

Carroll County Times

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MARYLAND

North Carroll High School alum makes music video for yearbook-inspired song in closed alma mater

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Tod Lippy strolled the halls of North Carroll High School for the first time since graduating in 1981. He walked around the gym, visited old classrooms and stood on the stage in the auditorium while mouthing the lyrics of a song.

It was to film a music video for “Ambitions,” a song he wrote that was inspired by his old stomping ground, classmates and senior yearbook. The video officially premiered last Friday.



The idea for the song came about in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when most people were staying home. Lippy, who now lives in New York, decided to go through his old yearbook and was struck by the “ambitions” section. Each senior could share a funny expression, what sport they played and what school activities they were involved in. At the bottom, they stated what they wanted to do in the future.

“I was struck by the pathos of being 18 and asked to predict what your life is going to be,” he said.

Lippy said his was to further his education, an ambition he called boring but did come to fruition since he went to college and grad school. While some ambitions were to live a long and healthy life and to live one day at a time, according to the lyrics, other ambitions were to be a therapist, cosmetologist and veterinarian. Lippy said he googled some of his former classmates to see what they become.

“It was nice that so many people ... ended up being just that,” he said.



Tod Lippy, a 1981 graduate of North Carroll High School, filmed a music video for his song, "Ambitions," inside the now closed school building. (Tina Barney, Kasmin Gallery)

And he quoted almost all of those ambitions word for word in his song, with changes to a line or two, he said. One of the ambitions he quoted in his lyrics was from a student who said he wanted to give his girlfriend at the time a better life. Now the two are married with children. He added another classmate was a decorated Navy officer.

Lippy added it was sad to discover some of those seniors did not achieve their goals or have since died.

North Carroll High closed its doors in 2016 amid a systemwide declining enrollment period, along with Charles Carroll Elementary and New Windsor Middle.

The Board of Carroll County Commissioners voted in December to accept a contract to sell the former North Carroll High School facility to Chesapeake Real Estate Group LLC, which plans to turn the property into a multipurpose sports complex featuring artificial playing surfaces for community use.

Carroll County Sheriff's Office now uses part of the facility.

Lippy recently discovered his alma mater's closure and thought it'd be amazing to shoot his music video there, the first one he's ever done.

"It just seemed like a really perfect context for the song," he said.

Greg Harris of Ruxton took a trip down memory lane when he watched the music video. The 1979 North Carroll grad said he was sad to hear of the school's closing and that it held a lot of great memories. However, he noted "a building is just a building" and what matters are the memories.



Lippy, a 1981 North Carroll High School grad, filmed a music video inside the now closed high school. (Screengrab)

Harris, a childhood and current friend of Lippy, said it was clever and innovative of Lippy to take something like a yearbook and to create a piece of art.

"When you're a senior and your about to enter into the world ... you have a very limited outlook on how the rest of your life is going to be," he said.

Harris added one can look back on his or her ambition and think "Wow, I should have set my sights a little higher."

He said he does not remember what his ambition was, but believes it was to go into political science "and I did not even get close to that." He did, however, enter marketing and public relations.

Lippy said the county government office and Chesapeake Real Estate allowed him to film inside. He said he spent the entire day, 12 hours, inside the school.

He said being inside the school was an intense experience. He'd walk by a classroom and remember that's where his homeroom was or walk by the cafeteria and remember eating a Salisbury steak during lunch.



Tod Lippy, a 1981 North Carroll High School grad, filmed a music video inside the now closed high school. (Screengrab)

"We literally covered every square inch available," he said, adding later they came back for reshoots.

He also noticed his dad's name, T. Edward Lippy, on a plaque near the entrance. He was a former president of Carroll County's Board of Education.

"He was fascinated by the whole idea of this," Lippy said of his dad.

Lippy said he'd describe himself as an alternative singer/songwriter with an eclectic taste and a strong interest in indie rock. When Lippy was making his second album, "Yearbook," he said a producer helped him with the arranging and mixing. His music became "more sophisticated."

He used to make music on his own, Lippy said, for three or four years during his spare time. His single, "Good Start" was selected for KCRW's, a radio station in Los Angeles, as "Today's top tune."



Tod Lippy, a 1981 North Carroll High School grad, filmed a music video inside the now closed high school. (Screengrab)