

Following the fall cross country season in 1987 Christine Yarger wrote a paper for her English class on how she felt about cross country. The girls had experienced their first winning season and they were excited about the upcoming season. Christine was a junior and was looking forward to her senior year. When she was given an assignment in English that allowed her to put her feelings down about cross country she wrote the paper that started what is now know as the A senior letters.@

Every fall since 1991 the seniors have written letters to their teammates to express how they felt about running and being part of the John Adams Cross Country team. It also has given them an opportunity to pass on some words of wisdom to their teammates; both the teammates that they have spent time with over their four years on the team but also to share their wisdom with future teammates. We hold the senior on the John Adams Cross Country team in the highest regard because they have put in the time and the miles that helped them to understand what this sport is all about.

I hope all of you read these letters carefully and consider some of the lessons that these people are trying to teach you.

July 21, 1992

Dear Cross Country Runners Present and Future,

This past weekend, I ran my first road race in almost three years, only to find that I was unprepared for the flood of emotions that the experience brought back to me. So many familiar sights, sounds, and feelings crawled from my memory: the nervous tension of runners packed together at the starting line, the burning deep in my lungs, the rapid shouting of mile splits, the home stretch. As I jogged a cool-down with two of my former teammates, I relished the heavy achiness of my body, thinking, "Hey, I can still do this. Maybe if I get back into some serious training..."

Randy always called that combination of total physical weariness and intense personal satisfaction "sweet exhaustion." To know that you gave everything you could possibly give is a truly wonderful feeling, and when I made the difficult decision not to run competitively in college, I felt certain that I could never experience that sort of "sweet exhaustion" again. But cross country had a way of teaching me lessons about life without my even knowing it, and when I went to college, I found that cross country had prepared me to achieve successes in many other areas of my life as well, successes that have been as meaningful to me as the most hard-fought victories I earned in high school.

I am committed to many different things in my life: getting a good college education, pursuing my dream of becoming a college English professor, being a loyal daughter, sister, and friend. As a member of the Adams cross country team, I was committed to my teammates. This kind of dedication to cross country, should you choose to pursue it, means more than merely showing up for practice every day, and it even means more than always working hard. It means taking responsibility for the whole team, and always working for the good of that group of people. In many respects, this was a hard lesson for me to learn. While I had no difficulty making a personal commitment to running my best, it took me a couple of years to learn how to place the team's welfare before my own personal goals. For example, as a freshman and sophomore, I hated pack running, for I preferred to run at my own pace, either pushing myself harder or taking it easier than everybody else. I also had trouble accepting the times when Randy ran us hard the day before easy meets, for I feared that it would endanger my chance of being in the limelight the following day. But as I grew to care more and more for my teammates, and began to discover that the most rewarding victories I experienced were team-oriented, I became much less self-centered, and a much better leader. By the time I became team captain, my number one priority was how the team was working together, not whether or not I could shave another five seconds off my personal best. And looking back, the fondest memories I have of cross country are of those times where we all ran our hearts out, not for personal gain, but so we could all huddle together at the finish chute, muddy, cold, and exhausted, and honestly say, "We did our best."

Presently facing my junior year in college, I consider myself to be a happy person, someone who is generally a lot of fun to be around. But that wasn't always the case. It took me almost four years of cross country to learn that success and fun really are compatible. For a long time, I believed that in order to run well, I had to be intense all the time, that if I ran a bad race, I deserved to punish myself in some way. I was a nervous wreck before every single meet my freshman year, terrified that I might run a poor race and fail to meet my own expectations. When I finally came to understand that a bad race wasn't the end of the world, and that my entire self-worth did not hang in the balance before each race, I began to enjoy running much more. Rather than allowing other runners to psyche me out, my more relaxed appearance had them worried. I believe that as a captain, it was important that my teammates could see that I had fun, and that I enjoyed running and competing. If you are a person who is always very hard on yourself like I was, I hope you will remember that no matter how big a superstar you may be, very few people will want to follow your example if you seem like an unhappy person. Work hard, but once you've given it your all, allow yourself to be proud of your efforts, even if you haven't met every single goal you've set for yourself.

Although the success my teammates and I achieved in running cross country at Adams demanded a great deal of sacrifice and commitment, the hours of hard work we put into everything from 400 intervals to ten mile runs, left us with a pride that truly will last forever. As a member of the cross country team, you have so many opportunities for success within your reach. Take advantage of them, and I promise you, you'll always be glad you did.

As a final note, I would like to thank this year's seniors, who were freshmen on the team my senior year, for having given me the chance to run with such a special group of people. When I'm away at school and my mom sends me newspaper clippings from your meets, the most incredible sense of pride rises up inside of me. Your drastic improvements reveal the hard work and commitment you've put into the last few years, and I'm proud to say that you were once my teammates. I would also like to thank Randy and Maria for all they have put into making Adams cross country the great experience it was for me, and continues to be for so many others. Listen to them; they're a lot wiser than you might think.

Sincerely,

Sue Austgen  
Class of 1989-90

July 26, 1992

Dear Cross Country Runners,

Well, it's almost time for another cross country season, and I am looking forward to this one more than any other. I know that I very rarely give "talks" to the team, but I asked Randy if I could write a letter to you for "The Book". I have found myself taking the initiative to share my feelings with you only when I am overwhelmed with strong emotion. Now is one of those times, so please read carefully what I have to tell you.

This will be the 5th cross country season that I have coached at Adams, and I am proud to have been a part of "The Tradition". My experiences with cross country, however, go beyond coaching. I ran cross country at Mishawaka, and unfortunately, I did not join the team until my junior year. For awhile I thought I had made the biggest mistake of my life. I threw up as I crossed the finish line in the first meet, two teammates were taken away in an ambulance because of heat exhaustion at the second meet, and I ran more than 20 grueling, hilly minutes in my third race at George Wilson, our home course. What had I done! Well, things got better. I ended up running first on the team, my PR was 16:16 at Erskine, and we were NIC champs. That's the good news. The bad news is I got a stress fracture the next season, and as senior captain ran only the first and last meets. What a disappointment. In two short years I experienced success, victory, injury, disappointment.... I look back on all of it, though, and I feel very sad. I didn't get the chance to appreciate and savor all that cross country has to offer. There were many area runners that were faster than I was, so I didn't think I was very talented. I made the All-Conference team, but I didn't even know what the All-Conference team was. My coaches never mentioned anything about running in college, so the possibility never crossed my mind. I was clueless to the possibilities and potential that could have been mine.

When you all are 24 years old, I do not want you to look back and wonder about what could have been. I want you to see that you reached your potential, you were successful at attaining your goals, you put forth maximum effort. Your memories should be filled with pride, satisfaction, and fun times. Cross country involves a great deal of time and physical discomfort. Since you have committed yourself to being here and running the workouts, why not make it all worth it by going beyond the minimum and going beyond the comfort zone. If you are willing to take this risk, you are guaranteed success. Success is determined by your improvements. If you make the decision to set goals and do what it takes to reach them, you will improve and therefore will be successful. The pride and satisfaction that come from trying your best can never be taken away from you. My goal is to provide you the encouragement, guidance, and coaching necessary to experience success. I want to give you all the opportunities and assistance I can, so you will never have to say you were not given a fair chance. You won't have to wonder how good you could have been.

As you will be able to tell from the following letters, your time with the Adams Cross Country Team will give you valuable memories that will influence you for years to come. Please read what these graduates have to say, and keep in mind that they once were where you are and experienced the same feelings, joys, and frustrations that you do. Eric, Jenny, Colleen, Donna, and Sue have all touched my life, and I hope their "words of wisdom" touch you in some way as well.

A word to the seniors: I know that you are able to look back already and reflect upon what cross country has meant to you. I can look back also at the past three seasons with you and appreciate how much you have given to the team. Along with the memories, however, we can look ahead to one more season - one more chance for you to challenge yourself and strengthen the tradition you have been such a big part of already. I wish you the best, and I love you.

Love,

Coach Maria

This is a paper that Christine wrote for an English class that she gave to me. It was the first "letter" that got me to have each of the seniors write a letter for the "bible".

In different extra curricular activities there are different goals for which to strive. Some clubs try to help people. Other clubs try to research a certain area. Sports all have a common goal: State. Teams as well as individuals work hard to accomplish this mutual goal. It is an important goal for me in cross country running. Reaching State would supply me with an overwhelming feeling of success, give me the experience of running in a meet unlike any other meet, and improve the respect of fellow students toward me, my sport, and my teammates.

Reaching State would give me personal satisfaction. Throughout my life I have been told to stay indoors and study while my classmates are encouraged to participate in sports. After years of feeling physically inferior and weak, I stood up for myself and insisted on joining cross country running. My friends and family were opposed, and therefore I felt that I had to prove to them as well as myself, that it was not a waste of time. This was difficult because my friends and family did not understand the benefits of running. My grades actually went up instead of down because I gained self-confidence and perseverance. These new-found characteristics helped me to participate more in class. I realized that I have potential for almost anything I want to do. Reaching State would be a glorious way for me to verify to my friends and family, as well as to myself, that I can accomplish goals that seem at first mere dreams. I would also feel deep pride at my success and my team's success. Accomplishing any goal is a celebration.

Another reason I want to reach State my senior year is for the experience of running in "State." The atmosphere at the State meet is unlike that of any other meet. There is a feeling of success among all participants. Suddenly placing and running a good time are less important. (They are not unimportant, but less important.) I want to experience that feeling of the ultimate goal. State is the ultimate goal. State would also be a great experience because of the unity that our team would feel, knowing that any one of us could not have made it there without the other six, and knowing that the other six are the people who you will be celebrating with after the race! The experience of State would be so astounding and colossal that I would treasure it for the rest of my life.

Few students think of cross country running as something worthy of treasuring. Cross country running is classified as a "minor sport." The general feeling among John Adams High School students toward the sport is not a feeling of respect and pride. They belittle the sport. Even our principal occasionally forgets to mention in the daily announcements what happened in "cross country action." State would bring new respect for our team because students highly acknowledge any team that reaches State. Mr Przybysz might even consider holding an assembly for us. State would bring respect to our team - respect that each of us deserves because of the extreme pain and fatigue we go through and the amazing devotion and perseverance it takes to make it to the top.

My goal for my last cross country season is to go to State. State is a common goal among athletes and the accomplishment of this goal is highly respected. Going to State would provide personal satisfaction, give me the experience of participating in a meet unlike any other meet, and would earn respect for me, my teammates, and my sport, cross country running.

Christine Yarger - November 7, 1987

5 September, 1994

Dear Dr. Isaacson,

Hello! I just wanted to write you a short note to thank you for your hospitality after the Alumni Race. We all really appreciated the opportunity to see your team with one another and to talk with each other.

I've wanted to tell you how much I learned from you during my short time as a member of your team. I know that when I was a member of the team it probably seemed like we weren't trying to win or do anything other than spite you and Adams ... it's funny how all that will change with a few years. Now, being a part of the JACC is one of my most fond memories of high school.

While in high school I thought meditation, stretching, and training diaries were all ridiculous and stupid. However, now that I run on my own ... I ALWAYS stretch before I run ... I play the course of the race in my mind time and time again the days leading up to the race ... I keep training diaries so faithfully to chart my improvements and reflect upon what I am doing correctly and what I need to do more of.

What I am saying is all the things you were trying to teach finally sunk in through my thick skull. I even hope to some day coach a high school team of my own. (I hope to be half the coach you were.)

The last part of what you were trying to teach me came from this past Alumni Race ... we the Alumni trained mostly together ... we had a lot of fun and developed a familial attitude towards one another ... we set a goal and achieved it ... together ... it all finally sank in ... how cross country was both an individual sport and a team sport. If I and the others of my class and teams had listened to you when we were your wards the possibilities would have been amazing. (My frosh-soph team went 2,3,5, something at Culver.) Alas, we all did our own thing and faded from the sport without leaving a distinctive mark. It was good to see your team all in your home ... being a team.

