

Opinion

A6 THURS. & FRI. 16 & 17, OCTOBER, 2008

THE CHIPPEWA HERALD • WWW.CHIPPEWA.COM

Hard as it is to admit, parents are sometimes right

By **BEN ARNEBERG**
Guest columnist

"Save me a spot!" I yell to my friend as he races to the bus. Moments later, we will load the Chippewa Trails buses for another marching band competition and adventure. It will be a trek chock-full of watching "Pirates of the Caribbean," munching on Doritos, and of course, loads of fun.

What can be more enjoyable than spending a bus ride and two days with your friends? We get to eat together, hang out, and cap it off with a rewarding performance in front of a large, roaring audience.

Yes, being one of the 200-member marching band is definitely one of life's pleasures.

I did not always feel this way. Back in eighth grade, I was deathly afraid of this so-called "marching band" activity. Being a freshman in the band the following year would mean being surrounded by huge upperclassmen and having to learn difficult music and marching drills.

I was dead set against joining.



Arneberg

But my parents wouldn't let me off the hook that easily. Since I had just learned to play the trumpet in three months, they knew I could surely learn to march and play with one.

More importantly, they knew that band would be a positive experience, and the only way for me to see that was to force me to join.

As any adolescent would do when told to do something he absolutely does not want to, I obstinately refused. I whined and griped nearly every waking moment at my house about having to join band.

I feared the older kids, and I feared the work. Most of all, I feared that my parents might be right about it being a good experience.

It got so bad that I even developed my own rhythm by pounding my feet to signify to my parents that I refused to do something,

and that something was usually joining band.

As generally happens between good parents and their children, I lost the battle. The first day of band came, and my fears began to be realized. The butterflies were fluttering and jabbing at the wall of my stomach.

But one band member took me aside and asked me a few questions about myself, and then offered to play his trumpet with me to warm up. And right there, I knew the experience was going to be great: I had nothing to fear; these people were my friends.

Now the only thing left to fear was admitting to my parents that they were actually right.

Even though I thought I was finished with frightful experiences in band, one more did occur, and this was gruesomely more horrific than anything I could have imagined.

In 2005, our marching band performed the best in its history at the state competition by capturing third place. But our celebration was short-lived — in

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the early morning hours of returning from that trip our first bus hit an overturned semi-trailer.

Five people were killed in that lead bus, two of whom were our director and student teacher. Moreover, our other main director was seriously injured and had to be airlifted from the scene. He would later be sentenced to months of recovery and therapy.

Dealing with this experience has been one of the hardest things of my life, but through it the band and I have grown so much. In the days and weeks following the crash, we cried together, laughed together as we remembered the

good times, and just took a moment to step back and reflect on what had happened, and where we were to go next.

We moved forward from those crucial days, healed together and, in a sense, became one giant family.

To think that I went from being deathly afraid of band to becoming an integral family member in that band is amazing. This single organization has changed my life, by teaching me perseverance, hard work, and that together we can overcome anything.

Two years ago, I wanted nothing to do with this program. Yes, I now admit it — my mom and dad were right. I am glad they forced me to join band.

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