

# THE COMMENTATOR

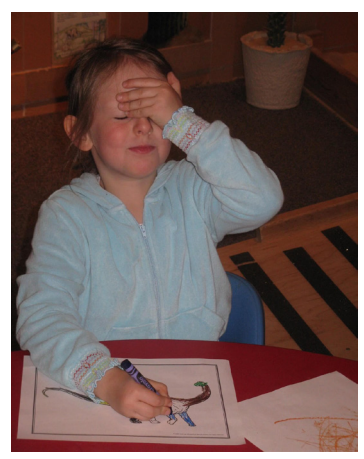
Vol. LXIX, No. VI ..... Douglas Southall Freeman High School ..... June 2022



**The Commentator Editors:**

**Top (L to R):** Jess Pruett (teacher), Jack Harenchar, Russell Nystrom, Cameron Cavender, Kieran Wall, Jack Kelleher, Grayson Horner, **Middle:** Annabelle Glassman, Riley Speidell, Maddie Cassidy, Sydney Tyler, Maddie Carpenter, Katherine Hynes, Claire Morris, Ella Hurlbert, **Bottom** Cindy Xie, Emily Waters, Taylor Widdifield, Isabelle Hevron, Daisy Fuller, Kristina Kang, April Miller, Emma Ridolphi **Not Pictured:** Brooke Ward, Hank Thompson

## Who's in Your Corner?



**Annabelle Glassman**  
Editor-in-Chief

If you've ever walked the halls of Freeman during fifth period, you've likely seen me, Riley, and Maddie sitting in the stairwell. From a few minutes into A block, all through B, with a lunch intermission during C, and, if it's a really dramatic day, back again for D block, we sit at the top landing of the stairwell that leads down all the way to the cafeteria. In the

stairwell, we share stories of our life, ask for advice, give advice, shop for clothes, draft important emails and even more important texts, open college decisions, cram for tests, make crucially important pro-con lists, cry, laugh, and more.

I was never very good at opening up to people before this year. Actually, let me rephrase that. I was really very bad at opening up to people. As a relative introvert, I prefer to keep things, especially feelings, hidden. At the beginning of the year, when Riley introduced me to Maddie, I would have never predicted how quickly I'd be able to open up to her. These two girls would come to form an all-important part of the people I count as being in my corner.

I'm shocked to be using a sports metaphor, but it's a concept I really like. High school, like boxing, is a time where getting hit so many times you fall down (hopefully not literally) happens often. Because of this, it is important to have people in your life who you can count on as part of your "corner." These are the people who are

here to celebrate your victories but, more importantly, to comfort you when you're down. In my four years at Freeman, I have found a community full of people willing to be in others' corners. This is a place where people work together, build each other up, and celebrate each other in an amazing way.

In freshman year, I would go to school early once or twice every week and Mrs. Pike, my amazing Algebra II teacher, would re-explain concepts to me, work through problems, and answer my inane and repetitive questions. Though I was the opposite of passionate about the subject she taught, she was in my corner from the moment I first asked for help. Throughout my four years at Freeman, there have been a number of teachers in my corner: Mr. Inman, who taught me civil discourse; Ms. Hunnicutt, who expanded my love for writing and motivation to work at becoming better; Mr. Abril, who exposed me to writers and literature that have become some of my favorites; Mr. Peck, who taught me not only how to think, but humored

me in debates (knowing full well he had the right answer the entire time); and Mr. Pruett, who has supported this paper and its staff through the challenges of virtual school, the highs and lows of senior year, and, well, the whole producing-a-newspaper thing. To these teachers and others who I did not mention by name: thank you. You are what has allowed me to get where I am today, and the lessons I have learned will continue to help me in the future.

The most important group to have in your corner is a good group of people to call your friends. Throughout my four years here, I met a lot of great people, but the ones who will stick with me are those who I could count on and who could count on me in return. I am forever grateful to these people for their role in making my high school experience what it was. If I have any sage advice to give from the other side of high school, it is to find these people and hold on to them for as long as possible. You may not know that you need them yet, but one

day you will. And, in my experience, the moment you realize you need these people, they'll be there.

I know this one is unpopular, but I'd be remiss not to mention parents and caregivers. I am beyond lucky to have my parents as my most enthusiastic cheerleaders and lifetime members of my corner. They were there for it all, from my horrific freshman cross country attempt to the college application process. Whether you find this relationship in a parent or another adult, it is critical to have this piece to your corner- people who are unabashedly proud of you and make it their mission to see you succeed.

So now, as I get ready to leave this place and these people, it reminds me of how important this idea is. To have a group of people that are always there for you. Think about this idea, and take the opportunity to thank these people for being there, because they will continue to be crucially important. I now walk forward into my future confidently, trusting that if I were to turn around and look, I would still see these people there.

## The Most Important Thing High School Taught Me



**Kieran Wall**  
Editor-in-Chief

For better or for worse, I've defined much of my life around my academic interests. Anyone who knows me or has been around me understands I have a tendency to become obsessed with whatever I'm attempting to learn. I know this seems like the lamest thing ever, but hey- all of you reaped the benefits of it with those Quizlets, so I don't want to hear any complaining.

Anyway, from early elementary school all the way until fairly recently, the core of my academic interests was history and politics. I was obsessed with learning more about the past and attempted to apply my knowledge to

present political situations. In eighth grade, my whole life revolved around my International Studies class in which we ran Moody's Model UN Conference.

Pretty much the entire reason I came to Freeman in the first place was for the Center for Leadership, Government, and Global Economics. I saw a program where I could continue exploring my fascination with history, philosophy, and government. My middle school self felt that when I clicked accept on my offer to attend Freeman, I was setting myself on the perfect course for the future.

For about two years, everything went exactly as I had predicted it. I loved my classes in the center, from philosophy to AP Human Geography. By 10th grade, my dreams of pursuing the liberal arts had materialized into a quintessential center student goal: I was going to be a lawyer working in Washington D.C. In this moment, my interests in history and politics became more than just fascinations, but rather a crucial aspect of the person I wanted to become.

However, as 10th grade turned to 11th grade, something

changed. It's hard to put my finger on exactly what shifted, but all of a sudden the topics that had occupied my curiosity for years- history, law, government- seemed so much less interesting. For months I tried to ignore this hollowness that had appeared in what I had made to be the core of my personality. This worked for a while, but I couldn't fight the sensation that the flame of passion that had kept me up late at night studying historical documents and press releases had gone out.

For some, it's probably easy to shake off changes like this. Everyone's interests and passions evolve over time; it's a natural part of growing up. However, because I had interwoven so much of my life (past, present, and future) into these topics, when I realized my enthusiasm for them had waned, I felt lost. In a lot of ways, junior year was rough emotionally. I began to question if the choices I had made based on these now lost interests had been mistakes. I spent hours stressed and confused about what I was going to do with my life now that I had lost my grip on

the thread of a guiding curiosity.

Part of what got me out of this sad place was finding a new thread. I had always appreciated the order and logic of math and science, but during this time I grew to love it. Although some are alienated by the cold and concrete nature of the hard sciences, it helped to fill part of the gap in my life that my burnout on history and politics had left. If you're reading this, Mrs. Vest, AP Chemistry was the hardest class I've ever taken but was exactly what I needed to snap out of the malaise I felt during junior year. I now plan to major in physics when I head off to the University of Virginia this fall. If someone had told my eighth grade self that this is where my academic interests would end up, I don't think I would've believed them.

However, the biggest factor in getting out of the junior year slump was recognizing a fundamental truth: it's okay, and healthy, to not define your whole life and personality around just one thing or one set of things. The most important lesson I learned in high school was not some an-

ecdote in history class, or even part of AP Chemistry- it was this revelation. What grew to define me was academic interests, but it could be anything for others: a sport, a hobby, or even popularity.

Over senior year, I've attempted to fill the gap not only with physics, but with other things like rock climbing, music, and the Washington Commanders (maybe I shouldn't have chosen that one). I found that having a variety of interests, rather than a singular academic-focused passion, brought me far more joy. While this new outlook on life is very much a work in progress and it is hard to maintain balance, at the end of the day it is well worth the effort.

If you know me, you know that I'm not exactly a big expressing-my-feelings guy. But I hope this article can serve as a guide for anyone experiencing a similar "I'm lost" feeling. Now, that's enough philosophical musing. Keep reading for a bunch of fun recollections of the senior staff's memories at Freeman High School. Maybe you'll learn some more lessons.

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# Have We Lived Up to Being ‘Mavericks’?



**Jack Harenchar**  
Online Editor-in-Chief

People aren't kidding when they tell you to make the most of your youth. To "cherish" your innocence and adolescence.

As I stand on the precipice of my adult years, I am at a loss for how I just completed four years at Freeman in what seems like the blink of an eye. Heck, make that 18 years in the blink of an eye. I still remember my mom dropping me off on my first day of high school.

I was halfway turned around as she tried to take a picture of me disappearing around the corner of Ken Moore Field from her rolled down passenger window. Now I sit here today, with graduation around the corner, writing one last article for "The Commentator."

To a school publication that has now withstood 69 volumes, I've been just another name to grace its pages. But through the stories I have told and the history I have been part of, I hope I will forever be a part of the Freeman story.

Last March, I had an opportunity to write an article titled "What 'Mavericks' Means to Freeman Students," reflecting on the school's transition to our new nickname/mascot after 66 years as "Rebels." What I found through my interviews with students and conversations with friends, was that feelings were mixed on our transition. While students were optimistic about the new name and its intrinsic values, there would inevitably be a reluctance to move away from a mascot that multiple generations of family members and friends identified with.

Between Tom Cruise's "Top Gun" and the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, the idea of the Maverick is

nothing new in American culture. If you can think back to those first Maverick t-shirts that are probably buried at the bottom of your drawer, if not donated already—just being honest, admin-Freeman chooses to define a Maverick as "an individual who thinks differently, blazes a new trail, breaks from the herd, and stands out."

From the get-go, students, myself included, believed that this definition was, albeit a good one, quite ambitious if we were really going to expect a bunch of 14-19 year olds to embody these values. Last year, knowing I was going to write the article that I did, on a whim, I emailed Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban. I had read that Cuban, probably best known for his role on CNBC's "Shark Tank," regularly responds to fan emails, so I thought I might as well give it a shot.

I emailed him a few questions about the concept of being a Maverick from his perspective as the owner of a multibillion-dollar sports team that we would share a mascot with. With some pure luck, though people still doubt that I'm telling the truth, he responded. In his short email that skipped the congenialities and jumped right to

answering my questions, he wrote that a Maverick is an individual "who has a dream and a vision and follows the path they set, to realize it." Adding that a Maverick "[loves] to learn, [loves] to help people, [and loves] to compete."

Now that seems like something more achievable for a bunch of high school students, right? Well, after nearly a year and a half having a new mascot under our belt, and as the first class to graduate with a full school year of the name will soon leave Freeman, I feel it's an appropriate time to assess how well we've lived up to these values.

For starters, I certainly believe that we have lived up to the ambition of thinking differently and blazing a new trail that the school has imposed on us. In 18 months, we've nearly transitioned entirely away from our old mascot and any remnants of postbellum ideals to "blaze a new trail" as Mavericks. The way students have shown their school spirit and continued to show their pride for their school certainly constitutes a new way of thinking and trailblazing in my book.

As for the values of a Maverick expressed by Mr. Cuban, I can safely say I see them embodied in the Freeman Family on a daily

basis. Whether it be a small goal, like getting a good grade on a test, or one of a larger magnitude like winning a state championship or getting into your dream school, Freeman students are not only dreaming big, but following up on their aspirations. With two state sports titles in the past year, a We The People team that finished third in the nation, countless Class of 2022 graduates attending top tier schools, and too many individual accolades to count, Freeman suffers no shortage of talent in and out of the classroom.

With that being said, we are still not perfect. We don't always get along, but can you expect us to? Families have their differences, and the Freeman Family is no exception. We are all here at Freeman to become better learners, but also better people. And despite our infrequent scuffles, I think that we are each well on our ways to achieve our goals.

While I will no longer have the pleasure of walking these halls, which I took for granted for far too long, I can confidently say that on June 16th, when I close this chapter of my life, I am leaving a better man. I will forever be a Maverick.

## My Favorite 'F' Words



**Kristina Kang**  
Design Editor

F-words are my favorite words: fiction, fantasy, filibustering, figure skating. And my favorite is probably not the word you are thinking of; it's food. More specifically, hot pot nabe.

Tender udon noodles, succulent tofu puffs, cabbage that melts in my mouth. Pretty much anything that can be boiled will be boiled.

However, what makes nabe special to me is that it reminds me of my other favorite f-word: family. More specifically the families I've created at Freeman (another top tier f-word, if I do say so myself). Here are some families and moments I've crafted throughout the last four years.

Let's start with the base of our soup: freshman year.

The smell of coffee wafted through my nostrils, bringing me what should be a sense of comfort ... yet, another scent clouded my nose: the burning smell of anxiety as we awaited our first class with Mr. Inman. Honestly, I'm not sure what made me so terrified. Maybe it was the absolute silence of the room or my crippling desire for academic validation.

The first conversation we had: no snacks in class. Not wanting to disappoint, I was determined to take this to heart ... well, that was until three minutes later when the smell of sweet mango drifted in my direction.