Randy, thank you for everything. Good luck this season ... I hope to catch a meet or two this season. I saw that you finished second in the pre-season race that used to be held at St. Patrick's ... not a bad start at all.

Thanks again,

Brian S. Collier  
Cowboy

November 22, 1991

Dear Runners Present and Future,

During my tenure as a runner for John Adams High School I feel that I have gained a lot mentally and physically. When I started out as a freshman, I wasn't very good but tried hard to improve my time every week. Unfortunately, I didn't try hard enough and my time was 21:20, or something close to that. The next few years of my career, my times and my attitude improved dramatically. I began running in the low 20's and high 19's and earned the nickname "Sarge" by Randy for getting on people's cases. As my senior year approached I was named captain along with David Lamborn and my outlook toward running changed.

When I first started I thought Cross Country was just running but now I know there is much more. It is building your body, lifting weights, and building your mind. My responsibility as the lone senior on the squad, and captain, made me feel special and one of my main duties was to make sure everyone did their work. Most of the time they listened to me. I ran my best time (17:51) in my senior year and improved by about 4 minutes from freshman year to senior year. The greatest moment in my career was winning the South Bend City Championship.

For you runners still here at Adams I have some advice. First of all, train to your potential. Second, set realistic and reachable goals. Last, and most important, strive for team unity: "In Union there is Strength." As you mature you will understand how important it is to try your best and achieve the goals you have set for self and for your team.

As a final note, I would like to say I'm proud of each and every one of my teammates for having such an excellent season and for being good friends. I've enjoyed my four years here and I'll never forget them.

Sincerely,

Eric Frankiewicz

November 30, 1991

Dear Teammates Present and Future,

My senior year of cross country was more than I ever hoped it would be. Winning the Stampede was just one of the many goals we accomplished. In the past years I remember feeling discouraged because it seemed like the team always fell short of their goals. This year, however, everyone did what they had to do in the tough races and we reached all our goals. All our hard work paid off when we made it to semi-state. That's what I've been working for the past four years and wanted for so long. It was a great feeling being at Valparaiso, competing against all those top ranked teams. It was a great experience for me, one I'll never forget. I want to thank all of you for letting me go to semi-state my senior year. Thank you for your dedication and for hanging in there for so long. I am so happy I had the opportunity to be part of such a dedicated, hard working, and caring team during my high school years.

Being a member of the cross country team has affected me in many ways. First of all, I'm not afraid to set goals for myself anymore. I used to be afraid of the disappointment I'd feel when I didn't reach a goal. Now I know that disappointment isn't going to kill me. Goal setting is essential because you experience pride and success when you reach them. As a result of being a captain for two years, and with help from Randy, I have developed leadership skills and have the courage to be assertive. I have also made many close friends which can only result from team unity.

In order to feel great about each season, make sure you always run year round. Give each year your best because your four years go by super fast. If you work hard at every practice, are dedicated, and never give up you will have tremendous results. Keep running because I want to come cheer you all on at the state meet in the next three years.

Remember, the pain always goes away, and "the pride lasts forever."

Sincerely,

Jenny Horan  
1991

December 4, 1991

Dear Teammates Present and Future,

When I was a freshman, I didn't know anyone and, well, let's say my moods weren't always pleasant. Most of the time, I was depressed and usually withdrawn from everyone and everything. Soon, however, I became aware that the team was important to me and to everyone else. Occasionally we had our differences of opinion, but we all had common goals that brought us together.

I may never have been a "star athlete" but I have gained many things through cross country. I have gained self-confidence, self-esteem, the qualities and talents of a leader (the "sarge"), friendship, and courage. Cross country has been the best part of my entire high school career (thanks Randy and Maria!)

For the future cross country teams, I have a little advice. Always reach for your goals, just make sure that they are realistic. Tell Randy and Maria how you feel about the practices because they can back off if they are becoming detrimental to you and your legs. Don't give up the mental battle of your mind and legs (if your mind tells you that you can't do it, do it anyway.) Listen to anyone with the title of "sarge," they usually know what they are talking about. Finally, even though you may not be going to the state meet, practice like you are (yes Randy, that was my line.)

So, to the future teams, good luck, and when you go down state I'll be cheering you on. And to my fellow graduates, all three of you, congrats, and I'll miss running with you!!!

Sincerely,

Donna Ruttschaw  
1991

December 4, 1991

Dear Runner Present and Future,

My freshman year I came on the cross country team not really wanting to be on it. All my friends were playing soccer and it was the "cool" sport to play and I wanted the security of being with my friends as I entered a new school. I remember the practice as being hot, long, and exhausting. Part of me wanted to quit while the other part of me was slowly getting addicted to the sport of running. I didn't letter my freshman year mainly because I stopped going to practice even though I was on the sectional team. That summer I ran almost every day with my running idol, Sue Austgen. I ran my fastest mile ever at 5:55 and people were telling me they were anxious to see how much my times would improve in cross country the next season.

Instead of seeing how much improvement I would have made in cross country my sophomore year, I decided to see how much I would improve in soccer and surprise Mr. Kelly with my 5:55 mile. Well, the first day of tryouts came and the soccer hopefuls were to run a 50 yard dash followed by the mile run. Somehow, during the 50 yard sprint I pulled a hamstring. I never got to run my 5:55 mile for Mr. Kelly and I didn't get to kick the soccer ball for five weeks.

Instead of surprising Mr. Kelly with my 5:55 mile, I surprised Randy quite a bit by not going out for cross country. Randy took me out for a yogurt to talk about the two sports and it was then that I realized that Randy really cares about his runners.

The next year I was back on the team and I even dragged a former soccer player with me. I felt like an outsider for having deserted the team the previous year. With Jenny as captain, I felt somewhat left out with her having so much leadership and her improvement in running.

The highlight of my running career was my senior year. Not only were my times a lot faster than my junior year, but I felt a lot closer to my teammates. Everyone got along great, even when we spent two and a half days together camping. Although I don't enjoy camping, the team's spirit and hard work made it an enjoyable weekend. I was even a little sad to see it end. My proudest personal moment was when I ran a 16:11 at Culver and received a medal. I ran more than a minute faster at that race than I had the year before. Obviously, the happiest moment we had as a team was qualifying for the semi-state meet. It was a total team effort, and we wouldn't have made it without the dedication, hard work, and heart it took to get there.

I hope to see the team make it to the state meet in a few years. You have to be a dedicated runner if you want to excel at it. Remember what it felt like to be at the semi-state meet. We were only one good race away from qualifying for the state meet. On your journey towards the state meet, remember to work together, run off-season, and always cheer-on your teammates: For it is from your teammates that you will reach your goal.

Sincerely,

Colleen Horan  
1991

November 29, 1992

Dear Runner Present and Future,

It's hard to believe that my cross country career is over. So many things have changed in me over the course of the last three years of high school that I probably would not recognize myself as a freshman. Many of those changes are the result of being on the cross country team the past three seasons. When I joined the team my sophomore year I was quite shy and unsure of myself, even though my class had a large number of runners on the team of whom I knew most. But the people who had the most impact on me were the four juniors on the team. I looked up to them because they were older than me, they showed me what cross country was all about, and I quickly learned to put the team before myself, just as they did. I had a very, very rough sophomore season (I had never run over two miles straight before joining the team, let alone a hilly 9 or 10 miles), but I made a commitment to myself to see the season through to the end. I never walked during a practice, I always lifted weights, and I never gave up on myself. I feel that is due to the great amount of support and encouragement I received from my teammates. Remember, no matter what the talent level of each runner, always give them an equal amount of encouragement. It means everything to hear a word of support from your number one or number two runner, especially if you are running a 24 or 25 minute race (or even a 31:27 race.)

Another important aspect to success in cross country is to be dedicated in the off-season. For the past two seasons I lifted weights the last two months of school to get in shape before summer track began, where I ran every day. That dedication in the spring and summer proved to be an invaluable asset to my performance during both my junior and senior seasons. You can be the best runner in the state, but if you don't have the drive to be the best, someone else is bound to surpass you. For all of you who will ignore this advice, just remember that the person who passes you at the finish line is the person who ran during the summer.

With all of my hard work and dedication, I was anxiously awaiting a very successful senior season, but it turned out to be rather disappointing. I guess I just was not cut out to be a star runner. But the one thing Randy tried to teach me at the start of the year, and the one thing that I finally learned by season's end is that the most important thing in cross country, or whatever else one does, is not whether you are number one, not whether you attain each and every goal you set, but whether or not you have fun and give everything you have to give.

Sincerely,

Paul Heller

December 3, 1992

Dear Runners Present and Future,

As a member of the John Adams Cross Country Team for the past four years I feel I have become a better person. In the beginning of my "career", my freshman year, I wasn't quite sure running was for me, I would come to the two-a-day practices asking "Why am I here so early?" or "Why am I here when I ache soooo much?" And the only reward I would receive that year would be a broken bone and a huge doctor bill. But through hard work and persistence I had success in a tough sport.

In the beginning I figured I could just run from when practice began in August 'till the end of the season. Wrong answer! A runner will never succeed in running, or in life for that matter, without the self-discipline to persevere. Which means either running in the winter or doing another sport; running track or playing soccer in the spring; and running in the summer, the dreaded time of the year for coaches when runners become vacationers. This time of the year is the most important time for runners. During the summer a runner builds the endurance he or she will need in October. Plus, while other runners, who will be your competition, are just getting into shape you're beating them.

Through constant running I have developed the ability to compete and through competition there is growth. Ever since my first full year of competing, my sophomore year, I have been using competition to grow as a person and eventually as a leader of the team. Through working hard and sportsmanship I have attempted to lead the team well by being a role model.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the seniors, juniors, sophomores, and even the freshman for bringing success to the JACC program. With our two year reign as City Champs, with two winning records, and more importantly bringing fellowship and unity to a team, which had been lacking in the past. Good luck next year when you bring another City Champs Trophy to John Adams.

Sincerely,

David Lamborn

December 1, 1992

Dear Runners Past and Future,

If nothing else, the only thing I learned about cross country during my four year career is that it definitely isn't an individual sport. I, unfortunately, did not really realize this until my junior year. For the first two years of my running career I was a lone runner; I had no idea of what team unity was. Although I had plenty of talent, most of it was geared towards defeating my own teammates rather than the opposing runners. Even though this approach yielded good times in the races, I wasn't able to procure much satisfaction or pride.

My junior year was the beginning of my change in attitude. I began running more with the team instead of against it. My realization of my importance to the team was driven home during the South Bend City Meet. I was running the meet with a cold that I had been battling all week. My outlook on the race was about as gloomy as the conditions I was going to run it in. I can remember running up "cardiac hill," the last leg of the course and Randy yelling to me that I had to catch just two more runners. I ran thinking only of how I would score for the team, not of my individual time. I caught those two opposing runners and we won the meet. I was the last runner on our team to score and if any of us had dropped back one space, we would have lost it. This was the proudest moment in my career because without me, without any of us, we wouldn't have won the title of best in the city. The rewards of my running cross country go far beyond by being named tri-captain for the next year. I have learned that groups perform to their best when they work with the union of their individuals.

Aside from learning that one has to work with a team in a team-like atmosphere, I have found self-discipline and how to push myself to the limits. Through the actual act of running I have found that my tolerance for pain has significantly increased. I have been able to find the extra motivation which keeps the body going after all of the energy seems to have been spent. It is amazing to me how much a sport can teach a person. Many of the skills obtained in cross country are easily applicable to other activities in life.

Although I am very grateful for all of these lessons, I must say that the most rewarding was the fun and interaction that I experienced. From the beach (which I can't say was the most **fun**) to the many parties at Randy's to many of the practices, I was able to see many people who I probably wouldn't come into much contact with. And for this I must thank everybody on the team.

