

At the Farrah Fawcett Wing of the Smithsonian

by Con Chapman

Farrah Fawcett's red bathing suit and a poster bearing her image have been donated to the Smithsonian.

The Boston Herald



As I herded my class of seventh-grade boys from Ryan O'Neal Consolidated Middle School up the steps of the Smithsonian Institution, I had to catch myself more than once, the wave of emotions that swept over me was so strong.

"This isn't like the Lincoln Memorial," I had said to the kids the day before. "That's just a boring statue of a guy sitting in a chair who made a lot of people mad by giving away free slaves, then got shot at a theatre. Tomorrow's trip will be about the woman who launched America into the Curling Iron Age, with side bangs that flipped up higher than any manned space craft the Russians ever launched."

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With sufficient Dippity-Do, no helmet is required.

My little guys had soaked it all in; they're good kids, just—*so* ignorant of American history! It makes me wonder what the hell their sixth-grade history teacher, Rose Alba Quince, had taught them last year. Goldie Hawn? Connie Stevens as Cricket Blake in Hawaiian Eye? I tell you, it's the decline of standards in American education that has allowed back-lot nations like Japan and Singapore to vault past us in mastery of TV starlets.

Connie Stevens: Go, girl, go!

No, I wanted my kids to understand where the hair styles of the girls they'd be dancing with at this Friday's sock-hop came from. How America had progressed from the uptight tresses of Hester Prynne, to the demure bun of Emily Dickinson, to the pageboy, to the bee-hive, then ultimately the heavenly tresses of Farrah, like the wings of a cherubim, in *Charlie's Angels*. Don't tell *me* you can't make history exciting!



Emily Dickinson: Bo-ring.

I was already planning the study materials and exam I would give them the day after to gauge their mastery of what they would see. Sample question: In the famous poster of Farrah that sold over *12 million copies*, which nipple is standing at attention through her bathing suit: (a) left, (b) right, (c) other, (d) none of the above. I know, I know—people say that “high-stakes” exams force teachers to “teach to the test,” but dammit—this stuff is important!



Kate Jackson: Compare and contrast—show your work.

I hope some of my students will go on to advanced studies in Charlie's Angelsology, maybe write a master's thesis like "Kate Jackson: Third Wheel or Brunette Glue That Held the Angels Together?" Or how about "Jaclyn Smith: What Happened to the Other Letters in Her First Name?" These are important questions, people!



Jaclyn Smith

What's that, Timmy? Who are Kate Jackson and Jaclyn Smith? Oh-my-God! Do you mean to tell me that you think *Charlie's Angels* was just a movie with Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore and Lucy Liu? Good Lord—it is just so sad to me when kids grow up ignorant of the past, not knowing our nation's treasured heritage.

Did you know that Farrah *styled her own hair* for her iconic 1976 poster? That she applied her makeup *without using a mirror*? Or that her blonde highlights *were further heightened by a squeeze of lemon juice*? No? These are the sacrifices our forestarlets made for us!

I can't believe it—it just breaks my heart.

Let's go—everybody into the museum—now! And I want you to march straight to the Smithsonian Gift Shop. I may have to reach down deep into my own pocket—that's what budget cuts mean for underpaid teachers like me—but I'm going to make sure each and every one of you leaves here today with a poster of your own!