My friend Bella was snacking on dried mango and Mr. Inman had not noticed. Feeling empowered, I grabbed a piece. Just as the tangy flavor hit my tongue, Mr. Inman's head turned in my direction.

"No snacks in class," said Mr. Inman, disappointment dripping from his voice.

Honestly, I don't remember much after that. I got yelled at, Bella never got caught, I starved for the rest of Inman's classes ... and, this might be the lamest thing for anyone to dwell on, but it's become a core memory; an act of friendship, an act of disobedience, and an act that has left a mostly sweet taste. Thank you, Bella, for giving me the piece of mango (and April, Camille, and Claire for cheering me on) that lit a spark in freshman year.

Next, let's add the vegetables: sophomore year.

Just as there are varying vegetables in a nabe pot, here are some key highlights in a few words: current events (ft. Grayson almost getting kicked out), chemistry class, seeing "Ham-

ilton," the fever dream that was the Short Pump Mall, and our first (and only), overnight Model UN conference (Mr. Abril, thank you so much for dealing with us).

Okay, next we have the noodles: junior year ... uh, we were online ... April and I facetimes almost every day ... I surprisingly did well on my AP exams ... honestly, that's all I have to say.

Finally, let's finish with the meat: senior year.

We the People: the project I'd been hearing about since I was a freshman. I didn't know much about it except that I'd be stuck with my group for almost half a year. So, in senior year when Mr. Peck sent out the groups, I was nervous to say the least. I wasn't even three lines down the spreadsheet when I was pulled into a rib-crushing hug. "WE'RE IN UNIT FIVE TOGETHER!!!!" I look up to see three familiar faces: Camille, Sydney, and Annabelle.

6 months later: Best. Unit. Ever. I know, I know, it's kinda cringe, but I'm seriously thankful for this group (and Mr. Peck was picking this God-sent unit). From dubbing ourselves the "girlboss" group to GreenGate Starbucks trips; from our superstitious dressing habits to our kissing of the pocket Constitution; from winning best unit and team at Regionals to placing third in the nation; to Annabelle, Camille, and Sydney: I love you guys so much, and I'm eternally thankful that we got to spend the last six months together doing WTP (even if it meant being added to the NSA watchlist).

I can't talk about my Freeman Family without journalism. What started off as two-minute check-ins evolved into a group I'm thankful to have. To recap the last year ...

Issue One: let's say the calendar did not go as planned. Work that typically was given three days was given 12 hours. It was not a pretty sight; multiple files opened, printed sheets scribbled in blue highlighter, and four frantic individuals maniacally laughing in hysteria.

The rest of the year, fortunately, has been pretty tame. Of course, Russell and I cram out eight hours of InDesign every issue, which chips years off my lifespan, but I can't really complain considering how little I do for the rest of the news cycle. While I'll probably never forget the monster that is InDesign, what's more memorable is the "Commentator" experience outside the paper; the many amenities Mr. Pruett gives us access to, literally anything that goes up on the Promethean board, and post-issue parties (thank you to Daisy, our Journalism mom) are just a few things I'm grateful to have experienced. Thank you fifth period journalism, and Mr. Pruett, for the best school paper experience I'll probably ever have.

Well, that about does it. My nabe pot is complete. Thanks for an amazing high school experience, DSF.

## Becoming My Own Nystrom



**Russell Nystrom**  
Design Editor

In the first class of my first day of high school, the teacher made her way down the roll and finally reached my name. "Russell Nystrom?" she asked. "Here," I responded immediately. Then, she asked, "Oh, are you Campbell's brother?" I didn't realize it at the time, but this would be a common conversation on my first day of every school year.

Both of my brothers made their way through Freeman before I did, taking many of the same classes under the same teachers that I eventually would. This meant that every time I started a new class, the teacher already had expectations for the type of student, and person, that I would be.

Now, my brothers and I are quite similar, so I can't say I exactly floored my teachers with a divergent personality. However, despite our similarities, in my time at Freeman I've sought to carve out a sort of niche that my brothers did not have—a way to set

myself apart from them. I wanted to be able to say with confidence when I graduated that I was not just another "Nystrom boy," but instead I was Russell Nystrom.

To me, this niche took the form of being more involved in the school community than either of my brothers were. In my high school career, I have joined clubs like Equity Ambassadors and History and Human Rights, and I was also captain of the swim team. However, I found my single biggest niche and involvement in the school through joining journalism.

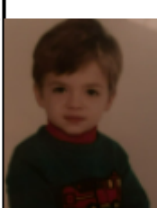
Because of journalism, I have been able to learn about happenings all around the school and activities that I never would have had any interest in otherwise. I've learned about student groups from Show Choir to the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) to the Marching Mavericks. I've worked with and met teachers and faculty of Freeman that I wouldn't have ever spoken to otherwise, from running last-second newspaper edits by Mr. Marshall to scrounging up last-second photos of Dr. Rodriguez and Mrs. O'Neal, and finally to my seemingly regularly-scheduled visit to Mrs. Phillips to ask if Mr. Marshall could pretty please—with sugar on top—approve the newest issue of "The Commentator" so we can send it to the printer on time.

Aside from interacting with students and staff at Freeman, I've found my own community in those joining me in journalism class. It has been a privilege getting to work alongside the other 36 students that make up the staff of "The Commentator," growing closer to them each and every day. While I started day one of journalism with

some of my best friends alongside me, I made countless new friends here as well. There were people I'd known since elementary school, like Maddie Cassidy, who I might have been able to count on one hand the conversations we had prior to this year. Then, there were people like Daisy, who I didn't know in the slightest until the newspaper brought us together. While my prior experiences with these two people couldn't have been more different (and, for that matter, those two people couldn't be more different), I have grown closer with them this year than I would ever have imagined. Then of course, there is Mr. Pruett.

Mr. Pruett: Thank you for all that you do for me, this class, and this publication. Thank you for being there to chat with me for two hours on the day I have class with you, and for two hours on the day that I don't have class with you (scheduled, that is). Those four years ago when I asked myself how I could separate myself from my brothers, I didn't know then that the answer would be the community and people of journalism. I will eternally be grateful for the fact I found my niche, and my answer.

Now, I know that when I walk across that stage on June 16th, I won't be crossing as just another "Nystrom boy"—but as Russell Nystrom. And now, just as I did in high school, I will once again be following in the footsteps of my brothers, becoming the third Nystrom boy to go to the University of Virginia. Once again, I will have to learn to differentiate myself from them. I just hope to find as incredible a niche at UVA during these next four years as I did at Freeman the past four years.

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2	<h1>AN ODE TO THE SHEETS</h1>	
3		<b>Grayson Horner</b> Online Editor-in-Chief
4	When considering the most impactful element of my high school career, it's easy to think of teachers, friends, or memorable moments. But no-throughout my high school career, no one has had my back more than Google Sheets.	
5	In freshman year, I was a novice. I used Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, and calculators. To say the least, I was clueless. I had no understanding of the vast breadth of functionality present in each and every spreadsheet cell, from A1 to Z1000.	
6	But my life changed senior year when I started to grasp the power of sheets. I started off using it to take notes on my Dungeons and Dragons campaign, and for my AP English Literature notes on "How to Read Literature Like a Professor." And while it might seem bizarre to take notes in Google Sheets, with basic mastery of merge cells and wrap text buttons you can create an oasis of little thoughts scattered about on the endless white canvas.	
7	Speaking of canvas, that leads me to my second use of spreadsheets; I employed incredible IF-THEN STATEMENTS to analyze data for the Rodney Willett campaign, empowering my canvassing abilities.	
8	It didn't stop there. My most prominent cellular function came with FreeMUN II, when almost everything was operated through a beautiful command hub.	
9	"What is a command hub?" you might ask. It's a hub where links, charts, and instructions are all centralized in one massive spreadsheet. For everyone to use.	
10	Of course, it just wouldn't be fair if I didn't mention that next year's "Commentator" staff have skillfully employed my very own spreadsheet task managers.	
11	So you ask: how can I employ these glorious skills in my own life- to gather data, manage groups, and take notes? Well, I don't know; but it never hurts to pull back the sheets and experiment.	



# Core Memories at Freeman



**Ella Hurlbert**  
Copy Editor

High school, for me at least, was overrated. There- I said it. That whole “it’s the best four years of your life” thing? Nah. The intense academic pressure during all four years was frankly unbelievable, and so were the ridiculously long hours required to work to A level in all my classes. Oftentimes, I’d end up working until I simply gave out and had to miss a day of school just to sleep! However, when reflecting on my time at Freeman, I can’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. Even though I wasn’t a fan of my high school experience,

I can’t deny that some of my best memories have been made with the people that walk Freeman’s halls. Here are a few of those memories.

**Ninth Grade ~ Project Citizen**

It counted for 75% of the fourth quarter grade of each freshman center kid. Needless to say, Project Citizen had us stressed out. We had been working all marking period on our 44-page written portfolio and oral presentation and were preparing for the nerve-wracking question-and-answer period in which we’d have to face various teachers (including Mr. Peck, who we were deathly afraid of at the time). My group had a seven-hour workday at my father’s office the weekend before our presentation so we could be fully prepared. The one break we took that day, in which we did nothing but run around the hallways giggling just for the sake of it, is one of my favorite memories of freshman year. It reminded me at the time that no matter how hard the work gets, it’s important to remember to be a kid.

**Tenth Grade ~ Chemistry Class**

Unpopular opinion, but I loved my Honors Chemistry class. I had the best workgroup. After the lesson almost every day, we’d have independent work time. I’d move

across the room to sit with two of my friends. There were a variety of laughs throughout the year, and far too many quotes that really should’ve found their way to the now-retired “Overhead Freeman” section of “The Commentator” ... or maybe it was best that they didn’t. Either way, I will always remember those classes fondly.

**Eleventh Grade ~ Camera On**

Ah, the era of virtual school. Can’t say I miss it. My sleep schedule was horrendous, and junior year through a computer was definitely a unique challenge. I never had my camera on during first period because, although I paid attention, I was pretty much always still in bed. That same camera standard applied to the breakout room I shared with my friend. I distinctly recall one day when I actually got up and got ready for the day before first period. When my friend joined our breakout room and my camera was on, he was genuinely happy- and perhaps proud- to see me again. I’m not sure if he knew how much that support meant to me, but in a time when I’d never been more stressed, feeling valued was huge.

**Twelfth Grade ~ Plenty of Good**

I think the biggest memory I’ll

carry with me from this year is participating in We the People. At the beginning of the year, I was not looking forward to it at all. Math and science come much more naturally to me than learning case law and aspects of The Constitution. But as we worked together, and continued to improve and succeed in competition, I began to realize I could hold my own. I was capable of more than I ever knew. There was a moment during Nationals that I will never forget. I was incredibly nervous, and the way my classmates and Mr. Peck rallied around me and assured me that I would do well was really touching. I wouldn’t have testified as well as I did all three days at Nationals without their support. And when my unit and I finished testifying, and it was finally over, walking out of the hearing room to see our classmates waiting to cheer for us, waiting to hug us and congratulate us- we mattered. I mattered. I’ll never forget that feeling. I appreciate you all.

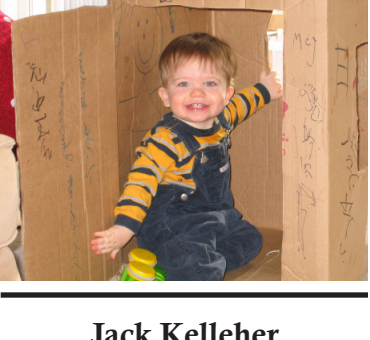
Here’s to being part of a We the People team that’s ranked third in the nation.

I have so many memories from this year that I hope I never lose. When I leave Freeman and many

of its students behind, I’ll miss the little moments. I’ll miss the late-night calls with my friend to study for math tests (I’m convinced that’s why we always nailed them). I’ll miss the continued pleas from my classmates to read the novel I’m working on (no, I’m still not ready for beta readers). I’ll miss laughing my way through statistics worksheets with my friend and math partner of three years (there’s some wild scheduling luck there, for sure, but thank goodness for it). I’ll miss foregoing the senior courtyard to sit inside with my underclassmen friends, who I’m going to miss tremendously (shoutout to my classmates and besties from Village Dance Studios- love you guys). I’ll miss our mandatory parties in journalism, and the general atmosphere of journalism, frankly. We annoy Mr. Pruettt to no end, I’m sure, but he loves us anyway. You know it’s true, Pruettt.

So even though high school hasn’t been all it’s chalked up to be, there is plenty of good I will carry with me. The best four years of my life will, I hope, start next year in college (Wahowa). But to all the people who made high school beautiful: thank you. Love you. Godspeed.

## Live, Laugh, Love (But Mostly Just Laugh)



**Jack Kelleher**  
News Editor

If you have ever been in the kitchen of a suburban house, you have probably seen a sign which reads “Live, Laugh, Love.” While obviously a bit cliché, this sign does contain a bit of wisdom, and since I am a 18 year old high school boy who has little wisdom to offer, I will steal a bit for myself. Coming from a family with Irish roots, humor has always been a fo-

cal point for myself and my family. The most commonly passed-down gene in our family is a wicked—and perhaps a little bit dark—sense of humor. This humor is rooted in centuries of a tradition of storytelling and oppression by British rule. See, the Irish used humor not just as a social device, but as a coping mechanism, and this trait is not strictly reserved for the Irish, plenty of other cultures use this as well.

