

THE COMMENTATOR

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The Commentator Editors:

Top (L to R): Jess Pruett (teacher), Connor Almstead, Matthew Wozniak *Third Row:* Katelyn Morrow, Julia Connor, Scotty Gregory, Kristen Carpenter *Second Row:* Sadie Edlavitch, Sarah Chilton, Libby Mercer *Bottom:* Izzy Minkler, Cate Woodrum, and Maya Tluchak

Meals Make Memories



Sarah Chilton
Editor-in-Chief

Psychologists say we associate smells with memories. To me, it's more than that. Smells, sounds, textures, images, and tastes all weave together to make up my high school experience. Now that senior year is coming to an end, every sense is heightened, and every memory takes me back. One sense that has a special place in my heart is taste. Not only does it make every meal and snack a joyful experience, but it also allows every dish and accompanying moment to create its own unique memory. Aside from its taste, food is a way that I share love with those around me, and it represents so much more than just a way to fuel my body.

I come from an ingredient household and entree/water family, but as long as I can remember, my family has sat down to eat dinner together almost every night. From a young age, this sense of connection and community with mealtime emerged and continues to flourish today. I'm so grateful for my parents and how hard they worked to make delicious dinners for us day in and day out, which I know takes intensive planning, commitment, and love.

Specifically, I want to shout out my dad for making the bread that I would take a PB&J on to lunch every day of freshman and sophomore year (what an era), and my mom for teaching me how to make the strawberry jam that we put on it. Even though I was at school, those sandwiches held comforting pieces of my family and traditions that I have only realized now, looking back. Whenever I eat those sandwiches, I think of the friends at that lunch table and how my relationships with them have changed since. Also, thank you to my parents on behalf of the Freeman field hockey and softball teams for the Chilton

chicken caesar salad brought to pre-game meals, an absolute hit.

Speaking of those pre-game meals, even though they were borderline excessive before sprinting for an hour straight, they exemplify everything a team is. Parents pitching in to help, girls talking and laughing before the game, and getting ready all together. We've gotten Chipotle, Chick-fil-A, Jersey Mike's, Cane's, Lee's, Jimmy Johns, and more, and any time I eat at those places, I'm brought back to the moments in room 123, the picnic tables, and the bus loop, laughing at absurd theme outfits or out of pocket comments.

Most of my Freeman meal memories come with sports, now that I think about it. Whether it's a Chick-fil-A or Panera run after morning practice or team bonding at El-Cap, the taste of a chicken mini or the delicious (I stand by this) white sauce reminds me of special moments and people. When I go to El-Cap, I remember the first time I went with our tiny softball team freshman year, the care that those seniors had for the never-played-softball-before freshman, and the time

our late JV field hockey Coach Plunket paid for everyone's meal.

To cap off the school sports saga, our huge senior night meals/cookouts and the cake with our faces on it (plus a gluten-free one for Campbell) are something I look forward to every season. There's something so connective and special about sharing a meal (shout out Thomas Foster) and taking time to enjoy one another's company.

Aside from sharing food, giving food is a way I show love. I make birthday cakes of all kinds for my dad's and brother's birthdays, infamous pralines for French Club meetings, brownies, cookies, fudge for ethics presentations, and much more. It brings me so much joy to make other people's days, like how whenever I make a batch of roasted nuts or pumpkin seeds, I think about Julia lighting up when I bring them to Journalism.

Speaking of Journalism, our distribution parties are unmatched. Piles of cookies, brownies, chips, sometimes a birthday cake for the birthday queen (Pruett), and whatever delicious dish Emerson and his mom cook up give a sweet end to every issue of the paper. These

parties are times for us to relax, enjoy each other's company, and take pride in the issue we worked hard for months before to put out. In the day-to-day, this group of people is so special to me, and the way that our senior group of 12 has grown into friendship (or hate-lationship) is highlighted every lunch we spend together.

Even outside of school, the people I've met over the last 12 years (particularly the last four) are never far from reach, as I'm reminded by the inability to go to Ray's without running into someone I know. Late-night trips to Cookout (+ Shookout) with the same order and person after football games and creating architectural award-winning towers of fro-yo at Sweet Frog's "No Weigh Wednesday" formed me into who I am today. Under the piles of sugar and fried food are people whom I met in the past four years and will never forget. The dishes may only be there for 20 minutes, but I hope that I'm still talking to these people in 20 years. Thank you, Freeman, for introducing me to my favorite meals and the people I get to enjoy them with.

Packing It All Back Up



Libby Mercer
Editor-in-Chief

While sitting in my first-period class as an almost graduated senior, I listened to my government teacher, Mr. Fabian, give his annual "you're almost out of here!" speech. It's far too early in the morning for me to fully process what he is saying, but even then, I still get a stabbing feeling that next year, I have to learn how to start over. Suddenly, I'm back at my kindergarten bus stop with two pigtails sprouting from either side of my head, wearing two-toned tights where one leg is hot pink and the other is neon green, and holding on tight to the rolling backpack with bright orange flowers that I begged my mom for. That girl is just like me right now: unsure of how or where to start given a "new beginning" like kindergarten. However, over her elementary school days, she gained confidence by boldly singing "Defying Gravity" at the schoolwide talent show in first grade, fostered her love of reading by participating in a fourth grade

reading challenge, and learned how to build connections with others from her third grade teacher, who still cheers her on to this day.

The good thing about a new start is that it means you get to take all the lessons you have learned from all the other "new beginnings" in your life — from kindergarten to starting middle and high school, getting your first job, or preparing to go to college — and pack them in that same rolling backpack as your first new start.

In the side pouch that usually holds my water bottle, I'm slipping my almost full Dunkin' refresher that I should have finished three hours earlier, but was too busy talking with Natalie Murchie and Olivia (Libby) Savage to take any sips at all. They taught me through hash browns and "Tornado Twists" how good it feels to be a part of someone's weekly agenda. Thank you to the two of them, but especially to my driver's ed partner turned best friend, Natalie, for extending kindness in the form of weekly Dunkin' trips.

Nicely stored away in the big pocket, I find my World History II binder from sophomore year, where I made one of my first friends at Freeman. Abby McGowan showed me immediate friendship and acceptance when I didn't know how to make my "fresh" public school start. Thank you for being a friend when I needed one most, and for sticking with me all three years at Freeman.

Crammed in a yellow folder are my disastrous attempts at mastery, most of which lack a gold star.

