

ARTICLE · CULTURA & SAÚDE

The Last of the Mohicans

A freshman's account of starting at the Escola Paulista de Medicina

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ABSTRACT

The author, a freshman at the Escola Paulista de Medicina, gives a first-person account of his impressions on beginning medical school. He opens by reflecting on how hard the great decisions of adolescence are, such as choosing a course and a school for the entrance exam, and on the emotional pressure involved. He explains that he chose medicine out of personal interest and strong family influence, since everyone at home is a physician, and he takes pride in studying at the same school where his late grandfather graduated in 1940. He describes the senior students' warm welcome, the early lectures on the institution's history, and the difficulty of getting to know his 113 classmates, who come from varied backgrounds. He also recounts the tradition of the mohawk haircut and the nickname "Indians" given to the students in sports competitions.

KEYWORDS: *escola paulista de medicina; freshman; entrance exam; hazing; mohawk; medical training*

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The most difficult phases in an adolescent's life are those that involve great decisions, ones made harder by inexperience and immaturity. Take the university entrance exam, in which the young person must choose not only a course but also a school, a choice that depends on his performance in the tests. One does not always get into the desired school, even after studying enough; the emotional pressure is very strong, and even bad luck, such as missing the bus, having a stomachache, running a fever, or going to the wrong exam site, can cost the candidate a year of his life studying for a second chance, or even make him change his choice of course or school.

I chose medicine for many reasons; I always had a special interest in the field. I have great respect for the profession. Family influence was, without a doubt, crucial to my decision. At home, no one was original: everyone is a physician, yet they somehow managed to show their individual passion for the profession.

I was never drawn to any school in particular; nonetheless, the history, the location, and the standing within the medical community certainly had their influence. Getting

into the Escola Paulista de Medicina was a great satisfaction to me, for I would be attending the same school where my late grandfather, Gabriel Antonio Galvanse Amato, graduated in 1940, in the third class!

Besides a warm welcome from the senior students, in the first week we had the chance to get to know our school better, especially its history, through a few lectures. Learning that it is the fruit of the union and dedication of students and professors awakens an even greater respect and pride! The first days as a freshman are unforgettable; even after being introduced to the school, it is almost impossible to know exactly which class there will be, at what time, and where. Even using the calendar, it is hard to find the rooms, and only little by little do you get used to it.

In a class of 113 students, it was difficult to get to know everyone, and to this day I still barely know some of them! It is interesting to learn where they come from and why they chose the school. Many are from the interior of São Paulo, from the state capital itself, from other states such as Mato Grosso do Sul, Santa Catarina, Goiás, and Alagoas, and two came from Africa.

It was complicated in the first days to identify our classmates, since all the men had their hair shaved into a mohawk, following the school's tradition, though some were extremely stylized! It was fun to see red mohawks in the street, but also very useful, since you could find out where class was simply by following them, though sometimes it went wrong!

At the freshmen's launch party and at the "intercaloured" in Atibaia, vanity reached its peak. Everyone

trimmed and touched up their mohawks so they could dye them red. Ill-informed people might have called us punks, madmen, or rebels, but the other schools knew they should call us "Indians"! No one could tell me the true story behind the nickname; some say we were so named for playing in the sports competitions like warriors, savages, Indians... and the insult became a compliment! All I know is that we fight for what we want!