

August 13, 2009: That was the day that I entered the Skyhawk Alumni Band Hall for the very first time. I remember being escorted into the band room by my mother, with my clarinet in hand and ready to start. The midday sun was shining through the windows, basking the enormous rehearsal space in a hopeful light. Trey and Brittany, the drum majors, were in the center of the room and with open arms welcomed me into the then 13-Time Honor Band, the Band with the Sound, the L.C. Bird Skyhawk Band.

Back then, I could never have imagined how much band would impact my life. I took band in middle school, because my childhood best friend Zak Khalil told me that his older sister Amani said it was cool. I chose the clarinet, because Squidward played it on SpongeBob and because I had grown accustomed to holding a recorder and a holding a clarinet isn't much different than that. Back in my middle school days, I was quite nerdy. I didn't have many friends because a lot of the other kids made fun of me. I had really severe acne, braces, and glasses. I was so self conscious that I avoided looking people in the eye because I was embarrassed about myself. I also hated small talk. There were elections for National Junior Honor Society positions and I said that I wanted to run for president and the other children straight up laughed in my face. Looking at me now, it's kind of hard to imagine that version of me. It was high school band that transformed this awkward geek into the strong willed, confident, driven young person you all see before you today. I may not have won NJHS president, but I earned your respect as drum major, which is worth way more in my book. I implore you to let band assist you on your journey of personal growth. Go with the flow, succeed, and use this supportive environment to mature into the person you were meant to be.

Leopold Stokowski once said that "A painter paints his pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence." In an instant, the once silent band room is transformed into the

something grand. It becomes our canvas to produce something beautiful that wasn't there before. We're a diverse bunch. We all band together from all genders, races, sexualities, creeds, grade levels, classes, heights, weights, and religions to show how much we all love music. That love of music creates a strong, universal bond with band geeks everywhere. It's what truly makes band a family. As cliché as it is, we are a family and the band room is our home. For most high schoolers, they don't really have anything to hold on to. They have nothing greater than themselves to worry about. Band gives us all something to work for together. We stop caring about just ourselves, but instead caring about working for the benefit of the group as a whole. My greatest memories of high school are from my time in band. Band camp, the rehearsals, the football games, the competitions, the trips, concert band festival, the superiors, and the greatest friends I could ever ask for, those memories are the ones that I'll hold dear to my heart forever.

The sun has almost set on 2013's time and it's time to say goodbye to all of that. I'm going to miss this band. For four years, this band program has been a major part of my life. I'm going to miss the little things, too. Showing up before first period to hang out in the band room, going on frantic McDonald's runs in that half an hour between school and practice, having silent conversations with the section during rehearsal, laughing at all of the inside jokes, listening to Mrs. Oyan's stories about Madeline, and chilling in the park lot after band rehearsals with my best friends. I just want to say thank you band, for all that you have done for me and taught me about myself and the world. I hope that music continues to be a medium for students to grow and express themselves for generations to come. Thank you, band, for giving me the opportunity to wear those white pants with Kendall. Marching Virginians, here we come! And thank you band, for the talented musicians in this band program. It was not me that achieved all of the success and honor this year. It's the band members that trusted me to teach, inspire, and guide them to

success. I now understand the real reward of being a leader; it's getting to watch the seeds you plant and care for blossom into something beautiful, realizing their previously untapped potential.

June 4, 2013: The final day the Class of 2013 can call themselves Skyhawk band members. It's the day of the annual band banquet. All of the students are dressed to the nines for this affair. There's food, friends, family, and fun here tonight to reminisce on the past year. The stage lights gleam on the medals, awards, and certificates each band member has earned. And behind the lecture stands the drum major, who is ready to start the next chapter of his life, but a part of him will always want to stay locked in the band room with his family forever. We didn't think it would happen, but it's time to say goodbye to the 15-time Honor Band, the Band with the Sound, the Skyhawk Band.