

Boarding school



Amber Johnson Josette Arvizu Writing 101 Narrative Essay 12 September 2009 First Days At Boarding School This was the first time I flew in a plane and I was so sure I was going to die. I imagined the planes engines suddenly breaking down and then slowly we plummeted down to certain death. “ Excuse me miss, would you like something to drink? ” the flight attendant asked me. I must have looked worse than I thought because she said it in a calm soothing way sort of like she was trying to talk someone out of jumping off the side of a twenty story building.

I looked at her and shook my head from side to side, closed my eyes and concentrated on not looking out the window. I would think myself to be a brave person, but when that plane left the ground I was praying to God like no other has prayed to God ever before. I must have said like twenty Hail Mary’s before my heart got down to it’s regular beat, a normal seventy beats per minute. After a long two hours and eleven minutes relief washed over me as I heard someone on the overhead say were landing in Portland, Oregon. I liked the fact that I finally had the experience of a plane ride, even though it was a terrifying one.

The thing that irritated me was that this plane ride would have to be the one that was taking me to prison or at least I thought of it as one. I was sentenced to spend a whole year at Chemawa Indian Boarding School. That meant I would have to spend a whole year away from my family, away from my friends, a whole year away from everything I knew. I was being forced to live in a place I have never been, with a bunch of people I have never met. After a long day of traveling one thousand miles from Tucson, Arizona to Salem, Oregon, I was finally settled in my room.

It was nicer than I expected it to be, no bars on the windows at least. As I first entered the room there were closets to the right, a bathroom, which I now shared with three other girls, to the left. At the end of the short hallway it opened up into a nice sized room. Enough room for two single beds and two desks to fit comfortably at either side. There are ten dorms at Chemawa and I was now a resident of dorm four, a sophomore girls dorm. I picked the left side of the room to occupy because it was hidden from the doorway by a wall, unlike the right side where you can see everything.

First come first serve I thought to myself. I laid on my bed and contemplated how different Oregon would be from Tucson. No more cactus I suppose.

When I arrived here it was already dark and I couldn't see a thing outside the bus windows, just black all around. I made a note to myself to go outside tomorrow and get acquainted with the world around me. I stared at the bed across from me and then wondered who my new roommate was going to be. Was she going to be nice? Where we going to be friends? Or, was she going to be one of those girls who thinks herself the best?

With my luck I'd probably get one that talks nonstop about nothing or one that just stares at you with the intention to kill. Yeah, that'd be great, locked up with a psycho as my roommate, can't wait to meet her. I looked up at the ceiling and stared at the numbers 406 burnt into the wood. Then slowly drifted off into sleep. I was woken up by a loud knocking on the door. " Wake up it's time for brunch it ends at twelve, if you don't eat now next meal time isn't till dinner at six! ". Whoa she's loud, I thought. I decided to get ready and go eat.

After I was done getting ready I went to the office in my dorm. “ Excuse me, where is the cafeteria at? ” I asked the lady sitting at the desk. She reminded me of my grandma. She was short, had a round face, kind eyes, but her hair was short and curly not long and straight like my grandmas. She looked up at me and said “ All meals are served in Crampton, it’s just above the Rec. center. Better get there quick they stop serving brunch in ten minutes. ” Then she turned to a white box shape, pushed one of the many buttons and announced it over the intercom. “ Hey Amber, want to come eat with us? It was Tamara and Brooke, two girls I met at the airport while waiting for the bus. “ Yea, that’d be cool”, I answered. As we were walking I asked, “ Hey do you guys know where ‘ Crampton’ is? ” They looked at me and Tamara said “ No, what’s that? ” “ Well it’s the cafeteria I guess, they call it Crampton,” I explained to them. So we searched for this Crampton place for awhile. We had found where the gym and the auditorium were. Then we circled around the whole campus when we came to a room that had pool tables, foosball, and a big screen TV, that was playing some unknown movie. So this must be the rec. ,” I thought out loud. “ Hey that lady in the dorm said that Crampton was just above the rec. ” I said while pointing to the ceiling. We found the stairs that lead us right to the blue double doors that had a sign that read Crampton overhead. I busted out laughing as I thought to myself, if we had just gone the opposite direction when we started out we would have run right into it. This certain fact was hilarious to me and I couldn’t stop laughing. My two new friends must have figured out the same thing because they couldn’t stop laughing either. HaHaHa...and I was getting scared that we were never...hahaha.... going to find our way back to our dorm.. HAHAHA!!! ” I got out in between laughs, which made us laugh even harder.

After brunch I went back to the dorm to unpack the rest of my things. Crampton food wasn't that bad. I ate a biscuit and gravy, scrambled eggs, hash browns, slices of oranges, and orange juice, I was stuffed. When I opened the door to my room I immediately thought I accidentally entered the wrong room because on the right side there was luggage on the bed. I looked at the number on the door, yup, this was my room.

I walked in and there was no sign of my new roommate anywhere. Wonder where she is I thought. As I was unpacking the rest of my clothes I noticed she had a guitar case also laying across her bed. Curiosity burned in me so I decided to ask the lady at the office who my new roommate was. As I walked to the door the door knob turned and the door opened. Walked in was a short girl, she had a round face fixed with glasses. She wore a plain black shirt with dickets and skater shoes. "Hi, my name is Amber" I said to break the silence. She was quiet and barely said a thing as I asked her a few more questions.

Her name is Latokadust Caljesuseso, she's Navajo and from Pinehill, New Mexico. She started to play the guitar only recently and listens to punk rock music. She also has a brother that attends here also. As I was about to ask more questions I was cut off by the intercom. There is a mandatory assembly in the auditorium at six o'clock. I looked at the time and it was already five fifty-three. "Let's go" I told my new friend. As we sat down in the auditorium I looked around at all the people in there. I've never seen so many different natives in one place.

In just the one day I've been here I've already met Navajo, Pima, Hopi, Athabaskan, Sioux, Blackfeet, and Northern Cheyenne people. It amazed me how many different tribes there were besides my own and how in many ways we were a lot alike. The assembly started with introductions of staff. Next they moved on to rules, regulations, and expectations. Somewhere in the middle of regulations and expectations I spaced out because before I knew it the assembly was over. When I got back to my room I thought about what was said at the assembly. Here we were to gain some kind of feel of independence.

It was true we didn't have our family here to run to. Here we made our own choices and dealt with the consequences that followed those choices. Here we can grow not only academically but mentally and emotionally as well. I realized that maybe getting sent to Chemawa was the best thing to happen to me and I should embrace the change with open arms. Here I can learn and grow with and from people with different backgrounds. Here I can gain friendships that can last a lifetime. Chemawa is a place of independence and growth. Chemawa is now my home away from home. With these thoughts I slowly drifted into sleep. Johnson