unnecessary.

In the great Meredith Wilson play “The Music Man” there is a very poignant scene in which the fast-talking salesman Robert Preston tries to get the reserved and proper Shirley Jones to accompany him “to the foot bridge”. By today’s standards, that seems innocent and some of that naiveté would actually be refreshing. Anyway, the hesitant Jones demurs explaining she would like to go but at another time. To which Preston responds with one of the more memorable lines (from my perspective) in a Broadway musical: “Miss Librarian, if you keep putting everything off until tomorrow, all you will end up with is a bunch of empty yesterdays.” I like that line better than “What are you drinking?”

Too often we become the reluctant librarian. I told that former student-athlete that a return to campus had promise

for a lot of pleasant surprises – and the chance to re-ignite some old memories too. Hey, come to think of it, we too have a foot bridge except it is over the Lodge freeway and underneath are some cars and trucks. But they are our cars and trucks – that’s Detroit!

If it’s been 40 years (or even four years) since you were last on campus you have been away too long. Much of the landscape has changed...and that is good. But what our student-athletes represent, what they aspire to be, and the ideals they hold important, well, those have not changed. And that is the foundation of the athletics department for the last 93 years.

Every time I meet a first-year student-athlete, I encourage them to enjoy the experience. To take it all in – the scenery, the opportunities, the friendships. Even learn from the frustrations. My admonition – it will go by fast. Years later as they walk out the doors as seniors they inexorably admit how quickly went the time. As Preston warned, don’t leave with empty yesterdays.

As I pen this article we are preparing for another new season. And even though the calendar says Fall, it is our Spring. The wide-eyed freshman, the unpredictable promise of intercollegiate athletics and the unbridled enthusiasm which is the essence of the University, are a part of the new school year.

It has now been ten (10) years since I first joined the athletic department. And each day is still as exciting and opportunistic as it was a decade ago (now I just know my way around better). If it has been “awhile” since you visited campus, I encourage you to return. You will discover some new things, and just as importantly, re-live some of that rich past. Don’t make your reflection of WSU an empty yesterday. I will meet you at the foot bridge.