

The Past, Present, and Future of a Valpo Freshman

By Ben Taylor

My writing is an extension of my thoughts, feelings, and expectations on paper. When I write, I give a little part of myself away to the reader. That part of me is gone. I could never write the same words today as I wrote yesterday or as I would write tomorrow. Because of this giving myself to the page, my writing changes from one paper to the next. Each of the following papers in this portfolio contains my own voice at that time and place about that certain topic.

My writing is at the best when I write what I'm feeling at the time. If I'm sad, I will write about sad thoughts. If I'm reflective, I will write in a reflective matter. This sharing of my mood makes my writing special to me. I do and will have memories of when, where, and how I wrote each paper. This portfolio acts as a timeline of my mood, my thoughts, and my reflections on each topic. I hope the reader can trace my tone and listen to my emotions by reading my portfolio.

Throughout this semester I had my triumphs and my disappointments. Some days I felt as though I picked the perfect school for my college experience and other days I could only take comfort in knowing that my parents would let me transfer to another school if that was what I wanted. The timeline of my semester is reflected in the three papers. The first paper acts as my past, the second my present, and the third is my future. Each paper is a step in leaving home and learning to live and to study at college.

My first paper, *Embracing My Creation*, is a reflective paper on my past. In the paper, I describe how I came to accept myself for my disabilities and how I relied on others for support. As I was meeting new people and making new friends, it was very important for me to write this

paper. In order to have confidence in myself, I needed to find confidence in my past. Writing the paper was a confirmation that I am a strong person and that I do belong at college. In my first few months at Valpo, I was homesick and felt very nostalgic about my past. As it so often does, writing helped me to recognize my feelings and to make sense of them. In my original draft of the paper, I wrote about my grandmother. My grandmother had a brain aneurysm this past summer and almost died. I was away on a church mission trip and when I heard what happened to her, I immediately came home. Upon coming home, I wrote a note to her. Believing she was going to die within 48 hours, I had plans of burying the note with her. I wrote the note with no intention of her reading it but every intention of her hearing it. Four and a half months later, I wrote about her in this paper. Once again, writing about her helped me to share my feelings with the world. Even though I edited her out of my final copy of *Embracing My Creation*, I am very pleased with the final result of my paper. My last line of the paper is "I need to take their (my family's) support and move forward in my creation." And that is exactly what I plan to do.

My second paper in my portfolio is called *A Question of Interpretation*. This paper is my first ever theological paper. I have wanted to write a theological paper ever since I first became interested in theology. Ironically, it was a very hard paper to write. When I was in high school, I would read a passage from the Bible and immediately I would have many ideas about the text. I thought that once in college, I could easily write papers about my thoughts on the Bible. But the paper was much harder to write for me than I thought it would be. The difficulty in writing it demonstrates my present feelings about my future vocation. Maybe I'm not cut out for theology, maybe I've changed. Still, I am proud of my paper. Writing the paper took critical thinking. It served as a wakeup call for me. Because I used to be able to come up with theological ideas easily, I thought I would write college theology papers without much effort. I thought the ideas

would just come to me and I would be praised for my impressive ideas. That was an unrealistic expectation and I'm glad I realized that sooner rather than later. Nevertheless, it is part of my present life at Valpo. I have accepted the uncertainty of my future. I am proud of the paper. But I am more proud of myself for struggling with the paper, and in the end, conquering it.

Self-reflection naturally follows accepting uncertainty about a future vocation. The third paper in the portfolio, informally titled *freedom to be who you truly are*, gave me a chance to look at my future. No matter what my future vocation is I want to help others directly. I have known this for a long time. This paper allowed me to search for an injustice in the world and share my thoughts about it. I have always tried to accept others for who they are. And when it has come to the poor treatment of homosexuals in my community, I've been outraged at my community's intolerance. I could not find another topic that I could share my own experiences as much as I could with the topic of homosexuality. In writing *freedom to be who you truly are*, I have been assured that I still have the passion to help others. I have realized that there are many opportunities for me to do good in the world. While writing *A Question of Interpretation* concerned me about my future vocation, writing *freedom to be who you truly are* relaxed me and gave me hope about my future.

The following papers are a reflection of my past, present, and future. Writing them has helped me find myself, express myself, and change myself into a better person. I invite you to read the following papers and to experience who I was, who I am now, and who I will be in the future.