

Marina Vidaurri

Mr. Rutherford & Mr. Sharfen

Oxford Scholars - Spring

7 April 2016

The Queen of Hearts

My life has been quite an educational adventure. The breadth of my experiences has been a benefaction of wonderful lessons, both formally and informally. My involvement in academics, athletics, altruism, performing arts, and travel has taught me independence, time management and goal setting which will all be necessary in my future endeavors. In addition to the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic I have learned collaboration, creative problem solving and resilience. My most valuable learning experiences have been those that appealed to my senses and involved my heart.

For as long as I can remember, my athletic participation has trained me to thrive under pressure. I am at ease performing thanks to the confidence I have built starting at a young age. When I was four years old I performed as the Queen of Hearts in my ballet recital. It was my first experience on stage, front and center before an audience. Starting with dance and expanding to soccer, basketball, swimming, and volleyball I have become accustomed to placing myself in the often uncomfortable position of performing a new skill. Knowing the team is relying on me to perform my duties for our shared success has taught me to remain calm, focused and committed regardless of the situation.

The classroom remains the foundation of my formal education. In kindergarten at John B. Riebli Elementary, my teachers, Miss Karen and Miss Joanne, set the foundation through encouragement, collaboration and group projects. I was exposed to new ideas through music

along with arts and crafts. To this day, I vividly remember artichoke day. We created art using artichokes cut in half, painted with a shock of vibrant tempura paint and then used them as a stamp to decorate large sheets of white construction paper. We memorized a song about the greyish-green vegetable and marched around the classroom singing and dancing wearing our meticulously decorated artichoke crowns. We then tasted the hearts of the thistle. The use of all five senses were creatively utilized to open our minds.

Fourth grade at St. Eugene's afforded me the pleasure of being taught by Sister Noreen Duffy. I grew to love the small Irish woman who initially instilled fear into many of my classmates, who would soon learn that she was actually 'all bark and no bite'. She taught us to take pride in our work, to be thankful to God, and above all else to live in His likeness with humility and kindness. The skill of memorization with our monthly prayer assignments, the focus to follow directions, and the development of self-discipline for completion of assignments were all instilled into us. Her biggest assignment of the year was the California Mission project. I visited the Mission of San Juan Bautista and filmed my first video presentation. With the help of my parents, I wrote a script highlighting the facts I had previously gathered with the assistance of our librarian, Mrs. Cindy Kirk. Reciting the facts in front of the camera was an introduction into a new format of public speaking, and it would be useful for many subsequent endeavors.

In high school, I have had many excellent educators. One who stood out for me is Mrs. Bernadette Calhoun. She was my math teacher junior year and she remains unmatched in her knowledge and passion about the subject matter. I have always had a knack for numbers; however I learned not only a great deal about math, but also about myself and the way in which I process new information. More significantly, I view her as a role model. Now, in large part

thanks to Mrs. Calhoun, I am considering a college major in engineering where I can apply my strengths as I pursue a career founded in computation and analysis.

My first educational trip was during sixth grade. My father, younger brother and I traveled to Cuernavaca, Mexico. We experienced a new way of life while staying in the home of a host family for the duration of our trip. The immersion trip revolved around taking classes in Spanish at Universidad Internacional for two weeks. Stepping foot onto the university grounds everyday was initially foreign, overwhelming, and a bit scary for this eleven year old girl. Eventually it became routine and comfortable. I truly envisioned myself as a college student for the first time during that enriching trip.

The summer after my freshman year I participated in a ten day school trip to Paris. Accompanying fellow classmates on my first trip to Europe were our teacher-chaperones, Mr. Maul and Ms. Meyer. Traveling without my parents taught me to be responsible for myself, which included everything from budgeting euros to keeping track of a passport. A few times we became lost in the subway or turned around on the city streets. This proved to be an opportunity to test our group's collaborative skills as we worked together to find our way to a treasured museum or restaurant. Furthermore, we were able to bring the history book's accounts of World War 2 battles into perspective on the beaches of Normandy, and ponder the sacrifices of life that those conflicts brought while at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. Over the course of the trip, the best laid plans were often changed. Being flexible and spontaneous are what led to a more memorable and unique experience. This trip allowed me to hone my sense of direction, embrace my love of spontaneity, and grow in independence.

As American philosopher John Dewey stated, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." I am confident that my multiple educational experiences have prepared

me for my future. The sense of community at both St. Eugene's and Cardinal Newman, particularly my teachers' commitment to the growth of each individual student, has been a wonderful blessing. They've nurtured and challenged, while setting me up for success in my future years at college and well beyond. Now, as I am deciding upon a university, I feel as though I am an echo of my four year old self. Once I set foot on my college campus I will once again be the Queen of Hearts, center stage, as I embark on an entirely new and unique scholarly journey. This matured Queen of Hearts will be much more skilled, well prepared and resilient.