

哈佛 50 篇 essay--4。经验之歌

“Should I Jump?”

-- Timothy F. Sohn

As I stood atop the old railroad-bridge some six stories above the water, my mind was racing down convoluted paths of thought: Logic and reason would oblige me to get off this rusting trestle, run to my car, fasten my seat belt, and drive home carefully while obeying the speed limit and stopping for any animals which might wander into my path. This banal and utterly safe scenario did not sit well with me. I felt the need to do something reckless and impetuous.

“Why am I doing this?”

I backed up to where I could no longer see the huge drop which awaited me, and then, my whole body trembling with anticipation, I ran up to the edge, and hurled myself off the bridge.

“Do I have a death wish? Will my next conversation be with Elvis or Jimmy Hoffa?” The first jump off the bridge was like nothing I had ever experienced. I do not have a fascination with death, and I do not display suicidal tendencies, yet I loved throwing myself off that bridge, despite the objections of the logical part of my brain. Standing up there, I recalled from physics that I should be pulled toward the earth with an acceleration of 9.8m/s^2 . G-forces meant nothing to me once I stepped off the edge of the bridge, though. I felt like I was in the air for an eternity (although I

was actually only in the air for about three seconds).

This leap was at once the most frightening and most exhilarating experience of my life. That synergy of fear and excitement brought about a unique kind of euphoria. Jumping off and feeling the ground fall out from underneath me was incredible. I have rock-climbed and rappelled extensively, but those experiences cannot compare, either in fear or in thrill, to jumping off a bridge.

Once I conquered my initial fear and jumped off, I did it again and again, always searching for that tingling sensation which ran through my limbs the first time I did it, but never quite recapturing the astonishing bliss of that first jump. I have jumped many times since that first time, and all of my jumps have been fun, but none can quite match that first leap. The thrill of that first jump, that elusive rapture, was one of the greatest feelings of my life.

“Wow, I can’t believe I did that!”

When I jumped off that bridge, I was having fun, but I was also rebelling. I was making amends for every time I did the logical thing instead of the fun thing, every time I opted for the least dangerous route throughout my life. I was rising up and doing something blissfully bad, something impetuous. I was acting without thinking of the ramifications, and it was liberating. My whole life, it seemed, had been lived within the constrictive boundaries of logical thought. I overstepped those boundaries when I jumped. I freed myself from the bonds of logic and reason, if for only a few seconds, and that was important.

ANALYSIS

In this essay, Sohn presents a captivating narrative of an experience that has significantly shaped his attitudes and outlook on life. In order for this narrative form to be successful, the writer must use descriptive language to set the scene and transport the reader to the location and even into the thought

process of the narrator. Sohn does this remarkably well. The reader can envision the railroad trestle upon which he stands and even feel the weightlessness of his free-fall thanks to clear, descriptive language. Sohn uses a mature vocabulary and incorporates an internal dialogue to aid the flow of his essay successfully.

The inevitable goal of such a format is for the writer to convey something about his or her personality or individual qualities to the reader. In this case, Sohn wanted the reader to know about his freewheeling side; his ability to take risks, defy logic, and experience danger. The conclusion is also a particular strength of this essay. Sohn takes the isolated event he has described so well and applies it to a broader scheme, showing the reader just how this event was truly significant to his life

"History"

"History"

--by Daniel Droller

The day had been going slowly. On other days I had been more successful in my research on the connection between Switzerland and Nazi gold. However, today I hadn't found anything substantial yet. I couldn't stop myself from looking at my watch to see if a time had come when I could take the shuttle back to Washington. Josh, the other intern, had been luckier. He had found a new piece of information dealing with Herman Goering. Like other information we had uncovered at the National Archives 2, it could be extremely important for the Senate Banking Committee, or just a widely know fact with which we would be wasting our supervisor's time. At any rate, he flagged it for copying and kept on searching his box.

I finished my box of files, checked my watch again, and decided that I could search through one more box before I had to take the hour-long bus ride back. The group of records on the next cart was marked "Top Secret Intercepted Messages from the U.S. Military Attaché in Berne, Switzerland, to the War Department in Washington D.C." Following the Archives' procedures, I took



one box off of the cart, then one folder out of the box, put the box in the middle of the table, and started looking through documents in the folder.

In this folder there was one document that caught my eye. It was dated “23 February 1945” and contained information sent to Washington on bombings of the previous day. Many of the documents I had gone through had recounted battles and bombings as well as the areas affected by these. What was different about this document was that the cities listed as being bombed were Swiss cities. This was very strange because Switzerland was a neutral country and its cities shouldn’t have been bombed. I recognized the names of many of the cities that were mentioned in the message, since I had gone to visit these when I had visited my mother’s family in Switzerland. They were listed as follows:

B-17’s. Fighters at 1240 machinegunned military post near Lohn north of Scaffhausen. 3 wounded.

