

LifeStyles

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Northern High School Alumni

Where Are They Now?



Dr. Christopher P. Nelson, M.D. - Retired Surgeon

By Steven M. Nesbit
Feature Writer/Dillsburg Banner

When writing your signature, how do you like to see your name appear? "It depends what I'm signing. If it is a script, it's really short - a C, a P, and Nelson. If I sign something more official, I have this way to spell Christopher. You kind of recognize the C, the T and maybe the R, then a big P and Nelson. It's doctor scritch-scratch."

Christopher was born on September 1, 1951 in Freeport, Long Island. His parents were Robert Paul Nelson and his mother, Lillian. They had four children. The oldest, sister, Carol Parvin, then Christopher Paul, followed by sister Claire Patrice and his younger brother Craig Peter. "We were all C.P.N.s," said Chris.

Freeport, Long Island was a nice suburb; it had a nice yard with green grass, and it was a safe place to play. "So, as a kid, I can remember playing in the yard," said Chris. "I remember taking my tricycle and going the whole way around the block with no mom around. We could go where we wanted to go. Even as a little guy, my older sister Carol would be the driver and I stood on back of tricycle. Once we went too far. From my mom's perspective, we were lost, so she called the Fire Dept. They found us about three blocks from home. We were kids just having fun."

Nelson went to ele-

mentary school in NY until seventh grade. Freeport was close to the ocean so he remembers spending a lot of time messing around the docks, "doing guy stuff." Chris has a friend whose father was in a dance band that played music from the "big band era." Chris recalls, "his dad had an old Gibson guitar. It was the early 60s. I was about 9 or 10. I learned how to play on his guitar. We played Beethoven songs together. It's those influences that guide us later in life." Probably, the most early influence was the water. "We were always in the water and at the beach. It was a nice safe area," he said.

Chris immediately jumped to present day and said, "I mentioned the safeness when I thought about raising my daughter. There was no way I would've let her of my sight when she was young. It was just a different time for us, quieter and much more peaceful times".

At home, his grandmother who lived with the family unfortunately passed away close to the time Chris was born. She was a piano teacher so there was a piano at home. "I grew up around music, and our generation grew up with the Beatles and the Stones. That's how I got into music," said Chris. "Today, I own about 8 different guitars."

In school, Chris will always remember the day JFK was shot. "I was in Long Island, and all the students were sent to the auditorium. It was only three grades, but 700-800 kids per grade; it was in



Playing 20 Questions with Chris Nelson - Class of '69

- 1. What was your first job?** Mowing the lawn for the neighborhood.
- 2. What was the lowest grade you every got on your report card?** In high school, a B in health because I didn't go out for track. In college, a B in physics.
- 3. Which superhero do you admire and why?** Batman. He doesn't have a super power; he uses his brain to outwit his enemy and has the ability create the technology to defeat the bad guy.
- 4. What's always in your refrigerator?** Orange juice.
- 5. What TV shows did you watch as a kid?** Have Gun Will Travel, Gunsmoke, Mighty Mouse
- 6. What's your idea of relaxation?** Playing guitar. I like play station. There's a game called Rocksmith, and you can plug your real guitar in it. You play along with songs and you work your way up starting as an amateur. I've worked my way up, and now I'm an International Headliner.

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the auditorium where the announcement was made."

So, how did a New Yorker end up in rural York county as a young teenager? It's probably no surprise that his father, who was working for Sperry Rand, a company that was a major military contractor for years in the mid 1960s, took a job with AMF here in York county. "It was some type of government military job, explained Chris, "and that's what got us here."

For a young teen who had been introduced to the beach, the Beatles and big cities, the move turned his world upside down. "My parents drove around and found an old farm in the middle of nowhere outside of Rossville," he said. Changing their family location was a huge adjustment, but the really big difference came in eighth grade when he was enrolled at Northern. "They dressed differently; they listened to different music," It was the classic clash of City vs. Country. "In math class, I noticed that the book was the same book I used the previous year." The same thing also happened in science, so Chris ended up a half grade ahead of his fellow classmates. He was being split between two classes. "Yes, the first year was definitely different. The ninth graders didn't want an eighth grader in their class," he said. He wasn't accustomed to the openness that people from this area demonstrated with each other. "You didn't see that "county kindness" in New York," he said, "it made it

hard for a shy guy like me to meet new people."

