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What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.
- Pericles

A former student once came and asked me to perform his wedding ceremony. “Why Me?” I asked.

“It is because of a story you once told in class which I never forgot. It was about a father and son realizing their dream of going to a circus for which they had saved their money during the year. As they joined the line for the ticket office, they could not help but be caught up in the enthusiasm of a large, rather poor family in front of them who were looking forward with excitement to the circus. Gradually they came closer to the ticket office. When the family in front of them arrived at the ticket office and asked the price of the tickets, it quickly became evident that they did not have sufficient money to pay for the tickets. Suddenly our hero noticed his father doing something unusual. He shouldered the father in front of him and then pointed to $100 lying on the ground. ‘I think you dropped something,’ he said. The other father recognized what he was doing and thanked him profusely with tears in his eyes. The young man often recalled the moment. ‘We did not get to the circus that evening, but my father left me an example which I never forgot.’”

I like the popular story of Jesus returning to Heaven after the Resurrection. On the way, he meets an Archangel who questions him about how things went. Jesus gives an account of his life, passion, death and resurrection. And then to the question about future plans, he replies, “I picked twelve ordinary men, and unfortunately one of them let me down.”

“What if they all let you down?”
“I am relying on them,” was the confident answer.
“And what about plan B?”
It was the same answer. “I am relying on them.”

Such is a reflection which I frequently use at the beginning of my undergraduate course. But I often learn from them also. I cannot forget, for example, the time my students insisted that I omitted three ‘l’s. “And what were those,” I asked?

“To laugh, to lose and the Lord,” they kindly replied!
Different Perspectives
Jessica Allen

In Edgar Allen Poe’s, “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the narrator is what most people would call insane. He kills a man for no legitimate reason. He then tries to cover it up, but in the end guilt becomes so unbearable that he starts foaming at the mouth, destroying things, and ranting like a mad man. Some people believe that Poe himself was insane. Despite Poe's posthumous reputation, he was a shrewd business man and a literary critic who was just able to write “insane” well. Poe creates a narrator that displays obsession, hallucinations, violent behaviors, and paranoia. All of these characteristics are consistent with that of an insane man's.

The narrator has never had any problems with his victim before, in fact, his victim has provided him with a place to live and takes care of him. The narrator says, “Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. I made up my mind to take the life of the old man.” The narrator is so obsessed over little imperfections, that he is unable to see the bigger picture in life.

When the narrator is talking about the old man's heart beat he states, “The sound would be heard by a neighbor.” This shows how the narrator actually begins to hallucinate and hear things that are not there. He is actually anticipating the old man's death so much that he hears what he wants to hear. He states that, “With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room.” He thinks a heart beat can be heard and a loud yell cannot? This is not only displaying crazy behavior, but an unstable mentality.

After the police are satisfied, the narrator invites the police in the exact room he committed the murder in. He even sets his own chair above where the body is supposed to be contained. The narrator becomes exceedingly on edge, and “[he] foamed-[he] raved-[he] swore! [He] swung the chair upon which [he] had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards.” His violent behaviors definitely should set off warnings flags to the police. A sane person does not act in the irrational state of behavior.

To show the narrator's increasing paranoia he shouts at the police, “Villains! [he] shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!-tear up the planks!-here, here!- it is the beating of his hideous heart!” When in reality, the police were not mocking him as he suspected, but were simply talking among each other. This proves the narrator's intense madness building within himself and the increasing paranoia.

As the aforementioned facts state, it really does depend on the perspective a person has on something. Just because things may appear one way to somebody does not mean they will appear the exact same way to someone else. Never make assumptions, and never think that things are always black and white. Sometimes the grey areas need to be looked at more closely to completely understand the entirety of the situation.

Life Lesson In Disguise
Gabrielle Archangelo

The summer before my sophomore year in high school I decided it was time to get a summer job. After looking around at different places I came across a job that called to be a camp counselor at a community center in center city Wilmington. Only after my interview did I know what I was getting myself into. The day camp consisted of sixty inner-city kids from ages six to thirteen. The camp provided a chance for kids to get away from the hardships they faced at home; a chance for them to act their age and forget about the difficulties of their lives.

At first, I have to admit I was reluctant to work with the kids knowing I would get torn up by their comments and foreign attitudes did not seem like a good time. The staff members at the camp also had a big impression on my perspective of them. Picture this, a young quiet Italian girl intermixing with a staff of Latin Americans and African Americans. While most of the guys dressed in jean shorts down to their ankles and long white t-shirts well past their hips with a nice gold chain to match, while the girls wore skin tight Baby Phat jeans and South Pole shirts. I figured they were no good, skipping class kind of crowd. As soon as I stepped in on the first day I could feel the not so friendly stares in my direction. This was going to be an interesting couple months I thought to myself. Not only are the kids tough and too outspoken but the staff thought I was this foreign individual who didn't seem too exciting.

I was an assistant counselor to a group of ten kids from ages twelve to thirteen, needless to say, the boys acted as tough as can be and the girls were almost the same. At first the kids seemed reluctant to talk to the “new girl,” however as the weeks pressed on
they opened up more and more which was cool to see. As the weeks pressed on I started to feel less out of place, I got to know more of the staff every day and they did not seem as intriguing as I once thought. I was from a completely different background compared to them, however as time increased I didn't seem to notice that fact as much. It was interesting to hear stories about their lives, even the not so good parts.

Overall, not only did I teach the kids about my culture and background I also learned so much based on what the kids and camp staff shared. I learned about the difference between long held stereotypes and reality. So many people judge one another based on physical appearance, therefore not giving a chance to get to know someone who may change your views on life. Not only did I have a great experience, I also learned an eye opening life lesson about stereotypes. Judging individuals negatively before you get to know them simply based on their physical appearance is not a smart habit to sustain in future situations when meeting different people for the first time.

Tell Tale Heart
Policeman’s Log
John Blassingame

I was sitting at my desk on an ordinary night at the office when the phone rang. My shoulders almost leaped from their sockets and my eyes bulged to my deputy's amusement. This is a small town and we don’t normally get calls past midnight because there is never any serious trouble. I reluctantly answered the phone and Miss Agnes voice frightfully greeted me. Miss Agnes is an old widow who always calls into the department for any minor inconvenience such as “weird noises” coming from within or around her house. However, she usually limits the hours that's she calls to 11:30 at the latest because she takes her medicine around ten so she is fast asleep. At first I tried to calm her nerves and reassure her that there was nothing to be afraid of, but this time there was an eerie tone in her voice that had never been there before.

She began to explain the horrible howl she heard coming from her neighbors home. I told her that I would go over to the house and make sure that everything was okay. My deputy and I made our way to our vehicle and drove to the house in question. I have been the sheriff here for a very long time and have become familiar with the town and the people in it. However, I have never seen the owner of this house and neither has anyone that I've talked to within the community. That fact coupled with the unnerving image of the unkempt house sharpened my senses as we knocked on the door.

