

Consolidation

Nobody asked but ...

I went to a “consolidated” high school. Franklin County Consolidated High School still bore that label when I transferred to it, in its second year. The process adjective was soon dropped as the little previous schools were forgotten. Names like Elkhorn, Bald Knob, Thornhill, Peaks Mill, and Bridgeport preceded that ugly, stark consolidated moniker. Economies of scale were sought. Franklin County beefed up its bus fleet, too. Many students now spent more than an hour a day riding on buses.

My high school was then the third largest in the commonwealth, we boasted. Of course, we were early on to consolidate — the Capital’s county had to show the way to modernity. Most other counties fell to the consolidation disease, as time wore on.

The promise was bigger AND better, but in my later years, I’m damned if I can see what the better was. Oh, there were a couple of things — Duke Ellington played in our gymnasium, as did the Dave Brubeck Quartet, and Adolf Rupp was the Commencement Speaker at our graduation. None of those little schools could do that.

But the little schools, with floors of wood and walls of plaster, were closer to Nature. Students could, in many cases, walk home, if they didn’t have a quick bus ride. The golden gift of time was theirs. The big County bureaucrats had not yet stolen much more time from them. I hope there were some homeschooled people out there, who took their time right back from the moguls, but our view then of the home schooled had been lowered by the social engineers to circles of hell below poverty and sin.

— Kilgore Forelle