After that first year, things settled down and he settled in. "I learned how to ride a horse, and you can't do that in Long Island," Chris was quick to point out. Soon, he learned how to hunt, go camping and hiking. Every year his father would ask him what he wanted for his birthday. "I don't know," he would tell his dad. Money was tight at the time so he did without, but on his thirteenth birthday is father took him downtown on his birthday, and told him to wait in the car. His father came back with an electric guitar and a little amp. "That [gift] revived my music," said Chris, "Eventually, I got in a band, the 'Shades of Doubt', and I played in that band all through high school. We made pretty good money for the time, so I never had to get a job through high school. Although I did pick peaches

See Where are they now. 5C



Steven Spielberg to be keynote speaker for 149th anniversary of Gettysburg Address

By Jeffrey B. Roth
Staff Reporter/Dillsburg Banner

A little more than one week after his newest movie, "Lincoln," opens in theaters, producer-director Steven Spielberg will be the keynote speaker at the Dedication Day observation to commemorate the 149th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Spielberg will take the podium on the rostrum in the Soldier's National Cemetery on Nov. 19, following opening events. The day's events begin at 9:30 a.m., with the laying of a wreath at the Soldier's National Monument. The Dedication Day ceremony will begin at 10 a.m., said Tina Grim, chairperson for the event.

Actor Stephen Lang was last year's speaker. Other speakers have included Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Tom Ridge, John Hope Franklin, Shelby Foote, Adlai Stevenson, Carl Sandburg, Colin Powell, Jack Kemp, Richard Dreyfuss, Sam Donaldson, San-

dra Day O'Connor, Ken Burns and Tom Brokaw.

The film, "Lincoln," opens Nov. 9 at select theaters around the country. It is partly based on the book, "Lincoln," by Pulitzer Prize winner Tony Kushner, and on the Doris Kearns Goodwin biography, "Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln." Stars of the movie, which will focus on Lincoln's final months in office, include Daniel Day-Lewis, Sally Field, David Strathairn, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, James Spader, Hal Holbrook and Tommy Lee Jones.

"It is an honor to be asked to speak at such a hallowed place on the anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address," Spielberg said. "I look forward to visiting Pennsylvania and commemorating this important moment in our nation's history."

Spielberg is the top-grossing director of all time, having directed such blockbusters as "Jaws," "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial," the "Indiana Jones" franchise and "Jurassic

Park." He is a three-time Academy Award winner, receiving his first two Oscars for Best Director and Best Picture for "Schindler's List." His third Oscar was for Best Director for "Saving Private Ryan." He is also the recipient of the Irving G. Thalberg Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the DGA's Lifetime Achievement Award, the Hollywood Foreign Press's Cecil B. DeMille Award, Kennedy Center Honors and numerous other career tributes.

The upcoming release of the movie is one reason Spielberg was invited to speak at the observation, Grim said. Spielberg, she added, has visited Gettysburg several times while preparing to make the movie.

The Lincoln Fellowship has been commemorating Nov. 19 in Gettysburg since 1938. In 1946, it was officially declared Dedication Day by a joint

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Happy 101st Birthday!



Photos by Curt Werner/Dillsburg Banner

Wyoma Arlotto, who was born on Oct. 3, 1911, celebrated her 101st birthday at Elmcroft with fireworks, the one present she always wanted. The fireworks were set off in the driveway so her son, Bob, and residents of Elmcroft could all see the colorful display. Wyoma is sitting on the right wearing her birthday hat.

Seasonal Seasonings

Steven M. Nesbit
Staff Reporter/Dillsburg Banner



"BASEBALL, HOT DOGS, APPLE PIE AND..."

So, is our national pastime baseball or football? Last month, I provided some facts and philosophies that would support football being considered our national pastime. This month is October, and if you ask a sports enthusiast what's the number one sporting event in October, the definitive answer will be, "It's the World Series!"

Let's examine at the history behind the idea of a national pastime. Baseball was the most popular sport in America both before and after the Civil War. That was when the game of baseball was identified as our "National Pastime." By the late nineteenth century, baseball was widely recognized as the national sport of the United States.

In the mid-1850s, the baseball craze hit New York city. In 1856, local journalists were referring to baseball as the "national pastime" or the "national game." During the late 19th and early 20th centu-

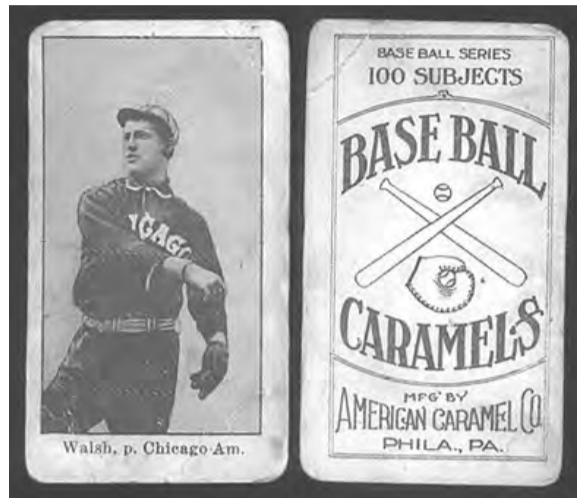


ry playing baseball was what kids did after school, on the weekends, and during the summer. There were no cars or no televisions to entertain young America. Playing baseball was what people did to pass the time.

