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548-91-1992

I grew up constantly questioning everything. After school, my dad would admonish me for watching CNN instead of doing my homework. But usually his gentle chiding quickly turned into political banter and my endless array of political questions. Recently, he told me how peculiar it was to see his ten-year-old watching *CNN'S Crossfire* after school. This early political interest may have seemed strange at the time, but it was really my way of piecing together my father's past. My father escaped the Communist country of Yugoslavia at the age of sixteen. His highest form of education was the United States equivalent of the eighth grade. Despite his lack of formal schooling, he constantly stressed the importance of education in my life. His words of encouragement, his courage to leave his homeland, and his passion for American ideals and civil liberties, inspired me to not only be the first in my family to attend college but to pursue *my* passion for politics and law.

The best decision I have made thus far in my young life is my decision to attend Saint Mary's College. I came to Saint Mary's College with a contradiction in terms. I had a keen interest in politics but an introverted personality that included a fear of public speaking. How would I fare at a Liberal Arts College where class discussion was integral to the curriculum? Although my dad may not have always had answers, and with his heavy accent, he may have left me confused at times, in the end, I remembered how much I learned by simply asking the question in the first place. When I started to speak

up in my college classes, the light bulb went off. I may have been afraid to speak in public but I was not afraid to ask questions. The more I asked the more my fears of public speaking were allayed. My job was to understand the world through reading books such as Plato's Republic and Saint Augustine's Confessions. Through more classes and more questions I decided to take a philosophy class. Of course, with all my questions, philosophy was a headache waiting to happen. I was not really going to get any answers to any of my inquiries, but simply, more questions. However, I learned that my questions became more succinct and more important than those that I had before. I questioned my way into an additional Philosophy major. Despite my busy schedule as the newly elected Student Body Vice President, I realized that the busier I was, the better my grades were.

When I called home to tell my family of my new position, my dad, his voice shrouded in a thick Slavic accent, asked to speak to "Dick Cheney." He told me how proud he was of me and to remember that I was a student first. Not surprisingly, my role in student government seemed to merge smoothly with my studies. During my time as Vice President for Student Affairs, I assisted in drafting new club charters and constitutions for on-campus organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Student Labor Action Coalition. Overseeing over forty on-campus organizations ranging from diversity clubs to recreational sports and student media such as the student newspaper and the campus television station was a constant lesson in management and delegation. I needed to change the way I made decisions. It was no longer about me anymore. Before I made decisions, I began to think about the whole, carefully considering how my actions would affect the groups I represented. As my appreciation and dedication for Saint Mary's College deepened, so too did my involvement in leadership causing me to take on

a bigger role as Student Body President. Thus far, as the Associated Students President, I have learned first-hand the process and politics of dealing with different parties. As President, I am the official conduit between students, the administration, and the Board of Trustees and Regents. While I keep in mind I cannot please everyone in every decision I make, I try to maintain a balance of decisions representative of the students' desires and those that are in the best interest of the College.

After a year of co-existing co-curricular activities and classes, I decided early on how I would spend my summer. I registered for a U.S. History course at a local community college, and spent my time working at a law firm owned by the former mayor of my hometown, Millbrae, CA. My first day on the job was spent discussing my interests and my duties. After my new boss learned of my passion for politics and constitutional matters, she assigned me to an attorney working on a case involving the First and Fourteenth Amendments. I spent hours in the San Mateo County Law Library researching past cases involving free speech and equal protection cases. I returned to the law firm with research in hand. The attorneys apologized at first for giving me a mundane errand on my first day. But the funny thing was, I enjoyed being surrounded by so much information, so many cases that asked questions upon questions and how different explanations were formulated. It prompted me to once again to ask more questions, particularly asking more of myself. My work at the law firm and my summer school class led me to register for a class on American Legal Institutions and an Honors Independent Study on the American Revolution and Early Republic. My rediscovered interest in History enticed me to add a minor along with my double major in Politics and Philosophy. It seems as I kept asking questions, I kept learning through a new leadership

position, new classes, or a new job. I learned more of my interests, my passions and discovered just how much I was capable of accomplishing.

My father's hope for me could be summed up in clear and proper English by Robert F. Kennedy. He once said,

The future does not belong to those who are content with today, apathetic toward common problems and their fellow man alike, timid and fearful in the face of bold projects and new ideas. Rather, it will belong to those who can blend passion, reason and courage in a personal commitment to the great enterprises and ideals of American society.

I was given the opportunities that my father was not. Opportunities of education and freedom. Four years ago, I began college with only a hint at what I could become. Now, molded by education and shaped by my faith, I understand I must blend what I have learned and been given into my future. It all started with a question and someday I will live into the answer. Until then, I will keep asking and keep learning.