



2021 Best College Essay Finalist

The Writing Initiative Award of \$2000

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“The H₂O Genetic Code”

The suffocating sensation of a 4:30 a.m. wakeup and the realization that there's a literal timer counting down the seconds till you enter the freezing cold water is a haunting feeling. Getting ready for a long, grueling, stress filled day that early in the morning shows the commitment and drive of student athletes but also the care and love that family members have for each other. As my father and I enter his truck at precisely 5:05 a.m. there's an overwhelming fog, not outside but in my head. As I see the few headlights of other cars pass by, my eyes open and close as I go in and out of consciousness, dreaming about being back in my warm bed. When we arrive at the pool I finally fully wake up and start my mental preparation for a hard practice. All while thinking to myself, how was my Dad able to stay awake for the entire drive in. In the pool locker room the masters swimmers change in one section of the locker room while the high school swimmers change in their own separate section. Walking onto the deck is always a daunting task, but when you realize that your own father is already in the water working hard, it really makes you think, “Wow. I thought I was the hard worker.”

You would think that my father had been a competitive swimmer his whole life but actually he started the sport when he was 46, and ever since then he's absolutely fallen in love with it. He picked it up because both my brother and I have been competitive swimming for the majority of our lives. Every day he would drop us at practice and watch, but the thought of actually taking it up and training did not cross his mind until later on. When I was older and couldn't drive myself, my dad would make eight trips from our house, to the pool, and to his work throughout the day to accommodate our practice and school schedule. I remember we used to have an above ground swimming pool in our backyard and my brother and I would start giving him tips on his form and how to properly do some of the strokes; this is when his swimming journey started. He began training with a masters club team and became obsessed with the sport.

My brother and I have a very strong and deep connection between the two of us. He's six years older than me and I've looked up to him as an inspirational and motivational person in my life. When I was only five, he introduced me to the sport of swimming. I had just finished my swim lessons and he asked me if I wanted to try and swim across the whole 25 yard pool with him. Of course, being only five and in swim lessons, I was unsure and skeptical. But he reassured me that he had me and would make sure I made it across. The thrill of completing such a monumental task at age five hooked me.

The connection I feel with the water goes much deeper than just swimming up and down a lane looking at a black line for hours. Swimming and the water connects my family and brings us closer together. Having my Dad and brother in the same competitive sport as me motivates me to become a better, more hard working person in and out of the pool, while also showing me how much they care for me and want me to succeed.

It's in the genes.