For more than a century, baseball has made a huge impact on our popular culture. The first radio broadcasts in North America were of the 1922 World Series, and the baseball cap has become a fashion item of sort, not only in the United States, but also in countries where the sport itself is not particularly popular, such as the United Kingdom.

Baseball has inspired many works of art and entertainment. (So has football, but not near to the extent that baseball has.) One of the first examples

used in the media was newspaper journalist Ernest Thayer's poem "Casey at the Bat", when it appeared in 1888. Baseball movies surfaced in the 1940s, and later, Oscar nominees "The Natural" (1984) and "Field of



Dreams" Field of Dreams" (1989) were huge box office hits. Baseball hit the Broadway stage with "Damn Yankees" and country rock band Credence Clearwater Revival had a hit with John Fogerty's "Centerfield." The best comedic sketch of all-time, "Who's on First", made famous by Abbott and Costello in 1938, became an American icon noted Time magazine.

Baseball's literary contributions include W. P. Kinsella's "Shoeless Joe" (the source for the movie, "Field of Dreams"), and the 1970 release of major league pitcher Jim Bouton's tell-all book, "Ball Four," is considered a turning point in the reporting of professional sports.

Baseball has also inspired the creation of new cultural forms. Baseball cards were introduced in the late nineteenth century as trade cards. A typical example would feature an image of a baseball player on one side and advertising for a business on the other. In the early 1900s they were produced widely as promotional items by tobacco and candy companies. The 1930s saw the first version of the modern style of baseball cards, with a player photograph accompanied on the reverse with statistics and biographical data.

Modern fantasy sports began in 1980 with

the invention of Rotisserie League Baseball by New York writer Daniel Okrent and several friends. Today, participants in fantasy baseball leagues draft teams from the list of active Major League Baseball players

and play out an entire imaginary season with game outcomes based on the players' latest real-life statistics. Fantasy baseball quickly became a phenomenon. According to Wikipedia, in 2008, 29.9 million people in the United States and Canada were spending \$800 million on the hobby, and in 2010, 32 million participated, and "now, 3-4 billion dollars is the annual economic impact across the sports industry" thanks to fantasy sports. And that number was reported two years ago.

So, again, I ask, "What is our national pastime? Here's what I believe. Yes, football is the most popular sport in America today, but popularity does not entitle it to be declared our "national pastime." Since before the Civil War, baseball has influenced our culture far more than football. Baseball was as important to 20th century America as video games, computers, iPods, and smart phones are today in the 21st century.

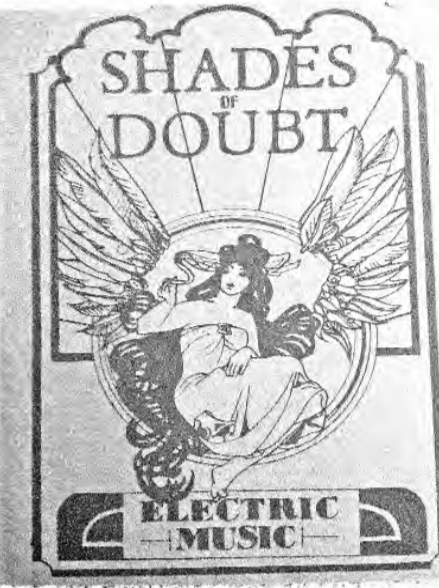
If we can agree to use the original definition of "national pastime" as I described at the beginning of this essay, I don't think football or baseball can be declared our national pastime. Our culture is now so technology gifted that "texting" may have become our "national pastime." As a sports fan, I believe I speak for all of us. I don't think we really care about which sport is our national pastime. Honestly, sports fans only care about one thing-- "What's the score?"

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one summer, ugh! We had a gig every Friday and Saturday. I put some money away for school and I bought some nice guitars back then."