Safe to say, math has never been my strong suit — hence the fact that I am Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper, not president of Mu Alpha Theta, the math honor society. But after walking into Mrs. Pike's class my junior year, I felt on top of the world, which would resemble the unit circle that I have memorized, thank you very much! To Mrs. Pike, thank you for being patient and understanding while I tried to understand optimization and for being a calming support system for the past two years.

Locked in the front of my backpack is my phone with a couple of notifications from @dsfwriting-center on Instagram. From my enthusiastic insistence that we even have a Writing Center Instagram, to the many Freeman Focuses that I turned into distracted yap sessions, the people in the Writing Center have more patience than you would know. Thank you to the senior girls in the Writing Center and Ms. Hunnicutt for being friends and mentors even after I said the wrong thing (many times) or left to pursue my big girl journalism dreams across the hall.

Somewhere in my pocket is a crumpled-up pass to the French Club, where I had the opportunity to lead a community with croissants and crepes as "madame president." Thank you to my French teachers Madame Blecher and Madame Pullin for patiently trying to comprehend my "franglais", my junior "children" Sarah Fuller, Gabby Mazzeo, and Syl Compton for sticking it out with me in class, especially with my obvi-

ous senioritis, and to French Club for showing up to the meetings and sharing enthusiasm with me.

Secured by a carabiner is currently my Disney princess lunch box, but previously was a pink and orange striped Scout. On my first day at Freeman, I ate lunch alone and cried in the bathroom about it, but fortunately, as I made more friends, my classmates never let that happen again. Thank you Allison Bischoff and Katelyn Morrow for honorarily adopting me into the swim team during B-lunch junior year, to Josie McGlynn for generously insisting I work with her at Core over shared bags of goldfish, to Elle Ainsworth for the AP Environmental Science pep talks this year, and for everyone who ensured I never sat alone at lunch again.

In my free hand, waving it around like a "newsie," is *The Commentator*. Journalism has been at the very heart of most of the leadership lessons I learned throughout high school, and helped me out of my scared sophomore shell. Thank you to Mr. Pruett for letting me barge into Room 208 most mornings, and for advising me against starting my "Frankenstein" paper with Merriam Webster dictionary definitions, and to Journalism for tolerating my many circle questions.

After shoving a copy of the newspaper in any willing Freeman students' hands, I hold the extra copy I set aside for my neighbors, Jerry and Cathy. As the biggest fans of the Freeman newspaper I know, thank you to Jerry and Kathy for

being some of my favorite people to share my hard work with.

Standing beside me in most transition periods or on my phone in frantic text messages is Norah Pascual. A true rock and gal pal, Norah guided me through my transition to Freeman in frantic mid-night DM's, sat with me in many lunch periods sophomore year, and has supported me through every high and low moment high school could bring during our daily calls. Thank you Norah for showing me true friendship starting from our time as St. Michael's Dragons all the way to Freeman Mavericks and listening to every iteration of what I have to say.

And as the wheels on the rolling backpack turn, guiding me through the halls of each "new beginning" or adventure, is the person who made them turn, my mom. Thank you for buying me that rolling backpack in kindergarten, when I'm pretty sure the supply list prohibited backpacks with wheels, and for being my endless support.

To the now burned AP Macroeconomics notebook I shared with Annabelle Nee, empty cheerwine cans given to me by Basil Betz, questionable timed essays Mr. Schuster and Mr. Abril had to grade, and to everyone who helped me make it through my time at Freeman, thank you for shaping me into the person about to move on at James Madison University. As I get ready to pack it all up again, I will take with me all the qualities, traits, and lessons I gained from the Freeman Family

Journalism Superlatives



Julia Connor

Arts and Entertainment Editor

Connor Almstead: Most likely to miss the reference. As our big table laughs at jokes, Connor will interject despite not having TikTok, the root of most of our references. But, Connor helps us create our own journalism jests. Not only do these always make us laugh, but they are unique because of his true humor and self, not tainted by TikTok. Thank you, Connor, for always giving us a laugh and making the funniest banter with Woz in your hate-lationship.

Kristen Carpenter: Most likely to be at Trader Joe's. Without a doubt, that is where Kristen will be to get her weekly groceries every Sunday. I've run into her countless times on her grocery runs, when I'm with my mom or a friend, but she always goes alone. Sunday is her reset day, which she spends by herself. She makes time for herself so she can do everything she does in a week: all her school work, gym, and work. As she does her routines perfectly, I admire her peace-

ful Sundays that make the best-looking lunches. I hope you can visit a Trader Joe's in Los Angeles.

Sarah Chilton: Best person to be on a deserted island with. Next time this circle question is asked, I know my one item would be Sarah. Not only do I love her cooking (thanks for the pralines and nuts), but I know she could help me. I imagine Sarah could build a tent, start a fire, and calculate the angle we needed to position our S.O.S. sign all on our first day. She is quite literally a Jill of all trades (her real superlative) as she is athletic, smart, savvy, and compassionate. I can lean on her for a snack, a hug, or help with homework.

Julia Connor: Most likely to tell the best stories. Julia always has something new to share with a smile on her face. Her infectious laughter and joy light up 208 every time we walk in, where she eagerly spills the events of late. Planning for events and debriefing the Monday after are never dull with Julia. Though she'll divulge her thoughts with enthusiasm, Julia also has the patience and kindness to be a supportive listener to anyone, which is one of the many reasons she'll be so missed next year (guest written by Sarah Chilton).

Sadie Edlavitch: Most likely to give Mr. Pruett a migraine. If Mr. Pruett has a hand over his forehead, it's more often than not because Sadie asked another question. From her questionable ethics inquiries to her asking for help on Lit homework, her questions raise eyebrows and smiles. Although we all laugh along with Sadie, her bubbly personality makes it hard

to say no to her questions. She always finds someone to help her export InDesign or read her essay before submitting, but no one will answer her ethical questions.

Scotty Gregory: Most likely to be unbothered. Because she has never experienced FOMO (fear of missing out), from football games, spur-of-the-moment hangouts, and parties, Scotty has never once thought twice about staying in or skipping an event. It is a level of unbothered I and most aspire to ascend to. Scotty is the sweetest person and will make any hangout fun, so the only side effect to this no FOMO is that she won't come to functions :(Although begged by Cate to do anything, she does not budge on her answer. Stay unbothered, Scotty.

Libby Mercer: Most likely to have thirty planners. Libby manages our journalism calendar and our circle slideshow using a combination of spreadsheets, Google Calendar, and a paper planner, to remind us of upcoming deadlines. From managing her life schedule to managing our class schedule, she has it down to a tee, which is extremely impressive considering how little other people in this class plan. But Libby keeps our class together and moves us towards our deadlines so we can have a perfect issue. I imagine her agendas are organized by classes, colors, school, life, and I aspire to gain this planning skill in college.

