

Pride is something that many people think negatively about. Too much pride in one's self worth can be disastrous but Mr. Webster defines one meaning of pride as being a "person or object one is proud of." That specific meaning is the positive version of pride and I think most of our small community has that sense of pride for our recent state qualifying basketball team!

Yes, your Miller Grove News columnist made the rigorous four-and-a-half hour journey to Austin to watch our Fighting Hornets play in the state tournament. How could I miss it? I have known these young men for most of their lives and wanted to support them, win or lose. I was pretty excited to get to have the opportunity to be on-hand with so many other faithful fans and friends as history was made. The Hornets were finally propelled into a position that has never been held by a male basketball team from our high school. The only teams throughout the years to excel to a state playoff game was the girls basketball team of 1937-1938 (they also competed in the National Tournament in Kansas) and the Lady Hornets team of 1945-1946. These teams played before girls basketball was a UIL-sanctioned event. The first UIL state tournament for female players was held in 1950-1951.

As I meandered through the Frank Erwin Center, where the game was to be held Friday night, it felt so surreal. The Hornets had made it to the big town of Austin! Excitement was in the air as the Miller Grove folks tried to find their seating before the beginning of the game. Most of the Grove had seats together which had been arranged by the school. Community members, alumni, faculty and onlookers had filled the seats reserved for MG. As you looked across the crowd, you could see a mass of green and gold shirts there to support our team. We had so many fans on hand for the event. Smiling faces peppered the section of seating we were in. Everyone was ready for a great ballgame.

To add to the excitement, the game was supposed to be shown live via the Internet. I know many home folks were watching back in Hopkins County while others were listening by radio. There is no way to tell the number of Hornet fans that listened and watched our team that night. I'm sure if we knew the exact number we would be speechless.

The game began at 7 p.m. with the singing of the National Anthem and presentation by the Color Guard. From the moment the jump ball was tossed into the air by the referee, the crowd was enthralled in the game. Our Hornets were playing against Laneville High School, which they had played earlier in the year and lost to by a mere seven points. This was predicted to be a nail-biting game and all predictions were accurate by my account. As far as season records, Laneville won 32 games and lost six while Miller Grove had won 27 games and lost nine (these

number include scrimmage games).

At the end of the first quarter, Laneville was leading by four points (14-10). Within about one minute, we had scored an additional four points to tie the game. Cheers exploded as the buzzer sounded ending the first half of the game. The score was Laneville 24, Miller Grove 27! We were putting the sting on our opponents. We were still winning at the beginning of the fourth quarter, amid several turnovers and missed free throws. With seconds left on the clock the game was tied — 54 to 54. Would we go into overtime? I know that was the thought that ran through everyone's mind. "Lets go Hornets, lets go!" was the cheer coming from the stands during a time-out. During the crucial last seconds of the game Laneville was fouled and made one of their two free throw shots. They had advanced by one point with only nine-tenths of a second left on the clock. Suddenly the final buzzer sounded and the score on the scoreboard was Laneville 55, Miller Grove 54.

Most of the time, if you don't win a basketball game fans begin to meander off from the stands. No one really says much and everyone tries to forget the loss. Not so at the ending of this match. Even though winning was just two points from our grasp, the fans still rose to their feet and cheered and applauded as if Miller Grove had won the entire state tournament. Everyone was so excited and proud that our school was so well represented that it didn't matter that we were not the victors ... we had accomplished something that had not been accomplished before. Miller Grove was put on the map by some of the best sportsmen that I have watched play the game of basketball.

After the ending of the game Superintendent Steve Johnson and Principal Kim Irby walked on court to bestow the official UIL medals to each of our players for making it to the state tournament. Well done Hornets, you have united a community and a school and accomplished so much during the special journey! You have made everyone proud!

It was nice to visit with Sue (Taylor) Loftin for a few minutes Sunday. We were both eating at Pizza Inn after church.

I was also able to see my little nephew, Owen, Sunday afternoon. He is already growing and is such a good baby. He doesn't cry very much and always seems so content.

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Written by By BRANDON DARROW, brd_2@hotmail.com
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Happy birthday this week to Billy Paul Wright on March 9; William Watson on March 10; Caryn Darrow, Terry Tate and Retha (Waskom) Heath on March 11; Johnny Ferguson, Jordan Lennon and Lindsey (Watson) Cipoletta on March 12; and to my brother, Bradley Darrow, and Peggy (Burns) Rohrer on Mar. 14.

Happy belated 12th anniversary to Heath and Sheena (Petty) McCraw on Mar. 9.

As you travel the highways and byways don't forget that all roads lead back home and back to Miller Grove. Please send me any newsworthy information. My email address is

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