So why am I saying this? To get to the point that learning to laugh is an important skill in life, perhaps more important than any other you will ever learn. And learning how to not just laugh, but find the humor in the bad. From dealing with something as insignificant as a failed driver’s test (yes, I have learned since that a school zone sign does not mean “business district”) to something as consequential as illness or death, laughter has always been my escape and can help provide relief.

An inability to laugh it off has been one of the things that I have seen fellow students struggle with the most. Many dwell on a bad grade or a mean comment, letting it affect them and their life long after it has passed them by. Making fun of something allows for a certain degree of control that few other methods can provide.

Laughing and humor in general also keeps us humble. If there is one thing that I have learned in the past 18 years of having two siblings, it is that no accomplishment puts you above a dig or roast, there is never a time when you cannot be knocked down a peg. Humor works in a similar way, stopping anyone from taking themselves too seriously, and as such, getting too high on themselves.

So try to keep it light Freeman. My four years here were filled with tons of great times and laughs, for better or worse. Thanks for everything.

## Life Behind the Scenes



**Maddie Cassidy**  
Copy Editor

One of my favorite times of year is the day of the PSAT exam. It is not because I enjoy taking the exam or like to spend my time sitting in a classroom full of random people or appreciate the one-by-one escorts to the bathroom during the ten-minute breaks. Rather, it is the hilarious aftermath of these tests and their ridiculous questions that make sitting for the exam fun. The College Board fails every year in their ability to regulate people posting memes online about various questions, and it never stops making me laugh. As a member of the Class of 2022, I was lucky enough to experience the 2019 PSAT which included a passage on ambiverts being the best salespeople because of their ability to relate to all sorts of people. As a person who covers in the decision posed by the question of “are you an introvert or an extrovert,” I felt seen and like I had finally found my identity. However, looking back on this breakdown of the types of personalities, I feel as though the simple categories are misleading.

I think that we are all instead divided into three categories of people for each activity we pursue: the audience, the onstage people, and the behind-the-scenes people. I hate that I’m making this a theater metaphor, but I am a theater kid through and through. I journeyed through all three of these categories to find the right place for me in theater alone. As an elementary schooler, I was onstage at every play, first to raise my hand for an improv activity, and a big participant in the Drama Club. I quickly recognized, however, that I was a terrible singer and could only excel in dancing when it is of the Irish variety and I don’t have to move my arms. I began to step away from the limelight when I started to get stage fright every time I was onstage- being an onstage person wasn’t for me. As a middle schooler, I took more of an audience role and maintained my participation in theater in a much more subtle way than I had previously. I quickly

started to realize however that I was not an audience member. I needed more of a hands-on role in theater that wouldn’t send my anxiety levels skyrocketing.

This hunt for a good level of involvement led me straight to the costume room in the Freeman Theater Department. The behind-the-scenes work of costuming included all of the things I loved and none of the things I hated. I could explore skills like sewing that had always taken a back burner in my life, spend time with the people I enjoyed, and still be involved with the activity. I loved without putting me onstage for longer than 2 minutes. I had zero speaking parts, which meant zero chances to freeze up once the lights shone in my eyes. That was heaven to me.

I found that this love for behind-the-scenes work does not only exist in the direct terms of theater but in all of my other activities. I thoroughly enjoy student government and planning school events, which I tried to pursue in freshman year as class president. Class president is very much an onstage role and not the behind-the-scenes role I was looking for, so I instead found my home in SCA. I could still choose school spirit days, decorate for school dances, plan school events, and do so with people I enjoyed spending time with without giving speeches and being the face of our class. But it didn’t stop there. My role in Paws for a Cause transitioned from an audience member who would support events and show up to meetings to a behind-the-scenes member when I became a historian. Furthermore, before I qualified for Thespians, I supported them as an audience member in fundraisers. I later took on the role of treasurer and helped plan events and coordinate our fundraisers. While I still take many audience roles in some clubs such as National Honor Society (NHS), Beta Club, and Freemanettes, it doesn’t mean I value them less. I have just found where I belong in that activity.

At the end of the day, I am passionate and grateful for every activity that I am a part of, even though I may seem over-involved and overbooked, which isn’t always completely inaccurate. It is what has made my high school experience memorable and one that I can look back on with pride. So here is my advice to you: get involved. It may sound cliché, but it truly helps you find your passions in life. You don’t have to be the onstage members in every activity you pursue, but if you even have the slightest interest in being an audience member, try it out! You never know ... in a few months, you may be the onstage person of that same activity.

## Have You Paid Your Dues?



**April Miller**  
News Editor

During the days of virtual education in the pandemic, I never could have imagined where our journalism class would end up. Logging in to a Microsoft Teams meeting to take notes or read aloud from the class textbook felt like a chore, just like many other classes, and the idea that one day our class would have a strong sense of community was unthinkable. However, from a class of strangers and acquaintances, we have become like a family, with our own senior superlatives and inside jokes, like the Rusty Taco restaurant or Grayson’s obsession with sparkling water. Unexpected friendships have developed along the way, and now the hour and a half that we spend in Mr. Pruettt’s room a few times a week has become the highlight of the school year. One of my fondest memories from journalism this year was

the first distribution day, when our first edition of the newspaper arrived at the school to be handed out. No one really knew what to do or how to handle the boxes upon boxes of freshly printed editions of “The Commentator.” We rushed around the room frantically, attempting to create an organized system for distribution. Some people sorted stacks of newspapers, pulled newspapers out of the box to hand out, or noted the progress on a spreadsheet, while others actually ran the newspapers around the school to various classrooms. This first hectic distribution day is the clearest indicator of the development of our fifth period Journalism II class. Now, we have distribution day down to a science. Everyone has a job to do, and we are efficient and effective in our deliveries. When this issue is completed, I am prepared and excited to deliver a few stacks of newspapers down to the lower floor and the annex classrooms one final time.

It is important to note how essential Mr. Pruettt is to our many happy memories as a class. Mr. Pruettt would often hang out with the students from behind his cluttered desk, laugh alongside us, and share in our inside jokes. Whether it was drawing on the Promethean board with us, projecting “The Great British Bake-Off,” or remaining a listening ear and an open mind, Mr. Pruettt has stayed involved in his students’ lives, and I can’t thank him enough for that.

However, my most heartfelt memory of Mr. Pruettt was not one where he shared in the joke, but when his own words became the joke. One day, shortly before Winter Break, a few students asked him to do something for the class- I can’t quite remember what it was- and he jokingly exclaimed, “I won’t! I’ve paid my dues!” This short quote quickly became the motto of the classroom, used and reused to the point of meaninglessness. Looking back, however, it means more than just a cynical teacher’s quip to his students.

As the year has passed, and I’ve become more and more inclined to give up on school (senioritis hits harder than expected), Mr. Pruettt’s words have given me the motivation to end my senior year on a high note. Until I could truly say that I had “paid my dues,” I stayed determined, partially as an excuse to avoid coming to terms with the future. This time next year, I will no longer be a part of the Freeman community as I will soon embark on the next chapter of my life: college. Recently, I have accepted and prepared for this. Now, as the year comes to a close, I sit back next to my classmates, drinking from Mr. Pruettt’s mini-fridge stash of sparkling water. I can truly say I’ve paid my dues to the school as I close out of the shared “Journalism 2021-2022” Google folder for a final few times. Journalism, it’s been a good year.



# High School: A Whirlwind of a Time



**Isabelle Hevron**  
Opinions Editor

September 17, 2018: The infamous tornado incident. I had just finished changing in the locker room for seventh period gym class when dark storm clouds began to roll in. Less than a few minutes after class started, Mr. Mey, our former principal, came onto the

loud speaker to announce that we needed to enter a tornado drill. My freshman class headed, giggling, into one of the health rooms, excited to miss a few minutes of playing floor hockey. If only we knew what was coming. A casual five minutes went by. Then 10. Then 15. By this point, we were growing impatient, as our phones were in our lockers and we had absolutely no way to entertain ourselves. Peeking out of the health room window, we saw an insane amount of wind and rain outside, and we realized that this might be an actual tornado. By the time 45 minutes had passed, we'd accepted that this classroom would be our home for a while.

My class, full of other new freshmen, bonded over this unimaginable experience for the next two hours. We shared laughs, fought over expired Smarties (thank you, Mr. Davidson), and dodged the water dripping from a leak in the ceiling. By the time the tornado passed, it was already 6:30 p.m.; the entire day was gone. While

we were initially upset at having to stay at Freeman beyond school hours, it became one of the best stories and memories I've made in this building. Looking back, I've realized that in many ways this massive storm has come to represent my four years here at Freeman.

Freshman year: The beginning of the storm. A combination of excitement and uneasiness. A million thoughts racing through your head. How bad is it going to be? How long will it last? Will I make it through? Freshman year is a time of uncertainty and the start of a new chapter. To me, it was cautiously walking into school on Freshman Friday (it's real!!!), getting extremely humbled by the jeers, jingling keys, and wall of newspapers from the upperclassman during my first pep rally, and ultimately learning how to adapt to high school life. In all honesty, freshman year was one of the most electric times of my life. I met my current best friends, played my first varsity tennis season, and made memories that will last a

lifetime. It was the year of firsts.

Sophomore year: The eye of the storm. After surviving the insanity of freshman year, sophomore year is a time to ride the momentary calm in the middle of the commotion. But it's not over yet; havoc is on the horizon ... junior year. Initially, my second year at Freeman was enjoyable. I had become adjusted to the schedule, I was testing the waters with two AP classes, and I had my routine down. Obviously, COVID-19 ruined the rest of the year, but the first half of sophomore year was mostly stress-free.

Junior year: The aftermath. Junior year can be summarized with one word: disastrous. Online school, five AP classes, and the loss of any sort of motivation I had left in my body. It was brutal. No football games. No pep rallies. No homecoming. It was completely and utterly draining, and no amount of money could ever convince me to relive this year. However, the sun started to peek through the storm clouds in the spring when my tennis team

won the state championship and AP exams were finally over. Things were starting to look up.

Senior year: The sun. We have (almost) made it to walking the stage at the Siegel Center. I will not lie to you, college application season is no joke, and you're probably going to feel more stressed than ever during the fall of senior year. But besides that, I got to experience an almost completely normal senior year, and for that I'm grateful. Front row of football games, early release, homecoming and prom, senior assassin, and the courtyard have shaped this into by far the most memorable year of high school. For those of you reading this, the end of senior year comes much faster than you think! Enjoy your time at Freeman and keep the traditions going! To the class of 2022, we've made it through high school. I can't wait to see what you all accomplish, and I will continue to hold onto the memories we've created together the past four years as we all go our separate ways. Congratulations!

## An Unexpected Blessing



**Cindy Xie**  
Opinions Editor

A click on an Instagram profile revealed three strange letters tied together: DSF. Seventh grade me understood that any sequence of letters in an Instagram bio usually indicated where that person went to high school. Prompted by curiosity, I asked my brother what school DSF was, and he replied, "Oh, it's Freeman." I had never heard of Freeman; my older brother went to Godwin, and I live in the Deep Run district. Honestly, I never could have predicted that "the best four years of my life" would be at Freeman. But, I can say with full confidence that coming here was one of the best choices I've ever made (sorry for the cliché!)

I am not sure what made me choose to apply to Freeman's center. Maybe it was the word "leadership" that stood out to me, but honestly, I think I went into it with a "Why not?" mindset. I was set on getting into Godwin's center program and going there; I wanted to pursue medicine, and my brother had an amazing high school experience at Godwin. When I didn't get into Godwin, I was crushed to be rejected from my "dream" specialty center. At that point, my options were Glen Allen or Freeman, and after shadowing a student at Freeman, I knew this place was the perfect fit for me. It seemed, however,

that all the signs were pointing towards Glen Allen: it would be closer to home, my friends urged me to go there, and I would enter the school knowing many people. Ultimately, it was the wildcard that prevailed: Freeman! It was a risk, and I usually don't take risks, but I followed my gut. I knew only two people going to Freeman, and I was completely unfamiliar with the environment surrounding the school. This decision was definitely a turning point in my life, so I want to reflect on my journey with this school- the school I never expected to find myself attending.

Freeman truly holds such a unique, unreplicable aspect that makes it somewhere I always want to be. For starters, the specialty center has constantly provided me with a smaller community within a community. This group of 45 kids, all so diverse in interests and personalities, has become a little family to me, and I have grown to love it. Is there often drama? Oh, absolutely. Do I occasionally wish I wasn't in the center? Maybe sometimes. But, the people here are truly amazing, and I have learned to embrace our "leado" stereotype. Without being a so-called leado, I wouldn't be at this school. I'm so proud to see all of us go from tiny, shy freshmen to grown-up (almost) college kids; without Freeman's specialty center, many of my closest friends and fondest memories of high school would be incomplete.

