



(Tribune photo by Mike Douglas)

Leslie Linthicum at dance sponsored by Eldorado cheerleaders at Graham Central Station

Serious students persevere, others talk of rock, partying

This is the fifth in a series of articles by a reporter who posed for two weeks as a student at Albuquerque's largest high school. Today's article looks at the attitudes of the young people she encountered.

By LESLIE LINTHICUM
Tribune Staff Writer

A freshman youth, slouched in his metal desk looking thoroughly unenthused about civics, snaps alert.

His friend — a lanky boy from the class next door is loitering in the classroom before the bell and has asked, "Who do you think is better, Van Halen or Rush (two rock groups)?"

The bespectacled, red-cheeked boy furrows his brow in a studious expression and answers slowly: "That's a hard question, man . . ."

During another period in the same classroom, teacher Dennis Sanchez grabs his students' attention with a comparison between the man-hours U.S. and Russian citizens must work to buy identical goods. His example: a pack of cigarettes and a quart of vodka.

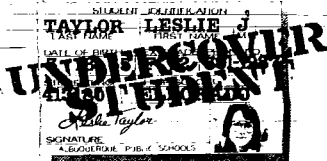
The cost to a Soviet startles the youths.

"Talk about working to party, man," a freshman observes. The rest of the class mumbles agreement.

Rock and roll, parties and friends are topics of high interest at Eldorado High School.

Book-learning, to many students, is not.

In Popular Fiction class, the requirement that a book be read every two weeks was greeted with disbelief.



"You mean we have to read?" a dark-haired female student asked.

News that one of the books would be "Red Sky at Morning" by Richard Bradford was met with; "It's short, but it's stupid."

Still, the ingenuity and energy of youth can be seen, though sometimes exerting itself in less-than-appropriate manners.

During a civics test, answers were traded freely from desk to desk. Slow walks were made to the front of the crowded room and back, as eyes industriously scanned other students' answer sheets. There was discussion back and forth among classmates, with the whole process becoming a sort of a test-by-consensus, while teacher Sanchez read a paperback textbook.

The true/false questions covered a rudimentary introduction to capitalism and socialism. The material had been reviewed for four days. Yet, after the tests were handed in, a girl turned to a friend and asked, "What is communism again?"

High school is a joke to many students. But

Serious EHS students persevere

Continued from Page A-1

beneath the lightheartedness, beneath the mischievous gum-chewing, note-writing, wisecracking and radio-listening, there seems to lie a general, if veiled, resentment toward the wasted time and lack of discipline.

Some serious students focus their frustration on the distractions and disruptions.

"People talk so much, I just want to tell them to shut up," a college-bound senior girl told me over lunch.

Other students accept the undisciplined atmosphere as a way of life.

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A junior boy tosses something across Pat Sutton's classroom during a noisy Independent Living period.

"What did you just throw?" Mrs. Sutton asks. "Dental floss," he answers smugly. (Chewing mint-flavored dental floss is a fad at the high school.)

"Why?" the teacher asks. "Because it tastes good."

Mrs. Sutton instructs the boy to move to the back of the room.

He stands, towering over the petite teacher.

"Who pissed in your cornflake's this morning, Mrs. Sutton?" the student demands.

The class breaks up in laughter as Mrs. Sutton ignores the remark.

Later, she tells me, "It would be a good class if it weren't for about four people."

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Like generations of high school students before them, Eldorado students are keenly concerned about their social identities.

At Eldorado, you can be a "jock" or a "freak." The sprawling campus is bisected by generally accepted geographical divisions reflecting these categories.

As a jock, you take your station outside the entrance to the Media Center in the middle of campus, along what is commonly called Jock Wall.

As a freak, you gather on the south wall of the Vocational Building — Freak Wall.

The wall system of social division is ever-changing in detail. The "stomps," or "kickers" of a couple years ago — western dressers who chewed tobacco and listened to country music — have faded from their south campus territory. Other distinctions endure.

"What are you if you're not a jock or a freak?" I asked a young, Levis-clad security guard who had introduced me to the wall system.

"There are a lot of 'nothings,'" he told me. The "nothings" don't have a wall. They just float around.

The divisions are not taken lightly. "Some of them take it really seriously," the security guard said, "until they graduate, and then they're all friends." On campus it is easy to discern who's a jock or who's a freak.

