

# THE COMMENTATOR

Vol. LXX, No. VI ..... Douglas Southall Freeman High School ..... May 2023



**The Commentator Editors:**

**Top (L to R):** Jess Pruett (teacher), Adair Reid, Henry Haggard, Peter Kriebel **Middle:** Morgan Strudgeon, Catherine White, Ada Malpani, Audrey Jones **Bottom:** Abby Crowe, Farah Abdullah, Lillie Deaton Connor

## Everyday Communion



**Abby Crowe**  
Editor-in-Chief

Alongside thousands of other AP Lit students across the country, we read “How to Read Literature like a Professor” by Thomas C. Foster. The author taught us how to analyze and creatively think about the texts we read. The point that most stuck out to me was when he said that when people gather to eat, they are having communion. Growing up in a family that loves church and loves good food, this made

sense to me. Throughout my four years at Freeman, I have eaten meals that have included bouts of laughter, unfortunate tears, and influential conversations. “Let’s get coffee!” has proven time and again to be my go-to phrase. While my attention to school, relationships, and dance has fluctuated, my whole-hearted love for delicious food has yet to waiver.

During my sophomore year, when everything was 100% online, I did school with my best friend since kindergarten, Camilla Burnside. We would alternate between houses but one aspect was consistent no matter what: everyday we would make lunch together. Throughout our morning classes we would try to figure out what matched our mood and prayed we had all of the ingredients to concoct our meal. Given the hour-long break, our lunches were elaborate and carefully planned and executed. After spending 55 minutes preparing our food, we would spend the next 5 laughing and scrambling to finish it before hopping on another call. This routine worked for us and we learned more about each other

and cooking in the process.

Gilmore Girls: Season 5, Episode 7 titled, “You Jump, I Jump, Jack” has been my favorite episode of the show since I binged it during the pandemic. Embarrassingly, my interest in journalism spiked when I watched that episode, and I was fascinated by Rory’s outgoing personality which enabled her to be a fantastic interviewer. Following my fascination with the main character’s journalistic endeavors, I came across a program that would teach me about journalism and law. After taking the two-week summer course, my mind was set. I would become a journalist. All throughout my junior year as a staff writer for the Commentator, I picked up as much extra work as the editors would give me. I was determined to learn InDesign because in my perfectionist brain, “if you work hard enough, and long enough, eventually you can make it perfect.” During my lunch blocks, I would stay in Pruett’s classroom with the senior editors and eat with them. They taught me ways to improve my writing and design skills while also giving

me important lessons about being a good person in general. Our communion was taken while people-watching out the front window and eating sandwiches out of our lunchboxes.

Continuing the tradition of dining, and sometimes whining, during the journalism lunch period, are the senior Commentator girls this year. Together we sit and eat as we recap our weekends, vent about homework, and get excited for upcoming plans. It is through this 27-minute lunch period that these girls have become some of my closest friends. We shared the ups and downs of junior year, the high-stress process of college applications and decisions, the exciting homecoming and prom drama, and everything else in between. Often, someone would be in charge of bringing everyone chai and pastries from Surrounding Counties next door. As our time together wraps up for now, it is with complete confidence that I can say our lunches brought us joy in the repetitive routine of school.

Almost every Friday night after Freeman football games, my friends and I would make

our way to The Continental on Grove Avenue to share comfort food and talk about everything we saw and heard that night. Even now, when we are stuck trying to figure out where to grab a bite, The Continental typically wins that fight. Other nights when our name is on the list of a nicer restaurant with a wait, we opt for a pre-dinner ice cream run. The tradition started as ‘... should we do it?’ and changed to ‘Let’s go to that restaurant because Gelati Celesti is next door.’ Sometimes our nights out are sophisticated and upscale, and sometimes they are laid back and chill. Regardless, the conversations that have united us most often occurred around a meal.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives one definition of communion as, “the act or instance of sharing.” I strongly believe that throughout my time at Freeman, my experiences would not be what they are without the shared meals and people that have surrounded me. Although I will miss the intimacy of high school, I am extremely excited to continue “communion” with new people in Athens, Georgia.



**Adair Reid**  
Editor-in-Chief

After four years, I regret to inform everyone that everything everyone has ever said about senior year is completely and unequivocally true. Except for everything that isn’t.

For much of my senior year, there has been a pit in my stomach; a part of me that dreads everything I am doing now just because it brings me closer and closer to what comes next. And even though I know where “next” is happening (an hour or so away) and how long I will be there (four years, give or take), everything else is an unknown.

Something I will miss about Freeman is its familiarity. After my freshman year, I resolved to treat high school like an airport terminal: a liminal space like a hotel lobby or train station where I would sit down, make sure I had my papers and that I had packed everything right, mind set on the brand new place I held a one-way ticket to. Four years later, the contents of my suitcase are strewn everywhere, and I’m heckling everyone around me to let me use an extra phone charger before I go.

The halls might be long, the air might be always broken, and the days may be sluggish, but I know them, no matter how my perspective has changed from year to year, class transition routes telling my feet where to point wherever I stand. I know a highlight reel of Mr. Peck’s funniest stories, I know Mr. Pruett will

always laugh when I make a joke at my school’s expense, and I know I’ll always be running out of the writing center past Ms. Hunnicutt for a meeting I forgot about. I know I will always scoff when I am informed I “have to go get a pass” (because, like, why).

I have no idea what will happen when I arrive at what’s “next.” I’m pretty sure the bathrooms will be nicer, but it won’t have the sometimes beautiful, sometimes disturbing locker art wrapping the halls. It won’t have canva posters with a single dot of masking tape slapped on the walls, advertising clubs to classes to sports teams I’ll likely assign an article to someone on. It won’t have the class pictures of my father, aunt, grandfather, or brother on the walls, a reminder flashing in the back of my mind to find them before it’s too late. And that’s

not even the worst part: if I fall up a set of stairs or find myself face planting on a hill again, my past of slipping all over a certain turf field or tripping over myself in the upstairs hallway won’t be attached. But one thing connects the things I stand to lose: they are all material; objects and places that still stand to live in my memory even if I no longer pass by them every day.

I have found myself prone to thinking about my high school years singularly. Each one was a separate station on an assembly line, every year a step closer to creating something I would have to use my diploma to view as a whole. But unsurprisingly, I was wrong about that too. To be succinct, people are like onions-- wrapped in so many layers that, over time, they blend together, each year blurring the contours of the year before in a way that makes

us look fully illustrated instead of rough sketches on paper. Trying to live your life from September to June in a singular shell only isolates you from the instinctual and habitual knowledge you have been gaining for the last 18 years, give or take.

You are not just a senior, you are everything that came before. You are a freshman, a sophomore, a junior, a kindergarten, a seventh grader (let’s skip over that one), a fourth-grade Skittle math genius who has it all figured out. Except now, you get to decide what you become next. But regardless of what you choose to be, know your past does not exist in the neat rows of a timeline or the digital slider of your camera roll. It is everything everywhere all at once — just don’t stare at it for too long. When it comes to the future, some people say if you dare to blink you’ll miss it.