Izzy Minkler: Most likely to be front row at a game. If I had to guess where Izzy will be in two years or 10 years, I would say front row at a game. From Freeman to

college to pro-level games, Izzy seems to always be up to date and covered. Izzy will come to Freeman games to support our peers, and not just football, but she actually watches the games! Beyond Freeman, she has been known to have a college basketball team, Purdue. I do not know exactly what "her teams" are for the NFL, NBA, MLB, and even NHL, but I would not be surprised if she has a team in each league. I hope you can watch Purdue win an NCAA championship in person, which is very fitting for you, sports editor.

Katelyn Morrow: Most likely to be MIA. Although I see Katelyn at the pool at 5:00 a.m., I rarely see her in Journalism, as she is in and out of the classroom during the day. This may be my most fitting task as she is out of the classroom when I picked her superlative, but she is probably working on something very important and not visiting Yearbook again. Her plate is full as she manages her classes, attends to her swim captain duties, and designs the whole Centerspread.

Maya Thlachak: Most likely to have inside jokes with herself. Maya will rarely go through a class without laughing as she exchanges jokes around the classroom. However, even Kristen and Sadie sometimes don't understand Maya's deep internet references. This will not stop her from laughing to herself and making TikTok videos to help us understand (which it does not). But no matter how chronically online you have to be to understand the joke, hearing her laugh can't help

the table from smiling. Please still make your jokes at UVA.

Catherine Woodrum: Most likely to hold a conversation with herself. If Cate gets started on a topic she likes, she will not stop. She knows everything: Egyptian gods, flowers, constellations, and liberal potato farming. Every day we have a circle in journalism, and Cate will always, without fail, add comments to other people's answers or want it to circle back to her again. If I need to sit and talk to somebody, she will sit and talk with me. I can also use her talkative help during class discussions and will always be grateful for the insightful views and boosts she's given me. Never stop talking, Cate.

Matthew Wozniak: Most likely to get the best article and not write it. Woz could be writing an opinion article about teamwork or a news article about Freeman's new school bells, but no topic can motivate him to write it on time, except his senior article on his procrastination habit. We made many attempts to reprimand his tardy articles: threaten his grades, announce his failure to write an article to the class, and even a behavior chart where he is ranked the worst (on red). But Woz's biggest determination was to never start his work on time, which he successfully did throughout the year.

Mr. Jess Pruett: Most likely to be the butt of every joke. We love to joke at Pruett's expense, but we all love him dearly. Mr. Pruett doesn't know or understand our references, but he always is good natured and takes our jokes wholeheartedly. Thank you, Pruett.



10 Years From Now...



Sadie Edlavitch

Arts and Entertainment Editor

It sounds crazy, but one C+ in AP Environmental Science does not mean the world is coming to an end. Most of my high school years consisted of countless nights worrying that I wouldn't graduate because of one bad grade on a math test. I found the constant need to excel in everything I did because if I didn't, I would let it have the power to derail my entire life.

Beyond academics, I constantly found myself stressed about smaller things, like club meetings, friendship conflicts, or minor inconveniences. "Will this matter in 10 years?" My mom would say to me. Most of the time, my answer was no, and this simple question helped shape my perspective and realize how temporary things can be. Now, when I look back on my high school experience, I think about the things that will matter in 10 years.

10 years from now, I will thank myself for applying to journalism and receiving the role of Arts and Entertainment editor, with the best co-editor, might I add. Of the many things that journalism has taught me, the most important one was how to come back from failure. The first article I ever wrote for the Commentator received 94 editing comments, and that's not an exaggeration. I remember staring at the Google Doc in horror, wondering if I was even cut out to be in this class. However,

I learned, rewrote, and improved.

Between all of the newspapers and deadlines, the bond my journalism class has formed is something that I will cherish forever. To me, journalism was about finding my voice and confidence. I will miss all of the distribution parties and laughing about our inside jokes that no one outside of room 208 would understand, such as the "three-bite rule", "Julia's nuts", or "sorry Maya."

10 years from now, I will be grateful for having the most dedicated and intelligent teacher, Mr. Pruett. A good teacher will teach you something you will remember for a day, but a great teacher will teach you something you will remember for the rest of your life. Mr. Pruett is the type of teacher who will not let you leave his classroom without a smile on your face. He takes the time to know each student as an individual and finds a way for each student to excel in their own way.

10 years from now, I'll look

back at all of the memories I made in high school, the good and the bad. Starting freshman year, when we all still had to wear masks and social distance in class. The best part about navigating through high school was that I had my best friend to guide me along the way. My constant, and the person I can count on through every twist and turn. Everyone needs a Caroline in their life.

Junior year tested me in ways I never expected. I had a total of 119 absences. I started to fall behind a bunch. If there's one thing I learned about juniors and sophomores, it's that all of us should have taken more driver's ed classes — or at least I should have. Three hits of parked cars and seven months later, I think I can proudly say that I know how to drive now. Sorry, Mr. Glen.

Senior year has been filled with many "last firsts" such as the last first day, the last first pep rally, the last first swim meet, and the list goes on. I also started a new

job, which I quickly fell in love with, and feel so supported by everyone there. Although it is sad to go, I can't say I'm not excited to have a fresh start in college and make the most of my last years as a teenager. Senior year has made me more independent. It's extremely important to know that you are in control of your own life and you will be okay by yourself.

Aside from the memories I hope to still have in 10 years, if there is one thing I have learned, it's that high school is just a bump in the road to get to where you want to be. Stressing over it will do you no good in the long run. We are all so close to the finish line, and the light at the end of the tunnel is near.

That C+ taught me more than any perfect grade ever could. About grace, about letting go, about understanding that these setbacks are just a part of being human. Life isn't linear, and success isn't defined by a flawless record. Now, I can confidently say that I know the world did not end.



‘Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans’



Scotty Gregory
Online Editor-in-Chief
Opinions Editor

In elementary school, I had a piece of grape jelly toast for breakfast every morning. I never grew sick of it, and my mom knew to always have it ready for me; she didn’t even have to ask. When driving to my river house as a kid, every time I would force my older brother and sister to watch High School Musical 2 (the best one) on repeat in the back of the car. When I get up in the morning, I wake up, and without fail, I make my lunch, eat breakfast, wash my face, change my clothes,

and head out the door. I’ve never strayed from this order. When I was in middle school, I watched The Office every single day. It was the only show that I watched, and I never needed to watch anything new. Why would I? I knew what I liked, so why change it to something that I wouldn’t know if I enjoyed? Fast forward five years, and now the only TV show that I watch is Friends.