Jocks — boys and girls alike — wear designer jeans or new "S01's" (button-up Levis). They sport button-down shirts, bandanas, Ocean Pacific jerseys and sweaters. If they are in the Golden

Eagle Marching Band, on the Cuadrilla drill team or on a sports squad, an orange-and-yellow Eagles jacket tops off the outfit.

Freaks are distinguishable by leather or denim jackets, faded jeans and rock T-shirts.

A sophomore girl, hovering between being an ex-freak and a newly accepted jock, described the Eldorado social scene as "real cliquish." She admitted that being friends with people across cliques was hard, but not impossible. Jocks try to keep the location of weekend beer parties a secret because they don't want freaks to show up, she said.

"Everyone in this place is a snob," is etched in a stall of a student restroom.

Two senior girls who each have lived in Albuquerque for three years told me they hate Eldorado because it is too cliquish and there is little to do. "Living in Albuquerque — it's like living in hell," one said. "There are some parties, but I really don't like parties. There's a lot of bull — that goes on there."

The strength of the cliques was apparent at the Graham Dance, a party at Graham Central Station sponsored by the EHS cheerleaders. Hundreds of students attended, nearly all dressed in slacks and sweaters. Some boys wore ties. But though the dance was supposed to be a school-wide event, a predominantly jock crowd attended.

Student restrooms are a good place to see a slice of social Eldorado in action.

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The bathroom door opens and I am confronted with a view of three girls, each with a cigarette in the left hand and a brush in the right hand, doing their hair.

On another morning, a girl in the Humanities Building restroom is using a battery-powered curling iron to touch up her bangs. She greets her friends with "Hi. My hair fell."

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One day a teacher dropped into the humanities building restroom to warn that the administration was cracking down on smoking and would raid the bathroom the next day. The following day there was no noticeable decrease in the number of smokers.

In vogue on the inside of girls' lockers are beefcake pinups. One girl has plastered her inside locker door with a collage of pictures of semi-nude men.

Notebooks are covered with the names and logos of rock groups, mostly "heavy metal" bands but also New Wave and punk groups. Youths spend entire class periods meticulously copying rock logos.

Students also have crafted their own impenetrable language.

For example, "Are you bummin', dude, man?" is a way of saying, "Aren't you feeling well?"

The end of a conversation overheard between two girls was even more perplexing:

"S—, man," one girl said.

"No kidding," her friend responded.

"I mean, no biggie," the other girl replied.

"Later," they said and parted.

Next week: A look at the reaction to the "Undercover Student" series.

School assembly energetic, racy

The excellence and the mischievousness of Eldorado's students were showcased at the 1983 drill-team pep rally held on a Thursday morning instead of class.

Eldorado's Golden Eagle Marching Band filled the gym with lively music as students trickled in.

There was no mention of the old-fashioned taboo against soiling the gym floor with street shoes. Boots casually scuffed across the wood.

Attendance at school assemblies is encouraged but not required, and the bleachers were filled mostly with "jocks" and ordinary students. A contingent of "freaks" ringed the upper bleachers. Many teachers were present.

Time for the 45-minute morning assembly had been carved out of the schedule by shaving five minutes off each regular class period and eliminating the daily silent reading time.

A junior girl opened the assembly by presenting corsages to the drill team advisers, and the team was introduced.

Then the 32 Eldorado "Cuadrilla" members snapped through their white-gloved routine to "On the Loose" by rock group Saga, and the visiting Sandia High School drill squad got a raucous hand for choosing a "heavy metal" Judas Priest song to kick to.

Both teams were dressed in short skirts, blouses

and vests, outfits they would wear to class for the rest of the day.

The music blared from a record player through scratchy speakers. Judas Priest was almost unintelligible.

But the real excitement in the gym was in anticipation of the "Desperados," a male kickline and pompon lampoon squad made up of the class president, sports stars and other "Big Men On Campus."

The boys entered dressed in makeup, short skirts and T-shirts covering massive water-balloon breasts.

They kicked, mugged and stripped to bare chests to the applause and catcalls of the audience. In the heat of the kickline activity, several balloon breasts jounced loose, tumbled down and did a jiggling roll before bursting on the wooden floor.

An on-looking assistant principal's smile faded as water splashed onto the floor and one boy lost his skirt, revealing black, string-bikini shorts that boasted a quilted, red heart on the crotch.

When the kickline returned for an encore, the popular heart had been covered up with less-racy gym shorts.

It was one of the better assemblies, students said later.