Some advice for next year's team: Stay together - a team that works together and dresses together, wins together; Run, Run, Run, during the summer - this can't be stressed enough, the more you run, the more you win; Have fun - if you lose the fun you miss the point.

Good luck next year,

Stasiu Nowak

December 4, 1992

To all, a little about me,

One of the things I lacked was foresight. I never realized that not doing my calculus homework for one night would effect me for a month. The same was true for running; I never ran off-season so I never really knew, or ever will know how well I could have done.

I remember the first day of practice for the '92 season. I remember how sore and tired I was the next day and thinking to myself "I really should have run off-season, that was pretty stupid."

I remember last year at the end of the '91 season when I came through the chute at Semi-State and I could hardly stand. I hurt so bad and I had run very bad. I said to myself, "I really should have run off-season."

I never fully realized what running during the off- season could have done for me. I didn't believe I could get any better, I was afraid to try. Now I look back and I wish I would have done it. I wish I would have worked all year round just to see how well I could do, and to see the looks of surprise on Randy and Maria's faces. And most of all, I wish I would have done it for all the wonderful people on my team.

The team is the most important. If the team doesn't work together then it isn't a team. If competition is all a team member cares about then she is an individual working to defeat all her teammates, that isn't a good example of sportsmanship or a friend.

I believe that the team of '92 was the most loving and caring group of people I have ever been with. I didn't feel pressured, I felt like I could have fun and help my friends while I was running. My best race emotionally was at St. Patrick's Park when I ran with Josie Anadon and Rachel Chrastil. We sang and had a wonderful experience and we had the greatest race so far that day. I will miss running with JA, especially with Josie and Rachel, my running pals.

The advice I'd give to all of you, if you want it: Don't be afraid to try; don't be afraid to set realistic yet high goals and succeed and, most important of all, listen to Randy when he tells you to run off-season.

I will miss JACC!

Run Your Butt Off,

Stacy Curtis

December 1, 1992

Dear Runners Present and Future,

Looking back at my freshman year, I remember a girl who had a good sense of humor and always made everyone laugh. She didn't care if she said something that was really stupid. She didn't even give a hoot what people thought of her. She said those "bone-head" things anyway. Also my freshman year, I saw a girl who as determined and wasn't scared to run and do well. Her attitude was sometimes negative, but she always bounced back. No matter how badly she ran a race she would always think, "Don't worry, I can do better next time." That person was me. I had a great first year and was really proud of myself.

Through my sophomore and junior years I was still the funny girl who made the "bone-head" comments, but mentally I slowly started to drift away. I liked running and races but I could never get the negative thoughts out of my head. Sure, through those two years I had some great races but I couldn't seem to bounce like my freshman year.

Coming into my sophomore year I had great expectations. I wanted to do very well and be on the sectional team again. To my surprise the incoming freshman were good. During the season and for the rest of the season if someone passed me I would give up and say, "Who cares?"

Finally, when my senior year came I was psyched. I was going to be a captain and have people looking up to me. During the summer I told myself that I wouldn't give up and have negative thoughts. Well, the start of my season was great. I was excited because I never thought a single negative thought. But something happened and I gave up totally. I had a bad attitude about everything. I didn't care how I did in races anymore. I really didn't have the best attitude a captain should have around teammates. You guys, I want to say that I'm really sorry for my attitude.

By the end of the season I just wanted to cry because I gave up and I could have helped myself from getting a bad attitude, but I didn't. Please learn from my mistake. Don't ever give up and always keep trying. Don't let your negative thoughts get in the way. Better yet, don't have negative thoughts. If something goes wrong during a race, don't let that bother you and don't give up. If you happen to have a bad race don't be so down on yourself. Bounce back and say, "I'll do better next time."

All in all, the past four years have been the greatest. I had a lot of fun being on the team despite my attitude. I want to congratulate you guys for doing well. You all deserve it. Keep working hard and beat St. Joe and Penn next year. I know you can do it, and you know you can do it, so go do it! You guys, thanks for all the memories you've given me. Please remember me not as a person who gave up but rather as a person who liked to have fun.

To Randy and Maria - thanks for always being there. I know you cared about me a lot. I'm sorry if I let you guys down. I'll always remember you both. And I will miss you tremendously. To the other six captains - thanks for the greatest four years of my life. It's been fun running with you all. Good luck where ever you go.

To my ex-teammates - "Run Your Butt Off!"

Sincerely,

Tina Olando

December 5, 1992

Dear Teammates Present and Future,

I started cross country my junior year because I was always hearing my friends talk about it and they made it sound like a lot of fun. Until then I had never been good at any sports and I heard that running could make anyone feel good about themselves because of the individual aspect of the sport. When I first started running that summer I thought I would never make it; but by the time practices started I was doing OK (not as well as everyone else, but I had made some improvements.) We went to the beach and I had a lot of fun and made a lot of new friends. About the time we got back I started having some pain in my legs so I went to the doctor and I found out that I had a stress fracture in each of my legs. I was very upset but wasn't going to quit the team so I became a "manager."

I can't give you any advice about running but I can give you some thoughts about the team and team spirit. I can't tell you how happy it made me feel when the team reached it's goals or a person made a new PR. When you can find it in yourself to feel happy for others and not just for yourself then you will find that the "Team" will mean a lot more to you. Most individuals I found run better if there are people cheering for them. Your teammates will try their hardest to be there for you if you try your hardest to be there for them.

I hope each and every one of you continue to be on the team. It has been a source of a lot of happiness for me and I know that it can do the same for you. Remember that the team is more than running all the time. It is a sense that someone will always be there for you.

Anyway, I hope you have a good season next year and all of you continue to improve. You all have a lot of potential, all you have to do is try your hardest all of the time. Don't give up. Just run, run, run.

Sincerely

Carrie Dennis

December 6, 1992

Dear Cross Country Team and Coaches,

My first memory of wanting to become a runner takes me to my 5th grade reading class when we were discussing careers, goals and ambitions. Among all the answers of lawyers, doctors, nurses, and teachers I remember raising my hand and explaining my ambition of becoming an Olympic runner. (Far fetched, I know, but I was only ten.) At that time I wasn't aware that such a thing as distance running existed. I guess I thought, if I was to fulfill my dream, it could only be as a sprinter. Well, time has shown that I'm not exactly the most fleet of foot, and that becoming an Olympic runner doesn't seem to be in the cards. But the most important thing I've come to realize since the 5th grade is that it takes more to achieve your goals (to become an Olympic runner) than sitting at a desk in a classroom and simply "declaring" what you're going to become.

It wasn't till the 8th grade that I was introduced to cross country when my coach asked who, of the members of the track team, wanted to run distance. With some reluctance, and almost no knowledge of the sport, I decided to join the cross country team. That season didn't prove to be the best, but it showed me that with a bit of natural talent, a lot of desire, and even more dedication I could become not an Olympic runner but at least a decent one. What I failed to add to that list was no injuries.

In my first year, I was pretty decent for a freshman. I had slight knee problems that caused pain and left me a spectator at a few races. But soon the knee problems passed, only to bring a new and more serious injury. Sophomore and especially junior year were anything but what I had hoped. I sat out a lot more races and felt as if I was letting the team down. I was upset, frustrated, angry, and even jealous of those that ran without injury. It wasn't fair. But I tried, despite mood swings from frustration, to remain as much a part of the team as I could. It was tough. I ended that season with a stress fracture, discouraging thoughts, no varsity letter and unused potential. That's probably the thing that hurt the most.

After a lot of tests, and doctor visits, I was given a special running schedule to follow in the off-season to allow my stress fracture to heal. Without much optimism I followed the schedule and ran during track season. Much to my surprise the pain didn't return, yet anyway. I went on to run summer track without injury and I started my last cross country season virtually pain free. My senior year was the best. I was never injured. Never missed a race and was not only a member of the semi-state team, but I ran my PR in my last race.

Cross country has taught me dedication to my sport, my team, and myself. It has taught me the importance of persistence, especially when I could have given up. During my cross country "career" I haven't won lots of awards, or broken a lot of records but I hope to pass-on the importance of dedication, determination, confidence, and persistence ... Oh, and don't forget to have fun.

Now that my final season is over I want to thank everyone for making it a great experience. Thank you to the guys team for showing everyone what team unity and achieving goals is all about. And for always cheering the girls' team on. I want to say thank to the entire girls' team for all your hard work and dedication and making this season so fun. Thanks to the Sectional Team for working so hard to achieve our goal - I'll never forget you. Thanks to Josie and Rachel for always encouraging and pushing each other and me. Good luck next year. Thanks to Kristy for always being the perfect example of dedication and persistence. Thanks to Tina, my running buddy, for everything - It was never dull. And finally a special thanks to the coaches. Maria, for being a close friend and a great coach. Thanks for sharing so much with me. Randy, thank you for all of your understanding, motivation, encouragement, trust, inspiration, advice, wisdom, and love - I will never forget it! And to everyone, good luck next season. I'll be cheering for you!

I may not be an Olympic runner, but it was all worth it.

Sincerely,

Colleen Moore

December 7, 1992

Dear Runners and Future Runners,

It all started four years ago, I knew nothing about cross country besides the fact that my sister was in it for four years. I decided I would follow in her footsteps since I knew you didn't have to be a super star to be on the team. My freshman year I was terrible. In my first race my time was 28:58, there was no other way to put it except that my time was pathetic. I soon found out if you want to get better you have to work hard in practice everyday. Whatever you do don't get discouraged if your hard work doesn't pay off right away. As time goes on you will definitely see improvements. Besides working hard you have to be mentally tough, not just in races but also in practices. You must realize you won't feel 100% great every time you run. You have to learn to run through your minor aches and pains. I know its not always easy, but you will make it through the pain. If you want to see improvement from year to year you must run in the off season on a regular basis, unless of course you are like Stacy.

By being in cross country I have learned it is important to set goals for yourself. It is easier to work hard when you have goals you want to accomplish. It is always a good feeling to meet you goals. Make sure your goals are realistic or you will more than likely get frustrated and give up. You need to have confidence in yourself and not give up. Giving up is the easy way our, you need to put yourself to a challenge once in awhile.

My freshman year I was ready to have a great season. Little did I know that we were going to have a lot of great freshman. For the first part of the season I was always upset because all these freshman were in front of me in races. I learned I had to look at self improvement and not comparing myself to my teammates. I soon just looked at the team and I was happy we were having a great season and I was proud of all of them for making it to Semi-State.

I must say that my senior year was the best. I felt that I was really part of the team. Everyone got along great, ran together, and most importantly we always were having a great time. This year I felt we were a team not just a group of individuals. I think individual goals are very important, however being a team sport means that team goals are more important. I was happy we met our team goals for the season. I was glad to see that last year they made it to Semi-State, but I must say nothing can beat the feeling of being one of the seven girls running. Although I did my worst performance-wise at Semi-State I was still happy since I finished and I was there. When I look back to my freshman year it amazes me that I actually improved by 11:03. This just shows if you set your mind to it you are able to succeed. Just a not to beginning runners; you don't have to be good at first, there is plenty of time for you to improve if you stick to it.

Some days I wish I could go back to the summer before my freshman and know what I do now. I guess I wouldn't appreciate all my accomplishments through my four years if I did. From the beginning of time until the end I loved being on the team. Being on the team has given me so many memories I will never forget. If there is one thing from high school I will miss most it is definitely this team. Just a note to the other six captains - it has been a great four years, I have enjoyed running with all of you. Randy and Maria, you two are the best, thanks for everything. It's been fun. Girls - best of luck making it to Semi-State again. Maybe you can make it to state if you all run in the off-season. Remember, to get the most out of cross country you must be dedicated, hardworking, stick together as a team, and most of all have fun!