See a pattern? You should. I like patterns! I prefer to live my day-to-day life by them. I have a schedule planned for every day, whether it is physically on paper or outlined in my head, and I don’t like to defy it (Seriously, ask my friends, they hate me for it). I’m not the girl to come running to when you want to impulsively go out to dinner or go on a quick trip for coffee. I most likely already have a plan to be doing homework, reading, or doing my laundry. This makes me sound like I am zero fun, but this is just the way that my brain is programmed.

Even though I feel like my life has to be planned out, somehow I am still a procrastinator. I get everything done on time, but it is almost always within two days of the deadline. That being said, I started looking for my senior

quote, you guessed it, two days before the deadline. Not a good idea, it was incredibly stressful because I wanted it to be something that in 30 years I would be able to look back on and be proud of, something that would still be prevalent in my life after that much time had passed. I started a note on my phone and wrote down every quote that I liked from TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, and ChatGPT.

I had quotes like, “I wish there was a way to know you are in the good old days before you’ve actually left them” said by Andy Bernard in The Office, “Start spreading the news, I’m leaving today” by Frank Sinatra, and “Slow down, you’re doing fine” by Billy Joel on my list but none of them felt fitting.

I ended up using the quote “life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans,” sung by John Lennon in his song Beautiful Boy. I loved the song, and the quote was very happy and also sentimental. I figured it would be something I would be proud to look back on in 30 years, so I just went with it (I was tired of searching for quotes, to be honest).

I knew that I related to the quote, because who doesn’t, but it wasn’t until I started brainstorming ideas for this article that it

hit me: the best parts of my high school career were the things that people convinced me to do instead of my meticulous schedule.

As my senior year is coming to a close, I realize that the unplanned moments are the times that I will forever cherish. Whether it is the late-night trips to Rays or running to Walmart before they close with my best friend to get a folder for mastery that is due the next day, the music is always the loudest, and the laughs are always the hardest. These are the moments that I will remember for the rest of my life.

During the beginning of my junior year, I had talked with some of my friends about going to see a concert by the Driver Era later that spring. It was a fun idea, but I didn’t think it was actually going to happen until my best friends surprised me with tickets! The concert was in Silver Spring, Maryland, and so, being my usual self, I freaked out a little bit about going to a concert in a different state in the middle of the school week. Little did I know, it was going to be one of the most fun nights of my life. Even though we didn’t know all of the songs, I would not trade the experience for the world. From blasting music

from our childhood on the drive up, doing our makeup in tiny mirrors in the parking garage, making new friends while waiting for the concert to start, to running around the streets of the city afterwards, I had the time of my life.

My high school experience has been nothing like the high school experience that I saw in the movies. Far from it. But when I look back on the moments I spent straying from my planned schedule, I see a glimpse of the magic that I used to see in Gabriella from High School Musical in me.

If you find yourself planning out all of your days like me, let me be the one to tell you that I think that is wonderful! Having a routine and knowing what you need to accomplish is one of the best ways to be productive, but let me also be the one to tell you to throw the schedule out every once in a while! Your core memories of high school will not be the ones where you are cleaning your room on a Friday night. Find a good balance for you and do not stress the little things! Enjoy your time in high school while it lasts, because before you know it, you truly will realize that these are the good ol’ days, and they are almost finished.

I Will Never Not Have Mastery Again



Cate Woodrum
Features Editor

My mathematics career effectively ended after seventh grade Algebra I, my last hoorah, a blaze of A+ glory before the inevitable tank of the last five years of math classes. When my calculus teacher, Mrs. Barbolish, hands back checkpoints, the rest of my table gets stars, and I get little “you should be coming to Freeman Focus :)” notes. Mind you, this is not a reflection of Barb, who has held my hand for the last two years and is a downright fabulous teacher. I am just not great at math (something she would immediately chastise me

for saying - sorry, Barb!). I am surrounded by all you extremely intelligent people who cannot help but have the calculus steps jump out at you, and I’ll be the first to admit I’m a little bit of a sore loser.

When I walked through the doors of Freeman High School in 2021, snaggle-toothed and acne-clad, I firmly believed I had all the answers. Yes I was crippling insecure, but even with that I still thought I knew best — don’t ask me why. I didn’t need the steps to jump out at me because whichever ones I took were bound to be the right ones. Why mess with perfection?

Oh boy, these last few years have been humbling, but I don’t mean that the way it sounds. Through an absolute trial by fire, I have been super wrong (yes Aidan and Adi were right about intra even though I swore on my life); I have been the weakest link (thank you Abby and Sarah for many a physics lab carry, I owe you both like crazy); I have tried my absolute hardest and I have failed.

If you think that sounds bad, wait till we unpack my social game here at Freeman (I just earned my contact photo back on Charlie’s phone). I have upset people I care about and myself, mostly because I couldn’t see past my own nose. I can’t discredit those friends, almost all of whom

in hindsight have given our relationship the chance to be even stronger; something that means so much to me (a certain mandatory scheduled visitor knows that I hope). I’ll admit I might have taken things a little too personally, and I may have fought a little harder than was ever called for.

But enough about all my unrelenting greatness, the moral of the story is: I have turned in Mastery packet after Mastery packet that were shoddy at best, which I 100% paid the Powerschool price for; and I am so much better for it.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m sure it feels great to be “the best”, but as a senior, I can confidently say that I have learned so much more from my shortcomings than my successes, no matter how much I still kick myself for them. I needed to be wrong all those times so that when it was finally right, I wouldn’t be able to give it up. My authenticity was, and still is, hard fought on the battlegrounds of DSF. Above all else, that was my biggest Mastery of high school, learning who I actually was; the me without all the guff of the girl I thought I had to make myself to be “the best.”

I have done a lot of hating up until now, I want to take a quick moment to convince you all these last four years weren’t just one giant tumble. I have the best friends (including those not name

dropped) who have ever existed. We can thank them for getting me through all these losses (Rays with Abby is the only reason senioritis hasn’t completely claimed me). I have cherished every moment with them, even our low points have just made the high ones that much higher. I am so lucky that I get to be so scared that we might drift apart, because that means I have gotten to live a life full of so much love I can’t imagine myself without you all right there with me (Scotty and Carter you two are my rock so you better not be going anywhere). I have adored all my teachers. Specifically, Durrett, Ms. Hunnicutt, Mr. Abril, Pruett, Barb, and Mr. Peck — you all have shaped me, the way I look at the world, and the person I aspire to become more than I could ever put into words. Sincerely, thank you for pouring so much time and love into your teaching. I know I am just one of the many who have had the pleasure to know and care for you all.

