

Memories

Many people live their lives going to school, getting a job, retiring, and living happily ever after. I plan very differently, and my life is already very different. How did I come from starting the life described above to living a life of rocky roads, success, and hardships. I am a three-time national champion in ice skating with records for youngest ever in history for my level, as well as highest score in history for my level. But without the life-changing decision my family made, all of this would never have happened. My home is in Palo Alto, CA. This is in Northern California. However, there are no real world-class coaches in Northern California. Quite contrary, there are a lot in Southern California. My coach in NorCal referred me to Tammy Gambill, a coach in Riverside, and I've been training with her since the 2009. My dad has a job at the Google headquarters in Mountain View, CA, and my sister goes to school at Henry M. Gunn High School, a 5-minute walk from our house. But Tammy is in Riverside. As a result, my mom and I live in Riverside, CA. Our split family rarely sees its two halves together. Every couple of weeks (or couple of months in extreme cases) my mom and I make the 400+ mile commute between Corona and Palo Alto. It's a difficult life to live, but it's the best for my path in the future.

I remember the day I was supposed to leave for the first time for the 7-hour drive to Riverside. I was doing a half-day of school at Herbert Hoover Elementary School. My teacher made an announcement. "Vincent is leaving us--he is going to go train in Southern California for his figure skating." I still remember the gobsmacked gasps of everybody in the classroom. I couldn't bear to leave behind all my friends, yet I couldn't bear the temptation of such a welcoming, promising new life. My only memoir of that day was a little book compiling a drawing and/or a message from each of my classmates wishing me good bye and good luck. This hilarious kid drew a swastika on a German bomber and wrote "Off to L.A.!"

Despite those hilarious memories, I still remember my mom quitting her 6-digit-salary job just so she could take me to Southern California. She still never has time for a job, so our family is on single income. I still remember my heart breaking as I walked out of the room with my empty backpack, all the textbooks given to the teacher. I got into the car, and my mom asked me, "Ready?" and I replied "As ready as you are!" I remember the setting sun lighting up the sky to a golden color as we drove on the 200-miles flat expanse of highway 5 cutting through Central California. We entered the mountains, still on highway 5, and an hour later, I saw the industrial glare and nighttime lights in the distance. For once I couldn't help feeling excited about my new life. Finally, we drove into our hotel, just a hundred feet from the rink.

When I first met with Tammy, one of the most influential people in my life, I don't remember what we said, but I remember the feeling of awe and that feeling you get when you see something new. I remember the warm welcome I received, and I remember meeting many figure skaters trained by Tammy that I looked up to. (Think of meeting PSY or Obama and you'll know what I'm talking about. However, from my experience in the past 3 years, all I know is that from that point on my rapid ascent to national fame in the small world of figure skating, Tammy has, is, and always will coach me until I retire from figure skating.

This story will always be significant to me because without moving down to SoCal, I wouldn't be with Connections Academy, I would be at Terman Middle School. I wouldn't be a three-time national champion, and I might not even be skating at all! School is extremely important to me, but skating is my true passion. Without it, my heart would truly break and my internal organs would burst from grief. I do not regret this truly inspiring story's decisions.

Note:

In fact I am undergoing great sadness right now because I just had surgery for a rare condition affecting 1-3% of the people in the world, which makes me more prone to injury. This special condition causes me to not feel as much pain as I should be feeling. I will not be able to skate anymore for three to four months, and that also means I will miss the qualifying competitions prior to Nationals. I will miss this season completely, and I am very sad about it. But injuries are a fact of life, and I will overcome whatever is thrown at me. I can!