Sincerely,

Kristy Dentino

November 17, 1993

Dear Runners Present and Future,

I decided to go out for cross country during the summer before my junior year. I was running summer track and had noticed that quite a few of the people at summer track were there because they were training for the cross country season. My first week of summer track was very slow and painful. I could barely finish the warm-up on the first day, but by the beginning of the next week, I attempted to run ACC. It was quite a challenge, but I liked it. I noticed that the girl I was running with wasn't even sweating while I was covered in pools of it. It was that moment that I really became determined to get into shape and become the best runner John Adams had ever witnessed.

As you might guess, I aimed a little too high with my goal, but not reaching it surely wasn't a disappointment. I ran very hard that summer and when cross country season rolled around, I felt that I could easily run with anyone on the team. The first day of practice was a real eye opener. I realized that even though I had run close to 100 miles over the summer, I couldn't just start out at the top. This definitely influenced my attitude for the season. I knew that I couldn't run the same pace as the best runner, but I could run the same distance at a fast pace. I quickly discovered that the more hard worked I put in during the week, the better my performance would be during races. I progressively got better, but at the same time, all of the freshman that I could beat at the beginning of the season were now passing me. I couldn't believe it at first, but then figured that since they didn't run in the summer, they were just then getting into shape. I tried as hard as I could to stay up with them, but I couldn't. It hurt real bad inside, but I kept my spirits high knowing that if they finished ahead of me, it was helping the team do better. I'm glad I did because those freshman helped lead us to a second City Championship.

My season ended with a bang! I had my best time ever in the JV City Meet and was elected to be a captain for my Senior year. I knew that I had only one year left to leave an impression on the team, so I made sure to do hard workouts during the summer and get lots of race experience by going to as many road races as I could. It all made a huge difference. I began the season finishing second in the Alumni Race (behind Dave Lamborn) and having times consistently in the mid 18's. I went from being the number 7 or 10 runner to the second and third. I did have more than my fair share of bad races, due to sickness, but I never gave up. Even when things started going downhill towards the end of the season, I tried to keep my head up and push for the best. It was difficult at times, but I felt that if I could keep everyone confident that we could do it, it would happen. Unfortunately, it didn't work out the way I planned it. We finished the season with a flat tire, but not before we traveled many miles. We had the best regular season, beating both Mishawaka and Elkhart Memorial for the first time in a long while! If there is one thing I learned from this, it was that it really doesn't matter if you get the gold, as long as you can honestly say that you couldn't have done any better.

The one thing I am going to miss most about cross country is the feeling of unity and caring. There is no feeling comparable to the one you get when you cross the finish line to the outstretched arms of your teammates or hearing the team cheer you on during a race. With most teams, that is the only place you would experience that kind of caring, but here at John Adams, you could feel it during practice, meets, and even when you pass a team member in the hall. I don't think I would have enjoyed cross country half as much if I would have run somewhere else. I'll miss everyone that I've met through cross country, especially Randy and Maria. Without Randy and all of his valuable advice, I probably never could have made it through the season with this much success. Good luck to all of you in cross country and life. Just always remember "aim high and take both the good and bad in stride".

Sincerely,

Scott Sobecki

November 23, 1993

Dear JACC Team,

One summer day before my freshman year I got a call from an ole middle school pal who was a year ahead of me. She started telling me about this sport called cross country, and said that I should join. So I said OK, I may as well. Little did I know what I was getting into. The next day I showed up at John Adams at probably about 8:03 am. My dad dropped me off as I finished a chocolate doughnut. Some boy that I vaguely recognized looked at me and said, "You ate a doughnut?!?" I thought he was crazy. Well, I knew just about nada about cross country at that point, but I soon learned not to eat doughnuts prior to running.

After my first practice, I was in awe of what had been asked of me. I mean, I thought I was going to die during the warm-up, but everyone on the team was pretty nice to me, and it was kinda fun, so I kept coming. The neatest thing was that when school started, I could walk down the hall and see faces I knew. Upperclass faces, boys and girls from the cross country team, and they would smile and say hello! I felt like I had a little family. One thing I remember, however, is that during practice had a feeling like I was missing something. As if there was some all-mighty CROSS COUNTRY FORCE that I didn't recognize. Now, in my senior year, I have finally come to realize what that ominous presence was. It was the presence of a team.

I may take a while to see, but once you feel that you are a part of a team, it is a very beautiful and satisfying thing. Everyone is in it together. We all go through the same pain, frustration, and joy. And the friends you make! There are all sorts of people on the cross-country team whom I never would have met, let alone become friends with. By being on the cross country team, you not only get a great body, you get to laugh and talk and sing and play football and frisbee with people whose company you enjoy, all while you're running! JACC is a great organization, and I know that I have grown by being a part of it.

So we've got a team. And what's more fun to do on a team than win? So here comes your end of the bargain. Run off season. Call up a cross country pal and go for a run. When you run during the season, don't blow off the practices. Each practice is important. If you'd these things, I promise you that the results will give you a lifetime of great memories. I wish all of you luck in this quest.

With fond memories,

Allison Payne

November 23, 1993

Dear Cross Country Runners Present and Future,

The summer before my freshman year I was persuaded to go out for the summer track program. That summer I never ran and spent most of my time on the high jump pit relaxing in the sun. The last race of summer track, Randy asked me to run the 2-mile along with Alison Fox. That race was one of the worst experiences of my running career. Despite that race I was convinced to join cross country over volleyball.

My freshman class had about ten girls that year. The team had no seniors. We were young with a strong outlook. Sophomore and junior year my class got smaller and smaller. We had an outstanding team and team unity both years and we always reached our goals.

This past year I was the only senior running on the girls team and a couple guys and I had high goals for ourselves and the team. As the season went on it seemed we had set our goals too high, and the guys and girls team was just not getting along. Some people started to suggest the seniors were cheated out of their last year.

Thinking back to this year, I realized that despite the problems, I had fun. After our "discussion" with both teams in October I really felt we pulled together. We still had our differences but they didn't seem so important anymore. I want to thank the guys for sticking with the team and really supporting the girls until the end.

The girls team fell short of almost each goal we had this year, but we are young and we all worked really hard. Thanks girls for working to your full potential and supporting me for my last year. I'll always remember each one of you. I especially want to thank the eleven girls that worked hard after the regular season was over until regionals.

My four years of cross country has taught me so much. The meaning of pain, hard work, persistence, and dedication. Although, I learned some of these traits a year too late. I honestly don't think I was cheated out of my last year. I learned a lot and everyone on the team was supportive of each other. I believe we could get along with each other, we just have to accept different ideas and people.

I want to thank Allison P., Scott S., Chris L. for always being there and putting your heart into the team. Thanks to Dana, Rachel, and Michelle for your dedication to the team and the laughs you've shared with me. Good luck next year. Thanks, especially, Randy for never giving up on the team and me. Thanks for all the encouragement and I'm sorry for never showing my full potential. The most important thing you have taught me (and I'm still learning) is dedication.

I will miss running with JACC and especially the people on the team. Remember for future runners, respect who is in charge.

Sincerely,

Josie Anadon

November 23, 1993

Team members present and future,

My four years on the John Adams Cross Country Team gave me some great memories. It was a lot of hard work, but it was worth it. I put in a lot of miles and ran through what seemed like a million cramps, but now I know that it was all worth it.

While I was on the team I learned about more than running. I learned how to deal with adversity and how to rise to the occasion when put under pressure. I also learned what it takes to be a leader. But most importantly, I learned that the team is much stronger than the individual.

Unfortunately, I also learned what it is like to have great potential and not take advantage of it. This is without question the most painful lesson I learned from cross country. My sophomore year was unbelievable. It seemed as though I got a PR in every race. I ran great invitationals. I won a trophy at every invitational we went to, including 8th place at Culver. I was running with the top guys in the state, and I thought I would have a pretty good chance at making it to state my senior year. I didn't come close.

I look at the results from the races my sophomore year and see the names of several people who are going to state, and I beat them my sophomore year. Why are they going to state this year while I didn't? Simple. They were more dedicated than I was. They ran during the winter and the summer, but I didn't. They improved by leaps and bounds, but I didn't. They went to state but I didn't.

I don't know how many times I thought, "What if ...?" What I do know is that I will never stop thinking that, and I'll never stop wishing I would have run during the off season. It cost me the experience of a lifetime.

I hope you realize now that talent alone can take you only so far. You need to be dedicated and make sacrifices to be your best. I hope none of you make the same mistake I did, and I wish you the best of luck next season and all that follow. Run your butt off.

Sincerely,

Chris Lichtenfels

November 20, 1994

To the Team,

This has been a great year. What can I tell you that you don't already know? It was probably the best overall girls' and boys' season in years, and we didn't even want to kill each other at the end. Hopefully we learned a little, too.

We know that cross country is probably the most demanding sport we can join. We know that unity is the most important part of the team. We know that running is a commitment of more than just three months - it's a year-long sport. We know that "hill" is a four letter word. We know that we couldn't have done it without everyone else.

The problem is, we can pretend that we know what all of this means, but we don't. Commitment to the team is easy to claim but hard to do. It's hard to forget about our personal goals in order to concentrate on the team. It's hard to listen to other people, especially when we want to live our own lives and our own agenda. But that's what being on a team means - forgetting ourselves to help everyone else.

I could write on and on about the importance of running off-season, but we've all heard it before. Commitment to running is something we all have to learn about on our own. Nobody can teach us how to be dedicated, but it's probably the most important lesson from cross country. For your own sake, learn it.

I have a lot more to say, but I can't express it in words. Thanks for a great season and a great four years.

Love,

Rachel Chrastil

November 20, 1994

Dear Present and Future Cross Country Runners,

To all the cross country runners at John Adams High School, I want to wish you all the luck and good thoughts throughout the years that you are at Adams. I started out running when I was in about third grade at Tarkington Elementary School and I have been running ever since. When I was at Edison Middle School Randy was watching me run because he wanted to see what kind of runners were coming into Adams the next year as freshman. He told me that he did not think I was going to be a very good runner at all because of how slow I ran. But when I came into Adams as a freshman and went through Randy's hard workouts I got a lot better, at least a lot better than what he thought I ever would. I was the seventh runner on the team my freshman year and was running times about 18:40's at the beginning of the season. At the end of the season I really moved up a lot and was running about 17:30 by the end of the season before I got burnt out from all of the hard work. I then went into basketball, then track, then summer track to keep in shape and get better for the next cross country season.

Sophomore year I got a lot better from freshman year. I was the #1 runner on the team and by the end of the season I was running low 16's. I also made 2nd team all-conference. I worked my butt off in practices and in meets and that is how I got so much better.

By my junior year I was kind of getting tired from running so hard in the off-season to keep in shape for cross country. My times were dropping but I was still running high 16's, very low 17's and was still the number one runner on the team. Even though I was slower junior year than I was sophomore year I still made honorable mention all-conference. But then something really bad happened to me in track my junior year. I got a stress fracture in both of my shins.

I had to sit out of summer track that summer and I had to sit out half of the cross country season my senior year. That hurt me a lot to just sit there and watch my teammates run when I couldn't. After sitting out of running for about three to four months to heal up I finally got to start running a little but I was never like I used to be because of my injury. I was just making the varsity team my senior year because my times were only low 18's because it still hurt to run but I was doing my best for the condition I was in. I did end up lettering all four years and getting my plaque.

So all I have to say is no matter how bad something gets just stick with it. It is worth it. Also if you are hurting or you may think you are injured go to Randy and tell him. If you don't you could end up getting hurt like I did and really mess up your running. You do not want to do that because it is not fun at all. Always keep your head up even if things are going all wrong because it won't always be like that. Plus you will run better if you are in good health, happy, and always smiling. Cross country is a fun sport and you always meet a lot of good friends. By joining cross country you did not make a mistake. It was the best thing you could have done. Good luck in the future cross country runners. I will be thinking of you and wishing you all the luck in the world. You will go far in running.

