



## WABASH COLLEGE

### *Class Agents Letter*

Alumni and Parent Relations

P.O. Box 352

Crawfordsville, IN 47933

Web site: [www.wabash.edu](http://www.wabash.edu)

Email us: [alumni@wabash.edu](mailto:alumni@wabash.edu)

Phone: (765) 361-6369

---

### Class of 1986

#### Class Agents

Tim Oakes

[tim.oakes2@gmail.com](mailto:tim.oakes2@gmail.com)

Eric Rowland

[ejrowland@gmail.com](mailto:ejrowland@gmail.com)

June 11, 2014

Dear Classmates of '86:

Greetings! I hope your summer is going much better than most of our winters have been here lately. Just a couple of notes and thoughts for you this time. I always find it entertaining where I think of Wabash and its influence on me. This story is one of those times.

First, I wanted to share a journey and revelation I had during my kids' Spring Break this year. It was just me and my two boys (ages 11 and 8) this year. My wife and the two girls (twins – 4) stayed home. I started piecing this trip together this year in January upon the realization that if I didn't go on Spring Break this year, I was going to have to shell out money anyway for someone to watch the kids. We've had a nanny for them at home for the past 10 years and so have never felt the need to go on a Spring Break.

So, I planned the trip: Springfield Illinois on Day 1 and 2, Carbondale Illinois on Day 3 (relatives and friends at the university there), Memphis for 2 days, then Nashville, then home. No video games were allowed in the car. Window time was given a premium. I also required the boys to do a report for me after each day. On one of the travel days, I was driving along that flat, deserted, barren (at least in March), part of the country known as the southern 4/5ths of Illinois and wondering what in the hell am I doing out here?

I was born in KY and raised in Indiana; so, there was a bit of Lincoln calling. I grew up on music from my folks radio and 8-track players – mainly country and bluegrass with a little bit of Elvis too. But why, I wondered, did I think this trip was such a good idea in the first place? Many folks take Spring Break trips with their kids every year. Many enjoy music, but why had I chosen this path for our Spring Break. The revelation quickly occurred to me.

Any trailer park Kentuckian can like music and be nearby Memphis and say, "Hey – let's go see Graceland!" But we were adding the Lincoln Museum in Springfield, Johnny Cash's childhood home on the Arkansas delta, Stax Records, the National Civil Rights Museum, Beale Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in Nashville, the Country Music Hall of Fame, Sun Records and the Gibson guitar factory. Why did this trip idea give

me such joy? Later the boys called it their 'best trip ever' (with the exception of Disney World). It occurred to me as I look out over that flat, deserted, barren (in March) godforsaken piece of land known as the lower 4/5ths of Illinois, that Wabash was the cause.

It was at Wabash wherein my intellectual curiosity had been peaked. It was there that subject matters outside of my comfort zone had been revealed to me and subsequently enjoyed and treasured by me. I did not take Art I or Music I, but I should have. Wabash gave me perhaps the greatest of all wisdom: how little we know and how much there is to learn and enjoy in this world, at this time. A smile came across my face and I hoped to recall all my thoughts when I got back and got near a keyboard. I failed, but the general idea is still there – how lucky we all were to have attended Wabash. A bigger smile came across my face as my oldest boy called out from the backseat, "Dad! Illinois is really flat!" Yes, it is son.

I had a second trip this spring (this is as rare in the Oakes household as a meteor hitting Manhattan at lunch hour by the way). Our second boy had his First Communion at our parish and we celebrate that in our household by pulling the kids out of school and taking them to a place of their choice (mainly their choice and our checkbook's choice). He chose Legoland. The checkbook chose the one in Chicago, not California.

No great Wabash epiphanies while in Chicago, but I did manage to reunite with Dan DeGryse. I had not seen Dan in quite some time, got his contact information from Tim Campbell, and took the family to the station house where Dan directed me. All I knew was that he was a fireman. Made sense – Dan's dad had been Chicago PD. When I asked for him at the station, I got that stare when the person has no idea who you just said. I repeated myself, now thinking my hungry family is going to be P-I-S-T now that they have been dragged here and dad has no idea what he is doing. Then, the fireman says, "Oh, you mean the Battalion Commander". No, I'm thinking, but perhaps he can understand my Hoosier accent better and tell me where to find Dan. "He will be back in a minute. He went on a run." Ok. Fine.

The firemen in the station now friendly up to me and the family and soon the kids are up and down the pole (thank god my wife stayed off of it), riding on the engine, walking the top of the engine and generally acting like they bought the place. Soon, one of those tricked out large SUVs with all the lights comes rolling in the station. "Here he comes" one of the guys shouts out. Out steps the Battalion Commander – Dan DeGryse.

I can report that fellow classmate DeGryse aka "Degeo" is doing well, very well. Here are a couple of stories on Dan from Chicago:

<http://www.nbcchicago.com/investigations/Firefighters-Address-Alarming-Suicide-Rates-258225891.html>

and

[http://www.laborassistanceprofessionals.com/index.cfm?zone=/unionactive/view\\_article.cfm&HomeID=397605](http://www.laborassistanceprofessionals.com/index.cfm?zone=/unionactive/view_article.cfm&HomeID=397605)

As you can see he is in better shape than he probably was at Wabash, and still has that old DeGo mischievousness. He came by the hotel later, picked me (when I came downstairs btw, there he was talking to a Depauw girl in the lobby – some things never change), and took me on a little tour. Similar to our time in Oxford together and our evenings and weekends at Wabash, I can't divulge what we did, said, or saw, but as always with DeGo, it was entertaining. Oh, and another thing, as I understand it, Battalion Commander means that DeGo is in charge of pretty much every fire station and crew in downtown Chicago. Wow! Truly some Wabash Little Giant!

Finally, I would add that it is that time of year again. It is your time to demonstrate what Wabash may have meant to you in your life and your relationships. You can give back to the college through different mediums.

Alumni can make gifts in three easy ways:

- a. Online at [www.wabash.edu/egift](http://www.wabash.edu/egift)
- b. By phone at 877-743-4545
- c. By mail to:

Wabash College

Annual Giving

PO Box 352

Crawfordsville, IN 47933

Ideally gifts should be made before June 30<sup>th</sup> to count in this fiscal year. Any gift is better than no gift at all as many grant programs look at the percentage of alumni contributing back to the college.

That is all for now. For my wife's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, we head off to Costa Rica soon. Looking at the pictures, the homes, the clothes on the children, and the roads, I may be getting transported back to 1950s Appalachia Kentucky. I should be right at home!

Yours in Wabash,

Tim Oakes

Oh....did I mention that the southern 4/5ths of Illinois is really flat and desolate?

And when the spell check on "Depauw girl" gives me options, do I hit "Ignore once" or do I hit "Ignore all"?