Sidenote: I do think I actually did alright academically all things considered, and I seriously learned way more than I thought I would.

As this gigantic chapter of my life ends, and our high school years come to a close, I feel so much more sure of myself than I did the first time I walked these halls. Knowing only that I have

no idea what’s really going on, nor what the future holds, and never what the ‘right’ steps are, yet still putting one foot in front of the other makes walking feel like flying. I am getting ready to ship off to college, to leave friends I have had for a decade, to have no choice but to reinvent myself, and I am terrified. We are all standing together, and yet each one of us is completely alone, on the cusp of our entire lives, teetering on the edge of what seems limitless. While I am absolutely white-knuckling my childhood, I still cannot help but relish in the fact that I am utterly clueless, and while I know my head is still a little big for my shoulders, wowza guys, isn’t this an improvement?

When you all are reading this, I will have just completed my final Mastery. I will have sat with my final table (HK, Molly, Logan, and Ben, you guys have easily been my most locked-in crew) for the final time, and I will have taken my final checkpoints. Trust me, Barb handed me back my work, and I yet again was arguing for a 20 points pulled from a place where the sun doesn’t shine. I want you all to know that no matter how many times I wrote “don’t worry obviously I understand this now” in my own desperate defense — no, no, I did not.



Remember to Stop and Smell the Roses



Kristen Carpenter
Online Editor-in-Chief
Opinions Editor

If you were to ask my friends what it’s like to walk with me to the Freeman parking lot at the end of each school day, they would say “exhausting.” I am a fast-paced person. I always have been and probably always will be. From the speed at which I talk to the brisk pace at which I walk, I’ve never been great at slowing down.

My high school career has been defined by this quick tempo, always jumping from thing to thing without hesitation. From diving into the intimidating world

of Advanced Placement coursework, participating in clubs, and engaging in social activities, it would appear that I’ve lived my high school career to the fullest. However, as my time at Freeman has begun to come to a close, I’ve realized one critical step in making the most of my high school experience: slowing down. And no, I don’t just mean in terms of my walk to the parking lot!

I have only recently started to appreciate many of the seemingly mundane activities that have characterized my time as a high school student.

1. Sitting in my car before walking into school: Everyday I leave my house promptly at 8:35 a.m. to ensure that I enter the Freeman parking lot at 8:41 and find my parking spot by 8:42. This allots me eight minutes of peace before the chaos of the day ensues when I get out of my car at 8:50. Although this has been a routine for many months, I have recently found a deeper appreciation for it. I will miss the familiarity of my car, the music playing on my speakers, and seeing friendly faces in the cars next to me as we all try to avoid

the inevitable walk into school.

2. The Trader Joe’s off of Huguenot: Every Sunday, without fail, I ALWAYS go to Trader Joe’s. Not just any Trader Joe’s, it has to be the one off of North Huguenot Road. Although what I purchase has fluctuated over the years, the routine has never wavered. When it’s finally warm enough, I love to open the roof of my car as I cross the bridge. It’s a ritual that I associate with Richmond. Whenever I get home from a trip or after an exhausting weekend, the weekly trip to Trader Joe’s resets me for the week. I know there will be plenty of Trader Joe’s in Los Angeles, but not MY Trader Joe’s. I will miss that.

3. The comfort of my bed and having my own room: When I am out of town, the first thing I miss is my bed. The peace that my room brings me isn’t just a product of my cotton sheets and silk pillowcases either, it’s a result of the familiarity of home. This comfort is something unique to my house, something that I won’t be able to exactly replicate anywhere else. When I imagine myself in five months, crammed in a dorm

built for two with three people in it (thank you, UCLA triples), I can already feel myself missing my safe space, my childhood bedroom.

4. Being close to the people I love: For pretty much all of high school, I have been dead set on going to college out of state. While Richmond will always hold a special place in my heart, I’ve always known that when I graduate, it will be important that I go and do my own thing. I still feel this way, and I couldn’t be more excited to explore a new city. However, it’s begun to sink in that this is the last time I will be able to easily drive to the homes of my best friends, see my dog every day, and have the comfort of my family nearby. Even though graduation marks the beginning of a new and exciting chapter in our lives, I’ve recognized how crucial it is to take a step back and recognize how lucky we are to be here now. In college, the people we have all met here may be simply described as our “hometown friends,” but they are also the people who watched us grow up and have seen us at every awkward, hilarious, and life-changing moment for the past 18 years.

These four points barely begin to scratch the surface of the hidden magic I have only recently discovered in my life at home. Regardless of where these next four years take me and where I end up after college graduation, Richmond is and always will be my home.

We spend all of elementary school wishing we were the “cool” middle schoolers shopping at Short Pump Mall WITHOUT parental supervision, all of middle school dreaming of being high schoolers who can drive to Friday night football games, and all of high school thinking about how much more fun life in college will be when we finally gain ultimate independence. I urge all of us to stop and smell the roses of high school. We have the rest of our lives to explore new places, meet new people, and try new things, but this is the last time life will be this familiar and simple. There is so much to look forward to, but I have come to understand that we are all living in a time that is just as special and exciting as what is to come. Don’t let life pass you by because you aren’t being present in the moment.

Accepting A Peaceful Life



Connor Almstead
News Editor

If you walked a mile in my shoes, a straight path would already be carved out. The ground would be beaten and faded out, with few deviations from the beaten road. After traversing, you'd realize that your initial observation was wrong. The path wasn't a straight line, it was a circle looping you back to the start. Honestly, my high school career was average, bland, and a

run-of-the-mill experience. Nothing stood out, and I was a true "average Joe" at Freeman. I had my classes that I went to, a sport I competed in, and a few clubs I joined. I sat at the same lunch table with the same groups of friends, always with a roast beef sandwich I frantically packed while running 10 minutes late. I had classwork, which turned into homework because I got distracted in class, then I had actual homework I didn't do proactively because I was too focused on doing said classwork. I had a few friend groups that got tighter as the years went on. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Somehow, in my oh-so ordinary life, I felt like an alien to those around me. Everyone always had something cool to tell me, some crazy story from their time in the fast lane. It would always blow my socks off, making me slightly envious while I looked forward to more hours of calculus and physics. No matter where I was, there was a lingering thought that someone, of much greater importance than I, was

having 10 times the fun I was having, while only needing to put 10 percent (or even less) of the effort.