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# The World Inside Freeman



**Henry Haggard**  
News Editor

Last year I met a student, who we'll call Juan. His real name wasn't Juan, but I want to keep him anonymous. Juan walked into my study hall one day, arriving in Virginia from his home country in Central America. He

did not speak a word of English, so my study hall teacher asked us if somebody could show him to the cafeteria when the lunch bell rang. I raised my hand.

I was nervous about conversing with a native Spanish speaker using only Google Translate and my far-from-fluent Spanish vocabulary. And sure, it was awkward, but I could tell he appreciated my effort. Me and Juan soon became close friends.

That week, Juan and I started teaching each other words and phrases, and I helped him with his homework during Freeman Focus. Eventually, a few more Spanish-speaking students joined us on the annex floor. And soon enough, we got to use Srta. Snellings' classroom!

Which brings us to this year, when a group called Mavs United was born. We now have a team of helpers, centralized in room 175 with the incredible Ms. Ferras. Students who want to make a difference in the lives of non-

native speakers — or even just practice their Spanish with them — can. The primary aim of Mavs United is tutoring. And yes, we do tutor (by God, do we tutor), but I think something more important has happened in Mavs United, something really special.

The people I have met this year and the stories I have heard, they amaze me. Students who walked two hours to get to school every morning in their home country. Students who, on their journey to the US, literally crossed rivers — without knowing how to swim. Students who now work after school every day until midnight in order to send money back home. The Freeman family is bigger than I thought.

Some of their stories (many of which I have chosen to leave out) make me red-hot angry and deeply, deeply sad. But with great lows come great highs. The circles that students form, where we go around the group reading picture and chapter books.

The heated arguments made in a hodge-podge pidgin language (some mix of Spanish, Portuguese, and Pashto) over how to pronounce this word or that phrase in English. The ceaseless teasing over my embarrassing accent.

The phone call Clementine freakin' Fuller translated between a Spanish-speaking student and their landlord. Can I say that one twice? My God!

But, for better or for worse, I have never been able to focus on victories for very long. I am constantly reminded that there is a lot more work to be done to help these students, and it cannot all fall on the English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. They are all doing as much as they can — and often more. But for these students to succeed, the whole school must be on board. Teachers, admin, and other students must stand up for them. Because frankly, I am tired of seeing them fight the odds.

As Principal John Marshall wrote in his doctoral thesis on

this very topic, "it is a national educational emergency that such a large and growing portion of our student population is being left behind" (emphasis added).

So those of you who are reading this, remember that there is hope. But this isn't the sit-back-and-watch-something-happen kind of hope. It's the kind of hope you have to fight for.

And to everybody at Mavs United: I love you and I am so proud of you. You taught me so many things, and you were like family to me. I'm sad to leave, but I'm so happy for you. If you study a lot of English, soon you will read this whole article, and you will laugh at me for my bad writing.

A todos en Mavs United: les amo y estoy muy orgulloso de uds. Me han enseñado tantas cosas, y fueron como la familia a mi. Estoy triste por salir, pero estoy tan feliz por uds. Si estudian mucho de inglés, pronto leerán todo este artículo, y me reirán de mí por mi mala escritura.

## Calling on Connections



**Audrey Jones**  
Online Editor-in-Chief & Opinions Editor

Highschool has easily been the most stressful four years of my life. Between hours upon hours of homework, dramatic school dances, intense sports practices, and the anxiety and pressure that comes with so much unknown about the future, I feel the emotions of excitement, pride, and confusion when reflecting on how I have made it to this

point. However, it is quite clear to me that the calm that got me through the chaotic storm that is high school is the connections I formed with people along the way.

Walking into the halls of Douglas Southall Freeman High School as an awkward, nervous fourteen year old girl in September of 2019, I had absolutely no idea what to expect or who I would become. I have always had a rather large imagination, so of course I had some fantasy built up in my head based on cliché movies. But I also knew in my heart that the reality of high school would be much different, and I was prepared to see where the weird smelling Freeman winds would take me.

My previously mentioned large imagination combined with the fact that I am a people person led to a natural habit of picking out seemingly normal people to be my ultimate role models — this played a big role in my experience these past four years. Early on in my freshman year, I was introduced to a girl named Gretchen Neary at a Young Life meeting. She was one of the kindest people I had ever met, and I couldn't

possibly understand why a senior like her would ever want to talk to me, an annoying freshman. But her friendliness and well balanced life quickly inspired me, and my freshman self decided that I wanted to be just like Gretchen.

I started attending Young Life meetings, worked hard in school with the hopes of attending the University of Virginia, and eventually joined journalism when I had the opportunity my Junior year. While I certainly did not replicate Gretchen's experience exactly, her inspiration led me to trying new things and meeting new people that have forever impacted my life for the better. I have learned so much about the many sides of Freeman and my community through working on the paper, and the many rigorous classes I decided to take taught me valuable lessons about diligence and balance.

Now, I am not advising anyone to pick someone at random and try to be an exact copy of them because everyone is unique. However, I will say that finding and surrounding yourself with a few people you can consider a role model is extremely benefi-

cial and will help you to grow and stay on track with accomplishing your goals. Without people like Gretchen to look up to, I probably would not be where I am today. The connection you can form with a role model is truly valuable and important during a time of so much change and pressure.

Another connection that carried me to the finish line these past couple of years is the obvious but ever meaningful one of friendship. Because of the variety of classes and activities I have taken throughout high school, I have been fortunate enough to meet and become friends with so many different people with a wide variety of interests and talents. Each of these bonds has taught me something new and inspired me to keep going even when it feels impossible. Specifically, journalism has gifted me with some of the best friendships I could ask for. The senior journalism girls that I eat lunch with in room 208 every week have truly made this year special. As we tell stories, gossip, and laugh each class, my day is always brightened, and I can't imagine leaving them and all of my

other Freeman friends next year.

The final connection I was lucky enough to form is one with my Journalism and English teacher, Mr. Pruett. Mr. Pruett, or just Pruett, has not only provided me with a fantastic education, but he has also acted as an amazing mentor and role model for me and all of his other students. He is always there to make his students laugh, encourage them to explore new ideas, and push them to reach their full potential. During times when my procrastination has gotten the best of me or when I am simply feeling tired, stressed, or sad, Pruett is always understanding. His passion for the topics he teaches and ability to form personal connections with each of his students is inspiring, and I have no clue what I would have done without room 208 as a safe escape in the wild halls of Freeman.

Overall, role models, friends, and teachers are what have made my high school experience exceptional, and the biggest piece of advice I can give to any high school student is to make, keep, and value the connections you make over the course of your four years.



## A Firm League of Friendship



**Catherine White**  
Online Editor-in-Chief & Opinions Editor

After returning home from my class trip to D.C., I found myself sitting on the floor of my bedroom flipping through the book of Federalist Papers I had spontaneously purchased in the gift shop at Mount Vernon. Over the course of my senior year, I started to become pretty familiar with this list of 85 essays (freshman me would call current me a major nerd), so I figured I would try to put this knowledge to use. Please stay with me (and don't judge me too harshly) as I attempt to recap my last four years through a very loose interpreta-

tion of the words of "Publius."