Moving on from the center, it would be simply criminal to not talk about the teachers here at Freeman. All the teachers are genuinely so passionate about what they teach and want to see their students succeed beyond the classroom. So much of the faculty in this school has affected me in ways I could never have imagined, whether it was through their wise words, small acts of kindness, or extraordinary knowledge. It is obvious that Freeman teachers just do it better; their quirkiness and candidness make them just as good

friends as educators. I will never forget the relationships I was able to develop with some of my teachers, and their dedication to teaching and learning will continue to make Freeman a better place.

The environment of infinite support that the Freeman community shares will always amaze me. Fall Friday nights depict a packed crowd of students cheering the names of football players who they may never have met before. An uproarious auditorium holds an audience giving a minute-long standing ovation for Freeman's spring musical production. Student volunteers fill the library every Freeman Focus to help their fellow students through tutoring. These are only a few of the ways in which we Mavericks come together to encourage each other in our personal endeavors. For me, being on the girls' tennis team as well as the dance team has illustrated how deep our school spirit is. Posters with my name on it or cardboard cutouts of my face are seen from the big gym bleachers and the outskirts of the tennis court fences. The special thing about Freeman is that we all just want to see each other do the best we can, and I am extremely grateful for this environment.

This school has taught me a lot- to name it all would fill up every single page of this publication, so I won't do that. What I will end off with is this ... everything happens for a reason. Getting rejected from Godwin made it seem like any chance of a good high school experience was eliminated. Coming to Freeman, a school that I had no knowledge of, ended up working out for the best. I am lucky to say that whenever I think back on these four years at Freeman in the future, I'll be smiling. No longer is DSF the school I furrow my eyebrows at; it's now the school that I am proud to say I attended. So, if for whatever reason, someone reading this is wondering if they should come to Freeman, do it. It'll be worth it.

## High School in Taylor Swift Songs



**Maddie Carpenter**  
Features Editors

My high school experience has been anything but normal. With a new principal, a changed mascot, and of course COVID-19, there have been very few constants throughout the past four years. One person, however, has stuck with me through all of high school: Taylor Swift. Unfortunately, I do not know her personally, but her music has been a huge part of my life during high school, and I have identified four of her songs that resonate with each individual year of my high school experience. My freshman year can be de-

scribed by the song "Fifteen (Taylor's Version)" from the album "Fearless (Taylor's Version)." The song quickly opens with the lyrics "It's your freshman year, and you're gonna be here for the next four years," which obviously is very accurate of my, and everyone else's, freshman year as well. Additionally, Taylor writes about meeting her best friend, Abigail, and going through the ups and downs of freshman year with her. This resonates deeply with me, because during freshman year I formed many new friendships which have lasted through all of high school. Freshman year was anything but easy for me, so I definitely leaned on my new friends when things were hard.

"Out of the Woods" from "1989" is the song I would choose to describe my sophomore year. This is the year that COVID-19 shut down schools in the spring. I was getting loads of work at the time schools shut down, so I thought I was "out of the woods" when I heard that schools would be closed for two weeks. Little did I know that I was not out of the woods, and that over a year of my high school career would be spent at home and away from the classroom.

I would choose "this is me trying" from "folklore" to describe my junior year. I started packing my schedule with AP classes during junior year, taking five in total. This, combined with spending most of the year staring at a computer screen, led to a major dip in my morale. The lyric that stands out for junior year has to be "I was so ahead of the curve, the curve became a sphere, fell behind all my classmates, and I ended up here." Before junior year, I was generally very academically motivated, but COVID-19 and my increased workload definitely took a mental toll on me. Thankfully, the option to return to school in-person was presented in the spring. I immediately took it, and my motivation and morale was quickly restored.

Most of you probably thought I was going to choose "22 (Taylor's Version)" for senior year. It makes sense as 2022 is our graduation year. However, I think that "Long Live" from the album "Speak Now" is more fitting. The song is really bittersweet. It is about moving onto a new stage of life but looking back on the fond memories of the past, which is exactly how I feel about graduating from Freeman. My favorite lyric is "Long

## "Waste it Not"



**Hank Thompson**  
Features Editors

In an attempt to reflect on my shortened stay at Freeman, I am reminded of a maxim that our school's namesake, Douglas Southall Freeman, kept displayed at his office: "Time alone is irreplaceable. Waste it not."

Freeman alone understood the meaning of this phrase. A prominent historian who studied every minute of the lives of some of America's greatest figures and understood the fleeting nature of time.

Yet as I reflect upon my time at Freeman School, I believe these words ring truer now than

ever. As the days creep down to the final deadline of June 3rd, I try to soak in as much as possible of the high school experience. Even the most normal of days have something to offer.

I distinctly remember leaving school one day sophomore year and turning to whatever friend was accompanying me that grueling walk to the church lot "Doesn't it feel like every day at school is the same?" Every agreed.

This is a dangerous cycle to fall into. As we saw with the Pandemic and virtual school, this daily monotony can quickly become something you yearn for. There is nothing I wanted more in those waning weeks of virtual school than to be back in this building surrounded by classmates and teachers I never knew I'd miss.

I made it my goal this year to never take for granted again those moments of school. No more turning out to earbuds or neglecting conversations. I sought to live everyday in the moment.

So that's my advice to all the students at Freeman, even the seniors whose remaining days can be counted on a single hand. Live in the present and take advantage of the time you have left with your peers. Make memories, have fun, join the newspaper. Godspeed.

## High School (Taylor's Version)

### "Fifteen"



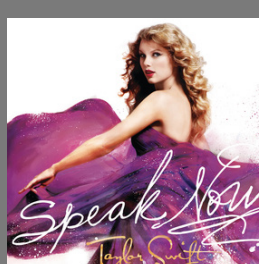
### "Out Of The Woods"



### "This Is Me Trying"



### "Long Live"



live the walls we crashed through, I had the time of my life with you." Senior year has been my favorite year of high school by a landslide. If you asked me how I felt about graduating before this year, I would have said I was looking forward to it, and would not miss high school at all. After this year, I cannot say the same. My favorite memories from high school have been made this year, so while I am still very excited to move on, I will definitely miss Freeman.

Taylor Swift truly has a song for

any scenario, emotion, or situation, and high school has 100% evoked every emotion that I possess at some point or another. Freeman, you have given me the most entertaining four years of my life and they will not be forgotten. Be sure to check out University of Virginia's newspaper, "The Cavalier Daily," in the spring of 2026 to see what four Taylor Swift songs go along with each year of college, because I would be shocked if I was not equally or more obsessed with her when I graduate college.



# 3 is an Odd Number



**Riley Speidell**  
Centerspread Editor

I like odd numbers. I have never been a math person and I don't think that numbers make much sense, but I've always liked odd numbers. I make a wish when I catch the clock at 11:11, and I think the clovers with three leaves look cooler than ones with four. My dad, who was born on October 27th, always wore the number seventeen in youth baseball, so I wore seven when I started playing tee ball. Seventeen was not an option, so seven was as close as I could get and I stuck with it until the end of my softball career.

Although seven is still my lucky number, I've noticed recently that the number 3 has more of a presence in my life than I thought. I was born in 2003. My bedroom is on the 3rd floor. My mom had 3 kids, and I see my life as a student at Freeman High School in 3 main parts.

When I decided to go to Freeman, my mom told me, "You'll get as much out of high school as you put into it," and I took this quite literally.

I have been on the Varsity Cheer team for 3 years and we placed 3rd in my first competition. In my 3 years on this team, I have held a number of roles, each presenting a unique set of responsibilities.

As an underclassman on a varsity team, I had the chance to observe experienced athletes. I learned the value of respect and experienced it as a two-sided exchange from the upperclassmen on this team.

When I became a junior captain, I had to get comfortable being

assertive despite being younger than my co-captains. As a senior captain, I faced the challenge of balancing my positions as a teammate, friend, and leader. Together, my team has experienced a range of emotions, from frustration with each other to heavy hearts as we realize that our time together fast approaches its expiration.

Being on the newspaper staff has also been a highlight of my high school career. Between English class, journalism, and Freeman Focus, I spend about 3 hours in Mr. Pruett's room every other day. From "necessary" parties to scrambling to make deadlines, this class has grown together as students and as individuals.

Although our first year of journalism class was online, the staff instantly bonded when school returned in-person. I have spoken with a myriad of people in all walks of life through writing for "The Commentator" and I am grateful for my 3 classes, and 3 hours, in room 208.

I have also served as an officer for the Class of 2022 since I was a freshman. For the past 3 years, our team of officers has remained the same. Through serving as a class officer, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with an interesting group of individuals.

In all my extracurriculars at Freeman, I have never had a plan go perfectly. In my 3rd year as an officer, we were tasked with planning a prom in a pandemic. Through this, I learned to be adaptable. Good leaders are ambitious, but not to a fault, and this is a balance I have worked to find in my time at Freeman.

I was accepted to the Center for Leadership, Government, and Global Economics when I was in eighth grade. Having 3 classes with the same students freshman year led me to some of my closest friends.

This year, my center class had the opportunity of participating in the We the People competition at the national level. At first, I was less than thrilled about this. We had been focused on the competition for about six months by the end of it, which is a very long time for what be-

gan as a group project in my eyes.

After spending hours with the same 3 people every other day, we were bound to encounter obstacles. This competition revealed to me some aspects of my classmates I had missed in our first 3 years together. We dance-partied our way through an exhausting final 3 days of hearings. In the end, we placed 3rd in the country.

As a team, we learned to work through challenges rather than around them and we saw that outlooks alter outcomes. The center gave me a family within a family.

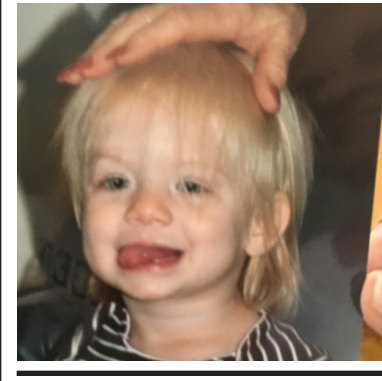
An extension of my Freeman Family is the family I have at home. All 3 Speidell siblings have been or are currently students in the specialty center at Freeman High School. My older brother, Connor, graduated in 2020 and Cooper is a sophomore. We take family seriously in the Speidell house.

My brothers and I have 3 grandmothers and 3 aunts. This year, especially, my family has gotten closer than we have been in the past, in part because we lost our grandfather. He passed away on February 10th, not the 9th, which would have been 3, 3 times. That would have been too easy. Daniel Murphy, better known as Dan, has 3 letters in his nickname and he taught me that what seems easy is rarely the most rewarding.

My family is my support system and, from them, I have learned that people need to lean on one another. I know that they will always encourage me and cheer me on. But they have also taught me that not everyone is as fortunate as I am in this department, so I should try my best to be there for those who need it.

I've never been a math person and I don't think that numbers make much sense, but I don't think that life makes much sense either. Life is an odd thing, really. I've been to odd places, I've met odd people, and I will cherish my odd memories. I like my odd friends and I love my odd family. They bring me an odd sense of comfort in the odd life I lead and, as I head into what I'm sure will be an odd transitional stage of my life, I know that the number 3 and all its odd lessons will follow me.

# Four Years Too Short



**Sydney Tyler**  
Sports Editor

In May of 2018, the Class of 2022 gathered for the first of many times in the auditorium, wide-eyed and anxious for Freshman Orientation and the beginning of our next chapter. I remember sitting in one of the lovely velvet chairs listening to the seniors say, "Four years will be over before you know it." At the time, I thought "There's no way it'll go that fast. Four years is a long time," but I couldn't have been more wrong. Whether it's because of missing a quarter of sophomore year or most of junior year being online, these four(ish) years have gone by in the blink of an eye.

On September 4, 2018, we walked into the building as Freeman students trying to find our classes in a new school and worrying if "Freshman Friday" was real. But it feels like just yesterday I walked from the church lot wondering what high school would be like and finally "took a deep breath and walked through the doors on the morning of our very first day." It turned out Freshman Friday was not real, and we capped off week one as part of the Freeman Family with a pep rally and our first home football game. It feels like just yesterday the band marched through the halls that Friday morning, the seniors put up newspapers when we arrived, and we questioned how much further back we could move in the student section.

The rest of the fall was characterized by the infamous tornado incident, our first Homecoming, and taking down Chop Chop Bob in gym class. When looking back at the pictures, it's quite obvious this was ... another time; it's hard to believe it was only four falls ago. Moving through freshman year, we started to figure out how to navigate seven classes a day and, for the specialty center students, the ever-dreaded focus questions (I'm still traumatized). Looking back, it's almost impossible to not cringe at the pictures, but freshman year was the perfect introduction to the Freeman Family. Before we knew it, we were back

at Freeman, but this time we'd slightly moved up the food chain. Even with our new classes and a block schedule, we were still stuck as underclassmen. However, nothing will beat the power trip of telling the new freshman to move back for the first time. Not even finally getting your learner's permit and driving for the first time with your parents screaming at you to slow down, even though you're going five miles per hour under the speed limit. Then, in March, we all cheered for two weeks or until we realized the rest of the year would be spent online. But the Freeman Family prevailed and found a way to bring us together, no matter how far apart we were.

While two weeks turned into two years, we started our junior year in our bedrooms. We definitely got the freedom we desperately wanted during sophomore year; we could eat lunch whenever we wanted and do schoolwork whenever and wherever we wanted. But something was missing. Instead of watching football games on Friday nights, we FaceTimed our friends from home. In March, we finally got to go back to school in-person and experience the dreaded one-way hallways and lunch in the Big Gym, but at least we were back. Even though we were apart, we found ways to stay connected.

