

A Toast: To Two Departed Ladies

The first: Johannah

She was *mo mhúinteoir* (Irish language teacher). Battled cancer for quite some time – being a smoker didn't help. Lass from Co. Tipperary (from which county my granddad also hailed). When I last spoke with her (mid 2021), she told me she was terminal and probably wouldn't be around much longer. I got the news of her passing literally as I was looking at the envelope for the Christmas card I was about to send her.

Funny Irish story: I made the mistake of saying in class – exactly once – *Is Éireannach mé.* “OH NO YOU'RE NOT!” she immediately replied. “I don't care what sort of paper you have in your pocket” (meaning my Irish passport). She explained that she would always be “that girl from Tipperary” even though she had been a naturalized American citizen for many years, and likewise I'd always be a Yank. “*Is Meiriceánach tú.*”

To Johannah:



(cuz that was me in class).

The second: Ginny (Virginia)

She was our grammar school PE teacher. As you might imagine, PE was NOT my favorite subject. At all. Being both a clumsy Aspie (which we didn't know about) with crappy lungs (allergies, asthma, alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency – which we also didn't know about) didn't help. Natural athlete I'm not. But she had a tremendous amount of patience with me and kept encouraging me to try things to stay active. That led to me becoming a martial arts student, first Hapkido then later (freestyle/folkstyle) wrestling (which I sucked at), then Jeet Kune Do and MMA-style submission grappling (which I wasn't terrible at), then the Filipino arts. And going to the gym. And my two-wheeled contraptions in the woods. Were that not to have occurred and I stayed on the path I was on (chubby kid), there's a pretty good chance I wouldn't be here now.

The land manager at Rockhouse is also a high school teacher and I had asked about her – she had already retired years earlier. I was hoping to connect with her, just to say thanks and show her the back window of my truck – she'd have gotten a kick out of it:

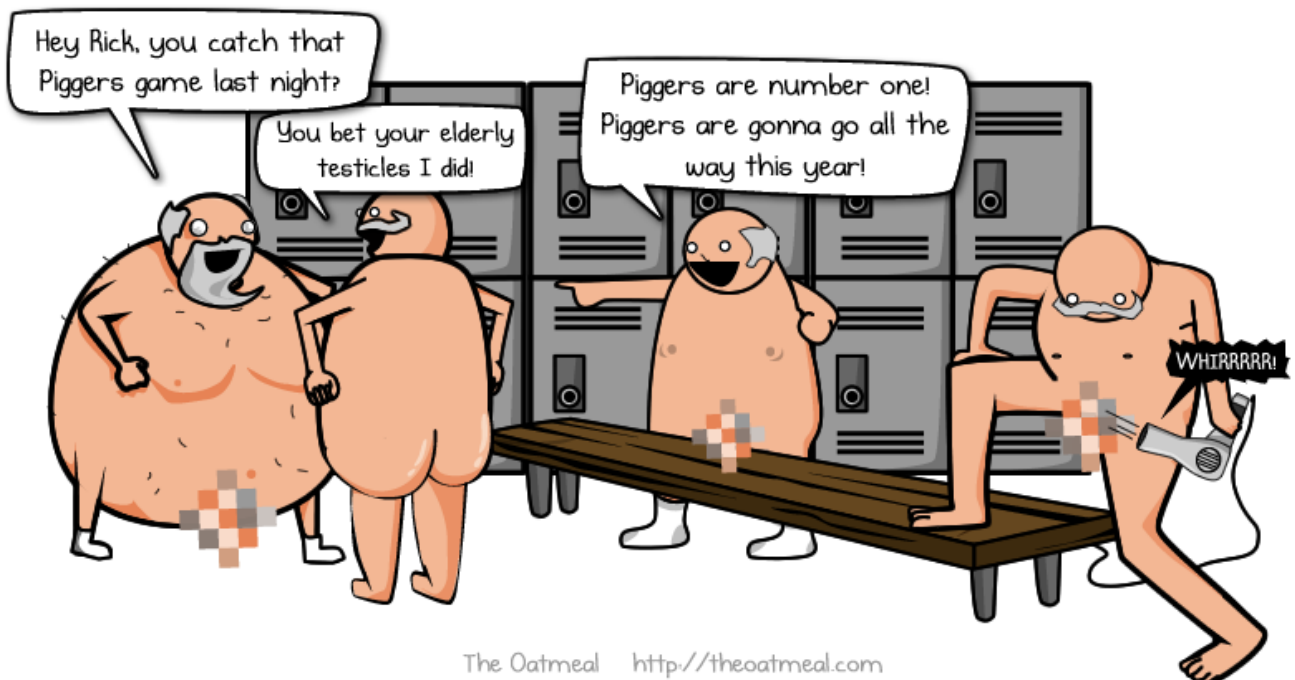


To Ginny:

Young men in the locker room



Old men in the locker room



The Oatmeal <http://theoatmeal.com>

(just cuz I made it to old – still not a Piggers fan).