Academically, like most high school students across America, he graduated without out really trying too hard. Reflecting on this time as a Polar Bear, Nelson mentioned a few faculty members specifically. The teacher who influenced him the most was Judith Kistler. "She had the ability to push me to do things I normally wouldn't do," he said, "I was pretty shy, yet she could get me to stand in front of an audience and deliver a speech." During his senior year, the forensics team performed the Spoon River Anthology, and Mrs. Kistler got him to play his guitar on stage. "That was the easy part, but she got me to sing two songs as well," Chris added. "She pushed students to go outside their comfort zone," he said. Under Mrs. Kistler's tutelage Nelson debated all four years for the forensics team with his sidekick classmate Charles Cook as his debate partner. Chris enjoyed Mr. Kistler and described him as "quite entertaining," and "If you wanted to get an A in health, with Coach Estright, you had to play a sport," so Chris decided to run for the track team.



In the classroom, Chris experienced a unique education opportunity because he was ahead of the school's curriculum in math. Mr. Swartz taught him calculus one-on-one his senior year. "I remember Mr. Swartz created an awkward situation for me when I was in eighth grade," Chris continued, "I'd get a 100% on his test, and he would announce to the entire class that "the eighth grader did better than all of you ninth graders." Eventually, the upper classmen got used to the eighth grader being in their classes. "Education is what you make it," says Dr. Christopher Nelson, "but you have to apply yourself. I believe Northern was a great place to go to high school, and I feel my experiences during that time were a major influence on who I am today." Chris was elected senior class president of the Class of 1969 and is "still proud of that."

After high school graduation, another life changing event awaited Chris. It was time for him to leave rural York county and head back to the big city. It was time to go to college in pursuit of the answer to the ultimate question: What do you want to be when you grow-up? For Chris, it was simple. He already knew the answer. He applied and was accepted to University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Leaving the parental nest and living away from home, is a rite of passage. Going off to college is always an exciting time for teens. For Christopher, the time was the late 60's and early 70s. The Vietnam war was going strong, and most college students were hippies with long hair and ponytails promoting the message of peace, love and happiness. Chris remembers, "Penn was perfect for me. It was the kind of place for people who were motivated. Professors didn't spoon feed you." He continues, "it was a wonderful campus with a wonderful group of professors. I was a biology major. Ever since seventh grade, I wanted to be a doctor." Nelson spent four years there, received his degree, and graduated with top honors. What came next? Medical school.

Four more years at Penn's Medical school. "It's really one of the best medical schools in the nation," he says, "It's a great place to learn, and I was proud to be accepted." Nelson explained how schools of that caliber can "open doors of opportunity" for graduates. After one year of classroom course work, the next three years students work in the hospital assigned to a resident. "It's an apprenticeship," says Chris. "You learn about the science of medicine. The program is rigorous and challenging, and all that it did was continually reinforce my desire to be a surgeon," he continues. "Interestingly, when you complete all of your rotations like internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics and cardiology you graduate with an M.D., but you can't do anything with that title of Medical Doctor until you do a residency."

Residency is selected by a computer matching program. "I ended up at the University of California in San Diego which was perfect because that's where I wanted to go." Chris explains, "I knew about the chief of general surgery there because he was trained at Penn, and I knew about his programs. That's what got me to the west coast." Residency is six years. Chris was 32 years old when he completed his academic work. When he went through his residency, they worked 120 to 140 hour weeks. With such a rigorous schedule, the residents ended up doing so many cases, and Chris didn't mind that at all. "That's how you

learn, and you have to learn somehow," says Chris, "You can read anything in a book, but in real life, it's hands-on experience that counts. Today, there's the 80 hour work rule, and residents have to have off one day a week and one full weekend day."

After residency, it's time to look for a job, and you do that, according to Nelson, by visiting different hospitals. So, during his last year in residency, he applied to a number of hospitals. He and Anita were married by then, and both were from the east coast. "San Diego was great," said Chris, "but we ended up in Portland, Oregon because there you can have a house with a yard, more like the east coast, and it's a great place to raise kids as well. To us, it just seemed like it was east coast living on the west coast. So, that's how I got to Portland." Dr. Nelson applied for a job, got the job and stayed there for his entire tenure. In spite of being from the east coast, the Nelson's haven't been back to York county very often.

Chris met his wife, Anita at Gifford Pinchot state park near Rossville. She was doing an internship and wanted to find work in Parks and Recreation, but at the time no jobs were available. Chris was working in the camping area assigning camping sites. Somehow they kept in touch after that summer. They married in 1977, and will be celebrating their 35th wedding anniversary this New Year's Eve! Their daughter AJ (nickname for Adrian Jovana) lives in the L.A. region and works for the University of California, Irvine, Department of Earth System Sciences. According to her dad, "She has a beau, not married, and no little AJ's at this time."