I've never been the rebellious type. If someone told me I shouldn't do something, I steered away with caution. I always had a guilty conscious that told me I would regret my actions, and my future would come crumbling down before me. While I have always been right in the eyes of the law, I felt like I was committing a crime against my social life.

The internal conflict stirred within me for years. Was I wasting my life away trying to be the goody-two-shoes? Am I the loser for trying to put my head down and do my work?

If you are like me, stuck in this dilemma between doing what's right and letting go, you probably feel stuck in a tug-of-war in your mind. An angel sits on one of your shoulders, and a devil sits on the other. One tells you to reject pleasure and focus on your mission, while the other tells you to let it all go. Throw all caution to the wind and live a little. Besides,

what are you really gonna do with the fact that "the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell?"

If you are stuck and drowning in indecision, hear me when I say this: You don't have to sacrifice your morals to have a good time. Fun is not the opposite of a disciplined life. There are opportunities in this school and around this city to get the same rush of living that you think you're missing out on. It all comes down to the places you go, the people around you, and the hobbies you're willing to pursue.

There are people around Freeman and our community who will support you in living the way you want to live. When it boils down to it, a friend is someone you trust who can help you better yourself. The people around you should be people you want to be around, and those who you trust can mold you, directly or indirectly, into a better person.

For so long, I was preoccupied with what others around me have done, comparing my measly hobbies to the extravagant activities people boldly claimed

they've done. I felt like I was doing something wrong. Luckily, that started to change in high school. I'm extraordinarily lucky to have found true friends through the few extracurriculars I did. My four years of being on the Cross Country and the Track and Field team allowed me to make friendships with many great people. I have still been able to have great moments with them over the years without ever having to compromise my morals to "fit in."

A few years ago, I would have been ashamed to admit I lived such a calm life, but my perspective on it has changed. Now, I don't think I live life to a lesser degree than people who do more exciting stuff than me. Looking at it from a different lens, I've learned to live in the moment and embrace the little things that come around me, rather than chasing some grandiose concept of popularity. I'm so truly grateful to have the things and people around me, and I'm hopeful that I can keep these relationships for as long as possible.



I Wrote This Article A Week Late



Matthew Wozniak
News Editor

It's interesting how my relationship with my time has changed over the last four years. My understanding about how the hours of the day can be used has completely changed since I started high school — there's a lot more hours in the day than just the time you're at school.

Three years ago in my freshman year, I didn't join Quizbowl because I was doing one other extracurricular that only took up an hour one day a week after school. Looking back on it, it's crazy to me that I thought I was "too busy." Now, three years later, I seldom find myself getting home before 7:00 p.m. I've spent an absurd amount of my time on robotics over the last few months, and while the skills and friendships I've built through this have been amazing, it has not been good for my preexisting inability to complete things on time.

Those who know me know that my time management is actually horrendous. If there's anyone good at wasting time, it's me. The number of times that I've told myself that I was going to do some work at a specific time and then proceeded to simply just ... not do it is astounding. Social media and scrolling has used up a lot of time, and recently I've been trying to reduce that. Looking at how much I've used my phone

has just made me disappointed. There's a lot that I could have done with that time instead, like schoolwork (namely my newspaper articles), socializing, talking to my family, or (in my opinion, most importantly) sleeping.

My sleep schedule over the past few years has definitely not been the best it could have been, and while yes, it is partially my fault, I blame a lot of that on the fact that I've spent a lot of time every night just doing absolutely nothing useful on either my computer or phone. I told myself that I would eventually do schoolwork, but by the time I finally started doing my work, it would already be almost midnight after I sat down to start "working" at 8:00 p.m. or so.

Honestly, I would be shocked if nobody else did this. It's something that I've settled into since last year, and I hate it. For some reason I just can't get myself to stop doing it, and I have tried. I don't know what the solution is, but even when I sit down earlier and tell myself to do work I just

... cannot. In fact, the only article I wrote for this paper that was even remotely close to on time was this one, and even then it's not done.

Looking back on the last four years, it might be easy to say that it "felt fast." I think that's a little diminishing, though. All of that work we've put in, all that time spent worrying about things that while they ultimately don't matter in the end, all that time doing all those little things adds up, and it matters. I don't think it's a good idea to just condense that all into just a sentence saying how fast it felt. Appreciate all the time you've spent in school with your friends, all of the different things you've tried, all the lessons you've learned. We've all changed a lot growing up, and I think it's important to recognize that. You've come a long way.

You might look back on things you've done up until now and regret a lot. As much as it might suck, failure is the best way to learn. You can be told to do or not do something time and time

again, but it's hard to really learn that without doing it yourself. This is the time of life where those mistakes don't cause as big of an effect as they will in the future, the testing ground for how to communicate with other people and live out your life.

High school is an important part of your life — I think Connor actually made a pretty good analogy the other day: We're almost done with the free trial of life. We don't get to just go through the rigid bell schedule and not really think about it anymore, we have to make our own life decisions.

But, there's a different way you could look at this: we no longer have to follow a rigid schedule, and we get to make our own life decisions. That's better. That free trial might be over, yes, and while the fact that it's not free anymore might suck, the trial is over. We have access to anything life offers, both good and bad. Making the most of that is up to you, not anyone else. Not your family, not your teachers, not your friends. Just you.



Thank You, Dad



Maya Tluchak
Copy Editor

“You will regret what you don’t do more than what you do” is a saying ever present in the Tluchak household. As a child, my dad’s so-called words of wisdom were eye-roll-worthy, but

as I have matured, I realized that my dad’s brushed-off monologue had subconsciously guided me through the world of high school.

“Take the smaller slice of pizza” seems simple, right? You will realize it is not easy in high school, as everyone competes for the biggest pizza slice — whether it’s the “popular group” or the valedictorian spot you are gunning for. My dad often told my anxious five-year-old self, who was determined to get the bigger piece of the pie, to put others first, no matter how hungry you are. This saying doesn’t just relate to food, rather, it serves as a reminder to consider others and their needs before prioritizing your own. The art of personal sacrifice has allowed me to create strong friendships and relationships throughout my time at Freeman. Although my five-year-old self viewed this act of kindness with disdain, she would later

feel the happiness of watching others bite out of the bigger slice.

“Expect the worst, hope for the best.” This one didn’t go over too well with my therapist due to its negative connotations. However, it allowed me not to get too discouraged over defeats and let me celebrate wins appropriately. Throughout high school, I applied this mindset to people. I’ve learned that you will be less disappointed if you don’t expect things from others. Instead, set the bar high for yourself and hope your attitude will reflect on others. Again, this advice is highly frowned upon by my therapist; use it with caution.