### Federalist 2-9: Unity is Crucial

Coming out of an era defined by the Articles of Confederation (@unit 2), the Framers faced a decision of whether to unite the states or remain a loose confederation. They choose to form one nation with the intention of the different states supporting each other. Similarly, having a support system as I went through the past four years was crucial to my survival in high school. As with every other junior who has ever walked the halls of Freeman, my junior year was filled with stress, neverending school work, and lots of talk about colleges. My family was behind me the entire year, with constant reminders that school is not everything and being entirely miserable is not worth the difference between a B and an A. Having a solid group of people who I trust to always have my back, has helped define my own high school era.

### Federalist 51: Separation of Powers

The concept of separation of powers creates balance within our government, something high school students typically do not

have. These four years are packed full of a million different things, all while being told that we need to live in the moment and not take this time for granted. While high school is certainly a time to try new things, we can often get caught up in trying to try everything, even things we have no interest in. Extracurriculars make up who you are; they are not meant to be chores. Therefore, if you are reading this and not yet out of high school, I encourage you to try and create some balance in your life. Do the things you enjoy doing and say 'no' to things you don't. Allow yourself to take time to breathe, don't compare your list of after-school activities to anyone else's, and find the hobbies you truly enjoy.

### Federalist 70: The Importance of Factions

A faction is a small group of people brought together through a common factor. Over the past four years, I have been lucky to come across the best "factions" of friends I could ask for.

During our virtual year, I did school with girls who are my sisters, both literally and figuratively. Obviously, this time was difficult, but without Charlotte

White, Julia Connor, and Lillie Deaton Connor, my days would have been much less interesting, and my lunches significantly more lonely. Although we may have not been the most studious, I would not do anything differently, including but not limited to, our failed Model UN career, middle-of-the-day naps, and obnoxiously large Starbucks orders delivered to the wrong house.

As we all returned for junior year, social skills were a little rusty for everyone and the idea of a full classroom was something we were not used to. That is why walking into a room of mostly unfamiliar faces in Journalism I was incredibly daunting to me. Little did I know that soon these eleven people (+ Mr. Pruett) that make up the senior Commentator staff, would be some of my best friends. You may know them as simply the names under the headlines in the school paper you skim through, but I know them as the most kind, thoughtful, and funny group of people I have ever been a part of. This staff is so incredibly special and while I am dreading our last Freeman Focus, I cannot wait to see what you all will do.

Another "faction" that is incredibly important to me, is the group

that is the reason why I know what a faction is: my senior year government class. Coming into the year, we were friends but if you would have told me how close we would become over the next few months I would not have believed you. The conversations I am able to have with these people, whether they are philosophical, constitutional, or just plain stupid, make me a better person. This year has shown our group the good and the bad and yet, we have managed to get each other through everything. You guys are my favorite and please never change. While we may not have won the "Superbowl," I couldn't have asked for a better team.

As I approach the end of my four years at Freeman, I could not be more grateful for the friends, teachers, and lessons I have experienced. Because of these things, I have watched myself become a different, better person and while I am nervous about the quickly approaching, large change in my life, I feel confident that my time at Freeman will never be forgotten. And when it comes time for packing in August, I will be sure that my new book of Federalist Papers will be making the trip to Charlottesville with me.



# “The Great Journalism Bake Off”



**Lillie Deaton Connor**  
Features Editor

Junior year, our journalism class had quite the obsession with “The Great British Baking Show,” watching it to celebrate exporting an issue and attempting to create our own rendition of the baking competition. We are all expert bakers so instead of intricate cakes or pastries we raised the bar for an all time delicacy: brownies. It

was a big deal in the journalism world, with experienced judges: Mr. Pruet, Mr. Schuster, and Mr. Byrne. While the judges, and their stomachs, may have regretted offering their services, this competition was the event that really binded and bonded us all together.

“The Great British Baking Show” was a key ingredient in the bringing together of our journalism class. Starting off the year, was a room full of some familiar and not so familiar peers, all of us separated by individual desks causing little interaction in the beginning. However, as the year went on, desks and people started scooting closer as we learned more about each other and our similar interests (The Great British Baking Show!).

My four years at Freeman are comparable to the British baking show. Recipes require the perfect technique, ingredients and patience to guarantee success. Some contestants create without flaws, while others struggle with

an unfamiliar concept. Baking, like high school, takes adjusting, patience, and time management.

One essential skill to aid in the baking process is Mise en place. Mise en place is a French culinary phrase which means “putting in place” or “gather.” Stressing that ingredients are prepped, tools are gathered, and everything is organized before the baking or cooking begins. Throughout my four years I have learned the importance of time management. While I still struggle with procrastination, especially now (thanks senioritis) I found my success goes hand in hand with organization and time management. My word of advice for future seniors is to keep pushing through the “senioritis” and that the right tools for success are organization and time management.

Attention to detail and creativity is another skill essential to a successful recipe. For those who know me, I am pretty shy. So applying to

journalism was a big surprise to a few people. Yet it was one of the best decisions I have ever made. In my two years of journalism, I have learned countless skills I will continue to employ for the rest of my life. Through conducting interviews I have learned to come out of my shell, be personable, and prepare for professional questioning in my future. I also discovered my fondness for feature articles, set on becoming the editor for the section my senior year. Through this leadership role I learned the importance of structure, attention to detail, how to adapt when issues arise, and communication. I have also gained so many close friends in this class that I am forever grateful for. From lunch table talks to always being there to help one another I can say without a doubt that these people have my back. And maybe most importantly distribution day. There’s nothing better than distribution day, two boxes filled to the top with

fresh newspapers, able to see in person all the hard work we put into the issue is really rewarding.

Most importantly, in my opinion, the skill of adapting to new recipes and environments. You will never know every “recipe” or correct way to prepare every “dish,” which is why it’s important to be open to change and excited to adapt to new experiences and circumstances. Coming into highschool, I was terrified of the big change and nervous for what the school had in store for me. However, throughout the last four years I have learned that sometimes the most unexpected circumstances provide the most influence, knowledge, and fun experiences. There will always be something unfamiliar in my life so it is essential for me to willingly adapt to provide the most prominent experiences, and knowledge. Now, while I am a little scared for what the future holds I am also excited for the opportunities for new challenges and experiences.

# Shaking Hands With Change



**Farah Abdullah**  
Copy Editor

As I reflect back on the past four years, I realize that I did not always know what was ahead of me, but in many ways, that was the most rewarding part of high school. I have a tendency to write to-do lists and plan everything out, but the unpredictable, new situations are what allowed me to learn more about myself and the world around me. Most of my junior and senior

year were spent in room 208. The first day I walked into Mr. Pruet’s journalism class, I sat in a classroom of unfamiliar faces. A year later, I am writing this as I am eating lunch with the Journalism II girls, talking about our weekend plans, sharing advice, and dealing with the very real struggles of senioritis. Now that we are about to graduate, I realize that room 208 fosters friendships that may have not been made otherwise. The past two years in journalism have been full of memories that are so unique to the class and the people within it. From talks about our favorite restaurants, coffee runs, and watching (and kind of recreating) The Great British Baking Show, to writing stories, export parties, and paper distribution day, there was never a dull moment.