Finally, we made it to senior year! In early September, we decorated our cars in the parking lot, so excited to see what this year would hold. And what a year it's been. From the first football season in two years to Powder-puff, Homecoming, Senior Prom, and We the People National Finals (Unit Five forever!) this year has flown by, but each moment was perfect in its own way. Now, halfway through our last spring sports season, it's hard to believe senior nights and graduation are right around the corner.

Each year of high school has had its ups and downs, unique moments, and some of the best experiences of our lives. But what we'll remember are the laughs at lunch and student section chants, not the tests we failed or those upperclassmen that yelled at us. While it's hard to believe it was four years ago that we walked through Freeman's doors as students for the first time, it's equally as hard to say goodbye. Thank you, Freeman, for all the memories and people we've met over these short four years, but Class of 2022, as Taylor Swift says, "It's time to go."

And to the underclassman: enjoy every minute, because before you know it, it will be your turn to walk across the Siegel Center stage.

# Keep Showing Up



**Brooke Ward**  
Centerspread Editor

"I won't let the seniors clock out" is a phrase heard by every student at least once during their final year of high school. What incites teachers to feel such a statement necessary? It's a little thing called senioritis, which hits every senior at some point during their last year of compulsory education, making them feel unmotivated and like their schoolwork is pointless. Some cases of senioritis are worse than others.

Unfortunately for me, my senioritis kicked in long before my senior year of high school- around when we were released from in-person schooling on March 12, 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, if I'm honest. For the rest of my sophomore year, schoolwork was "optional," and I, falling victim to the circumstances, allowed myself to disconnect from my schoolwork and focused mostly on outdoor runs and planning for my future. As I researched colleges, decided which major I wanted to pursue, and discovered the freedom that college ensures, I began to despise high school. Furthermore, through virtual schooling during my junior year, I realized that I could thrive in a virtual environment, and I personally didn't need the structure that compulsory education offers. This led me to enjoy virtual schooling as I was able to complete assignments on my own schedule and have more control over my daily activities, characteristics of college that

I've craved after years of conforming to the public education system.

By the end of my junior year, however, I began to miss in-person schooling because I wanted to be able to form relationships with my teachers and classmates. This was, essentially, the only aspect of in-person schooling I missed. But when I returned to Freeman in person, I was met with administrators making orders, teachers feeling extra upset about returning to uncomfortable working conditions, and students raging about their feelings on mask mandates. The return to in-person school was not the joyful experience I was hoping for. Instead of celebrating a return to some semblance of normalcy, it seemed like staff, teachers, and the student body were at odds with one another in various ways. The tension drove me to hate the learning environment I was forced to attend every week.

In February, I was accepted into my dream school: Virginia Tech. I'm planning to study political science on a pre-law track. The excitement was overwhelming, but my commitment to Virginia Tech pushed me to hate high school more than I already did. I was ready to move on, and I felt like most of my classes had nothing to do with what I wanted to study in college and were, therefore, of no importance to me. I was growing out of the lifestyle that high school enforces, and there was no escape; I still had four months until graduation.

I walked around school hating it for a month or two until I realized that there was no option. I had to go to school if I wanted to graduate, and there was no way I'd allow myself to not graduate, so I needed an attitude check.

THE ATTITUDE CHECK: Instead of focusing on the classes that I felt were unnecessary, I changed my mindset to enjoy my final days of high school. This was the final chapter, and I needed to make the most of it. Instead of focusing on the negatives, I turned my attention to enjoying the positives because,

in the end, the relationships I've formed with classmates, teachers, coaches, and administrators will outweigh the negative aspects of high school that I've experienced. Having a positive attitude changed my outlook on school entirely. I started to enjoy my classes much more than I had in former months when I dreaded going to school.

Softball, a sport I've played since I was three years old, was the most necessary factor in changing my outlook. I'm approaching my 15th year of playing softball. As most athletes know, burnout sets in if you fall into the trap of perfectionism and its prolonged physical, emotional, and mental stress. I've experienced burnout from softball for about a year now, but I believe that quitting is worse than pushing yourself to make it to the finish line. My finish line is the last game of my softball season at Freeman. After pushing for almost a year, I approached the beginning of that season which would be my last, and I realized that I needed to change my mindset. If I were to view the last season as a chore, I would be wasting my last opportunity to end my 15-year athletic career on a high note. After having that realization, everything changed. I began to view softball as a fulfilling, enjoyable experience rather than a task I had to complete before graduating.

My experience of burnout is not uncommon for high school seniors. We all want to go to college. We all want to live without a guardian ordering us around. We all want to leave high school. Despite these wishes, it is essential that we remember to enjoy our last leg of compulsory education because, despite the stress, the experiences that we make will last us a lifetime. Now is a time to be alive. It is the final stretch before feeling the long-awaited relief on graduation day, and that relief will only be diminished if you spend your senior year wishing you were somewhere else- so don't! Enjoy your senior privileges while you still can. This is your final chance to make the most of high school.

# High School- More Than Just A Stepping Stone



**Emily Waters**  
Sports Editor

How many times throughout the past thirteen years have we been warned about the "real world"? A place that won't be as easy on us as our first grade teachers, that won't love us like our parents, that won't look out for us like our high school coaches.

We're conditioned to see K-12 education as a stepping stone to this "real world"- a necessary step leading to the rest of our lives.

We are told not to take for granted our childhood and its simplicity. To enjoy the "good old days". But how are we supposed to truly soak in and enjoy the best years of our lives if we view it as an "in between"?

High school is much more than a stepping stone. We have to view the present moment as something to enjoy and appreciate. So as many of us head into our next phase, we should focus on seeing it as a part of our lives, not just a step to the rest of our lives. Because all those Friday night lights and "Sweet Carolines" are just as special and memorable as whatever incredible future lies ahead.

This isn't to say that these last four years haven't shaped us into who we are- of course they have.

Losing to Deep Run and Godwin after a hard-fought game showed us that character and sportsmanship are what people will truly remember. And winning against said teams with a crowd of excited students cheering us on reminded us why we wore the jersey.

Failing many AP Statistics tests taught us that we're worth way more than any grade (and that we needed to study a little harder next time).

Playing my last volleyball game made me reminisce on a little eleven-year-old girl who was so excited she couldn't sleep the night before her first "real" volleyball tournament. On senior night, like many of you, I wish I had taken it a little slower. Appreciated it more.

These four years have gone much faster than we ever could've imagined. And I'm not sure if everyone is feeling this way, but I'm left with the fear that I am going to forget some of it. What if I don't remember every journalism party? What if I forget how it felt to warm-up before a big game, or sing the national anthem before kickoff?

Although when we graduate we won't have it as easy as we did these last four years, high school is still the real world. Just because we still live with our parents and have the support of countless coaches and teachers and live within ten minutes of most of our best friends, the last four years are perhaps some of the realest we'll experience.

So, seniors, wherever you're headed, commit to experiencing it to the fullest. And everyone else with some high school years left ahead of you: take it all in. I know you've heard this thousands of times, but it goes by really fast. Cheer extra loud for me next season!



CLASS OF 2022  
WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?



Arizona State University  
Brock Smullen



Dartmouth College  
Alyssa Gagen



Bryant & Stratton College  
Daejha Johnson



Brigham Young University  
Jonathan Martinez



Christopher Newport University  
Alex Harris  
Lydia Harte  
Barry Jones  
Malina Kostic  
Matt McCabe  
Maggie Patten  
Kyle Schleicher  
Kenzie Temple  
Tommy Wasilik



Clemson University  
April Miller  
Kailyn Moye  
Ellie O'Neil



College of William & Mary  
Charlie Adams  
James Barber  
Paige Beale  
Maddie Cassidy  
Annabelle Glassman  
Grayson Horner  
Bradley Perkins



Columbia University  
Brett Bishop



Connecticut College  
Nate Elkin



Dickinson College  
James Wright



Elon University  
Corey Gutenberger  
Britt Mauck  
Ryan Pleasants



Fairfield University  
Olivia Bargatze



Ferrum College  
Manny Harris



Florida State University  
Sydney Greiner



George Mason University  
Nick Siler



Hampden-Sydney College  
Lucas Hite  
Davis Cauble  
Owen Fallen  
Eddie Allen



J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College  
Fernando Urquilla  
Cristian Reyes  
Nayzeth Cervantes  
Roblero  
Alisha Rahman  
Bodhi Atkins  
Chris Bailey  
Roneryl Dantzler  
Dani Ensminger  
Ryan Evans  
Olivia Goodman  
Reed Greenfield  
Lyssa Holt  
Anh Huynh  
Baron Wright II  
Greyson Jalette  
Amber Jerez  
Kristian Jones  
Emely Leon  
Mayerli Molina  
Fazila Orpee  
Sofia Reyes-Marye  
Chyna Ross  
Lutvo Salihovic  
Siegfried Santos  
Kamron Tucker  
Gracie Wells  
Cynthia Wright  
Zeky Sangiray  
Leslie Zuniga-Montes  
Ian Aguilar



James Madison University  
Natalie Shults  
Avery Berkshire  
Brennan Berry  
Alex Boyce-Draeger  
Will Campbell  
Vinnny Coriaty  
Preston Davis  
Emmanuela Deng  
Gabe Ehemann  
Owen Fogarty  
Daisy Fuller  
Daniel Fuller  
Thomas Givens  
Claire Greene  
Nathan Gustavson  
Jack Harper  
Michael Hiller  
Tadhg Leahy  
Aidan Mckeon  
Peyton Meadows  
Colby Rasmusson  
Mitchell Riggan  
Will Robbins  
Parker Shepherd  
Holden Strayer  
Lauren Witmer  
Eliot Zedd



Johnson C Smith University  
Maya Tucker  
Amaya Johnson



Longwood University  
Landon Romanosky  
Chloe Ellen  
Yasmin Lopez  
Chandler Tinsley



Loyola University Chicago  
Camille Kidwell



Mary Baldwin University  
Jay Lewis  
Donald Rawlings



Marymount Manhattan College  
Lily Bowman



New Jersey Institute of Technology  
Rob Rountree



North Carolina State University  
Molly Fratkin  
Madeline Holdren



Old Dominion University  
Zadea Chism  
Roland Davis  
Isaiah James  
Jahidi Kouroma



Patrick Henry Community College  
Trey Shelton



Radford University  
Bridget Amrhein  
Riley Campbell  
Ashton Elander  
Aidan Smith  
Hank Warner  
Andrea Whitaker



Randolph-Macon College  
Eliza Lowrey  
Emma Jacoby  
Angelica Tufaro



Richard Bland College of William & Mary  
Shimyra Gillespie  
Andrew Bottari  
Carson Herod  
Victor Vasquez



Roanoke College  
Dell Vidunas



Shippensburg University  
Emmaline Erikson



South Carolina State University  
Johnna Brown



Temple University  
Zoe Ardush



The Catholic University of America  
Drew Bryner



United States Naval Academy  
Julia Pellet



Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore  
Morgan Pustilnik



University of Alabama  
Virginia Garner  
Grant Miller  
Taylor Shumadine



University of Colorado  
Evan Reynolds



University of Connecticut  
Hayden Simpson



University of Dayton  
Bella Fowler



University of Florida  
Tania Perez



University of Georgia  
Abbey Bruce  
Josh Evans  
Katherine Hynes  
Lucy Larkin  
Hank Thompson  
Sydney Tyler



University of Hawaii  
Mariam Hobbs



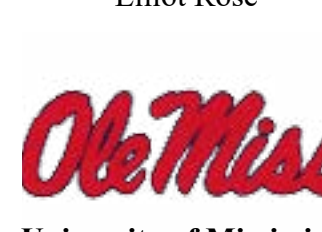
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Lucy Van Lenten  
Mario Orengo



University of Mary Washington  
Jackson Beale  
Juliette Brookman  
Niamh Creighton-Preis  
Jamie Grahek  
Jackson Peterson



University of Michigan  
Rachel Gordon  
Elliot Rose



University of Mississippi  
Claire DeSouza



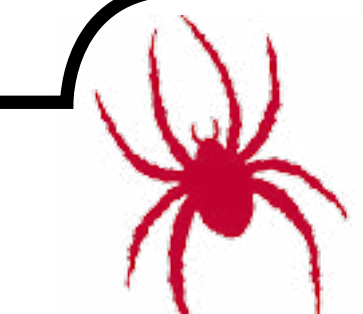
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Zach Wachtel



University of North Carolina - Wilmington  
Jackson Rabon



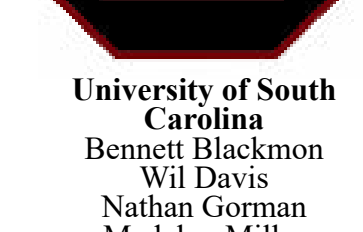
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Jack Harenchar  
Jack Kelleher  
Caroline Zorn



University of Richmond  
Adeng Malu  
Ben Mayes  
Claire Morris



University of South Carolina  
Bennett Blackmon  
Wil Davis  
Nathan Gorman  
Madelyn Miller  
AnnDouglas Rabon  
Riley Speidell