Dr. Nelson worked for NW Permanente (NWP), a large multispecialty group, affiliated with the Northwest region of Kaiser Permanente. His main hospital was Kaiser Sunnyside Medical Center.

Did being a doctor interfere with his families social life? "Big time!" he said. Chris told his wife to go ahead and make any plans she wanted to. He told her, "If I happen to be at home, I'll be with you, but if I'm not home, you're on your own". He said they had to make that deal or otherwise she'd be pulling out her hair waiting for him, and I'd be thinking about having to get home when he really should be thinking about what he was doing. "I was on call once every seven or eight nights, and she knew that night I was unavailable. Of course, she also knew what kind of doctor I was; if one of my patients had trouble at night, I was going to be in there to help."

Dr. Christopher P. Nelson M.D. just recently retired after 30 years of doing surgery. Chris was a general surgeon, not a brain surgeon like many people in the area believed. He said, "I never wanted to be a brain surgeon. I have no idea how that rumor got started." He, also, pointed out that, "general surgeons never got a name for themselves; the orthopods work with bones, and nephrologists deal with the kidneys. I always wanted to be a general surgeon. I did sub-specialize in what they call endocrine surgery--thyroid and parathyroid, as well as major pancreatic surgery."

Devoting his life's work to being a surgeon was such a rewarding and satisfying career, but it also came with frustration, and at times extreme frustration. Nelson said the frustration lies not with the career itself, but with the patients. "It's not being able to take care of them--not being able to fix them. That's the most frustrating. You walk in thinking you're going to help someone, and you find all kinds of stuff they're riddled with; then you have to tell the family, and then you have to tell the patient. The toughest part of job is when you are taking care of a patient and you really want to make them better, but there are times when you just can't," he said, holding back a tear.

We're hearing a lot from Washington about health care in America. From HMO's to Medicare and Medicaid, citizens find it hard to comprehend our current health system, and many find it even harder to understand the changes that politicians are promoting. Chris revealed a philosophy of his. Here it is: "I was part of a group. I received a salary. I really think that this is the way we should practice medicine in this country - where I don't have an incentive, other than my desire to make my patient well and to take care of him. Whether my kid goes to this college, or whether we have a swimming pool or a big house or a little house has nothing to do with my care for the patient. I sit him down and tell him what I think he needs, and what would be best for him; and then we go from there. Together we decide. There is no third party involved. This type of practice is so common, and it has been going on for decades. I saw this occurring when I was a resident, and I decided a long time ago that I wanted my patients and I to come up with the treatment plan without being biased by incentives or outside agencies."

During Nelson's career, he was elected to the Board of Directors of NWP for about fifteen years, and then he chaired the Board for three or four years. "There's a part of me that loved being on the administrative staff. I enjoyed being a leader; I liked being involved with the overall direction of the medical group as well as Kaiser Permanente, helping to shape the future. I don't know where that came from either. Maybe, it was my dad's business influence on me. My dad was a major influence on who I am."

Playing twenty questions Continued from 1C

- 7. What are you not good at?** Tolerating people that don't care to do a good job.
- 8. How social media savvy are you?** I use email. That's it. No twitter, facebook or blogging.
- 9. A quote to remember?** My dad used to tell me this my entire life. "You are only as big as the things you let bother you." When I was 6 years old I thought, "What the hell is he talking about?"
- 10. What talent would you like to have?** To be able to play the piano.
- 11. Other than your parents, who influenced you the most?** My wife, Anita. She's my opposite, yet we're a lot alike. We're both Virgos. I always play in the gray, and she's a black or white person. Sometimes you just need a black and white person to slap you a little bit.
- 12. A childhood memory?** When I was little, I used to go to the beach every morning with my dad. He would swim in the ocean before work. That was his exercise.
- 13. What makes you angry?** Dishonesty and flat out laziness.
- 14. Who's your favorite musician?** I've always appreciated Bob Dylan; through all the years, he's been in the background of my life.
- 15. How do you get on your good side?** Everybody is on my good side as long as they are always honest.
- 16. Three words to describe you?** Caring, emotional, intelligent.
- 17. What makes you cry?** When I hear the national anthem. I'm a sentimental fool. I got teary-eyed when the Olympic girls won the gold.
- 18. What cause do you whole heartedly support?** The National MS Society and the Wounded Warrior Project
- 19. How'd you like to be remembered?** I don't know. When I retired people were sad to see me go. How about? A good person, treated people well, a damn good friend, always helpful.
- 20. How will your tombstone read?** Ya did good!