Sincerely,

Michelle Vaughn

November 22, 1994

Dear Cross Country Runners, Past, Present, and Future,

At the beginning of the season, I was thinking about this letter a lot. I had also been thinking about the whole season, how it would go, and my senior year in general. Probably the only part of my senior year that I was looking forward to was

cross country.

This THE senior letter. Most likely the only chance to be remembered beyond my teammates' stories. This summer I started to plan everything I would write in this letter, making sure to bring in all of my main points while covering my four years on the team. But now as I sit down to write, I don't know what to say. There's too much to say. Bear with me.

I guess I'll start with the basics. RUN IN THE SUMMER !!! I don't know how else to say it. It is just that simple. When Randy made the requirement of running 150 miles this summer, I wasn't too sure I could do it. I am extremely glad he made me do it. Thank you, Randy. It was probably the best thing he could have done for me. I improved so much this year, to the point of running on the Sectional Team, to the point of running in the Semi-State.

During my freshman year (1991-1992), at the end of the sports awards banquet, I was so upset about the end of cross country I cried. I was mad I didn't letter, and I was mad no one ever told me about cross country, or even how to letter in the first place. It seemed like the majority of the freshman class was lettering that year, and I wasn't. I ended up working a little bit over the winter and a lot during the following summer, and my work paid off. I lettered my sophomore year. Plus, I was selected to be a member of the Sectional Team. I also received the Sportsmanship Award, much to my surprise. At the Sports Awards Banquet, I was very excited. The general feeling of the evening was quite the opposite of freshman year's banquet. Junior year came along and I didn't do as well as I would have liked. I was gone almost all summer, I didn't run as much as I should have, and I didn't letter. Quite a disappointment. Luckily, there were some redeeming characteristics of that season - I was chosen to be one of the three captains of the 1994 team.

And here I am, trying to share some words of "wisdom" and experience with you. I am not sure how to share my thoughts with you. I can't tell you how I feel. Everyone has to go through the four years of cross country, and I (or any other senior or coach) can't make you work over the winter, spring, and summer. I can't tell you what to do to get new PR's, I can't run behind you and push you through a race. All I can do is tell you my experiences, and speculate about how much better I could have been. And maybe you will read this letter and become inspired to work hard for the 1995 season. Just remember, I am not sad about this season. I did not have a bad season. I am very lucky to have been a member of such a great team, the four-time Junior Varsity City Championship team, the 1994 Girls' City Championship team, and Semi-State qualifying girls' team of 1994.

Yes, cross country was (and still is) a big part of my life, and it will be hard to let it go. But, as we all know, "All good things must come to an end." I am sad this season is over, but I feel ready to take on what's next. I am glad I had the opportunity to be on the John Adams Cross Country team for four years. Next year make it to State. It is that simple.

Thanks to Randy for being the best coach. Thanks for all of the special treatment for the seniors. I appreciate it. Thanks to all four of the JACC teams I have been on for making cross country a fun and meaningful experience for me.

I know You're Headed for State in '95,

Dana Goldberg

November 21, 1994

Dear John Adams Cross Country Team,

My years as a member of the John Adams Cross Country team gave me experiences different from most. From the time I started my sophomore year, after recovering from two track-caused stress fractures, I probably watched more meets than I ran, was in pain more often than I was not, and accumulated a higher number of visits to the doctor than I did points towards my varsity letter. Yet, through it all, there has not been one moment I have regretted any of the time I dedicated to cross country. My times with the team have become some of my proudest, most treasured memories, and I'm sure I will never forget them, or the lessons they have taught me.

When I first joined the team, I figured the team was mostly about running, that you ran, improved, and that was it. Well, right away I learned it was not that easy. There were hours of grueling practices I couldn't understand the point of, times I wanted to give up, and felt I would die of exhaustion. However, I also learned how much fun it could be. When we went camping and the seniors talked about all cross country had taught them over the years, I realized it was about much more than running. It was about team, and commitment, and the dedication to working hard no matter what. We had numerous card games, go-cart rides, and cookouts, mixed with hard runs and relays. I learned that work and fun could be mixed - that if I was willing to put up with the pain, I would be able to enjoy the rewards, and with the improvements I made, my enthusiasm for running increased.

Unfortunately, I was hurt early in the season, and finished limping around and in a great deal of pain. I was determined to finish out the season though. When it was over, I was glad I had stuck it out. My times had improved, but most of all, I had formed closer friendships with many of my teammates. I enjoyed watching them improve as much as I enjoyed watching myself.

My next year was more of the same. It started out great, with my times improving more and more, but once again I was hurt early on in the season. I finished out the season again, but barely his time, and I had begun realizing that I was never going to be a star runner. I was not fast enough to be in the front of the pack, and while this was discouraging at times, my teammates always made me recognize my accomplishments. No matter how far back I finished in a race, they helped me to realize that it was my own improvements that mattered, and my persistence that was truly important. This was one of the lessons I have never forgotten, and I feel is one of the most important ones to realize. I always felt as if I was part of the team, whether I was running a race or cheering from the sidelines.

My senior year was even worse. After a good start with my times a lot better than in previous years, I expected great improvement, and even won the Most Improved award for the First Day of Practice time trial. However, I was seriously injured right after our camping trip, and didn't run again till the JV City meet. I still came to every practice, though. Cross country has a way of involving you when you don't even know it - addicting you to running when you had never cared about it much before. As I ached to run, I realized the impact cross country had on me. I had learned to like something difficult, as I was able to experience the satisfaction it brought me. I realized my final goal as I ran in the last race of my senior year. I knew I would not do well, and my times would be way off after two months of rest, but I was still determined to run. The desire to line up with my teammates, to face the eager nervousness of the starting line, the thousand splits, the final push up cardiac, and the last strides into the finish chute overcame everything else. I realize for the last time that it didn't matter how fast I was, but how much I put into it, and how much I cared.

I am not a good example of a person to tell how much you can improve, how over your high school years you can drop minutes off your time, or how off-season running can benefit you. I know from watching others that these are all true. However, from my own experience, I can tell that you will be successful in running only if you truly care about it. If you want to run, are ready to challenge yourself, and are willing to offer the same encouragement to your teammates, you will truly succeed. After your last race, if you are able to smile and be happy, no matter what your time, and know you tired your hardest for yourself and for your team, you will have accomplished one of the greatest victories of your life. You will have realized that cross country is all about hard work and enduring pain, but most of all, about doing things you never thought you could do before. And that feeling can never be taken away from you. Thank you for the last few years, and good luck in the future.

Sincerely,

Jean Austgen

November 28, 1995

John Adams Cross Country,

The four years that I have spent on the cross country team gave me memories that I will never forget for the rest of my life. Now when I look back all the work we did, it was worth it. Being on four different teams, my Senior year was the BEST. To watch a very young team work their butt off is what every Senior loves to see.

When I think back to a couple of years ago that I was on the team, we went through quite a bit. We went from people fighting, to where people just didn't give a damn. But as a team, we always seemed to have the solution and worked things out. To me that was a mark of a good team.

Having the natural ability is one thing, but having to work for it is another. When I started running my freshman year I knew that I had my work cut out for me. It paid off well. From not running in the Varsity City Race, to getting an 8th place finish my sophomore year was an accomplishment. I did it one better. I finished with a 7th place my junior year. Just when one of my last races rolls around I pull off a first place finish at the City Meet in my senior year. That is something that I will never forget the rest of my life. Dreams are never out of your reach.

The best part about it was that the TEAM won. After watching us win it my freshman year I was determined to do it within my last three years and it finally happened. With Randy at the helm you guys and gals will always be ready for that BIG RACE. He's one of the best around and he should be treated as one of the best.

Well, I guess to finish up this letter I should tell you to achieve more than what you set out to do. You guys are the only ones who control those cool wins and those heart breaking loses.

Girls, good luck in '96". See you at State. As for you guys. You meant a lot to the team, school, and the '95" seniors (Nathan, Casey, J.P., Eric, and Blake). Let's compete at Semi-State next year and I'll see you in INDY in '97"

Thanks for the good times.

Sincerely,

Nathan Meadimber

December 5, 1995

To the John Adams Cross Country Team,

For me to say that being on the cross country team these last two years has been helpful to my life would be an incredible understatement. I very seriously regret the fact that I did not join the team earlier. Being on this team has taught me so many different things about myself, my teammates, and life in general.

In my opinion running is one of the greatest, easiest, and simplest form of expression and ways of reflecting on your own thoughts and problems. Honestly, what better way is there to reflect on the days events, burn off a little steam, enjoy time with your friends, and never get bored? None that I know.

Those were the times in which I learned so much about myself: discovering new values, how to control my emotions, understand that night=s homework, finding out how hard I could push myself, both mentally and physically, and how to control and keep my concentration. All of this I learned just by running ! Not from school, not from church, and not from friends or family, just from a few hours everyday for a few months. The best part about it is that it=s information I=ll be able to use the rest of my life instead of some ridiculous math equation that I won=t remember at all in 5 - 10 years.

That=s how cross country helped me mentally. Physically, it was just as beneficial. I had better endurance, much better flexibility and agility, more coordination, and the satisfaction of being able to enjoy running. All of these factors helped me dramatically with baseball last year and just all the other sports I enjoy in general.

The best advice I can give to you future speed racers is to play hard but don=t forget to have fun. Those are the reasons you=re here. And whatever you do, don=t take these years for granted because they go by very fast and you can=t have them back !

I wish you all the best of luck and my heart goes out to you all for your hard work and strong dedication.

With many great memories,

J.P. Connelly

P.S. Remember to always listen to Randy, even when you don=t want to. He knows best.

November 25, 1995

Dear JACC Runners, Past, Present, and Future,

It's hard to be the only non-rookie senior girl. There's no one who has really experienced everything you have. It's even harder being alone when you're not allowed to practice, especially when you've been diagnosed with a breathing problem no one's ever heard of (vocal cord dysfunction) and for the most part isn't treatable. I guess I'm used to being alone though. I started my freshman year alone but recruited two friends. Sophomore year another girl was added to our trio. Junior year my two original friends dropped out, but one rookie participated. My senior year both of them left, and another rookie joined. It seems as though everyone's always leaving me - and now I'm leaving too. At least I can say I was on the CC team all four years of high school. If there's one thing I've learned it would have to be this: Don't give up. Don't be a quitter. Once you've started something, finish it. There's quite a bit of personal pride involved when you can say you've accomplished something from start to finish, no matter how rough the course has been and no matter how many times you've almost given up. But most importantly, make a few friends, have a good time, and maybe learn a little bit.

Love ya=

Becki Heller

December 5, 1995

Dear Present and Future Cross Country Runners,

To all the cross country runners, and coach Isaacson, I want to wish you the best of luck next year. I also would like to thank the 1995 team for one of the most memorable years of my life. This team was devoted, hard working, very friendly, and the team unity was like none I had ever seen in any other sport. I emphasize the friendly part. You couldn't ask much more from a team, especially your senior year.

I started running my freshman year mainly to get into shape for baseball. I didn't take anything seriously. You could tell by my attitude and also by my times. My first race was at oxbow, and I finished dead last with the time of 25:???. It didn't bother me much. The year came to an end, and so I would put all my time and effort into baseball.

Sophomore year came around and I decided to put a little effort into practice. It wasn't >till around the middle of the season, at Erskine, when Randy pulled me off to the side and said that this was my race. He said that I needed to get out of the comfort zone. Somewhere in the middle of the race I remembered what he said and decided to push myself. From that point on I took cross country seriously. I would work hard at practice, and I would try to run in the summer. I broke 20:00 that year at New Prairie. This was one of my goals. The season ended and I was satisfied with myself. Randy never let me forget the fact that running in the off season helps. But if you knew me, there was no way I was running in the summer. I wished I had though, who knows how good I could have been.

