

Hawks or ramblers

Business



Hawks or Rambler We were all lined up outside of the auditorium. There were a sea of blue caps and gowns at Maine South High School. Everyone was anxiously chattering and pacing awaiting to enter the stage to not only walk across and receive our middle school diplomas, but to see what would unfold for our futures.

I felt the most nervous of them all. I stood in a small circle with my lifetime friends as we shared our feelings for our futures. We had been going to school together for our whole lives up until this point. Every single day was spent together not only in classrooms, hallways and cafeterias, but also in our sports and personal lives. We were inseparable.

If we weren't playing sports together, we were jumping on Nick's trampoline or playing whiffle ball in Diesel's backyard. Not only were they my longest friends, they were my best friends. In that moment, standing just before my graduation, I realized that I made the right decision about attending the public Maine South High School as oppose to the Catholic private school Loyola Academy. It was just a typical Wednesday when I was walking home from Lincoln Middle School, a well known school of about 600-700 students located just outside Chicago. I just finished the first trimester of eighth grade. I walked home that day with my normal crew, Diesel, Danny and Nick, also known as 'walking group'.

Nick, my best friend since we could even talk lived right around the corner from me. Had brown hair brown eyes and was always the same height and weight as me. Diesel who lived just down the block was the tall and skinny one of the group. Had blondish hair blue eyes and was an incredible athlete.

Danny, the shorter and heavier one was always the funniest of the group. He had brown short hair and hazel eyes.

Snow rain or sun, you could catch us four throwing crab apples at cars and signs. We usually did not get caught for our shenanigans, but on the rare occasion that we did, we stuck together. On this particular Wednesday, we were walking home and I felt proud. I had just gotten an A on the hardest math test of the year. I had been doing well in all of my other classes this year too, not just math.

I said goodbye to my friends as we parted ways on the corner of Hamlin and Aldine. I walked into my house at the normal 3: 35 to the smell of my mom beginning to make dinner. She only starts cooking this early when we're having something really good. I approached her and she smiled. "What's going on mom..." I asked suspiciously. "Your progress report came in today!" She replied.

My heart sank a little, I didn't know whether to be happy or scared. I had no idea what she was thinking until she showed me my grades. All A's and two B's for the second trimester. The B's were in science and english which are the classes I struggle most with. The paper seemed to glow. It's crisp white with a blue hue just lit the room.

These are the best grades I have ever received in all of my time in Middle School. She grabbed me and gave me a huge hug. "I'm so proud of you and all of your hard work. And your father will be even more proud!" she exclaimed. I went to my room to continue to study while my mom finished

cooking. When I heard my dad walk through the door, I closed my books and pressed my ear against the door to listen to them talk.

“ Wait, these are his final grades?” my dad asked my mom. “ Yes, honey. Isn’t this wonderful?” she replied. “ These are better than Charlie’s were.” my dad noted. Charlie is my older brother.

He attended Maine South and at this time he would have been a junior. When he was my age, he didn’t try very hard in school. He knew he was smart, so he just got by doing the minimum. I on the other hand learned from his mistakes and pushed myself to be the best I could be. I knew that my grades in middle school would not impact my future, but establishing a proper work ethic before my grades would be reflected on my permanent high school transcript were important to me.

“ Honey! Time for dinner” was my cue to get ready for what my parents had been whispering about for the past hour. What could possibly be the problem? I thought to myself. I cleaned up my workplace and headed into the dining room. My brother was at the library and my sister was at a basketball game so it was just my parents and I eating together that night. The lighting seemed confrontational, like an interrogation room.

I was nervous for what they had to say. “ Jack I saw your report card” said my father. “ Yeah Dad? What’d you think” I replied. “ Well, your mother and I have been talking, and we think that it’s excellent.” he exclaimed.

I felt so proud of myself. My dad is very critical of how much I study and how well I do in school so to hear this coming from him was very rewarding. He

continued to say, “ We think that it is so great, that we want you to apply to Loyola Academy.” I went blank. All I could think to say was, “ Loyola? Are you crazy?!” “ Honey, talk nicely.” said my mother.

I got up and stormed to my room and didn’t come out until school the next morning. When I went into the kitchen to eat breakfast the next morning, I avoided both of my parents. I quickly grabbed my lunch and stopped at the sight of something new marked on the calendar: ‘ Jack Loyola shadow day’ next Monday. Shadowing a student at Loyola meant I had to wear an ill fitting pair of khaki pants and one of my brothers polos since I didn’t have any. I had to follow this senior named Nathan around to all of his classes while he told me all about how great Loyola was. I didn’t even try to listen to him.

He even tried to tell me that their football team was best in the stateThe entire school was dimly lit. It reminded me of a prison. The windows seemed to have a filter over them to allow the least amount of light in as possible. The students were silent and gave me judgemental looks. Even the lunch room, the best part of the school day, the atmosphere was mundane looking.

The worst part about Loyola was that none of my best friends would be there. I know that there’s lots of debate about whether private education is better than public, but I didn’t care. How am I supposed to enjoy myself in a place where the classrooms, people and overall environment are all just stuffy. I ate my lunch with Nathan and his friends in silence. I thought to myself in this moment about my parents. I know they had me come here today because they want what was best for me.

What they didn't realize is that sometimes the better opportunity, doesn't have to come at a price. I was perfectly capable of maximizing my potential attending a public school. In the back of my mind, I was still thinking about my friends and how going through high school without them wouldn't be the same. My mom picked me up from Loyola at 3: 30. Nathan waited with me, even though I asked him not to. He could tell I was not fond of his school. I said goodbye to him and thanked him anyway. I got into her car and shut the door. " Jack how was it? Did you love it?" " Mom, how come you didn't make Charlie shadow Loyola like me?" " Oh, well, I'll tell you as long as you don't get a big head about it. Your grades and Charlie's grades in eighth grade do not compare. You go above and beyond in your studies and that shouldn't go unnoticed. We want you to see what you're capable of." Did my mom just say that I was better than my older brother? I can't wait to make fun of him for this when I get home. She might as well have told me I was the favorite child. " Mom, it's not right for me." I pleaded." You should see some of these kids. They look like they just left their country club. I'm not like these people. We're not like these people." She didn't say anything after I said this to her. Eventually, my parents did not make me go to Loyola. Regardless of how many more opportunities I would have gotten, I just wasn't the type of guy who would fit in at a place like that. Of course, my dad tried to play up all of the amazing athletic opportunities that I would have, but that didn't help to persuade me because my mind was set. They are the only people who know me better than I know myself and the eventually saw that I would have been truly miserable at a place like Loyola. Today, walking group is still around and well. Although some of us have sports or other commitments to attend, we try our best to catch up everyday after school. I try my hardest everyday

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when I come to school and can honestly say that I've learned so much. I proved to my parents that I don't need some expensive prep school to get a good education. It's not about what school a person goes to, but rather the drive and work a person puts into their education.