He was an eccentric man whose feeble appearance disguised the fact that he had recently approached the middle ages of his life. He eagerly invited us into the house and after our initial questioning he offered to take us on a tour of his home. His tired physique was overshadowed by his confidence as we went from room to room. His eyes widened to a soul piercing length and he bore a clown like exaggerated grin as he handed my partner and I a cup of tea. By that time we had made our way from the front door, through the living room, and into the kitchen. He pleaded his case stating that a glass had fallen off of his cabinet which startled him when he went to get some food late at night. It was perfectly reasonable that he let out a shriek that may have frightened Miss Agnes. He finished by saying” I’m not crazy! I was scared, I’m only human.” Although his argument was perfectly logical, I urged him to show me the bedroom because it was the room that was closest to Miss Agnes’s home. To my surprise he took three chairs from the dining room and planted them in the bedroom so that we may continue to chat and enjoy our tea more comfortably.

“I was sitting at my desk on an ordinary night...”

As he sat into his chair, his eyes lit as if he had been shot by a bullet. He began sweating like he was overcome with a sudden illness. As if he was forced to still entertain guests, he began to speak, but his throat was in knots. He kept looking at the floor; I was guided by his eyes to notice that the floorboards that surrounded his chair were freshly chipped and battered at the edges. I paid no mind to that small detail that detectives usually live for until after I reluctantly asked the gentlemen if he was ok. Without warning he leaped forward and flung his chair in my direction. In self defense, I pulled my firearm from its holster, but he was not concerned with me or my partner. He attacked the floorboards, prying away the wood with no regard for his tattered and bruised hands. He did so until all that was left was a gaping hole and a deranged man screaming “look how it still beats! The heart! The heart!” My deputy restrained the man as I approached the crater in the bedroom; I was ready for the worst. I peeked into the hole, it was worse than I expected, nothing….the man was insane.
Throughout my time here I’ve had time to think about and consider some of the more important aspects of life; or at least my life. I’ve always known that my family was and continues to be a huge part of my life, and along with my family are my friends, who are my second family. However, the most important aspect that has formed my life and shaped who I am has not yet been mentioned. The factor that I am writing about is, of course choices. We all make choices in our everyday lives; some take fractions of a second, others may take years. When it comes down to the core, we are the products of our choices. Through the choices and actions that we take, we proclaim who we are, what we stand for, what we want, and show our perspective of the world. Throughout many times in my life I have faced many different situations, and I have learned to expect adversity. When I was thirteen my father died of a fatal heart attack, leaving my mother, my two brothers, and myself in this world of cruel reality. When I look back to my freshman and sophomore years I now realize so many mistakes that I could have blamed on my situation. I was now the man of the house. The man. I would be tested by my ten and four month old brothers, my mother, and the rest of my world.

“Please consider every possible outcome, reward, consequence and most importantly every person that your choice will affect.”

In most of the decisions that we make we do not often consider some of the outside factors that our circumstances may present. These outside sources of consequences and reactions can sabotage our otherwise well thought and planned decisions. My particular situation called for choices that I would not regret and that I would be able to use as a strong point in my life, rather than giving someone a reason to doubt me. Many of my decisions were often subject to a question that has been all but written on my conscience: “Will this look bad for my family, and would I want my younger brothers to do this?” I realize that I am far from perfect, and I also find that fact difficult to prove. I hope that the decisions I have made in the past have influenced my younger brothers in a positive way. My main point of concern, though, is that those who read this may take a small piece of advice that I have learned in my eighteen years. Please consider every possible outcome, reward, consequence, and most importantly every person that your choice will affect. As the north star is the natural failsafe to those seeking guidance, so should your morals be in times of importance.

I would like to conclude with a quote that a very important institution has given me, something that no book, nor school, nor person ever could. This quote was originally said by the great Winston Churchill. “Success is never final, Failure is never fatal; It’s courage that counts.”

When the elevator door opens to the bottom floor of the student union a person’s senses are opened to new things. As for smell you could smell garlic from the pizza at Off Ramp, or the somewhat musty smell of the basement in general, and maybe even a scent of Indian food from the cultural office. Another sense is sight. You see the sitting area and the night spot which is frequently packed with fellow students playing anything from Xbox to ping pong or to the old school skee ball. You may also see those same people in the same places, for example there is always the same girl sleeping on the same couch every day, there is also many people in and out of the Multi-Cultural office visiting the lady who runs it. Many of the same students have the same spots that they hang out at. Also when entering the first floor you can see the lockers for the commuters.
Bouncing Back
Colleen Breslin

“When things go wrong, don’t go wrong with them.” This quote can be interpreted many different ways, and for me very much relates to what is going on now, and recently in my life.

Just about one year ago I was on top of the world. Everything seemed to be perfect to me; I was doing well in school, and I was just about to commit to play basketball at one of five schools of my choice. One week before my signing date I tore my Anterior Cruciate Ligament, Medial Collateral Ligament, and Menisci in my right knee. This being a very common sports injury, I knew that I would not be able to compete in any sports or do physical activities for the next six months to one year. Due to this I lost five full scholarships to play basketball. I literally thought my life was over and I felt like everything import to me was crashing down, but the reader is probably very aware that things could be worse and that I was not finished as an athlete.

“When things go wrong, don't go wrong with them.”

This is where the quote comes in; everyone gave me the advice to make the best of the situation and just because it was a roadblock it did not have to affect me in a negative way, or just because my knee was torn, I certainly was not. I spent the next months working the hardest I ever have in my life. I worked out three hours a day doing everything I possibly could injury-allowing and it was well worth it because the physical therapy did pay off. Not only did I get in the best physical shape of my life, but I was in the best mental shape as well. I had the greatest positive attitude change that I could ever imagine, where I now think very positively about almost

...if you are a student looking for something to do...go down to the first floor of the union for a good time.”

Your other choice is to go hang out in the commuter lounge. In the commuter lounge you can see many different people such as the Matthys’ or many of the Commuter Council members. Also in the commuter lounge you can get donuts and peanut butter and jelly on Wednesdays instead of eating at Off Ramp, this draws a very big crowd to the lounge. Also the commuter lounge is a frequent spot where many people take naps in the many different chairs and couches or watch TV on the big screen TV. The commuter lounge is a great place to hang out, sleep, do work, or eat. The commuter lounge is in a sense a dorm for the commuters. It also has small spaces when you walk in to put your belongings in. The people working in the commuter lounge are very friendly and are always ready to help you find something or need to know something.

