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**When you arrived at Lake Forest College, did you know you wanted to major in History? If yes, why? If not, what were your plans when you arrived?**

A good historian would approach this question with the disclaimer that when thinking back to events of more than ten years ago, our memories might not do justice to what actually took place. I did begin at LFC with a dual major in Education and History, but I had an open mind. I was particularly torn between History and English, and held on to that internal debate until my junior year, when History 300 stole my heart. Prior to that moment, I had not been sure what being a History major or wanting to teach history actually meant, and that course went a long way towards solidifying my love for history. History 300 taught me what being an historian was all about, and it introduced me to the mystery and intrigue within the discipline. I won't ever forget how my views of Abraham Lincoln changed when I read Art Zilversmit's book Lincoln on Black and White. The documents used in this book are the foundation of my Civil War unit in the US History classes I teach.

**Can you describe (in detail), a class and/or a professor who had a particular influence on you? It could be on your decision to major in History, on the course of your study of History (area of focus etc.), on your development as a thinker or writer, on your choice of career, etc.**

I have to say that there were two professors who helped to shape me as a History student at Lake Forest College. They are opposites in most senses of the word, but each of them was what I needed to further my development as a thinker and writer. Professor Ebner was the nurturing influence I needed when I was a scared freshman who had no idea what college was all about. I remember in History 120 (I think it was called Foundations of the American Republic), we wrote weekly essays; this was where I learned to write, a skill that I'm certain my high school teachers tried to instill within me, but it never stuck. His gentle feedback on my writing helped to build my confidence.

I also had Professor Rosswurm my freshman year for History 121, but I was not ready for him. The fragile elements of style within my writing that I was still far from perfecting were critiqued in a way I had never seen. I hated that class because I wasn't good at it. In fact, I vowed never to take another class with him again. By junior year, I had figured college out and realized that my idea of working hard my freshman year was not what was required by the rigors of a liberal arts education. I wanted another shot at Rosswurm to prove to him that I wasn't the lackluster student he had seen when I was a freshman. I took an American Studies class that Rosswurm team-taught with Professor Goluboff and I loved it. Furthermore, my writing had improved, but was still in need of polish (truthfully, my writing could still use some work). I was much more ready for the fine-tuning that Professor Rosswurm offered, and I also learned that I grew significantly more as a student when someone was pushing me. As a result of this course, I selected Professor Rosswurm to provide that push for my senior research project on Bunker Hill.

I proudly consider both of these individuals good friends and colleagues in the field of education and communicate with both frequently. I needed each of them at the time to provide me with what I required developmentally; I am better for having known both of them.

**Did you write a senior thesis? If so, describe that experience. If not, is there a particular piece of work for a course that you remember as particularly challenging or rewarding?**

I wrote a senior research project on the Battle of Bunker Hill from the perspective of the common soldier. Professor Rosswurm was my advisor through the process and insisted that I use nothing but primary sources for the first several months of research. I can still vividly recall the stress-filled days sitting in the Newberry Library and the Massachusetts Historical Society on my breaks. I could not figure out the contradictory reports of what happened – every soldier who wrote about Bunker Hill had a different perspective. Eventually, I was able to piece together the accounts, and I absolutely loved “eureka” moments when various stories would come together. By the time Professor Rosswurm approved of my using secondary sources, I remember being unaffected; I no longer truly needed them.

Through this, I learned valuable lessons about what it meant to be a historian. Furthermore, I wanted my students to share in this sort of research. Any recognition I have received as a teacher is a result of the preparation I received in the History Department. I could not have taught my students to be historians if I hadn't gone through the process myself.

**Many of our students worry about getting a job after college, and many are hesitant about traditional Liberal Arts majors (particularly in the Humanities) because they are unsure how they can translate to job skills. What advice do you have for these students? As you have searched for jobs over your career, how have you discussed what skills you bring to future employers, whether in interviews, application letters, or other contexts? Have you found that employers value the skills you acquired in your History major?**

I can only speak to the one job I have held since graduation: teaching at Waukegan High School. As I mentioned above, the skills I learned in thinking like a historian are skills I can use to pass along to my students. People across the field of education have applauded me for what they call “progressive” education in history (they mean getting students away from textbook-driven courses and toward constructing their own conclusions from a variety of sources, like a historian would). I feel that this is a huge part of the problem with public education in general – teaching students to be historians should be common-place, not seen as radical in any way.

**How do the skills and knowledge you acquired in your History major help you in your day-to-day work? Concrete examples are helpful.**

Content knowledge is obviously crucial in being a history teacher. I try to get my students thinking like historians every day.

One of the most noticeable (for outsiders) ways students have demonstrated this skill-set is through the Chicago Metro History Fair. Here, I have students working with mostly primary source materials from the Waukegan Historical Society so that they can piece together the history behind various happenings in Waukegan. Over the past four years, dozens of students have advanced to the state competition, and five groups of students to the National History Day competition in Maryland on the basis of these skills.

But doing history happens much more frequently in my classroom. Students use primary sources like the Declaration of Independence and Notes on the State of Virginia and debate whether or not Thomas Jefferson was a hypocrite. They write essays addressing Abraham Lincoln's views on race and slavery. They analyze music, art, photographs, and countless other primary source materials on a daily basis to enhance their understanding of a particular time period.

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Thank you ☺