If you ask anyone who knows me well, they will tell you that I can be kind of a closed book. I’ll be talkative in class or mention a few things about myself in a conversation, but for a long time, I kept to myself. However, going into high school, more so in junior year, I made a goal to expand my interests and meet new people

by joining clubs, extracurriculars, and trying different hobbies and classes. Through this, I am lucky to have met so many kind, fun, and thoughtful people, many of which became my closest friends.

On a similar note, the supportive community around me was influential to my success in high school. I am thankful for Freeman’s clubs and events, as well as the welcoming teachers, staff, and friends for pushing me to connect with my culture at school. Walking into unfamiliar halls as a freshman that led me to proudly wear my Yemeni clothes to school as a senior is an unexplainable feeling, and it is one that I will always hold on to.

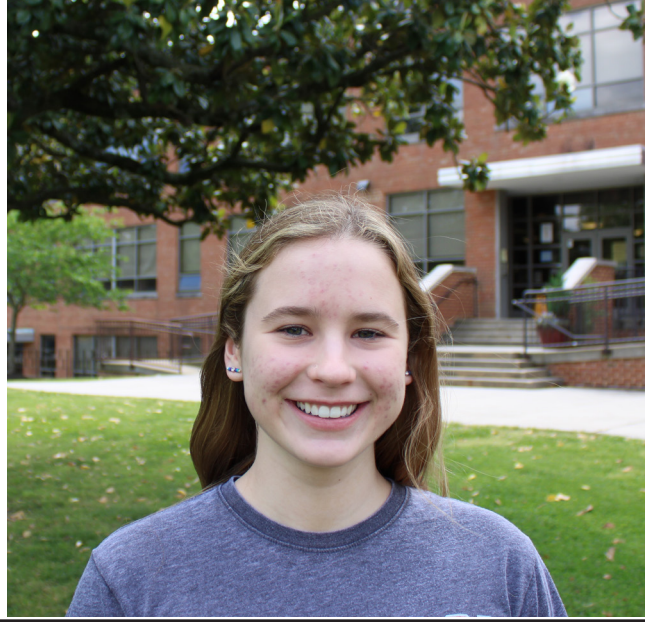
Additionally, the bonds I have created with my teachers are invaluable. Whether it was journalism, English homework, or college application advice, I appreciate Mr. Pruet’s mentorship and support in all of the classes I’ve had with him. I’m thankful for Ms. Fergus’ help and encouragement as it has made me enjoy math despite any struggles, as well as the safe space in Ms. Divina’s class that got me through junior and senior year. The list can go on and on.

As high school is ending, my mind is now filled with thoughts of the future. Like most seniors, I know where I will be next year, and there is an idea of how things will go. But as I think about being a 14 year old freshman and how I thought I would be by the end of senior year, I know that I most likely have no clue what the next four years hold. However, that is the most exciting part.

The new beginnings of next year mean new environments to explore, new friends to cherish,

new activities to try, and most importantly, new lessons to learn.

If I had stuck to my preconceived idea of how high school would be, I would not have become the person I am today. So as this wave of change quickly approaches, I am taking the advice I would give to any freshman: trust the course life will take, have fun, and be open to the unknown. Till then, I will spend my time soaking in the last weeks of grade school and appreciating all of the ways it allowed me to grow as a person.



# Journaling My Way Through High School



**Ada Malpani**  
Centerspread Editor

4 worn-out journals are leaning tiredly against my bookshelf. From 2019-2023, each of my high school years is memorialized in its own bullet journal. For the uninformed, a bullet journal is a handmade, sometimes artistic, organizer. A glorified agenda. I began creating bullet journals as a way to organize my life and

practice art all in one. As I entered high school and anticipated the homework and general disorganization that would come along with it, a bullet journal seemed like the most elegant solution ... and an excuse to buy absurdly expensive and fancy stationery.

I came into Freeman as a scared freshman, knowing practically no one. I was terrified but excited about what this new place would hold for me. Despite all the ups and downs, my four years at Freeman have been transformative. I’m glad to say that my classmates and teachers have turned into friends and confidants, and many of my classes fundamentally changed the way I think and act. I like to think that I will be leaving high school as a better person and student.

Through all this change, however, my bullet journals provide a way to look back. Re-visiting them quickly transports me back to my headspace at that time, as I remember all my worries, fears, or joys that came with them. My freshman-year bullet journal

was easily the most optimistic of the 4, set up with an exclamatory “BACK TO SCHOOL” in all caps and bubble letters. Suffice to say, I have not felt that excited about going back to school since (except maybe when we returned from virtual year). Within that journal, I find memories and assignments long forgotten. A to-do list from my very first high school homecoming dance, filled with reminders about turning in the student guest form and asking my mom to buy a boutonniere, is especially funny to look back on as I see a reflection of that very same to-do list in my latest bullet journal, written for my last high school dance.

My sophomore year is easily the most artistic of the bunch, as I dedicated all my newfound free time at home to creating elegant spreads with enticing themes and graphics. Each month was accompanied by a thematic watercolor painting, an underwater scene for April, or a jack-o-lantern for October. My to-do lists also changed, with school events

replaced by virtual Zoom meetings and going out with friends turned into bike rides with family.

Looking through my junior year bullet journal still gives me PTSD from the pure stress of that year. Shout out to the month of April for easily being the most chaotic time ever. My usually neat handwriting devolved into illegible swirls that are now impossible to understand.

Sprinkled into that chaos are some landmark dates, like getting my driver’s license, junior prom, and seeing my upperclassman friends graduate. That journal serves as a good reminder that even though stress and fatigue, there are good things to come.

As my final bullet journal from high school comes to a close, I’m excited to document the events that mark this closure. Prom, Graduation, and College Orientation will find their way onto my calendar, lengthy shopping lists for my dorm room necessities, and to-do list galore will decorate my pages.

As I write “last day of school” into the little calendar box des-

ignating May 25th, it kind of hits me that I will truly be leaving high school soon. I’m still not entirely sure whether I feel sad that this chapter is ending or excited at the opportunity to encounter something new.

No matter how I feel about this change, one thing I am sure of is that I will continue to document my life through the dotted pages of my bullet journal. As I enter college life, I’m eagerly anticipating these next few years of change and evolution. Within the pages of my journal will be new events, like lunch dates with friends I’m yet to meet or office hours with professors I haven’t had yet. But there will also be trips back home and movie nights with the friends I have made in these past few years.

As my bookshelf slowly accumulates more journals, I am eager to look back and watch my evolution. For now, I’m just happy to cross “write senior reflection article” off my to-do list for today, close my bullet journal, and take a much-needed nap.