“Tluchak’s aren’t quitters.” Oftentimes, my dad casually said this. For example, when I wanted to paddle in after getting wrecked by a wave. However, this quote has stayed with me throughout my life as a consistent reminder to keep going. I struggled with my mental

health often as a teenager, but I vowed never to let go. I wrestled with an epilepsy diagnosis, and now, I am committed to the University of Virginia to continue my education by studying the brain. As a Tluchak, I am not a quitter.

“If you don’t stand up for something, you will fall for everything.” This is my favorite, and if you know me, I take this very seriously. In high school, someone will inevitably try to take advantage of you, socially, academically, or physically. When you have what others want, they will try to tear you down. The only thing that has kept me sane these past four years is not allowing people to take anything away from me. This is often frowned upon for reasons I can’t wrap my head around. Although I have stood up for myself and others in ways I am not proud of, I don’t regret establishing myself as a confident and assertive young

woman. In the future, I will have the pleasure of looking back on my high school self and knowing I wasn’t someone who allowed myself to be steamrolled by societal expectations or fear of judgment.

To future high schoolers, use these years to find your voice and mature through experience. Most importantly, don’t run away from the challenges that force you to be yourself. It is better to regret your actions and learn from them than regret your inaction and wonder what could have been.

Despite all the dad jokes and quotes I cringed through, these sayings have stuck with me. I plan to carry these mindsets in my future endeavors, as they have served as the backbone of my high school career.

Thank you, Dad, for having confidence in the ground I stand on and for raising me to prevail on it proudly.

Shout Out to the Swim Team



Katelyn Morrow
Centerspread Editor

“Take your mark, get set, GO” are the only words rushing through my adrenaline-filled body when I get out of the pool and open the doors to my brand new home for the next four years: Freeman. As a measly freshman, I was surrounded by people who seemed so sure of themselves. All the athletes had a team, all the students were in clubs, and teachers remembered their favorite students, but I was just there. I knew I needed to take my mark. Hesitantly, I joined the Freeman swim team. I didn’t know whether to expect the average high school ‘90s teenybopper movie or something completely different. While I’m trying to avoid clichés, I now

know that the ‘90s movie directors knew what was up. The swim team in my freshman year was small yet mighty. I automatically clicked with my team, even if, at times, it didn’t seem like it. I took my mark.

“Get set.” Soon after I joined the team, I started bothering Coach Gromling (it only got worse junior and senior year) about what the team was wearing, what times we needed to be there, what we needed to plan, and what he was thinking for relays. I knew I wanted to put effort into my team. Sophomore year, the women’s team got runner-up at states. Junior year, the same. Now, if you’d heard me sophomore year, I was invested in winning. If you knew me junior and senior year, I wasn’t just invested — I was planning for our team to win.

Finally, after hours at the trainer (thank you, Ms. Jess), race strategies, lineups, endless feedback from both of my coaches, and more hours than I would like to admit planning with my fellow captains for events and random surprises, we won States. The exhilarating feeling of seeing our team with huge smiles on their face and a look of relief that all of our hard work paid off is something I will never forget. “GO.” The two-letter word that started as me just jumping off the block, eager to swim my event, completely changed. I am going away

from my family. The word “GO” is me diving into the next chapter of my life with my new team, my new family, and my new coaches.

Going into swimming, I thought I could do everything myself. The most important thing I have learned is that your team means more than anything. Having a cheering squad watching my good and bad swims was more important than the times displayed on the screen. I realized that my priority changed from only me doing well to my team doing well. I loved seeing the smiles as people broke records, watching everyone cheer when others got cuts, and the nervous jitters from the team. The Freeman swim team is more to me than just 100 swimmers. It’s 100 members of my family. It’s 100 people to talk to, and it’s 100 people that I care about.

Shout out to Coach Gromling for dealing with my excessive planning and “verbal diarrhea,” as he calls it. Even though he would joke about how invested I was, I know he secretly loved it. It’s okay, I won’t tell. To me, Coach Gromling is more than just our coach. He cares for us not just in the pool but in our future as well. I have never met a coach so willing to put in his extra time to ensure the men’s and women’s teams get equal treatment and an equal opportunity to win. At States, after the meet finished, we had a conversation

recapping our season. I remembered freshman year (ew get away déjà vu), standing in front of him and saying that we would make history as a team, and luckily, I was correct. Thank you for making such a big impact on me and my teammates’ lives. I know these past four years will be an unforgettable experience for everyone.

Coach Densley, where do I even begin? Thank you for all the funny memories of summer swimming. Even though you tried to take sole credit for teaching me how to swim, I have to give Coach Amanda some major props as well. As I got on the blocks at States for the last relay I would compete in for high school, a moment flashed when you were coaching me on the B team in summer swim at 12 years old. Look how far we’ve come. I wanted to thank you for the countless hours helping me plan and listening to all my crazy spirit wear ideas. Don’t worry, there will be more this summer.

To the men’s team and all the memories, thank you for keeping the girls on their toes. We all needed your interesting humor and random side quests when the women’s team was a little too stressed about winning. I will never forget our freshman year getting “knighted” by fireman hats from Firehouse Subs or Nick Kuriger getting lost after dinner. But the memory I will always remember is

the support from the men’s swim and dive team at States, helping us keep score, stay positive, and the swarm of smiles when it was officially announced that the women’s swim team won for the first time in Freeman history.

Finally, a shout out to Allison Bischoff for being my partner in crime the past four years. If any of you have seen Allison and me on the pool deck, we couldn’t be any more different, but for some reason, it makes our bond 10 times stronger. When I am irritated, she smiles, trying to make me laugh. When she says she’s too tired, I’m five steps away with a speaker blasting Tate McRae and holding out some candy. To my best friend, who made me realize one person makes more of a difference than 1,000 people, I can’t wait to see what you do.

Finally, thank you to my parents for driving me to and from swim practice at 4:30 a.m. for a few years, thank you for showing up and cheering embarrassingly loudly, and thank you for being you. To the people I have shared the past four years with and met along the way, thank you. You have taught me what it means to be a part of something bigger than myself. I can leave with a bigger win than a state championship trophy and an All-American record in a relay. I am leaving with a family I will never forget.

Crossroads



Izzy Minkler
Sports & Graphics Editor

When I first sat down to write this, I braced myself for the emotional flood. But that’s not what happened. Instead, I just stared at a blank Google Doc, waiting for some kind of profound realization. It never came. And the idea of spilling my guts on page seven of the newspaper? Not exactly what I had in mind when I thought of senior perks.