I believe that many people walk down to the first floor of the union and go to a specific place, yet they don’t open their mind to actually how many different things you can do while in the basement of the union. It not only is a place to eat or to play games but it also is a place to sleep or do homework or watch T.V. The first floor is by far the place on campus where you can do pretty much whatever you would like to do. So if you are a student looking for something to do I would tell you to go down to the first floor of the union for a good time.
A few years back a weird occurrence happened to me as I was out one night at work. I first received the call of an incident in the Crystal Hill neighborhood, but my captain did not want me to investigate. I was so intrigued by the story that I had to investigate. They say curiosity kills the cat and I learned my lesson that night. Two nights after; my partner Gomez and I were patrolling the Crystal Hill neighborhood while my other partner Jackson stayed in the car. We heard a loud scream from the house of billionaire Steve Smithers. The neighborhood was always dark and gloomy. You always heard dogs barking as if they were malnourished and sickly. Mr. Smithers’ house was always particularly strange. He had these tall, old gates that bore his initials and a watchtower surveying his property. There was also something strange about the old man besides the fact that he lived alone in that mansion. The old man had this eye and it was like a vulture’s, but it didn’t bother me so much as his demeanor did. What really made me suspicious was his caretaker that’s why I had to go check out the house. As his caretaker answered the door, I always noticed that sly look on his face. I could compare him most to a fox, who is always scheming. The young man seemed very polite and composed offering Gomez and I a snack. The young man as I recall was named David, he was a local prodigal son. David explained to us that the noise we heard was him having his occasionally night terrors. As he continued to speak more about the situation, I felt like he was hiding the truth. I pulled Gomez to the side and asked him what he thought. Gomez said the young man sounded brilliant and very confident. After Gomez responded I still felt uneasy about the young man. I asked David where the old man was and he said that he was sleeping. I asked myself why the old man was sleeping so early on Christmas Eve. I couldn’t quite understand why Gomez did not pick up on these clues. We continued our tea and biscuits, the snacks the young man gave us. Somehow the conversation switched to sports and how well the New York Giants were playing. Suddenly David began to shriek as he held his ear and turned pale. It seemed like he was hearing a loud noise but I heard nothing. Gomez also felt like David was putting on some kind of performance or joke. The young man then got up and led us to the old man’s rooms; but the old man was not there in bed.

David then raised the wood planks on the floor and screamed that he murdered the old man who made those shrieks that first caught our attention. Gomez then arrested the young man and filed the police reports. I took notes and took pictures of the scene. As I walked out, I glanced at the body once more and I saw the old man’s vulture eye blink. I was horrified; would I be cursed or something is what I asked myself. I had to write about this occurrence because I was going mad keeping it locked inside. I did not want to tell anyone so I decided to express myself in this journal entry. Everyday I was haunted by the eye, I would awake in the middle of the night sweating heavily, and I had to release the hold that the eye had on me. I could no longer have restless nights and stressful days at work; I had to express my thoughts. One day I will share my story to my close family and friends, but for now it will stay a secret. I never did share that last second with Gomez because I thought he would not believe me. If I told Gomez I would have lost respect in the precinct and I probably would not have been the great lieutenant I am now.
The True Measurement of Character

Wiley D. Brown

It was once said that “The measurement of a man’s character is not what he gets from his ancestors, but what he leaves his descendants.” The choices one makes within the type of life he leads along with the way he handles adversity is what shapes his character. Many things come to my mind when I hear this, but the first thing that comes to my mind when I hear this statement is the saying that I would hear from my parents when I was little which is, “You can do anything you want to as long as you put your mind to it.” I thought of that because that is the aspiration that I think would fit perfectly with that statement.

Someone can easily not think highly of himself or could have low self-esteem towards what things he thinks he is capable of doing, because of certain reputations that they could have knowledge of that could be relevant to him, and he could give in to those hindering things. Some reputations that could cause someone to possibly have a cloudy look upon what things he may be capable of doing are expected trouble, failure, or because what may have run in his family. This could be various things such as drinking problems, gambling problems, or any type of drug or substance abuse problems that may run in someone’s family. I personally have not experienced anything similar to this and I am glad that I do not have to experience any of this. My father used to drink a lot, but has stopped drinking for about 14 years now. My mother thinks I could develop the same type of drinking habits that my father had if I were to start drinking. It is a good thing that my mother does not have to worry about my developing similar habits that my father once had because I will not drink at all because I do not think it is something that will interest me.

Just because of how bad the face of someone’s history may look, does not mean that he has to follow suit and fall into the same category. It is not about one’s family’s past, one’s heritage, or one’s race’s past. What really matters is what one is going to do with his life in order, not only to overcome and to change the perceptions that lies before him, but also to have an everlasting impact on his family, heritage, and or race as his legacy if so possible. I plan on doing whatever I can and whatever I want in order to do those things in having an everlasting impact on my family, heritage, race and society if I can do so.

My First Contest

Ashton Burno

6:17, my obnoxiously boisterous alarm sounds
Springing off the mattress I have a reminding notion
My gym bag is lying there empty on the ground

With 13 minutes until departure I must leave my dorm room in 10
For 2 minutes are needed for the walk to the bus & “Time Waits for No Man”
Time has flown by, 10 minutes has pass the clocks 17 bend
Sprinting out of the dorms double doors I feel my feet stop on their own
Remembering that I left my phone
I quickly turn back sprinting in the fastest way I could move my bones
The phone is grabbed I am now ready to go
Though by this time 6:29 so is the bus
Filled by my team & 30 seconds to spare I’ve arrived to the bus but my energy is low

Through all of the forgetting & running I could finally relax
Having 4 ½ hours of nothing but the open road I caught up on some Z’s
Though upon reaching our destination I had finally awaken
My 270 minute deep sleep had ended finding myself in our opponents’ stadium stretching the day before the field would be taken
After getting through my 1st walk-thru we headed back to the hotel
Although it just seemed as if we were in a town in which we were clearly not wanted
Team dinner, meetings and a good night’s sleep had all past by time I heard housekeeping’s bell

The day had come with only few final moments until that opening kickoff
But with a 6:00 am start amid meetings and meals I had all day to prepare
However this also means over thinking, nervousness, stress…yes I was tearing out every hair

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Revealing a Person’s True Self  
Vj DeFreitas

“A person's true character is revealed by what he does when no one is watching.” This quote means a lot to me and I believe it is true. People put up a front for the public when they are around people that they know, but one's true self comes out when he is behind closed doors. When people are not around an individual he starts to bring his true self out. I am not saying it’s a bad thing but sometimes one's true self is not what people expect. For example, a person that someone knows in school may seem nice and cool when he hangs out with him or her, but when he or she goes home he could be a suicidal and one would never know because one only sees the good side of him or her.

I always believe that everyone has something to hide; sometimes what they are hiding is not so bad, but sometimes it is to the extreme. For instance, some people may get abused at home by their parents and would not tell anyone. When people are ashamed of something that they have done or something they have that is bad they try to cover it up in different ways. In today’s society younger kids get teased in school for being smart. They get called “Nerds,” and while these individuals are at school they try to act “bad” to fit into a crowd that they really do not need to be with but as soon as they get home they complete all of their work and pass with flying colors. For example, someone may join a group fight with individuals just so a few of their friends may think they are cool and hard, but the reality is that the person just did it to impress others. Society is so corrupt and ugly that people with intelligence hide it because of their surroundings. A bad thing that can be revealed behind closed doors is when couples cheat on each other after they have been together for years. Then that one night stand can ruin the whole relationship. Finding this out early is not always a bad thing for couples because they find out the true character of this person that they never knew before.