# Freeman Class of 2023 Future Plans



Appalachian State University  
Sean Lehev



Auburn University  
Peyton Borges  
Ann Haden Payne



Christopher Newport University  
Audrey Bates  
Alex Brann  
Ellie Clements  
Carter French  
Jonah Herbert



Clark University  
Virginia Gerczak



Clemson University  
Grace Montgomery  
Georgia O'Sullivan



College of Charleston  
Sophia Smith  
Ramsey Slye



College of William & Mary  
Clementine Fuller  
Emmie Love  
Abishek Samuel  
Morgan Strudgeon



Colorado School of Mines  
Kieran Berry



Cornell University  
Ava Jung



Dickinson College  
Lillie Deaton Connor



Duke University  
Jordanna Silverman



East Carolina University  
Colin Chewing  
Connor Hilemn  
Grace Moore  
Christian Sleman



Elon University  
Sophie Armstrong  
Sadie Urquhart



George Mason University  
Caroline Johnson  
Linth Knight  
Tyler Moore



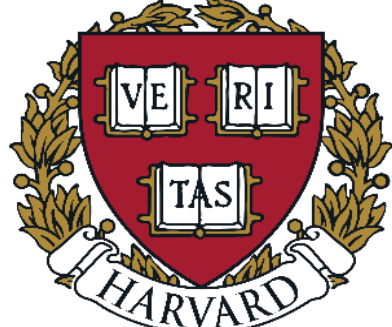
George Washington University  
Rachel Stanton



Hampden-Sydney College  
Tommy Roberts  
Field Smith



Hampton University  
Adriana James



Harvard University  
Aarna Sitani



Hollins University  
Lily Morris



J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College  
Shiraz Ali  
Skye Allan  
Brady Burton  
Augustin Dulancy-Dewald  
Macie Jordan  
Misa Keller  
Mariam Kerolos  
Dubraska Lozano  
Mariam Mansour  
Chandler Ross  
Caitlyn Selater  
Nyla Sims



James Madison University  
Luke Branch  
Jacob Buxbaum  
Matt Danforth  
Simone Fortier  
Owen Glass  
Michael Harris  
Allie Hazelgrove  
Zara Issak  
Joy Mee  
Evelyn Murray  
Hung Nguyen  
Xuan Nguyen  
Carly Riggan  
Hayden Schwartz  
Brendan Siewert  
LJ Straw  
Charlie Swartz  
Braden Sweeney  
Betty Grace Thompson  
Bridget Wilson



Johns Hopkins University  
Kiran Sabharwal



Lees-McRae College  
Larissa McMahan



Longwood University  
Bridie Abbott  
Kayla Nolte



Marymount University  
Brey Loving



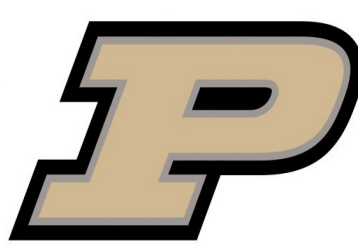
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ShaNyla Allen



North Carolina State University  
Avery Edmonson  
Finley Holland  
Avery Ingram



Penn State University  
Tavis Steele



Purdue University  
Cara Brickhouse  
Catherine Weir



Radford University  
Rye Haddad  
Benjamin Hess  
Jasanti Rainey



Randolph-Macon College  
Ty Bowman  
Lily Gentry  
Miggy Martin  
Chichi Mortazavipour  
Jace Nguyen  
Berkley Young



Regent University  
Emily Alvarez



Roanoke College  
Erin Collier  
Jake Sterns



St. John's College  
Henry Haggard



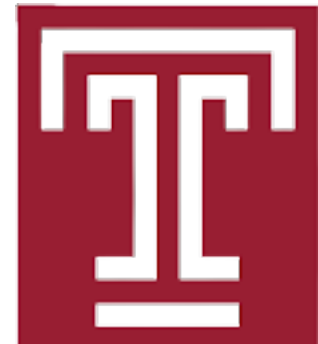
Stevens Institute of Technology  
Elizabeth Knerr



Sweet Briar College  
Lola Muhlenfeld



Syracuse University  
Lauren Lukacs



Temple University  
Clara Cotropia



The Culinary Institute of America  
Kate Bowman



United States Coast Guard Academy  
Ben Coker



University of Alabama  
Ann Collier Ferguson



University of Evansville  
Jayme Davis



University of Florida  
Virginia Broughton



University of Georgia  
Griffin Belding  
Abby Crowe  
Avery Fonville  
Will Kurz  
Annie Vosmik



University of Mary Washington  
Abby Kirchoff



University of Maryland  
Nikolas Chupp  
Peter Kriebel



University of Miami  
Jackson Rountree



University of Mississippi  
Starlet Archibald  
Alyssa Farrell  
Ava Schleicher  
Margaret Shepardson



University of North Carolina  
Isabelle Broughton



University of Pennsylvania  
Siyona Singh



University of Pittsburgh  
Eleanor Roberts



University of Richmond  
Emina Selomovic



University of South Carolina  
Emily Carver  
Cate Haymore  
Liza Haymore  
Mary Kenzie Hubbard  
PJ Moore  
Vail Thomas  
Polly Winterhalter



University of Tennessee  
Lily Davis



University of Vermont  
Hope Fagan



University of Virginia  
Grayson Archibeque  
Ishita Bakshi  
Ashley Cryer  
Andrew Escobar  
Carly Farrey  
Catriona Flynn  
Daniel Habeeb  
Audrey Jones  
Alka Link  
Miranda Lutchman  
Ada Malpani  
Trisha Nagulagari  
Arghawan Nazari  
Maggie Newton  
Emily Pinotti  
Meg Pollard  
Anne Riley Pounders  
Jeremy Price  
Ella Rackliffe  
Wit Rader  
Adair Reid  
Corleen Sullivan  
Claire Thomas  
Emery Troxell  
Harrison Walker  
Catherine White  
Charlie Wills



Virginia Military Institute  
Luke Liberatore



Virginia Commonwealth University  
Takiyah Banks  
Elizabeth Delcid  
Laury Gamez  
Bridger Giddings  
Wyatt Giddings  
Christine Jacob  
Joshua Jones  
Paloma Lhéritier  
Dacie Luginbill  
Chelsea Lugo  
Stephanie Portillo  
Mohamed Ragab  
Sarah Reed  
Mytasia Rowley  
Tanvir Rukunuzzaman  
David Zheng



Virginia State University  
Kameron Scruggs-Taylor



Virginia Tech  
Jason Abbey  
Farah Abdullah  
Nyla Addotey  
Cooper Amendola  
Charlie Bernhardt  
Matthew Britt  
Camilla Burnsides  
Gianna Colangelo  
Miles Creason  
Jackson Cunningham  
Thomas Disharoon  
Deonna Edmonds  
Reid Garnett  
Hayes Gelsomino  
Samuel Lee  
Zoey Martin  
Meghan McBride  
Ellie McCormick  
Rory Notley  
Brayden Owens  
Sahel Rahman  
Julia School  
Angel Soto-Torres  
Sophia Swartz  
Genevieve Travers  
Davis Woody  
Carter Wyatt



