I have been told before that everyone you meet in your life will impact your personality in some way, either good or bad, and I believe that statement holds a lot of truth in life. It doesn’t matter how long they last in your life, whether it’s your entire life or just a few days or minutes, they leave some mark in your personality. It is an arduous task to describe oneself using only a few words, but sometimes it must be done. The words I feel best describe me are love, learning, scouting, and science because they have been present in my life for longer than I can remember.

Grade School

The best place to start would be my birth and early life. I was born in 1991, the second of five children. My parents were married in the summer of 1985, and are still married to this day, which I believe is a major reason why love is so important in my life. My parents raised us in a Christian-oriented household: we pray every night before dinner; we go to church together every Sunday; and all five children attended Trinity Lutheran School where my mom has taught since 1985. My love for learning enhanced while I was at Trinity, but I have to say that it started while I was a baby. My family has watched Jeopardy for as long as I can remember and my mom told me that there were times that she could only calm me down by humming the Jeopardy theme song; knowledge has been important to me since the time I was born.

Grade school was the source of many of my more notable traits; Trinity helped me grow in a loving and supportive environment while enhancing my learning and peaking my love for science. All the way through sixth grade (the furthest one can go in the school), I made a very close-knit group of friends and found a seemingly endless supply of love and support from all my friends and teachers. My eight years at Trinity helped me learn to live and love others the way Jesus taught, so I strived to show compassion and love towards those around me. Half way through my 1st grade year, we had a new student who joined our class and I was one of the first people to introduce myself to her. We became close friends until we graduated in 6th grade and her friendship became a strong basis for how I made friends and still make friends today. Around the time I entered first grade, I joined the Cub Scout pack at my church which started my long-time involvement in scouting which continues to this day. Regrettably, I do not recall much about cub scouts but I do know that my participation in cub scouts told me that I wanted to follow in my brother’s footsteps and join the Boy Scouts. Fifth and sixth grade as a whole solidified my love for science; the big project we did those years were the science fair. In fifth grade, my project involved pinewood derby cars that I had built from Cub Scouts and I investigated the best place to put weights on the car to make it move the fastest using the power of gravity. My sixth grade project investigated the refraction of light through different liquids to see if the color would have any effect on the amount the light was refracted. Both years, the teachers and judges were impressed by the projects and my experiences helped solidify my love for science.

In fifth grade I joined one of my local Boy Scout troops where my dad and brother were both actively involved, and that decision would prove to be one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life. My involvement in Boy Scouts has had a major influence in who I am as a person; it has taught me how to be a better person mentally, physically, and morally, traits I didn’t quite understand or realize that I had until looking back on it. The few times in particular that come to mind in my scouting career that really helped shape me into the person that I am now have been helping my fellow scouts with their Eagle Scout projects. From the time I joined my troop up until I left for college after getting my Eagle Scout award, I have helped quite a few other scouts with their projects; anything from building benches and birdhouses for a local church to collecting clothes for a local clothing drive. My service with these projects has facilitated my growth mentally, physically, and morally; the growth did not become overly apparent to me until I worked on my own project and I was blown away by the amount of time and planning it took to complete my project. It made me extremely thankful for the people who were willing to take time from their lives to assist me with my project.

High School

Even after grade school, my family continued to support me and love me endlessly despite my own personal problems through middle school and into high school. They continued to set a high bar for me both academically and behaviorally. A’s and B’s were expected and anything lower was subject to question; I was also expected to make good choices and to live the way they wanted me to. There was a deep love and respect for my parents and they respected me and my decisions, so their expectations were never in question. I managed to find a small niche of friends within the school, and my involvement in Scouts allowed me to continue to find new friends that I still keep in touch with now.

High school was a completely new experience for me, my first time at a school where I was forced to be more independent and my first time in a public school. It was hard to find friends in such a large and foreign atmosphere, but I quickly met people through class and I tried to be friendly just as I did at Trinity. My attitude toward the people I met helped me meet my closest friends through school. I met my best friend halfway through freshman year and he helped me become more outgoing and find more friends and acquaintances.

My scouting experiences also helped me gain new insight to myself as a person and allowed me to discover more of my interests. Scouting gave me prime opportunities to have a life outside of school itself. We had weekly meetings and I never wanted to miss a single one, we always had something to talk about whether it was fundraising or planning for the future or doing a merit badge as a group. Most of the guys in the troop looked up to me and the scoutmasters had respect towards me and high expectations for me, the troop chose me to be the scout leader of the troop and I kept the position for three years until I got my Eagle Scout award. To me, the position was more than just being respected; it was about being a leader and a mentor to the other guys in the group, I was thrilled to be given an opportunity of that sort.

Every year I was involved in scouting, I went to summer camp with my troop. Summer camp was the best place to complete merit badges and hone our camping skills in an atmosphere different from our monthly weekend camping trips. Some years I completed badges that were required to get my Eagle Scout award and helped better myself personally such as: personal fitness, camping, citizenship in the community and nation, and environmental science; other years I completed badges that allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and learn new things: basketry, photography, weather, art, and bird study to name a few. Summer camp also provided me great opportunities to bond with the guys in my troop, especially since I was the leader of our troop for many of those years. We usually just talked about what badges they were taking or what they enjoyed most about the summer camp experience; more importantly than anything, I wanted the guys in the troop to feel comfortable and to enjoy their time outdoors.