I ran but not enough to help. My junior year came, and along with Randy=s long speeches on who did and didn't run in the summer. I improved dramatically, I was one of the top ten runners. This year I would work hard at practice, but also slack around to keep everyone in a good mood. I broke 19:00 that year, and I began wondering how good I could of been if I had only taken things seriously from the beginning. And if I had only listened to my coach and run in the off season. I ran that whole summer trying to become a good role model for my senior year.

My senior year came and I was voted the captain along with Nathan Meadimber. He was the number 1 runner an took most things seriously, while I was the one to make everyone laugh, but yet keep things under control. I=ll never forget my teammates or most of all my coach. Because we had such a great year, and most of all we all got along as one BIG FAMILY. We won City, made it out of sectional, but most of all, we felt very successful in our year.

I would like to wish the new comers good luck, and work hard. While all the former runners I would like to give you my appreciation and thanks for the best year a senior could ever have. To Randy, I would like to thank you for helping me fulfill my goals. You not only taught me a lot in the running aspect, but also many things about life. Work hard this summer, have fun at the BEACH. Always bring a sack to practice. Most of all never forget that everyone on your team is almost like a part of your family. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Casey Binder

July 22, 1997

Dear Present and Future Cross Country Runners,

Here it is. My final say in the end of an era. I never thought this letter would be so difficult to write. Ever since I was a freshman I had ideas in my head of what my letter would be like. Would they remember me? Who would they remember me as? Would they hear stories about me? I heard stories about all of the greats: Sue Austgen, Jason Yazel, Gina Kelly, etcetera. I'm not so concerned with that anymore. My only hope is that you will remember my message. I feel like I have so much to say, so little letter before your minds wander off and you get bored with me. My most fond, most influential memories are from cross country. Honestly. Yea, I had a lot of great times outside of cross country, but they aren't branded in my memory like the ones from the fall.

I will never forget those blazing summer mornings and afternoons that seemed so dreadful, yet everyone truly loves. I can't think of a time where I felt more confident about myself after completing a grueling workout. I will never forget thinking that Eric Donoho's name really was Don Juan. Neither will it slip from my memory my first crisp Saturday morning bus trip. My legs will never forget what it feels like to climb cardiac. My eyes will never forget the beauty of Culver, even when it is raining. My taste buds won't forget how wonderful an apple tastes after a race. My voice will never cease to sing the songs of run-a-thons. My ears won't ever stop hearing the echo of cheers and screams throughout my skull. My nose won't ever forget what freshly stomped grass smells like, the official smell of cross country. Most importantly, my heart won't forget the love and bonds and ache that it felt when I finished a race, said goodbye to a senior, concluded a season, or told stories on camping trips. (Sob)

I keep rattling my brain to think of advice I can leave behind. It's hard to think of things that I wish I would have done differently; I don't have many regrets about my Cross Country career at John Adams. Most things that happened that weren't that great at the time turned out to be my best lessons later on that can only be learned through experience. I can't say that I regret not running during the summer because I always did run my miles. I can't say that I regret not being more focused, because I almost always put forth 100%. I can't say that I regret fighting with my teammates, because five minutes later it made me realize how silly I was acting.

The only thing I regret is being too hard on myself. It is important to be disciplined, work hard, and set high goals for ourselves. Yet, sometimes we need to congratulate ourselves and be content with our work, even if we didn't achieve our goals. Sometimes we need to be satisfied knowing that we did our best and be accepting of ourselves. Along with that, never let anyone discourage you, or tell you that you don't have talent or guts. What do they know about you? I still struggle with that, no one comes right out and says it, but I understand their intentions. I know myself better than they do. I know that I'm strong. Invest time into learning about yourself, it's your best defense.

Second, I hope that no one forgets why they run. Not for medals, not for glory or for a championship, or an article in the paper. It's deeper than that. It's that satisfaction that rolls off your forehead with your sweat. It's the excitement that belts through with your cheering and laughter. It's even pain that burns in your chest after a hill charge. All of which can be associated with the great pride in yourself that will take you through the years. We do it because we love it. Let's face it; we all know that we're in the most exhilarating, challenging, self-rewarding sport known to humankind. That's why I'm doing it for four more years.

In closing, I would like to thank Randy. Thanks. Some of your talks will stay with me forever. Thanks for being one of my best teachers and a wonderful friend. Thanks to all of the alumni, who may never read this, that I loved and taught me so much. Thanks to all of the present harriers. Thanks for all of the wonderful times. I'll never forget you and I hope that you will never forget me. Write me letters. I love mail. You taught me a lot too. I wish you all the best of luck. Work hard, have fun. I hope that your experience will be as enriching as mine was.

Love Always, Nicole Beeman Class of >97

January 6, 1998

Dear present and future cross country runners,

Well I guess I'll start this off like every other senior letter by saying how much cross country means to me. I still can't believe that it's all over now. I never realized how short these four years actually were. The past four years have been the best in my life. That's what I love about JACC. There is a lot more to it than just running together.

I can remember my freshman year as I walked into this mass confusion called John Adams. I never even considered joining a sport until my mom told me that I had to join some kind of extra curricular activity. She suggested the cross country team, so I gave it a try. Believe me, my freshman year was not the most outstanding of my running career. This was the year that I found out that I was small, weak, out of shape, and had asthma. I think that the only reason that I even stayed on the team was that this was the only place I had ever had a group of complete strangers be so willing to help me out.

I know that you've heard it before, but this is unbelievably true. You CAN do anything that you set your mind to. I can still remember the day that Randy asked me to stay after practice one day. Here I was, listening to this crazy old man telling me that I could be the JV city champion and that if I kept it up, I could be a very good varsity runner. To be honest, I thought the man was completely out of his mind. Although I was doubtful, there was something inside of me that thought he might have a shred of sanity left. And you know what, I went and proved him right.

Cross country has become such a big part of my life, that it's hard to not be running for JACC anymore. This year, JACC (jack) was stronger than ever before. I know that the unity will continue to live on through the years to come. I can't even begin to tell you how much I care for each and every one of you. I can still see your faces when I sleep at night and I can still feel the bond we have made. I'd like to thank every runner, manager, fan, and parent for their support this year, because without you, we couldn't have even come close to accomplishing our goals that were set back in '94=. I'd also like to thank Randy, the best coach ever, for being there when I needed him and believing in me even when I didn't think I could do it. I will never forget any of you and I will continue to be a part of the John Adams Cross Country legacy forever. Good luck for the seasons to come. Go out and kick some a#\$!

Sincerely,

Brandon Quick

January 6, 1998

Dear JACC,

I have been approached countless times in the hall by some unfamiliar face who says, "Hey, don't you run cross country? What's the point? It seems so boring; why do you run anyway?" This is why.

I run to escape, to be alone in nature, flying around the curves in the pine forest trails, because that is the only place where there is nothing to hide and no one to impress, and I search for myself. I also run to be with my teammates, my sisters who have fought through countless hill charges with me, who were at my side during 8 AM seven mile runs when the sweat soaks your shoes and drips off the end of your nose. I toed the line of every race with my six sisters, all bent, motionless, waiting for the crack of the pistol. I jumped into their arms when we won and they helped me stitch my heart back together after I crossed the line at Semi-State, sobbing, frozen, and spattered with mud. There is a bond between us that can be only formed with love, sweat, and tears.

I also run to push my own limits, to overcome self-doubt, to learn that no matter how exhausted I am, I can always do one more lap. I run because it teaches me that the more work you put into something, the more you will get out of it. I run because I like to break the tape, and I love to out-kick someone at the end of a race.

I run to leave that freshman boy in the dust at practice, to teach him that boys aren't always better than girls. Most of all, I run to discover what I want out of life, to realize what sacrifice and dedication can produce, and to learn what courage is.

These past four seasons mean more to me than I could ever express on paper. To Randy and all my teammates: I love you. Work hard and have fun.

Love always,

Sonya Sterba

November 1, 1997

Dear JACC,

I LOVE YOU !

I=ve been trying, but there=s no better way to say it. I=m not going into great detail about why we run cross country or why this was such a great year - you already know! We were running on clouds.

This summer we had our 5-hour senior meetings at Randy=s over mozzarella sticks and talked about goals, and of course we had high expectations. But I think >97 turned out even better than we thought it would. Sure, the girls= team didn=t get our final goal of State, but it=s the journey that counts, not the destination. And we had one hell of a journey !

As for me, I was so excited about this season. I broke last year=s PR in the first dual meet, and I knew that if I kept working hard I could reach my goals. I figured I was on a path to JV greatness. It was really cool.

The problem was, I=d been having this pain in my shins since the middle of August and it wasn=t getting any better. After New Prairie the doctors told me I had a stress fracture. I was out for the season.

The worst pain I=ve felt in cross country is the pain of not being able to run. 1,000 times worse than any tightness in my calves or burning in my lungs. The pain in my leg can=t even come close. I couldn=t understand it. All my dreams were suddenly impossible, all my potential was lost. I drove myself crazy wondering if I would have run harder had I known that race would be my last . . .

At Culver I told the JV team that Pre quote, ATo do less than your best is to sacrifice the gift.@ Because being able to run really is a gift. It=s funny, I=ve always liked that quote but never really knew the meaning of it until now. One good thing did come out of the injury. It gave me perspective. We run all the time, and after a while it just becomes natural. We don=t even think about it. When I couldn=t run anymore, I finally understood just how much running is a part of me. All I can tell those of you who are coming back next year is - make sure you appreciate it. Don=t wait for personal experience to teach you.

But it wasn=t all that bad. I did get to run my last race after all (2 of >em, in fact). We don=t need to talk about Manchester, but JV City has to be my all-time favorite. Not because of the way my legs felt going up that hill 4 times after a month off, definitely not because of my time or my place, but because the whole time I ran I was ignoring the pain, just thinking about how much I love this team and how much I love to run. I don=t remember a single negative thought. For once it didn=t matter what my splits were, who was in front of me or that I wasn=t going to achieve my goals. That I cared about it, that we won 4 City Championships, that we beat Penn (4x) and MC, won the conference, jumped in the lake at Culver, that I=ve made some of the best friends of my life - these are the important things.

I know we=re having some separation anxiety and we don=t want it to end. The thing is, CC will always be with us. I don=t want to be sad about it anymore. The only thought that comes to me now is how unbelievably lucky I was to have been a part of this team. I want you all to know that you have inspired me, not just as runners, but as people too. YOU ROCK MY WORLD! Thanks for the wonderful friendships, fun times, kick-butt performances, and everything else. You=ve given me things I=ll keep forever.

SKUNK STATE IN >98 !

Love

Caroline Beal

January 5, 1998

Dear JACC family,

I was not a great runner. I was never the best. I do not hold many records and very seldom will you see my name in the Bible. In many respects, this is my claim to fame, if you will; that is to say that I was known as the speaker, and this is my last speech.

My years in high school are full of memories I will take with me forever. Whether it was school itself, parties, friends, or sporting events, high school is quickly ending and soon all I will have are the memories of what I've done. Many memories will be forgotten over time, but the ones I have of cross country and the teams I've been apart of most certainly will not. Over the past four years, cross country has become a huge part of my life, and I will forever be grateful. Sometimes I wish I would have played soccer, or baseball, but then I think of all that I have gained, not in athletics, but as a person and a friend, by being a part of the John Adams Cross Country team. To say that JACC made me feel special would be an understatement. John Adams Cross Country is a family, a family comprised of many different individuals each bringing their own personality to the table. Diversity is a word that leaps from the tongues of many of today's leaders, and I do not think that it is too hard to see the differences amongst us. The thing that makes JACC so special, it that we do not cling to our diversity, but instead look past that to see our likenesses. It was our ability to create that common bond between us all, while not changing ourselves to do so, that made this whole ordeal into a masterpiece event.