Washington and Lee University  
Brooke Capuzzi  
Morgan Stouidt



Wofford College  
Ella Davis



# Committed Maverick Athletes



**Ty Bowman**  
Randolph Macon College  
*Football*



**Braeden Farmer**  
Paul D. Camp College  
*Baseball*



**Jason Abbey**  
Virginia Tech  
*Football*



**Ava Jung**  
Cornell University  
*Soccer*



**Ella Davis**  
Wofford College  
*Lacrosse*



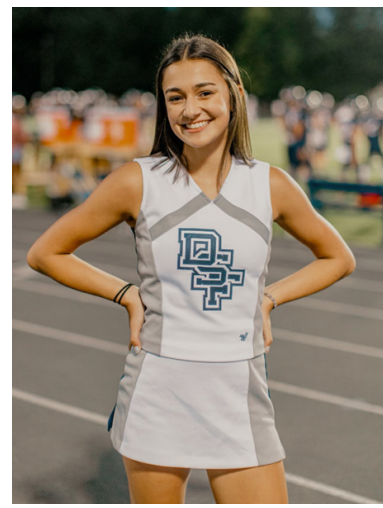
**Brey Loving**  
Marymount University  
*Wrestling*



**Alex Brann**  
Christopher Newport University  
*Football*



**Grace Moore**  
East Carolina University  
*Lacrosse*



**Alka Link**  
University of Virginia  
*Cheerleading*



**Lora Young**  
Virginia Wesleyan  
*Swimming*



**Carter French**  
Christopher Newport University  
*Cross Country*



**Bridget Wilson**  
James Madison University  
*Lacrosse*



**Lillie Deaton**  
Dickinson College  
*Swimming*



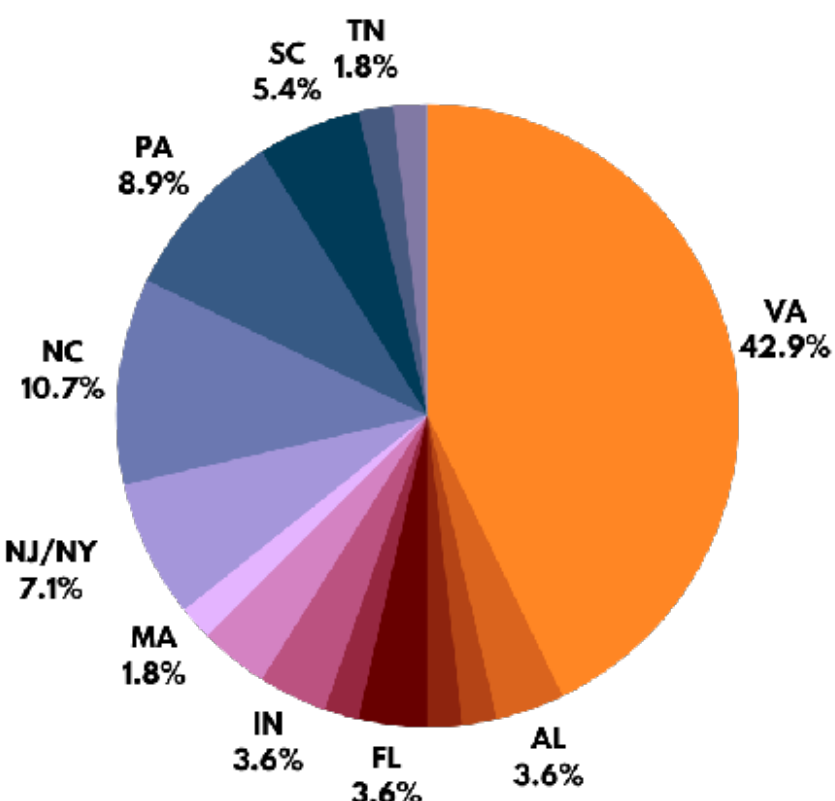
**Connor Miggy**  
Randolph Macon College  
*Baseball*



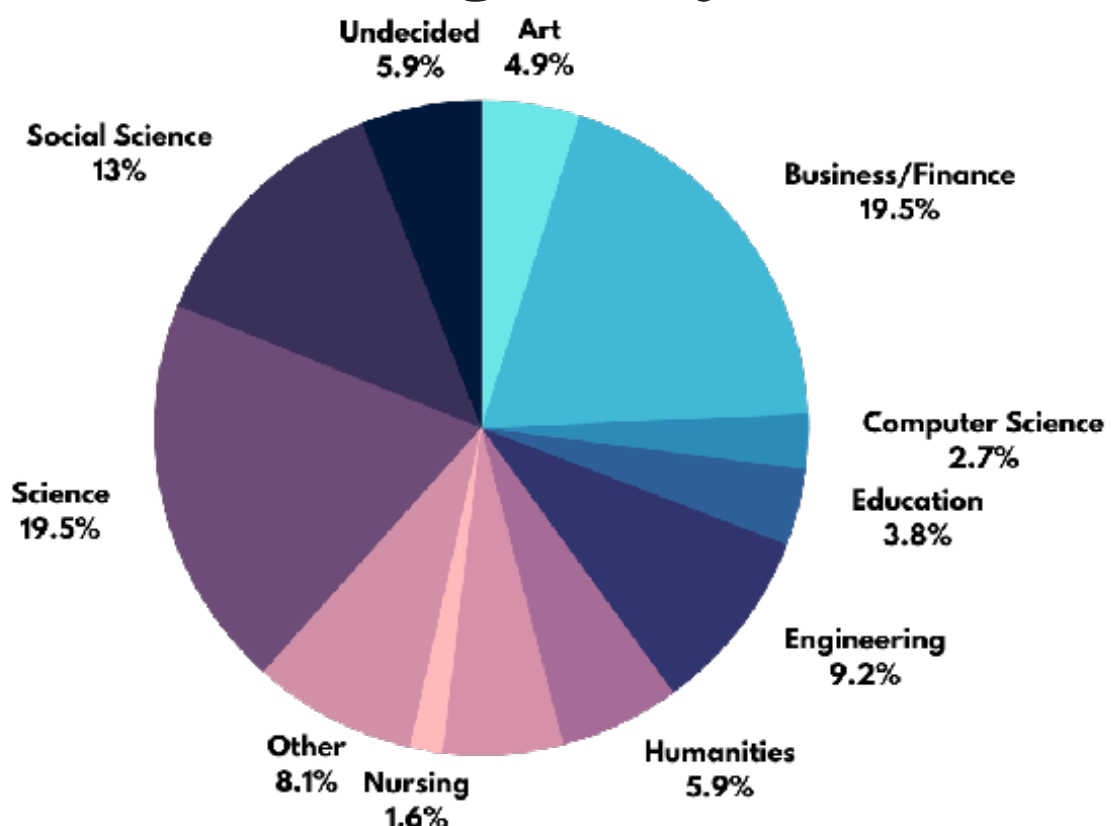
**Ben Coker**  
US Coastal Guard Academy  
*Track & Field*