What a person does behind closed doors reveals his or her true character whether that character is bad or good. It is hard in today’s society to reveal a person's true character. Sometimes people get so good at hiding their true selves that others never know what this individual's true character is really like.
A person’s true Character?

Eric Evans

“A person’s true character is revealed by what he does when no one is watching.” I think this quote is one of the most truthful statements there are. Is this statement true? A person can act a certain way around someone when he or she is around, but what is he or she actually doing when they are around friends. I feel that if people are acting a certain way around the people they are not as familiar with, then the person should act the same way around everyone, whether or not the person knows them well.

I have learned the act of judging other people’s action throughout my lifetime. I had a friend from back home who was one of the nicest people I knew which I thought. He would meet and greet people he really didn’t know and have friendly conversations with them. On the other hand, when we were hanging out with the people who were our mutual friends, his whole demeanor would change. He would start being rude with people, do things that were not right, and be disrespectful. For example, we all had gathered up to go to a big party in the city of Detroit where I’m from. We decided to stop at both of our friend’s house who was with us due to the fact that he was with me earlier in the day because we were playing ball together. My friends and I had decided to walk to the party because of the weather. He would be like the best friend ever around company and people’s parents, but when it was just us, he would do all types of violent things. He would start throwing rocks at cars, steal things out of the stores when we stopped, and would just be a kid that I thought he was not. I felt like he was a big phony. I thought to myself, why would he act like this around us and another way around people he really did not know? This quote explains a lot in general; many people in the world act this way.

People really act certain ways when no one is watching. The person could be the nicest person when no one is watching, but on the other hand, there one of the worst friends to have! If people were to just act the same way and not have to get noticed or get attention which I feel my friend was trying to do. I say that he wanted attention because he would be two different people at the same time which just is not natural. If the person doesn’t act the same way all the time, then why be a rude and disrespectful person behind closed doors?

Pittsburgh: One Livable City

Ernesto Hernandez

Island life to me is a whole different lifestyle than the one I see here in the United States, especially having Spanish as a native tongue. From a very young age my parents would bring me traveling to the states many times to visit family, go on vacations, and inside all those practice my English. The education I received growing up taught me to make the most out of my person, and to continue getting an outstanding education was a key to success. Unfortunately the business programs that Puerto Rico has are not developed yet, and are not considered to be competitive among schools in the United States. With the interest of majoring in International Business I moved recently to the city of Pittsburgh.

The respect I have to this day towards nature I developed independently growing up back home in Puerto Rico. The scenic atmosphere that surrounds anywhere I live is of concern to me before moving because it brings good vibes to my days. In Pittsburgh the trees all over the city and its outsides called my attention because for the first time I could see every season of the year reflected in nature. The temperature and atmosphere here in Pittsburgh is very different than back home, however the way I see it different can be good at this point and time in my life. Cold weather is something I have faced before and well evaluated before coming to Pittsburgh, to think of snowboarding helps me adapt even better.

Perhaps it is not the correct thing to say, but I consider Pittsburgh to be a college town. Coming into Pittsburgh in the airport I noticed how many young people were waiting around with their college sweatshirts as if they had just arrived to begin the fall semester. The pride people share for schools in Pittsburgh is very admirable and comforting for any international student that comes to apply his or herself. Standing up to rival colleges or professional teams in this city is a pride factor shown often by the locals. Restaurants all over Pittsburgh have college or sports fan items on display and one may notice during a visit. The education that colleges have to offer here in Pittsburgh has great standing among my research, and holds popularity nationwide. Duquesne University has brought satisfaction and support to my college life in every way I wanted and/or might have expected.

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Leaving your family and home to go study somewhere else is never an easy task, but in my case it has been handled successfully and with much care. Adapting to the city of Pittsburgh has been a first time experience filled with first time experiences like I have never encountered before. My perception on many subjects has shifted due to the impact living in the steel city has had in me. This city brings me the key factors I need supporting the focused mindset I have already established on my studies for the next couple of years. Everything has gone with the flow, as they say, and worked in my favor in this city, and for this reason I can say my life seems to be following the right track. In conclusion Pittsburgh in my opinion is one livable city where big goals can be accomplished and potential can really get its chance to shine.

“I’m Legal”
Nensha Kamara

I remember the first time I was educated about the Presidential elections. It was around election time in 1996, and I was six years old in the first grade. My first grade teacher Mrs. Sharp informed my class about the two different presidential candidates. I remember the Democratic candidate was President Bill Clinton. At that time, I did not realize that he was the nation’s current President, nonetheless I liked him. That day, my entire elementary school had a mock election with ballots and booths in conjunction to the actual election that took place soon afterward. I knew from the beginning that I would place a vote for President Bill Clinton and I did. My completely feign, but highly imperative vote for President Bill Clinton assisted with his win throughout our school, and I felt proud of myself because I knew that I assisted with his win. It was then that I knew that I wanted to make a significant different by voting.

Now that I am finally 18, I am extremely excited about having the opportunity to do the many things that I can do at my age. For instance, I have the ability to make my own decisions, which can include going to clubs or perhaps smoking. Also, now that I’m 18 I am automatically associated with being an adult. This makes it easier for me to travel alone and apply for things such as credit cards or possibly sweepstakes. Most importantly, I have the opportunity to vote for an electoral candidate. Fortunately, this year the Presidential elections are taking place and I have the ability to vote for the first time. Finally I can live up to my long lived dream of making a meaningful difference by voting. This upcoming election is extremely important for me and also the rest of the world. The United States is definitely in need for change and each Presidential candidate is promising that for our future. Knowing that I will assist with the determination of our United States President is fantastic. I feel triumphant because I am living a dream that I have had since the first grade.

Two figures, removed from the worries of life. Standing atop an unassuming building, they stare down upon the world, indifferent. The city pulsates in its electric glow, distant. The toil, the erratic and chaotic ticking of life is a footnote in their present sense; far more pressing matters are afoot. Talk of life, of faith, of everything and anything pass between them. They share some things in common, but the unifying force between them is the cigar that each is smoking. It sets the mood and the pace of the conversation, once it’s exhausted, the two are as well.

Every Wednesday night a friend and I meet atop a parking garage. It’s the twelfth floor, and is wholly deserted on most nights. Typically we’ll meet between eleven and midnight, staying for an hour or two. How long we stay depends primarily on the weather, the quality of our cigars, and how long they last. There’s a scant car or two most nights, though it’s beautiful when there are none. We feel so utterly removed in this state, this mindset. We have our own individual problems, sure, our own concerns. However, it’s what really matters that comes out during these times. I’ve offered my theories on religion, the world at large, the universe, and many other things great and small. We discuss things that we want to do in life, things that we sorely miss, and things that we’ll never be able to do. The core idea is that we’re talking about things that would normally be either swept aside, or out of place. We fall into an introspective
Childhood Friend

Dorian Lane

“When things go wrong, don’t go wrong with them.” This quote is saying that when something goes wrong in a person’s life or on a particular day he shouldn’t let that ruin his life or take his emotional state down so far that he doesn’t want to do things. He shouldn’t throw his life away.