At 1235 Stein on Rhine bombed. 7 dead. 16 wounded. 3 children missing.

About halfway through the list I saw the following:

At 1345 BB-17’s bombed Rafz. 8 dead, houses destroyed.

I was shocked. My mother is from Rafz, and most of her family still lives there. Even more disturbing was the date of the message. My mother would have been only four years old.

“Josh, you’ll never guess what I just found! The town where my Mom grew up was bombed. She was ... four years old! This is so weird!”

“Yeah, that is pretty weird.” Obviously, Josh wasn’t as enthusiastic as I was.

I stayed until the last shuttle at 6:00 to go through the rest of the boxes on the cart, but didn’t find anything nearly as good. I really couldn’t believe it, my Mom had never mentioned anything about a bombing, and I assumed that she didn’t remember it. This made me even more excited because I had uncovered a piece of my history. I couldn’t wait to call home that night.

When I got to the dorm, I said “hi” to a few of the ballerinas and other interns I had met that summer, and ran up to my room. As soon as I got in, I picked up the phone and called home.

“Yallo?” “Hey, Moms!”

“Hi, Daniel. How was work? Did you find anything for Alfonse?” “Not really, Moms, but...”

“How are the ballerinas?”

“Fine, but Moms. Listen. What do you remember about February 22, 1945?” There was slight hesitation on her end of the line. It was only for a few seconds, but I thought that I had stumped her. She was only four years old at the time of the bombing; she shouldn’t remember. But in a few seconds she spoke. The jovial manner of before had been replaced by one solemnity. She had remembered. “That was the day the Americans bombed Rafz.”

ANALYSIS

“History” is about the discovery of one’s past. Droller describes his findings of a small, yet significant, piece of history concerning his mother. The reader is not given a complete picture of the applicant’s background. Instead, the essay succeeds in revealing one personal and meaningful moment in Droller’s life that would otherwise not have been captured by the rest of his application.

Through his essay, Droller describes how he accidentally came across a part of his history. What most stands out is the shock and surprise that he feels with his newfound information. While Droller does tell us outright about his excitement, “I had uncovered a piece of my history,” he also illustrates his enthusiasm with the description of his telephone conversation and his impatience to reveal his findings. This leaves the reader wanting to learn more about the details of the bombing and how it affected his family.

The essay's form could, however, be made stronger. Despite the defining moment found at the very end of the essay, the opening has little direction. There isn't much indication as to the main point of the essay. A reader would probably be more interested in the details surrounding the bombing, shedding more light on the relationship between mother and son. We are not shown how this discovery affected their relationship or if Droller now thinks differently about his mother based on what

she went through during her childhood. A detailed account of the author's interactions with his mother, and his knowledge of his mother's childhood, might have made the final realization about the bombing more emotional and revealing about Droller's character.

"To Soar, Free"

"To Soar, Free"

--by Vanessa G. Henke

A cold, blustery winter storm swept my grandparents and I into the warmth of my aunt's living room, where she was hosting her traditional Christmas Eve party. My hat and cape were taken from me, revealing the Victorian party dress, which had been designed and painstakingly tailored just for me. The music lifted me, and chills surged through my body. I was enthralled, ecstatic with the power of the orchestra. My excitement mounted as I realized that, for a few brief moments, the audience at the opening night of *The Nutcracker* at New York City's Lincoln Center was focusing on my performance. At nine years old, this was my long-awaited debut. Any vestige of uncertainty about my performance had dissipated. I was transformed from a shy young girl into a confident performer.



Over the years, as my technique improved and I spent increasing amounts of time each week practicing and performing, I learned to value the discipline required of a professional. Without so many hours dedicated to practice, I would never have been able to execute powerful leaps across the stage in performance. In class, or on stage, the music would pulse through every fiber of my being, my body resonating to every note of the score. I discovered that discipline and dedication gave me the confidence necessary for me to refine my technique and style, and to fulfill my potential and dream – to dance like another instrument in the orchestra.

This past summer, I taught ballet and choreographed dance at Buck's Rock Camp for the Creative and Performing Arts. There, I discovered that fulfillment can come not only from soaring across the stage, but by communicating what I have learned to others. I emulated the good techniques of my best teachers, so that my students could find pleasure in dance. For my more advanced students, I offered well-deserved praise and helped them to refine their skills. For students with less experience, I tried to foster self-confidence and create an environment in which they could learn, ask questions and make mistakes without feeling ashamed. The rewards for my efforts were the students' improved self-confidence and skills.

The discipline I learned during my five years with the New York City Ballet helped me understand that with freedom comes responsibility. When I performed at Lincoln Center, I danced across the stage, free, because of the hours of preparation and thoughtful consideration I put into planning classes and rehearsals, inspiring students to be their best. I now have a greater appreciation for the value of my