University of Tennessee  
Zane Gurkin  
Isabella Cavallo  
Haiden Curtis  
Jilly Duffy  
Brandon Turnage  
Aubrey Walker  
Sophia Georgiadis  
Charlotte Hare



University of Vermont  
Alice Correa  
Eli Schulman



University of Virginia  
Ella Appich  
Walker Beck  
AK Canavos  
Maddie Carpenter  
Cameron Cavender  
Joseph Chambers  
Spencer Cox  
Roopa Das  
Ian Donnellan  
Evie Gouldin  
Ella Hurlbert  
Kristina Kang  
Gio Mazzeo  
Caroline McDevitt  
Johnny Metinko  
Harrison Monette  
Sam Moran  
Sagar Murthy  
David Nu Nu  
Russell Nystrom  
Jack Phillips  
Max Sanne  
Kieran Wall



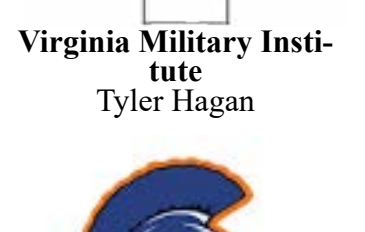
UNOH University of Northwestern Ohio  
Zoe Bell



Virginia Commonwealth University  
Zaid Ahmad  
Lama Ahmed  
Nafisa Anjum  
Macarios Atia  
Elisa Begic  
Greysin Bennett  
Jason Brown  
Alicia Casolaro  
Haley Coulbourn  
Ilhana Dzamdzie  
Grady Game  
Dani Henry  
Virginia Johnson  
Mya Jones  
Richany Lak  
Andralyn Lesley  
Munshi Mohiuddin  
Daniel Morrissey  
Jessica Nguyen  
Sithmi Rajaguru  
Maria Rezk  
Martina Rezk  
Emma Ridolphi  
Jack Ridolphi  
Emily Sanchez  
Macho Santiago  
Cele Sharma  
Lucy Strauchler  
Troy Vu  
Marisa Walthall



Virginia Military Institute  
Tyler Hagan



Virginia State University  
Jahrell Home



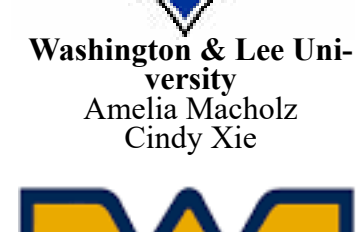
Virginia Tech  
Ryan Alexander  
Luke Bitsko  
Jeb Brown  
Beth Ann Cortright  
Eram Elgaali  
Colin Estrada  
Sam Gavin  
Chase Hendricks  
Isabelle Hevron  
Seth Holtz  
Ethan St. John  
Grace Johnson  
Kelly Mollenauer  
Luke Morton  
Meredith Murphy  
Alexandra North  
Vivian Payne  
Grace Phaup  
Kaitlyn Plemons  
Gray Proffitt  
Katie Robbins  
Charan Sama  
Sam Shaia  
Riley Spoenlein  
Brooke Ward  
Emily Waters  
Clarke Wickham  
Taylor Widdifield  
Mads Kuriger



Wake Forest University  
Blair Bishop  
Ella Glaze



Washington & Lee University  
Amelia Macholz  
Cindy Xie



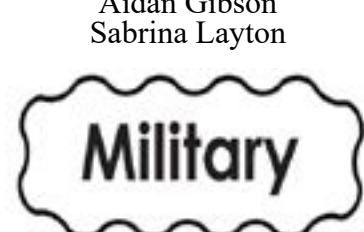
West Virginia University  
Robbie Acree



Yale University  
Aidan Gibson  
Sabrina Layton



United States Navy  
Logan Mackintosh



Workforce  
Aidan Baird  
Emonie Bates  
Jalen Belton  
Jackson Maguire Brantley  
Alexis Bryant  
Marce Castaneda  
Brayden Coleman  
Angie Cruz  
Kameron Giles-Morris  
Kennon Hopson  
Asma Karimi  
Benjamin Neurohr  
Elyas Ozbek  
Yenifer Ramos  
Johnie Rodriguez  
Jack Slone  
Staceyonna Hobson  
Eirini Theocharidis  
Steve Wilson  
Hana Zinat



# Journalism Superlatives



**Daisy Fuller**  
A&E Editor

**Maddie Carpenter:** Most Likely to be on a Reality TV Show. M-Carp is the quintessential TV character- truly our resident Kourtney Kardashian. She never misses a beat. She remembers everyone's inside jokes, loves some good drama, and brightens up whatever room she walks into.

**Maddie Cassidy:** Most Charismatic. Maddie is one of the most genuine people I have ever met. She is always there to support her friends and takes charge during difficult times (like when Mr. Pruet's room needs a redesign). She is the person to call on in a jam and will be there for you with a smile on her face.

**Cameron Cavender:** Best British Accent. If you see Cam on the streets, listen closely when he talks and you'll understand. Just do it. Beyond his British accent, Cam is easily one of the coolest, funniest people I have ever met, and even though I've only known him for a few months, I consider him one of my best friends.

**Annabelle Glassman:** Most Likely to Succeed. Annabelle, our beloved editor-in-chief, is the most driven and focused person in every room she walks into. Her motivation is astounding and her personality is infectious. If you called me up in 20 years and told me Annabelle just became the highest paid CEO or the president, I'd believe it in a heartbeat.

**Jack Harenchar:** Best Dressed. If you're into 2010s era Vineyard Vines vests and salmon pink button-ups, Jack is the fashion icon you need. Jack, you are one of a kind. It truly breaks my heart that I won't be able to annoy you



daily next year, but don't worry. I'll still attempt to over text.

**Isabelle Hevron:** Best Laugh. In journalism, we have quite a lot of laughs. A lot. However, Isabelle's laugh in particular is wildly infectious and always brings a smile to my face.

**Grayson Horner:** Biggest Gossip. The thing about Grayson is he is always ready for the drama. Grayson, you are truly the funniest person I know, and my go-to when I need to know the dish. Thanks for always being my confidante and helping me make lists and webs ... iykyk.

**Ella Hurlbert:** Most Likely to be a "New York Times" Best-Selling Author. At the ripe age of 18, Ella has already written two and a half novels. Her commitment is inspiring, and I can't wait to see what the future holds for her.

**Katherine Hynes:** Most Unforgettable. Katherine, you know how much I love you. You are truly unforgettable. Your personality is emblematic and always has been. You are one in a million, and I am so lucky to call you my friend.

**Kristina Kang:** Best Personality. I didn't know Kristina until this year, and boy have I been missing out. Kristina is easy to talk to, kind, funny, and will always be there for you. Kristina,

I am so happy I met you and wish you nothing but the best.

**Jack Kelleher:** Most Sarcastic. After talking Jack's ear off every other day for the past year, I have learned that he is a master of sarcasm. Kelleher, I am so glad we became friends this year. Thanks for listening to my ranting and always matching my humor.

**April Miller:** Most Likely to Win in a Fight. Although Brooke won our girls' fighting bracket (no actual fighting involved, we promise Mr. Marshall), my money is on April to take someone down. April is strong, determined, and bold. April, I love you and hope to never be on your bad side, as I wouldn't last ten seconds in the ring with you.

**Clarie Morris:** Biggest Surprise. Claire is quiet when you first meet her, but under the surface she is one of the silliest, most personable people I have ever met. If you are ever bored or in a bad mood, just go to the upstairs resource room and find Claire. I guarantee she will put a smile on your face.

**Russell Nystrom:** Most Likely to Attempt a Coup. Warning to the UVA school newspaper editor-in-chief: he's coming for your job. When Russell isn't planning a coup he is one of the most sensational people I know.

Big Man Rus, know you can always count on me for assistance if you ever decide to take over the world. I know you can do it.

**Emma Ridolphi:** Most Patient. Emma's genuine kindness and patience is truly remarkable. Emma manages to diligently complete tasks within the madness that is fifth period journalism, which I believe is pretty close to impossible.

**Riley Speidell:** Everyone's Biggest Cheerleader. A cheerleader not only on the field but in her everyday life, Riley never fails to lift someone up and boost their confidence. Riley is pure sunshine, radiant and beautiful; her energy is unmatched. Riley, your constant positive attitude and generous heart inspire me, and I am in constant awe of your spirit.

**Hank Thompson:** Most Likely to Trip at Graduation. If your friends are all laughing about someone who fell down the stairs on his way to class, there is about a 90% chance they are talking about Hank. But in all seriousness, beyond his clumsiness Hank has so many attributes that I can't even begin to list. Hank is my best friend and I know I can count on him for support and encouragement at any time.

**Sydney Tyler:** Most Likely to Win "The Hunger Games." Syd-

ney is wildly determined, cunning, and fast on her feet. I seriously think she could take down Katniss Everdeen any time, anywhere.

**Kieran Wall:** Most Intimidating. If you need an extension on your article deadline or want to know what Kieran's zodiac sign is, good luck ... just kidding. Kieran Wall may seem tough when it comes to the journalism timeline or completing his physics homework, but deep down he is all fluff. Kieran is a great guy and anyone would be lucky to call him a friend.

**Brooke Ward:** Most Likely to be MIA. Brooke, I am writing this in journalism class right now and have no idea where you are. I'm going to go ahead and assume you are working on a Pulitzer Prize winning article, and not just wandering the halls...

**Emily Waters:** Most Entertaining. Emily is funny, spirited, and always has a good story to tell. I know I can always count on Emily to turn my day around with her exciting personality.

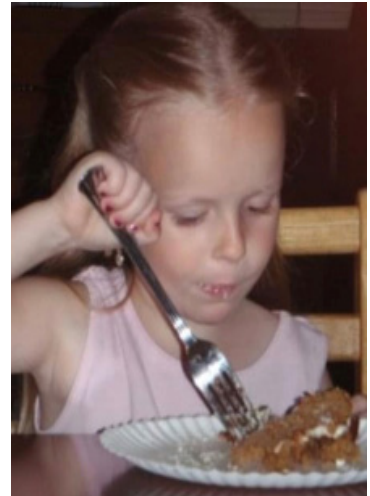
**Taylor Widdifield:** Most Tallies. Taylor is one fierce and feisty girl. During the time of our infamous swear jar, she won with absurd amounts of tallies accumulated daily (let the record show I was a close second). Taylor, your bold attitude is the necessary spice needed in this class and I am lucky to call you my section co-editor.

**Cindy Xie:** Best Person to be Stranded on a Deserted Island With. I feel like Cindy would be able to protect me from whatever any island could throw at us. She is smart, fearless, and someone I could count on to endure the elements with.

**Mr. Pruet:** Best Teacher Ever. Self-explanatory. Mr. Pruet, you are truly the most amazing teacher, and you have made my senior year memorable and exciting. Thanks for putting up with our antics all year. We love you.

And finally... **Daisy Fuller:** Coolest Person Ever. Self-love, am I right? This class has been the highlight of my senior year by a landslide, I love my "Commentator" family forever.

## Shoutout to my Teachers!



**Taylor Widdifield**  
A&E Editor

In my time at Freeman, I've had the honor of learning from some spectacular teachers, especially during my senior year. As I prepare to graduate, I want to give a shout-out to some of the teachers that have made my high school career a little brighter!

Of course, I'm starting off with Mr. Pruet. I'm so grateful to have had such an amazing journalism teacher for the past two years! From college advice to just being there for his students, he embodied the definition of a "trusted adult." He really made my senior year better, and I'm positive most of his students feel the same way!

Obviously, Mr. Seegar had to make my list! While he may have been prone to getting easily frustrated by his students, it was typically justified, and he always seemed like a dad who was disappointed in his kids. It

was definitely effective at motivating us, because we wanted to make him proud. Mr. Seegar's class was always a great way to start my day. Thank you, Mr. Seegar!

As a student in the center, there's no way I could write this article without including the icon that is Mr. Peck! His ethics class could've made anyone question their entire existence ... which meant he was doing his job well! While he was very blunt, we all knew he cared deeply about us. He also put up with my constant questions, which is pretty impressive! Finally, we can't forget how he coached our We the People team all the way to a third place win at the national competition. Thank you, Mr. Peck! You're the best.

Quick honorable mentions go to Ms. Beaton, Mr. Schuster, and Mr. Lewis! Ms. Beaton was so easy to talk to, had an amazing personality, and she put up with a lot from her statistics class, and trust me, she'll definitely know exactly what I mean. Go Hokies, too! Mr. Schuster was an amazing English teacher, who was really personable, and definitely helped us improve our analysis skills! Oh, and thanks for showing us poets.org! Lastly, Mr. Lewis is well aware how much his center kids love him, but he deserves the shoutout anyway! He was an all-around amazing teacher, and I always knew I could count on him. Thank you to all the teachers I've had over the years. Every one of you has made my high school experience special!

## Don't Take Anything For Granted



**Cameron Cavender**  
Sports Editor

We all remember coming into high school and hearing "it'll be gone before you know it" and "enjoy it while you still have it" from parents, teachers, and coaches. Hearing those words over and over, I could only think about how senior year felt lifetimes away. Four years later, I agree with them 100%. I hate to say it, but they couldn't have been more right.