# Freeman College Statistics

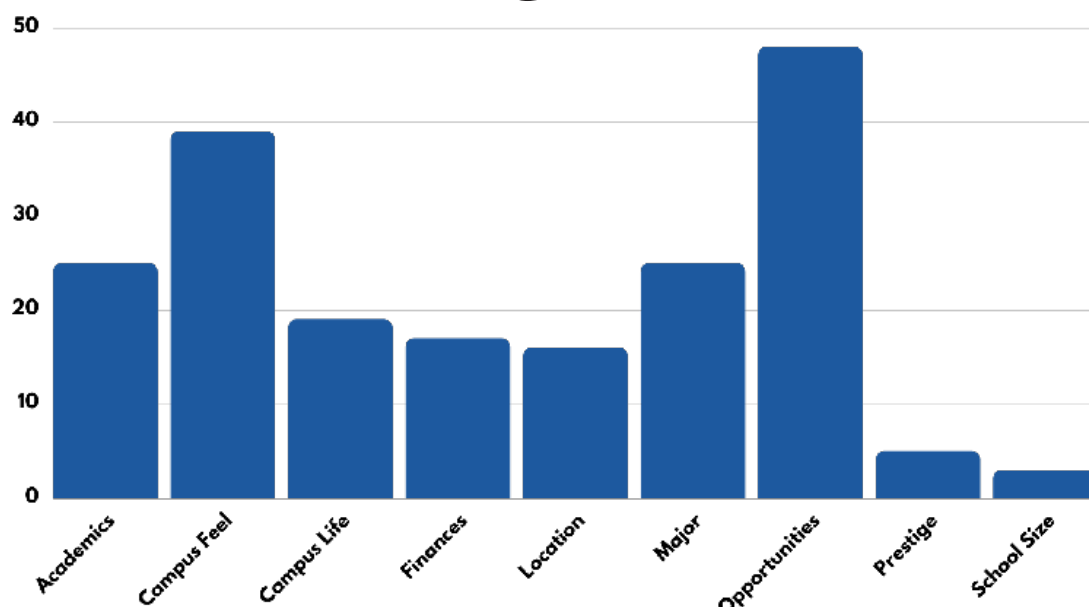
## Which states are students going to?



# College Majors

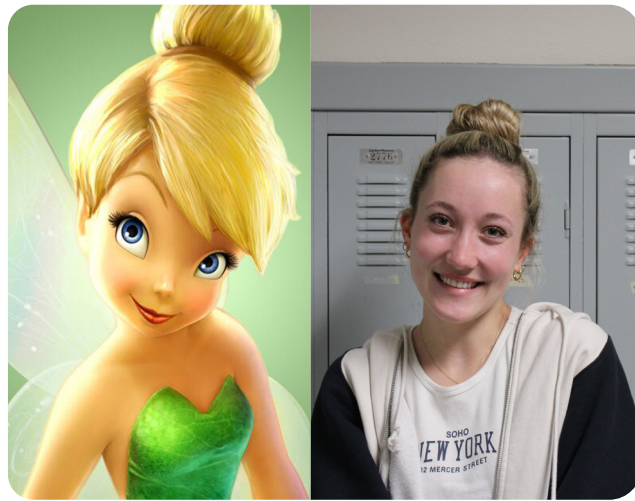
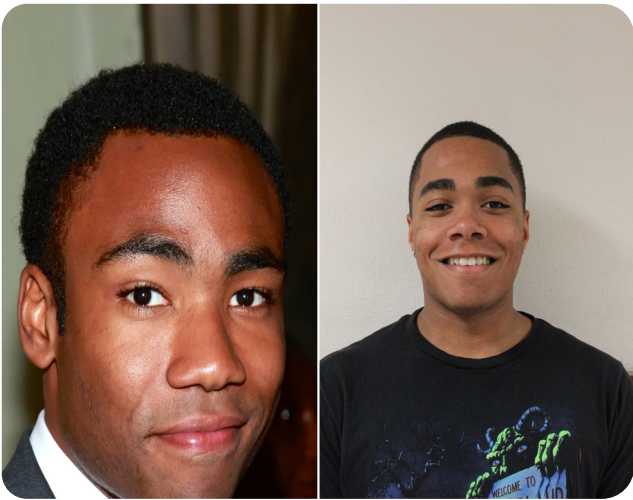
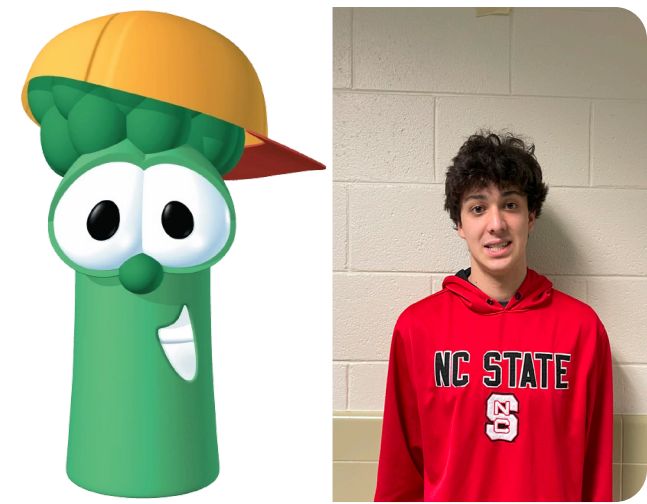


# Deciding Factors:





## Senior Lookalikes

Alfredo Linguini  
Rye HaddadTinkerbell  
Emery TroxellSimone Ashley  
Trisha NagulagariDonald Glover  
Devin EdmondsThe Weasley Twins  
Bridger & Wyatt GiddingsMerida  
Mary Kenzie HubardTyga  
Greg ThomasChicken Little  
Griffin BeldingJunior Asparagus  
Christian Sleman

## Am I doing this right???

Morgan Strudgeon  
Editor-in-Chief

Right now, seniors nationwide are preparing to graduate and begin the next chapter of their lives. Whether we are going to college,

starting our careers, or spending time finding out how we want to spend the rest of our lives; we will all soon be going out into the world and trying to find our way.

However, before I set out to conquer the world, there is one major question that I must have answered: am I doing this right?

Even though throughout the past four years I have found a few jobs, driven myself around the greater Richmond area, and traveled to a few places on my own, I think these things are fairly straightforward and only the tip of the iceberg of adulthood.

Simply put, I don't know if I can be on my own. Do I know how to find an apartment? Can I find out who I am supposed to call if my car breaks down? What am I going to do if I end up somewhere without cell service and I can't find out where I am supposed

to go? How do I get insurance?

The answer to all of these questions: I do not know. I might be able to do all of these things, I might actually be able to do them very well. However, I have no idea if I actually can. I feel untested against the world, like I'm the new kid on the playground and everyone is waiting to see how far up the climbing wall I can go.

But enough about what I don't know. While I might not know exactly what I am doing, there are a few things that I have picked up through the years that I think will serve well. I know that I am NOT the kind of person that can just skip breakfast. I know that I need to bring ChapStick with me wherever I go. I know I absolutely cannot stand scratchy tags on clothes.

But in addition to these more trivial things, I have also learned about who I am and what I believe in.

I learned that I should never say no to trying new things, that new experiences are important, and that there is still so much out there to discover. Throughout high school, I have tried new things, met new people, and discovered that there is more out there than I was ever exposed to before.