I know this quote firsthand. I have a friend who when things went wrong in his life, gave up on doing anything good. His name is Lamar, and he was my childhood friend. When we were seven and eight we played football in my backyard. Lamar had a mom who passed away from cancer when he was four, and he didn’t know his father, so he lived with his grandparents. In 2004 his grandparents got into a car accident and died. Since he and I were so close my parents took him into live with my family. When we were teenagers it seemed like Lamar and I started to go separate ways. He started to skip school, and when he did come to school he was a trouble maker. My dad was coming to school on a regular basis to pick Lamar up from the principal’s office. We still had a curfew when we were sixteen. It was 11:30. Sometimes he wouldn’t even come home and nobody would hear from him for a couple days. One day I decided to hang with him like we used to just to see what he had been up to. He went to school, school went well, and he didn’t get in trouble. After school he took me to where he hung out. It was a trap house. I couldn’t believe it, he was selling drugs. Then when it was close to curfew I asked him it was he coming home that night. He told me to tell my mom and dad that he was moving out to live in the trap house. From that day forth he didn’t come to school anymore. The only time I would see my childhood friend was when I would walk past the house and he was selling drugs. One day my mom was watching the news, and I had just gotten home from basketball practice. My mom told me that there was a major drug bust a couple streets up. At first I didn’t pay any mind to it. I was just getting ready to leave the living room to go to the kitchen and my mom suddenly screamed. I looked at the T.V screen and there was Lamar in handcuffs being put in the back of the police car. I couldn’t

mood, able to bear our inner thoughts without fear of criticism or self-consciousness. In some ways it’s as educational as stepping into a classroom, and on an elemental level it’s the same type of learning experience. We treat it as a therapeutic and educational practice, learning as much from each other as we do from ourselves.

It’s strange when you create your own ritual. It’s common to hear about other people doing things as a tradition, but you hardly think of how it ever started. There’s no formula to ours, it exists as an informal affair first and foremost. Though it’s usually the two of us, that’s only because we’re the most reliable to show up. We’ve had four before, though sometimes it’s simply me. Creating rules seems to overcomplicate and restrict the process, especially in this sense. For us, it was simply that the view from the garage was spectacular, and that the location was isolated. We had no worry of unnecessary interaction with other people, especially during the summer. It started out that we’d go once a week, on whichever day that we could manage. Soon, however, we were scheduling it on a Wednesday, to celebrate the midway point of the week. However, even this is not set in stone, for spontaneity is what drives this ritual.

“I’ve wondered if people on the street ever look up and see two figures atop the garage, staring off into the distance. Do they acknowledge us?”

I’ve wondered if people on the street ever look up and see two figures atop the garage, staring off into the distance. Do they acknowledge us? Do we ever bear them any mention? Who’s to say that there can’t be mysticism to it, to some unknown figures staring off into the distance? One wonders.

I hope that we continue this practice until it has run its course. Though, if we never did it again, I wouldn’t be more than slightly mournful. I’d never want this to become a tired, old process. Something this informal and spontaneous seems as though it could sputter out at any time. Should it, I’ll simply look back on the deep, sprawling conversations that have been had. Looking back, I’d be able to do little other than smile.
believe that my best friend was on the news and in handcuffs. My mom screamed and then she called all my family members and told them to turn on channel eleven.

When things go bad in one's life, if he lets it get to him he can go down with it. When things go bad a person shouldn't go badly with everything that is going wrong. I wish my friend hadn't gone down the bad road because I probably would have gone to college with him. He was more than just a friend to me. He was like a brother.

The playoffs were set to start and we were ranked the number one team in our region. Our first test was Madison, and their Tight End who had already committed to play college ball at The Ohio State University. In every practice leading up to our home first round playoff game our coaches kept telling us to not get “big headed”. It was hard not to get caught up in the hype because all the local media, which had closely covered us all season, was now portraying us as superstars. Nevertheless, we stayed humble and kept in focus what had gotten us throughout the regular season, which was a desire to hold up the coveted state championship trophy. We jumped out to an early lead on Madison and never looked back as we went on to win 49-7. We were the best team in the state and could not be stopped. We asked who was next. Mayfield was and they were bringing another solid, but beatable team, as well as their Running Back who had previously committed to Illinois.

The second round playoff games were supposed to be at a neutral site. Well, we had to travel over fifty miles to Solon High School’s stadium while Mayfield only traveled less than fifteen miles. That’s okay we thought, we were still going to beat them. We had been prepared for a battle all week and that is exactly what we were in.

Three quarters had passed and still no one scored as each defense played outstanding and tortured the opponent's offense. Throughout the struggle we knew that someone on our team would make a big play and that victory would be ours. Mayfield had the ball around the fifty yard line, and with about one minute left in the contest, that big play happened. The guy who played the opposite defensive end as me stripped the Quarterback of the ball and I recovered it in Mayfield’s backfield. That was it. We would now get in field goal position and win the game, but a whistle came in and took away this vision I had. The referee had ruled that the player’s knee was down before the ball came free. No matter how much our team and coaches argued the call, or how much our fans booed, there was no reversing what had been done. Mayfield drove the ball and scored a touchdown with only about ten seconds remaining on the clock. As I came off the field I do not remember everything that I did as a result of frustration and madness, but different people’s stories help me recall some of it. I had developed “hulk like” strength and launched a bench about ten yards. If one had walked down our sideline or into our stands they would have come to the conclusion that the most loved person in the world had been killed or something. Nothing in my mind could replace the feeling that my team and I should have had by raising the state championship trophy. I myself was named The Defensive Player of the Year in the state, first-team all-state, all-district, all-conference and all-county, but I would trade all that in for the joy of being known as a state champ. Even with all the accolades and awards my brothers and I received, something still felt incomplete.
From Minnesota to Pittsburgh
Lawrence McCoy

Born in frigid Minneapolis
Where even the moon may be able to freeze
Winters are long shivers and quivers
Months like heaven and months like hell
Depending on who you are, of course.
As time passes on, you adapt to winter’s best effort.
You and the cold now have a relationship:
A love/hate one.
As years went on, so did the travel.
16 hours of driving seemed like seconds,
Knowing that’s all it took for my life to change.
As the south took me
So did its pride/ for football, and its players’.
Determination at its fullest
Dreams longing to be achieved
Winters of light snow and summers of dripping sweat
There was zero off-season.
Maroon pride and many yards later
Graduation came, and so did Pittsburgh-
Snow-less Christmas holidays replaced
By the brother of my beginning season.
Virginia will be missed, Minnesota already is...
Life must go on, and so does my life with the game.