Quarantine really put this into perspective for me. Before the pandemic, I felt like I was just going through the motions everyday. Each day was the same as the last. Going to school seemed like a chore everyday, and while it still feels like one sometimes, I've come to appreciate it a little more. Sitting in my room in front of a screen everyday made me realize how much I missed normal life, and I noticed that I'd been taking the little things in life for granted for too long. I missed seeing my friends at school. I missed going out on the weekends. I missed baseball practice and going to the gym. I missed having fans in the stands during big games.

Now that the end is in sight, I feel that I'm living more in the moment, because I realize that each minute, each hour, and each day leads me closer to graduation, and I'll be going off to college

before I know it. And as the end nears, I find myself often reflecting on what led up to this point.

This is especially true on the baseball field, where I'm playing my senior season with a special group of guys that have a true chance to achieve. If you've grown up playing any sport, you've likely heard parents and coaches tell you that they'd "give anything to trade places with you," and big surprise, they were right again.

I've been playing baseball since I was four, and I truly would give anything to go back and do it all again. I've always been number seven, my dad number eight right beside me, and my mom has been my biggest fan since day one. My favorite picture shows my dad and I walking side by side when I was younger (when he could still say he was taller than me). A father's arm around his son, wearing the Cavender name and numbers seven and eight proudly on our backs, as we prep for a big game. Oh, what I would do to go back to that moment.

As the season's end inches closer, and especially on senior night, you might get some tears out of me- something you don't see very often. I dread the day that I put on the pinstripe 22 and the gray 45 jersey for the last time (don't ask why I have two numbers). I'm not sure what my baseball journey has in store for me next. I plan on giving it my best shot to continue on playing in college and beyond, both dreams of mine since I was young. Regardless of what happens, I don't know who I am without the sport, and I'm grateful for how it has influenced me so far.

In terms of high school, I still remember the very beginning of my journey here at Freeman. I remember my interview with Mr. Peck so I could come to school here. I remember that shy, quiet, tall, short-

haired red-head that came walking in the school doors four years ago, and I realize how much I've changed as a person since then, with Freeman playing a big role in shaping me into who I am today.

However, I feel that most of us reach a point during high school where we are ready to move on to bigger and better things. I'm still enjoying my last few moments here, but part of me is chomping at the bit to start the next chapter of my life.

Maybe I'm alone in feeling this way, as I feel I'm in a pretty unique situation heading to college. I'm lucky enough to be heading off to my dream school with almost all of my best friends coming with me.

But while I'm conflicted between wanting high school to last forever and wanting to move on, part of me knows that I'll come to miss it all. I'll miss the Friday night football games. I'll miss seeing my friends every single day. I'll miss hearing the chatter of teammates and fans cheering me on in rivalry games.

I want to take this chance to send a message to underclassmen. Listen to adults when they tell you to enjoy your time in high school, because it's easy for the days to blend together, and before you know it you'll be grown up and going to college. Don't take yourself too seriously, try new things, go to social events, and meet new people. You only get one shot at high school, so give it your best one.

Thank you Freeman for four of the best years of my life. Four years that changed me and molded me into the man I am today. As I move on, I'll look back down the road and have no choice but to smile at the memories I made, the experiences I had, and the friends I made here. Three things that will stick with me forever.

Forty five, twenty two, and seven ... out.



# A Series of Unfortunate Vignettes



Lily Bowman  
Staff Writer

Though the Class of 2022 was blessed with a completely normal freshman year and semi-normal senior year, the years in between have been an absolute catastrophe. From natural disasters to a world pandemic, this year's class of seniors has experienced it all. The following editorial will consist of a ranked list of Freeman's most disastrous events from 2018 to 2022.

## Friday, the 13th

Undoubtedly the most tragic of these events, COVID-19 presented many challenges for the Class of 2022. Having entered our second year of high school, we were living off the high of no longer being considered irritating freshmen. We were able to enjoy football games without being nearly thrown off the back of the bleachers. We didn't

know all this excitement would be ended by the ring of the dismissal bell on Friday, March 13, 2020.

Just when everything was going our way and the end of the school year was finally coming into view, COVID-19 shut down the entire world. When we left school that fateful Friday, everyone said, "see you in two weeks" and we went our separate ways. Spring break plans were finalized and it seemed as if summer might come early for us. This wish was, of course, not the outcome. Suddenly, our whole class was isolated from each other. We talked every day only from the comfort of our own homes. TikTok became an addiction to which we sacrificed many sleepless nights. Socially-distant picnics served as our "lunch break," when really it was an excuse for us to leave the confines of our houses.

## The Tornado Hostage Situation

On September 17, 2018, barely three weeks into freshman year, the sky went dark and winds began to blow at unimaginable speeds. During the last block of the day, which happened to be Algebra II for me, Mrs. Kilberg was attempting to engage us while every student in the room stared blankly at the clock waiting for the bell. Startling everyone, phones started blaring with weather alerts ... tornado warnings. Mrs. Kilberg kept

teaching until an announcement over the loudspeaker directed us to "duck and cover" along the walls of the hallways. Lucky enough for me, I was at the end of the line leaving the classroom, so I got placed right next to the door of Green Acres- the one that led outside. We were all sitting happily on the floor when the door beside me swung open, giving me a prime view of the dangerous elements outside. Next thing we knew, we were swept into random classrooms by random teachers, no longer with our same classes.

Cramped in a room with many unfamiliar faces for hours, phones started dying, and no one had any chargers, so we eagerly looked for anything to entertain us. I ended up listening to Mr. Podonly reread "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein at least three times from where he was perched atop a stool on top of his desk (so we could all see him, of course). Green Acres eventually started to flood, so the teachers began crowding us into the main hallway where we all waited until finally, after three hours, we were released back into the wild. By the time I reached the tennis courts, several inches of water were covering the ground. Students still flew through the puddles with complete disregard to how utterly soaked they were

becoming, opting to sprint to their cars rather than attempt to stay dry.

## Fire Drills

The best prank anyone has ever pulled? Three fire drills during the same class period.

Mrs. Curry's AP European History class was going smoothly when an unexpected fire drill occurred. We didn't assume anything problematic- maybe they just forgot to send teachers an email forewarning the drill. We evacuated outside and stood in the hot sun as we do when a fire drill is called. Then we went back to class. The class sat back down and prepared for Mrs. Curry to resume her lecture when the fire alarm went off again. Confused, the school headed back outside. Clearly, that second alarm wasn't planned. We stood in the sun, took attendance, and received the "all clear" once again. Mrs. Curry had barely opened the door to her classroom when the fire alarm went off for a third time. At that point, everyone was confused, annoyed, and laughing because we didn't know what was going on.

The whole affair lasted for an hour at least before we could re-enter the school building without any more fire alarms going off. The police were called and wandered around the halls to prevent any more unnecessary evacuations for the rest of the day. This event

is still one of the most chaotic things to ever happen to Freeman.

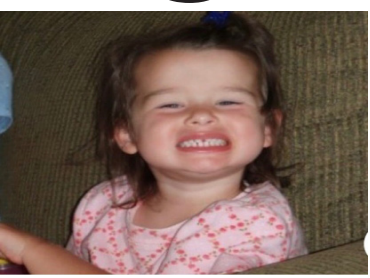
## CW Banned During Football Games

Dear Freeman Administration, It is a known fact that the CW cheer is a favorite among the Freeman students and they get very angry when it is not allowed during football and basketball games. Respectfully, please refrain from banning it again, if possible. Thank you! Thanksgiving Kitchen Fire

On November 20, 2019, a predecessor to the triple fire drill fiasco occurred. Members of Mrs. McMunn's Nutrition and Wellness class participated in a harmless Thanksgiving feast preparation until the turkeys were allegedly cooked to a literal crisp. Yeah, that burning smell you thought you smelled in the cafeterias that Wednesday afternoon? It was the turkeys burning in the oven. Thankfully, no one was harmed during the evacuation; however, it did cause quite a panic among those enjoying their lunch.

While many people would state that our class wasn't blessed with a memorable or interesting high school experience, it is clear from these events, and many more that sadly didn't make the top five, that our experience was far from dull.

# Highs and Lows of High School



Katherine Hynes  
Community Editor

The last four years at Freeman have been filled with a thousand moments. A million memories. Some moments we may wish to forget, but others we hope will stay with us forever. All the tests, projects, and homework slip away easily from the brain, soon to be forgotten after we leave the building. 50 years from now, we won't be complaining about all the late nights finishing essays or studying for exams. 50 years from now, we won't be whining about that one teacher who always gave us a hard time, or the parking lot attendant who gave you ticket after ticket. 50 years from now, we will remember the most precious moments of our time here. Nevertheless, there will always be some embarrassing moments we wish

we could erase from our memory. Without a doubt, every senior about to leave high school has moments they wish they could forget.

Freshman year. Freshman Orientation is when most of us first set foot on campus, starting the most embarrassing year of high school by far. Freshman year is for getting thrown in trash cans on Fridays, worrying about the way you are walking down the hallway, and stressing about where to sit at lunch. But let's not forget the most embarrassing moment of freshman year: walking past the senior section at football games all the way up to the top of the bleachers. For some reason that remains unknown, that is the most demoralizing walk of shame one could ever take. Regardless of if you are fully-dressed to the nines in that night's theme attire or are wearing nothing remotely related, you are likely to get a few looks, and even if you don't your mind will convince you otherwise. Although getting called down to play in one of the games at the pep rallies was definitely one of my biggest fears of freshman year, the shuffle past the senior section was by far the most embarrassing moment of my first year at Freeman. However, my favorite memory, one I wish

to never forget, will ultimately outlive the previous. Participating in the CW at that very first football game of freshman year is a moment I will hold onto forever. Although it was short-lived and semi-deadly, the CW will always be my favorite Freeman tradition that I live to tell the tale about.

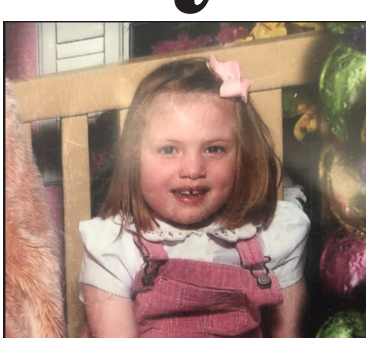
Sophomore year. Finally assimilated. Although I guess not to the traffic laws, because my most embarrassing moment of sophomore year is definitely one that not only I but also our auto insurance wish to forget. Sophomore year is the year of car accidents and tickets, considering not a single one of us truly knew how to drive. For me, my first ticket was given to me in the school zone in front of Freeman on the way to Driver's Ed class. I know. The irony is real. After bawling my eyes out in the Melito's parking lot, I had to shamefully walk into Early Bird Driver's Ed. However, sophomore year did have some decent memories attached to it. Regardless of the abrupt end to our sophomore year due to COVID-19, I do not wish to completely erase the year from my memory. Junior year is another story, but I'll get to that. Personally, my favorite memory of sophomore year came after we

were sent home in March. I was overwhelmed with appreciation when I opened my emails one quarantined day to videos from each of my teachers telling us how much they missed us and how everything would be okay. That was a moment when I felt truly a part of the Freeman family.

Junior year. Moving on ... Senior year. After the monstrosity that was junior year, senior year had to be the biggest comeback of the century. All in all, I'd say the year delivered what was expected of it. Nevertheless, being the person I am, there were still a handful of embarrassing moments that I was not thrilled to experience. So, to make up for the lack of junior year "festivities," I will list a couple for you. The first would have to be my many encounters with the parking lot attendant staff. Maybe it was the ticket received from parking in a teacher's spot, the email from my counselor saying I am not permitted to leave campus during Freeman Focus, or the many different people I impersonated to get Ms. Criswell to let me out of school early. Regardless, I think my favorite "embarrassing" time spent in the parking lot was sitting in my own car, a glamorous 2003 Toyota Camry in

a beautiful champagne-beige hue. In addition, getting pelted by a Nerf bullet in the parking lot of my place of work, whilst the entirety of the kitchen staff watched, was certainly not a highlight I wish to relive. However, without a doubt, senior year gifted me with some of the most precious memories of my life thus far. Senior Prom was honestly the best night of my life. No debate. The dance floor, the music, the dresses, the friends. The night was electric and I will remember it for the rest of my life. The beginning of the end of an era was also an extremely sentimental time of my life. This is the time of last firsts. Last first football game. Last first day of school. Last first pep rally. Last first failed test, spirit day, Homecoming parade, Powder Puff. These are the bittersweet memories I will cherish forever. These are the bonding moments with my classmates that fused us together as a family. Class of 2022, you have truly shaped me as a person and welcomed me into a family I will hold onto forever. Even if it means remembering the cringiest moments I wish to forget, I hope I never lose sight of the growth and friendships I have made here at Freeman throughout the last four years.

# My Four Years in Playlists



Emma Ridolphi  
Photographer

My journey through high school has felt incredibly long and tiring, yet fast, slipping away like sand through my fingers. I think

back to when I was a scared freshman, wandering the crowded, windowless hallways, insignificant in a sea of people. The thought of graduation excited me even then, but it felt so dreadfully far away. Three years seemed like a lifetime.

But each year flew by, each with its own challenges, its own wins and losses. Each year held a different meaning, a lesson that I only learned by the end of that year, and the ways each year changed me are only visible to me now. I will not lie and say I'll miss Freeman- its dim, windowless hallways, its scalding temperature as summer approaches, the bugs littering the hallways, the so-called diversity we boast,

but only when it benefits us ...