I also found, rather abruptly, that I do not know anything. There have been plenty of times that I, even as someone that always seems to have something to say about everything, have been at a loss for any kind of answer. While this doesn't necessarily mean I know nothing, it does seem that the more things I learn, the more books I read, and the more lectures I attend, the more I seem to develop a sense of all the things I know nothing about.

And perhaps most importantly, I learned that I must be a product

of my own creation. Throughout the last four years, I have cherry-picked the very best of everything that I have come across and made it my own. I am an accumulation of my own experiences.

Now, as I am preparing to go out into the world, I inevitably ask myself 'am I doing this right?'. I know that the answer doesn't matter as much as I think it does. If the past four years have been any indication, as soon as I think I have found my way, I will get lost yet again and be forced to find my own way back.

However, being lost is not a bad thing, being lost means that you have the ability to get unlost, you have the ability to go somewhere else, find new things, and meet new people. There are a million and one adventures to go on, so in the end, knowing what you're doing is overrated anyway.

## Proud to be "Kriebel-ish"

Peter Kriebel  
Sports Editor

In 1982, while chopping wood, my granddad's splitting maul was snared by his clothesline and ricocheted back, Looney Tunes style, into his head. Now Willis Kriebel is many things, but drama queen is not one of them. So, mildly encumbered and bleeding profusely, he walked inside and, instead of

dialing 911, told my nana that he was "going to lie down for a bit." This is a story that's been told in my family forever. We reference it whenever one of us is doing something "Kriebel-ish." What that actually means is, of course, never defined but always understood. The best way I can describe it is a Pennsylvania-Dutch brand of Stoicism. You see, my granddad grew up on a farm in Worcester, Pennsylvania, in a house with four siblings and no indoor plumbing. The family made a living, but only managed to scrape enough money together to send the oldest of the four kids to college. My granddad was not the one.

Flash forward about 50 years and I'm lucky enough to still have my granddad in my life while weighing a particularly tough college decision. Virginia has some of the best in-state schools in the country, all of which can offer a great education. But none offer a major in sports journalism, a passion I dis-

covered working on The Commentator. My time as a staff writer and sports editor allowed me to blend my love of writing, sports, and storytelling. I've gotten to know so many of my amazing peers and have grown a great deal closer to the school. My wonderful experience in the classroom has led me to dive into opportunities outside of it and pursue this subject as a career. But in order to get a hands-on journalism-specific education, I need to travel out of state. Now sports journalism is an extremely competitive field; everybody at the end of the bar thinks they can do Al Michaels' job. Couple that with a waning print market and it would seem I'm entering a pretty unstable field. Relatives naturally asked questions about "back-up plans" and offered their practical advice, all of which I accepted behind a feigned smile. But one family member went out of his way to say otherwise: my granddad. He told me, "If it's something you're truly

passionate about, then you should make it work." The man who grew up with the least opportunity has been the most supportive of my dreams. But that's just who my granddad is, an infinitely selfless, humble, and caring person. And reflecting on my time at Freeman, what sticks out are the people who displayed similar traits, who were dependable and kind without even thinking about it. Because we're so used to it, we take for granted

ed what a tight-knit community Freeman is. It's not easy to turn a bunch of middle schoolers into functioning members of society but somehow Freeman manages to do it every four years. It's a testament to the staff and the culture, but also the students' willingness to challenge themselves and grow. I'm extremely thankful for my four years here and am proud to say I went to school with so many people like my granddad.



Peter with his older sister and grandfather



## Best Dressed



Griffin Belding &amp; Vail Thomas

## Best Bromance



Christian Sleman &amp; Hayes Gelsomino

## Best Gal Pals



Grace Montgomery &amp; Annie Vosmik

## Best Smile



Hayden Schwartz &amp; Meg Pollard

## Best to Bring Home to your Parents

Peter Kriebel &amp; Anne Riley Pounders

## Most Likely to be on Broadway



Jackson Rountree &amp; Avery Ingram

## Most Likely to Get Caught in a Tardy Sweep

Liv Robinson &amp; Graham Daly

## Most Athletic

Ella Davis &amp; Jason Abbey

## Most Likely to Become President

Adair Reid &amp; Grayson Archibeque

## Most Artistic



Owen McGill &amp; Paloma Lheritier

## Most Likely to Break the Curve

Anna Basola &amp; George Li

## Mr. &amp; Mrs. DSF



David Badhoun &amp; Alka Link

## Jack and Jill of All Trades

Ishita Bakshi &amp; Charlie Wills

## Class Clown

Allie Hazelgrove &amp; Sahel Rahman

## Everyone's Friend

Simone Fortier &amp; Angel Soto-Torres

## Soccer Mom &amp; Dad



Kieran Berry &amp; Ellie McCormick

## Most Likely to Be On Jeopardy

Isabelle Broughton &amp; Grady Wills

## Everyone's Crush



Bridget Wilson &amp; Wit Rader

## Who You Become

**Jess Pruett**  
Staff Advisor

As much as I don't want to admit it, I was quite happy to be asked by some of my students to contribute to their last issue of the Commentator. So as the school year comes to a close, it is once again time to say goodbye and good luck to my senior journalism staff members. They have spent countless hours interviewing, writing, editing, and designing for Freeman's newspaper, and their hard work has illuminated the pages of the school rag. The Commentator's senior staff, Farah Abdul-

lah, Lillie Deaton Connor, Abby Crowe, Henry Haggard, Audrey Jones, Peter Kriebel, Ada Malpani, Adair Reid, Morgan Strudgeon, and Cat White, have provided the Freeman community with valuable information, insightful opinions, and entertaining articles. But most importantly, they have developed productive, creative, and meaningful relationships with each other over the two school years they have spent in room 208.

Writing and leadership skill-building aside, this is the best part of Freeman's journalism program. I say this because it is wonderful to watch the seniors navigate running the paper as editors rather than staff writers. Because of

their new senior staff responsibilities, they leave the program as close friends and colleagues who have discovered each other's graces and faults — and are all the better for it. On the other hand, as the staff advisor, I find that there is often a unique combination of feelings at the end of each school year because of these circumstances. While I am more than confident that they all have bright futures ahead of them, I have also come to know the mixed emotions that follow the senior group's inevitable departure in the warming days of May and June.

It is common knowledge that the transition from high school to college can be daunting, but

I have unwavering faith in this group's abilities. After all, I have witnessed firsthand their prudence in dealing with new classes and people, college decisions, interviews, internships, deadlines, competitions, and roommate dilemmas. They have already proven themselves to be capable and committed people, and I do not doubt that they will continue to excel, no matter the path they choose hereafter, but I sincerely hope that they will look back with fondness on their time in room 208. I urge them to commit it to their collective memory as a symbol of possibility and the joy these kinds of meaningful relationships bring.

Senior staff, as you move on to

the next chapter of your lives, I encourage you to continue pursuing your passions and fostering the kinds of relationships that you have built here. The world needs more people like you: kind, intelligent, creative, articulate, funny, committed, and compassionate. Wherever you go, they will be lucky to have you.

In closing, I want to thank you all for your hard work, dedication, and passion for the journalism program — and your friendships. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors and look forward to seeing the great things you will accomplish down the road. Please keep in touch and come back and visit. I can't wait to see who you become.