“Doing a Good Turn Daily”
Pasquale Merante

A local man in Pittsburgh has a very thrilling morning while on his way to work. His car broke down about half way to work, and had no other alternatives but to take the local Port Authority bus. Once boarding the bus, the man was forced to sit in the front since many of the people start to sit in the back and work their way up to the front. Shortly after, the man got comfortable and he glanced at a woman who was struggling with her baby because she was standing in the front of the bus. The man did not offer his seat to the woman with the baby because he was only interested in helping himself and not a person who was struggling. The appropriate way to conduct him would have been to offer the seat to the woman with the baby because it would have helped her out, and also made the man feel like he had done something considerate.

“...a man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.”

In society, this could be considered one of the multiple stories which happen to people where they only care about themselves rather than improving society, and by lending a helping hand. I feel if everyone lent a helping hand on a regular basis, the world would be considered a better place, and people could applaud other’s efforts. The quote “a man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package,” best describes the story I stated. I feel like this quote is saying that a person willing to offer help to others before himself is the “bigger” man. As I am starting to become an adult, I am finding out that college is totally different than high school, and people’s perspectives of me tend to be on a much high level. If I am too caught up in worrying about myself rather than my peers or the university as a whole, what good am I?
“When things go wrong, don’t go wrong with them”

Brendan Monteiro

In my life, I have found that there are often bad situations going on around me that could lead me into trouble, but I have to stay strong and keep on the right path. It is important to be smart enough to stay away from issues that will cause more unnecessary troubles in life.

For example, in my hometown of Waterbury, Connecticut, many people that I grew up with started selling drugs and dropping out of school when they reached high school. I would see them with new clothes, cars, and jewelry and it made me think about picking up the same type of lifestyle, but I was aware of the consequences they would eventually face and I did not want to put myself in that type of situation. I chose to stay in school and work hard to get into college so I would be able to get a good education and eventually make enough money to buy myself things legally.

Even our former President Ronald Regan had an obstacle to face. His father was an alcoholic and many people say that alcoholism is hereditary, but he managed to stay away from alcohol and become the President of the United States. His wife also was against substance abuse; together they formed the “Just Say No” campaign which was against drug and alcohol use. He had the opportunity to become like his father, but instead he focused on becoming a successful man.

In conclusion, many people have the option to go down the wrong path, but it is important to focus on what is right. Many people face obstacles every day, including myself, but those who hurdle those obstacles without doing the wrong thing become successful in the long run. I believe this quote is true, and I plan to follow it for the rest of my life.

“A Dream”

Akeem Moore

It all started on a cold December night when I was walking home from a long day’s work at the library. I was a freshman in college and had been studying for final exams right before Christmas break. It was about midnight when I got done with my work at the library. Ready to leave, I stepped out of the main entrance doors of the library into a snow storm. Snow was up to my knees, cars were covered top to bottom, and no one was to be seen. I was ready for the elements of the weather because my mommy had told me to bundle up because the weather was going to be bad. So I had on my long johns with two pair of black sweat pants with my timberlands. I wore a long sleeve under armour with a Gucci fur coat, just looking too sexy. With all this on, the storm was still overpowering.

“Snow was up to my knees, cars were covered top to bottom, and no one was to be seen.”

As my skin got cold and my toes went numb, I finally gave in and decided to take a shortcut home. As I walked through an abandon apartment complex, I saw six people standing in a circle, all were dressed in black. Assuming that they were gangbangers, I glanced then turned away as I tried not to make myself noticeable. My heart started to pound as I heard one of the people yell something toward me. I started to walk faster and faster until I realized I was running. As I look back, I see all six people chasing me, I’m glad I was a track star in high school because they couldn’t even keep up with me. Unfortunately I spoke too soon. I turned a corner and was greeted by four more people also dressed in all black. They grabbed me; duck tapped my mouth, hands, and feet, and threw me into a black navigator, which I noticed had twenty-six inch rims.

We went to this house where we met the six people who was chasing me from before. I was scared and frightened for my life.
“A Man’s Character”  
Christopher Oliver

“A person’s true character is revealed by what he does when no one is watching.” That quote has one main meaning, but has several applications. One that related to me right now is for football and my education. In football when I am working out and running it is the little things that count. Being able to work hard when no one is around as if I have a coach breathing down my neck like a two-a-day practice is not something that everyone can do, and the ability to work hard no matter what is a major part of character, a defining quality.

No matter if I will receive credit, or even acknowledgement, it is as important as having good character. My work should be a great indicator of my character. I should be someone that does the little things on a job, staying late to finish up some work so I don’t fall behind, being the first one in the office, and staying on task are all indicators of good character. Some people will only do a task if they think that they will get a prize or acknowledged. That’s not the best attitude to have when one plays a team sport, or is working in a group with others that depend on him. Working hard on the field is important to me, but not as important as working hard in the classroom. It’s not only working hard in the classroom, but also studying outside of class, and going the extra distance to get the A, or to understand the topic in class.

When parents are looking for a babysitter they look for someone that has good character, someone who is not only watching their precious child, but also that they are letting into their homes. A person with good character stands out to parents especially when they are picky about the people who are around their children.

“When dealing with money, or a job that deals with money, it’s key to have someone that is trustworthy with good character.”

When dealing with money, or a job that deals with money, it’s a key to have someone that is trustworthy with good character. A person that doesn’t have good character that always needs someone over his back is not someone I would want handling my money. The same can we said for someone who is in the childcare business. No one wants a person to watch his child who isn’t of good character and trustworthy. When someone asks for references on a job interview, the first thing that he asks is “does this person have good character;” “are they trustworthy?”

Working hard when no one is looking is what great leaders do without a thought. To them doing the first thing is not extra work, it’s the only thing that matters.
Kindness: The Friction of Life
Kevin O’Neill

There are many quotes that seem appropriate throughout the course of one’s life. I feel that the quote “Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life” is one quote that is significant to my life. This quote not only relates to me but I feel that everyone should understand why this quote is important.

The quote “Kindness is the oil that takes the friction out of life” means that without living one’s life by having an act of kindness, one will not be able to succeed to the fullest. When times in life get rough, the kindness of others helps me get back on the right track. An example of this would be motivation to do well by a friend during a sport event. Just when one feels that failure may occur, friends and other teammates are always there to encourage me to do well. That act of kindness helps me do well knowing I have the encouragement of others. A personal example of this would be teammates supporting me during soccer games. Encouragement is one act of kindness that can make a difference in one’s performance such as when I competed in high school.

It is miserable to live a life filled with unhappiness and being pessimistic. Acts of kindness from others help smooth out troubling situations throughout the course of life. The phrase “random acts of kindness” is a side thought the next time someone asks for assistance. One could have a significant impact on another’s life through simple acts of kindness. Living life with kindness will benefit in the long run though many opportunities.
If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything! This quote is very strong and relates to how people live their lives today. To stand for something means that a person has a faith, belief, or a confidence in whatever they stand for. It can be morals, values, or someone's faith. These three things are the strongest foundation in a person's life. However, if people question what they believe in, or even doubt it as being the right and moral thing, then they may lose what makes them a unique individual. Instead of following their own heart and what they may think is right, people might try to live off of other people's beliefs, not because they want to, but because people are afraid to be wrong in another's eyes. Whatever is unethical or immoral to someone will soon become the right, all because we don't stand for what we are and what we believe in. In essence, we will fall for anything and everything that we may think is the truth or reason in our lives when in reality it is not.