I look back on my early years of CC and I realize how little I knew, not just of running, but of how life worked or what it was all about. And while I do not claim to have it all figured out, I truly believe that JACC has set me in the right direction. I think back to Ramsey's humor and that 1994 class of girls and how mature and immature they were, and how I looked up to all of them for knowing when to be which. I think back to the class of 1995, and how much those guys meant to me--a tear forms in my eye. I feel I must reflect on this group a little more, for if heroes exist and role models are in fact who you really want to be like, this would be the group of guys I would say are mine. They filled my life with joy, laughter, heartache, love, friendship, guidance, and plenty of wet eyes to last a life time. To describe it best, I just must say that even now as I write this farewell, I get a lump in my throat when I think of all of them. You guys walked and left a path I only hoped I could follow. You gave me the inspiration to strive for all I didn't think I could accomplish. You gave me the ear of a great friend when I needed to talk, and the told me when I needed to shut up and listen to what I needed to hear. You guys were special to me, to all of us, and enough cannot be said of how much I admire all of you.

The next group of people that comes to mind would have to be those of the class of 1997, my comrades. If I wrote of diversity before, I have to mention it again with all of us. We are definitely different individuals with our own opinions and perspectives, but I cannot think of any other people I would rather argue with than you. We've been through so much together, and I must say that this past year has been more than special to me. We really came together as a true family, and I will always remember our talks. Caroline, you always put a smile on my face and your energy kept me going when I was running a little low of my own. You should know how much you helped those runners in the back of the pack and just what kind of influence you had on them. You truly are one to be admired. Erin, we have shared a lot, and have had many battles, but through all those clouds we remain good friends. You are one of the only people I know that has always loved running, and you helped me realize the importance of that love. For that I thank you. Sonya, you big stud, you are an animal. Your accomplishments only reflect just how much work you put in. We have shared many talks, and be certain that the mark you have left in my heart will forever remain. Anne, it has only been in the past year that I feel I have truly gotten to know you. You are perhaps the only person I know that makes any sense at all. When my opinionated mouth opened, you always gave me the other perspective, and helped me see my ignorance. You made me realize that while life is complex, it is only complex because of all the simple things that build up. I am humbled by your philosophies and your patience, two qualities that I hope I can take with me forever. Tim, if I have any regrets, it will not be knowing you better. I enjoyed talking with you, and only wish we could have more. You seem to be the most misunderstood person I know, for you are one of the most down to earth, compassionate persons I know (who happens to have his share of bad luck). To you I wish good luck and happiness in all your endeavors. Brandon, the poet, the one whom everyone thinks he is who he's not. You amaze me. Your wizardry with words is what first lead me to the real Brandon. Since, we have become great friends, and have shared much. You're like a treasure chest that no one realizes just how

much gold you have inside. I'm glad I found that gold in you, thank you for sharing your riches. I hope I can some day be as wealthy as you. Nick, I purposely left you for last. (I spelled purposely wrong just for you.) You have been my best friend since 3rd grade, and we have been through the most of perhaps anyone I know. I want you to know how honored I was to be a captain with you and Brandon, how honored I was to run along side you, and how honored I am to be your friend. Tears form, and I think I'll let them fall. You're worth it.

Randy, Coach Randy Isaacson, 1997 coach of the year and one of the best people I know, you have had some great people, runners too, but people first, that you have coached. Don't you think for a minute that they were just great people you were lucky to have coached. They were people that you allowed to become great, and the amount of lives you have touched cannot be measured, for they are infinite. You see, you have touched us all, and in turn we will touch others, and many people will benefit from the special person that we simply call "Randy". Randy, you are a great teacher, a great coach, and a great friend. One of the few old people that I can turn to. Thanks for listening, thanks for talking, thanks for the guidance, thanks...

To put a cap on this last year is like looking through my old baseball cards one more time before I put them away. It was a year in which we all received the honor and respect we deserved for working as hard as we did. I could not have asked for a better ending. During those VO<sub>2</sub> Max workouts, those long runs, the agonizing hills, I was proud to be a part of this year's team. As I will look back years from now, I am sure that I will visualize a year of success, and how sweet it was. Thank you for turning our goals into a reality. For four years I cried a semi-state, I'm glad that this year it was because I was happy. A quote I cut out the newspaper awhile back and I always keep taped in my wallet says this: "Today I gave everything I had, and what I've kept I've lost forever." I just want to thank each and every one of you for giving your all; it's what made us great.

To everyone I was privileged enough to call my teammate, to everyone that was part of the JACC family, to the Scott Majewski's that I never ran with, and the stories I love to hear of the last boy JACC runner to make it to state Jason Yazel, you all made life a little more fun, a little more exciting, a little more complicated, a little simpler. All I have left now is memories, and I thank you for making those so great. I got nothin but luv for ya.

Your JACC brother

Travis Krueger

January 6, 1998

Dear JACC,

I=d like to start by thanking everyone who was a part of the team during the last four years. You made cross country the best times of my life and I am forever grateful for the memories. This last season was the best one yet. I looked forward to going to practices and meets each day above anything else. Only among my fellow runners did I really feel at home. And this year=s camping trip was spectacular, to say the least. Just being around my teammates was the most fun I ever had.

If there=s one thing that cross country taught me, it=s that desire is everything. Without it, I never would have worked hard to improve, or even stayed on the team after freshman year. I wanted to be the best that I could possibly be, and I wanted it so badly that would get motivated in bed at night just thinking about it. This desire led to hundreds of miles in off-season training and resulted in huge improvements over my pretty dismal freshman season.

I could clearly see this desire in our team this year. After a disappointing Stampede, we were fired up for the rest of the season. I had dreamt about being part of a great team, a team that was respected by other great teams. We weren=t given the slightest respect in the beginning, and so we went and earned it with an 11-1 record, a City Championship, and a Semi-State berth. I will never forget this team. It was a great team.

Now I=d like to thank the man responsible for putting together that team. Randy has been more of a good friend than coach these last 4-5 years. He is also responsible for converting me from a true lazy-ass to a hard-working, dedicated runner. Without him, I shudder to think what would have happened to me in high school, and in life. He changed my way of thinking and has better-prepared me for the future than any teacher I ever had. Thanks, Randy. I hope you realize the effect you had.

To next year=s team and future teams, good luck with running and remember to have fun, because if you don=t, you=ll never remember all the great times. High school is the best part of a person=s life. Enjoy it while it lasts.

Sincerely,

Nick Emmons

January 7, 1998

Dear JACC,

There are so many different things a senior letter might say . . . so many wonderful stories to pass down, so much pertinent advice to share, and so many beautiful memories to document. But in this particular letter I only want to say one thing, and that is thank you.

Thank you so much to all of the John Adams Cross Country family for making the time I've shared with you so amazing. I can't describe the feeling of satisfaction that comes with being part of such a wonderful team. The sense of accomplishment you feel when you reach the top of Cardiac Mountain, run an inspired race, or push through a tough practice is unbelievable. But even more satisfying than any of those things is the excitement that comes with knowing that you are part of a beautifully unique team. Working toward a common goal with teammates that you love, respect, and admire is, at least for me, the most fulfilling aspect of cross country. When people ask me why I run, I try in vain to explain how inspiring and exhilarating it is to work, play, and sweat with such an awesome group of people.

Thank you so much JACC, and thank you especially Randy, for giving me this wonderful experience. I wish you all the best of luck in the years ahead. Enjoy this time, it passes much faster than you might think.

I love you all,

Annie Dodds

October 30, 1998

Dear JACC,

Well, here it is. I have often thought about what I would write in my senior letter, probably since my freshman year right after I read the 1995 senior letters. I didn't ever know what I would write, but I wanted it to be just perfect; to inspire, to motivate, and I wanted it to be memorable. It is fitting, though, that I have thought about this letter so much because I seem to always think about CC in one way or another. But now as I sit here writing my senior letter, the day before Semi-State, none of that seems important. I have always wanted to be remembered for something that I contributed to the team and usually I wanted that to be in my performance on the course. People would always tell me that I was a good leader and I brought great team spirit but I don't think, and probably won't ever be, a Travis Krueger in that respect.

I look back on the teams of the past as bringing something new to my life. My freshman year was the year of learning how to run CC, about getting over my freshman fears and realizing my true love of the sport. Sophomore year was the first year we ever dreamed of the STATE meet, the first time we realized how good we really are. Junior year was the year of great accomplishments and great heartache. The year when we had all the talent and team unity in the world but things didn't turn out as we had hoped or thought they would. And finally, senior year, the year when it all came to a close. The year when having fun was the primary goal. We tee-peed well and loved each other much. We acted like little kids but grew up. This was the year when we stopped worrying what other people thought and just decided to run. This is probably the reason why I'm writing this letter before my season has concluded because the results of tomorrow cannot take away my satisfaction of today. For the past four years I wanted to go to the State meet and it still would be the real icing on the cake, but the hard work I have put in, the friends I have made, and the life it has given me is really what frosting I will eat. It is the rich and creamy kind, the kind where the flavor stays in your mouth much longer than the artificial store bought kind that was just whipped up and slammed on. Advice to youngsters, go for the good stuff, it's much more satisfying.

I have been told that. "One of life's greatest tragedies is not telling people that they meant something to you." The JACC team meant something to me. My inspirations are all of you who continue to come back for more and are constantly turned away by the power of your bodies. My inspirations are all of you who reach out your shoulder and let me cry when I have tears to shed, and there have been many times I have required that shoulder. My inspiration is Randy who brought running into my life when I was 5 years old and has always been there to discuss CC with me, to coach me, and to shelter me from the harshest criticism I get, those from myself. Thank you JACC. I cannot put it any better than that. No matter what the results are, the journey though it was worth it because of you. Love you guys.

Your Sister,

Susie  
Class of 1999

P.S. RUN YOUR BUTTS OFF !!

December 5, 1997

My dear JACC friends,

I have decided that the announcement of my retirement from cross country would not require the presence of t.v. cameras and interviewers. Well, maybe they decided that, but anyway... My illustrious, magical, and not so newsworthy cross country career began on that fateful summer day in 1996. At that time I was still new to Adams as a transfer from Marian, and the few people I knew said it would be a good way to meet people if I came out. So >lil >ole me strutted into Playland with the thought that, AI=ll show these people how it=s done!@ And now that it is done what do I say?

I am grateful for the opportunity cross country, Randy, and the powers above have granted me. Please don=t get confused between Randy and the powers, they are separate no matter what he says! But really, I was given a gift which was wrapped up in the daily gallons of sweat I dripped off. Inside this gift is love, friendship, and comradeship, things which I=ve never experienced before. The bow on this present is made up of all the memories, be they good or bad, which I can look back on with a smile. From Sonya=s fateful 32 rolls of T.P. in her yard, which made it to the tapes of her home video camera by her father, to Billy=s inspirational passing out at the finish line at 4H. It=s been quite a ride!

To say that my bubble was burst that summer day would be an understatement. Did you really think I meant that I would show you all how it=s done regarding running? I fooled you all in that case...including myself. Of all the many lessons I=ve learned, the most important would be the power of mind over body. That=s why some of the meanest S.O.B.=s are successful, and why you won=t find my name in the Bible many times, if at all. As you all well know, a race is more of a mental battle of who has more guts. That=s what separates men from boys (women from girls Suz). Although I did not enjoy the success I would have liked to have had. I have already benefitted and will continue to do so when I carry these lessons learned to everyday life. I know you can always push limits, and dare to dream.

So to the guys team next year let me say this, when you=re down, you=re not out! And when you run through the valley=s of the shadow=s of death...fear no evil! FOR YOU ARE THE MEANEST S.O.B.s IN THE VALLEY!!!Peace >yall!

