



Matt Lennox
Second Place
Senior Division

Dedicated to the people that I am proud to call my friends.

“Mexico”, they said. “We’re going to Mexico.”

In four months’ time, when the summer is over, I will watch them go – some of my best, closest friends – as they make their way to Mexico. I will not watch idly, however; if things work out, I will be heading off to university. I had been invited to go with them, of course – in fact, I helped come up with the plan originally – but I declined. I will miss my friends, I know, and I wish I could be there beside them in whatever misadventures they manage to get themselves into (and I know they will). I will miss them, but inside myself, I know I have made the right decision.

My situation is not uncommon. A host of young people is standing at the verge of very pivotal, very transitional points in their lives, as a different host of young people did last year, and in all the years before that. We’ve come to a point where the securities, constants, and routines of childhood are things of the past; where adulthood is slowly asserting itself and with it comes the time of self-definition. In this time, some leave home, some stay, some go to university or college, some go to Mexico. Essentially, we all follow our callings into the vast world. I know my calling is university and a separate road from my friends.

We will see each other again, my friends and I, but I believe things will be different. We will have defined and found ourselves separately from each other. Still, even as I establish myself as a true individual, I know that my friends have had a huge, critical effect on shaping who I am now, and who I will become.

The things I have learned from my friends are invaluable and unforgettable. There are simple things, like the lazy summer afternoons or evenings when we’d head out to our favourite jumping bridge; I learned there how to achieve minimum impact upon hitting the water from airy heights. Or the long hours we spent in the local billiard, where I was taught a more effective way of sinking that eight-ball in the corner

pocket. Together, my friends and I made a science out of many things.

Yet there is so much more, more than the times and places we capture in photographs or our memories, more than the fun we will revisit in our minds somewhere down the road. I have discovered that we learn constantly from our friends; when we are simply being there for one another, through the good times and the bad, our experiences are meshing together and the process of learning, of discovering, is constant.

One lesson overrides all others, however. This is nothing specific or spoken. Essentially, as human beings, we are social animals. We *cannot* make it alone, we cannot be – to paraphrase Paul Simon – rocks or islands. If I live my whole life, and only ever have a handful of friends that I can share my best times with, and also count on in my worst times, I will have lived a rich life indeed. The unspoken security of knowing that there is even one person – one single person – that will always stand by my side is a truly monumental thing. The problem with learning this, though, is that it takes parting from our friends to drive that greatness home.

“Mexico”, they said. “We’re going to Mexico.”

As we part ways, I wish my friends the best of luck. I only hope I lived up to them, that I was everything to them that they were to me. I have learned that we must accept the diversity of our callings, even as such callings carry us to university, to Mexico, and to all places and times beyond. I have also learned – and this is most monumental of all – that, because of the true and deep friendships we make, we are strong people in this particularly trying world. Stronger people for the time we spent together.