

I have been fortunate enough in my four years of enduring the strange, sometimes smelly labyrinth of hallways and children known to the common homosapien as “high school,” to be part of the Chosen Ones. Not the Chosen Ones that were led by Moses to the Promise Land, or the Chosen Ones who came to the new world to establish the thirteen colonies that would ultimately lead to a haven for the idea of democracy, but the Chosen Ones who have been granted the ultimate life. The ones who flock by day and night down the hall past the cardinal lockers to the safety of the room where music is made, and where the tall, skinny man with the white hair that we adore so much leads us from the field, to the stands, to the stage. I have been one of the chosen band dorks.

Let me start by confessing that I will probably have no memories of high school throughout the rest of my life, besides my role as a clarinetist in the Ponderosa band. I started out as any other freshman. Terrified, slightly obnoxious, and very short (though that has not changed in the slightest). I did the band thing in elementary and middle school, and was not a part of any other activities, so why not roll with it I thought. I showed up to the first day of band camp, placed amongst the intimidating, confident high schoolers, and waited to begin. Then something odd began to take place. A person I had never met before spoke to me. Not only spoke to me but cracked a joke with me. Then another appeared, who told me her name, and even asked what mine was. Then the unthinkable happened. A real, genuine, actual senior in high school, the top of the food chain, the leader of the pack, told me he was glad I was there. “What sort of parallel universe could this be?” I thought. In no other organization outside of band would a freshman like me be acknowledged by so many older kids that only five minutes ago would have been the cause of nearly wetting my pants. In no other activity besides band would the director originally scare me right out of my pants, but then transform into the most inspiring and encouraging mentor and friend, who I can honestly say is the one teacher I will truly miss when I leave. Only in band can unnatural phenomenons like this occur.

I now go forth from high school into the world of music school, the place where you are trained for one of the most competitive and lowest paying fields a person could go into. So yes, to answer your question, in a way I suppose I am a nut case. I am not going to be a CEO, or a surgeon, or the person that invents cars that run on air. I am only going to be a “starving musician” (though like any music student I hope to catch a gig at Carnegie Hall), but I will love my life. I know I will love my life because of what I have experienced in band. The experience of once a day every school day escaping from the classes I hate and reuniting with the best friends and director I could ever ask for and playing music. Or the experience of spending hours in everything from sun to rain to snow so I could contribute my efforts to help produce the best show we have ever marched, even though I know nobody at the football games will pay attention to us (nor do I care). Nothing else in my four years at Ponderosa matters to me but what band has done for my confidence, my motivation to be great, and my love of music, and all I can do is be grateful to everyone who embarked on the band journey with me, and hope that when I have kids someday, they will arrive at band camp as tiny, terrified freshman, and morph into the essence of everything good; high school band.