I could list every problem I've encountered during my four years at Freeman, significant or not, or every positive thing that has happened to me during my time here. That's not what I'd like to do. Instead, you can listen for yourself, and feel what I felt at each point in my journey at Freeman.

Ninth grade's overall vibe was fear. I was coming from middle school with only a couple of friends and some unaddressed mental issues. I felt so unequipped to start this next step, one that would force me to make serious life decisions. There were good moments sprinkled between each worrisome day, but overall, I was a mess.

The 10th grade vibe was relaxation. I was beginning to find my footing, not just at Freeman, but in the world as a whole. The mental health issues I had struggled with for previous years were more subdued. My friends and I were just having fun, discovering ourselves, and learning to function as individuals. Plus, there was that "two week vacation" due to some strange virus that totally didn't change the trajectory of our lives.

The 11th grade vibe was struggle. My mental health began to seriously decline again this year. On top of that, I was working 30 hours a week at my part-time job and struggling to manage four AP classes. I liked online school

more than I'd care to admit, but as I look back now, I realize it only stunted my mental health and hindered my ability to communicate with others. Overall, this was a very dark period.

12th grade's vibe was letting go. I found a new job where I met new people and worked less strenuous hours. I made new friends for the first time in years, and reconnected with old ones. I learned to accept the things I could not change, and my mental health issues became less tumultuous. Light began to shine through the dark tunnel that was the pandemic. Life began to stabilize. I allowed myself to miss Freeman the smallest bit, but prepared for the better things ahead.

Playlist	Year	Artist	Album	Duration
Freshman Year	2018-2019	Hesitation	Neapolitan	3:29
		Keep Yourself Alive	Queen	3:48
		A Burning Hill	Puberty 2	1:49
		Comfortably Numb	The Wall	6:22
		I'm Just a Kid	No Post, No Filter	3:18
Sophomore Year	2019-2020	Unlock It	Pop 2	3:52
		Kissing Lessons	boygenius	1:55
		Paradisin'	SAWAYAMA	3:06
		Dreams	Everybody Use It	4:31
		Luxury	Rich With Experience Teal	2:47
Junior Year	2020-2021	My Own Summer	Around the Fur	3:34
		I Bet On Losing Dogs	Puberty 2	2:50
		Fourth of July	Cattle & Lowell	4:39
		Space Song	Depression Cherry	5:19
		Warped Window	Idie Mind	4:55
Senior Year	2021-2022	Amber	From Chaos	3:30
		Show Me How	Show Me How	3:35
		Gloria	III	3:35
		Paprika	Jubilee	3:40
		First Time	Home Video	4:14



# Committed Maverick Athletes

**Eddie Allen**

Hampden-Sydney College  
*Football*



**Carson Herod**

Richard Bland College  
*Baseball*



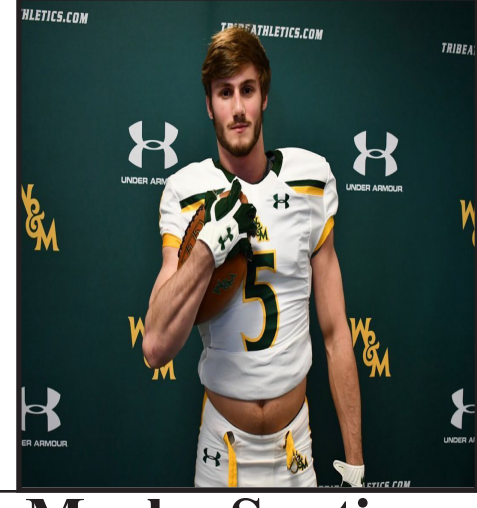
**Davis Cauble**

Hampden-Sydney College  
*Men's Basketball*



**Bradley Perkins**

College of William & Mary  
*Football*



**Jackson Beale**

University of Mary Washington  
*Baseball*



**Nate Elkin**

Conneticut College  
*Men's Lacrosse*



**Jahrell Horne**

Virginia State University  
*Football*



**Macho Santiago**

Virginia Commonwealth University  
*Baseball*



**Brett Bishop**

Columbia University  
*XC/T&F*



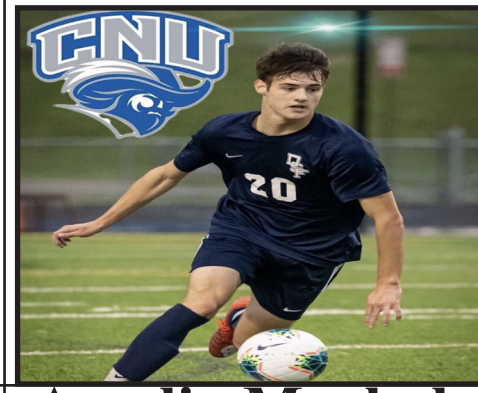
**Owen Fallen**

Hampden-Sydney College  
*Football*



**Barry Jones**

Christopher Newport University  
*Men's Soccer*



**Trey Shelton**

Patrick Henry CC  
*Baseball*



**Andrew Bottari**

Richard Bland College  
*Baseball*



**Rachel Gordon**

University of Michigan  
*Women's Rowing*



**Amelia Macholz**

Washington & Lee University  
*Women's Swimming*



**Dell Vidunas**

Roanoke College  
*Men's Lacrosse*



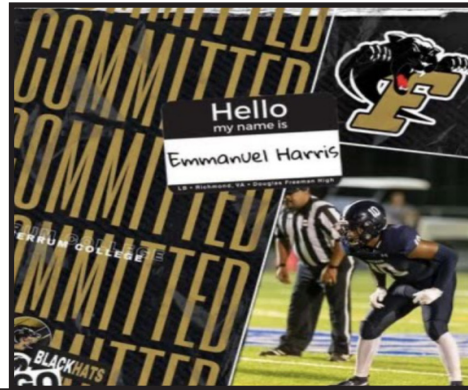
**Drew Bryner**

Catholic University  
*Men's Lacrosse*



**Manny Harris**

Ferrum College  
*Football*



**Matt McCabe**

Christopher Newport University  
*Men's Lacrosse*



**James Wright**

Davidson College  
*Men's Swimming*



# Thank-You Letter to Freeman



**Claire Morris**  
Photographer

Dear Freeman,  
Thank you for showing me that high school is not something straight out of the movies. I'll be

honest: I was a little disappointed when no one broke out into singing and choreographed dancing in the hallways on my first day of freshman year, but what you lack in Hollywood glamor, you make up for with character. I loved your hodgepodge hallways and classrooms, each with their own unique style. The art and music hall is crazy and colorful, with new murals and art projects on display each year. The main hallway is comically large and has a vague 70s aesthetic with its weird lighting. Green Acres just looks like the inside of an avocado, an interesting- but rather iconic- design choice. Then, there is the annex

with its endless roaches and that constant Cookout smell. All Freeman's areas are strange and imperfect, but I learned to love them. I see all of these shiny new high schools being rebuilt and turned into glamorous, state-of-the-art, cookiecutter buildings, and I'm glad that you haven't changed yet. I want to thank you for showing me that, just like the building, I don't have to be perfect. I can be a hodgepodge of interests and passions and still make it work. You have taught me to explore and take the time to find out what I really want to do with my life. I took classes in everything from chemistry to ethics and found

what I was interested in. I not only discovered that I love learning about other languages and cultures but that I could pursue that passion as a career, and you gave me the foundation to do so. I won't lie ... I do have a sort of love-hate relationship with you and the four years of studying and stressing that I endured. It was really difficult, and at some points I genuinely considered dropping out and becoming an acrobat in the circus. However, I do think the experience was beneficial, and I have learned skills that I will use for the rest of my life. While I am positive that I will never truly understand how to find an area under

a normal curve, I have mastered the art of last-minute cramming and giving presentations on the fly. It sounds super cliché, but you taught me how to struggle through the rough patches while also enjoying the smaller moments. I won't miss the crazy anxiety and stress preparing for We the People or AP exams, but I will remember the rush of the competition and the relief when it was over. I am glad that you were not something straight out of a movie. Life is more than a carefully-directed plot that fits into an hour and 38 minutes. Thank you for being the most confusing, stressful, messy, and valuable four years of my life.



# SENIOR LOOK-A-LIKES



Ann Douglas Rabon and Emily Blunt



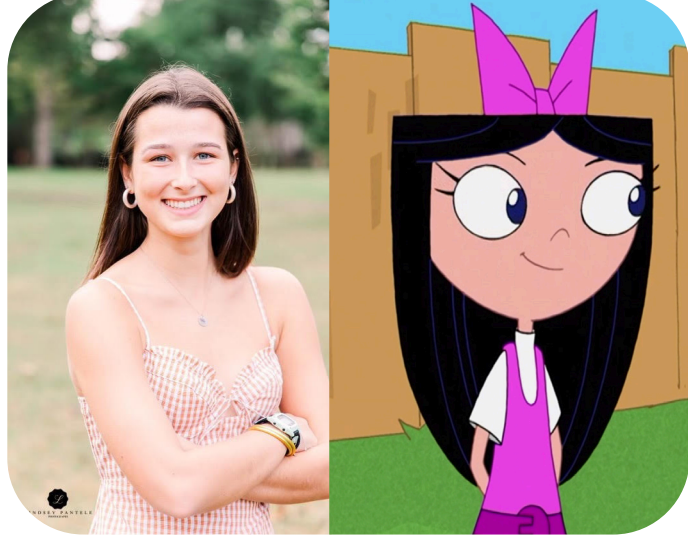
Grayson Horner and Gru



Charlie Adams and Mr. Peabody



Eddie Allen and Larry the Cucumber



Katherine Hynes and Isabella



Andrew Bottari and Yung Gravy



Kieran Wall and Amy Adams



Annabelle Glassman and Squirt

## Farewell Journalism Class of 2022 Message from the EiCs



Jess Pruett  
Staff Advisor

As an English teacher, I always encourage senior students to spend a little time at the end of the year reflecting on their time at Freeman and what is to come. Usually, I do this in the form of a speech or writing assignment that attempts to inspire, through questioning, some thinking about the wonders of the past and future. The irony in this is that, like clockwork, I often spend the last few weeks of school doing some version of my own reflection, though most of the time this is introspective

and rarely takes the written form. However, I was asked a few days ago to write a small piece for the senior issue of The Commentator, reflecting on the very strong and encouraging group of Journalism students that I have had the pleasure of working with over the past two school years.

Teaching Journalism at Freeman is a unique experience because I get the opportunity to work with students as juniors and then again as seniors. This is kind of a rare occurrence in teaching because while one year is often just enough time to establish productive and amicable relationships with students, two years can be a splendid thing, especially with a remarkable and memorable group, such as this one.

The 2022 senior section of Journalism, in my mind, stands apart because I have had a good amount of time to get to know these students, and they have gotten to know me, likely far better than some of my previous sections of Journalism. But this group has proven to be the exception to that likelihood. And it is that

quality that I think sums up the totality of their time at Freeman—exceptional. They have brought joy, inspiration, and excitement into my classroom, sometimes to an annoying level, but, most of the time, they have been an absolute pleasure to be around.

From the newspaper release parties and Promethean board antics to last-minute article revisions and InDesign edits, there has always been something ‘newsworthy’ going on in Journalism this year, even between issues. Camaraderie and a kind of banter have developed amongst us that I will miss when these particular students have all moved on to bigger and better things. My hope is, though, that they keep their experiences working for the school paper in their hearts and minds, as a signifier of opportunity and possibility. I also hope that they keep in touch.

Thanks to the 2022 senior staff for a great year, for their hard work on The Commentator, for their patience, diligence, and kindness, and their amazing senses of humor. Good luck out there. Y’all will be just fine.



Annabelle Glassman and Kieran Wall  
Editors-in-Chief

Dear Commentator Readers,  
As editors-in-chief, it is our responsibility to fill the awkward space that is left over when we don’t plan enough content or that planned content falls through. So, one last time, it is our responsibility and privilege to fill this space for you.

Our time in this role has been interesting. We have covered serious stories like the return to in-person learning, both in Spring and Fall of 2021, important stories, like the end of Andy Jenk’s time canceling school, and, above all, what we hope were interesting stories. We hope you have enjoyed and appreciated learning more about

some of the interesting aspects of your community that you may not have otherwise known about.

What has made this possible is the fantastic team of editors we have worked with to make this volume possible. Thank you all for all of your hard work and for making both the paper and the journalism community what it is. We have loved how fun and interesting you all made our job—especially the time we had to pull the draft of a paper off of our principal’s desk for inappropriate content that snuck in (Mr. Marshall, we are still sorry about that one).

We are leaving the DSF Commentator in the very capable hands of Abby Crowe, Adair Reid, and Morgan Strudgeon. To the next editors-in-chief, and all of the other former staff writers: congratulations! We can’t wait to see what you make of Volume 70. Have fun, learn lots, and please don’t ask us Commentator related questions next year.

Now, we are officially signing off as editors-in-chief. Thanks for reading, keep on reading, and look out for us in the pages of The Cavalier Daily and The Flat Hat next year!  
Annabelle and Kieran  
Editors-in-Chief of Volume 70



