

Almost famous classmate comes out of retirement to work for Dr. Fauci

I’ve always been just a little envious of people who went to high school with somebody famous. Like the people who were in the same class in Brooklyn with Neil Diamond and Barbra Streisand. No matter how dull your adult life worked out you’d always be able to tell your bar buddies about how you and Neil and Barbra used to hang out together in the cafeteria, even if they didn’t know you existed.

That’s true with both good celebrity and bad celebrity. Like when Neil Armstrong died the TV types went to every house over in Wapakoneta until they found someone was in third grade with the First Man To Walk On The Moon. Same is true with classmates who do evil things and become famous for 15 minutes. I don’t recall it, but I’m fairly sure the same TV people went to every house in Milwaukee until they found some poor soul who went to grade school with Jeffrey Dahmer. Probably would have been tacky to discuss lunch with them, though.

I used to work with a

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guy who had been a classmate of ‘50s teenage heart-throb Bobby Vee out in Fargo, N.D. Actually, he had a pretty good story to tell. Bobby Vee was Robert Velline, who desperately wanted to be a rock ‘n roll star, but that was tough to do in those days in Fargo, which was a long way from anywhere.

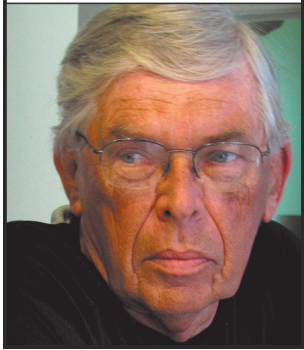
But stardom came to him instead. In February 1959, Buddy Holly and Richie Valens and the Big Bopper were all killed in a plane crash. You know: The day the music died. That fatal flight was bound from Mason City, Iowa, to Fargo. They, these idols of the Winter Dance Party, were to have performed in Fargo the next night. Tickets had

been sold, kids wanted to do something, so the promoter went in search of some local talent. Robert Velline stepped up and that night became Bobby Vee. He later had a bunch of hits; you could look it up.

But there was nobody in my class who was famous. Well, there was one guy who got his picture on the cover of Time magazine back in the ‘60s being arrested during a war protest, but that really doesn’t count. Not like a couple of young people my daughter knows who had gone to North Central High School in Indianapolis and were classmates of the singer known as Babyface. His name was – is—Kenneth Edmonds,

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A MOMENT
Ed Breen



but he built a solid career as Babyface.

I suppose that up in Hibbing, Minn., there are several old codgers now who mumble about their days in school with the Zimmerman kid, the one who went off to New York can became Bob Dylan.

Bottom line is everybody has to come from someplace, and I got a taste of that the other day when the alumni newsletter from my far-off high school arrived in the mail.

They know and care nothing of me, but they play the odds on the chances of getting a check or a few bucks in the will, maybe.

I flipped through it to see if anyone had died or if my generation was still producing grandchildren and I came to this headline: “Retired alum helps in the search for global vaccines.” Kevin Ryan is his name. Dr. Kevin Ryan, class of ’71. Didn’t know him, a full decade behind me.

But he’d trod those same halls I did all those years ago. Suffered through the same physics classes on that field out back, might have been in the same home room., which was 208. He’d gone on to the University of Michigan, earned a PhD in molecular and cellular biology and had spent his career working at the National Institutes of Health, specializing in seeking treatments and cures for AIDS patients.

He retired a couple of years ago, but had been recalled from retirement in the Age of COVID to go back to work with his old boss, Dr. Anthony

Fauci.

That’s the very same Dr. Fauci who has been in all our living rooms every night for six months, the man who is driving Donald Trump crazy because he insists on dealing with facts.

The high school alum editor had interviewed Dr. Ryan for recollections of his high school days, especially favorite teachers.

He named a chemistry and physics teacher who had been especially influential. And it smacked me in the face: She, this woman certainly dead many years now because she was ancient then, was the very same person who had given me a D – in chemistry and an F in physics, grades which I certainly did not deserve simply because I had not done the work.

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And this delusional thought: Same school, same teacher, and but for a few Ds and Fs here and there I might be seeking the cure for COVID. Or not.

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