“I have always known that I have wanted to help people…”

Jim Sabia

My grandfather was in World War II. I remember my grandfather telling me some of his war stories when I was a young child. I always remembered him telling me that when he fought, he told himself that he stood for something. As he looked into the eyes of his enemies, he knew that he stood for freedom, peace, and change. He told me that he believed in himself and his brothers around him. He believed that he could make a difference in this world. Most importantly, he believed in making sure that his wife, family, and country could sleep safely at night. Before he died, he told me that if I didn't believe in myself, then everything around me would fall. That is why this quote is so important to me. Although my grandfather grew up in a different time period, he still understood what it meant to stand for something. Because of my grandfather, I believe in myself and the things that I stand for. I have confidence in my morals, values, and faith. I know that whatever I stand for in life, it will never break. I know this because all that I believe in makes me who I am.

A Tough Year
Rafael Santiago

My junior year of high school I attended a tennis academy in Tampa named Saddlebrook Prep. This academy is divided into tennis and golf; these two branches are completely separated from one another. It is one of the best academies in the U.S. and even the world. Many pros have trained there like Pete Sampras and Martina Hingis. I went there with the expectation to improve my game and to travel to tournaments in a national and international level. It is known for being very demanding and strict in training, and for having coaches and players from all over the world. I was the only Puertorican there except for the coach that started me on tennis. This did not really bother me because I was there to train and try to achieve my potential. After many phone calls and a ton of paperwork I was finally there.

I had been going to the academy during the summers for a couple of weeks at a time so knew some of the players and a couple of coaches. This did not prepare me for much because I did not know how things ran on a regular basis. It was a very demanding
schedule which consisted of four hours of school, four to five hours of tennis and one hour of fitness a day. This ran Monday through Friday leaving weekends for tournaments or relaxing. There were six guys in each room, which was pretty nice because it bonds you into kind of a team. Players come from all over the world, in my room there was an American, a German, a Mexican, two guys from Trinidad and Tobago and me. The German and the Mexican played golf while the rest of us played tennis. At first it was very awkward because we were all pretty different in personalities, but the ice soon broke. When you are living with five other guys that are about the same age living and competing with each other it can get very nasty. We had our fights about dumb stuff that really did not matter, but we would always forgive soon after.

The tennis training was very demanding, the coaches expected a lot and they got it. We would drill for hours and then we would play matches against each other. This created an atmosphere of pure competition, day in and day out. There were coaches that used to be pros and know coach so they knew what it took to make you better. There was one coach named Julian from Colombia, he would tell us that water is for girls and that we could only drink whenever he let us, this was every forty-five minutes or so. This was the same with the fitness coach that used to run track professionally. He would work us until we could not give anymore. Twice a week we would run the loop, which was a three and a half mile run around the academy, we did this after playing four hours in the grueling Florida sun. This really made us push our limits and find out what we were made of. I unfortunately had to lower my training because I suffered from a left wrist injury that did not allow me to hit backhands. This was a terrible injury because I could not travel to tournaments for a year, which was the span that the injury lasted.

I made unbreakable bonds with my roommates; we had so much fun in spite of our arguments. I also made great friends with guys in other sports and in other rooms, so much that they have been visiting me at home for the last two years. I remember the pranks that we played on each other. One night when everyone went to the movies we stayed at the dorms and moved all of the furniture from the room to the golf course. Other nights we would sneak out to the girl's side in the middle of the night, which once ended with us suspended for a week. I will always remember the smell of freshly cut grass in the morning and the pungent smell of new tennis balls. This is a time that I will always cherish because I matured a lot; I no longer had my parents to look after me. It was very tough going home for vacation and having to leave all my friends and family to go back to the academy. In the end the experience prepared me for college and everything that was new to most was normal to me.

Companions are like elevators. They will either take a person up or take him down. I feel that this is a moral in most people's lives because when one is doing things good people will be on one's side asking him to go places, taking him out to a nice restaurant, or might even buy him things just because of his success, but at the same time things can turn bad as soon as he messes up in life.

When one is successful in life whether it's from school, sports, or a business, people seem to see a person as a god or someone that is very important to that corporation. It's like one can do anything because he is on top of the world. I think that most people feel like a king or queen due to the way they are treated in the neighborhood or business.

Once he messes up like getting demoted from a high position in a large business or if he is an athlete and he gets arrested for a DUI or possession of narcotics, then people that looked up to him as a role model, or wanted to be just like him when they made it to that place in their lives where they think that he's nothing and will make him feel that way about himself as well. When people look up to him as a role model and he lets them down he better believe his buttons will be pressed until he is broken down to make him feel lower than low.

There are some ways to deal with people that like to push one's buttons. For instance, if people are treating him good he should let them, so he doesn't break their spirit because they want to make him feel good, but at the same time they are trying to make themselves feel better in life because they did something for him and he is someone that's important to the neighborhood, company, or the school. Things can turn on him as quick as a switch of a light. He is at the top of his game and all of a sudden he is coming home from a party and he had a few drinks and the cops pull him over and arrest him because he was drinking and driving better known as a DUI. The community will push his buttons until he breaks down and starts feeling angry with him and he doesn't want anyone around because he knows he let them down.
I can relate to this because I used to get treated like I was royalty by friends and family members just for being successful on and off the court and that made me feel invincible like no one could touch me. When things started to go downhill for me all that stopped. There was no more going out to dinner, going on trips, or even just getting extra attention from the family when we would all gather at my grandmother’s house every Sunday.

Companions are great to have in one’s life but one has to remember not to let them make him a person or break him. I feel that a person should be oneself and in due time things will be looking better for him in the long run. A person is the only one who can prevent the outcome of their own life and no one else.

I can apply this quote to football very closely; I was not always the biggest or the fastest kid on the field when it came to football. I was not always the biggest or the fastest kid on the field when it came to football. Just like the small oak nut, I was a little kid when I first started to play football; just a skinny little kid with little knowledge about the game. Ever since I was a small child I watched college and NFL football games all Saturday and Sunday with my dad. I knew I wanted to be doing the same things those football players were doing. When I was old enough I started out where most kids do, playing little league football, where I learned the basics of the game. I learned to catch and run with the ball, along with the many rules and techniques that came with the game of football. As I got older the competition got better also, the players were bigger, stronger, faster, and more skilled. They caught the ball better, more disciplined, and smart as their knowledge of the game grew. To keep up when I got to high school I started to spend a lot of time in the weight room, and also attended camps where I worked on my techniques. After all of this time and training I learned to stand my ground when game time came, just like the little nut did.

Although I would not say that I am a great oak, I would not say that I am a little nut either. The only “great oaks” in football would be those who are in the NFL. They are standing their ground against the best of the best. I have learned to compete at the Division 1 level, and I would say that I am well on my way to becoming a “mighty oak” as long as I continue to progress.