It turns out, the emotional weight of leaving high school doesn’t hit you all at once. It’s quieter, slower,

stretched out over a series of small moments. So, yeah, maybe I’m not having the emotional breakdown I thought I would while writing this. Maybe that will come later, when I’m packing up my room, saying goodbye to the people I love, or sitting in a dorm room, realizing I don’t know where anything is. But for now, it just feels like another thing to check off the list. And honestly? I think I’m okay with that.

For as long as I can remember, I wanted to leave Richmond. Not in a “drop everything and go off the grid” kind of way, but more in a “surely my dream life is waiting for me somewhere with better restaurants” way. I was certain that anywhere (really anywhere) would be better than here. I imagined myself thriving in a busy city or a quiet town where people didn’t ask me what I planned to do with my life. Mostly just where no one cared what my five-year plan was. But now that this part of my life is ending, I’ve concluded that Richmond isn’t that bad. Shocking, I know. Maybe it’s the nostalgia talking, or maybe I’ve finally realized what people older and wiser than me have always said — the

people make the place. I guess that’s the irony of growing up: you only start to love what you took for granted when it’s time to leave. And if Richmond has taught me anything, it’s this: At the end of the day, I will only ever have myself. Sounds bleak, I know, but walk with me. When the party’s over, when the noise fades, you’re all you’ve got. I’m all I’ve got. And that’s not a bad thing. It’s not scary. It just is. Because when you’re at your lowest, when you’re stripped down to your barest bones, no one is coming to save you but you. You have to be the one to pull yourself back up. I used to think growing up meant knowing all the answers, but now I think it’s just about learning to stand on your own two feet. To figure things out as you go. You can’t go through life expecting someone else to make your decisions for you. For me, the hardest part has always been trusting decisions I’ve already made, and not grieving what could have been.

That being said, I’ve also learned that what’s meant for you will find you. The right people, the right opportunities — they won’t pass you

by. Maybe it doesn’t happen on your timeline, and maybe it doesn’t look the way you thought it would, but life has a funny way of sorting itself out. The best moments, the ones that actually matter, aren’t ones you can plan for anyway. And sure, I spent years convinced that if I had just been somewhere else, everything would have turned out differently. But just because something could have been different doesn’t mean it would have been better. Maybe in another life, I went to some far-off, exciting place. Maybe I lived out my “city as my backyard” dream. But in this life, I had this. These people, these late-night drives, these moments of laughing so hard I forgot what was even funny. Maybe life isn’t about searching for something better, but about learning to see what’s already good.

Time has a way of moving forward whether you’re ready or not. Some days felt endless, and it felt like I’d be stuck here forever. But now, all of a sudden, it’s over. The places and routines that once felt so permanent are already fading into memories. Maybe that’s how it’s supposed to be, High

School is meant to be lived in the moment, not clung to forever.

Now, I’ve reached the crossroads: I can either hold on or move along. I could sit here and get sentimental, or I could do what I’ve been waiting to do for years — go forward. I, for one, am excited to get started on the rest of my life. Still, I hope I remember this place. The lockers we could never open. The chipped paint in the cafeteria. The stairs down from the field house. “Sweet Caroline” when I’ve stayed longer than I thought I would at a football game. The breath before Dr. Marshall says, “Go Mavs.” Because for all the times I wished I were somewhere else, this is where I was. And for all its chaos, this place and this life were mine.

As I leave you all for the promised land of West Lafayette Indiana, I hope you remember me well and think of me fondly from time to time. To Anna: I love you. And to my friends who still have time left here: you’ll get to the next big thing, but right now, you’re here, so be here. Change is scary, my friends, but so is staying the same.



SENIOR SUPERLATIVES

Most Spirited

Emma Crone & Aidan Cassidy

Natalie Murchie & Michael Bannister

Most Likely to Win Top Chef

Soccer Mom & Dad

Ben Mustico & Maya Tluchak

Most Likely to Survive the Hunger Games

Jefferson Meade & Oakley Cotroptia

Most Likely to be an Influencer

Laney Gilman & Luke Betke

Most Likely to be President

Meade Anderson & Grace Harbach

Piper Troxell & Anuj Damle

Most Likely to be on Jeopardy

Erin Walters & Riley Robinson

Most Likely to be on Broadway

Isabella Dillard & Peyton Beale

Most Likely to be Caught in a Tardy Sweep

Most Athletic

Sydney Miller & Butter Stephenson

Most Artistic

Hannah Kate Harrison & Ryan Duffy

Jack and Jill of All Trades

Nathan Szobota & Sarah Chilton

Everyone's Friend

James Bryant & Molly Bannister

Everyone's Crush

Anne Claire Hart & Thomas Rader

Class Clown

Claudia Keith & Finn Whipple

Best Smile

Tobias Suarez-Vasquez & Lila Holdren

Best Gal Pals

Abby Johnson & Abby Clifton

Best Bromance

Blaine Nelson & Henry Brooks

Best Dressed

Temi Oladiran & Tucker Gushman

Continuing the Tradition



Mr. Jess Pruett
Staff Advisor

We did things differently in journalism this year. The senior group (in no particular or-

der), made up of Libby Mercer, Sarah Chilton, Matthew Wozniak, Scotty Gregory, Kristen Carpenter, Izzy Minkler, Maya Tluchak, Sadie Edlavitch, Julia Connor, Katelyn Morrow, Connor Almstead, and Cate Woodrum all played their parts in streamlining the production of the newspaper and the curriculum delivery to the junior section of staff writers.

They all will, of course, be missed as they move on to college, but they have already set the tone in terms of diligence and productivity that the junior group now has as a model, and for that, I am incredibly thankful. But we also just had a really good time together

this year, continuing the tradition of the Commentator. There has always been, and I hope there always will be, a sense of community, friendliness, and support in the Journalism program offered here at Freeman, and these soon-to-be graduating seniors played a huge role in making the class welcoming and fun for everyone involved. As usual, I have become close friends and colleagues with all of the seniors as we have worked towards keeping the paper running, creating content, doing interviews, having release parties, and just generally having great conversations with plenty of banter. What a stellar group of hu-

man beings. I'm so proud to have been a part of your tenure as both staff writers and editors here at the Commentator. You will all be missed, but I am so excited for the futures you each have in store. Y'all are the best. Good luck out there. Take care. Keep writing. Stay safe. Mind your studies. Keep in touch. —Pruett

