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Introduction to Journalism

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Feuds and rivalries are as old as time itself. Some are large and some are small, but they all take place between people of differing views. We have all been in these kinds of situations; no one is immune.

You don't have to travel far and wide to find these feuds: there is one in our own backyard. The rivalry between Houghton and Hancock has existed for decades, though little more than 500 feet of water separate us.

After years of elementary, middle and high school, the rivalry becomes inbred, and, in some cases, that inbreeding occurs at an even younger age when previous generations are made privy to the rivalry. And the feelings of rivalry don't go away upon graduation. Those who decide to stay in the area still feel the rivalry because they are still so close to it, but even those who leave still feel it, especially when they make return visits.

Houghton and Hancock residents pit the schools against one another, especially when it comes to sports. Each year, the two schools celebrate Copper Bowl (basically your classic Homecoming celebration of football) and Wing Ding (a celebration of hockey). Both schools get fired up for these events. And it has become tradition for them to burn each other's mascots.

They also have specific cheers taunting one another. For example, Houghton fans often cheer, “What do we eat? What do we eat? Dog Meat! Dog Meat!” referring to Hancock’s mascot the Bulldog.

Barbara Amato, a 1985 Houghton graduate, says, “I remember having ill feelings toward Hancock since elementary school, though no one ever did anything wrong to me or injured me.” She doesn’t understand how the rivalry affected her so strongly because her parents were both graduates of Hancock. She says that she doesn’t have any problems with anyone from Hancock; it’s just the spirit of it. Ironically, Amato found love with a Hancock graduate, her husband of ten years, Mike Amato.

Amato admits that the rivalry is still strong within her. This past summer, she attended her husband’s high school reunion with him, and she said that there was still a lot of strong feelings and that she found herself in a few heated debates.

Rebecca Vollrath, a 2009 Houghton graduate, says that the rivalry is still very much alive, but she doesn’t look at it as something negative. She said, “I feel like we were born into it by starting at one school or the other and it was just engrained into us that we had to be loyal to our school and hate the other. I think it’s taught me what loyalty is. Houghton may have lost the Copper Bowl game but I still loved my school and had this undying faith that one day Houghton would regain the Copper Bowl. Loyalty, I think, is a vital part of human life.” When asked if she still feels the rivalry now, after graduation, Vollrath said, “I still do of course. I went to the Copper Bowl this game to cheer on my little brother and although we lost I could never lose that loyalty to Houghton High.”