This quote does not only apply to people in the sports world; it is also a natural way of life. As people go into the real world they will be tested by those who are bigger and more powerful than themselves. As those things start to happen people have to learn to stand their ground if they want to compete in the game of life.
“Decisions Can Take You Out of God’s Will, But Never Out of His Reach”

Alycia Washington

Throughout life, God will always stay with us, even if we do wrong and act against God’s will. My dad’s life is a good example of God sticking by someone even when that person makes bad decisions.

My dad, like most African Americans growing up in Georgia in the early 1950’s, had hard times. They may not have had money to buy a lot of clothes or food, but they learned to enjoy their life. In the mid 1960’s, my father and his two younger brothers moved in with my great-grandma, whom I called Te-Ma, up north, to Duquesne Pennsylvania. Although my Te-Ma was from the South as well as my dad, she was living the life! Her house was never bare of food. Te-Ma cooked everything; breakfast, lunch and dinner, so my dad never went hungry. She had the newest fashion, and she always kept her house spic-n-span. Te-Ma was a wise spender, so she never ran out of money. The most important part of Te-Ma’s life, other than her new found children, was church. She made sure that my dad and his brothers went to church every Sunday, even when they were sick. Of course my dad was spoiled and greatly blessed; who wouldn’t be. As he entered into high school, temptations ran through his mind. Peer-pressure is a big factor in every teenager’s life, and my dad let it come in when he opened arms.

After that day, he experienced many different types of drugs. In my opinion, his favorite must have been cocaine. My dad started snorting after I was born and continued for a few years; the other
drugs he had taken before I was born, and they had a short existence for him. I will never forget the first time I heard that my dad got in trouble under the influence of drugs. After snorting cocaine one night, he began to act out, leaving my great-grandma’s house and heading down the hill. At the end of the hill there is a busy highway, and my dad thought he was invincible and decided to walk slowly to the middle of the road. Cars were beeping, but it seemed like he couldn’t hear them. One car didn’t see him in time and ran into him. Police, ambulance, local news and newspapers came to the scene of Duquesne-McKeesport Boulevard, where a forty-something year old black male would soon be arrested for disturbing the peace and being under the influence of drugs. “He should have been dead,” everyone said, but God was on his side.

“My dad’s life is a good example of God sticking by someone even when that person makes bad decisions.”

For as long as I knew my dad, he sold cocaine. In 1999, there was a drug bust and he was part of it. He had to go to jail for the drugs he had stored, and rehab for almost a year for the use of it. Once he got out of rehab in 2000, he was a changed man, for the most part, but then he started selling drugs again.

Other than my dad selling drugs after he was arrested he started to make money in legal ways. Right after he got out of rehab, he began opening businesses, including a cellular and pager shop, for which he went to school to get his license to sell products. He also started two car services. The car services were located where most of his illegal acts took place, so a lot of people knew about my dad and how he has a lot of money and drugs. One day he was driving back home from a long day at his job. Two men that he didn’t know, but looked very familiar, flagged him down for a jitney. My dad told the guys that his jitneys were over for the day, but the guys insisted it was urgent. Being the kind jolly man that my dad was he gave the guys a ride. When the guys got in the car, my dad asked them where they were going. The guy in the front seat took his hand out of his pocket and pointed a loaded gun at my dad’s forehead. My dad remained calm so he could think of what to do. He then did something that was not so wise: he started driving on the other side of the road, he managed to get to the nearest police station, but there was no one outside. The two guys ran out of the car in terror and my dad pulled away. That was just another incident that should have ended worse then what it did. God had protected him again.

Unfortunately in 2005, my dad passed away. The doctors could not figure out what was wrong with him. They diagnosed him with many different diseases, but none of them sounded right. The night of his death, I had a dream that he told me if I ever have sexual relations to make sure I am protected, both me and my mate. After the dream, I decided to put the pieces together; my dad not only had experience with drugs, but he lived a very wild life, which included a lot of women. Also, he didn’t want an autopsy. Therefore, I could only think of one thing it could be, which was AIDS. I think my dad took advantage of all of the changes that he had, that God thought it was time for him to leave from here. I am always talking or thinking about the situation, although it is tough for me to talk about. I know one good thing, my dad was saved, which means he is in heaven, where God forgives us of all of our sins.
“Don’t Let the Skirt Fool You”

Samantha Yinger

Lacrosse is often referred to as “the fastest game on two feet,” but it is also one of the fastest growing team sports in the United States. It’s obvious that both boys and girls have the same opportunity to play, but what most do not realize is that they are two completely different games. The fundamentals of the game are essentially the same. For example, throwing, catching, passing, and cradling the ball are all major aspects of the game, but if you compared a boy’s game to a girl’s you might think you were watching two different sports.

Though the sport is growing in popularity, many girls hesitate to try this up-and-coming sport. Few people have seen a girl’s lacrosse game, let alone had any playing experience. But the great thing about the sport is that it is easy to pick up at any age. Once girls experience how fast-paced and exciting the game of lacrosse can be they are motivated to learn and usually get hooked right away. While unfamiliar with lacrosse, many of the new players come with plenty of other sports’ skills. Because many of the girls who are interested in the sport have previous experience with other sports, coaches build on this experience and focus on teaching the lacrosse-specific skills. This combination allows the new girls to contribute to the team quickly as well.

Lacrosse has many essential tools that both girls’ and boys’ use, but they also differ in many smaller aspects of the game. The biggest difference is the equipment and the degree of allowable physical contact. The required equipment for a girl to wear is only a pair of goggles and a colored mouth guard, while boys must wear a helmet, gloves, shoulder pads, and elbow pads. Another difference is the aggressive nature of the boy’s lacrosse game. In girl’s lacrosse a player is not allowed to hit or shove another player in anyway, but in boy’s lacrosse they may strike another player in order to change possession of the ball. Another difference between the two is the uniforms. Boys wear the standard shirt and shorts, but girls wear a shirt and a skirt with little briefs underneath. This many sound like an unusual choice for a sport’s uniform, but because of the culture and origins of the sport, which is what girls are required to wear. However, even though skirts are deemed as a “girly” type of dress, do not let it fool you because girl’s are every bit as determined and passionate about the sports as the boys.

“In my opinion, I feel as if girl’s lacrosse is ready for a more aggressive nature.”

In my opinion, I feel as if girl’s lacrosse is ready for a more aggressive nature. Boys are allowed to strike other players with their bodies and strike to get possession; girls should be able to do so as well. This would make the sport more appealing to watch and play because there would not be as many rules, and thus, would make the game have a better flow rather than having the whistle blown for every accidental bump. Also, because the game would become more fluid, more girls would be attracted to the sport. That is exactly what caught my eye when I watched my first boy’s lacrosse game, and what inspired me to play the sport. Since then I have loved the game and the mechanics of it all. Next time you see those skirts running across the field, just remember all the hard work and drive that comes from each one of them and never let it fool you.
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