I saw high school as a place to learn first and socialize second, and I took both my standards and my parents’ standards very seriously. I didn’t take very many science classes while in high school, but there was no other subject that sparked my interest more vividly. Freshman year involved general science which covered topics in both physics and chemistry, and sophomore year included biology. Chemistry was by far my favorite science class because it seemed to come naturally to me and I could easily apply it to my everyday life. I took AP Biology, physics, and calculus my senior year and my classroom experiences lessened my interest in both subjects, Biology was taught by a first-time teacher in the subject and the math in physics and calculus proved to be a bit too confusing for me.

Although science captured a large portion of my attention, I also found a number of different subjects that opened my mind to new experiences. I took just about every history class at the high school and learned about major facets of history spanning from ancient Egypt and Greece all the way to the world in the 1990s. I took art my freshman year, Spanish for three years, sang in a school choir for three years, I was a part of the school’s quiz bowl team for two years, National Honor Society for a year, and I was in mock trial for two years. Both my in-school and extra-curricular involvements helped enhance my love for learning and open my mind to new experiences that not only benefited me in high school, but still benefits me and sparks my interests now. I have become a better public speaker, gained a strong interest in history and many other subjects, and learned the importance of service and generosity through community service.

College

Well before graduating in 2009, I had officially decided that I would attend Capital University to study Environmental Science, but not without some hesitation. My final choices for colleges were Capital University and Wilmington College, and in the end, I chose Capital because it was a little closer to home and they offered me a little more money to attend. I also came into college unsure of my choice of major and I chose Environmental Science mainly because I couldn’t choose between a chemistry and biology major and I thought that trying to double major would cause too much stress. The first semester was tough for me, the new environment, the increased workload, and my inability to really find myself put me under a lot more stress than I had faced in high school. There was a point during the second semester of my first year that I considered dropping out, but I was lucky enough to find some true friends that I have kept with me until now. It was in this time that I met my first girlfriend who has shown me nothing but love for the past three years that we’ve known each other. For the longest time the only love and long-term support I had ever received came from my family, and finally I had another source of support.

After achieving my Eagle Scout rank and heading off to college, it was and still is hard to remain active in my troop. Most of the news and information I get about the troop comes from my dad who is still, more or less, one of the scoutmasters. Even though remaining active has been a challenge, I still live everyday as I was taught by my parents and through scouting: physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight. In the same regard, I still strive to follow both the Boy Scout Oath and Law in my everyday life: being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, clean, brave, and reverent. These are the twelve points of the Scout Law and I do my best to follow all of them daily and show others how to live in the same way. Even though active involvement in scouting has been more difficult, it’s still possible to live the way scouting says one should live.

College has worked to enhance my love for both learning and science. Aside from the large number of science classes I have taken at Capital, my experiences outside of class have had the most profound effect on my affinity for science and learning. During my junior and senior years, I have had the amazing opportunity of working in the chemistry department as a workshop leader and a teacher’s assistant for the general chemistry labs. In my two years working in the department, I had the opportunity to work in two workshops and three labs. My job expectations for workshop has been to help students better understand the classroom material by using supplemental activities provided by the professors and to answer any questions about topics covered in class. My expectations for lab TA includes setting up all the chemicals needed for weekly labs, answering student questions about the lab procedures, and ensuring students follow all the necessary safety precautions. Aside from the expectations of my job, working in the chemistry department has provided me with a great opportunity to review everything I learned in both general chemistry and organic chemistry while continuing to enhance my chemistry knowledge through other classes.

During the summer before my senior year of college, I had an opportunity to work at my grade school at a summer camp which caught my eye for teaching. I was responsible for leading a group of 1st through 6th graders in lively games and academic activities every day. I was also responsible for planning weekly lesson plans to teach the kids about subject matter they might not cover in the normal school curriculum. We had different themes every week: sports, art, the Olympics, and science (my personal favorite) to name a few. During the science week, I taught the children some basic concepts from different realms of science; we learned about chemistry, dinosaurs, geology, and the solar system. I taught the children a little bit about each subject, and then we watched Bill Nye The Science Guy and Magic School Bus videos to help interest the kids some more. Every day of the week, I also showed the kids some cool chemistry experiments that they could perform at home (with parental supervision of course); from that week until the end of the summer the kids asked me every day if I had some new experiments to show them. I honestly didn’t think that they would be so thrilled by what had happened, but it made me really happy to see them interested by the experiments and the subjects; if I take anything at all from that particular experience I hope that one week might encourage at least one of the kids in my group to become more interested in any of the subjects we talked about. Teaching the kids subjects that they wanted to learn as well as subjects that I already had ample knowledge about was the best way for me to enhance my love for knowledge and to discover a new love for educating others.

It’s impossible to say that my life experiences have not influenced who I am as a person, and I still hold true to the fact that everyone I have met in my life has affected me in one way or another. The people that I have known anywhere from my entire life to just a few days have all had some influence on my personality. My parents, friends, teachers, the children from summer camp, my girlfriend, and people I befriended in grade school, middle school, and high school… Everyone has changed my life in one way or another and I hope I had some effect on their lives as well. I can’t say that everyone has had a positive effect on me, but those positive individuals and experiences definitely outweigh the negative ones. There are many more than four words to describe me, but from my life experiences that I remember most profoundly, those four words are the first to come to mind; they have been with me since I was born and have shaped me into the individual that I am today.