Your Brotha,

Bart Bauer

July 20, 1999

Dear JACC,

I remember standing at the starting line of my first high school race thinking, "Man, this is cool being a high school athlete!" I never for a second pictured myself competing at the varsity level at JA. As it turns out, being a part of the John Adams Cross Country team was the best thing that happened to me in high school. It helped me grow up, helped me to learn social skills, and forced me to reflect upon myself. This sport possesses the amazing ability to be pleasantly rewarding, excruciatingly difficult, and extremely fun, all at the same time. This combination of emotions and feelings was what I loved about JACC.

I loved being part of a team. You all are great, and I will miss all of the conversations, the pre-race rituals, the TP Wars, the post-race sulks and celebrations, everything. Thank you all for being who you are. It always seemed like there were several different personalities on the team, but after a couple of weeks, we gelled together like a great big family. I'm really going to miss you.

The one person most responsible for making my JACC career rewarding was Randy. Thank you so much for tolerating thousands of questions, for cheering for me, and for challenging me to do what I thought was impossible. You are a wonderful coach, and people would be foolish to think otherwise.

I guess my only parting advice would consist of three short tidbits: Practice your tails off because that is the only way to get better. Be mentally tough, because all the practice doesn't mean squat unless you've got it together in your head. Finally, enjoy yourself, because you will never be good at something you can't stand doing.

Guys, keep going back to Semi-State, but start taking it seriously. Girls, you'll never win the TP war!!! Thank you everybody for everything!

Sincerely,

Nathan Hall

December 5, 1998

Dear JACC,

My favorite memories of Adams will definitely be of my athletic teams, especially cross country. Cross country has meant more to me than just running, a team atmosphere exists here more than anywhere else. My relationships with my teammates have meant far more than any race. One of Randy's quotes we see in our running diaries is, "People rarely succeed at something unless they enjoy doing it." I have always believed our successes are due to the team atmosphere, we all make it easier for each other to go out and work hard day after day.

Without my friends I would never have made it to semi-state, been a city champion, and so far as I know no individual runners who have achieved runner-up in the conference standings. More than just winning races, I would not have been near the runner I was in the end without someone pushing me to push myself. Nick, Travis, and Brandon; thank you. I was four and a half minutes faster from my freshman to senior year because of your encouragement and occasional kick in the pants. I am also indebted to everyone who has run cross country for John Adams for working hard and doing their best. But there is more to John Adams Cross Country than that.

Thank you to everyone for just being there, for making JACC the special team that it is. Thank you to Nathan for being my arch-rival, you made me run harder every race to try and beat you. Thanks Billy for being you. Sure, you were a good runner, but I will always remember the guy who always kept me from getting too serious. Thanks Bart for being my friend, you were integral to the success of the team as a leader and runner.

Thanks Susie, even if I never raced against you I have only the greatest respect for your commitment and passion that you brought to the team. And finally, thanks Randy. Without your persuasion I would not have even run cross country or seen the ability that lay hidden inside.

Matthew J. Latowski  
Class of 1999

Dear JACC,

Running is my way to escape. During the easy runs I get a chance to just think and during the hard ones to vent anger, disappointment, etc. I love being out in the nature with the cool breeze, the earthy smells, and the freedom it gives to me.

I love the competition in running, it gives me a great feeling. A person's race is purely up to themselves, no one else to rely on. I always set time goals for myself for meets, but that wasn't really what made me happy. I looked at my effort, for that is the most that you could truly ask of yourself, your best effort. I would have been mad if I had reached my goal but felt like I could have done better and didn't give it that extra push. If I am way off my goal but gave everything I had I am a little disappointed but proud of myself.

I always listen to my body. I see the signs and take appropriate action. I tailored everything to my individual needs in some way so that it would benefit me in the long run. I suggest to everyone that you listen to your body and take appropriate action and hydrate all the time, especially before races! Running is one of the few sports where you truly show your guts. If you don't have the guts, don't care, or don't commit then you won't reach your true potential. This unfortunately was a major problem with our team. It seemed as if the majority of the team thought Cross-Country was a big party and I don't believe that that attitude will change for a while. I really appreciate those who hung in there and stayed committed to the team. You are the future of it. Keep striving for the best and keep away from those who would corrupt you.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wieber

July 10, 2000

Dear JACC Family,

Senior letters always seem to be so important. It is a way for the seniors to leave a little wisdom and appreciation to their former team. So that is exactly what I am going to do. I put this letter off until the very last min. (I am sure Randy isn't too happy with me) but I think I did this because I just didn't want to let it go, I didn't want to face it that Cross Country was over for good. Cross Country was a huge part of my high school career. If it wasn't for this team I probably would have gone to Clay. I just couldn't leave all of you. But now I am here to Thank you all so very much. I couldn't have asked for a better four years. All the runners, managers, and coaches were great. From the beginning to the end, through thick and thin it was the best time of my life.

Freshmen year was rough. I didn't know what I was doing on a cross country team - I was suppose to be playing volleyball- I can still remember sitting at Edison listening to the girls on the team telling me I had to run. Everyone thought I would be good at it since both my brothers had run in previous years. I was about 4'11 how could I play volleyball? I thought what the heck I might as well give it a try for a year. Even though I had never run further than about a mile before in my life. Well you can see where that lead too. To put it nicely I pretty much sucked my freshmen year.-except at eating watermelon-- I just didn't try as hard as I knew I could. But that all changed very quickly.

By my sophomore year I had learned how to train and push myself. I had grown a few inches and I even won a race that year, can you believe that? This year came and went really fast. I hardly remember it I just knew we didn't reach our main goal. Junior year came up real quick. I was dumb and didn't listen to the one person I really should have, that would be Randy. He told me I had to run in the summer to be good. Well I didn't run that much that summer and let me tell you I regret it more than anything. But Randy was still there for me. This year I got injured for a little while and I learned a lot from Randy not only about running but about life during our chats as I sat on the log at Playland. Man I was so upset missing some races, I couldn't wait for that good year I really wanted out of my Senior year.

Senior year came up. Now I was a Captain and it was scary. Some people were actually looking up to me. Well some, now I was about 5'6.. I was ready for this year I wanted everything. Then I had to sit out again. What could a girl ask for all I wanted was to be healthy and here I sit for about three weeks being anemic. I cried a lot this season watching my team, my sisters and brothers do so well. PR's here and there and I had to sit and watch. This hurt me more than anything. Again I had a lot of heart to heart talks with Randy. You can't believe what he does for all of you and what he would do for any of you.

As some words of wisdom, STAY OUT OF TROUBLE, and respect Randy for all he is worth. Which is alot. Never give in to anything and trust me if you put your mind to something and work at it as much as you can you will get it. You just have to believe and put trust in your FAMILY. Take my word for it you will regret it if you don't work at each work out like it means making your goal or not. You won't understand this until you realize it is over. It goes by fast, don't let a day pass you by.

As for the 2001 team I wish you best of luck and I am right behind you. I will miss you all very much. Keep me in your head when you get to that point at which you just don't think you can do it anymore. I will be there cheering you on. Love Always,

Chaylan

P.S. Seniors make this team succeed. They can't do it without you... And Randy I just can't tell you how great being a part of this team has made my life. I thank you for every second of it and I wish I could return for just one more season. That's all I really want one more. I wish you guys all the luck in the world and hang in there through the tuff times it always works out.

To the John Adams Cross Country Team,

As I look around my room, I see ribbons, medals and plaques reflecting my last four years of cross country. But they mean nothing to me. Well... nothing compared to the smiles, the laughter, and the pain. Yes, the pain. The pain of pushing that last champions 1000 after a VO<sup>2</sup> Max. That positive extra effort is what brings the JACC team closer together. We all go through hell and back, and in the end we congratulate and praise each other wondering how we managed to finish. Afterwards we go home to ice our legs, and go to bed early-like we are >supposed to=. Then get up the next day to go do it again. Why? So we can develop shin-splints, or occasionally swallow a flying source of protein? Or maybe it=s the self-pride we feel after pushing ourselves to the limits even when we are dying to stop. It could be the all nighters at Warren Dunes, swimming in our running clothes at Culver or Chucks house, the bus rides, the singing, the jokes, the color of the leaves at Erskine, or the feel of the corkscrew at New Prairie. All of these things leaves a smile on my face, even the occasional stick throwing at Playland.

But my ribbons make me smile too. Throughout my four years we=ve kicked Penn=s sorry Malibu-tanned butt, won Varsity and JV City, Conference, Sectionals, and Regionals. We even sent a very talented and humble girl to State (I tried to live through your experience). Even though our talent and dedication didn=t always get us quite what we wanted, our friendships and hope held us together and brought me back year after year.

Thank you to everyone with whom I=ve laughed and cried with throughout the years, for always being my trusted sister or brother. Chaylan, thank you for being my arch-rival. We pushed each other all four years, in and out of season. Randy, to you I am eternally grateful for urging me to test my limits and helping that little fourth grader find the distance runner inside herself. To any runner: No deposit-no return. You=ll get out of life what you are willing to put in. Good luck and run your butt off.

Love Always,

Charity >00

July 19, 2000

Dear Present and Future Cross Country Runners,

First I'd like to say thank you to Randy and everyone who has ever been a part of the team throughout my four years, without you we'd have no family. Randy...You are truly inspirational, you're a loving coach and wise man. I will always be thankful for having you as a coach, receiving your advice and for the talks we've shared. I will never forget the times of eyes full of tears, then walking away knowing that because of you and this team I was a stronger person. Though these four years have been a hardhearted and overwhelming emotional roller coaster, I wouldn't change my memory of the days for anything. My teammates...past and present, I could write a book about each and every one of you. We know each other too well, sometimes that isn't the best thing, but I will cherish the pieces of life I gained from your own. Thank you for being a part of my life, and giving me the best memories I will forever be grateful for.

Well now for the next part of my letter, I can honestly say for the first time I am at a lost for words. I imagined the day coming when I'd have to wrap up four amazing years, but never would I have grasped how quickly they pass you by. Being involved in sports definitely makes the months go faster, especially in cross country. It becomes your life!

I was never a good runner, my personal goals were never accomplished but I believe that because of love for the sport from my teammates, I acquired a heart like no other. My freshman year was for me a trial of a new sport, but by the middle of the season I became part of a life long family. Returning for my sophomore year I was incredibly excited, not just for another infinite season, but to conquer goals I had now set for myself. But throughout this season the more I ran, the more I couldn't. I have never been through so much pain, and when I look back, I don't even think the pain came while I was running, it came when I knew I could no longer.

When you start to like something, and want to persevere, and then everything shatters, your heart crumbles with it. My junior year I was 95 percent sure I was not coming back, but every time I imagined not being a part of this team again, I'd break down. Though I knew coming back and watching my team from the side would be difficult, I had a notion in my mind I would regret otherwise. I continued with my teammates, following their every stride, cheering at every possible moment, taking down countless laps, miles and times, and creating more extraordinary memories. Even though I was not able to run my last two years, every single day of those seasons were well worth it; being exceptionally proud of my team and learning a hell of a lot about life and myself.

I could continue my letter in depth on the numerous emotions and experiences you will endeavor in high school and being a part of the John Adams Cross Country Team, but within the memories, people, goals, laughter, tears, pain, miles, races, times, exhaustion- all heart felt emotion, you will never fully discover the essence of life until a part of you dies. My words I leave the future JACC team is **Intake every moment possible**. In these years ahead whether you have four, one or are right in between, **LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST**. In everything you do! Within the grass and sky of cross country make goals, but only make them for today. Don't look towards what you can do months ahead. Focus on today, you never know what might happen tomorrow. Your life is what you make of it, when today is done, and you look upon it with no regrets, you live the next with a smile. I wish all of you the best of luck, in every stride give it your all. You have all embarked on one of the best experiences, so have the time of your life! I'll always be cheering for you on the side.

Love always,

Angela Rhodes